

When Heat Meets Warhol!

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NOT QUITE AN ABSTRACT

In 1968, Warhol wrote, "In the future everybody will be world famous for fifteen minutes". In the age of user-generated content, YouTube and Flickr, it seems at last he is right. However, not only can your photolog images be seen by the world, but photolurkers, like C-list paparazzi, may follow your life, and groups of strangers discuss you, like the pages of Heat magazine discuss Jade. Virtual community or simply complicit voyeurism? Certainly, photologs help families keep in contact and local friends establish new communities, and photolurking gives pleasure to individuals and can be a locus for local social interaction.

Keywords

Photolog, photolurking, user-contributed content

1. PHOTOLOGS AND PHOTOLURKING

Do you ever wonder that one day you will become famous because of your mundane and domestic photographs? Forget about big brother or reality TV programs, now you can be a DIY celebrity [3] without knowing it. Thanks to photolog!

Photolog first hit the web in 2004 and since then it has attracted millions of users across the world. These global applications allow people to share photographs with remote friends, family and online acquaintances. Photolog can be developed by individuals using album software on their web pages or can be offered by photolog hosting services like Flickr and Fotopages.

Four linked studies, which combine qualitative and quantitative methods, were performed to explore user experience in photolog. Participants were people who have temporarily relocated to Lancaster to further their studies. Having relocated remotely from their friends and family members, they formed new groups in the new area have experienced a significance change in their local social interaction and photo-sharing experience.

Our early premise was that photolog is largely used to share photographs remotely. However, when we explored this further, apart from remote sharing, photolog has been substantially repurposed for sharing with the local community.

People in the community come and go but their history in this temporary location remains in some of the participants' photologs. These photologs served as a locus for collective remembering [2]

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for the community events, history and progress. Photologs also help to maintain and nurture friendship and relationship, both local and abroad. People who are married tend to focus more on family photographs; their photographs are used to show cohesion, connectedness and evidence on how the family has progress during this period. Photolog also functions as a mundane memoir. Some mundane activities were snapped, shared and archived. Mundane activities will be meaningful memory overtime.

Apart from photologging, participants also engage in *photolurking* [4]. We define photolurking as flicking through other people's photographs in photolog, notably including those of strangers, giving little or no comment. Photolurking is the product of the *public-ness* of photologs. People indulge in photolurking for different reasons. They have found photolurking to be an interesting and pleasurable activity [1] in their spare time. When the local surroundings and culture seems alien to them, these people will seek *comfort and familiarity* in photologs. Although the public-ness of the application allows them to view photographs from different people and culture, they usually prefer to look and flick through photographs of strangers from their own culture, as the old adage says, 'birds of a feather flock together'. Looking at these photologs helps them to '*feel at home*' and provides more meaningful photo sharing experience.

What they have seen and remembered is then shared with others, including face-to-face meetings, re-telling their experience, gossip and rumors. Instead of celebrity magazines, they talk about some famous photologger; a commoner, not a celebrity who has become famous because of photographs and stories in photolog. People take them as an idol, inspiration or enemy. The heat however, doesn't stay long and people will turn to other photologgers as the talk of the town. It is 15 minutes of fame; Heat meets Warhol! [5]

2. REFERENCES

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