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COMMUNICATING WITH TEENS AND YOUNG PEOPLE

A Research Document Compiled by Barefoot Creative
In partnership with Canadian Mennonite University, the Barefoot Conference and Mike Tennant



SECTION 1 INTRODUCTION

I set up a search on Tweetdeck.com today.

If I've lost you already – let me try to explain.

Twitter is the new star in the social media space. From the overwhelming success of MySpace, who was lapsed by Facebook in May of 2008 (MySpace had 114 million unique visitors that month and Facebook had 123.9 million unique visitors). From January 2009 to March 2009 the number of visits to Twitter went from 9.8 million to 19.1 million and the experts anticipate that it will hit 50 million by summer.

New platforms of digital communications are cropping up every day.

Back to my Twitter search.

In the past 30 minutes I have had more than 60 notifications of real time tweets. They have come from every part of the English speaking world that has access to mobile phones and tweets. The data tells me that's just over 19 million people. Each message is 140 characters or less and I set my search to look for the words: "social media".

The messages are largely soft forms of advertising. So far (in just 30 minutes) they have lured me into following the white house, the weather and teens in our society.

Eleven more tweets just arrived.

"In a minute son, just updating Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter and my RSS feed."



In January 2009 Canadian Mennonite University and Barefoot Creative joined forces to survey a group of just over 1200 young people attending high schools and post-secondary schools in Canada. We were on a quest to discover the uniqueness of young people in a faith context. Our overall purpose was to understand how they used technology and traditional forms of communication.

In understanding the scope of the survey, the following data provides a brief overview:

- **78%** of the people who participated in the survey were between 15 and 19 years old.
- **20%** were between 20 – 24 years old.
- The other **2%** were teachers and other adults testing the survey.
- **54%** of participants were young women and **46%** young men.
- Over half of those surveyed lived in Manitoba, with Ontario and Saskatchewan making up almost **35%**.
- **80%** of those who responded told us that they go to church.

The survey was open to anyone and largely completed on the web. The survey was also distributed to Christian high schools, several denominations and Christian university/colleges.

The survey focused on the places young men and women obtain their information. The survey shows trends that reflect comparable surveys completed in Canada, the United States and world-wide. We want to emphasize that the data collected are TRENDS. Each of us can quickly identify exceptions, but the importance of the data in this survey is to learn from the trends.

Some of the questions were fashioned so that teens chose from least likely to most likely. Others prompted participants to check off their choice.

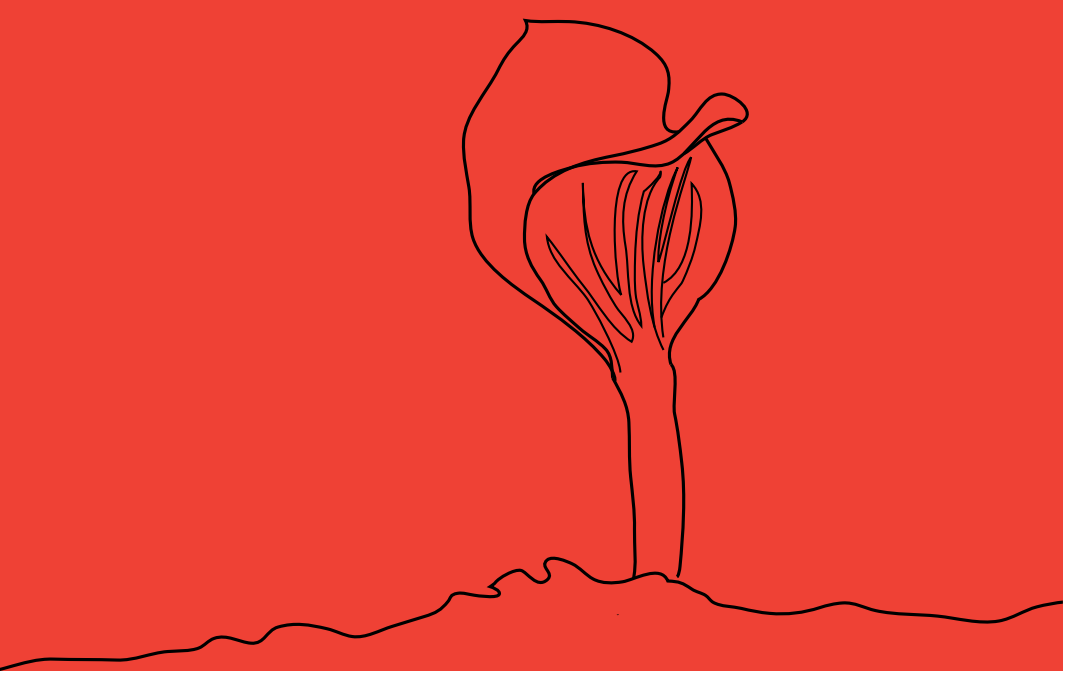
In order to capture a full picture of a youth's experience and daily practices online, we also encouraged them to volunteer information rather than check our best guess at their practices. As expected, the information collected showed diversity and choice. More interestingly, in every category there were clear trends that reflected the teens' choices.

We thank participating schools, denominations and young people who donated 15 to 20 minutes of their time in sharing their practises with us. We congratulate our winner from Abbeydale Christian Fellowship who received an apple iTouch.

