

DISSERTATION

Has Technology and the Internet Caused Us to forget the Private and Emotional Meaning Meant to Be Gained from the Photograph?



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Abstract

In 1839 the interest of permanently capturing a moment in time was born, with the invention of the camera. By the twenty first century these moments are being captured in their thousands due to the cross over between Analogue to Digital.

Digital photography is not only cheap but easy to use, making photo taking a popular global activity. The development of this technology has merged into the 'publicity of private' with photographs being uploaded to the self-promoting World Wide Web.

This study examines traditional family albums and whether the mass amount of photo taking and digital technologies has made them a thing of the past. It will question the 'Digital Loop' and how our generation has adapted to live within it and analyse whether this generation really has given thought about what information they are spreading across the web. From this, the study sets out to bring to light whether modern day technology and the use of the Internet has affected the emotional importance and connection of the photographic image.

Included within the study is a chapter with references to Roland Barthes Camera Lucida (1984) and the private connection he has with 'The Winter Garden' photograph. It questions whether Barthes would be so private about the photograph, if he was a writer in current day.

Introduction

'Photography is a way of feeling, of touching, of loving. What you have caught on film is captured forever... it remembers little things, long after you have forgotten everything.' (Siskind: 1984)

'From its beginnings, photography was recognised as a "machine for providing small doses of happiness on a mass scale" ' (Sekula: 1988: cited in Lury, 1998: 43)

In this day and age, the Internet and the use of Web 2.0 has made it relatively easy for people (specifically young adults) to create websites, blogs, Facebook and Twitter profiles and Flickr and YouTube accounts. All of these can display personal details, conversations, activities, and videos. It even allows users to express their innermost thoughts and desires. The most recent popular feature within Web 2.0 has to be the option of uploading photographs. The social networking website Facebook is the most used to upload photographs. According to comScore data some two billion photographs a month, or nearly seventy million a day are uploaded to the site.

Considering these shocking numbers it could be argued that photographs are no longer treasured objects to own anymore, that they are no longer used as personal memory prompts, and have arguably become disposable. Is this all due to the use of digital photography and its easily captured, easily disposable, mega amount photo taking? Is it also because it has become too easy to share, that once were, our private memories across the World Wide Web.

This account is aiming to question whether photographs still carry the same emotional value they did a decade ago, and if this is not the case, why have photographs turned from being privately captured magical moments to published meaningless images.

My study will be built up around four chapters. All chapters will discuss the photograph and argue how the new generation – Generation Web - with its access to new technologies and the Web, have developed into a "self promoting world", and how this impact has effected the emotional attachment between human and photograph.

Chapter one is a study on domestic photography, and will mainly focus on the "family album". It will be taking an in depth look at these traditional story telling time capsules, and how precious and meaningful photography was to the family life. Also it will look into who maintained and was generally in charge of the album and how it was classed as a private activity to look through the album with the family and very close friends. From this the chapter will move onto the subject of

how the introduction of the digital camera completely altered the uniqueness of a photograph, due to the technology allowing you to take hundreds of photographs instead on a handful. This could be debated that as there is so many photographs, the memory of the moment becomes less precious as there is multiple photos of the same thing. There is no more "one chance" to take the perfect picture attitude anymore. Also with this new technology brought the role of picture taking handed to all members of the family, with most young adults owning a camera as well as their parents. Chapter one will conclude on looking at whether the family album is still a treasured private possession and whether the use of uploading online will eventually dispose of the family album altogether, as Generation Web will find it too much of a chore to keep together.

Chapter two will move onto looking at the uploading of the photograph to the World Wide Web more closely, and discuss the "Digital Loop" the new generation – Generation Web - has grown to live in. It will argue that the use of technology and the Web have made this generation not think twice about taking photographs and how they have to be uploaded to the web for them to become global visual images. Does Generation Web have any private captured memories anymore? Or are they all lost within cyberspace? From here the chapter will move onto a study of the photo application on Social Networking site Facebook. It will dispute what the application has created and destroyed for the photographic image, and how it has emerged the publicity of private. The chapter will conclude on looking into the other side of the argument and see if all the uploading of photographs is a breakthrough for photo taking and sharing and how it connects individuals in a quick and easy social way.

