Perception and Motivation of Selfies among Millennial Users

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Abstract

Online communication and self-expression through posting pictures have become a social norm. While most research's focus has been on how these affected adolescents and anyone bracketed in generation Z, those born between 1995 and 2015, this paper will be looking at the impact of social media and selfie culture on those in generation Y, better known as Millennials, born between 1980 and 1994. This subset of social media users was not born with access to camera phones or social media, yet they have adopted it for both professional and personal interactions. This study aimed to investigate whether individualism and collectivism in the west and east respectively can impact the results, to understand what motivates the millennials to take selfies, to investigate how millennials perceive their selfie habits, whether the millennials who take selfies exhibit similar narcissistic traits, and to find out if and how selfies impact the lives and relationships of the millennials. This research focuses on qualitative, semi-structured interviews done with a selection of professionals aged between 23 and 39 years, capturing insight from the oldest Millennials to the youngest. The findings revealed that there were several areas concerning the millennials' view of expression through selfies. Many millennials believed taking and posting selfies was negative behavior and judged others for doing so however they partook in the same behavior. The motivations for taking selfies were predominantly similar; memories and keeping family and friends informed. However, a millennial's definition of a selfie did differ. Within a conclusion in this study is language surrounding selfie culture is predominantly negative; this includes language used by people who take selfies. The millennials' actions could be viewed as hypocritical as they say the pictures posted on social media are fake and not a true representation of popularity yet they still take part in this behavior. Understanding the millennials' expression through selfies is key to understanding how they view themselves and the world around them. Even if a millennial fabricates their life through editing a selfie this in itself offers an insight into how they deal with life. It may be prudent to revisit some language used to describe the use of social media.

Keywords: *Selfies, Social Media, Personality, Narcissism, Anxiety, Depression, Relationships*

1. Introduction

Over the course of the past 15 years, the world has seen the rise of social networking sites (SNS) and connectivity. With this, a new phenomenon has also been seen, the use of selfies as a form of self-expression. A selfie is a self-portrait digital photo, taken with a digital camera or, more commonly, with a smartphone and posted on SNS such as Facebook and Instagram. These photos are then liked and/or commented on by friends, fans, and strangers.

These SNS give a user the ability to create a persona different from their offline persona. The user can consider their words and responses as well as edit and filter their photos, creating the "best version" of themselves.

According to digital reports carried out by Kemp (2019), there are 3.484 billion social media users in the world, of these the highest percentage of users dependent on age group was 32% aged between 25 and 34. The average time spent on social media was 2:16 hours a day, the highest being 4:12 hours in the Philippines and the lowest being 36 minutes in Japan. The author hopes to find out through this research whether a professional adult's use of social media has caused any significant impact on work or home life due to the time it takes to post a selfie on social media. This will take into consideration how many selfies are posted a day, how many times that one posted picture has been retaken, and how long it has taken to edit, touch up or otherwise "improve" the selfie.

In the era of #MeToo and women standing up for women, more celebrities and influencers are turning to their social media accounts to share positive body image posts with their followers. Selfies are

heralded as a key tool for empowering marginalized groups, driving the message that you are not alone and more people look like you. Selfies have been deemed a form of communication and a way of tapping into an otherwise unattainable support network. Radovic et al. (2016) interviewed a group of adolescents already diagnosed with depression and found that they viewed social media as a way of expressing themselves and expressing their emotions and feelings when they were not able to face to face with their peers. Also, those who went for a period without leaving the house due to suffering from debilitative disorders such as anxiety or depression found they could not only keep their peers up to date on their conditions without having to talk about it but also keep up to date with what their friends were doing

Many studies have looked at the psychological impact posting selfies has on both the poster and consumer. Mills et al. (2018) found that posting selfies significantly lowered the mood of an individual, and led to worsened self-image. Hogue and Mills (2019) noted that young women who actively engaged in social media with more attractive peers led to worsened body image. Selfies have also been linked to narcissism in several studies. Dalvi-Esfahania (2019) concluded that narcissistic individuals used the act of posting on social media to satisfy their need for recognition. March & McBean (2018) broke down narcissism into three subcategories; Leadership/Authority, Grandiose Exhibitionism, and Entitlement/ Exploitative. They found that the only category to show a significant relationship with selfie-taking was Grandiose Exhibitionism. In addition to this, they also found that those who presented with Grandiose Exhibitionism narcissism would only post selfies when they had low self-esteem, this led them to the conclusion that those who posted selfies were trying to compensate for the aforementioned low self-esteem.