Acknowledgements

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SECTION 2

WHAT WE LEARNED

A. TEENS ONLINE

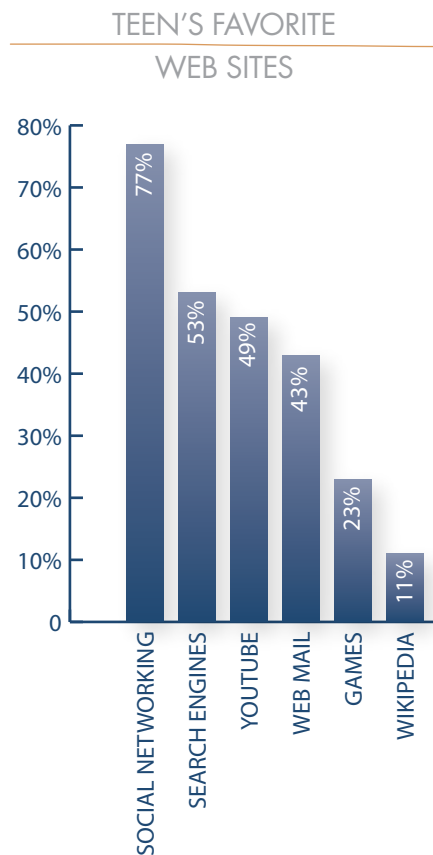
Teens are online. While Canadian statistics vary, most agree that over 90% of teens and young people are online. This varies in specific demographics. In our study, the participants were definitely online.

When asked about specific advertising online, young people tell us that they read online ads (23%), but don't click on them (3%). 15% do surveys and polls. And only 6% read pop-up ads.

1. Favourite web sites

While young people volunteered a number of favourite web sites, the front runners are clear. Social networking sites are a favourite among young people. Anecdotal evidence tells us that many young people are abandoning email for Facebook walls, messages and chats. Google is a big winner online and YouTube is well visited.

IMDb is the Internet Movie Database and the ratings come from viewers posting their own ratings.





"MySpace? What's that?"

2. Changing trends

Participants in the survey reflected the trends observed in market research. While two years ago MySpace led in the social networking space, Canadians have been early adopters of Facebook. In our survey 76% of the participants used Facebook weekly, while 6% use MySpace.

In today's world "Google" has become a common verb. Our survey participants confirmed that they use Google as their preferred search engine. In our group, 85% prefer to use Google as their search engine and 2% use Yahoo. All other search engines fell well below these percentages.

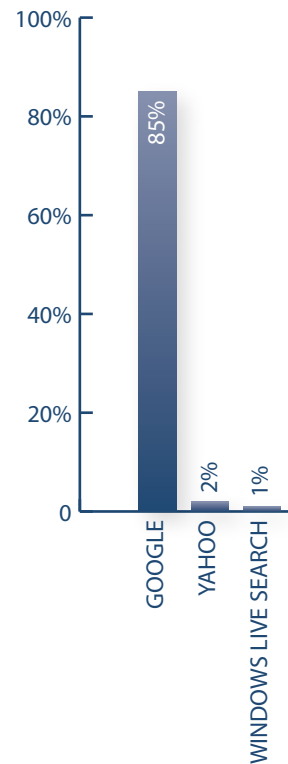
3. Relationships are important

Young People still prefer to hang out and talk person to person, but they integrate their communication tactics. Their home phone and Facebook are their second communication choices if they can't get together personally.

Email and text messaging are their third choice. MSN chat is gone – so if you are waiting to link with a teen through MSN, think again. You would be best to visit Facebook and check to see if they are available to chat.

Mail – the kind that comes in a physical envelope and requires a writing device to compose – is history. Over 40% say they never communicate through the mail. While only 1% say they never use Facebook. While 35%

SEARCH ENGINE
PREFERENCE



use text messaging, 43% say they rarely use it. Compare this to Facebook: only 23% say they rarely use it and 49% say they use it all the time.

I PREFER TO COMMUNICATE WITH FRIENDS THROUGH...

	NOT AT ALL	OCCASIONALLY	SOMETIMES	OFTEN	ALL THE TIME
CELL PHONE	23%	10%	17%	20%	18%
EMAIL	9%	18%	24%	24%	14%
FACE TO FACE	1%	1%	5%	18%	65%
FACEBOOK	14%	9%	17%	25%	24%
MSN	30%	14%	15%	15%	14%
MAIL	44%	23%	11%	6%	4%
PHONE	6%	12%	22%	30%	20%
TEXT MESSAGING	33%	10%	12%	15%	19%

B. YOUNG PEOPLE AND ENTERTAINMENT

Because we opened the survey to volunteer information, we experienced the diversity of young people's entertainment choices. They read magazines, watch TV, go to movies, read novels and play on the internet. We observed the influence of the popular and the influence of the boomers. We also saw significant trends. In almost every section, even though the participants could contribute their personal choice, the top five were clear leaders, representing 10 – 15% of the full group.

When comparing the survey participants' responses to media ratings, other secular surveys and data available about today's youth, we saw much alignment between the youth in Christian contexts with their peers in secular society.

The Office is an American comedy based on the BBC production. It first aired in March 2005. It's considered a mockumentary.

Grey's Anatomy first aired in 2005 and is a prime time medical drama. It captures the attention of the 18-25 year old crowd.

