A snap of intimacy: Photo-sharing practices among young people on social media

Engl. transl.: A snap of intimacy: Photo-sharing practices among young people on social media

# Keywords

* Snapchat
* photo sharing practices
* intimacy
* Instagram
* social media

# Details

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## Sample

"Our overall methodological approach can be described as multi-sited as we have been present across off-line and online spaces (the classroom, interview situation, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Tumblr, Ask.fm, Snapchat) and have used different methods (survey, online ethnography and interviews)"
"We have developed an Internet mediated mixed methods approach in which we have attempted to grasp the understandings of social media use by young people themselves (in interviews and online surveys) and by following these young people as they live their online lives"
"The primary empirical material for this paper consists of an online survey focusing on photo-elicitation practices on the two platforms Snapchat and Instagram; secondary empirical material consists of qualitative interviews conducted prior to the survey. The primary focus in the survey is typical content and most commonly shared pictures on Snapchat and Instagram as well as the sharing of and experience with photos that are seen as unpleasant or disruptive by the receiver. The survey was, as mentioned, conducted in 2015 and 2016 amongst Danish young people."
"Prior to the online survey we conducted interviews in an off-line setting (a Danish elementary school) which subsequently led to online fieldwork and observations on social media, where the young people interviewed were present (Facebook, Tumblr, Twitter, Instagram and Snapchat). This research design is inspired by a virtual ethnographic approach (Hine, 2000). On the basis of this, we were able to formulate the questions that appeared in the online survey where we employed both qualitative and quantitative oriented approaches (using both open– and close–ended questions)"
"The data collection thus started out in January 2013 with focus group interviews with 25 14-year olds (four interviews with five participants) focusing on social media use, in particular photo sharing practices among the young people and experiences with dating/flirting and sharing of nudes"
"Before sending out the online survey, we carried out two “think aloud-tests” where test respondents (who were both Snapchat and Instagram users) within the target group provided us with feedback — both in terms of wording as well as technical insights. After that, the survey was tested three times among groups of university students before it was sent to the actual respondents: 230 primary school students aged 12–17. The students come from different social backgrounds in different parts of Denmark."
"The empirical material has been analysed in multiple layers informed by the research question’s focus on photo sharing practices and its implications for friendship and intimacy. We read, re-read, organised and re-organised the answers to the open-ended questions of the survey. In this process of analysis we took notes and created codes, categories and themes which were then gradually refined into the categories"

# Abstract

In this paper we investigate photo sharing practices among young people on the ephemeral social media platform Snapchat. What kind of photos are exchanged amongst 12–17 year olds via this app where pictures are elicited after up to 10 seconds? How is the content of the photos perceived by the young people themselves? We employ an Internet-mediated mixed methods approach. The primary empirical material consists of an online survey focusing on photo-elicitation practices on the two platforms Snapchat and Instagram conducted in 2015 and 2016 amongst Danish young people. Our results suggest that Snapchat is a site for intimacy in that pictures of double chins, ugliness and self-exposure are shared. These activities of photo-sharing and photo-communication bind young people in closeness and friendships. In this respect Snapchat differs from, for instance, Instagram where the pictures shared tend to be more polished, neat and perfect. The intimacy shared and maintained on Snapchat does, however, also cover nudes, dickpics and tarnished pictures. In this respect, intimacy entails both the comfort of sharing and the dramas of disruptions.

# Outcome

"Intimacy builds social worlds. It builds closeness as when the young people share unimportant photos of food, silly doodles or double chins and ugliness. At the same time it also threatens to destabilize closeness when snaps are screenshot and shared and hence carries the strengths and vulnerabilities in rapid exchanges of snaps and saved snaps. It carries the promise of closeness and potential failure of intimidating this very promise. Snaps of intimacy thus reverberate as utterly unimportant, yet publicly embarrassing, yet threatening vulnerabilities.
It seems that exactly these complex dynamics make Snapchat popular among young people. They relish a social media platform that on the one hand lets them bond in closeness by just “being themselves” and lower their self-presentational concerns and on the other hand intensifies shared intimacies by adding high-paced, disturbed temporalities and vulnerabilities. Thus, it seems that Snapchat has made room in the social media landscape for new kinds of intimacies where the inherent dramas, desires, betrayals and declarations are lived both incognito and publicly"