

Click to prove
you're human



Whether they're getting retweeted by members of One Direction, or liking the "Hunger Games" Facebook page for a chance to be included in the movies credits, today's teens are directly interacting with pop culture celebrities, movies, music, and, increasingly, brands in ways never before possible. Tweet pictures of yourself at a Lady Gaga concert, and maybe she'll call you from the stage a moment sponsored by the cell phone company Virgin Mobile. Send Beyonce your selfie, and maybe it'll be included in the Pepsi-sponsored intro to her Super Bowl halftime show. Do kids think they're being used to promote these brands? Do they care? Or in a new teenage reality where being Internet famous seems to be just a click or a post away, does the perceived chance to be the next big star make it all worth it? Doug Rushkoff, writer and correspondent, YouTube personality Tyler Oakley, Oliver Luckett, the Audience HQ CEO. In "Generation Like," an eye-opening follow-up to FRONTLINE's 2001 documentary "The Merchants of Cool," author Douglas Rushkoff returns to the world of youth culture to explore how the perennial teen quest for identity and connection has migrated to social media and how big brands are increasingly co-opting young consumers' digital presences. Today's teens don't need to be chased down by corporations, Rushkoff says. They're putting themselves online for anyone to see. They tell the world what they think is cool starting with their own online profiles. Likes, follows, retweets, and favorites are the social currency of this generation. And they're a very real currency for marketers: instead of selling the product to the teenage audience, the idea is to get the teenage audience to sell the product to itself and for corporations to collect big data in the process. Companies know how to take that data, and turn it into money, one marketer tells FRONTLINE. The people who are handing over the data because they're hitting, I like this or I like that, or they're telling all their friends, Will you please come like me? they have no idea what the value of that is. From the agency that's leveraging the Twitter followers of celebrities like Ian Somerhalder (THE VAMPIRE DIARIES) to make lucrative product endorsement deals, to the grassroots social media campaign behind the Hollywood blockbuster "The Hunger Games: Catching Fire," "Generation Like" explores how companies are increasingly enlisting kids as willing foot soldiers in their marketing machines. In the social media age, does the division between marketing and authenticity still exist? What's the hidden alchemy that brands are using to capture Generation Like? And who are the people behind the curtain making it all happen? "Generation Like" is a powerful examination of the evolving and complicated relationship between young consumers and the companies that are increasingly working to target them and their fans, friends, and followers. "Generation Like" is a FRONTLINE production with Left/Right Docs. The producers and writers are Frank Koughan and Douglas Rushkoff. The correspondent is Douglas Rushkoff. The deputy executive producer of FRONTLINE is Roney Aronson-Rath. The executive producer of FRONTLINE is David Fanning. Past episodes of FRONTLINE are available for online viewing. FRONTLINE is on Facebook, and follow @frontlinepbs on Twitter. It looks like we don't have any synopsis for this title yet. Be the first to contribute. Learn more Suggest an edit or add missing content Reviews This product has not yet been rated. Jump to Main Content Living in Debt Pay Plan Oct 10, 2017 Updated: Nov 8, 2023 You'll have probably seen plenty of newspaper reports about mental health in recent months encourage more vulnerable clients to reach out for help in the run-up to World Mental Health Day on 10th October. Slowly-but-surely, the stigma is being removed, though there is still more work to be done. Most of us are aware of the link between mental health and financial problems. When you're feeling stressed, anxious or depressed, spending money helps you feel better in the short-term, even if it leads to debt further down the line. In other situations, general money worries, like fearing you can't pay the rent or buy food, can compound your condition even further. It's important to work closely with your GP to ensure you receive the right support, however, there is also financial help available to help alleviate the stress. Check your benefits If your condition means you struggle to work, you could be eligible for Employment Support Allowance. You will need to undertake a series of tests, including the Work Capability Assessment and you may be able to receive financial assistance if you work fewer than 16 hours and earn less than £120 a week. Navigating the benefits system is sometimes difficult, especially when you are feeling vulnerable, so try to seek support from a friend, relative or via local branches of Mind and Citizens Advice. Help for the armed forces Conditions like post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) among the armed forces have received much publicity, thanks to charities like Combat Stress and recent campaigns backed by Prince Harry and the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge. Life on the frontline is extremely distressing and former servicemen and women might experience flashbacks and/or have to come to terms with severe physical injuries. Organisations