The Simpsons is celebrating its 20th year and will air its final show in May 2009. The animated series satirizes the middle class American family. Young people today are the third generation to be influenced by *The Simpsons*.

Friends is in re-runs. This group of 20-something friends has influenced young people since September 1994. With more than 63 Prime time Emmy's, *Friends* has influenced GenY in a variety of ways.

CSI first premiered in September 2000. The series has evolved into a franchise and now has a variety of location-based spin-offs. It's a prime time drama focused on forensic investigation.

One Tree Hill is in its 7th season. This show targets 12-15 year olds and assumes a lifestyle of sex, broken homes and peer influence. It's considered by many young people as a "real life" show. It's a teen focused drama.

1. Favourite TV

The top 6 shows our participants chose most often were:

- The Office
- Grey's Anatomy
- The Simpsons
- Friends
- CSI
- One Tree Hill

We might be coming to the end of the reality era. Only 15% of the participants said they favoured reality shows. *American Idol* continues to receive the highest ratings in its time slot, but *Canadian Idol* has been discontinued. *So you think you can dance?* is seasonal and captures the TV audience in the months it runs.

Drama and clever comedy captures their attention. Their TV choice illustrates the power of choice and the influence of long running series.

Now in its 20th season, *The Simpsons* (6.2 rating/15 share in adults 18-49, 12.5 million viewers overall) racked up the best demo score of the night. It fared even better, of course, in adults 18-34 (7.3/20) and teens (4.2/12). (*Nieslen*)

2. Favourite movies

The top movies for our participants were:

- The Dark Knight
- Lord of the Rings
- A walk to Remember
- Twilight
- Pirates of the Caribbean

The choices again reflect the influence of media and the popular. Sequels show a great deal of popularity. *The Dark Knight* was a classic comic book movie, most recently released in the Batman series. *Lord of the Rings* is a triad of fantasy adventures by J.R.R. Tolkien and has captured the attention of young and old. With the exception of *A Walk to Remember*, which is a classic "chick flick", the movies that are the top choices for young people are strongly oriented to the genre of fantasy.

The Dark Knight is the 2008 Batman superhero hit. (IMDb 9/10)

Lord of the Rings is a trio of action, fantasy, epic movies based on J.R.R. Tolkien's fantasy novels. (IMDb 8.8/10)

A Walk to Remember is a 2002 romantic drama based on a novel by Nicholas Sparks. The plot is based on a bad boy high school student who is forced to help disadvantaged children. (IMDb 7/10)

Twilight is this season's hit teen movie. Based on novels by Stephanie Meyers, this vampire story has captured the hearts of young people across North America (IMDb 6.1/10)

Pirates of the Caribbean this multimillion dollar production is the brain child of Disney and has entertained young people throughout North America since 2003. At the World's End was the third movie in the series. (IMDb 7/10)

IT IS THE BEST TV SHOW EVEEEEEEEEEERR!!!!!!

I'm 13-15 years old(i wont give my age) and i have been watching ONE TREE HILL since it started and i love it im litterally in love with it i never really thought it was not age appropriate although well this is what i think kids grow up earlier these days ... (Web opinion on One Tree Hill)

CSI grabbed the night's biggest audience at 9 p.m., scoring a 9.6/15. "Grey's Anatomy" was close behind at 9.4/15 and led the hour in adults 18-49. "Hell's Kitchen" came in third for FOX. "The Office," 4.4/7, and "30 Rock," 3.6/6, kept NBC in fourth. "Supernatural" drew a 1.8/3 for The CW. (May 1, 2009; Zap2it)

3. Authors

The most often mentioned authors by young people are:

- J.K. Rowling
- J.R.R. Tolkien
- C.S. Lewis
- Stephenie Meyer
- Ted Dekker
- Christopher Paolini
- Dan Brown

These choices illustrate the integration of different influences in the lives of young people. Rowling, the author of the *Harry Potter* series, and Stephenie Meyer, author of *Twilight*, were both quickly elevated to celebrity status when their books were made into movies. *The Lord of the Rings* series (Tolkien) was written in the late 1930's and early 1940's and the *Narnia* series (Lewis) was written in the 1950's. Both series were considered classic allegories in the Christian world and were popularized in recent years when they were made into movies.

Dan Brown's *The DaVinci Code* gained international popularity even before the movie and churches drove the popularity by using the book in sermons across North America. His book, *Angels and Demons*, was published in 2000 and the movie released in May 2009.

Christopher Paolini is a young writer who is firmly positioned in the genre of fantasy. One of his books, *Eragon*, has been made into a movie, but has not been well received. Ted Dekker is a little more main stream, but still aligns with the genre of adventure and fantasy. Dekker is available in Christian bookstores.

The most poignant observation from these choices is that each of these

authors writes about “other” worlds. Our current youth culture is intrigued by witches, demons and vampires.

