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'Privacy does not interest me'. A comparative analysis of photo sharing on Instagram and Blipfoto.

Abstract

Photo sharing online has become immensely popular and is a central aspect of modern visual culture. Yet it creates a number of privacy issues, both in relation to other individuals and corporate surveillance. The purpose of this study was to investigate users' understanding of privacy issues in photo sharing, based on a comparative study of two contrasting platforms: Instagram and Blipfoto. The study combined netnography and in-depth interviewing. It was found that Instagram users had a greater awareness of how the platform might use their data, but saw this loss of privacy as inevitable in return for a free service. Blipfoto users were more trusting of what they experienced as a very community minded platform. Any concerns felt by both groups of users were out-weighed by the sense that photo sharing was highly meaningful and their fascination with watching and being watched. Both groups main approach to privacy was through restricting certain types of image of people and not revealing the location of certain personal spaces. Notions of privacy thus remained primarily personal and ignored corporate dataveillance.

Introduction

The intensification of the practice of photo sharing through social media platforms is one of the most notable changes in visual culture in recent years. From the time of the launch of the first mass-market cameras by Kodak, in the 19th century, there have been many significant changes in the vernacular uses of photography (Sarvas and Frohlich, 2011). Kodak, as well as initiating a process of change driven by continuous new technological developments, shifted photography towards uses within the family. As one of the first scholars to investigate this subject, Chalfen (1987) highlighted that the practice of photo

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sharing became strongly associated with family social events, such as birthdays and holidays reflecting an interest in sharing stories, emotions and places within a familial community.

In the past decade, the appearance of digital cameras and then mobile devices (smartphones) have created the conditions in which the practice of photo sharing has developed in many unprecedented directions. The ubiquitous use of mobile devices has increased the frequency and intensity of taking photographs and changed the way they are edited and shared. As a consequence, people are progressively starting to privilege the ephemeral exchange of images through social media over the traditional ways of sharing based on a face-to-face interaction. Activity on photography sites like Flickr, Photobucket, SmugMug, Fotki, Zoomr, as well as more mainstream social networking websites such as Facebook, show a widespread interest in using social media to share images and engage with other users. For instance, Van Dijck (2013), analysing Flickr, described social media platforms as powerful structures within which social interactions revolve primarily around images. This demonstrated how the combination of mobile devices and photo sharing platforms contributes to the dominance of the visual in many daily practices.

The use of social media represents a visible and decisive shift in the production and viewing of images with both benefits but also potential risks for users. Some use photography to represent their identity online (Zappavigna, 2016) and to maintain social relationships (Serafinelli, 2017) creating a general sense of community and reciprocity. In addition, they may share photos to tell stories (Van House, 2009) and to maintain memory of important events (Van Dijck, 2007). Yet, if the experience of exchanging visual stories online is valued, it also implies risks around privacy protection and surveillance (Debatin, 2011; Ellison et al., 2011; Nissenbaum, 2009). In fact, the visibility and connectivity afforded by the Internet means that images and information can go viral, increasing the risk that people are exposed and their privacy is breached (Sampson, 2012). The over-exposure of users' personal

information (Ahern et al., 2007) creates a paradox of the co-presence of intense online data protection concerns with diversifying pleasures in watching and being watched. Issues related to privacy and surveillance are widely investigated in media studies (Lyon, 2007) (Fuchs et al., 2012). Although privacy and surveillance issues are strongly related to the visual practices of observing, looking and monitoring, the practice of photo sharing has not yet received much attention in the literature.

Just a few studies of Instagram have started to address privacy issues around online policies and the practice of photo sharing. Talib et al. (2014), for instance, investigated Instagram users' understanding of privacy policies employing a quantitative methodological approach and circumscribing the analysis to the Islamic context with little reference to western visual culture. Babb and Nelson (2013) focused their analysis on the challenges caused by measurement tools that entrepreneurs use to optimise their visual marketing campaigns on Instagram. Both studies reported the presence of a general awareness of social networking websites' privacy policies without providing a critical interpretation of the consequences for users' behaviour.

In the context of this gap in the research, this paper examines in-depth how users perceive and manage privacy concerns in the context of photo sharing and whether or how these differences are shaped by specific platforms. To do so, it explores public views of privacy through the analysis of interview data with users of two photo sharing platforms: Instagram, the massively popular photo site owned by Facebook, and Blipfoto a UK based specialist photo sharing site for 365 projects, where people commit to taking one photo every day for a year. A comparative analysis of these two platforms identifies similarities and dissimilarities in behaviours in order to reveal what factors characterise privacy and surveillance within contemporary photo sharing and how users' comprehension of potential risks shape new behaviours and practices as a crucial aspect of new visual cultures.

