Short Communication

Get behind my selfies: The Big Five traits and social networking behaviors through selfies

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ABSTRACT

The present study examined the relationship between the Big Five and the use of selfies to maintain online sociability and social connection. An online panel survey was conducted with 299 selfie posters. The findings suggest that the Big Five traits, except for extraversion, are significantly associated with the degree of concern about other's responses to one's own selfies. Selfie posters with agreeableness and low openness show a high tendency of observing others' selfies. In addition, tendency to comment or like others' selfies is predicted by extraversion and agreeableness. The implications of the study findings and limitations of the study are discussed.

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1. Introduction

Social media provides a new venue for expressing one's personality through photos. Social media users express a variety of selves and their personality through photos of facial expressions, locations, special moments, social connections, or other cues on SNSs (Bennett, 2014). Starting with the front-facing camera on the iPhone 4, millions of social media users are now posting "selfies" every day (Bennett, 2014). A selfie is defined as "a photograph that one has taken of oneself, typically one taken with a smartphone or webcam and shared via social media" and was designated as the 2013 word of the year (Hempel, 2014; Oxford Dictionary, 2013). Along with a shift in technology, mobile-based photo-sharing SNS, have boosted selfie-related hashtags and selfies since 2011. Reflecting this huge cultural and social phenomenon, the word "selfie" was officially added to the Oxford Dictionary, and the most-liked Instagram photo of 2015 was a selfie (Worland, 2015). Taylor (2014) reported that 55% of millennials have shared their "selfie" on SNS, and approximately 50% of men and 52% of women have taken a selfie (Bennett, 2014).

Reflecting this huge selfie phenomenon, researchers have explored individual differences in selfie-posting as well as selfie-related behavior. Fox and Rooney (2015) found that narcissists and self-objectifying individuals tend to spend more time on SNS and edit selfies more. In addition, they found that narcissistic and psychopathic personalities have positive associations with the number of selfies posted on SNS. Further, prior research suggested that narcissism is closely related to men's selfie-posting behavior (Sorokowski et al., 2015), SNS users' self-promoting behaviors (Moon, Lee, Lee, Choi, & Sung, 2016), time spent editing selfies (Fox & Rooney, 2015), Facebook profile picture selection (Kapidzic, 2013), and selfie-posting frequency (Moon et al., 2016). Although several studies have delved into trait predictors of selfie-related behavior, existing research has largely investigated narcissism. Other traits relevant to selfies on SNS remain unexamined.

Other personality traits that may predict selfie-related behavior are the Big Five. Prior research indicates that the Big Five traits are closely associated with use of SNS. For instance, extroverts tend to show more belonging to Facebook groups (Ross et al., 2009). Sharing of private information is predicted by neuroticism, and agreeable individuals show a positive correlation with the number of pictures posted on SNS (Amichai-Hamburger & Vinitzky, 2010). Further, individuals who score high on neuroticism are more likely to use Facebook for socialization, whereas those high in conscientiousness and openness tend to use Twitter for the same purpose (Hughes, Rowe, Batey, & Lee, 2012). Regarding self-presentation on social media, extroverts showed higher frequency of photo uploads and status updates than introverts (Lee, Ahn, & Kim, 2014). Seidman (2013) found that communication and information-seeking motivations of SNS use are positively related to agreeableness, extraversion, and neuroticism. Additionally, in terms of self-presentational behavior on SNS, Seidman (2013) identified extroverts' actual self-expression and neurotic individuals' actual, ideal, and

hidden self-presentation. Finally, Qiu et al. (2015) examined the relationship between the Big Five personality traits and personality-related cues on selfies. Findings suggested that emotional positivity predicts agreeableness and openness, a "duck face" indicates neuroticism, and a private location in the background indicates less conscientiousness.

Despite the evident relationship between the Big Five and SNS use, as well as online self-presentation, there is still a lack of substantial understanding regarding the connection between the Big Five traits and diverse selfie-related behaviors. Of particular interest in this study is how the Big Five traits are associated with selfie-related attitudes and behaviors such as the following: 1) how users are concerned with others' responses to one's own selfies, 2) the degree of observation by users of others' posted selfies, and 3) the degree to which users leave comments or "likes" on others' selfies. While a recent study (Lee & Sung, 2016) found that individuals higher in narcissism were more likely to read the feedback given by others and be observant of other people's selfies, to the authors' knowledge, no study has yet examined such behaviors in conjunction with the Big Five traits. Examining the relationships between the Big Five traits and selfie-related attitudes and behaviors is of importance, because it may shed light on the psychological meaning of selfies.