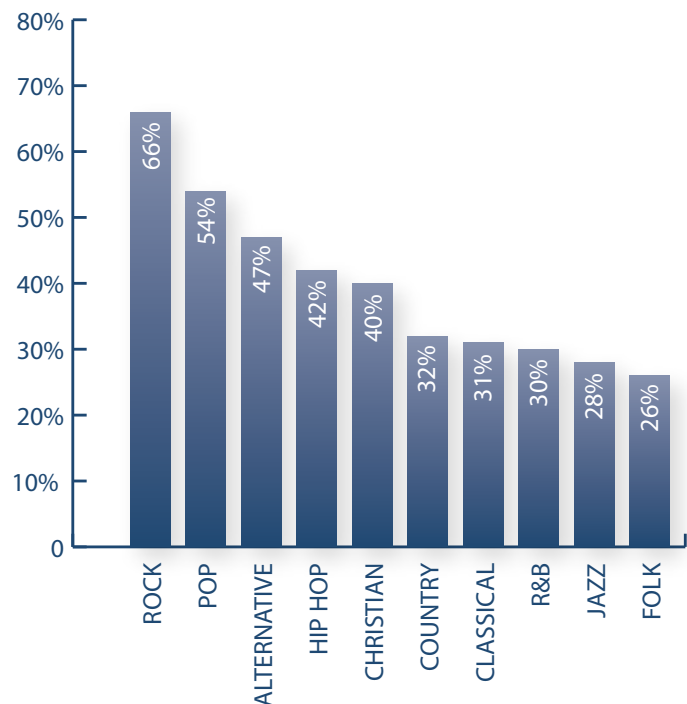
4. Musicians

Young people have eclectic taste in music.

We received 2,559 responses to the question, “What is your favourite band?” – 2,084 were unique entries. The top three genres are: Rock, Pop and Alternative. Teens included the Beatles, Sting, Rush, Rise Against, Hillsong, Reliant K, Rascal Flatts, Newsboys...

Standing out in the mix were ColdPlay, an alternative rock band from England and Taylor Swift, an American Country star who crosses over into the pop environment.

YOUNG PEOPLE’S MUSIC TASTES...
ECLECTIC



52% of teens said they listened to online radio in 2008, up from 34% from 2007. Almost half of teens, 46%, used social-networking sites to download or stream music, an increase from 26 percent in 2007.. Free music services like Pandora, iMeem and MySpace let users stream music instead of downloading it to their hard-drive. Fifty-four percent of teens who heard a song they liked on MySpace were likely to return to the site to hear the track again, compared with 1% who said they bought it through Amazon.com Inc., the digital music seller for MySpace. *(Bloomberg.com)*

"TURN IT OFF... I hate country music!"



Country music is inching up on the scale of popularity in young people's lives. Most of this is due to the cross over of country artists and the number of pop music radio stations playing country music. As our stats show, only 32% like "country music," but Taylor Swift, a country musician, was one of the two musicians/bands mentioned more than 70 times by name.

Interestingly, radio is seeing a revival. Most radio stations are streamed live online – making radio very accessible and free.

5. Magazines

While most survey participants told us that they do not read magazines, their favourite magazines are: *Seventeen*, *People*, *Sports Illustrated*, *Cosmopolitan* and *National Geographic*.

When we asked what their favourite "e-zines" were, the majority of participants didn't know what an e-zine was.

C. INFORMATION AND INFLUENCE

1. Where do young people look for information?

The web is the overwhelming winner for young people. Interestingly, they didn't even consider books, encyclopaedias or textbooks an option for information. Although 34% of the young people interviewed would go to the library if they needed information.

They will look to their friends, parents and teachers, but not to their coach or pastor.

I FIND MY INFORMATION USING...

	NOT AT ALL	OCCASIONALLY	SOMETIMES	OFTEN	ALL THE TIME
BOOKS	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%
COACH	49%	16%	13%	7%	2%
ENCYCLOPAEDIA	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
FAMILY	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
FRIENDS	2%	10%	25%	36%	17%
LIBRARY	16%	19%	21%	21%	13%
MAGAZINES	35%	30%	17%	5%	2%
PARENTS	5%	13%	25%	31%	15%
PASTOR	38%	23%	18%	8%	2%
TEACHER	11%	18%	29%	25%	7%
TEXTBOOK	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
WEB	1%	1%	7%	3%	56%

2. Purchase decisions

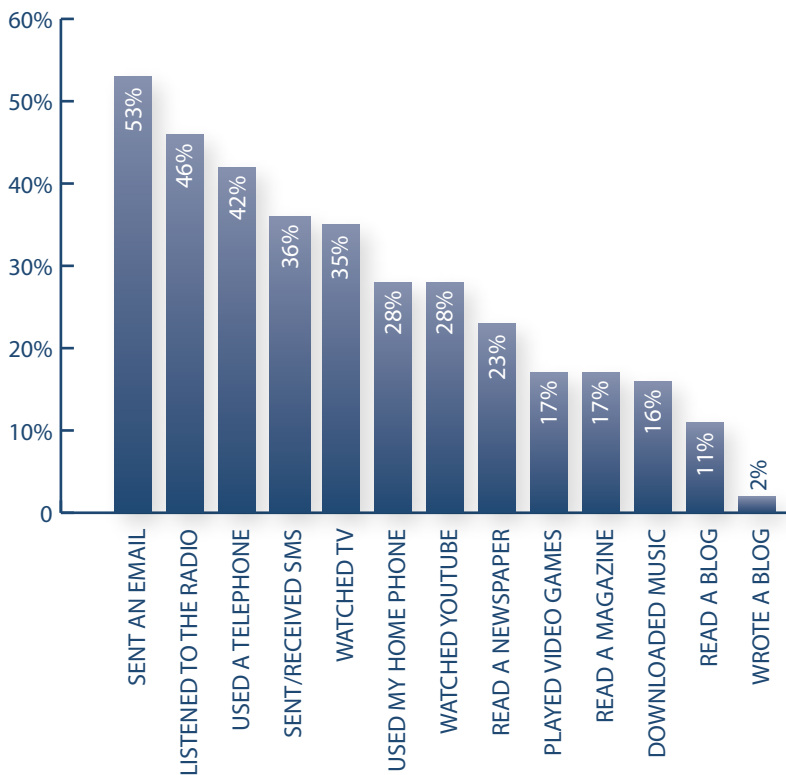
The top three purchases made by young people are: clothing, food and books. They are most highly influenced by their friends, although they respect their parents' opinions. TV influences them, but they don't feel influenced by radio or web advertising. They feel equally influenced by their teacher and pastor, but not highly influenced. Their own faith and values are considered when they make a purchase.



