



## Personality traits and self-presentation at Facebook<sup>☆</sup>



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### ABSTRACT

The current study explores the relationship between personality traits and self-presentation at Facebook. An online survey of Facebook users was conducted. The results suggest that extraversion was positively related to self-presentation both on Wall and at News Feed. Extraverts uploaded photos and updated status more frequently, and had more friends displayed on Wall than introverts. Besides, extraverts clicked *Like*, wrote *Comment* and clicked *Share* at News Feed more frequently than introverts. Moreover, narcissists with high rivalry frequently updated their *Status* on Wall. In addition, neuroticism and conscientiousness were negatively related to writing *Comment* at News Feed. Lastly, openness to experience was negatively related to clicking *Share* at News Feed. The results and implications are discussed in conjunction with previous research. Suggestions for future research are provided.

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### 1. Introduction

Facebook (FB) is an online venue where the users not only socialize with one another (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007; Boyd & Ellison, 2008), but also construct and manage their identities via self-presentation (Zhao, Grasmuck, & Martin, 2008; Nadkarni & Hofmann, 2012). FB allows the users to manage their self-presentation by uploading pictures, updating status, and displaying friends (Kleck, Reese, Behnken, & Sundar, 2007; Zhao et al., 2008; Amichai-Hamburger & Vinitzky, 2010; Mehdizadeh, 2010; Gosling, Augustine, Vazire, Holtzman, & Gaddis, 2011; Ong et al., 2011). A considerable amount of research has examined the association between self-presentation at FB and personality traits (e.g., Amichai-Hamburger & Vinitzky, 2010; Gosling et al., 2011; Moore & McElroy, 2012; Ross et al., 2009). However, most FB research to date has focused on self-presentational information displayed on Wall (Zhao et al., 2008; Amichai-Hamburger & Vinitzky, 2010; Mehdizadeh, 2010; Gosling et al., 2011; Ong et al., 2011; Moore & McElroy, 2012). The current study goes beyond this and suggests that FB users can also present who they

are by using *Like*, *Comment* and *Share* buttons provided at News Feed. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between personality traits and self-presentation at FB, both via the information displayed on Wall and the behaviors at News Feed.

### 2. Literature review

#### 2.1. Self-presentation at FB

FB offers two venues where the users can strategically manage their self-presentation: Wall and News Feed. First, Wall is where FB users display, edit and manage self-presentational information including profiles, photos, and connections for others to see. Boyd (2009) suggested that the “profile can be seen as a form of digital body where individuals must write themselves into being” (p. 131). In an extensive content analysis of FB user profiles, Nosko, Wood, and Molema (2010) identified 97 items that people might disclose in detail. FB users generally present quite accurate descriptions of themselves at their profiles (Back et al., 2010).

The other venue, News Feed, is the first page that the users see as they log into FB. Since News Feed displays friends' FB activities such as status updates, photos and video uploads, links, application activities and likes, the users spent most of FB time at this page (Lipsman, Mudd, Rich, & Bruich, 2012). Also, a user's News Feed

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is open to his/her friends, who can view the people that are connected to the user and their activities. Furthermore, News Feed offers *Like*, *Comment*, and *Share* buttons, which appear on every post at FB News Feed. Introduced in 2004, *Like* is a quick and easy way to share content with a click. It signals the user's appreciation for the content and support for the person who posted it. It is also the fastest way to distribute the content at FB. *Comment*, on the other hand, allows for a dynamic expression of thoughts and feelings in response to a posting. There are no restrictions as to what is said in *Comment*. Most recently introduced is the Retweet-style *Share* button. It is a relatively high effort response to a posting, which may include personalizing the titles and thumbnails of the links for added visibility.

Despite the differences, these three buttons are all used for responding to and sharing contents posted at News Feed. Furthermore, the use of these buttons is displayed both on the user's and friends' News Feeds. Therefore, the use of *Like*, *Comment*, and *Share* can be viewed, tracked, and trigger a response from friends. In this process, the user can manage self-presentation, signaling the user's likes and dislikes, close and distant friends, expertise, interests, political views and so on. Therefore, we consider *Like*, *Comment* and *Share* buttons as self-presentational buttons and use of *Like*, *Comment* and *Share* buttons as self-presentational behaviors that help manage FB users' identity at FB.

