

## **Understanding Malaysian Twitter Users Behaviour Using Hans Eysenck's Three-Trait Model**

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### **Abstract**

The study seeks to understand Malaysian Twitter users personality using Hans Eysenck's three-trait model; that entails of extraversion, neuroticism, and psychoticism. This theory proposes that individuals possess certain personality traits which partially determine their behavior of usage. Data was randomly collected using Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (EPQ) from 400 Twitter users in Malaysia via Google Docs. The EPQ used were altered to suit the objectives of this study and the data collected were analyzed with statistical analysis (SPSS) using descriptive analysis represented by mean ( $\bar{X}$ ). Items for this study were adapted from the study of Tiwari, T., Singh, A. L., & Singh, I. L. (2009). The Cronbach Alpha reliability test on all items has gained scores as below: Extraversion (Cronbach's alpha value = 0.766), Neuroticism (Cronbach's alpha value = 0.722); and Psychoticism (Cronbach's alpha value = 0.722). The findings of this paper found that Twitter users in Malaysia possess a medium extraversion personality (between  $x=5.00$  to  $x=4.52$ ). However, the respondents possess low neuroticism and psychoticism personality (between  $x=4.47$  to  $x=3.87$ ).

Keywords: Hans Eysenck, EPQ, Twitter, Extraversion, Neuroticism, Psychoticism

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## **Introduction**

According to Twitter in Malaysia: Population and Insights. (2014, April 13), Malaysia had a total of 3.5 million Twitter users as of February 2014. But only 21.8 percent of the registered Malaysian users are actually active at a given time. Malaysians send a total of 162.4 million tweets, or roughly 5.4 million tweets per day. This is higher than the 4.5 million tweets that Twitter users from Thailand send in each day. Among the most popular brands followed by Malaysians are two airlines, Air Asia and Malaysian Airlines. PlusTrafik, FireFly and Maxis are the other three most followed brands in the country. Among celebrities, actress Lisa Surihani is the most popular with more than 2 million followers, trailed by Zizan Razak the famous Malaysian comedian, who has 1.57 million followers and actor singer Shaheizy Sam who has 1.52 million followers. Among Malaysian politicians on Twitter, Prime Minister Najib Razak is the most popular with 1.93m followers. In terms of usage, Twitter is ranked at number 4 among the most popular social networking sites in the world. While English is the most commonly used language on the site, it only accounts for 34% of the tweets. 8% of the tweets are in Malay, which is the fourth commonly used language on the site.

Personality on the other hand has a significant influence on the way we perceive outside world, think, feel and relate to other people. The word “personality” itself comes from the Latin word *Persona* which stands for the theatrical mask to project different roles of a performer. Hall and Linsey claimed in 1957 that there are many definitions of personality as different theorists articulate it differently. However, we generally define personality as the combination of characteristics or traits such as emotions, pattern of thoughts, feelings and behaviors unique to an individual. Traits are partly inherent and remain consistent throughout life, especially after adulthood. However, they can be marginally manipulated with the help of psychiatrists for an individual’s amelioration.

It was found that there are many psychology works that relate personality traits to online social behavior. They found some evidences that personality and online behavior do have link to each other. For example: people scoring on high neuroticism often use more social media services like Facebook, Twitter and blogs (Teresa Correa, Amber Willard Hinsley, and Homero Gil De Zuniga, 2010; Rosanna E Guadagno, Bradley M Okdie, and Cassie A Eno, 2008). However, some studies found a negative correlation between neuroticism and overall Internet usage (Tracy L Tuten and Michael Bosnjak, 2001). Moreover, people with emotional instability seem to have additive behavior on the Internet (Elizabeth Hardie and Ming Yi Tee, 2007; Lei Li, Yang Yang, and Liu Mingxin, 2006; Mehwash Mehroof and Mark D Griffiths, 2010). This indicates that there is inconsistencies and varieties in previous findings.

