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Extroversion, neuroticism and self-concept: their impact on internet users in India

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to find out the influence of personality structure of an individual, i.e., extroversion, neuroticism and self-concept on the usage of the Internet in India. Further, it was also aimed to find out the correlation between the three above-mentioned variables in the light of Internet usage. Exploratory research design was used in this study and the tools used were: Eysenck Personality Inventory and Mohsin Self-Concept Inventory. The Internet was the medium for data collection and individuals were invited by e-mail to participate in the study. The method of random sampling was used for selecting the sample size of 200. In this study, Internet users were classified as heavy or light users based on the number of hours spent online. While we found no significant difference between heavy and light users of Internet on extroversion and neuroticism, it was found that the heavy users scored high on self-concept. © 2004 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

Keywords: Internet; Extroversion; Neuroticism; Self-concept

1. Introduction

The purpose of this study was to find out whether usage of the Internet in India was influenced by personality dimension of an individual, more specifically extrover-

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sion, neuroticism and self-concept. The relationship between extroversion, neuroticism and self-concept in relation to Internet usage was also examined.

A survey of Nielsen Media Research (Nielsen Media Research, 1996) showed that one in four Americans has Internet access and it is estimated that more than 50 million people in the United States and Canada surf the Internet on a regular basis. Once dominated by males, the Internet community is now attracting about 21 million women in the United States and Canada. It is estimated that in less than a decade, access to Internet in the United States would reach the level of access as for telephones, which is about 94% (FIND/SVP, 1996; Hoffman, Kalsbeek, & Novak, 1996). The growth in Internet use can be attributed to the ease and low costs of access in the United States. In other parts of the world, although the Internet has not reached the same levels of usage like the United States, it is expected to grow exponentially, reaching millions around the world in the next few years (Rao, 1998).

India is a developing country and majority of the population lives in villages. The Internet is popular only in urban areas while it is still unheard of in rural areas. Not many in the country have access to Internet as its use is still considered a luxury. In urban areas, majority of the people use the dial-up mode while of late the cable mode is picking up. Internet connection is slow when compared to the developed countries and access is also limited. Hence, the usage of Internet in India is different from that of the developed countries.

The various services of Internet and tools (chat rooms, e-mail, etc.) provide users with a wide range of benefits and shortcomings, many of which the users are aware of, and with which they seek to fulfil their own goals. The services also determine what a user can do, with whom, and, how their behaviour will be enacted. For instance, someone who does not want to get involved with a lengthy conversation might choose to use e-mail or text messaging. It is this balance between the aware user and the effects a service exert on behaviour or psychological state that is domain of the study of the psychology of the Internet (Joinson, 2003).

It is important to recognise the strategic aspect of Internet use because it extends beyond the service selection as the services are chosen in a motivated manner. It should be noted that apart from the services chosen and motivation, the personality and gender of an individual plays a crucial role in the usage of Internet. This was shown in the study of Hamburger and Ben-Artzi (2000). They analysed people's Internet activities in light of their scores on Eysenck's Personality Inventory. They identified three main types of Internet activity or service: 'social' (e.g., chat, discussion groups, people-address seeking); 'information' (e.g., work, or studies-related information seeking); and 'leisure' (e.g., sex web site and random surfing). They found that scores on extroversion were positively correlated with use of leisure services for men, and negatively correlated with the use of social services for women. Scores on the neuroticism scale were positively correlated with use of social services for women, and negatively correlated with the use of information services for men.

A weak correlation between neuroticism and Internet use was found by Swickert, Hittner, Harris, and Herring (2002). In their study, neuroticism negatively correlated with 'technical' Internet use (including chat rooms, bulletin boards, web page design and MUDding) and 'information exchange'(e-mail and web use).

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