WHEN I MAKE A PURCHASE, I AM INFLUENCED BY...

	NOT AT ALL	A LITTLE	AVERAGE	INFLUENCED	VERY INFLUENCED
COACH	47%	16%	7%	6%	0%
FAITH	19%	14%	17%	20%	13%
FRIEND'S OPINION	2%	4%	16%	36%	26%
MAGAZINE ADS	32%	23%	18%	9%	2%
PARENTS	7%	11%	21%	29%	11%
PASTOR	32%	18%	17%	12%	4%
RADIO ADS	44%	25%	12%	2%	1%
TV ADS	21%	22%	22%	14%	4%
TEACHERS	29%	20%	20%	12%	3%
WEB ADS	39%	23%	13%	0%	0%

IN THE PAST 24 HOURS
I HAVE...



3. Communication channels

The local paper is the most frequently read. 40% of participants indicated that they had read their local paper in the past 30 days. 15% have read their denominational paper. *McLean's*, *Sports Illustrated*, *People*, *Globe and Mail* and the churches' web site were sought out by 12% of those who participated in the survey.



Email is the most frequently used form of communication. More than 50% said they sent an email today. This is 17% higher than those who used SMS. 46% listened to the radio and 35% watched TV the day they completed the survey. Television may be lower because some of the students would have completed the survey in class and did not watch TV in the morning. 70% of the participants used a phone. A cell phone was used 14% more than a landline.

4. Life influencers

Young people respect and are influenced by their parents. More than 43% said they were very influenced by their parents. 67% said that they were influenced or very influenced by their parents. Friends are also a powerful influencer: 67% indicated that they were influenced by friends, but when asked if they were very influenced by friends, the percentage dropped to 35%. Siblings were also high influencers at 44%. 30% said their boyfriend or girlfriend influenced them. This lower percentage may be due to the prevalence of teens in our survey.

Teachers and pastors were seen to influence, but not highly.

PEOPLE WHO INFLUENCE MY LIFE...

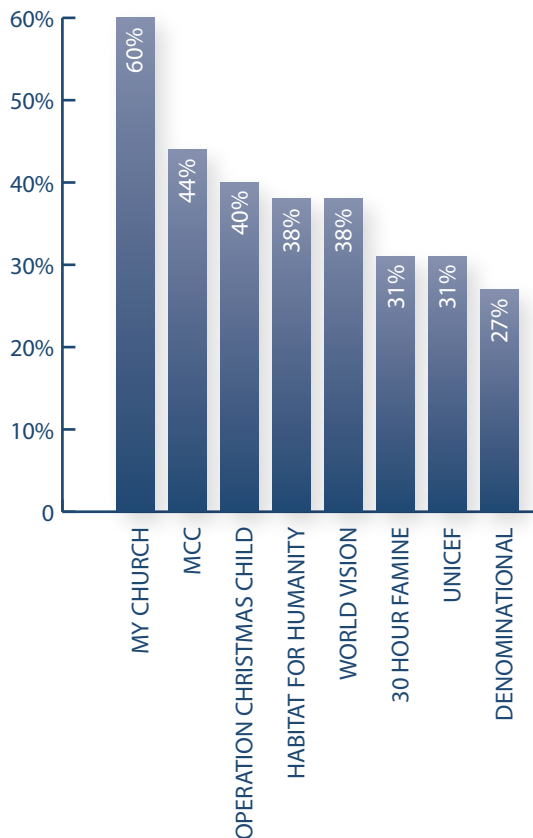
	NOT AT ALL	A LITTLE	AVERAGE	INFLUENCED	VERY INFLUENCED
BOYFRIEND/GIRLFRIEND	33%	4%	11%	14%	16%
SIBLING	9%	10%	19%	24%	20%
COACH	44%	13%	13%	8%	2%
FRIEND	1%	2%	11%	32%	35%
GRANDPARENT	13%	16%	22%	18%	12%
PARENT	2%	4%	10%	24%	43%
PASTOR	19%	14%	23%	19%	7%
TEACHERS	12%	18%	30%	17%	4%

D. I AM CONCERNED ABOUT THE WORLD

We included several questions in the survey about the compassionate lives of teens and young people.

Participants were generous with their feedback and provided these insights:

THE TOP ORGANIZATIONS
THAT THEY WOULD GIVE TO



"How liberals have flushed society down the toilet"

"Everyone's need to be stylish/fashionable."

"The need to be accepted at any cost, even to the detriment of their health"

"Constant appearance of drugs in my community."