Something this paper will investigate is whether the rise of the selfie has encouraged people to be more narcissistic, or whether selfies have just given existing narcissists a platform. Mccain et al., (2016) believed that taking a selfie can change a person's attitudes or beliefs. The process of self-promotion through posting selfies will lead to reactions from others, which reinforces their own narcissistic beliefs and feeds their desire to take and post more selfies, which may be consistent with the idea of impression management, "the act of influencing others' perception of you by regulating or controlling information in social interactions" (Piwinger & Ebert, 2001). Social media users are driven to make a good impression by posting the "best version" of themselves, when this behavior is rewarded with likes and comments they will carry on presenting this new image. Alternatively, if they do not get the desired results they may alter the information they are relaying to try and recreate the desired results, thus resulting in a change in personality through operant conditioning (Skinner, 1965).

A Millennial is anyone born between 1980 and 1995. They have been raised being told they were special and unique, and to "follow your dreams." This self-confidence often spills over into the realms of narcissism. Millennials are seen as more optimistic than other generations, this could be down to their unrealistic expectations of how their lives should go. They have grown up watching Boomers have a house, car, good job, and a family by the time they are 35. When they finally conclude that these things are out of their reach, it sometimes leads to disillusionment. The millennials are tech-savvy for the most part. They were the early adopters of the internet and social media although they do have difficulty troubleshooting issues with hardware and software. The millennials have a challenging time trusting, they have been bombarded with advertisements from an early age, and they have seen a surge in untrustworthy politicians and politically aligned news corporations. In short, the millennials have a great amount of self-belief and optimism that they will change the world. When things do not go in their way, they may come across as entitled, which leads other generations to think the worst.

Previous research has discovered millennials consider their generation to be the most narcissistic, however, the term narcissistic creates unhappy emotions. Grubbs et al. (2019) found that millennials have been hearing a prevailing message that they are narcissistic, they agree but dislike the label as they associate it with arrogance and vanity. Grubbs also found that what one person may say is narcissistic another would call individualistic, a trait that the millennials value.

A behavioral function is often used to identify why a child does something, and how this behavior can be altered, (O'Connor, & Ammen, 2013). The four main functions of behavior are sensory stimulation, escape, access to attention, and access to tangibles.

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This assessment can be applied to the group of millennials to better understand the basic needs met by taking and posting selfies.

This study proposes that there are five steps to the process of taking a selfie. These five steps are used to understand the behavioral function of a selfie taker, analysing these five steps helps us to understand the function of behavior and therefore understand the behavior itself.
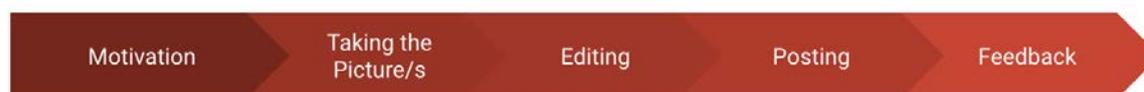
Figure 1 Five steps of behavioral functional of selfie

(a) Motivation

The main driving force behind a person picking up a smartphone to take a selfie is their motivation. This could be to capture the moment, show off, or keep friends and family informed of what's going on. Previous research states that an individual's main motivation is self-promotion and to gain acceptance from a peer group, (Yang & Li, 2014), this would fall into the function of 'access to attention.' This study aims to assess if this is something millennials also believe. Other research has identified impression management, happiness, physical appearance, and self-esteem as motives for posting selfies online (Pounders, Kathrynn & Kowalczyk, Pounders, Kowalczyk, & Stowers, 2016).

(b) Taking the picture/s

This step includes the setup, how long it takes, how many photos are taken before the subject is happy, and whether the taking of a selfie interrupts the natural flow of a situation. Responses were analyzed in terms of both self-reflection (whether they felt their actions interrupted a social event) and the individuals' view of other people's behavior (whether their friends' actions interrupted a social event).