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Photo sharing online

The arrival of new devices to take and share photos and ubiquitous connectivity, especially the use of smartphones, has massively stimulated the digital exchange of images producing new social behaviours. Having a camera always at hand allows people to capture, view, upload and share content so that it becomes for many a part of multiple daily routines. As a consequence of this, smartphones become memory-capture, communicative and expressive devices (Van House et al., 2005). Younger generations seem to use these devices in all their everyday social interactions because they are so user friendly and fast. These features make digital photography a favourite idiom for instant communication (Van Dijck, 2008).

Analysing Flickr as a case study, Van House (2007) observed that the mediation of the platform plays a crucial role in increasing previous photo sharing practices because of the social interactions and engagement that are enabled by their use. In particular, this study revealed that through the practice of online photo sharing people create social connections, interactions, and multimodal communications (Van House, 2007) emphasising the increasing presence of images in everyday conversations. Together with the interest in social engagement, revealed first in Van House's research (Van House et al., 2005; Van House, 2007; 2009) a recurring connection between the use of digital photography and communication, identity and memory emerges as well. The study exemplified the enlargement of areas where images are used.

Maintaining memories of the past has always been considered one of the primary uses of photography. On social media it figures as another significant aspect that contributes to the intensification of the practice of photo sharing. In this, it has been suggested, images shared online as 'mediated memories' (Van Dijck, 2007) reveal that the traditional conception of photography as testimony is beginning to be substituted by the social, fluid and transitive

practices of sharing online. Nevertheless, new practices of online photo sharing do not annul completely the remembrative function of photography, but rather show the evolution of previous practices. In fact, the spirit of connectivity that animates social media platforms prompts users to follow their peers' behaviour under the 'imperative of sharing' (Van Dijck, 2013).

A recent study reported that, in particular on Instagram, users are mainly motivated by personal satisfaction, reciprocity, and the idea of seeing things they have never seen before (Serafinelli & Villi, 2017). There is non-sexualised type of voyeurism as play. The mutual exchange of photographs is based on a combination of social interaction and curiosity in observing new and/or unconventional scenarios. Using social media for collecting and sharing memories blurs the boundaries between the private and public spheres, as users distribute personal information to each other in a way visible to third parties.

Privacy policies and risks online
Privacy issues online are complex but revolve around a dilemma of users' intent of protecting their personal life combined with a desire to share. Social media creates complex ambiguity between the private and public spheres. An increasing number of platforms are based on users creating accounts and/or profiles listing personal identification details (name, email address, date of birth etc.) and a profile photo. They invite users to reveal an online persona that, subsequently, interacts with other users through a variety of online activities such as liking, commenting and reposting. This is the reason why social media figures as a public extension of people's private lives. It blurs spheres of social interaction (private and public) that before were relatively clear and separate. It follows that people's presence on social media becomes more difficult for them to manage. In spite of the general 'internet safety' advice to avoid exposing personal information, users participate in a collective 'self-violation of privacy' (Menduni et al., 2011) revealing themselves and their

daily activities, sharing personal data, such as addresses and contact details on sites even though they know are very widely accessible. Because of the widespread popularity of social media, this potentially risky behaviour becomes usual, resulting in a normalisation of sharing and attendant surveillance.

Users create and share multimedia content with the expectation of it being viewed by other users, whether that means working on their own self-presentation to engage with an audience or doing something provocative to attract attention. This correspondence between watching and being watched in social media has been framed as 'social surveillance' (Marwick, 2012). Social surveillance is a mutual activity. Users tactically disclose and hide personal information to create contacts with others and, at the same time, protect social boundaries. This form of surveillance shows how users' understanding of social roles is, in fact, altered by the social characteristics of the media. Social media by their very nature encourage users to share content, engage in conversations and activities with other users generating a general interest in watching each other's activities. These practices are part of the way people manage their social relationships on a day-by-day basis, which is in turn highly dependent on the functioning structures of platforms. For example, on photo sharing platforms users expect to mutually share photos, on social networking websites users expect to engage socially and so on.