Chapter three, will be an in depth discussion on how Author Roland Barthes of *Camera Lucida* (1984) believed that photographs are the most emotional meaningful object a person could ever own. Barthes most emotionally meaningful photograph is named "The Winter Garden", it is a picture of his mother as a child, but Barthes believes he can see the "true her" within the photograph. The interesting part to this is that Barthes does not duplicate the photograph for all to see as he believes it is personal to him and how there was no point in exposing it to others as they would not understand the photograph and not gain the true precious connection from it as it would just be another ordinary image to anybody else. The chapter (with Barthes emotional meaning in mind) will continue to discuss on how today's Generation Web could arguably not be gaining this emotional attachment to photographs, as it seems that all that a photo is lived for it is to be exposed and broadcasted to the world without any precious meaning or reasoning. Could this be because of the use of current technologies and the use on the Internet has allowed this to be done so easily? That it could be disputed that Generation Web have been forced to believe we are meant to display and take hundreds of photographs just for others to see and not for our own personal private memories.

In the final chapter – chapter four, the study of the cost of being public will be the main focus. It will discuss the "tagging" feature of the photo application on Facebook and argue that this is a

very exposing and impersonal factor. It will also discuss the negative aspects and inconveniences it can have on users of Facebook. It will also argue whether people who do not want to be exposed on the Internet should never take place within a photograph because of the risk of it appearing on websites. Also it will question whether we are all turning into celebrities and products of the Internet. From here the chapter will move onto a discussion whether we really know where our photographs are going and whether the Internet really is a safe and a secure place for our images to be placed. This section will feature a report on how Facebook members found their personal photographs being used within adverts on Facebook without their approval. Finally the chapter and study will conclude with thinking about the future and the cost of being so open and free on the Internet and how in 40 years time all of the photographs may have repercussions on the individuals. Also what will happen if all of a sudden the taking of thousands of photos and uploading wears off and the private emotional attachment photograph will be born again. Will our photographs be available to us or will our memories be lost forever?

Chapter One: The memory of the family album

' Most people's most valued photographs are taken, shown and displayed in the intimate spaces the family album provides, whether these are to be found between the leaves of an album or in the nooks and crevices of domestic life – the mantelpiece, the pin-board, the bedside table, the wallet, the handbag or the old shoe box on top of the wardrobe. Indeed, so many a part of everyday life are these spaces that rights of possession of the subject by the photographer (and/or the owner or keeper of the photograph) are not generally seen to require the necessity of a formal contract.' (Lury: 1998: 80)

It is more than likely that every family, no matter how much have to rummage through the cupboards will locate a family album. These plastic covered, bursting at the seams books are “time capsules” of family trees and allow people in the present to get in touch with their past. They tend to include photographs of old relatives and special events/occasions that have taken place during the family time line. Including births, first day of School, marriages, to family holidays and outings. The most important factor about these photographs is that they are classed as private memoirs between the family. Those are treasured within the album.

Then along came the Digital Camera and its use of Digital Photography that completely changed the way in which people view photography and a “one chance” to take the perfect picture activity. Which could arguably result in photographs not being as precious to memory as there are 5 of the same snapshots within a collection. Soon after this came the birth of Web 2.0 and the option to upload photographs to the Internet. With this the photographed memories that once were only stored in the family album were now appearing on the World Wide Web, also creating what once was a private affair into a public one. Arguably photographs are becoming not as precious and valuable and not seen as worth keeping items, then they were a decade ago.

During this chapter the main argument whether the technology of the Digital Camera and the use of the Internet has taken away the meaning and value of having a family album and whether there is still an emotional connection between the family photographs and today's Generation Web, who may only know photographs as digital pixels on a computer screen.

What once was - The traditional family album

Photography was first invented in The French Academy of Science in 1839 and was first used for the formal taking of photographed portraits of upper class, high-ranking individuals. It began to take over the portrait painting, but it wasn't until the second half of the nineteenth century when photographic portraits became popular.

At first the invention was very complicated to use, only inventors and well-educated technical individuals were able to use the device. It was not until 1888 when George Eastman, Founder of Eastman Kodak Company, introduced a camera the size of a small cigar box and provided everybody with the opportunity of the skill of taking a photograph. 'You push the button, and we do the rest' was the slogan for the hand held camera, and this really was the case, there was no more need for 'photographer amateurs' to own equipment such as backdrops, glass plate negatives, mixture of chemicals and they even did not have to step foot into a darkroom, to develop their photographs. The camera was easy to handle with only having to complete three simple steps to take a photograph: pull the cord, turn the key and press the button. No professional technical skills required. Once the users film was filled up with their snapshots, they would simply have to return the negatives to the factory and then the developed mounted photographs would get sent back to the photographers household along with a new one hundred reel film. This process would take around ten days. This was a huge revolution for the camera, however it was still a pricey device that most families were unable to afford.

