PERSONALITY TRAITS AND FACEBOOK USAGE

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Abstract: *The paper presented is a review article focused on the current findings in relation to personality traits and the use of Facebook. Facebook is the second most visited website after Google (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007; Ryan & Xenos, 2011) and the users are active on average between ten minutes and two hours a day (Kalpidon, Costin, & Morris, 2011; Moore & McElroy, 2012). In certain aspects, FB is significantly different from other social networks, because it is characterized by offline to online trend – an individual meets the majority of friends on Facebook in real life, and subsequently adds them to Facebook (Ross et al., 2009). In the five-factor model of personality traits (McCrae & Costa, 1992), Extroversion was reported to be positively related to the use of Facebook, and that it is the most important predictor of the use of Facebook for adult networking (Corea et al., 2010). Although the introverts had fewer online friends and were less inclined to online self-promotion than extroverts, the introverts experience Facebook more attractive than traditional methods of communication and spend more time on Facebook compared to extroverts. The results of the study (La Sala, Skues, & Grant, 2014) suggest that Collaborativeness is the most powerful predictor of the number of accessions, the so-called log in to Facebook profile for students. Openness is registered as a negative predictor of using Share option and Conscientiousness as a negative predictor of using Comment option (Lee, Ann & Kim, 2014). Outside the five-factor model, the personality trait Narcissism is associated with the use of FB. Buffardi and Campbell (2008) suggest that FB is an excellent platform for narcissistic self-regulation. In addition, there are findings (Carpenter, 2012; Ong et al., 2011) that Narcissism is highly correlated with the frequency of changing profile image and status.*

Keywords: *personality traits, Facebook, Five Factor Model, Narcissism*

1. INTRODUCTION

Facebook is currently the most popular social network on the planet. During June 2017, Facebook (FB)[2] had 1.32 billion active daily users, and 2.01 billion monthly active users (https://newsroom.fb.com/company-info/). Bearing in mind the significant presence of FB in the lives of an extremely large number of people, it seems important to understand the

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2   In the paper, Facebook and FB will be used as synonyms

relationship of determinants of behavior, that is, personality traits, and behavior visible on Facebook.

McKenna and Bargh (2000) suggest that online social interaction possesses unique characteristics and that for these reasons it is attractive: a) the fact that a relationship can be formed without spatial closeness and b) that an individual chooses when it will be online ("logged on"). Additionally, the ability to correct your comment messages provides a sense of greater control than in real-time communication. The concept of a virtual world, as it is sometimes described by the Internet, also contains the idea of the Internet as a substitute for the real world and space for the promotion of the desired self. However, unexpectedly, the results indicate that with introverts and people with high Neuroticism, the Internet, or Facebook, provides the opportunity for the expression of the real self (Amichai-Hamburger, Wainapel & Fox, 2002).

Facebook profile is today an important source of information when we form opinions about other people. People explore FB profiles of other people when choosing or deciding about partner relationships or when evaluating job candidates (Zhao, Grasmuck, & Martin, 2008). There are findings (Evans, Gosling, & Carroll, 2008; Gosling, Gaddis, & Vazire, 2007) which suggest that personality traits of a particular person can be successfully evaluated based on their FB profile. The mentioned researchers showed the set of profiles to the respondents and found that it was possible to determine the basic personality traits by "layman" profile review. Also, there are findings that suggest that FB is reflecting primarily a real person than projections of idealized traits (Back et al., 2010). This implies that people do not "distort" deliberately the image of themselves on FB, at least not more than what is present in personality tests (Bachrach et al., 2012).

2. PREVIOUS RESEARCH OF PERSONALITIES IN FACEBOOK ENVIRONMENT

Ross and associates (Ross et al., 2009) were among the first researchers to relate personality traits and manners of using FB. They assumed the importance of the number of links between personality and features on the FB, such as: a positive link between Extroversion in the use of FB, number of friends and membership in different FB groups; then a positive link between Neuroticism and the discovery of intimate information; further positive correlation of the Collaborativeness and number of friends on FB; the positive correlation between Openness to experience and the number of using the different FB features and the negative relationship between Consciousness and general use of Facebook. Although informative, the results presented were derived from a study with significant limitations. First, the sample was small, a total of 97 respondents, primarily female. Furthermore, findings are based on the respondents' reporting on how to use the FB, rather than on direct observation.