The reciprocity of this type of surveillance results from a mutual interest in watching each other and practices of gathering information about friends and acquaintances or would-be friends. Keeping track of one another, for romantic or familial reasons, or for friendship can also take the form of 'lateral surveillance' (Andrejevic, 2002), another peer-to-peer type of monitoring. Compared to social surveillance, this type of surveillance involves the use of monitoring tools, where the 'do-it-yourself information gathering technologies' (Andrejevic, 2007:223) characterises the use of investigative apparatuses and/or the development of

appropriate strategies. The latter, depending on available technologies and techniques, moves from searching for the name of a new acquaintance on Google, to the use of CCTV and the employment of monitoring software.

Consumer surveillance and dataveillance

Alongside its social aspects, surveillance online encompasses the collection of data and metadata about users by Internet services. This category of surveillance can be defined as 'consumer surveillance' and is based on the monitoring consumer behaviours primarily with a view to producing personalised advertising. Platforms like Facebook and Twitter provide services to users to create value and profit through the content they create and the data they collect about users. In participating in social media users labour on user generate content and indirectly data commodities that companies such as Instagram, Facebook and Twitter, and others, sell to third party advertisers. Seemingly trivial patterns in site usage, especially when combined with other data, produce potentially rich marketing intelligence. The active, creative user is an 'Internet prosumer commodity' (Fuchs, 2010): a user involved in both the use and the creating of contents, but themselves commodified. This condition is a subtle form of exploitation where users are unpaid for both their ongoing creative activity and as a source of a stream of data. Essentially, from this viewpoint the online world is a commercialised space where social media platforms (as companies) are central examples of the contemporary digital economy. Where the primary commodity is data about users rather than the content they create we can refer to dataveillance.

In this context, the notion of 'digital enclosure' (Andrejevic, 2007) can help us to understand the hidden character of surveillance that users face regularly online. This term captures to the various ways relationships between digital objects, processes and interactions are traced and the gathering of private information with or without users' explicit awareness. Digital enclosure is 'a state of affairs in which producers have more information about

consumers than ever before, and consumers have less knowledge about and control over how this information is being used' (Andrejevic, 2007:27).

Methodology

In this context and through the lens of media practice theory (Couldry, 2004), this study offers a critical comparison between the photo sharing platforms Instagram and Blipfoto to investigate the changes in users' understanding of privacy online. Given that social media platforms are taking the place of previous means of communication, in this study it was decided to employ a netnographic approach (Kozinets, 2015) that encompasses the mediation of the Internet when analysing contemporary online sociality. The use of netnography helped to delimit the context of analysis to the interactive sphere of the Internet and the two photo sharing platforms. The mediation of platforms is, in fact, what structures an extensive part of daily social practices and as such, these mediated activities need to be analysed and contextualised within the condition of mediation. Indeed, considering the context where photographs are shared and observed is crucial for the analysis of visual contents (Bock et al., 2011). For this reason, a first analysis the platforms' structures and functioning as systems (Franklin, 2012) was undertaken in order to produce an in-depth understanding of the environment where the practice of photo sharing is experienced.

The netnographic approach was combined with participant interviews to enrich the analysis. For this sampling was accomplished entirely online. Regarding Instagram, since Facebook bought Instagram in April 2012 a vast number of Instagramers' Facebook pages have appeared all over the world. The call for participants in the study was distributed on the Internet within these Facebook pages. A first approach on the platforms was followed by private email conversations through which participants received a detailed description of the study and a consent form. The target population was active users, i.e. 'relevant,

substantial, heterogeneous, and data-rich for the research question' (Kozinets, 2010:89) without placing any restriction in relation to gender, race, age and education. In a similar way, the Blipfoto participants were recruited through the Friends of Blipfoto Facebook group and a call through Twitter and other channels.

This study employed a qualitative interviewing approach as through this technique it is possible to understand experiences and reconstruct events in which the researcher does not participate. Through the accurate description of social processes, also they allow an in-depth understanding of what happens, why and what it means (Rubin and Rubin, 2005). Considering that part of the sample population was more comfortable with text-based communication (Salmons, 2010) email based asynchronous interviewing method was suggested to participants as a valid alternative for taking part in the study. A list of seven open-ended questions was sent to the participants who preferred this option.

A sample of 44 Instagram users and 10 Blifoto users took part in this study. Of these, 38 participants were interviewed via Skype, 15 participants responded to open questions that were sent via email and 1 interview was conducted face to face. Interviewees were asked to define how and why they chose the accounts they followed, to illustrate the type of visual private information they were willing to share online, to describe how and when they looked at photographs online, and finally to explain their use of hashtags and geo-tags. Follow-up questions were asked to obtain further depth and details, in order to complete the picture of their behaviour. In this way the interviewing process elicited more details without changing the main focus.

