

How companies are taking advantage of selfie culture

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Who would have thought that millennials' polished selfies at the beach or #nofilter photos of themselves would influence how companies are marketing their products on various social media platforms?

As it turns out, companies have caught onto selfie culture, now encouraging consumers to take and share personal "selfies in relation to their brand." This trend, now coined as "selfie-marketing," can be defined as "user-generated selfies that are used by a company for marketing purposes."

One University of Akron professor has been honored for her research paper on the subject. Dr. Alexa Fox, an assistant professor of marketing, received the Journal of Consumer Marketing's Outstanding Paper award in the 2019 Emerald Literati Awards for Excellence.

Analyzing popularity of selfies

The paper, titled "Selfie-marketing: exploring narcissism and self-concept in visual user-generated content on social media," explains the research conducted by Fox in partnership with Todd J. Bacile of Loyola University New Orleans, Chinintorn Nakhata of Penn State Harrisburg and Aleshia Weible of Clarion University of Pennsylvania.

Fox's research used two mixed-methods studies to analyze the popularity of selfies as it relates to classic research on narcissism and [self-concept](#) to help determine the effectiveness of selfie-marketing on photo-sharing social media apps like Snapchat and Instagram.

The study defines narcissism as a [personality trait](#) "characterized by a grandiose self-presentation motivated by the need to regulate self-esteem." The researchers' findings suggest that narcissism does in fact affect millennials' attitudes toward and intent to participate in [selfie](#)-marketing.

Responding to environment

The results also show that, due to ranging levels of narcissism, millennials use selfies to present self-concepts differently in various content-sharing apps. In other words, millennials present different versions of themselves based on the [social media](#) network's environment.

For example, on Instagram, users may feel inclined to express their most ideal selves, posting photos where they feel they look their best and using filters to aid in doing so. On Snapchat, however, users may present a version of themselves that seems more authentic and every day. This is due to the less permanent nature of an app like Snapchat, where stories disappear after 24 hours, and direct messaging photos disappear after opening.

"Our research offers implications for what type of content resonates most on [various social media platforms](#)," explains Fox. "For example, marketers of products designed to improve customers' lives in some way, like cosmetics, might benefit from using Instagram, whereas products designed with everyday life in mind, like coffee, might be more successful on Snapchat."

Social [media](#) has changed the landscape of so many industries like marketing. Research like that conducted by Fox will allow marketers to get a leg up on the changing environment, providing a more thorough understanding of the consumer and opportunities for better strategy.

More information: Alexa K. Fox et al. Selfie-marketing: exploring narcissism and self-concept in visual user-generated content on social media, *Journal of Consumer Marketing* (2017). [DOI: 10.1108/JCM-03-2016-1752](#). [www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/JCM-03-2016-1752/full/html](#)

Provided by University of Akron

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