providing mental health support and grants for veterans include The Royal British Legion, Help for Heroes and Combat Stress. Managing mental health in the workplace Many people with mental health issues find that going to work improves their wellbeing and enables them to remain financially independent. Having said that, there could be occasions when your condition makes everyday tasks seem overwhelming, potentially affecting your performance. When working through mental health issues, it's important that you speak to your HR team or a trusted line manager as soon as possible. Depending on your company's policy, you may be allowed to work flexibly, have time off for counselling appointments and/or be put on light duties to avoid stress. Remember, the law protects you from discrimination, so take a look at Mind's website for further information. For more details on debt and mental health, visit our dedicated page. Read more on benefits Financial Help Mental Health Stress Wellbeing This article was checked and deemed to be correct as at the above publication date, but please be aware that some things may have changed between then and now. So please don't rely on any of this information as a statement of fact, especially if the article was published some time ago. Facebook Twitter LinkedIn Email Loading... Fretting about social media corrupting youth these days risks sounding like an earlier generation of parents wringing their hands over Elvis and the Beatles. Yet Frontline has found a way into the conversation by delving into the insidious way corporate marketers including Hollywood have insinuated themselves into the process, turning enthusiastic fans into co-opted marketing minions. Generation Like is a fascinating look into the world where Retweets, Likes and other online endorsements have become social currency, spawning a new breed of consultants unabashedly seeking to take the risk out of public opinion. That the younger cohort has an evolving relationship with technology and ostensibly fewer compunctions about privacy hardly comes as a news flash. Still, picking up where he left off more than a decade ago in Merchants of Cool, correspondent Douglas Rushkoff finds several interesting points of entry into this multipronged topic, from the obsession with celebrity to the way sponsors crunch data in order to turn enthusiastic teens and young adults into apostles to help promote their brands. You are what you like, as Rushkoff puts it, and the copious amount of information available as well as the eagerness of teens to promote something like The Hunger Games for the merest brush of personalized contact with the property make it easier for companies to track and exploit every move. Similarly, as Rushkoff documents, Web personalities can create a viral effect by cross-pollinating their subscriber or fan bases, until the act of getting noticed becomes a marketable end unto itself. A similar logic guides actors, and the doc shows The Vampire Diaries Ian Somerhalder meeting with a consultant and marveling at how his Twitter following can exceed his shows audience. If all that seems relatively benign except perhaps for the crass commercialism of it all, and the layers of AstroTurf underlying what are supposed to be grassroots fans Rushkoff closes on a particularly sobering and troubling note: A teenage girl who has developed an avid online following with the encouragement of her mother, who notes that her daughters likes pile up when she posts full body shots. So while there's a case to be made for the democratizing aspects of the social-media revolution potentially eradicating some of those barriers erected to block access, as Generation Like illustrates, sometimes that just amounts to a fancy way of pimping out kids, even if they're willing participants. Daniela Diaz, eighth-grader from southern California, loves to make videos from her bedroom, garnering thousands of fans at the peak of her popularity. Image credits: Frontline/PBS (The kids are all put into this arena where you're forced to try to survive on your own. They have to, like, do things in order to get people to like them. The game makers want this arena, just sit and watch them. But basically, they're in there alone trying to survive.— Ceili Lynch's description of the Hunger Games tribute in the bottom description of the Weekend running through the labyrinth with the handheld camera, or from the picture of Bernie Sanders at Biden's inauguration). Ultimately this leads to extremely rapid mixing of different cultures and the rapid cycles of social media content that we see today. The underlying thesis of the film is that youth wannabe influencers are being consensually exploited by the culture and consumer industry for their word-of-mouth, showing how the interaction approach has been co-opted by the advertising industry for the profit motive. This shows that pop culture can hardly escape the clutches of capitalism. Explicit word of mouth diffusion as well as implicit, passive influence have been found to be the most effective forms of marketing for consumer products. Hence, companies capitalize on attention-grabbing content produced by teen YouTube/TikTok (insert social media app) celebrity of the day by dangling the reward of some sponsored equipment and the sense of achievement of becoming an officially validated influencer. The episode gives two ready examples: skateboarder Steven Fernandez, who showed off