



#INSTAFAME: Youth Views on Privacy & Personal Brand Building Behaviour in the Social Media Space

www.hashtaginstafame.com

Instafame Methodology and Research Design

The kidsmediacentre designed and conducted a series of three, qualitative exploratory groups (n = 24) with the goal of better understanding how youth are using social media tools to build a personal brand. Our qualitative research used a series of highly interactive projective techniques to explore selfie culture, privacy literacy and some of the new fame building practices used by youth (i.e. hashtags, likes, shout-outs).

All research groups were held in Toronto in June 2014 with students 13 - 18 years of age. A diverse (ethnicity and gender) sample of students was recruited from schools across the GTA. The #Instafame research design was approved by Centennial College's Research and Ethics Board on March 11, 2014.

Many of the image-based stimulus exercises were collaborative and participatory so students didn't feel awkward about sharing a point of view. Recruitment criteria required students to be using a minimum of three social media platforms. We wanted to ensure participants were actively aware of the platforms and personal content young people are sharing.

All personally identifiable information (PII) in all visual stimuli (names, Twitter/Instagram handles, comment stream contact info, email addresses, etc) was blurred to protect those youth with "un-private" or publicly-shared profiles (even if they had a large base of followers).

This research is directional only; the small sample size allows for rich discovery and meaningful discussion, however, findings cannot be viewed as hard evidence.

Results

1. **Audio highlights** – Student research groups were audio recorded (no video per Research and Ethics Board). Highlights from the discussions can be found at www.hashtaginstafame.com/audio-clips. Additional verbatims from the three exploratory groups are also shared on this page.
2. **Student Exercises** - Students participated in a series of collaborative exercises exploring themes in the social media space. Results from these three exercises can be found on the Instafame website www.hashtaginstafame.com
3. **Pre-Questionnaire** - Youth participating in the kidsmediacentre research completed an individual survey (only age and gender information was collected) prior to the start of the exploratory groups (n = 22). This survey augmented the rich discussions and interactive exercises completed in the qualitative groups. The goal was to learn more about students' individual use of social media, their views on privacy, the extent to which they personally manage their privacy settings and to explore tactics around fame building on social media channels. Results and data tables are below.

Instafame Pre-Questionnaire Research Results

Executive Summary

Students in the older part of our research demographic are acutely aware of the issues around privacy and how things can go sideways if an inappropriate selfie or tagged post appears on an individual's social stream. Although the majority of teenagers are worried about their privacy being violated, few are taking the necessary precautions to *actively* update and protect personal accounts. Most sign up for a social network and then assume their password and privacy settings will keep them in good stead.

Questionnaire results also indicate youth are concerned about online popularity, as it immediately relates to offline popularity and being able to keep up with all their friends and the latest trends. They are not necessarily going out of their way to get more followers, but they are more than aware of the negative connotations of having too few. The desire to have more followers, and more likes – especially amongst the youngest participants - can be seen as a direct relation to their laissez faire privacy practices.

Students are most aware of privacy as it relates to Facebook, which most agree, is for friends only. Youth with Twitter and Tumblr accounts seem less concerned about who is reading their posts, suggesting they take care to ensure they're posting appropriate content.

Platforms

When it comes to social media, students in the kidsmediacentre research sample indicate they're using a wide variety of platforms. Here are the most commonly used outlets, in order of popularity (% of teenagers currently active):

- Facebook 82%
- Instagram 77%
- Snapchat 77%
- Twitter 68%
- Tumblr 55%
- Vine 50%
- Google + 36%
- Other:
- YouTube 36%
- Pinterest 14%

Privacy

“Employers look at social media sites as part of the hiring process. This concerns me for my generation because we post everything online.”

Female - 17

The majority of youth between the ages of 13 and 18 seem to agree that online privacy is about choice, safety and consent - who is allowed to follow you, who you share with, and who can see/access your personal details.

Relative to a breach in privacy, they are most concerned with:

- unwanted people having access to their personal information and social statuses
- parents accessing the details of their life and passing judgment
- future employers looking at social media sites and the risk of **not** getting a job because of online content
- criminals and the potential for identity theft
- stalkers – both from a personal safety perspective and the safety of others
- predators gaining access to their personal accounts

Most youth think of privacy settings in the context of Facebook (and to a lesser extent Instagram) and said their account is specifically set to “friends” (only one participant

had privacy settings set to “friends of friends”). Importantly, only a few claim to actively research and manage privacy settings beyond the initial sign-up process, although all are concerned (in varying degrees) about what happens.