(c) Editing

Much like taking the picture/s, editing could be another point in the selfie process that creates a barrier between the individual and the situation they are in. Even if the user waits till they are at home before editing a selfie, the focus should be put on how long they take to edit before posting, what tools they use, and what edits they make to the photo; is it just changing the light balance, adding a filter, or editing features and/or physical appearance. At what point does the user deem the photo-worthy of posting?

(d) Posting

Once the user has gone through the steps of taking and editing a photo, they must choose whether they will upload it to social media. For the purpose of this study, SNS refers to platforms where you post pictures for public consumption, this could be Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, or TikTok. Many respondents mentioned WhatsApp as a regular tool for distributing pictures to specific friends or family members. This study will also look at behavior associated with sharing selfies within small friendship groups, does motivation or behavior change depending on the audience?

(e) Feedback

Feedback links back to the user's motivation for taking a selfie, is it the desired result of posting selfies on SNS, or just a byproduct of the medium of self-expression? If the main motivation of the selfie is to raise self-esteem, then the correlation between feedback and the user's mood or outlook will be high. Positive feedback will lead to feelings of happiness and self-worth whereas low levels of feedback could be perceived as negative feedback and lead to low self-esteem. If the motivation is to keep friends and family up to date, then feedback is not measured in quantity but quality, with a focus on who is engaging with the photo as opposed to how much engagement the photo is receiving.

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2. Objectives

The primary objective of this paper is to understand how millennials perceive their behavior of taking and posting selfies on social media. The author has developed three secondary objectives that will be achieved during the research:

1) To investigate whether individualism and collectivism in the west and east respectively can impact the results

2) To understand what motivates the millennials to take selfies

3) To investigate whether the millennials who take selfies will have similar narcissistic traits

3. Materials and Methods

3.1 Data source

This paper used a data source of professionals, specifically the Millennials (those born between the early '80s and mid '90s). There were 15 respondents aged between 23 and 39 years. This age group was emphasized as they are in a unique position and old enough that they did not spend their formative years with the internet, yet they have still easily adopted technology and are active on social media.

3.2 Data collection

The interview consisted of 20 questions. Individuals who were in the chosen age range were approached, and appointments were made to have one on one interviews. These interviews lasted between 25 and 30 minutes. Even though there was a structured set of questions to follow, the interviewees were not restricted. If a subject mentioned something that might be important, they were asked to follow up questions, allowing them to expand on their thought and allowing the subject to go into more detail about their thoughts and feelings. The author would bring them back on track with the next structured question. Demographic data were also collected, namely, age, gender, occupation, and relationship status.

Table 1 Demographic data of interviewees

Name	Age	Country of origin	Current country of residence	Occupation	Relationship status
Holly	30	UK	Bangkok	Teacher	Married
Eoin	30	Ireland	Bangkok	Teacher	In a relationship
Barry	33	Ireland	Bangkok	Teacher	Married
Laura	37	Ireland	Bangkok	Teacher	Married
Mike	35	Thailand	Bangkok	Photographer	In a relationship
Danilo	26	Italy	Bangkok	Student	Single
Rich	33	UK	Bangkok	Teacher	Married
Emma	26	Thailand	Bangkok	Teacher	In a relationship
Sam	29	UK	Bangkok	Teacher	In a relationship
Sammy	38	UK	Bangkok	Teacher	Single
Jay	39	Thailand	Bangkok	Teacher	Married
Cia	30	UK	Bangkok	Copywriter	Married
Amanda	29	Canada	Bangkok	Administrator	Married
Pat	39	Thailand	Bangkok	Teacher	Single

The interview responses were analyzed and interpreted. Each answer was read and reread, and each recording was listened to until key points emerged. These key points were then grouped under key themes to fully answer the research questions. Below are the questions asked in the interview:

Demographic questions

1. How old are you?
2. What is your gender?

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3. What is your occupation?
4. What is your relationship status?