"Grey Cup & World Hunger"

"Homosexuality and how the church approaches it."

"The almost infinite gap between the rich and the poor and how much the rich get and how little the poor get."

"Children who move to Canada and are trying to adapt after having gone thru a war."

"Wow. Not sure I can pick just one...."

One thing that really concerns me is the general apathy/mind-set of careless consumerism that many youth have, and that is why I am very interested in peace education."

Clearly the top 5 issues that concern young people are:

- Poverty
- The environment
- Global warming
- The economy
- War

They will give their money to a charity or non-profit.

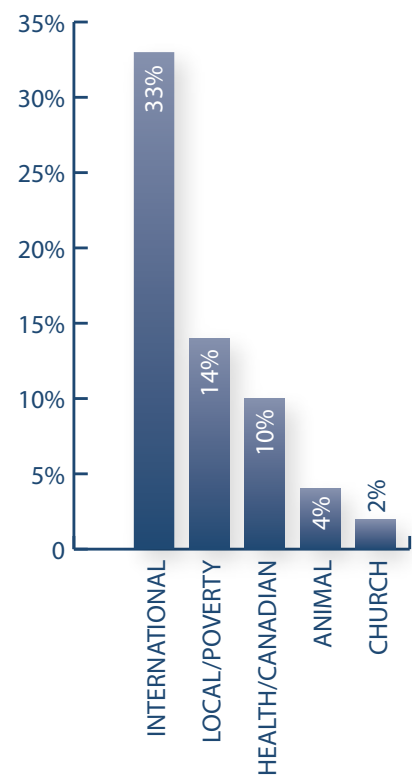
Their favourite Charities include (the top of the list were most mentioned):

- MCC
- World Vision
- Compassion

We purposely asked what type of organizations they would be most interested in. While 60% give to their church, only 2% considered the church as one of their favourite organizations. International organizations have a firm grip on the top of their list and were the only 3 organizations to be identified by more than 3% of the survey.

Overall, issues of poverty were the most motivated for the participants with health coming in second.

ORGANIZATIONS
MOST INTERESTED IN



E. EDUCATIONAL ISSUES

The participants were in post-secondary school and high school with a 12% higher participation rate from high school students. 50-60% participated in extra-curricular events, youth and church events and sports teams. Participants who were currently attending post-secondary school heard about the school they were attending through their family or friends. Their church, their high school and the web also played a large part in contributing to their decision in the school they chose.

TO RESEARCH MY UNIVERSITY/COLLEGE OF CHOICE I USED...

	NOT AT ALL	OCCASIONALLY	SOMETIMES	OFTEN	ALL THE TIME
CAMPUS TOUR	19%	13%	21%	28%	18%
EVENTS	31%	20%	24%	17%	7%
GUIDANCE COUNSELLOR	23%	12%	20%	23%	21%
INTERNET	8%	5%	13%	26%	49%
MACLEAN'S	53%	16%	13%	11%	5%
PARENTS	8%	7%	17%	29%	39%
FRIENDS	6%	9%	22%	35%	28%
TEACHERS	19%	14%	25%	27%	14%

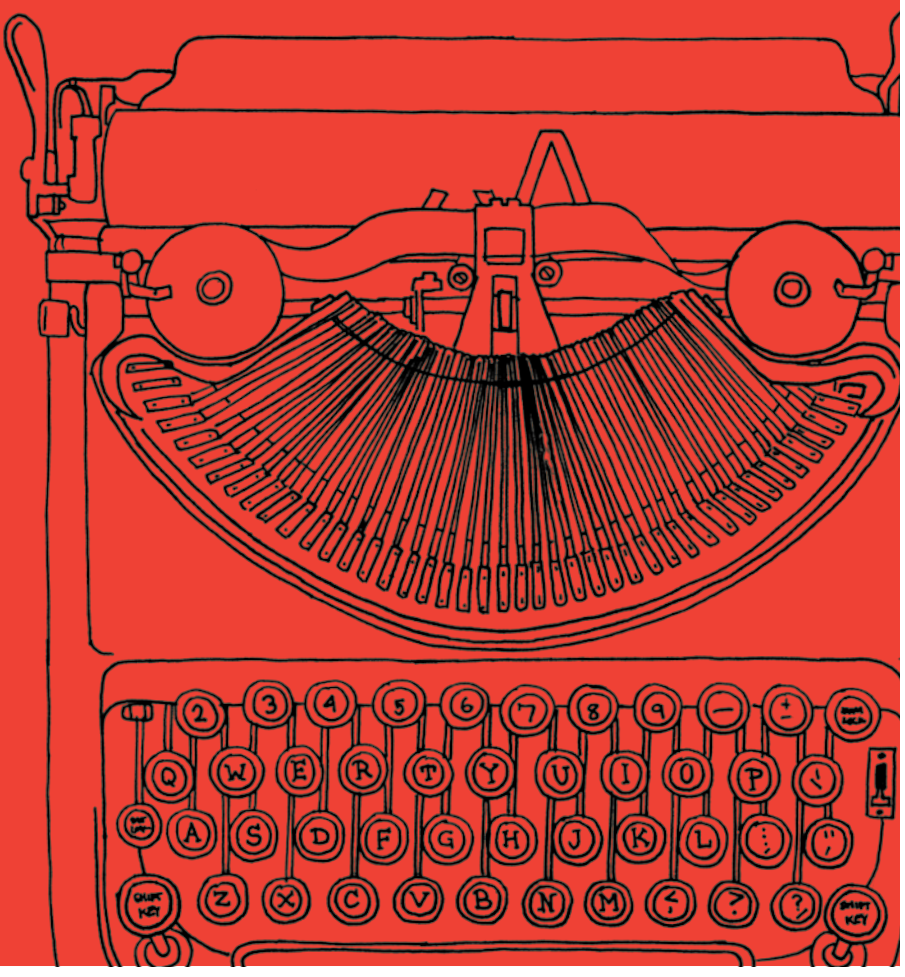
As you can see from the chart, the internet is the most often used research tool used in finding a post-secondary educational institute. Parents and friends are also very influential. A campus tour, guidance counsellors and teachers also influence their decision. Magazine reports seem to have little impact. Events are seen to have little impact, however about 6% of the participants attributed a university/college speaker as their key influence.

