

What Does Your Smartphone Reveal About Your Personality?

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Background

An individual's personality may be discerned through zero-acquaintance observers' ratings of the environments in which the targeted person lives, works, and socializes. Observers can reliably base personality ratings of extraversion, openness, and conscientiousness on "behavioral residue" or evidence of their personalities that people leave behind in their environments. This pattern of findings has been demonstrated in physical spaces (e.g., homes, offices) and virtual spaces (e.g., websites, Facebook).

We seek to further extend this research to another central aspect of individuals' environments: their smartphones. We examined how the content and usage patterns of targets' smartphones are associated with various dimensions of personality.

Participants & Procedures

68 undergraduate students (78% women) completed a self-report personality measure and answered several questions about how they use their smartphones.

Measures

50-item personality measure: extraversion, conscientiousness, agreeableness, openness to experience, & neuroticism

56 questions about their phones: contacts, phone calls, text messages, photographs, & applications, and the frequency, duration, & variety of use associated with each

Extraversion

Hypothesized correlations		Other correlations	
# Contacts	.61	Contacts/week	.28
Calls made/taken	.03	Contacts/month	.35
Call time/length	-.27	Photos taken	.27
# Texts	.04	Check email	.26
# People texted	.35	Access Internet	.27
Photos of others	.09		
# Facebook friends	.44		
Facebook time	.21		
Facebook freq	.29		
Soc'l network freq	.37		
Use while driving	.30		
Use in class	.27		
Use at work	.06		
Use with others	-.04		

Openness to Experience

Hypothesized correlations		Other correlations	
# Applications	.25	Call time/length	.31
Tumblr	.42	Texts	.26
Photos art	.45	Photos self	.26
Photos landscape	-.17	Tumblr, freq	.42
Photos variety	.14	While driving	-.30
Soc'l networking	-.18	While at work	-.30
Facebook	-.18		
Twitter	-.20		
Tumblr	-.10		
Instagram, time	-.20		

Conscientiousness

Hypothesized correlations		Other correlations	
# Broken phones	-.09	# Calls	-.26
Texting	.12	# People calling	-.26
# People texting	-.13	Photos landscape	-.41
Check email	.16	Photos pet	.25
Check voicemail	-.01		
Access Internet	-.02		
Facebook	-.05		
Twitter	-.12		
Use while driving	-.21		
Use in class	-.21		
Use at work	-.21		
Use with friends	-.12		
Use with partner	-.26		

Neuroticism

Hypothesized correlations		Other correlations	
# Texts	.25	# Contacts	-.31
# People texting	-.10	# Applications	.28
Soc'l network freq	.18	Time on phone	.29
Twitter	.23	Tumblr freq	.34
Facebook	.07	Instagram	-.30
Photos of self	.04	Photos of partner	.32
Use while driving	.14	Use with partner	.32
Use at work	.14		
Use in class	-.15		
Use with friends	.17		

Agreeableness

Hypothesized correlations		Other correlations	
# Calls	-.23	Soc'l network	-.27
Call length	.10	Facebook time	-.34
Call freq	.10	Tumblr time	-.28
# Texts	-.13	Use while driving	-.26
# People texted	-.12	Use with partner	-.36
Text freq	-.06	Use at work	-.40

Mean Levels of Usage

# Contacts	163	"Multiple times/day"
# Calls/week	26	To send or receive texts
# Texts/wk	1298	Access Internet
# Applications	39	Social networking
# Photos/wk	16	"Daily"
		94% take selfies, 94% friends, 88% locations, 79% pets, 63% signif. other, 53% food, 38% art
		"Less than daily"
		To call or receive a call
Multitasking settings		To check voicemail
		To take a photo
		Play games
		96% social, 93% meals, 91% in class, 59% romantic, 56% driving, 48% at work

Notes

Statistically significant (p < .05) correlations are bolded.
This project was the first author's undergrad Honors thesis.

References

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Conclusions & Future Directions

Similar to previous behavioral residue examinations, individuals tend to leave more reliable indicators of their extraversion and openness, but fewer reliable indicators of agreeableness, neuroticism, & conscientiousness. Overall, frequency counts were more useful indicators of personality than duration or variety reports were.