Targeted questions about social media use and selfie-taking
5. How many social media apps do you have and use?
6. On a scale of 1(not a lot)-5 (all the time), how often do you use those apps?
7. Do you post selfies?
8. Are your selfies just of you?
9. How many times do you take a photo before posting it?
10. Do you edit your selfies before posting?
11. If yes, how long do you spend editing your selfies?
12. How often do you refresh your feed to check how many likes/comments your selfie has received?
13. Do you delete a selfie if it doesn't receive enough positive feedback?
14. How do you feel when your selfie gets positive feedback?
15. How do you feel when your selfie doesn't get as much feedback as you'd hoped?
16. How many 'likes' do you deem to be acceptable?
17. Do you edit and post selfies whilst with other people?
18. Do you think popularity is linked to selfie 'likes'? if someone has a lot of likes, are they well-liked?
19. Who mostly takes selfies in your friendship group
20. Do you look at other people's selfies and compare yourself to them?
21. As briefly as possible, what motivates you to take selfies? If you don't, why?

3.3 Ethical Considerations

As this research touched on certain issues such as mental health, relationships, body image, and potentially negative results of taking and posting selfies, all research was conducted in confidence. Those interviewed gave express permission for their data to be used, and if a participant felt uncomfortable with any questions, they did not have to answer. The subjects also gave their permission for use of their first names.

4. Results

4.1 Cultural considerations

As seen in table 1 all participants come from various countries around the world, this can lead to some cultural differences in results. The objectives of this paper mainly focus on a specific generation; however, it would be prudent to give culture some thought, namely how individualism and collectivism in the west and east respectively can impact the results.

Individualism is classically defined as whether people define themselves as 'I' or 'We' (Hofstede, & Hofstede, 2005). An individualistic society will often encourage self-promotion and ideals of self-worth, whereas a collectivist society will put the needs of the group before the needs of the individual. In terms of our selfie taker in Asia, this could seem hypocritical as many view selfies as a blatant show of self-promotion (Bij de Vaate et al., 2018). However, when the interviewees' answers are analyzed, a different conclusion can be found. When asked "Are your selfies just of you?"

Pat responded: *"I prefer selfies with others. For me, a selfie shows the relationship between me and others. It shows trust."*

When asked "Do you post selfies?"

Pat responded: *"Yes, I started taking selfies a couple of years ago. Lots of people were doing it so I thought why not?. It's trendy, I wanted to be trendy"*

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These answers indicate that the goal (whether conscious or subconscious) is to create the network and 'in group' associated with a collectivist society, one which extends far beyond the users' core friendship group. This is also evident in the average amount of likes the participants indicated when asked "How many 'likes' do you deem to be acceptable?"

Table 2 A statistic of like acceptances

	Asian	Western
The lowest number of likes deemed acceptable per post	50	10
The highest number of likes deemed acceptable per post	300	70
The average number of likes deemed acceptable per post	127.5	27.5

Here the difference in the volume of likes deemed acceptable could indicate the difference in which each culture fosters relationships. If 'society' is interpreted to be SNS, then collectivists create a society where strong relationships involve everybody taking responsibility for group members. When someone in that group posts a selfie, it is expected that all group members engage, leading to the expectancy of a higher number of likes per post.

In an Individualistic culture, where people are meant to have meaningful relationships with close family and friends only, the expectancy for a higher number of likes is not as evident. When asked "How do you feel when your selfie doesn't get as much feedback as you'd hoped?"

Sammy responded: *"Even if it's just my parents that have liked something, I'd be happy. In the past, if I post something I want a guy to like specifically and they haven't I might have felt disappointed...maybe there is a specific person you want to notice you and they don't, that could be disappointing"*

This indicates the importance of fulfilling the desire to foster those close relationships. As long as those key needs have been met the individual feels a sense of validation.

4.2 Key Points

Whilst compiling the data four main themes, or key points (KP) were identified. These were:
KP1: Motivations
KP2: Narcissistic traits
KP3: Perception of selfies
KP 4: Link between popularity and selfie 'likes'

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KP1: Motivations

Figure 2 The research's key theme: 1. Motivation

One of the main objectives of this study was to investigate why millennials take selfies. The author found that there were two specific motivations for selfie-taking; firstly, to create a memory, and secondly, to keep friends and family informed.

(1) Memories

Eoin said: *"In 50 years' time, if I have dementia, it might trigger some memories"*

This was backed up by Mike who said: *"A year from now I won't remember this moment, but I can scroll down and see this picture and be reminded"*

Sammy added: *Looking at a selfie from years ago helps me remember how I felt at that specific time. It's also interesting to see how my face changes over time"*

Whilst Jay stated: *"Over the past month I've posted a lot as my kids are on holiday so I spend a lot of time with my kids, so I just want to post it for my own memories for myself"*

It was an important point for them and an indication that social media is potentially this generation's photo album. Previously people would flick through a physical record of their past experiences, whether in the form of slides or photo albums, people now scroll through digital photo albums to see where they were or what they looked like years ago.