Most students search for universities and colleges by using a Google search (52%). Only 11% said they went directly to a school's site.

When choosing a university or college, the program choice is by far the most important consideration (89% consider this important). Academic standards are high in the considerations (63%). Proximity to home and the tradition of parents plays very little into their choice of post-secondary education.

WHEN CHOOSING A COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY I CONSIDER...

	NOT IMPORTANT	SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT	I CONSIDERED IT	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT
ACADEMIC STANDARDS	7%	7%	22%	34%	28%
CLOSE TO HOME	40%	15%	16%	0%	13%
ALIGNS WITH MY FAITH	21%	15%	21%	22%	18%
MY FRIENDS ARE THERE	27%	21%	23%	17%	10%
MY PARENTS WILL PAY	37%	14%	18%	14%	14%
PARENTS WENT THERE	68%	14%	9%	3%	2%
PROGRAM I WANT	2%	2%	6%	26%	63%
CLOSE TO HOME	24%	17%	23%	19%	14%



SECTION 3 REFLECTIONS

HOW SAVVY ARE YOUNG PEOPLE IN DIGITAL COMMUNICATION?

Teens are less savvy than adults when it comes to their knowledge and exploration of the internet. The participants in our survey are not actively listening to blogs, writing blogs or listening to podcasts. Their primary activities on the internet are social and research.

This concurs with an Ipsos survey done in Canada. Ipsos found:

- Teens' computer time was mandated by parents. The number of hours per week went up as young people graduated from high school. Young people did not see the internet as important in their day.
- Older young people, aged 18-21, are much more active on the internet and use it to keep in touch with people, chatting and browsing social networking sites.
- Teens use the internet as entertainment: they download music, watch videos, play games.

Interestingly, only 28% of teens surveyed by Ipsos considered themselves skilled or experts in using the internet. 48% rated themselves as fairly skilled and 24% admitted to not being skilled at all.

Observations:

The internet is as everyday to today's young people as television, radio and newspapers, but they are not savvy users of it. Only the youth extremely interested in technology use it beyond everyday use. Teens, few having credit cards, are much less likely to make purchases online. They are however willing to do surveys.

When marketing or advertising to teens, use your mediums well. Teens largely use the internet for social interaction. They expect the internet to be interactive. They anticipate that they will provide some of the content they engage with.

Young people are anxious to absorb information. The internet is a medium they control. If they are bored, another page is just a click away. They read in short, sixty second blurbs. Barefoot Creative calls this "Sesame Street" reading. They are fast paced, short attentioned and focused on personal needs.

When using the internet to communicate with young people, provide features that are interactive, allowing young people to contribute content. Keep the posted information short and meaningful. Include as many interesting entry points as possible. Your site, to engage young people, should be slightly cluttered.

YOUNG PEOPLE CHOOSE COMMUNICATION TOOLS FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES

Young people, while using many different forms of communication, use specific formats for specific reasons. Google is a primary search tool – they go there first to find resources for information. Facebook is a place they engage with friends. They ignore advertising on it. They are more likely to be influenced by an ad on TV than on the internet. Young people avoid pop-ups and, while they read ads, they don't click on them.

Observations

Invest in Search Engine Optimization (SEO) and Search Engine Marketing (SEM). While there are multiple search engines available, Google is the search engine of choice. Maximize your investment with Google. SEO is increased by rich and meaningful content on your web site. This content is picked up by search engines. Using words that are commonly used in searches for your site is critical. By using simple tools like Google Analytics you are able to track the search words most commonly used for your site.

When developing content for your site, make sure the content on the home page and subsequent pages is rich with searchable words and phrases. Content groups should include at least 225 words – this helps to optimize the searchability of your site.

SEM (Search Engine Marketing) is usually pay-by-click. The most important thing to remember is to purchase key words that are targeted and meaningful to your audience. Don't try to lure browsers to your site by using clever words that only partially give the message. This frustrates users and will damage your reputation.

Track activity well. Simple, cost effective tools like Google Analytics are extremely helpful as you study the activity on your web site.

SEO (Search Engine Optimization):

the process of designing your web site to increase the traffic to it. The overall goal of SEO is to have your site come up first in logic searches.

SEM (Search Engine Marketing):

using paid advertising to promote your site.

