

You are not as anonymous as you think online

June 7 2016



Credit: Wikipedia

You may not be anonymous as you think you are online; reveals a new study published on *Frontiers in ICT*. Your browsing behavior can indicate your personality and provide a unique digital signature which can identify you, sometimes after just 30-minutes of browsing.

"Our research suggests a person's [personality traits](#) can be deduced by their general internet usage. This differs from other studies that have only looked at the use of [social media](#) platforms, such as Facebook and Twitter," said Dr Ikusan R. Adeyemi, a research scholar at the Universiti Teknologi, Malaysia, and lead author of this new study.

He continued; "That we show these behavioral signatures exist opens up new research into understanding online behavior."

Research linking personality traits to computer usage has typically focused on social media. For example, extrovert people tend to use these platforms to enlarge their boundary of friends and influence, while introvert individuals spend more time on social media to compensate for a probable lack of physical interaction.

However, a person's general online browsing behavior can also reflect their choice, preference and reflexes, which is largely controlled by their unique psychological characteristics.

This latest study recruited volunteers from the Universiti Teknologi, Malaysia and monitored their internet usage. This included many factors such as the duration of the internet session, number of websites browsed and total number of requests made.

In addition, the volunteers completed a test to reveal their personality characteristics over five categories: openness to new experience, conscientiousness, extroversion, agreeableness and neuroticism.

The analysis of this data revealed strong links between a person's personality and browsing behavior. For example, an individual's level of conscientiousness could be distinguished within a 30-minute session of online browsing.

"Online marketing organizations can use our findings to reliably tailor their product to a specific audience; it can be used to develop an intelligent internet service that can predict and personalize a user's experience," explained Dr. Adeyami, "It can also be used as a complementary way of increasing security for online identification and authentication. Law enforcement agencies can also apply our findings in the investigation of online crime cases."

Further research by Dr Adeyami and his colleagues at the Universiti Teknologi hope to reveal more patterns across the five personality traits investigated, which will help to map an individual's personality signature and increase our understanding of online behavior.

More information: Ikuesan Richard Adeyemi et al, Understanding Online Behavior: Exploring the Probability of Online Personality Trait Using Supervised Machine-Learning Approach, *Frontiers in ICT* (2016). [DOI: 10.3389/fict.2016.00008](https://doi.org/10.3389/fict.2016.00008)

Provided by Frontiers

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