The data was analysed separately for the two populations, using a thematic analysis approach, in which data was coded in fine detail and then built up to major themes. A

critical comparative analysis was then conducted of the two groups in relation to beliefs and behaviours around privacy.

This study was conducted respecting principles of research ethics in line with basic human rights legislation in force in the UK (Human Rights Act (1998) c. 42) and relevant codes of practice such as AOIR guidelines (Markham and Buchanan, 2012). Informed consent that was gained from participants: they were apprised of the purpose of the project and how their data was to be used and protected. Participants' identity was kept anonymous in order to protect their privacy and confidentiality.

Instagram and Blipfoto. Comparing the context of analysis

This section presents the context for the two studies as background for the findings by giving a description of structures and the functioning of the two platforms. Following Franklin's (2012) criteria of analysis, the following aspects were considered: design of the platform, whether and how the platform is part of a larger conglomeration; uses of the platform, content analysis, theme/s of the platform and its connections with offline relationships; technological features, and the role of the platform in a larger setting (e.g. its relation with other social media platforms).

The major common ground is that both sites are dedicated primarily to the practice of photo sharing, and to a large extent the similar functionalities of the sites flow from this: sharing photos, commenting and liking/following type activities. In contrast, marked differences are in the scale, demographics and ethos of the two sites. Instagram has a huge global membership, with an Internet typical demographic profile and a commercial ethos, arising from being owned by Facebook. Blipfoto, on the other hand, is a small web site, with a few thousand users, largely populated by people over the age of 50 and mostly from the UK. Founded in 2006, it retains a strong community feel. After a brief period of ownership

by Polaroid, it is now run by a crowdsourcing/subscription model. Blipfoto focuses on one particular practice of sharing: "365 projects", where a single photo every day is shared, rather than generalised sharing of photos.

On Instagram the practice of photo sharing is widely used for marketing purposes (visual media marketing) and by Instagram online communities (Igers). The platform does not present rules in relation to sharing photos. However, many users do follow precise routines ("good morning" photos, photos of coffee breaks, after work etc) and seek for high quality images. This is the reason why Instagram is mostly recognised as a photo sharing platform rather than a mere social networking site where users follow each other for the curiosity of observing other users' photographs, for the reciprocity of giving and receiving comments and likes. On the platform there is a space for a caption that is usually used to include hashtags and geo-tags to simplify the search and the categorisation of specific contents.

On Blipfoto, in contrast, the practice of photo sharing is set up to encourage users to create narratives around their everyday lives, through the specific practice of a photo-a-day (Cox and Brewster, 2018). This limits users to share one photo only every day, but also imposes the discipline of taking and sharing a photo even when one would not otherwise do so. The consequence is less flooding of the channel, more reflection and careful choice of image (Piper-Wright, 2013). On Blipfoto, the textual element of diarying with the photo represents a crucial part of the narration of users' everyday life. Indeed, this platform is based on a model of following people reciprocally, rather than just browsing random accounts, even if that is also possible.

Instagram as a mobile application is mainly used through smart mobile devices, but often (with the appropriate skills) it is used with digital cameras, on desktop computers and with professional editing software. In contrast, Blipfoto's users prefer using the platform with

digital camera and computer than directly on their phone. Despite differences in purpose, scale, demographics, users on both platforms interact and share photo in a similar way. Online, they give each other likes, hearts and comments and offline they organise meetings and walks.

Findings

As a massive site ultimately owned by a profit orientated company, participants in the study had a fundamental distrust of Instagram. Yet their strong desire to share photos overcame their doubts and prompted them to agree to the terms of conditions which could effectively be seen as signing away their own privacy. However, they did place some limits on their use of the platform to protect privacy in certain very particular ways. Thus, although Instagram was launched with the intent to promote instant and immediate photo sharing it seems that users actually tend to think carefully about the type of images that they share on the platform. This approach is guided by the way users use the platform (marketing, leisure, information, and activism, for instance) together with their understanding of privacy risks.

Similarly, Blipfoto users, although trusting the platform quite strongly because of its stated ethos and the character of the photo-a-day practice, also recognised some similar privacy issues. Because of the balance of drivers for sharing and protecting, users seem to abide by simple rules, which are: not sharing pictures of certain people's faces or, children, and not revealing the location of private spaces, especially deliberately not geo-tagging their own homes. Despite the intent of visually protecting personal privacy through the protection of loved ones and private spaces, the fascination with watching and being watched emerges as a central motive. In fact, both platforms' functioning system is based on the mutual exchange of images. This practice is also combined with the exchange of comments, likes and following.