It is quite an internalized motivation, the behavior is not driven by a desire to get attention but rather to catalog one's life. The fact that this is done on a public platform is potentially irrelevant and can just be chalked up to the progression of technology.

(2) Keeping friends and family informed

For many, the need to keep friends and family updated on their lives is a key motivation. A large number of millennials are living away from home whether in the next district or another country, which makes checking in with family and friends back home harder. Out of the interviewees, 66% were ex-pats who live and work in a foreign country. Most of them are from the UK or Ireland, where it is costly and time-consuming to fly back and, due to the time difference, video calling is also difficult. A good way to keep in contact with those at home is to post their pictures on social media.

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Jay said: *"Friends want to see updates, updates on what I'm doing. Friends that didn't see each other, only talking on Facebook for a few years. Just in case they want to know my kid is already five years old and I have two kids now."*

Rich said: *"Connection and communication, particularly with family back home. Just to let them know I'm ok and happy. Particularly having nephews, I know my brother will show them pictures of me just so they have that connection with me. The personal connection would sum it up."*

Sam added: *"I wasn't really a massive social media user back home but since I've moved abroad, it's more to check in with family and friends you lose touch with back home. In an informal kind of way."*

Sam was prompted further with the question "Do you ever hope that they will look at those pictures and want to do what you're doing?"

"I think with family, they haven't visited me yet, so it is a way of showing them beaches and stuff and saying 'come out'"

Years ago, in the seventies and eighties before social media, many young people started a global movement. They were emigrating to other countries, mainly America, Canada, Australia, and Hong Kong. During this time families had to rely on the postal service to exchange photographs and information, with the occasional phone call on a special occasion. Communication was costly. Now people can instantly share where they are and what they are doing.

The millennials indicated a need to remind those back home about what they looked like or how they were changing, some people may only go home once a year, and if they have young nieces or nephews, the need to stay visually connected is high.

Eoin noted that there was an element of bragging when it came to informing friends and family through selfies:

"Look at me, I've been to the Taj Mahal, it's a self-glorification thing."

He reasoned that this is a part of everyone's motivations to take selfies so people whom you have not spoken to in a while, maybe the person you did not get on with at school, could see the fantastic things you are doing now.

An interesting development when talking about connecting with people back home was the fact many millennials said they would take a selfie to send it via WhatsApp, not posting it directly to SNS. They would go through the same process; motivation, taking, and some editing but when it came to posting they wanted to connect with specific people instead of everybody, which could indicate that those who send pictures via WhatsApp are hypocritical. They will say those who share pictures on SNS are vain, however, they will readily take several selfies and send them to group chats, which include many of the friends who would see the picture if it was posted on SNS.

Rich, who had previously mentioned he sends lots of photos on WhatsApp said: *"I think it's self-obsessed to think having you in a photo makes it worth taking, when I'm on Instagram and Facebook I stay away from anything selfie-related. I don't want to reward them"*

Barry added: *"I think it's sad if people post loads of selfies on social media. I don't do it because I'm not a narcissist or a prick, I hate those people."*

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He then went on to say: *"I post on WhatsApp every day. In my family chat and to my friends as a form of communication, I'm sending loads of pictures."*

It is perhaps more to do with the definition and perception of a selfie and the understanding of social media use, something that will be focused more on KP3.

KP2: Narcissistic traits
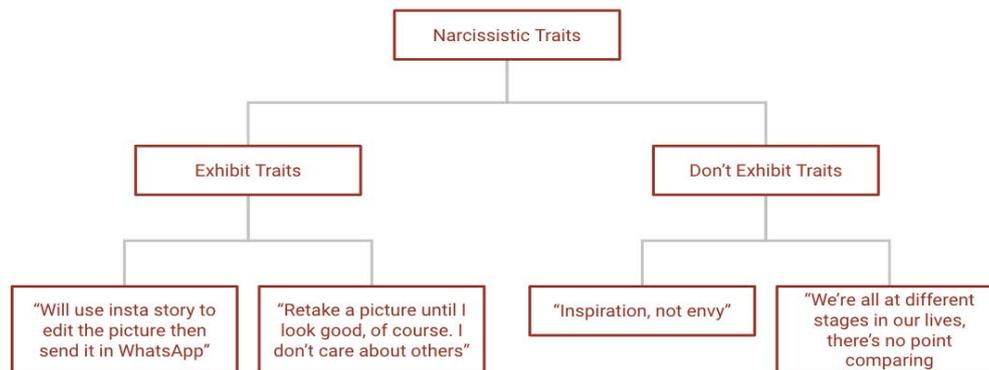
Figure 3 The research's key theme: 2. Narcissistic traits

