

The Personality of Instagram Profiles

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Abstract

Social media has become a commonplace part of modern life. Individuals use sites like Instagram to share pictures and their usage of social media sites is often related to personality. However, the relationship between personality and perceived brand personality of Instagram accounts has yet to be studied. 194 participants participated in an online study about Instagram profiles. Each participant was shown 1 of 3 Instagram Influencer profiles (guru, adventurer, and instructor). Participants rated each profile on its perceived personality using the NEO IPIP measure of Big 5 personality. Participants also rated their own personality using the HEXACO six factor measure of personality. Researchers analyzed the ratings and found that the profiles were perceived differently on the personality trait of extraversion and openness to experience with the guru profile having the highest level of extraversion. Future research should continue to evaluate perceived brand personality of Instagram profiles.

Keywords: Social media, Instagram, Influencers, Personality, Perception

Social media usage has become a fact of modern life. 72% of United States adults report using social media, up 36% from late 2009 and 67% from early 2005 (Social Media Fact Sheet, 2019). As social media usage has increased so has the types of social media profiles from professional platforms such as LinkedIn to more informal image sharing services like Snap Chat. Instagram is the fastest growing social media platform (Influencer Marketing Hub, 2019) Expanding research in Instagram profile perception and personality is important for understanding how social media has impacted our social interactions with social media platforms and platform users. Instagram has a culture of influencers who impact the Instagram user base (De Veirman, Cauberghe, & Hudders 2017). Instagram influencers present a specific type of personality to their followers yet there has been little research done on the nature of Instagram influencers or the perceptions of influencer profile followers.

Social media use also has some effect on mental health. In a recent study focused on social media use and perceived social isolation within the young adult population it was hypothesized that there would be a negative correlation between social media use and perceived social isolation. The researchers conducted an online survey and used 1,787 participant responses from their original random sample size of 3,048 participants. The participants were assessed by the Patient-Reported Outcomes Measurement Information System (PROMIS) for their perceived social isolation and participants were assessed on their social media use by time and

frequency. It was determined that with social media use greater than 121 minutes per day were probable to have an increased perceived social isolation. (Whaite, E. O., Shensa, Sidani, Colditz, & Primack, 2018). Social media profile personality may have an influence on this type of isolation.

Profile personality involves a user forming an impression of the account owner. In order to understand how impressions were formed in an online setting, a study was designed with a false online profile with limited information to see what impressions were formed with an online stranger. 239 participants were scheduled to take part in this study however some weren't involved due to problems so 211 people participated. Participants viewed similar profiles which were either a male or female avatar with general information made by a fictitious person and participants were asked how they perceive the "avatars" profiles. They rated the targets more positively than negatively and tended to rate appearance favorably. It is suggested that when people first meet others online they should "fill in the gaps and overemphasize the importance of minimal cues, when making first impressions" gender stereotypes were involved in this experiment the male was perceived to be "athletic" while the female was seen to be "creative and friendly" Because we are always forming impressions of people we tend to make the best of other behaviors, we overestimate positive traits while underestimating negative ones. (Bacev-Giles, C., & Haji, R. 2017). Advertisers may implicitly be using this mechanism to draw in followers to influencer accounts.

Influencers can campaign for brands by promoting the brand products or services. In an article from Ladd (2017), the author discusses 7 different types of campaigns used by influencers with the advantages and disadvantages of them. The first campaign discusses influencers sharing brand related content; which are individuals that share the brand on their media platforms to their audience. Co-creating content with influencers in another campaign where the influencer teams up with the brand and create something that can be then easily promoted by the influencers, although this may take some time. Brands can use their influencers content with consent, this exchange benefits both the brand and influencer since the brand is able to promote their product through someone else without the stress of putting together an entire team and the influencer is getting promoted by the brand. The fourth campaign consists of competitions, giveaways, and hashtags, these allow for a brand to be more competitive than other brands since the brand allows for autonomy by the influencer to give away something and boost the perception of the brand. Event marketing is when a brand holds an event where influencers are invited, and their followers are given knowledge of this event (i.e. Fyre festival). Brands provide affiliated links and discount codes to influencers to provide to their followers when checking out. The last and seventh campaign is takeovers, this is when an influencer takes over the brands social channel for a period of time and provides the brand's users with a new perspective. Ladd. (2017, August 23). While these profile types present specific information, little is known about the perceived

personality of these accounts though Kim & Lehto (2013) did show that destinations can cultivate a brand personality that attracts customers.