2. Method

2.1. Participants and procedure

A sample of 299 participants was recruited by a major research firm in Korea. The sample was randomly selected from the virtual research group panel and notified by e-mail that they had been identified for recruitment in the study. The virtual research group panel is an opt-in, informed consent, and privacy-protected subject pool for Web-based research experiments and surveys. All participants were offered virtual currency incentives by the research firm for participation in the survey. The average age of respondents was 29.6 years ($SD = 5.15$; 19–39). Among the 299 respondents, 207 were female. Manovich et al. (2014) analyzed 3200 Instagram selfies shared in major cities such as New York, Moscow, Berlin, and São Paolo and found that significantly more selfies are posted by women than men in every major city. Thus, while females outnumbered males in the study, this mirrored selfie posters on SNSs.

2.2. Measures

2.2.1. Big Five

The Big Five personality traits were measured using the Mini International Personality Item Pool (Mini-IPIP), a 20-item short form of the 50-item IPIP Five-Factor Model measure (Donnellan, Oswald, Baird, & Lucas, 2006). Each of the five personality traits consists of four statements ($\alpha = 0.65$–0.68). Some sample items include "I don't talk a lot," "I sympathize with others' feelings," and "I make a mess of things." All items were rated on a seven-point Likert scale.

2.2.2. Dependent variables

Involvement in the feedback they receive on their own selfie was assessed using the statement "Other people's feedback, such as comments and 'likes,' on the selfies I post on SNS is…" ($M = 4.70$, $SD = 1.33$, $\alpha = 0.94$) rated on a seven-point semantic differential scale with four items: (a) unimportant/important, (b) useless/useful, (c) uninteresting/interesting, and (d) boring/entertaining.

The *degree to which one observes others' selfies* was measured using two items (i.e., "Do you carefully examine others' selfies?" and "Do you carefully examine the comments and number of 'likes' on others' selfies?"; $M = 4.38$, $SD = 1.29$, $\alpha = 0.75$), and the *degree to which one comments or "likes" others' selfies* was measured using a single item (i.e., "Do you comment or 'like' others' selfies?"; $M = 4.70$, $SD = 1.42$), rated on a seven-point scale (1 = not at all to 7 = very much).

3. Results

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics and intercorrelations among the variables of interest. A series of hierarchical multiple regression analyses were conducted for each of the three selfie-related outcome variables (i.e., involvement in others' responses, observation of others' selfies, and commenting or posting "likes" on others' selfies). As presented in Table 2, two sets of independent variables were entered in each of two blocks. In Block 1, gender, age, and frequency of SNS posting were controlled, while the five personality traits were added in Block 2. Their betas and significant levels are reported in Table 2. Overall, as compared to Model 1, the variance in the selfie-related outcome variables was better explained with Model 2, which included the five personality traits. With the additional five personality traits, Model 2 explained 12% of the users' involvement in others' responses to their own selfies, 9% of the extent to which they observed others' selfies, and 13% of the likelihood of posting comments/"likes" on others' selfies. These are significantly increased from Model 1.

More specifically, extraversion was a significant predictor of the tendency to post comments/"likes" on others' selfies, suggesting that extroverts are more likely to leave comments on or "like" others' selfies. Agreeableness was a significant predictor of all three dependent variables. Our findings suggested that selfie posters high in agreeableness were more likely to be involved in others' responses to their own selfies. Additionally, they tended to observe others' selfies and comments posted about others' selfies and to leave comments or "like" others' selfies.

SNS users high in conscientiousness and neuroticism tended to be involved in others' responses to their selfies. Finally, openness was a negative predictor of involvement in others' responses and tendency to observe others' selfies. SNS users with lower openness tended to be more involved in others' responses to their selfies and to observe others' selfies than did those with higher openness.

4. Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between the Big Five and selfie-related behaviors among selfie posters in social media. More specifically, the present research investigated how the Big Five traits are related to selfie posters' involvement with others' responses on their selfies and the extent to which they observe others' selfies as well as comment on or "like" others' selfies. The findings of this research extend our understanding of the relationship between the Big Five and diverse social networking behaviors through selfies on social media.

Social media users high on extraversion showed greater association with the likelihood of commenting or liking others' selfies than did introverts. Our findings are parallel with those of Lee et al. (2014), who found extroverts to have high levels of Facebook behaviors such as frequent uploading of photos, clicking "like," and writing comments. The results of this study are closely related to those of Marshall, Lefringhausen, and Ferenczi (2015), who found that extroverts frequently posted updates about their everyday life on Facebook and interacted more actively with others on social media. Presumably, extroverts utilize selfies as a communication tool or as a new way of sharing their lives on SNS.

Agreeableness was positively related to all of the dependent variables measured in this study. These findings are consistent with those of past studies showing the relationship between agreeableness and a variety of selfie-related behaviors. For example, Seidman (2013) found that a group membership motive and communication were largely explained by agreeableness. Individuals high in agreeableness tend to communicate and make more social connections on Facebook. In addition, more agreeable individuals have been found to post about themselves on their Facebook walls (Moore & McElroy, 2012). Considering these past findings, it seems reasonable to suggest that individuals