Attitudes Towards Social Media

“I feel like everyone is online and it’s so cluttered and confusing.”

Female - 14

When asked to describe how social media makes them feel (based on several images provided), the majority chose option D - a picture of three girls sitting together, smiling and looking at their individual cell phones. The key words used to explain why they chose option D to describe what it is like participating in a social network are: **friends, fun, fitting in, sharing, socializing, and keeping up-to-date.**

The next most popular choice is option B - a picture of a traffic jam. The key words used to explain their decision are: **overwhelming, cluttered, confusing, crowded, everyone, and tedious.**

Several students chose option A - a lone bird flying over water. The key words students shared are: **freedom, and calm.**

Several other students chose option C - posing party girls - using these key words to explain: **competition, childish, appearance, fitting in, online popularity = offline popularity, parties, and social media as a promoter of drugs/alcohol teen culture.**

Students choosing the other images mention the following key words to express their feelings about participating in social media: **alone, frustration, anger, hidden, and serious personal issues.**

“Followers make you feel good. They make you feel like you are cool or attractive.”

Female - 15

Based on student feedback, it would seem that half of the students in our research have positive attitudes and experiences with social media, while the other half use negative words and phrases to describe their online perception.

Followers

“The more followers you have, the more praise worthy and likeable you are.”

Male - 18

Youth in our sample between 13 - 15 years of age reported having anywhere between 40 to 300 followers (averaging around 150) across all social media platforms, while the 16 to 18 year old students had at least 300 to 700 (averaging around 400).

When asked if they want more followers, the majority responded negatively. Their reasoning included comments like:

- fewer followers means more privacy
- it's not a competition
- it's better when only your close friends are following you.

The few who answer positively - although most specify they only want more followers on platforms *other than* Facebook i.e. Instagram, Tumblr and Twitter - reason that more followers means more validation, communication, and fun.

When asked if they would actively try to get more followers, most said (with a resounding NO) they weren't interested in actively growing their following.

“Followers are the new applause.”

“This means that when you get more followers, it is like getting more applause. A million followers is like a standing ovation.”

Male - 17

When asked to explain the quote, “Followers are the new applause”, the general response is based around the idea that *number of followers = level of popularity*. They describe popularity in many ways - as an achievement, feeling good about oneself, doing something impressive, as validation/approval, and as praise. In fact, their social media world is rife with competition with several comparing it to an offline/real-world popularity contest.

Fame

“An easy way of becoming famous is posting revealing photos.”

Female – 17

When asked how one can become famous online, half of the youth in the research sample think that publicly sharing content, specifically videos, geared towards a general audience is the best way to gain fame. Some youth say “marketing yourself” and “promoting your talents” is an effective approach. A few said “sharing revealing photographs/pornography of yourself” is the surest way to get mainstream attention.

Instagram Pre-Questionnaire Survey Results

A) Pick a number between 1 and 10 that best describes how important privacy is to you, personally (1 = not a lot 10 = very important)

1. Male, 17 - 9
2. Gender unknown, 17 - 9
3. Female, 17 - 8
4. Female, 17 - 10
5. Female, 17 - 10
6. Female, 17 - 10
7. Female, 17 - 7
8. Male, 14 - 8
9. Male, 13 - 3.5
10. Female, 14 - 10
11. Female, 13 - 8
12. Male, 18 - 8
13. Male, 18 - 8
14. Female, 17 - 1
15. Female, 17 - 3
16. Female, 15 - 7
17. Female, 15 -10
18. Female, 14 - 6
19. Female, 13 - 5
20. Female, 13 - 8
21. Female, 16 - 7
22. Female, 16 - 8

B) What does privacy mean to you?

