



Instagram Spam: Teens, Finsta, and the Portrayal of One's True Self



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Overview

Multiple Instagram accounts are a common phenomenon among teenage users. Typically, one Instagram account is associated with the teen's given name, and is either public or at least broadly and relatively freely networked with other Instagram users. Teenagers who have a second account often refer to it as a "finsta" or Fake Instagram account (Urban Dictionary, n.d.). These accounts have more restricted network connections than real name ones, and rely on pseudonyms as usernames (Homayoun, 2017). In recent studies, finsta accounts were alternately noted as spaces for ranting and being authentic (Weinstein, 2018) or for pushing humor and other boundaries (Kang & Wei, 2019).

Objective

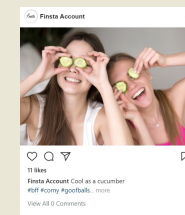
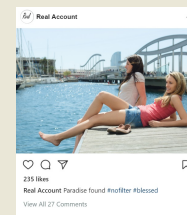
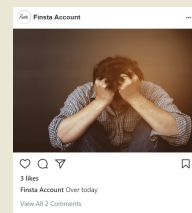
The objective of this study is to explore why teens do or do not choose to have a finsta account and, in the case of teens who maintain multiple accounts, explore which elements of themselves are reflected in each account.

Methods

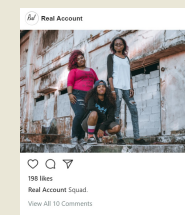
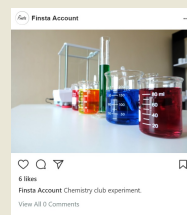
This poster draws on a data set from a larger ethnographic study of social media use among teenagers. Data were collected from observations of teenagers interacting and discussing social media use and interviews with teenagers about their social media use.

Results

- The term "spam" was used more frequently than finsta.
- All students were familiar with the concept and some followed finsta accounts.
- Teens with spam accounts echoed earlier studies: they used the accounts to share funny things they see, things they like, and how they are feeling with their friends. They considered these images to be of momentary interest, but superfluous or "spam" (i.e., neither of interest to a larger audience nor to be shared broadly) in the context of their regular identities.



- Two students succinctly summed up the most popular reasons for not having spam accounts, stating "(Spam account users) just post, like, random pictures and stuff. I don't really see the point of it" and "Who has time for that?"
- Students also maintained Snapchat accounts, relying on the ephemerality of Snapchat to serve a function similar to spam accounts.



Future Work

Data analysis on this project continues, and next steps in data collection include revisiting the school system to investigate use among middle school students.



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