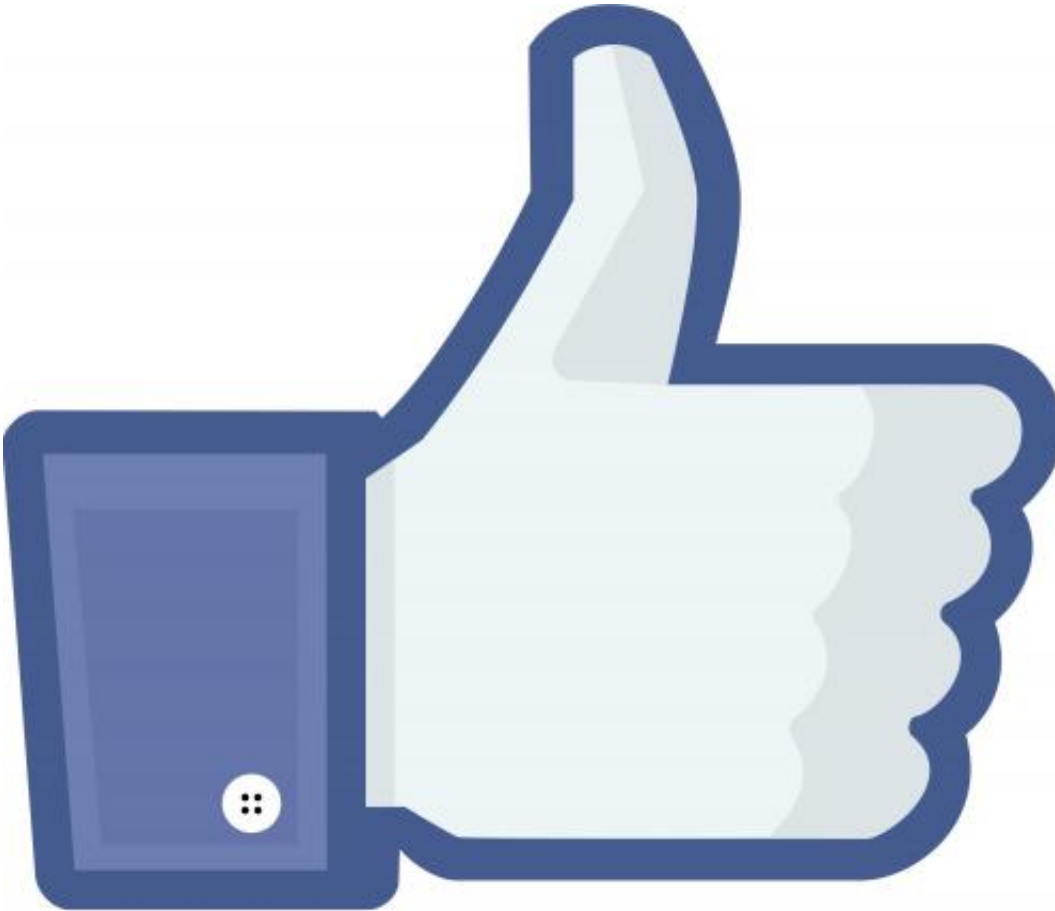


Are you Facebook dependent?

December 22 2015



What drives you to Facebook? News? Games? Feedback on your posts?
The chance to meet new friends?

If any of these hit home, you might have a Facebook [dependency](#). But

that's not necessarily a bad thing, says Amber Ferris, an assistant professor of communication at The University of Akron's Wayne College.

Ferris, who studies Facebook user trends, says the more people use Facebook to fulfill their goals, the more dependent on it they become. She is quick to explain this dependency is not equivalent to an addiction. Rather, the reason why people use Facebook determines the level of dependency they have on the social network. The study found those who use Facebook to meet new people were the most dependent on Facebook overall.

To identify dependency factors, Ferris and Erin Hollenbaugh, an associate professor of communication studies at Kent State University at Stark, studied 301 Facebook users between the ages of 18 and 68 who post on the site at least once a month. They found that people who perceive Facebook as helpful in gaining a better understanding of themselves go to the site to meet new people and to get attention from others. Also, people who use Facebook to gain a deeper understanding of themselves tend to have agreeable personalities, but lower self-esteem than others.

"They might post that they went to the gym. Maybe they'll share a post expressing a certain political stance or personal challenge they're facing. They rely on feedback from Facebook friends to better understand themselves," Ferris says.

Ferris explains that some users observe how others cope with problems and situations similar to their own "and get ideas on how to approach others in important and difficult situations."

Ferris and Hollenbaugh presented "A Uses and Gratifications Approach to Exploring Antecedents to Facebook Dependency" at the National

Communication Association conference in Las Vegas in November. They say other Facebook dependency signs point to users' needs for information or entertainment. In other words, a user knows about the local festival scheduled for this weekend thanks to Facebook.

In their previous studies, "Facebook Self-disclosure: Examining the Role of Traits, Social Cohesion, and Motives" (2014) and "Predictors of Honesty, Intent, and Valence of Facebook Self-disclosure" (2015) published in the journal *Computers in Human Behavior*, Ferris and Hollenbaugh also uncovered personality traits common among specific types of Facebook users.

For example, people who use Facebook to establish new relationships tend to be extroverted. Extroverts are more open to sharing their personal information online, but are not always honest with their disclosures, Ferris says.

The most positive posts online come from those who have high self-esteem, according to Ferris.

"Those who post the most and are the most positive in posts do so to stay connected with people they already know and to gain others' attention," Ferris says. "This makes a lot of sense - if you are happy with your life, you are more likely to want to share that happiness with others on social media."

Provided by University of Akron

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