Generation Like Review

Adam Stammer

Generation Like is documentary focusing on the effects of social media on today's younger generation, specifically from a social and corporate point of view. It explains the socioeconomics of social media: likes, retweets, comments, etc. and how they are the appraisal of corporate sponsorships and the fuel for social life on the internet. This is what drives so many people to consume the media of others, and to spend far too much time creating it themselves, with no other purpose than social acceptance.

I want to get one thing out of the way right away. I firmly believe that technology and scientific advancement is a net good thing. I look back to my grandparents, who never traveled more than three midwestern states, and found the rare person from the coast an oddity. I look to my parents who grew up in an era where ham radio was the closest many people got to meeting strangers from strange lands. My father used to talk to people all over the world through his radio, but only after years of study and tinkering, with extreme effort, and only when the astrological conditions were proper for radio propagation. And then I look at myself. With a few strokes of a keyboard I can talk to people from anywhere in the world, do almost anything with them. It doesn't take me hours of time and cooperative weather just to talk to someone in Canada. I can sit down and start playing a video game, or go on social media, and share more than just words with someone on the opposite side of the worlds in mere moments. Technology has shrunk the world in ways that once seemed impossible, and to me that is a good thing. I wouldn't be studying computer science otherwise.

That said there is much to be argued against the direction social media is taking society. Many people are spending more time on their phones consuming media of people they've never met than they spend talking with their friends and family. Creators are spending a lot of time and money to do things that in any other context would be simply idiotic. And perhaps the most destructive, corporations are throwing capitalism into the mix and using social media as a new hunting grounds for consumers.

Nowadays you can't surf the web without seeing an advertisement for one thing or another every few minutes. On social media it seems to only be seconds, and it's often under the guise of cultural appropriation that only increases the consumption rate. One could argue that people are the most vulnerable on social media and companies are certainly taking advantage of it. This only serves to emphasize the consumer culture of younger generations. Fashions and fads are being perpetuated by companies and content creators, drawn up in the various currencies of the internet just scream along with them. People are more and more driven to consume and to conform for no purpose other than social acceptance.

The social drive to conform though is another snake in its own right. Nearly everyone past the millennial generation has a strong presence on social medias. The peer pressure to join in is simply too strong. Personally I avoided it until quite recently. All the way through high school I had no social media presence. I didn't see the point. My friends were only casual consumers so I didn't see the pressures that many of my peers did. But now I have a new set of friends and it seems that half of the things they talk about are social media happenings that I wasn't a part of and so I finally caved in a joined a few. And what I found wasn't necessarily surprising, but that doesn't make it any less upsetting.

Our social media face is very rarely even close to what our true selves are. When you have the time to think about what you're going to post, and how people are going to react to it, you change what you would otherwise do. To me it seems a sense of Dramaturgy and Looking Glass Self because we base everything we do on social media by what people expect and how we think they will react to something and we change how we act to suit it. We say one thing to fit this preconceived conception and we just hope nobody calls us out on it. It's like playing a character that you're pretty sure everyone else will love. It seems rather unhealthy to me.

Today's society is certainly shifting towards a stronger role on the internet society. It's leading to a much more prevalent corporate presence and making many people pretend to be people they aren't. We are already seeing many chronic mental conditions like depression increase among younger generations and this may very well have something to do with the role social media takes in their lives. Technology is without a doubt a good thing, but social implications are creating problems that we as a society need to face, the sooner the better.