Regarding privacy issues on Instagram a widespread disregard was observed.

'Personally, it is part of the game even if I don't agree with the rules, the Terms of service. How many terms of service have we just clicked "yes" to because we want to use this product? We don't read them. I have been doing that for years. I think there should be a reasonable expectation of privacy but at the same time if you sign up for a social open network how much privacy are you expecting? It goes both ways. […] I know that they are probably selling my habits, my information. I know that. It is part of the game. It is what they do; it is how they stay in business. This is how they provide the services they provide me'.

This is just one of the many examples of a common disregard participants in the Instagram study had for their own privacy online. Participants had a general but blurred awareness of the conditions that they needed to accept to use the platform. They were concerned about the risks of their personal data being gathered and used, nevertheless, they believed that in order to use the service (which they want to) they had to sign the agreement, and so there is no point in paying careful attention to the exact terms and conditions. Participants showed a vague awareness of the contents of terms and conditions admitting that they have never actually read the entire document. The interest in using the service appears to be stronger than the potential consequences that the agreement produces, and so they choose not to know more. All the participants in the Instagram study showed a similar careless attitude towards the protection of personal privacy from corporate surveillance online.

'Well, regarding privacy I am totally convinced (laugh) that once you are on the Internet, just from the first time you get onto it your privacy falls down, falls totally. So, I am not one of those obsessed in posting photos that privacy is needed so I do not post photos of me, there must not be photos of you. If I want post photos of you I need to ask for approval. I mean,

since the moment I signed up on Instagram I have an open account even because otherwise it just doesn't make sense to me. I say… I am not interested in privacy'.

This response reveals a fatalistic acceptance of the consequences for privacy of the very act of going online. The willingness of participants to share photos of themselves and so diminish their own privacy seems partly to arise from their desire to be observed by others and their desire to observe others. There are various reasons that motivate users to share photos online: an interest in gaining social connections (followers, likes, and comments) as well as visibility for their photographs (visual content). Together with these aspects, participants admitted to a moderate voyeuristic interest in observing other users on Instagram. In fact, their intentions go beyond the mere practice of photo sharing. They are interested in interpreting the person and the personality behind the photos. This type of voyeurism manifests itself as an interest in interpreting other users' identity through their photo sharing.

'The group of people I already know. Only for the reason I know them in real life I want to know them better. It's just to know people better. Through his/her eyes I can see his/her perception of the world, when he/she has photographed that thing in that way when I would have done a totally different thing. It makes me understand many things about the person. There, there is more a psychological interest. Instead, if I follow random users there are themes'.

As can be observed from this response, the voyeuristic interest arises only in relation to people known offline. This response is only one example that shows how Instagram users (together with the motives of collecting followers, gaining popularity and creating sense of community) observe photographs with the intent to know the person behind the images.

This curiosity emerges from the desire that users develop in seeing through someone else's eyes.

This type of intrusiveness into each other's ways of seeing is widely perceived by the majority of Instagram users. They do not seem particularly concerned about other types of surveillance. Indeed, they showed a generalised consciousness that businesses and brands observe their photo sharing and that they have access to their personal data. This does concern them but is counterbalanced by a strong sense that any online activity immediately compromises all privacy. Users have a strong desire to use the platform because they want to be visible. However, participants do have some strategies in place to avoid over exposure and publicity, mostly to protect others rather than themselves. Participants regulate their own activities according to their personal perception of what type of behaviours might be dangerous. They pay particular attention to images of human subjects and locations to protect the people they love and private places.

'Honestly, the problem doesn't arise for me, because I have public profile and intentionally I post things that are open to everyone. So, the problem of privacy doesn't touch me. I don't put up photos of people so. The problem would arise for me on Facebook where more personal information is shared'.

From this perspective, Instagram is perceived as a type of social media platform where users share only photos and, consequently, less personal information compared to other online services. In some sense photos are seen as not containing personal information. This potentially ignores the platform's interest in deriving metadata about behaviour, as if it is only the content of the photos that contains information.

The majority of participants reported a high level of consideration and respect for people. They declared that they do not share on Instagram photographs of relatives and, in particular, young people. This exclusion was explained as an act of protection towards children and loved ones. A single exception was one interviewee who reported that she often shares photos of her nephews saying that it is connected to the affection she feels for them and the amusing time they spend together. For example, a participant in the Instagram study liked street photography and she photographed individuals during their everyday life. Nevertheless, she underlined that the images she captures never show people in embarrassing and bad situations justifying this as an act of respect. When possible she also tries to avoid including people's faces to protect their identity. This is just one example of ethical personal conducts that users follow on Instagram.