The narcissistic traits this paper is focusing on are persistent grandiosity, which is an excessive need for admiration and the feelings of envy towards others as well as the belief that others envy them. The main popular understanding of narcissistic people is that they hold their value above others. and that they constantly seek to validate this belief through the praise given to them by others (Campbell, Rudich, & Sedikides, 2002; Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001).

The questions "Do you look at other people's selfies and compare yourself to them?", and questions attaining frequency of taking a selfie or time spent editing were used specifically to judge whether individuals associated any feelings of envy to their social media presence, and whether they would spend longer than necessary trying to create a perfect image to broadcast to the world.

Some answers did reveal aspects of narcissism, for example, Laura stated:
"I will use insta story to edit the picture then send it in WhatsApp"

Jay said: *"Retake a picture until I look good, of course. I don't care about others"*

Mike added: *"It's not about how many times I take the photo, it could be once it could be one hundred times. I'll do it until I'm happy"*

Barry said: *"When I was single I used to compare. It would be about looking at the competition. Now I compare baby photos, what parents are doing with their kids."*

These responses show a certain level of narcissism. The instances where an individual edits a selfie before sending it to family members or when they retake a selfie until they (and only they) look good indicate an excessive need for admiration. They are pursuing gratification from an idealized version of themselves. In the case of a parent, it can extend to their children, unwitting extensions of perfectionism.

Although there were elements of narcissism in the interview responses, there were many instances that showed a lack of narcissistic traits in our selfie-takers.

Mike said: *"I do compare, but I look at new ways of how to get a good shot. It's more for inspiration than envy"*

Emma said: *"We're all at different stages in our lives, there's no point comparing"*

Sammie added: *"I will compare what I'm doing with what they're doing and feel a bit of jealousy, but then I will reflect on my own life and my own happiness...I'd probably spend 1 minute editing a picture, I've realized that others don't notice imperfections I may think are there"*

These reasonings show a deeper understanding of the millennials' value of their self-worth. It indicates higher self-esteem rather than narcissism. Grubbs et al. (2019) rationalized that the traits that some call narcissism others call individualistic. Children are told from an early age that they are special and what they do always matters, which surely has an impact on how an adult forms their opinions of themselves. Assurance of their value could read as a grandiose view of themselves and an expectation that others will continue feeding the same message received from an individual's parents can be linked to the pursuit of gratification.

Something that was noticed when interviewing people was their acceptance that selfie culture had been given the label of narcissistic, they spoke in an almost apologetic way, some adopting defensive postures. This adds weight to Grubbs' idea that these adults have been flooded with the message that their behavior is narcissistic whilst also hearing that they should have high self-esteem, very conflicting ideas. It leaves the millennials feeling defensive about their actions. It could be argued that posing for four hours whilst someone paints your picture is far more narcissistic than sharing a selfie on social media, it's just that SNS are more accessible to a larger amount of people.

