

TWEENAGE CLICKS

THE SOCIAL MEDIA LIVES OF TWEENS AND EARLY TEENS

Insight #1: Facebook Pages/Groups help Tweens express their fast-changing identity

Of all their online activities, it is social networking sites where this age group are spending the vast majority of their time.

Even those under 13 are entering false dates of birth in order to create a profile. Facebook is by far the most popular site used, because “everybody has it”.

Although secondary sites such as Bebo (soon to close), MySpace (decreasingly so) or Twitter (increasingly so) are used, Facebook is the hub. YouTube is also hugely popular, but has a different, less rounded offering, with many simply embedding YouTube videos or links into Facebook Pages.

For Twitter, pop sensations like Justin Bieber have proven a tipping point for Tweenage adoption. Twitter has been battling to stop Bieber tweets dominating “trending”; the Tweens have been fighting back, however, by changing his name to Twieber and Jieber and continuing the conversation thereafter! But despite the growth in usage, Twitter has yet to reach its full potential and the relative complexity of Facebook provides greater opportunity for brands.

Of particular focus to brands when thinking about Facebook should be the millions of Pages and Groups available to ‘like’ or join. Tweenage years find individuals in a state of flux; they are rapidly and continually testing and changing their identity. Facebook ‘Pages’ and ‘Groups’ allow them to share information and therefore express their evolving identities. Tweens have control over very few things in their lives, yet how they express their identity via social media is an exception to that rule, and something this generation of Tweens is first to experience.

From a functional perspective, liking/joining Pages/Groups enables Tweens to stay in touch and up to date with their favourite brands/products/bands etc.

“I’m addicted to joining Groups. I’m on Pages for Jason Derulo, Samsung, The Saturdays, iPhone (and I haven’t even got one yet), Crunchie Bars, Lindor, New Look and River Island; loads of others. It’s how I stay in touch. Things like new launches, sales offers, discounts – I get to hear about it all.” (Female, 13 years old)

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“I signed up to a Nike fan Page, then an Adidas one, then a PlayStation one. Why not? My friends will probably sign up to them, too, so I’ll try to be first. Do I care what the Pages give me? Yeah, I do. It’s really nice to have new stuff appearing on your profile page.” (Male, 12 years old)

But there are powerful emotional benefits too. Liking/joining a Page/Group is communicated to your Facebook network via your newsfeed and Facebook profile. This moulds and enhances a Tween’s online image, demonstrating to their peers that they are in touch and in the know. It’s a badge of identity, signifying their allegiance to a social group.

For brands, the benefits are clear. Tweens are hungry to add myriad Pages/Groups to their profile, word is then spread among large peer networks, greatly increasing exposure to the brand.

TOP TIPS FOR BRANDS:

- Having a number of Facebook Pages/Groups is a must – an overall brand Page/Group, but also individual product Pages/Groups. (If you’re really lucky, consumers will create their own Groups on your brand/products – you can interact with Group members here, but don’t try to dictate what is and isn’t said as this is social media suicide)
- Ensure you nurture your Groups/Pages, keeping them up to date and developing a relationship with members; Tweens demonstrate a more voracious appetite and greater need for new content than older audiences
- Implement Facebook’s social plugins:
 - o Add the ‘Like’ button to your website(s). This new functionality from Facebook will potentially give brands a social media presence across all web spaces
 - o Look out for ‘Recommend’ and ‘Activity Feed’ – new plugins from Facebook which will increase the opportunities for online influencers to act as brand advocates
 - o Use a company such as AdNectar to enable members of your Groups/Pages to give branded virtual gifts to their friends