The most well-supported model of personality is the Five Factor Model (FFM) or the “Big Five” (McCrae & Costa, 1997). The Big Five framework is a model of personality that contains five factors representing personality traits at a broad level: extraversion, neuroticism, openness to experiences or imagination, agreeableness, and conscientiousness (Ehrenberg et al., 2008). Extraversion refers to an individual’s desire to interact with people often on the extravert (desiring to be with people) or introvert (desiring to be by oneself) spectrum. Neuroticism refers to an individual’s emotional stability or emotional control. Openness to experience or imagination refers to an individual’s desire to try new things. Agreeableness refers to an individual’s desire for social harmony. Conscientiousness refers to an individual’s self-discipline and willingness to strive for achievement (Goldberg, 1990). The FFM has been consistently shown to correlate with and predict behavior in a variety of settings (White, Hendrick, & Hendrick, 2004)

Previous research has shown that individuals can make accurate assessments of personality based on social media profiles (Back et al., 2010, Gosling et al., 2007). These studies indicate that individuals perceive some aspect of behavior from their social media profiles. Personality has often been used in the study of consumer behavior and has been a powerful predictor of purchasing

(Podthar, Donthu, & Wei, 2009). Some have theorized that social media searches involve individuals' search for similar personality traits (Watts, Dodd, & Newman, 2002). Additionally, brand personality of websites has also been found to be a predictor of customer buying intention (Toldos-Romero & Orozco-Gómez, 2015). Personality is predictive of who interacts with the web (Correa, Hinsley, & De Zuniga, 2010) and in what way the individual chooses to use the internet. Little research has been done on the interaction between social media accounts and individuals. Specifically, social media influencer accounts have yet to be studied in personality research.

Social media influencers are any profiles that have a consistent theme (Bakshy, Hofman, Mason & Watts, 2011). The accounts have a large audience with numerous followers, likes, and shares. While there is research on the effects of advertising disclosure, there is little research on the types of influencers that exist (Evans, Phua, Lim, & Jun, 2017) or influencers' effect on fashion ad campaigns (Abidin, 2016). There remains little research on the relationship between influencer personality and individual follower personality.

There are three broad types of influencer profiles that the researchers wish to understand: the adventurer, the guru, and the instructor (Ladd, 2017). The adventurer influencer is a profile that can be identified as a traveler and includes adventure photography and caters to extreme sports enthusiasts. The instructor

influencer is a profile that contains life hacks, do it yourself projects (DIY's). This account usually appeals to food bloggers and how-to experts. The guru influencer is a profile type relating to beauty, lifestyle, fitness and fashion. As Instagram and platforms like it become more commonly used for purchases an understanding of how social media users relate to these accounts is necessary (Phua, Jin, & Kim, 2017).

The present research examines the relationship between perceived personality of social media influencer profiles. More specifically, the researchers hope to understand how social media users differentially perceive the personalities of Instagram influencer profiles such as the guru, the instructor and the adventurer.

Hypothesis

We hypothesize that each profile will lead to have different personality that emerges to be distinct.

- Hypothesis 1: states that the adventurer profile will be perceived as having the highest ratings of open to experience.
- Hypothesis 2: states that the guru profile will receive the highest ratings for extraversion.
- Hypothesis 3: states that the instructor profile will receive the highest ratings for conscientiousness .ram influencer profiles such as the guru, the instructor and the adventurer.

Method

Materials

Without a clear model of influencer personality, the researchers decided to follow the guidelines for types of Instagram profiles based on an article about social media marketing (Ladd, 2017). In addition to this article, an undergraduate researcher reviewed Instagram influencer accounts to better understand what types of images were used in the guru, adventurer, and instructor accounts. After a comprehensive review of the accounts and a discussion with a PhD level researcher the undergraduate researcher developed a version of the guru, instructor, and adventurer accounts. A pilot test was conducted to assess whether users perceived differences between the accounts. Acceptable results were found based on the pilot test and the accounts were deemed suitable for the present research. The account images can be found in Appendix A.

Participants

194 participants from a northeastern university completed the study. Participants were from a psychology department subject pool and completed the study online. 65.5% of the sample was female and 4.7% reported that they were nonbinary or did not wish to disclose. 38.7% of the sample were seniors and 26.8% were juniors in college as indicated in Table 1. Table 2 contains age ranges

indicating that most of the sample 33.5% was between the ages of 20-21. Table 3 contains information about Instagram usage and most of the participants 66.5% used Instagram often.