Wall and News Feed differ mainly in two ways. First, the information on Wall can be said self-oriented whereas the information at News Feed is other-oriented. FB users post and manage their own information on Wall to promote themselves. At News Feed, in contrast, the users are provided with their friends' information, which can trigger the users' reactions as self-presentational behaviors. Another difference between Wall and News Feed concerns interactivity of the communication. The communication on Wall is typically one-way as the users display self-presentational information for others to see. On the other hand, the communication at News Feed is two-ways as the users give feedback to others using *Like*, *Comments*, and *Share*. In short, "I" manage the Wall, and "We" maintain the News Feed via social interactions. Given these differences, both Wall and News Feed are worthy to investigate to understand self-presentation at FB.

## 2.2. Research on self-presentation and personality

Before the time of FB, personal websites provided an arena for individuals to express their personalities and to create and experiment with multiple identities (Marcus, Machilek, & Schütz, 2006). FB makes it easier to create and maintain such online presence than ever before. Accordingly, a considerable amount of research has examined the association between self-presentational information at FB Wall and personality (e.g., Amichai-Hamburger & Vinitzky, 2010; Gosling et al., 2011; Moore & McElroy, 2012; Ross et al., 2009). In the current study, we investigate how personality traits are related to both self-presentational information on Wall (the frequency of photo uploads, the frequency of status updates, the number of friends) and self-presentational behaviors (utilization of *Like*, *Comment* and *Share* buttons) at News Feed.

As a broad classification of personality trait, the big five factors of personality has been repeatedly adopted in FB research (Ross et al., 2009; Amichai-Hamburger & Vinitzky, 2010; Gosling et al., 2011; Ryan & Xenos, 2011; Moore & McElroy, 2012; Ljepava, Orr, Locke, & Ross, 2013; Seidman, 2013). The model includes extraversion, neuroticism, agreeableness, openness to experience, and conscientiousness. Narcissism is another personality trait that appears highly related to self-presentation on SNS (Buffardi & Campbell,

2008; Bergman, Fearing, Davenport, & Bergman, 2011; Ong et al., 2011; Carpenter, 2012; Wang, Jackson, Zhang, & Su, 2012). Thus, the current study considers a total of six personality traits in order to investigate the relationship between self-presentation at FB and personality.

## 3. Hypotheses

### 3.1. Extraversion

Extraversion describes the extent to which an individual feels comfortable engaging in direct social interactions with others (Costa & McCrae, 1992). Individuals high in extraversion are dominant, expressive, talkative and sociable. Extraversion is known as the personality factor highly related to FB usage (Ross et al., 2009; Amichai-Hamburger & Vinitzky, 2010; Gosling et al., 2011; Ryan & Xenos, 2011). Ross et al. (2009) found a positive relationship between extraversion and using SNS for communication. Amichai-Hamburger and Vinitzky (2010) suggested that extroverts had a greater number of friends than introverts. Gosling et al. (2011) suggested that extraverts seek out virtual social contacts and were more engaged in online social experience than introverts. Based on these previous studies, we hypothesized:

**Hypothesis 1. Extraversion** will be positively associated with the self-presentational information on Wall and self-presentational behavior at News Feed.

### 3.2. Neuroticism

Neuroticism refers to the lack of emotional stability and tendency to experience psychological distress (Costa & McCrae, 1992). Neurotics would thus feel more comfortable with information on Wall than information at Newsfeed since they can control the former whereas the latter is out of their hands. Indeed, Ross et al. (2009) found that the highly neurotic FB users chose the Wall as their favorite FB component while less neurotic users selected photos. Photos often contain emotional states and the geographical location they were taken, which the users cannot control. Therefore, the users high in neuroticism may find photos threatening. Thus, we expect the following:

**Hypothesis 2. Neuroticism** will be positively associated with the self-presentational information on Wall. However, due to a lack of control, we expect a negative relationship between neuroticism and self-presentation behavior at News Feed.

### 3.3. Agreeableness

Agreeableness represents the tendency to be sympathetic, courteous, flexible, kind, trusting and forgiving (Costa & McCrae, 1992). Compared to extraversion, less research has been conducted with regard to agreeableness and FB use (Moore & McElroy, 2012). Moore and McElroy (2012) showed that agreeable users were more likely to post Wall contents about themselves than less agreeable users. Wang et al. (2012) found that agreeableness was positively related to making comments on SNS. They argued that since agreeable users were friendly, warm and sympathetic, they should be more likely to post friendly and positive comments to other users' posts. Likewise, FB users high in agreeableness may show their emotional support to others via self-presentational behaviors at News Feed. Thus, we propose:

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