## **Hans Eysenck's Three-Trait Model**

Hans Jürgen Eysenck developed a model of personality based upon just three universal traits:

1. **Introversion/Extraversion**  
Introversion involves directing attention on inner experiences, while extraversion relates to focusing attention outward on other people and the environment. So, a person high in introversion might be quiet and reserved, while an individual high in extraversion might be sociable and outgoing.
2. **Neuroticism/Emotional Stability**  
This dimension of Eysenck's trait theory is related to moodiness versus even-temperedness. Neuroticism refers to an individual's tendency to become upset or emotional, while stability refers to the tendency to remain emotionally constant.
3. **Psychoticism**: Later, after studying individuals suffering from mental illness, Eysenck added a personality dimension he called psychoticism to his trait theory. Individuals who are high on this trait tend to have difficulty dealing with reality and may be antisocial, hostile, non-empathetic and manipulative.

According to this perspective, traits are relatively stable over time, differ across individuals (e.g. some people are outgoing whereas others are shy), and influence behavior. Traits are in contrast to states, which are more transitory dispositions. Since Hans in 1947 defined the pillars, or traits, that form personality, numerous studies have been conducted and many works have been written about the subject. These works have supported his theory of individual differences between humans with regards to personality. In communication research, Eysenck's supertraits have been used for a great deal of variance in a variety of communication variables: communication apprehension (Beatty, McCroskey, & Heisel, 1998, Beatty & Valencic, 2000, Kelly & Keaten, 2000), communicator style (Bodary & Miller, 2000, Horvath, 1995), humor enactment (Wrench & McCroskey, 2001), nonverbal immediacy (Cole, 2000), sociocommunicative orientation (Cole & McCroskey, 2000), and verbal aggression (Valencic, Beatty, Rudd, Dobos, & Heisel, 1998, Wrench, 2002).

Since the Internet is powered by human interaction, we cannot understand the Internet without knowing the personality of the user, and researchers stated above have used Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and various other websites to collect usage statistics. However, we are still far from a successful outcome. This paper aims to add academic value towards the literature, thus this study embarks on following objectives:

1. To identify the extraversion personality among Malaysian Twitter users
2. To identify the neuroticism personality among Malaysian Twitter users
3. To identify the psychoticism personality among Malaysian Twitter users

## **Methodology**

An online survey of 34 questions using Google Docs was done to 400 Malaysian Twitter users. Simple Random Sampling method was used as suggested by Jianguo Lu, Dingding Li (2012) due to irrespective of respondent's status in a scale-free nature. According to Twitter in Malaysia: Population and Insights. (2014, April 13), Malaysia had a total of 3.5 million Twitter users as of February 2014, thus the sample chosen for this study is 400 ( $p = .5, >100,000$ ) by referring to table by Israel, Glenn. D. Twitter users irrespective of age, gender and so on, were approached randomly and given the URL of the survey. The research instrument in this study comprises of 4-section questionnaire. All sections except for Section 1 used 5 point Likert Scale ranging from 1 = "Strongly Agree" to 5 = "Strongly Disagree". Crosschecking with communication experts in order to get the standardization of the questionnaire and wording of the questions was done to get the instrument's validity. Items for this study were adapted from the study of Tiwari, T., Singh, A. L., & Singh, I. L. (2009). It was later altered to suit the objectives of this study. The Cronbach Alpha reliability test on all items was done by the same study and has gained scores as below:

1. Extraversion Cronbach's alpha value = 0.766.
2. Neuroticism Cronbach's alpha value = 0.722
3. Psychoticism Cronbach's alpha value = 0.722

Data from 400 respondents were analyzed with SPSS using descriptive statistics and were represented by mean using the value of  $\bar{X}$ .  $\bar{X}$  represents the mean (also known as average) scores of the result. Only top five scores of mean were shared on this research paper. As for the operational definition of the variables, Twitter in this research is defined as a free social networking micro blogging service that allows registered members to broadcast short posts called tweets. Twitter members can broadcast tweets and follow other users' tweets by using multiple platforms and devices. Tweets and replies to tweets can be sent by cell phone text message, desktop client or by posting at the Twitter.com website (Yair Amichai-Hamburger and Gideon Vinitzky, 2010). Personality in this research is defined as characteristic patterns of thoughts, feelings and behaviors that make a person unique. In addition to this, personality arises from within the individual and remains fairly consistent throughout life (Lei Li, Yang Yang, and Liu Mingxin, 2006). Elizabeth Hardie and Ming Yi Tee (2007) define extraversion and neuroticism as a central dimension of human personality theories. Extraversion tends to be manifested in outgoing, talkative, energetic behavior, whereas introversion is manifested in more reserved and solitary behavior. Meanwhile, psychoticism in this research is defined as refers to a personality pattern typified by aggressiveness and interpersonal hostility (Mehwash Mehroof and Mark D Griffiths, 2010).

