

# With friends like these...

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A screengrab of Barack Obama's typical Facebook fan from LikeAudience. Credit: [www.likeaudience.com](http://www.likeaudience.com)

(PhysOrg.com) -- Cambridge researchers have created a website that combines the Facebook profiles of fans of companies and public figures with personality testing to create what they are describing as a “revolutionary” new marketing tool.

What do Barack Obama, Adam Sandler, and the animated comedy Family Guy all have in common? How about David Cameron, Eva Mendes, and the former Ultimate Fighting Champion, Chuck Liddell? And what links Shrek, McDonalds, and David Beckham?

The answer is that each group attracts the same type of personality on Facebook – at least, according to a newly-launched website, [www.likeaudience.com](http://www.likeaudience.com) , which has been designed by two researchers at the University of Cambridge who believe that it could “revolutionise” marketing.

Unlike other online marketing tools, LikeAudience combines the information people share about themselves on Facebook with data about their personalities gathered from the same profiling tests used in psychological research. It then tracks what these people have chosen to “like” on the social networking site – the Facebook user’s stamp of general approval.

For the first time, it means that companies, politicians, celebrities and anyone else with a Facebook presence can investigate not just how many people “like” them – they can also draw up a detailed profile that includes information about their average follower’s personality, IQ and satisfaction with life. Other data such as the gender balance and average age of their fanbase is also made available.

In addition, users can examine what people with similar [profiles](#) also like on Facebook. For example, a quick search for Barack Obama reveals that his typical fan is middle-aged, relatively happy with life and a relaxed, steady-going individual. Similar people tend to be fans of Adam Sandler, Bob Marley, Family Guy and the Angelina Jolie action thriller, Salt.

Not surprisingly, Sarah Palin appeals to a rather different personality type. Her followers are likely to be more traditional in mindset, disciplined, dutiful, and older than the average Obama fan. Perhaps less predictably, her typical Facebook followers are not hockey-mums, but men. People with similar profiles still track the fortunes of the last President, George W. Bush, and also enthuse about Pizza Hut and the

Seattle Seahawks. More sample profiles are shown in the panel below.

The site was created by Michal Kosinski and David Stillwell, both researchers at the University of Cambridge's Psychometrics Centre. So far they have aggregated the data from about 170,000 participants, which means that they have been able to process about 36,000,000 individual "likes" in all.

"What people like, follow or recommend to their friends is related to their personality, intelligence and other psychological factors," Kosinski said. "This means that we can accurately estimate the average personality type that constitutes a typical fan of a person, company or thing."

"Never before have we had access to such comprehensive behavioural data about consumers. We think this will revolutionise marketing, because it introduces a completely new dimension by adding scientifically robust personality tests to other demographic information."

LikeAudience profiles are based on personality and demographic data gathered from the Facebook app, MyPersonality, which was also created by Kosinski and Stillwell. This app, which has had more than 5.5 million respondents, invites users to take a genuine personality assessment, and builds up a psychological profile based on standard questionnaires used by research scientists.

Each individual is assessed according to the standard "Big Five" personality traits used by psychologists and other researchers. These are: Openness (liberal vs. traditional); Conscientiousness (flexible vs. organised); Extraversion (introverted vs. outgoing); Agreeableness (competitive vs. co-operative); and Stability (stressed vs. relaxed). Each personality profile is an expression of where the person is ranked on each of these five scales.

Other apps, such as an IQ test, have also been added. All of this data is then combined with the participant's Facebook profile information – such as their age, hometown, and relationship status.

The information is only used for LikeAudience if the respondents agree to it when they use the app. It is also completely anonymous and cannot be linked back to the participant. A sample entry, for instance, might read: “Female, 34 years old, extraversion 4.5, openness 3.5, likes Lady GaGa”. Individuals are never identified to ensure privacy.

LikeAudience's creators believe that it will be of particular value to marketers, who will be able to uncover new potential audiences for their advertising campaigns, and exploitable niches based on the fans of their closest rivals. The potential significance for politicians, particularly when on the election trail, is also clear – although it can throw up some interesting results.

In Britain, for example, Ed Milliband struggles to shake off his “Red Ed” tag by attracting the same sort of people who like Karl Marx and the Manic Street Preachers. Lib Dem leader Nick Clegg, by contrast, has much in common with fans of the 90s comedy show *Bottom*, the violent computer game *Grand Theft Auto* and Eric Cartman from *South Park*.

But perhaps the biggest shock is the Prime Minister himself. David Cameron's fans are highly organised, traditionally-minded and very competitive. Similar people follow the former American Ultimate Fighting Champion, Chuck Liddell, the actress and model, Eva Mendes, and G-Unit – the hip-hop group formed by rapper 50 Cent.