The independent variable in this study is the three influencer Instagram profiles: the adventurer, the guru, and the instructor. The dependent variable in this research was the perceived personality of each account using the Mini-IPIP. Participants also completed a personality assessment of their own personality using the HEXACO. The researchers used two separate personality measures to reduce confusion among participants. The researchers also chose to use a measure of individual personality rather than brand personality because most influencer accounts are viewed as being operated by individual people not necessarily brands.

Procedure

The participants first took the 24-item HEXACO Inventory to determine their participant personality (DeVries, 2013). The HEXACO had a reliability of .56. Participants were then randomly presented with one of three designed Instagram profiles: the adventurer, the guru and the instructor. Each profile contained pictures of landscapes, make-up, or food respectively. After viewing the Instagram page participants took the Mini IPIP (Donnellan, Oswald, Baird, & Lucas, 2006) to determine the personality of the page participants viewed. The Mini-IPIP had a reliability of .54. Each profile consisted of 9 pictures that related to the respective

influencer theme. In appendix A, the three Instagram influencer profiles: the adventurer, the instructor and the guru can be found. After viewing the profiles, participants were asked manipulation check questions. The results from the manipulation check question indicated that the participants correctly perceived each profile as either containing images of food, landscapes, or make-up.

Results

Table 4 contains the results of which profile participants would be most likely to follow. Results indicate that the participants would most likely follow the food (instructor) and make-up (guru) Instagram profiles. Twenty-five percent of the participants would follow those profiles. Table 5 shows descriptive statistics of participant personality based on the HEXACO. Participants scored highest on agreeableness ($M=16.7$) and emotionality ($M=16.6$) in terms of personality.

Tables 6a-6e show the results of an ANOVA analysis. The data were analyzed using a one-way ANOVA with the Instagram profile type as the independent variable and the ratings of perceived personality on the IPIP as the dependent variable. Hypothesis 1 stated that the adventurer profile would receive the highest average score on openness to experience. Hypothesis 1 was partially supported as the ANOVA results in table 6e indicate that there is a difference that approaches statistical significance between the Instagram profiles $F(6, 186)=2.94$. The average

rating for the instructor profile was higher on average than the guru or adventurer (M=16.1)

Hypothesis 2 was supported. Data in table 6a indicate that there was a statistically significant difference in perception between the profiles on extraversion $F(6,186)= 3.488$ the guru did receive the highest scores on extraversion. The guru had the highest average rating of extraversion (M=13.67). Hypothesis 3 was not supported $F(6,186)= 0.343$ and indicates that there was no significant difference in perception of conscientiousness

To explore the relationship between perceived Instagram profile personality and participant personality correlations were calculated between the HEXACO (taken by participants) and the perceived Instagram profile personality based on the IPIP. The correlations can be found in table 8. None of the correlations between perceived Instagram profile personality and participant personality were statistically significant. This finding is not very surprising given that the participant's personality should not be related to the personality of the Instagram account holder.

Discussion

These preliminary results show a perceived difference in extraversion and openness to experience depending on the types of Instagram Influencer accounts.

Extraversion and openness to experience seems to be clear actions taken by anyone posting on social media. Actions on social media are often referred to as 'sharing'. An extraverted person who is interested in new experiences would certainly be interested in sharing on social media. The results of the present study seem to indicate that participants who view profiles on social media see them as being more open and outgoing. The guru and the instructor profiles were viewed as being the most extraverted and open to experiences. Extraversion may vary from profiles may be because of our previous understandings of those individual's personality and we associate those with different levels of extraversion. These findings indicate that social media profiles do offer different signals to viewers. Dependent upon that signal, viewers may be more likely to follow individuals that can be perceived as open to experience and outgoing because of the social inclusion and social connection. What an individual social media user shares in their posts affects how the social media use is viewed in public. This information should be used by marketers and organization as well as individuals using social media to identify how they present themselves to the world. Organizations may wish to design and develop marketing plans to highlight their brand's personality. Individuals may want to highlight certain characteristics in their efforts to create a personal brand (Karaduman, 2013) and market themselves either as influencers or for other opportunities.