CHOOSING CHANNELS

Every communication expert faces the same challenge: the best and most effective way to reach the audience. While young people told us that they don't read magazines, newspapers, books or look to events to learn about things, they are listening for the information they want.

Your job is to understand what kind of information they are looking for.

When we understand their interests, we are better equipped to place communication materials in the right places. Young people tell us that they are concerned about key issues like poverty, the environment and war. But when we analyse their reading and entertainment habits, we see that their focus is on entertainment. They watch network television. Their favourite shows are the favourites across North America. They read popular magazines: *Seventeen*, *People*, *Sports Illustrated*, *Cosmopolitan* and *National Geographic*. They listen to mainstream radio and, while the music they listen to is diverse, they show strong trends to the popular.

Observations:

Unlike mass brands like Converse, Dove and Ford, many organizations have a distinct audience. When building your marketing strategy, set acquisition goals that are reachable and targeted. Know your specific audience. Understand the magazines they read, the radio stations they listen to, the messages they are looking for. Perhaps your message should only be delivered through events or face-to-face encounters. Perhaps TV is a perfect medium for your message.

Take care when accepting free media (radio spots, insert placements, TV spots, PSA's). While acknowledging the generosity of the patron extending the service, the media choice may not be the right place for your message. While the placement may be without cost, creating the content for the placement is costly.

This fall Nissan launched a new line. They did it entirely through social media and web. The reviews were filled with lines like: "Nissan launches new line with no cost." But when pushed, they disclosed the cost for the production of the content was hundreds of thousands of dollars. Yes, they saved a lot of money by using cost effective placement – but there was significant cost to the creation of the ads used.

Message carefully, understanding your audience's needs, motivations and touch points. Take care not to create communication material for public consumption that is targeted to your boards, program officers or professors – unless, of course, they are your core audience.

EARLY ADOPTION OF MEDIA

One of the biggest challenges faced by non-profits today is keeping up with the many social media sites. We have all experienced the success of viral marketing – if only by hearsay. Susan Boyle's video from Britain's got Talent received over 3 million hits within 8 hours of her live performance. Within 24 hours it had become a news item on TV networks, radio and newspapers.

Similarly Taylor Swift and ColdPlay, our participants' favourite bands, have both recently released albums. It took no time at all for fans to find their videos on YouTube and share the newest post with friends – both artist's videos have had more than 3 million viewers.

How can we experience this kind of leverage?

Perhaps that's not the right question to ask. Perhaps we need to be asking if that's the kind of leverage we want and how effective that media attention is to fulfill our communication goals.

MySpace, Facebook, Twitter and other social media spaces are relatively new. There is an urgency among communicators to be early adopters. The challenge is relegating the time to keep up with the trends, the technology and the content needed to keep your messaging engaging.

Most importantly, you need to determine your priorities.

Your web site is absolutely critical. Google is the primary choice for young people when they begin their research. Making it engaging, creative and relevant is very important. Developing content that motivates young people back to your site is very important. This is difficult, as our research shows that they tend to have a few favourite sites and they keep going back to them.

According to a recent US survey, **Facebook** remains the most popular social networking site among non-profits, with 74% of those surveyed using the site. Most organizations have not been involved in the social networking scene for too long, with 94% having used Facebook for less than two years, and 93% having used **Twitter** for less than one year. Eighty percent of the non-profits using social networking sites are devoting at least one-quarter of a full-time position to social networking. However, only 39% had successfully raised money through Facebook, with 29% raising less than \$500 in the past 12 months. *Nonprofit Social Networking Survey Report (Charity Village)*

Recruitment and fund raising are different entities. While some of the media you use may overlap, track effectiveness in order to maximize the effectiveness of your investment.

Observations:

Facebook and Twitter – the two most talked about sites – are still in their development phases. Both are cluttered, unsorted and noisy. For instance, we researched a faith-based educational institution and found more than 250 Facebook “fan” clubs for them. The alumni group attempted to sort through them, but it is very difficult to do.

Facebook’s primary purpose is to keep building a social network. While many youth participate, its current growth demographic is 35+ – mothers who want to

keep up with friends but are too busy to see them or live too far away. As parents and adults invade what was primarily a young person's domain, they simply create a different space. Twitter is still young – though it first went live in 2006, its popularity has really only grown in the past year.

Neither social media forums have been established as effective for results. Our observation is that Facebook has excellent possibilities for recruitment and general messaging. We have seen some success with fund raising for highly publicized emergencies. But on the whole, it has not been an effective fund raising tool.

Twitter is an interesting product, but still not widely used. Canadian mobile services are not as pro-active as European and US services: data costs are high in comparison and a protocol of payment through mobile payment is only beginning. Until giving to your favourite charity becomes as easy on your mobile device as buying iTunes, Twitter will not be an effective fund raising tool. But it is a good tool for communicating quick messages to your audience.

According to Comscore, **the majority of Twitter users worldwide are 35 or older.** Young adults 18-24 only make up 10.6% of the Twitter population in the US and are less likely than the average user to tweet. 45-54 year-olds are actually 36 percent more likely than average to visit Twitter.

Choose carefully when engaging in social media. To be effective, you need to have meaningful content that is updated daily. Blogs, Twitter, Facebook... it can become burdensome.



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236 Victoria Street N, Unit 3A, Kitchener, Ontario N2H 5C8

tel 519.571.5058 toll free 1.877.571.5058

www.barefootcreative.com

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