

Content Creation for Teens: An Overview

Throughout this issue of the YA Hotline, we have highlighted the various aspects of content creation that young adults can take part in, whether they are reading about it or actively creating their own content. However, for those educators, librarians, and others who play important roles in supporting teens, it may be helpful to understand more about the idea of content creation itself.

In an article entitled “The Participation Divide: Content Creation and Sharing in the Digital Age” by Hargittai and Walejko, the authors surveyed students to determine who was posting and creating content on social media (2008). They found that, of the population surveyed, “60.8 percent of students engage in at least one of the four content creation activities” (Hargittai & Walejko, 2008, p. 246). These four content creation activities are defined as music, artistic photography, poetry/fiction, and film/video (Hargittai & Walejko, 2008). This article shows that more than half of teens surveyed in 2008, when this article was published, were creating content. Given the ever-increasing importance and use of the internet in our daily lives, it would be of little surprise if this number had increased beyond this since then. Interestingly, in terms of creating content, the content that was most likely to be posted online was poetry (Hargittai & Walejko, 2008).

The study, however, finds that content creation is highly determined by a young adult’s socio-economic status (Hargittai & Walejko, 2008). That is, specifically, it was found that “students who have at least one parent with a graduate degree are significantly more likely to create content” (Hargittai & Walejko, 2008, p. 252). The authors note that, although it has become easier to post whatever you want online, this behavior is still in some ways determined by your background as “engaging in creative pursuits remains unequally distributed by social background” (Hargittai & Walejko, 2008, p. 252). Even when you have all the tools at your disposal to pursue the things you enjoy, whether that be writing poetry or making videos, there are confounding factors that may discourage teens from engaging in content creation. This is an important consideration for people working with teens. Leverage whatever resources you have and encourage young adults to engage in creative pursuits in spite of whatever their background may be. While identity is certainly an important consideration that informs art which, in this case, is content creation, it should not be the thing that stops teens from doing what they love. As adults working with teens, we need to understand that some teens will need that extra bit of encouragement and love to show them all that they are capable of.

Further looking into which teens are creating content, a study on content creation behaviour, or CCB as the authors, Yang et al., call it, looked at what facets of your personality likely indicate whether you are taking part in content creation online (2023). Though this study was not on young adults specifically, it does portray some interesting insights in content creation. According to Yang et al., factors such as conscientiousness, extraversion, and neuroticism have an effect on CCB (2023). If you are more extraverted or neurotic, you are more likely to take part in CCB (Yang et al., 2023). If you are more conscientious, you may still create content, but are generally more wary and “selective” of posting online (Yang et al., 2023). Throughout all of this, Yang et al. also notes the “moderating effect of social pressure” which is an important

consideration for young adults (2023, p. 4). You may see an increase in content creation behaviour if your teens are facing the social pressure to do so, though it is moderated by their other social qualities (Yang et al., 2023).

Beyond understanding who “content creators” are demographically, some research has also highlighted the benefits of what Koh (2012) calls information-creation behaviour. Although they note that this is an understudied subject area, the researchers highlight some beneficial insights about young adults (Koh, 2012). In creating information or content for others, young adults have an “affinity” for “visual and graphical display of information, as well as synergistic integration of the use of text, images, and multimedia” (Koh, 2012, p. 1834). Koh further notes that young adults are more adept and likely to incorporate various mediums of information (2012).

Beyond this, the author critically accounts that young adults feel empowered through information creation: it elicits “a greater ownership and a sense of agency over information activities” by getting a chance to control and create their own narratives (Koh, 2012, p. 1835). As professional working with young adults, it is important to understand how you can embolden young adults to feel comfortable in creating content and give them all the more reason to do so.

References

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