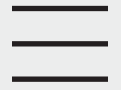




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Photo by Lily Schweitzer



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Story by Laura Sackie

Design by: Kiara Gross

Social media has had its fair share of negatives, leading to the idea that there is a correct and incorrect way of using it. Since its introduction, the media has been prominent in the lives of many with teenagers as its number one audience. But as time goes by, people are beginning to doubt whether or not it's being used in an appropriate manner.

So is there a right or wrong way of using social media? The answer is no. According to an article entitled "The relationship between internet usage, socioeconomic status, subjective health, and social status", "the media provides users with a wide range of benefits and shortcomings, many of which the users are aware of; but all use it

to fulfill certain goals.” Our cultural, economic, and social surroundings affect our social media usage. Many other factors, including accessibility, can also influence the patterns of social media consumption. The sole purpose of social media lies within the individuals themselves, therefore there is no exact reason for using it.

This is seen within Atherton High School in Louisville, Kentucky. Atherton is a great representation of what the United States is today. Different ethnic, racial, social, and religious groups gather together in this little learning community. Although we are all one, we come from different backgrounds, with different values and responsibilities. This shapes our thoughts and ideas in various ways. Therefore, the extent to which social media and its platforms are used are shaped by our surrounding circumstances.

Cultural factors play major roles in social media consumption. People tend to use the media as a way to express their values and interest in a particular hobby. Grace Wiley, a Junior, uses the media “To get her art and ideas out.”

Inspired by fanarts, Miss Wiley created a Youtube channel called Grace’sFaces7, where she posts video edits of songs and TV series like Supernatural. Miss Wiley believes that “people are realizing their ambitions and goals via the internet, because social media gives young people an opportunity to work on whatever craft they find interesting.”

Social media consumption can be influenced by social factors as kids create and develop personal relationships with friends. In this day and age, calling people is far less

common, as students would rather text through Snapchat or Instagram, than call a friend. It’s an easier route to take and if you can’t keep up, you exist in a sort of oblivion. Gabriella Farris, a Senior mentioned “There is a young aspect to using social media. Your generation is basically using it as a means of communication. You don’t want to be left out.” Miss Farris also claimed that, “If no one used it, I wouldn’t use it.” This is evidence of social factors being influential to media usage, as kids feel obliged to follow this generational trend to be a part of the “the now.” Alix Harris, a Senior said “With this new medium of contact, students are able to see what others are up to. You learn if you have other interests through your friends”

This form of communication doesn’t only involve connecting with people you know. It serves as a form of meeting new people and interacting with different cultural and traditional backgrounds.

Hannah Schagene, a Senior, likes “seeing what the people she looks up to are doing.” Therefore using the media to form a connection with her role models.

Social factors can be interpreted

in other ways. Zoë Peterson, a Senior points out that “it also influ-

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“I use the media to form connections with my role models” -Hannah Schagene

ences media usage on a need-want basis.” Others use the media as a means of connecting with clients, because their careers require them to do so. As a teacher and the vice president of the teachers union, Mrs Tammy Berlin uses social media “For activism, community organizing, advocacy, and political purposes. My social media use is related to the fact that I’m a teacher and I care about kids.” Because of the position she holds in society, Mrs Berlin uses the media as a platform for her job. It provides an opportunity for her work to be viewed by many, therefore reaching out to a wider audience. Mr David X. Thurmond, a substitute teacher for JCPS, uses linkedin for professional purposes. He owns a consulting business called Developing Xcellence Together, and uses the media to make connections with customers. Mr Thurmond pointed out that “A lot of people make their living in branding and advertising and if social platforms are not used, they’re basically down to the wire.” He mentioned Mr Chuck Brymer, the CEO of DDB Worldwide, which is one of the top advertising and marketing companies in the world. Mr Thurmond said, “Mr Brymer is one of the top branding guys in the world through a skillful use of

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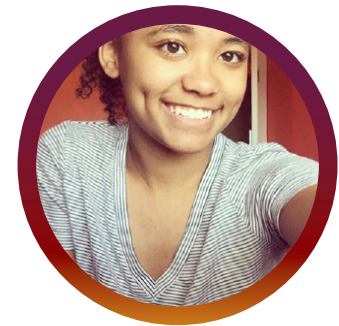
“Our cultural, economic, and social surroundings affect our social media usage.”



Hannah Schagene is a senior at Atherton High School.



Gabriella Farris is a senior at Atherton High School.



Alix Harris is a senior at Atherton High School.

social media.” Mr Brymer heavily depends on the media for networking, therefore he mostly has to use it in such likeness.

Overall, the use of social media is primarily an age thing. The differences in the ways teenagers compared to adults use the media are a result of the gap between ages. According to Target Internet, “Younger users are more interested in identity forming activities, like posting selfies.” On the contrast, most adults use social media for professional, political purposes, or for looking up the news.

Age differences don’t only affect

social media consumption, but also the types of media platforms used.



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Sites like Facebook or LinkedIn are predominantly used by older audiences, while the number one

social networking site for teens and young adults, are Snapchat and Instagram.

With such variations in ideas and even beliefs, it’s almost impossible for media usage to be the same for all. There are so many influential factors other than social and cultural that change our choices. For some, social media has become an integral part of their worlds, as while others are vice versa. Saying there’s a right or wrong way isn’t really the case.

We just need to be more open to the paths we all choose to take.