## **Findings And Discussions**

### **Respondents' Characteristics**

The demographic characteristics of respondents indicated that 42.6% of the respondents were male. Majority of them were Malay (94.5%), 49% of them spent 6-7 hours per day in online activities, and 50.7% were aged between 21-25. In terms of education level, 54.0% of the respondents hold a diploma, and 31.0% were bachelor degree graduates.

### **The extraversion personality among Malaysian Twitter users**

The first objective of this study is to identify the extraversion personality among Malaysian Twitter users. It is found that respondents possess a medium extraversion personality. On Twitter, respondents see themselves as someone full of energy ( $x=5.00$ ), they choose to exhibit their social skills ability ( $x=5.00$ ), they were ingenious, a deep thinker; and weighs everything before sending a tweet ( $x=4.52$ ). Respondents also took the initiative to make new friends On Twitter ( $x=4.52$ ); and they choose to tell jokes and funny stories to their followers ( $x=4.52$ ). These findings are consistent with the findings of a study done by Yair Amichai-Hamburger (2005) that demonstrated a positive link between personalities and the Internet usage.

### **The neuroticism personality among Malaysian Twitter users**

The second objective of this study is to identify the neuroticism personality among Malaysian Twitter users. It is found that respondents showed a low neuroticism personality as they do not experience the sense of moodiness, worry, and envy or full of jealousy for other users ( $x=4.47$ ), respondents have the ability to withstand the effects of a hostile environment ( $x=4.47$ ); and they were not prone to be stressed out whenever their tweets were replied with negative remarks ( $x=3.92$ ). It is also found that respondents on Twitter, does not care deeply of what other users think of themselves ( $x=3.92$ ); and they did not become overly sensitive ( $x=3.92$ ). These findings are consistent with the findings of a study done by Yair Amichai-Hamburger and Gideon Vinitzky (2010) that did not find a strong correlation between people's change of personality (after-used) and their activities on social media.

### **The psychoticism personality among Malaysian Twitter users**

The last objective for this study is to identify the psychoticism personality among Malaysian Twitter users. It is found that respondents have a low psychoticism behavior while on Twitter as they can control themselves to not be irritable, annoying, impatient, tends to threaten others, and be verbally aggressive ( $x=4.47$ ). Respondents also pointed out that on Twitter, they do not misuse weak spots in the society ( $x=4.00$ ). For example, respondents will not retweet possible false news on their timelines. Respondents were also able to safeguard themselves by not blocking users/followers they're not comfortable with ( $x=3.87$ ). It is also found that Malaysian Twitter users are able to commit to long-term friendship / relationships found on the social media network ( $x=3.87$ ); and solemnly agree not to deceit and deception to cheat, con, or defraud others for their personal gain from other users of Twitter. These findings are consistent with the findings of a study done by Yair Amichai-Hamburger and Gideon Vinitzky (2010) that suggested, current users are able to isolate their real life personality from the virtual world personality due various reasons such as privacy, branding efforts, or laws that has been enforced.

### **Conclusion and suggestions**

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that Twitter users in Malaysia were sociable and craved for excitement. They tend to be carefree, optimistic and impulsive. The respondents were also not anxious, worrying and moody on Twitter. They are not overly emotional and find it difficult to calm down once upset on

conversations over social media network. This paper would like to suggest for replication studies to be done using more items, to larger populations or different demographical elements among Twitter users in Malaysia. The absence of replication studies is particularly problematic because as stated above, we cannot comprehend the Internet without shrewding the personality of the user and the social media network such as Facebook and Twitter is here to stay. This paper would also like to suggest the test on other major theories of personality such as Biological Theories, Psychodynamic Theories, Humanist Theories and so on towards the personality of social media network users.

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