The present research also offers a glimpse into the power of potential false accounts. Marketers selling products is a generally benign use of brand personality but there is a darker side to this type of activity in online trolling. Given the nature of trolling and influence via social media (Cheng et al, 2017) an understanding of account personality may be used to handle fake news online (Shu, Wang, & Liu, 2018). Identifying a troll account using followers' personality assessments may help online platforms like Instagram handle negative user behavior. Perceptions of accounts should be evaluated to identify those accounts that show real signs of personality rather than trolling behavior.

Future research should evaluate perceived personality of influencer accounts on other platforms such as Snap Chat or Facebook. There may be some expectations of brand personality types that are dependent on the social media platform. Researchers can help marketers and social media users to better understand these distinctions. There is also to understand the negative outcomes of following Instagram accounts. Given the experience that followers had through their interactions with the Fyre Festival (Kaufman, 2017) this research may prove beneficial to users in determining the quality of offers. While the present study has provided some initial exploratory results, there is still much to learn.

Introduction

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Table 1 Class Standing

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Freshman	24	12.371	12.500	12.500
Sophomore	41	21.134	21.354	33.854
Junior	52	26.804	27.083	60.938
Seniro	75	38.660	39.063	100.000
Missing	2	1.031		
Total	194	100.000		

Table 2 Age

Age Range	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
18-19	49	25.258	25.521	25.521
20-21	65	33.505	33.854	59.375
22-24	42	21.649	21.875	81.250
25 and above	36	18.557	18.750	100.000
Missing	2	1.031		
Total	194	100.000		

Table 3 Instagram usage

Instagram Use	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Definitely yes and I use it often	129	66.495	67.188	67.188
Yes but I do not use it often	46	23.711	23.958	91.146
No I do not have an Instagram account	17	8.763	8.854	100.000
Missing	2	1.031		
Total	194	100.000		

Table 4 Frequencies for Profile Follow

Instagram Profile Choice	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Food	49	25.258	25.521	25.521
Make-up	49	25.258	25.521	51.042
Landscape	33	17.010	17.188	68.229
Other	61	31.443	31.771	100.000
Missing	2	1.031		
Total	194	100.000		

Table 5 Descriptive Statistics for Participant Personality

	HEXACO Honesty- Humility	HEXACO Emotionality	HEXACO Extraversion	HEXACO Agreeableness	HEXACO Conscientiousness	HEXACO Openness
Valid	194	194	194	194	194	193
Missing	0	0	0	0	0	1
Mean	11.335	16.577	11.809	16.691	12.314	11.109
Std. Deviation	3.928	4.060	3.439	3.403	3.757	3.387
Minimum	4.000	7.000	4.000	4.000	4.000	5.000
Maximum	23.000	28.000	20.000	26.000	22.000	20.000

Table 6a-ANOVA – IPIP Perceived Profile Extraversion

Cases	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Profile Type	230.511	6.000	38.419	3.488	0.003
Residual	2048.473	186.000	11.013		

Note. Type III Sum of Squares

Table 6b-ANOVA – IPIP Perceived Profile Agreeableness

Cases	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Profile Type	42.525	6.000	7.087	0.790	0.579
Residual	1669.309	186.000	8.975		

Note. Type III Sum of Squares

Table 6c-ANOVA – IPIP Perceived Profile Conscientiousness

Cases	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Profile Type	9.290	6.000	1.548	0.343	0.913
Residual	838.544	186.000	4.508		

Note. Type III Sum of Squares

Table 6d-ANOVA – IPIP Perceived Profile Neuroticism

Cases	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Profile Type	55.412	6.000	9.235	1.336	0.243
Residual	1285.935	186.000	6.914		

Note. Type III Sum of Squares

Table 6e ANOVA – IPIP Perceived Profile Personality Imagination or Openness to Experience

Cases	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Profile Type	143.851	6.000	23.975	2.943	0.009

Table 6e ANOVA – IPIP Perceived Profile Personality Imagination or Openness to Experience

Cases	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Residual	1515.155	186.000	8.146		

Note. Type III Sum of Squares

Table 7a Descriptive Statistics for Profile Personality

	IPIP Extraversion		
	Instructor	Adventurer	Guru
Valid	62	65	62
Missing	0	0	1
Mean	13.613	11.523	13.677
Std. Deviation	3.360	3.364	3.228
Minimum	6.000	4.000	5.000
Maximum	20.000	18.000	19.000