1. Male, 17 - Privacy means keeping personal information amongst myself and any I choose to disclose that information to.
2. Gender unknown, 17 - Making sure that only people you know or let view your pictures and profile. People aren't using personal information against you.
3. Female, 17 - Privacy to me means that it is something that is personal just to me and something that no one else is required to know.
4. Female, 17 - To have information and connect to people only YOU are aware of.
5. Female, 17 - That the pictures I upload are safe from people I don't know and that they can't be sold without my knowledge.
6. Female, 17 - Knowing that people can only see what I want them to see about me online.
7. Female, 17 - Privacy is about hiding my personal information from strangers. It is about guarding my social media activities from people who will use my personal information such as my pictures and phone number for their own purposes without my consent.
8. Male, 14 - Privacy means that information that I share with any source is not proliferated throughout the Internet and is not shared with the government.
9. Male, 13 - Privacy means not simply handing out my personal information.
10. Female, 14 - Privacy is something that everyone has a right to and is important because it is safety related.
11. Female, 13 - People not able to see who I am or what I am doing if I don't want them to.
12. Male, 18 - Personal information that is not shared, on a regular basis with others.
13. Male, 18 - The right to restrict personal information from those you do not wish to see it.
14. Female, 17 - Allowing only people you are familiar with to see all your information
15. Female, 17 - Deciding who can see certain things you post/share.
16. Female, 15 - Keeping my personal information personal and private.
17. Female, 15 - Keeping my information safe, keeping my identity secret, and only shared with my permission. Essentially it is where I live, who I am, and how to find me.
18. Female, 14 - To me, privacy means being able to choose what you share and don't share with the public, and being able to choose who you share it with.
19. Female, 13 - It means that followers have to ask to follow you and my pics have a privacy setting.
20. Female, 13 - Privacy to me means keeping your information safe, and keeping things personal.
21. Female, 16 - I means not having to fear for my safety. Not having anyone in your business.
22. Female, 16 - Privacy means having the respect over anything that I wish to be personal.

C) Do you actively research and manage your privacy settings? Please offer an example or two.

1. Male, 17 - Yes I do. I make sure that a social network platform says in writing they will keep my information private and do not disclose it to anyone without my consent.
2. Gender unknown, 17 - Yes, on Facebook I make sure only my accepted friends can view my pictures and profile. Also on Instagram I check to make sure my account is private.
3. Female, 17 - No, I don't actively do anything to my settings because soon as I signed up for Facebook or Twitter I already took care of it then and that's why I no longer feel it is necessary to actively research and manage it.
4. Female, 17 - Yes. Facebook: I constantly change my password every 6 months and go through my posts and delete unnecessary ones. Email: I clean out and change my password and contacts every 72 days.
5. Female, 17 - I manage them by making sure only my fiends can see my pictures.
6. Female, 17 - Once in a while. I'll update my privacy settings whenever I feel as though someone might have had access to my account.
7. Female, 17 - I take the basic precautions in order to manage who can see my social media activities. On Facebook only my friends can see all my posts and pictures. On Instagram only my followers can see and like my photos.
8. Male, 14 - I do. I have managed my Facebook settings to "Friends of Friends" and have reported spam of the above accounts.
9. Male, 13 - I don't have any personal information on my Instagram account. I do not post on Vine.
10. Female, 14 - Yes on Facebook I edit my privacy settings so that only my friends are able to look at my posts etc...
11. Female, 13 - Sometimes like changing who can see my pictures.
12. Male, 18 - No. I have had to deal with privacy issues on my gmail, bank account, and Facebook profile, but do not set up privacy measures.
13. Male, 18 - No I do not. I set them when I started my account and my opinions haven't changed.
14. Female, 17 - No I am fine with people I don't know reading my tweets.
15. Female, 17 - Not usually. My Instagram is private because I don't want my mom to see everything I do.
16. Female, 15 - Yes. I check for any changes or new privacy features regularly.
17. Female, 15 - I do try to keep track of my privacy settings, but not extremely often. I am very worried about people that I don't know having access to me.
18. Female, 14 - When I first got Facebook and Instagram, I put them on private but since then I haven't changed anything.
19. Female, 13 - No, I don't.
20. Female, 13 - On Facebook before I make one, when I fist login I do. But otherwise not often.
21. Female, 16 - Not often, I usually don't change them.
22. Female, 16 - I manage my privacy settings by putting my Instagram as "private" and locking my Twitter account.

D) What is the greatest privacy concern that you have with your friends and your generation?