his entire outfit being sponsored by companies like Primitive, Supra and DGK, and Daniela Diaz, who catapulted to fame after posting a cover video of the Cup song. The thirst for online validation the greed for the online currency of likes, makes them devote countless hours into generating their content. And with more and more of them being lured into this seemingly lucrative field, winning this zero-sum competition for attention means generating even more sensational and controversial content which often becomes far divorced from their original talents. The film showed that Steven started making more scandalous videos involving holding hands with random people and filming girls twerking, and other frankly cringeworthy videos such as a girl who stuck a condom into her nose and out of her mouth. Besides obviously risking their safety, this is a slippery slope of increasingly morally questionable behavior. (Sure enough, just two years after the documentary was released, Steven was accused of sexually exploiting an underage girl which resulted in him going into depression). Furthermore, becoming popular on social media may lead influencers to pander to cultural stereotypes, objectifying ones own body by posting revealing pictures something that Daniela Diaz does and even her mother endorses and supports, suggesting poses that would get 150 likes. This shows the ever-increasing efforts and sacrifices they need to make to maintain the attention that sustains their corporate sponsorships and personal ego a hedonistic treadmill where they exert themselves more and more just to stay in the same place. Furthermore, such teens inevitably tie their sense of self-worth to the online validation they get from online strangers a modern, virtual form of Charles Horton Cooley's social self where he posits that people build their self-image from the judgements and acknowledgement of others in society. However, the Internet rapidly moves on to the new fad but programmatically (trending or hot pages by definition show new rapidly rising posts), and socially (people get bored of seeing the same style of meme or video), and the resultant sudden decline in fame and popularity has devastating psychological effects on these influencers half of social media influencers report mental health struggles. The end result is that firms essentially receive low-cost, yet organic word-of-mouth for their products, holy grail of marketing in a world where traditional TV ads are becoming less effective and more expensive by the day and youth influencers are left with the risk and psychological trauma. The cruel twist is that teens are continually duped into thinking that being an influencer is worth it they only see influencers at their highest points (when they are trending on TikTok or YouTube) and not after they've faded. They toil hard to earn the currency of likes (or in the Ceili's case, Sparks), a currency which loses its value rapidly, while aiding corporations amass the actual dollars, dollars which actually last and hold economic sway in our capitalistic society. When the dust settles, the firms emerge unscathed and even enhanced by the organic marketing, while the kids and their fleeting moments of fame are swiftly forgotten (just googling the names of the teens featured in the film yields few results. The film also talks about how teens are motivated by fame by association being mentioned or featured by celebrities, even through an online signal such as a retweet or follow. The Hunger Games fan girl Ceili talked about being ecstatic when the Official Hunger Games Twitter account retweeted her, as well as when Hunger Games actor Jack Quaid responded to her repeated tweet messages. Once again, the pop culture machinery is manipulating these desires. Firstly, by designing entire marketing campaigns around chances to be featured by celebrities on their montages or videos to incentivize loads of free word-of-mouth online chatter. More importantly, by choreographing celebrities online personas so mechanically and efficiently through marketing agencies like the Audience and TVGca such that what fans think are authentic fan engagement and validation from their idols, are in reality, merely optimized and premeditated stunts done not by the actual celebrities but profit-motivated strategists. Generation Like deftly closes by drawing the parallels between the Hunger Games the reality of social media. In a massively ironic scene, Ceili excitedly describes the invisible game-makers in The Hunger Games who manipulate the gameto get higher ratings and more sponsors, forcing kids to go into the arena, survive on (their) own, (and) do things to get people to like them , not knowing that she is precisely playing the role of the tributes she is describing. FRONTLINE explores and illuminates the critical issues of our times - from business and health to social issues, politics and war. Watch Tuesdays 9/8c. Since 2008, Wall Street and Washington have fought against the tide of the fiercest financial crisis since the Great Depression. What have they wrought? In a special four-hour investigation, FRONTLINE tells the inside story of the struggles to rescue and repair a shattered economy, exploring key decisions, missed opportunities, and the unprecedented and uneasy partnership between government leaders and titans of finance that affects the fortunes of millions of people around the world. Part one airs Friday, April 27 