By 1890 Eastman and Kodak introduced a camera that was retailed for one dollar - named the Brownie Camera. This simple camera could be manufactured through mass production and because of the price; the device was available to the poorest families who were now able to partake in the magical activity of photo taking. This was a worldwide success, and with it's advertisements it encouraged customers to take as many photographs as possible daily and for them to take their Kodak Camera out with them at all times.



Figure 1.1 - 2 women by a fence wearing checked dresses. April 1924.

From the above advertisement, you can see that the poster includes two women using the technology. This was more than likely because this was seen as the first real technology that women were able to use without the men looking over their shoulder. Henceforth this was the beginning of domestic photography and the storing of the family album. This was an activity mainly taken up by the mother of the family, who would want to take and organise photographs of their family life cycle. Its was soon classed as a domestic skill along with cooking and cleaning: 'It's simplicity of operation indicated that the women of the house could use it, while chemicals and other technical paraphernalia could be left to the men' (Wells: 2004: 140)

Elaborately bound albums were introduced to accommodate the photographic cards, within the albums would be plastic leaves which the photographs would be slipped into, some albums even had the feature of note sheets, so descriptions could be written to help the image become a memory prompt. Kodak themselves started to bring out album books for customers to buy and soon almost every family would have an archive of their families lives stored in images. Kodak would use advertisements showing families huddled together going through the album together, to show how each member of the family would gain something from looking through the family

photographs.

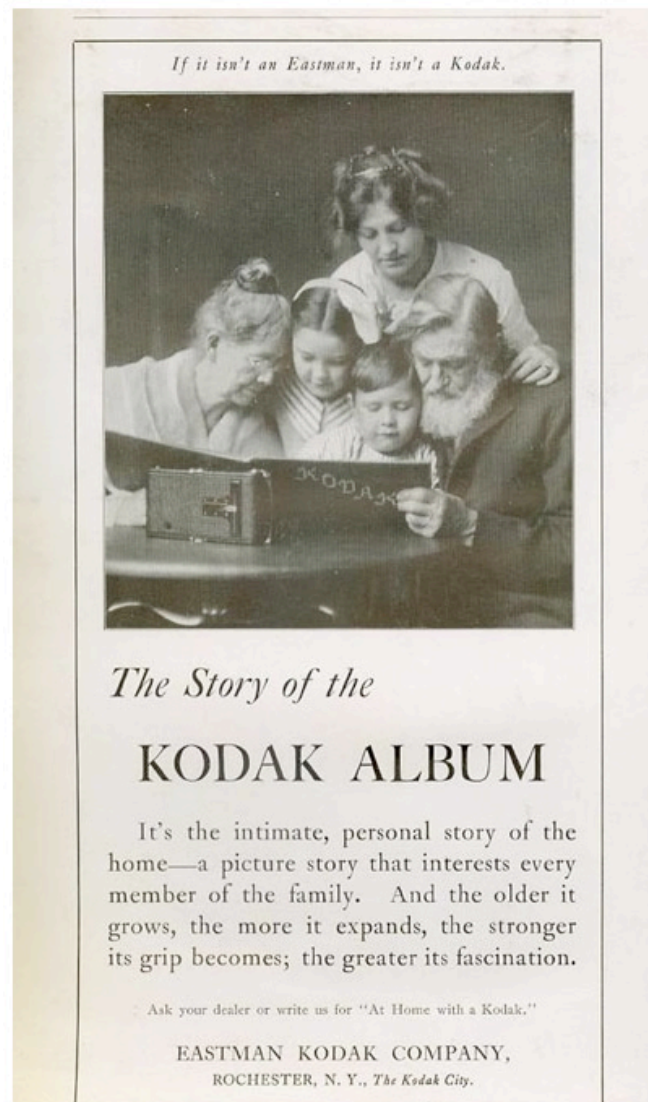


Figure 1.2 - Kodak Album - Family members around the photo album.- Circa 1915.