## **10 profiles from LikeAudience**

### **1. Barack Obama**

Who likes him? Typical fans are secure, confident and balanced personalities, with liberal leanings and a reasonably high sense of duty. They exhibit considerable life satisfaction and are, on average, middle aged.

What do they like? Similar personality types like Reggae and Bob Marley, the show Family Guy, comic actor Adam Sandler and Salt, the action-thriller featuring Angelina Jolie.

## **2. Sarah Palin**

Who likes her? People with a strong sense of tradition, and in particular people who like order, structure and self-discipline. Palin appeals to older people with high life satisfaction and, for a self-confessed “hockey mom”, her Facebook fanbase has a male bias.

What do they like? Former US President George W. Bush, the patriotic “United States of America Fan Page”, Pizza Hut and the Seattle Seahawks.

## **3. David Cameron**

Who likes him? Cam fans lean towards tradition and conventional interests. Their most striking trait is low agreeableness – suggesting that they are competitive, not particularly concerned with the wellbeing of others, and place self-interest before co-operation. Cameron’s Facebook fanbase also has a very strong male bias.

What do they like? Former Ultimate Fighting Champion, Chuck Liddell; the actress and model, Eva Mendes; Romanian techno act “Akcent”, hip-hop collective G-Unit, the Audi R-8, and the dubiously-titled Facebook Group: “Wrestling isn’t gay, you are just a pussy”.

## **4. Ed Miliband**

Who likes him? Miliband's Facebook followers are high on openness, suggesting imagination, creativity, and a sense of adventure. However, they aren't big on socialising and may also be vulnerable to stress.

What do they like? The Guardian newspaper, socio-political theorist Karl Marx, left-wing 90's rock icons the Manic Street Preachers, and the rather defeatist-sounding Facebook group: "Republicans are Idiots and arguing with them is a waste of time."

## **5. Nick Clegg**

Who likes him? Like Cameron, Clegg followers exhibit low agreeableness, meaning that they may have a tendency to think of themselves before others. They also have low conscientiousness, meaning that they are potentially messy and disorganised, and dislike order. Few of them are in relationships. Clegg fans are also from a wide range of age groups.

What do they like? Bottom, the 90s comedy with Rik Mayall and Ade Edmondson; Corey Taylor, the lead vocalist from Slipknot; Eric Cartman from South Park, Grand Theft Auto, and the Facebook fan group "I Hate Big Brother". Which suggests that they don't really like Big Brother.

## **6. McDonald's**

Who likes it? Balanced personalities, whose most distinctive feature is a significantly low IQ, are – ahem – "lovin' it".

What do they like? Similar types like the chocolate bar Snickers; the big,

green, friendly ogre Shrek, footballer David Beckham and the Facebook club “Not smoking pot”.

## **7. Innocent drinks**

Who likes them? The healthy smoothie manufacturers appear to have a Facebook fanbase who are typically quiet, reserved and have little to say around strangers, and who exhibit low stability – meaning that they may often worry about things and experience mood swings.

What do they like? An array of Facebook groups and apps, including “Stop Animal Cruelty”, “Send the teens who murdered a cat/kitten in a microwave to jail” and “Super Poke Pets!” (home to the cutest virtual pets on Facebook, apparently).

## **8. Jennifer Lopez**

Who likes her? The average fan leans towards traditional tastes and has high conscientiousness – making them ordered personalities who pay attention to detail. Lopez appeals to a balance of men and women, particularly those not in a relationship.

What do they like? Similar profiles follow Justin Timberlake, action man Vin Diesel, reality show America’s Got Talent and Starbucks Coffee.

## **9. Radiohead**

Who likes them? Average fans exhibit high openness, which suggests they are imaginative, curious, creative and sensitive to beauty. They also have high IQs and not many [friends](#) compared with your typical Facebook user. Coincidentally, this fits the profile of a paranoid android.

What do they like? The film adaptation of Hunter S. Thompson's Fear And Loathing In Last Vegas; William Golding's novel Lord Of The Flies, Tarantino's Kill Bill series, and Monty Python And The Holy Grail.

## **10. The University of Cambridge**

Who likes it? Typical [Facebook](#) fans are liberal-leaning and extremely conscientious – suggesting that they are hard-working and aim for achievement. They are also lower on agreeableness, tending to suggest that they are highly competitive. They are unlikely to be in a relationship.

What do they like? Robert De Niro, news channel CNN, the Steve Buscemi-fronted TV drama Boardwalk Empire and, er, the European Parliament.

Provided by University of Cambridge

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