at 9 p.m. (this first part originally aired on Tuesday, April 24) - FRONTLINE tells the epic story of the rise of modern finance. A revolution in banking begins at a luxury hotel in Boca Raton, Florida, where a rowdy team from J. P. Morgan invents a new marketplace for trading risk. Correspondent Martin Smith ("College, Inc.," "The Madoff Affair") interviews leading bankers, officials and journalists to explain how financial engineering on Wall Street brought the global economy to its knees and the reverberations are still being felt along Main Street. Immediately following, in hour two, FRONTLINE producer Michael Kirk ("Inside the Meltdown," "The Warning") investigates how the country's leaders failed to prevent an oncoming crisis and ended up initiating the largest government bailout in history. Told by participants from Washington and Wall Street, the story includes inside accounts from the campaign of presidential candidate Barack Obama. By the time of his election Obama is thoroughly up to speed on the disaster, but the question remains what can be done he takes office? Part two will repeat on Friday, May 4 at 9 p.m. (part two originally aired Tuesday, May 1 at 10 p.m.). The second part opens with Barack Obama taking office in the midst of the worst economic crisis in 80 years. To the surprise of many, he adopts a strategy to help the very Wall Street firms that plunged the American economy into chaos. FRONTLINE goes inside the White House to meet the key figures locked in a fierce debate over the administrations game plan and follows those who said they had no choice but to rescue Wall Street. Did they choose the right course? In the last hour, FRONTLINE probes into a Wall Street culture that remains focused on making risky trades. Bankers left an ugly trail of deals extending from small American cities to European capitals. For more than three years, regulators have tried to fix an industry steeped in conflicts of interest, excessive risk taking, and incentives to cheat. New rules and regulations are being written, but can they fend off the next crisis? FRONTLINE is on Facebook, and follow @frontlinepbs on Twitter. Watch Money, Power and Wall Street on PBS. See more from FRONTLINE. Since 2008, Wall Street and Washington have fought against the tide of the fiercest financial crisis since the Great Depression. What have they wrought? In a special four-hour investigation, FRONTLINE tells the inside story of the struggles to rescue and repair a shattered economy, exploring key decisions, missed opportunities, and the unprecedented and uneasy partnership between government leaders and titans of finance that affects the fortunes of millions of people around the world. Watch A Financial Crisis Will Happen Again on PBS. See more from FRONTLINE. Dodd-Frank proposes to solve this problem by giving the government resolution authority to dismantle a big bank, but Fisher suggests a better solution is to not allow banks to get so big. Journalistic Standards Support Provided By Learn more Douglas Rushkoff's documentary Generation Like explores the issues that come with an entire generation believing that the way to stay alive is by getting people to like you. My essay will not be limited to these issues alone; there will also be a discussion of the way these issues were documented. For starters, the sample of teenagers interviewed and filmed were strangely limited to a small group of American teenagers. The documentary spoke of today's teens and the camera panned to a group of American teens sitting at a table which does not represent all teenagers. Perhaps the implication here is that not every teenager is part of Generation Like. And by that line of thought, it can be suggested that it was a conscious decision on the part of the filmmaker to limit himself to the consumers only. However, consumers of American products are not limited to the United States itself and a more international sample could have been used to explore wider themes of U.S. hegemonic practices in the technology industry. When the documentary attempts to establish that corporations now operate on the principle that Your consumer is your marketer, it starts with the initial stages of the MTV era where the marketing strategies differed. Companies profited by taking teen culture and selling it back to them. But now, the corporate media profits by getting kids to be part of the game. This finding is especially true in an age where fans are encouraged to participate in the marketing campaign of their favourite brands that is supposedly organic i.e. generated and shaped by the fans themselves but is, in reality, a preset marketing strategy for a young consumer where there's a studio back there counting how many times does she click on it. The case studied in this film was The Hunger Games franchise whose second film Catching Fire was about to be released. According to Rushkoff, it may be Catching Fire but it was doused with gasoline beforehand. Ceili Lynch, a teenager in New York self-described as one of the people who like The Hunger Games the most, appears to speak with earnestness about the franchise. Having watched the films and read the books they are based on, I can relate to her passion about the story and its characters. But beyond that, I feel disconnected with what she talked about in terms of tweeting to the actors, entering contests on the franchises official website, and so on. It also begs the question