The improvement of this research was carried out by a team of researchers in 2012 (Bachrach et al., 2012). Their study focused on the question of how a person is manifested through the use of different FB features. They distinguished the most commonly used features and tried to determine the correlations with the owner's profile, estimated through the five factor model. The examined features were divided into two categories. The first are aspects of the profile that depend solely on the activities of the owner, such as the number of

published images, events, etc., and the number of objects "liked" by the owner. The second category includes actions involving owner's friends, such as the number of images in which the owner was tagged and the size of the friends' network. The sample consisted of 180,000 users of Facebook. The results obtained indicate a significant correlation between the personality traits and the use of different features on the FB. The best prediction is possible in the context of Extraversion and Neuroticism, and the least accurate for Collaborativeness. Openness to experience and Conscientiousness are in the middle.

Additionally, the findings of the authors Lee, Ann and Kim (2014) suggest that Extroversion is positively related to self-presentation on FB, especially with the *Wall* and *News Feed* options. Extroverts add their images and statuses more often and have more friends than the introverts. Neuroticism and Conscientiousness are registered in a negative relationship with commenting on FB, while Openness to experience is in a negative relationship with the the option *Share* on FB.

As the number of interested researchers in the field grows, the requirements for methodological precision and the greater possibility of generalization of the obtained data increase. As noted, pioneer research (Ross et al., 2009; Zywica & Danowski, 2008) pointed out that people are open to experience (more often attracted to social networks, primarily Facebook, and that extroverts and individuals with high Neuroticism prefer instant messaging options in social networks (Ehrenberg, Juckes, White, & Walsh, 2008, Corea et al., 2010). Several methodological challenges are present in the above-mentioned research. Most studies of personality relationships and FB examined on a sample of students, without controlling gender differences and socio-demographic characteristics. Encouraged by the limitations of previous studies, authors Correa, Hinsley and De Zuniga (2010) conducted a study related to the relationship of attributes and social networks to a representative sample of adult Americans. They examined the relations of three dimensions of the five factor model (Extroversion, Openness to Experience and Neuroticism) and the use of social networks with the analysis of gender and age differences. The results indicate that Extroversion and Openness to experience are positively related to the use of social networks, Neuroticism is registered as a negative predictor with the control of socio-demographic characteristics and life satisfaction. The results differed from age and gender. While extrovert men and women were equally more frequent users of social networks, only men with significant emotional instability were regular users. In the youth period, the relation of Extroversion to the use of networks seems significant, while in the mature age, the connection between Openness to the experience and use of social networks is strengthened (Corea et al., 2010).

Since recently the behavior on Facebook has been linked to the traits beyond the five-factor model. Thus, the use of FBs has been linked to self-esteem (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007; Skues, Williams & Wise, 2012; Wilson, Fornasier, & White, 2010), narcissism, loneliness (Ryan & Xenos, 2011) and shyness (Orr et al., 2009). Studies indicate (eg. Mehdizadeh, 2010) that lower self-esteem is associated with more frequent profile checking and longer online time spent. The results show that people with high narcissism prefer to publish the so-called selfies and change their posts status more often (Carpenter, 2012; Ong et al., 2011; Ryan and Xenos, 2011) as well as check their tasks more often and generally spend more time online (Buffardi & Campbell, 2008).

Most of the studies so far examined the connection between the Five Factor model of personality as the main goal; personality traits defined beyond the five-factor area and use of

Facebook. Despite the expected and confirmed relationship of Extroversion and Openness to experience, and furthermore Narcissism, personality traits are potentially not so significant to the extent that the literature so far suggested. It is possible that a certain motivation for communication also contributes to a particular way of using FB. There are assumptions (Ross et al., 2009) that different motivators can lead to the decision about the use of certain FB tools and options, and not solely the personality traits.

3. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The paper presented is a review article in the field that explores relations of personality traits and use of Facebook as the dominant representative of social networks. At first glance, and at the beginning of the development of the area, it seemed that there was a clear connection between certain personality traits in the use of FB in a certain way. However, a more comprehensive analysis gives the impression that the relationship is likely to be influenced by certain factors. In subsequent research, it would be useful to include moderator variables that would potentially clarify the relationship. It is possible that the relationship of a particular trait and a particular way of using Facebook is expressed in a particular context. As a next step, one should think in the direction of defining a relevant context that could, to a greater extent, explain in which conditions a particular connection is expressed or not. Although there are solid finds of certain relationships (e.g. Extroversion as a predicator of the number of FB friends), further research is needed.

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