1. Male, 17 - Private pictures that are not meant to be released to the public are leaked out and shown to everyone.
2. Gender unknown, 17 - That my personal information can be seen by someone who can harm me. That someone will steal my identity.
3. Female, 17 - There is nothing I'm really concerned about because there is nothing on my Facebook or Twitter (etc..) that I don't want anyone to see. The only thing that I am worried about is my password being discovered because my one password is my password for everything.
4. Female, 17 - The group dynamics between family and friends.
5. Female, 17 - That my friends don't share the pictures with people I don't know.
6. Female, 17 - If there were ever an error that caused passwords to be leaked to the public. I wouldn't want my information public.
7. Female, 17 - The young generation is mainly concerned about hiding our social life from adults such as our parents and employers.
8. Male, 14 - The fact that Facebook is currently making money out of a billion people's information. The fact that my privacy is being invaded in this way is disgusting.
9. Male, 13 - People whom we don't know having our phone numbers/email.
10. Female, 14 - Online friends and who to trust online.
11. Female, 13 - People stalking us or creeping on people and blackmailing them.
12. Male, 18 - Everything online is accessible and can never be removed, even if you delete it.
13. Male, 18 - That anyone can access my information if they have a desire to, due to the digital nature of communications.
14. Female, 17 - Some of the information I post online may be viewed by future employers. I wouldn't want that to be the deciding factor for if I get a job or not.
15. Female, 17 - Employers look at social media sites as part of the hiring process. This concerns me for my generation because we post everything online.
16. Female, 15 - I find that Facebook especially is not very private at all and even if you personally have tons of privacy settings, often friends post pictures and statuses of or about you.
17. Female, 15 - I find that Facebook especially, but other social media platforms as well, put my privacy at risk and I am very scared of being tracked down by what I put online.
18. Female, 14 - One privacy concern that I have with my generation is that if somebody's account is not on private, a complete stranger could have access to all of their photos and information.
19. Female, 13 - Making sure no strange people follow me.
20. Female, 13 - The greatest privacy concern I have is that someone will get a hold of my friends' accounts and basically stalk them.
21. Female, 16 - Having your parents go on your accounts. Having predators go on your accounts.
22. Female, 16 - The greatest privacy concern is that people are giving away information, talking to strangers, or not managing their privacy settings.

E) Participating in a social network is like... (circle one) Please explain why:

- a) A picture of a lone bird flying over a sea
- b) A traffic jam
- c) Party girls
- d) Three friends smiling and sitting together, all using their own phones
- e) A person sitting alone, surrounded by people
- f) A woman screaming
- g) A girl with her face in her hands
- h) A fish in a bowl
- i) A sad girl looking through a hole in a broken window

- 1. Male, 17 - (d) - I primarily use social media to find funny pictures and posts to share with friends along with following sports teams and showing results to friends.
- 2. Gender unknown, 17 - (d) - I mainly use social media for fun, I see things that I share with my friends. You fit in better when you're using all the popular sites like Twitter, Instagram, etc. Feel left out when you don't.
- 3. Female, 17 - (a) - For me social networking is nothing complicated, it's not something I am addicted to. I was pressured by my friends to expand my social networking but it's pretty interesting and fun.
- 4. Female, 17 - (b) - It's just people putting their info out there not necessarily important and sometimes it just feels a bit overwhelming.
- 5. Female, 17 - (d) - Literally everyone is on their phones 24/7 and never really physically interacts with each other anymore.
- 6. Female, 17 - (a) - Anything is possible online and it should be that way. Social networks are a place to express how one feels, so it should be free.
- 7. Female, 17 - Social network is about keeping in contact with your friends and peers.
- 8. Male, 14 - (c) - A large number of people have turned Facebook into a competitive game, while using increasing childish tactics to extract outgoing positivity.
- 9. Male, 13 - (d) - They keep me social and up to date.
- 10. Female, 14 - (b) - I feel like everyone is online and it's so cluttered and confusing and the traffic jam best described that.
- 11. Female, 13 - (d) - You're always sharing with your friends what is going on in your life.
- 12. Male, 18 - (b)(c)(d)(g)(i) - Despite the large probative attitude, there are serious personal issues hidden behind the cracks.
- 13. Male, 18 - (b) - There is a lot of information and much of it is tedious and it is hard to keep track of.
- 14. Female, 17 - (b) - Everyone is using social media these days so it feels very crowded and it feels like among friends.
- 15. Female, 17 - (d) - I use social media to interact with my friends and share fun pictures/memories.
- 16. Female, 15 - (c) - Many social media platforms promote and depict partying and the use of drugs and alcohol.
- 17. Female, 15 - (c) - Everything boils down to how you appear online - the more visually appealing, the more you fit in, all affects how popular online - which then affects your offline life as well.
- 18. Female, 14 - N/A
- 19. Female, 13 - (a) - It's really calm.
- 20. Female, 13 - (f) - Because sometimes some of the things that happen make you angry or frustrated and have you looking like that.
- 21. Female, 16 - (e) - Sometimes you feel like you're alone and no one else can see what you post.
- 22. Female, 16 - (d) - You get to share information with others.

