

How youth mix personalities to suit social media platforms

So you've got your social media strategy covered when it comes to the youth? Think again.

Brands have been overanalysing students' social media behaviour for collective targeting for ages, but what about the personal interaction [Afrillennials](#) (African millennials) crave? Just like you might have different outfits for different occasions, students have different personas on their various social media platforms.



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Student Village conducted focus groups within the 18-25 year old student market and analysed how they use the top four social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat) differently.

1. Facebook – Circle of Trust

If playing it safe is the name of the game, then this is the social media platform where students go to be 'real' or what their friends and close family believe them to be. Students who are turning it up, trying to impress and living the lifestyle are not showcasing their exploits here. Instead you will find support for a friend's meme, or wishing of happy birthdays to long lost relatives, all the while posting 'safe' content. Breaking out of the mould may occur on particular posts or in particular groups, which don't involve friends of friends or friends of family and even that's risky. But by and large, this is a more formal and structured approach to social media and engagement with friends and family.

2. Twitter – Bandwagon Boulevard

From one extreme to the next, students are braver on Twitter than they are on Facebook. While Facebook is seen as the quiet angel, Twitter becomes the soapbox for the youth to vent. Just think of the #FeesMustFall movement, where students suddenly have a voice and brands get scared. It's where students move away from their normal Facebook names, operating with pseudonyms and become the uber-sophisticated critics on everything.

Fear not though, this is the place where the youth want brands to be real. Be prudent with your brand strategy because when the heat's on in the kitchen, adding fuel to the conversation is not necessarily the best approach. Think of it as the "as it's happening app". Twitter is used to highlight and give opinions on current topics and there's no space for stories unless you're following a trending topic. It's a platform for those who are living in the moment and for that reason it's also become

popular for announcements and debate, from politics to [Black Twitter](#).

3. Instagram – Turn Up City

The youth have become really good at showing off and this platform is where students flock to create the future personality of themselves. “That expensive pair of sneakers I want, I’ll post that”. “That mansion I will have one day, yup, let me post that too”. “Oh, check out that car that I will be driving when I’m CEO, yup, my followers need to know my taste.” Perception is nine-tenths of the law and in a student’s mind, Instagram ensures that ratio becomes ten-tenths. Through Student Village’s [social media research](#), it was found that students would often go in store, try on clothing, Instagram the look by photographing it for their feed and return the clothing again, just to make an impression.

Fashion, beauty and other lifestyle brands have done particularly well on Instagram as they emulate what students desire. From showcasing short, scripted tutorials to boosting the latest release of [sneakers](#), the youth of today live for soaking up other peoples’ idealistic realities on Instagram.

4. Snapchat – The Real World

Far more recent than the previously mentioned platforms, [Snapchat is gaining popularity](#) at an incredible rate with the youth. Effectively, Snapchat offers a more authentic way of engaging with friends and followers. The content is real-time, unlike Instagram where content is much more easily planned. Even though students are all for showing off, Snapchat is there for sharing real amazing moments alongside not-so-amazing moments. If the moment isn’t that great, no biggy, it’s gone tomorrow (content and uploads expire after a short length of time on Snapchat).

The big feature of this platform is called “Story”, which allows users to share moments of their day with their friends and followers. “Hey fans, have a look at my new office vibe,” or “Have a look at this amazing hotel room on my New York holiday,” and so on.

There’s no doubt Snapchat is being put forward as the latest fad under assessment by social media strategists. Should your brand join in on being this real? The truth is that brands are already using this platform but not by plugging in with traditional advertising. Instead they are making use of influencers and ambassadors that are already using the platform to show off brands they encounter throughout their lifestyle. Afrillennials don’t want to follow a brand on SnapChat like they do on Twitter or Facebook. Influencers and ambassadors can help brands to be more authentic on this platform.

How social are you?

There you have it, four platforms and four personalities that the youth will use to keep engaging with the brands that want to attract them. As a brand, having this many personalities is going to lead to a schizophrenic meltdown, so choose each platform wisely and go with your brand’s essence instead. That’s not to say you can’t have fun. Youth see right through brands and their agendas so stay authentic and allow them to share your brand’s journey.

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