KP3: Perception of selfies
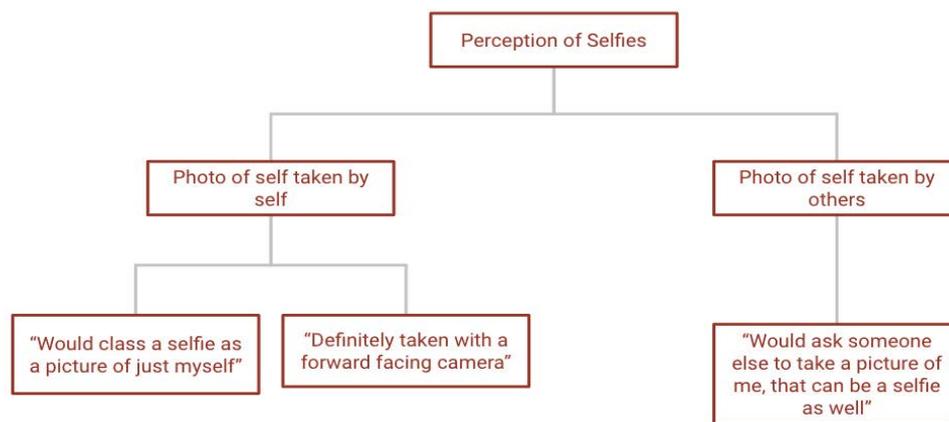
Figure 4 The research's key theme: 3. Perception of selfies

Understanding how people perceive their behavior means understanding how people perceive the definition of those actions. The question "What's your definition of taking a selfie?" actually revealed some interesting results. There was a split, with some people defining selfie-taking as 'a photo taken by you with a phone at the arm's length,' some went further by defining it as 'a photo of you and you alone taken on a phone at the arm's length,' whilst others defined it as 'a photo of you either taken by yourself or by other people.' This distinction between the two characteristics of a selfie could indicate a huge miss perception of an individual's use of selfies. The definition of a selfie is a self-portrait-style photo taken with a smartphone held at arm's length. A selfie may include multiple subjects as long as the photo is being taken by one of the subjects. It fits in with many of our data sources; Danilo said: *"I would class a selfie as a picture of just myself"*

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Holly added: *"Definitely taken with a forward-facing camera"*

Whilst both of these definitions fit the standard definition they are intrinsically different. If Danilo only classes pictures of just himself as a selfie then any picture he takes that includes other people may not be classified as a selfie when responding to the questions. Similarly, Holly's definition that a selfie must be taken with a front-facing camera means that pictures taken with the rear camera may not be considered a selfie.

For some of our users, this definition does not quite encompass all aspects of selfie-taking for them. Most notably Emma said: *"I would ask someone else to take a picture of me, that can be a selfie as well. If I want a picture of me from a certain angle I will ask a stranger or have my boyfriend take it."*

This highlights how the definition of the selfie may be evolving. As the users' demands change so must the terminology. Terms like 'Instagram husband' and 'Instagram girlfriend' have been coined to describe those who are used by their partners as glorified selfie sticks. If this definition is applied to the group of millennials, then many of their estimations for how many selfies they take are far too low.

KP 4: Link between popularity and selfie 'likes'
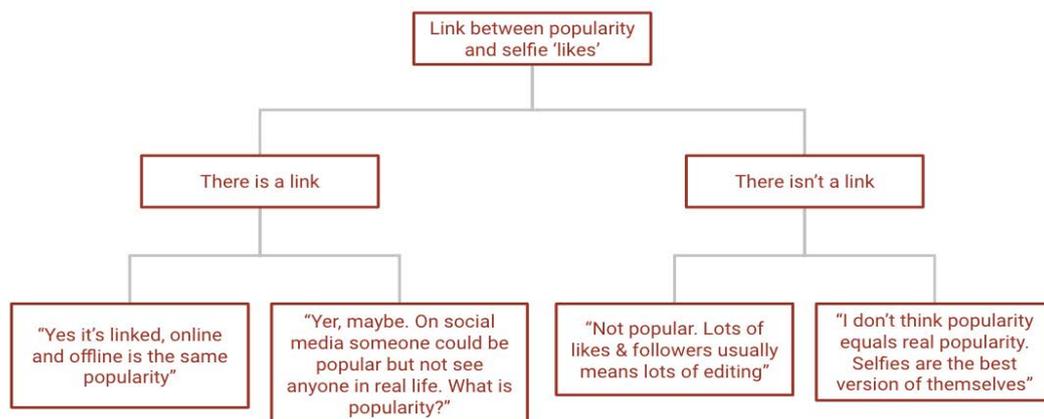
Figure 5 The research's key theme: 4. The link between popularity and selfie 'likes'

Many of the respondents believed online popularity; people who get a lot of likes for their selfies, and offline popularity; the classic interpretation of popularity where someone knows a lot of other people, are two different things.