'I don't know if you even heard about this band Triggerfinger. I was at their concert and the day before the concert I came to this club and asked if I could make some photos using my DSLR and they told me, the owner of the club told me "well, for us it's not a big problem but the band manager does not allow any photos". Right. So, I was only able to make photos with my mobile phone. But I have respected the request of the band members to make only photos of up to 3 or 4 songs during that concert, all right? I have seen that many other people didn't care about it. They just started to take photos and after the fourth song, well there was no chance for the manager to stop that. But, it wasn't nice, right? Just respect the artist, respect their request and both sides would be satisfied and the other thing is that I always carry some forms about privacy'.

Although this participant showed respect towards the event and the music band, he reported the careless behaviour of the rest of the audience towards the unwritten rule that the manager tried to set before the concert. In relation to sharing images of people without signed consent, participants report contrasting opinions. The majority of participants

declared that people are part of their photography and the ways they decide to photograph them are related to the situation and the location. This is the only participant that mentioned the use of consent forms. Even though the majority of participants did not report a wide interest in portraits, there is fair presence of people (consenting or not consenting) within their photo stream.

Together with the idea of privacy in relation of protecting people, another example of the protection of privacy on Instagram relates to the geo-tagging or sharing of physical locations. By default, (as long as the GPS on the smart phone is switched on) Instagram shares the geographical location of where photos are taken. Even though participants did not show privacy concern in relation to the use of the platform itself, the majority of them declared that they never share photographs from private locations, such as their home or relatives' and friends' homes. *'I don't use geo-tags for private locations, I prefer not to set them'.* In contrast participants reported an active interest in setting geo-tags when travelling in order to show their actual presence in certain places.

Participants in the Instagram study at some level saw privacy as lost by the very act of using the Internet, certainly in signing up to the platform. Thus, their notion of privacy is largely personal. However, they do see themselves as acting ethically in protecting certain key aspects of privacy in how they share photos.

Turning to the Blipfoto study, participants were much more trusting of the platform. Participants' main concern was the potential for the platform itself to disappear making inaccessible their collection of photos, diary entries and the comments on them made by others. This had been brought into sharp relief by the commercial problems of the platform at the time interviews were conducted. This also made at least one interviewee start to question the previous trust they had had in the site regarding their data, as ownership might

be changing hands. But in general, although asked directly about the potential for data about their habits to be sold or exploited this did not seem to be a major concern. Membership of Blipfoto was understood more in relation to the defining ethos summarised in the slogan be "excellent to each other" than the "terms and conditions".

Blipfoto is for everyone. While we have a few simple rules, we sum them up with be excellent to each other. In other words, if you don't have anything nice to say, don't say it! Some other simple rules: No inappropriate content, own the copyright, no advertising, save the day.

Further one could argue that the very practice of sharing one photo every day to build quite a close knit community, on a platform with just a few thousand users, created a very trusting relationship towards the platform. There were some concerns about images being used by commercial third parties without permission. But, rightly or wrongly, participants were not concerned about Blipfoto collecting data about them or making commercial use of their data.

Whatever their anxieties, participants shared the Instagrammers' desire for their photos to be viewed by others and be popular. This was again more about the photos than about them as people: profiles on Blipfoto tend to be fairly brief and selfies uncommon. So they desired their photostream to be visible to others. Equally self-surveillance was also of importance to some interviewees as they enjoyed looking back at their collection of material and reflecting on what they could learn about themselves.

"You know if I am on the bus quite often I will flip back through you know just the last few days of my journal and I think you know what I have had quite a good week, just because there is a picture in there I want to look at again. Erm… you know occasionally I will be sitting in of an evening and I will flip back quite a long way through my journals just to

remind myself of stuff, so probably you know I will dip in a little bit on a weekly basis and then maybe every few months I will have a bit of a session where I will go back through a lot of photos just having a browse and reminding myself of what is there."

Like the Instagramers they also enjoyed surveillance of others.

"It is just an interest and almost a privilege if you like to be able to eavesdrop in on their lives and see what they are doing."

"Yes, I like the stuff that reflects somebody's existence."

However, unlike the Instagram participants there was a strong stress on gaining intimacy and longer term relationships mediated by the platform.

"You have a little glimpse into their life and you do end up feeling concerned about them."