about how valid is her claim of being one of the biggest fans. Is participation in these online contests and tweet storms the only measure of how much a teenager is attached to something? As a fan, I am very fond of The Hunger Games because of the story's plot. If I were to speak to Ceili about the story itself, the conversation itself would change and perhaps this is one of the flaws of the documentary: the teenagers are responding to only that which they are asked. They are presented as naive, simplistic and easily duped children who are satisfied with being noticed by their favourite actors; the reality may be very different. This thought was reinforced when I arrived at the point where the filmmaker is sitting at the table while a couple of teenagers are demonstrating a facebook profile makeover. Rushkoff asks them questions and they are laughing around, sometimes breaking into a giggle, all the while training their eyes onto the computer screens. Even when Im no longer a teenager, I could still identify the sarcasm when one of them talked about the true me and its connection with a picture uploaded on facebook. At that point, it became even more important to be skeptical at what the documentary was pushing for. Teenagers can be guarded about what they are vulnerable about and waiting for them to utter a profound truth while being filmed is too high an expectation. Perhaps it is this vulnerability that companies are cashing on, as is suggested in the documentary. Actively engaging with the content is what occurs when teenagers want to stay updated and relevant in conversations with people their age. This is why companies need kids to stay online. As the documentary argues, were the teenagers to know that there is an adult pulling the screens of their favourite celebrities or brands accounts, they would be less fascinated. They would see through the messaging. If I find out that what the singer-songwriter Taylor Swift wrote on twitter is part of a marketing scheme, I disengage with that content. I do not treat it with the same care as I do with something personal which emerges from her end. I see through the tweet and I realise that it is a job she gets paid for and supports herself and her family with. Her carefully constructed personality online is not what Im interested in. Im looking to connect with her lyrics which one could argue are also constructed to fit a certain demand which tell me more about her than an endorsement she was part of. Another aspect of social media is fame by association is where the strategy is merging the fan bases all together. In my simplistic understanding, pitting fan bases against each other is also a very interesting and profitable way of solidifying brand loyalty. But it is true that the first strategy has worked well in both real and virtual life especially if the idea is to get the audience to sell the product for them. However the underlying assumption that a person will like Product B just because Product A (or Person A who is awesome and uses it) is odd because it is possible that one has a different worldview than Person A or Product A. Younger audiences have got changing personalities but that does not mean that they will actually go buy the products their favourite celebrities are endorsing. In collective societies, spending is exclusive to the adults and even if a teenager insists on getting Diet Coke because they saw Ms Swift endorse it, does not mean that their parents will buy that. It is likely that having a diabetic person in the family will be a cause of that specific purchase. In developing countries, finances matter greatly. From my personal experience of writing a letter to J. K. Rowling, I understand the documentaries claim that if you reach out to any celebrity or brand on social media and theres an implied promise that they might reach back. But this is a problematic relation to draw since regular users of social media would understand that fan bases exist in huge numbers and that this lowers the probability of a famous person actually seeing in their message, not just in real-time but like, ever. Chances of receiving a reply are greater when one switches to postal mail where writers, intellectuals, and even very famous professionals respond to letters sent from all over the world since that allows them a more delayed time. The documentary claims that children can be walking billboards and to be fair, that reality is true even in babies who are unsuspecting victims. Regular users of Instagram post their infants picture and end up tagging the clothing companies on the child's romper, bib, and mitten. This reality, as Tyler Oakley confessed, happened without intent on the part of the younger generation. But the older and supposedly more wiser generation exists in the same timeframe as the younger lot. If younger children can be a victim of the usual corporate suspects, that is still understandable since they have been born into this technologically active environment. However, the documentary failed to address what the excuse of parents and businessmen is, some of whom even financed this particular documentary. After the credits rolled, even PBS Frontline asked audiences to follow them on social media, to visit their website, to sign up with their email addresses, and to order the DVD of the documentary. But this burden of responsibility does not lie on the corporations alone. Educational institutions who could