F) On average, how many followers or 'friends' do you have on social media?

1. Male, 17 - A little more than 100
2. Gender unknown, 17 - About one hundred - Give or take.
3. Female, 17 - On Facebook (400+) on Twitter and other social media (200+)
4. Female, 17 - 700+ on FB, 200-700 on the rest
5. Female, 17 - 300 approximately on Tumblr and Twitter/Facebook.
6. Female, 17 - 200-300 for Facebook. 2-3k on Instagram.
7. Female, 17 - I have on average 200 followers.
8. Male, 14 - Around 50 or so.
9. Male, 13 - 300-1
10. Female, 14 - 300.
11. Female, 13 - 40.
12. Male, 18 - Approximately 600
13. Male, 18 - 300-400
14. Female, 17 - About 200
15. Female, 17 - Facebook 500. Tumblr/Twitter 100-150. Instagram 50
16. Female, 15 - Anywhere between 30ish (Snapchat) and 250ish (Facebook)
17. Female, 15 - 200 Facebook, 100 Tumblr.
18. Female, 14 - About 200
19. Female, 13 - 500 followers per each social media site.
20. Female, 13 - Around 300-400
21. Female, 16 - 200
22. Female, 16 - 200-400, two hundred friends, four hundred followers

G) Do you wish you had more followers on social media?

1. Male, 17 - No. I prefer to only have people on social media I actually know.
2. Gender unknown, 17 - Maybe on Instagram or Twitter but not on Facebook. Facebook is only for people I know.
3. Female, 17 - Yes because it would make my timeline more interesting!
4. Female, 17 - Sure, it's great to know people's appreciation for who you are.
5. Female, 17 - No, only on Tumblr because you can get very recognized if you're Tumblr famous.
6. Female, 17 - Sure, it's nice to know that people like what I post.
7. Female, 17 - No, I am happy with the amount of followers I have because the higher number mean my information is accessed by a lot of people.
8. Male, 14 - No. Social media is not a competition.
9. Male, 13 - No so much.
10. Female, 14 - Not really. I don't care as much about it because i don't go on as much/often as others.
11. Female, 13 - Sure so you have more people to communication to?
12. Male, 18 - No. I want to know the people who add or follow me, and actually see them in person occasionally.
13. Male, 18 - No, I generally only keep people I actually call friends on social media
14. Female, 17 - I am fine with how things are now.
15. Female, 17 - I don't typically advertise myself in order to gain followers, but I think it could be fun to have a lot, especially on blog sites like Tumblr.
16. Female, 15 - No.
17. Female, 15 - On Tumblr yes I do. I love having new people to talk to, but on Facebook I hate friending people I don't know, or know that I won't talk to. It seems pointless and I like keeping my friends limited to my real friends.
18. Female, 14 - No, because there are already lots of people following me that I don't know.
19. Female, 13 - I would like to have about 300 likes a pic, so yes I would.
20. Female, 13 - Not really because I have everyone I talk to and need on all my social media accounts.
21. Female, 16 - Yes, on websites like Tumblr and Twitter
22. Female, 16 - I sometimes wish I had more followers on social media in the sense that I would like to get more feedback on my work.

H) Do you actively try to get more followers on social media? If yes, please elaborate:

1. Male, 17 - No
2. Gender Unknown, 17 - No
3. Female, 17 - No
4. Female, 17 - No
5. Female, 17 - No
6. Female, 17 - No
7. Female, 17 - No
8. Male, 14 - No
9. Male, 13 - No
10. Female, 14 - No
11. Female, 13 - Yes - follow a person because a) friend, b) might follow you back
12. Male, 18 - No
13. Male, 18 - No
14. Female, 17 - No
15. Female, 17 - No
16. Female, 15 - No
17. Female, 15 - Yes - I try to post according to what people will like mostly.
18. Female, 14 - No.
19. Female, 13 - Yes - I got the App to get more followers.
20. Female, 13 - No
21. Female, 16 - No
22. Female, 16 - No

l) “Followers are the new applause.” What do you think this phrase means?