Following practices focussed on mutual sharing. Several participants showed a strong concern to ensure that they checked on all the people they followed and commented on their photos every day. Such practices generated a growing sense of intimacy:

"It is an odd thing to say but I have got to know people without meeting them you know, there are people now if they walked in and said I am so and so, you know off Blipfoto it would not feel awkward to talk to them you know because you, you get to know bits about their life which are sometimes quite intimate. Erm... people ask me about my illness, there are other people on there that had illness and I have had conversations with people about illness and cancer and all the rest of it, so you know it can be fairly heavy stuff really and

through that you do get a sense of mutual support you know people are concerned for you, and you are concerned for them and one person".

They felt that sharing what they saw was a powerful means of self-revelation to others. Blipfoto users, indeed, believed that the platform can help them to know other people better through the practice of photo sharing, which is experience as a mutual revelation of the self.

"You can be opening up part of yourself that is usually kept behind your eyes if you see what I mean."

Notwithstanding this belief that one could understand someone through their photos, there were ways to protect very personal feelings.

"I wanted to capture that moment, erm… but I posted that just the photograph of the gravestone but I didn't post any text, or title and I disabled comments on it, erm… because I didn't want anybody to comment. It was a private moment for me so I didn't write about my feelings I just took a photo that I knew would remind me of them and I deliberately closed it to comments because I didn't want to hear what anybody else thought about it, that was just a moment from me."

Thus even though Blipfoto participants believed others could understand them well through their photos, and that this was what they wanted to share, this could be controlled to some degree. Not explaining a photograph helped. Turning off comments avoided others intruding their commentary onto private moments. Also, they discussed the limits on how much they would share of their real feelings. Most recognised distinct limits on what they

would share. But they tended to be struck by the depth of sympathy that could be elicited for sharing darker moments.

As in the Instagram study they interpreted privacy primarily in terms of protecting significant others.

"I haven't really featured family either just because I didn't necessarily want to put their photos on-line."

"Just personal things about my family that I wouldn't post".

"I wouldn't talk about my personal life like my relationship with my husband, erm… or family members that are intimate or person that you know there is a point where you definitely stop."

As in the Instagram study they also saw protection of privacy in terms of hiding their own location.

"I am careful about what I post, so I do erm… put a location tag on my entries but not if they are taken in my home, so my home location isn't identifiable through the site. For example if I go away on holiday I quite often don't update my journal until I get back, so that there is no way for somebody to know that my house is empty."

Discussion

The speed of the introduction of exciting new services is faster than ever before, and yet it increases the development of new forms of digital intrusion. The meaning of privacy in the context of social media practices is shaped by the co-presence of protection and disclosure of personal information. Monitoring systems by Internet services are about control of information: data, metadata, and traces left by behaviours. The basic functioning of Internet

services requires the agreement to privacy policies and terms and conditions, which are rarely read by users. As participants from both studies reported, in order to get access to online services they are obliged to agree to platforms' terms and conditions, which implies giving away some rights around the use of personal data. In both studies the urge for participants to share their photos overcame their anxieties around privacy, suggesting a process of 'self-violation of privacy' (Menduni et al., 2011). Both groups enjoy sharing photos and gaining visibility for themselves and their work, and this tendency overcomes most of their concerns. Instagramers seemed more aware of consumer surveillance and the way their data can be exploited and controlled than Blippers (Turow, 2006; Fuchs, 2012). Yet they saw this loss of privacy as the inevitable trade-off for access to a free service. They preferred not to know more about what exactly they had agreed to in the terms and conditions. This requirement determines that users agree with the use of their personal data by third parties, as Fuchs (2012) argues. For many people today most daily activities and social interactions occur online, from the purchase of a train ticket or food shopping to chatting with a friend. Therefore, people are well used to agreeing to terms and conditions because they feel the necessity to use Internet services and revealing a passive acceptance of this mechanism and a normalisation of surveillance practices (Wood and Webster, 2009). In this context, photo sharing is widely enjoyed, felt to be so significant for social practices, that the desire to see and be seen over-rides anxieties around privacy.

Internet users show a general understanding that Internet services use their data and metadata, but the majority of them do not seem to know precisely how. Indeed, the participants in both studies were not fully aware of potential privacy risks around their data, revealing a condition recalling Andrejevic (2009) notion of digital enclosure. In relation to certain services like photo sharing platforms and online communities Internet users expect a certain degree of personal privacy because they "trust the service". In the Blipfoto study users show a more visible concern about big platforms (like Instagram) because they do not

perceive them as safe as small platforms. This reflects a belief that small platforms are online communities, and therefore more trustable.