Those who stated there was no link included Mike who said: *"They are not popular. I know lots of likes and followers usually mean lots of editing, maybe even paying money for professional work. If you think about what Instagram is, if it shut down tomorrow, lots of likes are then just gone. Internet popularity isn't real"*

Both Sam and Laura called the process *"fake"*. Rich also added that:
"Popularity on social media isn't real popularity. Selfies that are posted are usually the best version of themselves. The measure of popularity is people you see in real life."

The few who believed that selfie likes were linked to popularity had some interesting points,

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Pat said: *"Yes I think it's linked, online and offline popularity is similar. People who have a lot of friends offline will get a lot of likes online for their selfies"*

Sammy believed there was a link but answered differently:

"I guess so yer. If I see a friend has posted something and loads of people have liked it then on social media they are popular. They might never go out and see anyone, but what is popular? Everyone has a different meaning to that word. Is it about quantity or quality?"

These responses, although different, do highlight a difference in people's understanding of what popularity is. As Sammy pointed out, what is popular? Again, understanding this point is relative to how you define popularity. The definition of popularity is being liked, admired, or supported by many people. Nowhere does it specify real-world connections. Previously, there has been a societal definition that adds to this need for physical connection. It is perhaps the reason that so many of the millennials believe people who receive lots of likes are not popular. As Rich said, 'the measure of popularity is whom you see in real life.'

Now in a digital age, can this understanding still ring true or do people need to broaden their definition of popularity? We already think famous people are popular even though we only know them through media, why would we not extend this to non-famous people?

5. Conclusion

The objectives of this research were to highlight whether culture could influence the results of generational research, to understand what motivates the millennials to take selfies, and to investigate the links between narcissism and selfie culture in the millennials.

Firstly, the concept of culture does have some influence on the results. It is most evident when looking at the number of likes deemed acceptable by each culture. The average for Western respondents was 27.5 whereas the average for Eastern respondents was 127.5. This difference could indicate how each culture understands its reach within its community. The insular, individualistic culture only expects to have a small number of people engage with their pictures. In a society that looks out of their immediate family, such as a collectivist society, there is an expectation that the level of engagement will be higher, which means that there is more involvement in selfie culture than just which generation you are from.

The second objective is to understand the motivation to take the selfie. The two most common answers were 'forming a memory' and 'keeping friends and family informed and up to date with the goings-on of your life.' These reasons have always been reasons to take photographs but the subject matter has turned inwards to include the self, which leads us to the third objective, investigating the links between selfie-taking and narcissistic tendencies.

This link was proven to be not entirely true. Although there are a few individuals who exhibited narcissistic traits, it is more appropriate to attribute this behavior to the millennial's individualistic traits. Most interviewees stated they did not post selfies to gain recognition or to have hundreds of people like and comment. This leads to the possibility that the common traits of narcissism should perhaps be reassessed, as the most self-assured generation yet is given the title of narcissistic when it is highly unlikely that an entire generation has this specific personality disorder.

This research adds to the research already done on defining whether there is a need to amend how we characterize people as narcissists. There were a couple of respondents that believed there was a link between social media 'likes' and popularity, meaning that it cannot be concluded that this hypothesis has been proven false. However, the majority of millennials did not believe online and offline popularity was linked.

The final hypothesis has proven true. Those interviewed all presented the fact that posting selfies was not a good behavior to partake in, which could be down to social pressures. Many articles in both print and digital media are telling them that the behavior they are participating in is narcissistic and harmful. Nostalgia could also play a part. The millennials were introduced to social media and selfies further into their

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lives. They knew a time before these things existed and rose-tinted glasses could make them think that they were simpler happier times.

This study is limited by an individual's ability to self-report. It relies on the interviewees' full disclosure of their habits, beliefs, and behavior. If the interviewee holds anything back through embarrassment or for any other reason, the results can become skewed.

Understanding the millennials' expression through selfies is key to understanding how they view themselves and the world around them. Even if a millennial fabricates their life through editing a selfie this in itself offers an insight into how they deal with life. Millennials are often said to be cleaning up the mess left by boomers; recession, global warming, and institutionalized bigotry are all products of a bygone era that have left younger generations struggling. Perhaps the action of presenting a happier, more put-together version of oneself isn't the most destructive thing. To understand whether this is true, further research should be carried out on the millennials' self-representation.

6. References

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