Table 7b Descriptive Statistics for Profile Personality

	IPIP Perceived Profile Agreeableness		
	Instructor	Adventurer	Guru
Valid	62	65	62
Missing	0	0	1
Mean	14.258	14.431	13.500
Std. Deviation	3.244	2.646	3.082
Minimum	7.000	6.000	4.000
Maximum	20.000	20.000	20.000

Table 7c Descriptive Statistics for Profile Personality

	IPIP Perceived Profile Conscientiousness		
	Instructor	Adventurer	Guru
Valid	62	65	62
Missing	0	0	1
Mean	13.097	12.862	12.758
Std. Deviation	1.989	2.007	2.359
Minimum	9.000	8.000	6.000
Maximum	19.000	18.000	18.000

Table 7d Descriptive Statistics for Profile Personality

	IPIP Perceived Profile Neuroticism		
	Instructor	Adventurer	Guru
Valid	62	65	62
Missing	0	0	1
Mean	11.677	11.123	12.242
Std. Deviation	2.792	2.619	2.467
Minimum	5.000	6.000	5.000

Table 7d Descriptive Statistics for Profile Personality

	IPIP Perceived Profile Neuroticism		
	Instructor	Adventurer	Guru
Maximum	20.000	17.000	16.000

Table 7e Descriptive Statistics for Profile Personality

	IPIP Perceived Profile Imagination		
	Instructor	Adventurer	Guru
Valid	62	65	62
Missing	0	0	1
Mean	16.194	15.831	14.726
Std. Deviation	3.077	2.870	2.594
Minimum	7.000	6.000	7.000
Maximum	20.000	20.000	20.000

Table 8 Correlation Matrix Individual Personality and Perceived Instagram Account Personality

		H-H	H-Em	H-Ex	H-A	H-C	H-O	IPIP-E	IPIP-A	IPIP-C	IPIP-N	IPIP-I
H-H	Pearson's r	—										
	p-value	—										
H-Em	Pearson's r	0.202	—									
	p-value	0.005	—									
H-Ex	Pearson's r	-0.084	-0.231	—								
	p-value	0.245	0.001	—								
H-A	Pearson's r	0.114	0.028	0.047	—							
	p-value	0.115	0.702	0.514	—							
H-C	Pearson's r	0.235	-0.193	0.266	0.071	—						

Table 8 Correlation Matrix Individual Personality and Perceived Instagram Account Personality

		H-H	H-Em	H-Ex	H-A	H-C	H-O	IPIP-E	IPIP-A	IPIP-C	IPIP-N	IPIP-I
	p-value	< .001	0.007	< .001	0.323	—						
H-O	Pearson's r	-0.056	-0.162	0.164	0.173	0.263	—					
	p-value	0.439	0.024	0.023	0.016	< .001	—					
IPIP-E	Pearson's r	0.216	0.145	-0.293	-0.129	-0.138	-0.129	—				
	p-value	0.003	0.045	< .001	0.074	0.055	0.074	—				
IPIP-A	Pearson's r	-0.002	-0.113	-0.228	-0.088	-0.203	-0.137	0.161	—			
	p-value	0.973	0.118	0.001	0.224	0.005	0.058	0.026	—			
IPIP-C	Pearson's r	0.030	-0.133	-0.057	-0.005	-0.057	-0.048	0.060	0.067	—		
	p-value	0.677	0.065	0.428	0.941	0.428	0.509	0.404	0.352	—		
IPIP-N	Pearson's r	0.091	-0.150	0.095	0.041	0.189	0.053	-0.031	-0.042	0.454	—	
	p-value	0.207	0.037	0.189	0.567	0.009	0.467	0.674	0.558	< .001	—	
IPIP-I	Pearson's r	0.079	0.029	-0.144	-0.112	-0.075	-0.388	0.175	0.219	0.045	-0.194	—
	p-value	0.272	0.686	0.045	0.122	0.301	< .001	0.015	0.002	0.532	0.007	—

H-H=HEXACO Honesty-Humility, H-Em=HEXACO Emotionality, H-Ex=HEXACO Extraversion, H-A=HEXACO Agreeableness, H-C=HEXACO Conscientiousness, H-O=HEXACO Openness to Experience, IPIP-E=IPIP Extraversion, IPIP-A=IPIP Agreeableness, IPIP-C=IPIP Conscientiousness, IPIP-N=IPIP Neuroticism, IPIP-I=IPIP Imagination or Openness to Experience

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