The sense of community that small platforms can covey seems to overcome the general concern about privacy risks. Blipfoto users, indeed, reported a strong sense of community using the platform that confers a sense of closeness and protection to the whole online experience. Instagram users, in contrast, were fairly aware that Internet services exploit their information including in relation to the practice of photo sharing. They were generally not particularly concerned about privacy risk because of the general belief that "it's just photos". Although photos are seen as deeply revealing on a personal level, it does not seem to users that they can have significance (as data) for service providers. On the contrary Blipfoto participants' concern was continuing access to their content (including comments made by others) if the site had to close. Two interpretations of this seem possible. One is that the very ethos of Blipfoto engendered a different type of trust, then was invested in an overtly mass commercial site like Instagram. An alternative view might be that being a little older and less Internet aware, Blippers simply did not have awareness of the issue.

Whatever their view of the platform, users in both studies did have an interest in protecting privacy, and it would seem that they shared a rather similar concept of what this meant. In both studies privacy was mostly conceptualised as personal. The different understanding of privacy risks online does not seem to change substantially the way users from both studies use online services and it is observable in such 'self-regulation' (Debatin, 2011) of the practice of photo sharing. In this type of behaviour, users limit the visibility of some personal information guided by the idea of privacy in an ethics of self-restraint. In sharing photos online, both Instagram and Blipfoto users approach the notion of privacy through the idea of 'contextual integrity' (Nissenbaum, 2009). They share information considering what they perceive to be appropriate to that context.

Rather than focussing on loss of privacy to service providers, participants worried about more personal types of threat. To overcome such potential privacy risks on both sites participants set personal rules related to the content of their photo sharing to compensate for the presence of uncertain privacy settings. Sharing of images of certain people, in some cases the entire family and in other cases only children, is widely avoided. Similarly, the sharing of geo-tags for what users define as private personal space, such as the home, is limited. Yet this addresses threats from malign strangers rather than the more probable threat of commercial exploitation. It can be seen to reflect widely promoted notions around internet safety.

Despite the 'Big Brother' spirit that animates the majority of social media, users seem not to perceive surveillance from Internet services as excessively intrusive as much as the ones practised by other users. This suggests that while social surveillance (Marwick, 2012) is more acceptable than other types of monitoring, such as consumer surveillance (Turow, 2006), in practice it is risks associated with social surveillance that underlie users' notions of privacy.

Conclusion

To summarise, it would seem that the major factors shaping privacy around photo sharing include the following. Some services attract a level of trust, but there is a general sense that people accept losing a degree of privacy in return for a free, valued service. People want to see photos that others take and want to be seen themselves, experiencing such social surveillance as a highly meaningful and interesting form of interaction. For this reason, they self-violate privacy with the result that surveillance tends to be normalised. There is a sense that because it is "only photos" not much is being revealed. People are naïve or turn a blind eye to the value to the real level of consumer surveillance of the data and metadata

associated with images and related activities. The true nature of the loss of privacy and the power of consumer surveillance and dataveillance is masked in a form of digital enclosure.

Part of this ignorance seemingly comes about because there is a culture of signing through terms and conditions without reading them. Knowledge of the implications of what data and forms of privacy are being given away is hazy. Critically this is combined with a continuing belief that certain strategies can protect the self, friends and family, through a form of contextual integrity, to use Nissenbaum's (2009) term. Not sharing certain types of photos or identifying certain locations is seen to offer protection from direct personal threats. This reflects a mental model of privacy as about danger from malign individuals, other users, such as stalkers or thieves, but is a conception that largely ignores the workings of the corporate dataveillance machine that Fuchs (2012) discusses. This conception may reflect the successful penetration of early advice around Internet safety, but is rooted in an immediate personal notion of privacy, arguably rather outdated in the era of big dataveillance. Such factors seem to operate across platforms in the context of mediated photo sharing.

The comparison of photo sharing in two radically different contexts is suggestive that common features of the cases can be generalised to photo sharing as a whole. Nevertheless, it would be useful to extend the research, informed by the conceptual resources emerging from the present analysis, to encompass the proliferating forms of photo sharing, to other platforms and to specific genres of photo sharing. The conceptual resources informing the analysis also provide a toolkit for analysing privacy in contexts other than photo sharing. Over time users' awareness of dataveillance is likely to increase. This suggests the necessity to examine how users work round service providers' data collection methods to continue to enjoy photo sharing as a highly significant form of social interaction, while maintaining particular aspects of privacy, and how services themselves respond to this resistance.

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