1. Male, 17 - Just as people get applause for saying something impressive or brave people now get followers on social media for typing something impressive or brave.
2. Gender unknown, 17 - I think this means that when you get more followers it is like getting more applause. A million followers is like a standing ovation.
3. Female, 17 - For me, this means that the more followers someone has, the better they feel about themselves. This is because it basically makes you feel popular and people actually want to follow you for some reason.
4. Female, 17 - As humans, we have evolved our practices of performance from live to virtual. At this point anything that earns appreciation is through followers virtually. Therefore, followers are the new applause.
5. Female, 17 - Followers are like having more friends. The more followers you have the better.
6. Female, 17 - People consider having new/more followers to be an achievement.
7. Female, 17 - The number of followers indicate the number of audience members who observe your life.
8. Male, 14 - Followers are the people who openly give approval over and over again. They sound their claps with their words, and they will always whistle and jeer.
9. Male, 13 - More followers = more popular?
10. Female, 14 - Followers means that people are liked and by following someone you are showing them that you like what they post, etc., like applause.
11. Female, 13 - Followers are like people who like you and are interested in you and you can use that to brag to other people. Also applauding means that you like that person and what they've shown you which is like following them.
12. Male, 18 - The more followers you have, the more praise worthy and likeable you are.
13. Male, 18 - Applause is attention, the more followers you have the more attention you're receiving.
14. Female, 17 - People love and praise you. The more followers, the more loved you would feel.
15. Female, 17 - Applause represents approval. Now, people feel good about themselves when many people 'follow' them.
16. Female, 15 - Followers make you feel good. They make you feel like you are cool or attractive etc. The more followers and likes you have the better you feel about yourself.
17. Female, 15 - The more followers you have, the louder the applause, the better you are.
18. Female, 14 - This means that applause symbolizes people viewing and appreciating what you do, and how, followers symbolize that.
19. Female, 13 - The more followers/likes per upload means that you will get noticed.
20. Female, 13 - I think this means that the amount of followers you have categorizes you into popular and non popular categories and so forth.
21. Female, 16 - It means that people associate followers with praise and feeling good about themselves
22. Female, 16 - I think that it means that the higher amount of followers you have, the higher you are ranked. You get praised for the amount of followers you have.

J) If you wanted to become famous online, how would you go about doing this?

1. Male, 17 - You would write and post comments and opinions that appeal to the General Public. Such as religious beliefs or personal opinions on political points.
2. Try promoting myself, use hashtags so people can see it. Have someone more famous online see you or mention you.
3. Female, 17 - Probably by making some videos that will talk about everyday problems but I would convey that in a funny way.
4. Female, 17 - Giveaways, shootouts, groups, viral videos, covers, edits, and mixes.
5. Female, 17 - Promoting by messaging and in-boxing people.
6. Female, 17 - Instagram or YouTube. Just post what people would like to see/watch.
7. Female, 17 - An easy way of becoming famous is posting revealing photos.
8. Male, 14 - Nope!
9. Male, 13 - Vlogging on YouTube
10. Female, 14 - I would make YouTube videos because it's a great way for people to see you/ "meet" you.
11. Female, 13 - Become un-private and post a lot.
12. Male, 18 - Make popular videos. Weekly posts like RWJ or such.
13. Male, 18 - Success in my endeavours in real life and use these to market myself online.
14. Female, 17 - Pornography. Posting covers of new/popular songs.
15. Female, 17 - Pornography.
16. Female, 15 - N/A
17. Female, 15 - Appealing to the general people, knowing when/how to post that would attract most people.
18. Female, 14 - N/A
19. Female, 13 - I would get the App and I would follow random people.
20. Female, 13 - I would probably ask for a lot of shout outs from friends.
21. Female, 16 - Post a video on Youtube or a funny video on Vine.
22. Female, 16 - Share your talent to the public, e.g., post a YouTube video.