not as the documentary showed teach this particular sample of teenagers about the meaning of the word sellout are also guilty for creating such a generation. If it is profit that motivates adults then it can be argued that teenagers like Ceili are driving on the same principles. In the documentary, she said, My hands were so tired at the end I feels like youre a worker but its all worth it in the end because and here she pointed to her laptop screen I get more Sparks. The question is: What are the adults pointing to? Originally written on 31st December 2015. Share this: Facebook Twitter Reddit LinkedIn WhatsApp The documentary film, Generation Like, Douglas Rushkoff, introduces the issue of how social media has influenced the life of the teens in today's society. The documentary is a representation of how current teens are swayed by the social media in search of connection and identity through Retweets, Likes, Subscribers, Favorites, Comments, and Followers. The documentary evaluates the contribution of various social media platforms on the lives of the teens. The documentary also addresses the issues of changes in character and culture among the societal members due to the impacts of how teens adapt to fit in to today's society. Even though many teens use social media platforms for interaction, connection, and identity, the marketers have the upper hand in attracting and using teens to market their products through making them part of their marketing operations, seeking ones identity, using celebrities and artists, and providing payments and sponsorship. Rushkoff evaluates the changes introduced by the social media age while also reflecting in the past times. The rise of social media platforms as a hub for teens interactions and connection has also paved the way for evolving complicated relationships between companies and young consumers. With today's social media interactions they have introduced changes in the culture and character of individuals in society. The current teen culture has embraced the use of social media platforms for interactions, communications, self-identity, and connection. To define culture as what human beings make of the world is to make clear that culture is much more than a world view (Crouch, 2009). Rushkoff argues that teens seek for popularity and connection through reaching out to more friends and peer networks for likes, subscriptions, favorites, followers, and comments. At the same time, companies have entered the race to expand their products markets by taking data and turning it into money (Rushkoff, 2014). Teens have unknowingly engaged in practices that get them used for unwanted marketing as they hope to become the next big star. As the Bible says, do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect (Romans 12:12). Showing that do not conform to the world around you, be your own person, be with God and he will lead you to be the best version of you. The documentary also depicts changes in character among the teens and the companies involved in social media interactions and product marketing. Rushkoff is quick to show that today's teens are not chased down by corporations. Instead, they engage in talking, posting, liking, following, and retweeting. Teens today struggle to be their own character because they try to be what social media wants them to be, they struggle to answer the same questions Wright asked, what am I here for? How do we know whats right and whats wrong? (Wright, p 7) This generation showcases a change in character as compared to the past where pop culture, advertisement, and promotions were useful in attracting teens to various products. By trying to develop personal profiles and lead in the race for followers and likes, today's teens showcase a change in principles and leadership practices. Teens need to sit back and ask the question Kouzes & Posner asked, who am I really serving? (Kouzes & Posner, p. 72) They should realize that in order to make a real difference is to do so humbly, without regard for recognition, ego, pride, even self-preservation (Kouzes & Posner, p. 72). But teens in today's social media culture do not care whether they are being used to promote brands since they hope to benefit from assured popularity, identity, and even income. The companies using teens for marketing do not necessarily care about their rights of privacy, compensation, and protection. Because of this, the interactions have led to a change of character associated with new practices. As teens get swayed while seeking for popularity and identity, companies have found opportunities to harness data and get their products marketed. The teens seek to gain an identity to adapt to today's society, and to fit in to today's culture. By seeking an identity based off of social media does not show your true character. Character strengths dont happen all in a rush. You have to work at them. Character is a slow forming thing (Wright, p 35). In conclusion, the documentary, is an evaluation of the current society and changes that have occurred with technology advancement associated with the internet and social media. The film discusses how teens have embraced social media for the actualization of their self-identity and to ensure increased connections. However, this issue has only resulted in being targeted and used for marketing and marketing data by companies. 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Frontline generation like.