The meaning between the leaves - The traditional family album

Even though all families differ, from income to religion, each family album generally has the same themes and patterns. Covering of events that occurred during the families' domestic life. Albums tend to record: births, first day of school, graduations, weddings along with family holidays and outings. They intend to not include memories that would rather not be remembered, or unhappy times the family have gone through, such as funerals, divorces and member of the family ill in hospital. The only time an album will see a hospital is of when a baby has been born into the family. To quote Don Slater in his writing of Domestic photography and digital culture:

'...moments of pain, horror, discord (even the traces of these: consider what photos are removed when a family relationship splits up); unhappiness could only be included is the sentimentalised from a crying baby.' (1995: 134)

Indeed, that is what the family album is all about, telling the happy story of the families lives, expressing all the good time memories in an informal visual photo essay format. From these stories we can learn and gain knowledge of who we are and where we originated. It leads us to become fascinated with our own history. Slater believes that: 'Domestic photography held out the possibility of telling one's own stories about oneself and one's life, about the life around one.' (1995: 144).

When looking through the photo album, the family would tend to all sit down together and go through the album together. Telling stories about the photographs and reminisce together in the privacy of their own home environment. Each member of the family gaining an emotional involvement with the photographs, whether this being receiving knowledge of what existed or just experience of a visual magical memory that is personal to you and nobody else. Would a family in current day even have time to sit down together, let alone go through family photographs together, or would members of the family be too busy indulging into their latest technologies? Younger members of the family may have never even seen the family album before or at least heard stories about every photograph within the album.

Don Slater included in his study an interesting piece of market research taken in 1982 that 39 per cent of respondents rated their family photographs as the possession they treasure most and would least like to lose (out of a list which included jewellery and clothes). As Slater goes onto discuss: 'These figures ring true intuitively and correspond to feeling of existential photo is lost or destroyed' (1995: 138). Would these figures be the same in current day? Does the family photo album really mean that much to individuals anymore? If not it could be disputed that this is because of the shift from Analogue to Digital. With today's technology and the introduce of the Digital Camera and online distribution, are the traditional simple things in life just not good enough for Generation Web?

Digital photography - The digital family album

Digital photography became popular in early 2000s and as soon as this happened the existence of the family photo album became threatened. The digital camera is a cheap to use technology that has dropped the costs of taking photographs and printing. With it being so cheap to operate, what once was the mother's role to control the camera, the picture taking has now been distributed across the whole family. Indeed even older teenagers within the family will now

own a camera. Plus will only be interested in taking photographs of their own social events and holidays, rather than, appearing within photographs and taking photographs for the family album. What once was an enjoyed hobby of the mother is now becoming a chore, to gets the family to participate.

The digital cameras ability to be plugged into a home computer and copy over photographs without any cost has increased the volume in picture taking but has reduced the volume of photographs getting developed and becoming physical objects. A holiday trip a decade ago would have been covered by reel of 24 coloured photographs, whereas in current day the same holiday will be captured in 300 plus photographs. Is this 276 too many? It could be said that Generation Web have become spoiled and overloaded with photographs, that is it now just became another object which has no sentimental meaning at all. Also with this mass amount of photo taking comes the option to pre-viewing your photographs on the built in screen in the camera. This has lead to people taking a number of photographs of the same scene, just so they can make sure they get that "perfect shot". It could be debated that this will make sure we get our best memories collected, but on the other hand is could be also said that it has taken away the preciousness of the "one-chance" photograph, because there being so many of the same photograph, that brain starts to become bored of looking at the same image. The preview screen has also taken away the excitement of waiting to see what has come out of the film. It could also be said that waiting for the film to be developed was a better experience for the memory. By the time the photographs have arrived the images of your holiday would become blurred in your mind, possibly even forgotten, so the photographs would have more of effect on you upon remembrance. Now with digital cameras, the photograph is available at a click of a button. Has this taken away the memory triggering moments? Now photographs are always available, has the emotional effect left the image, and even though we are looking at a memory, in our minds is the image meaningless?

To get your digital photographs printed professionally, costs. The cost per print may be less now than a decade ago but the volume of photos being taken has increased. This has resulted in many photographs not being printed and therefore not becoming physical objects in our hands. Furthermore with the use of storing photographs onto home computers or burning onto disc, Generation Web do not see the need to print out the photographs and waste their money, as they can display the photographs on their computer screen. But will this generation have the time to sit down and go through stacks of disc containing thousands of photographs? Have they thought about whether a problem may occur with the disc, alas losing the prints - whereas a printed photograph may fade over time, yet at least you can still possess the image. Along with this non-interest to print photographs, the family album is no longer expanding and becoming a time capsule for future generations. Is the achieving of a family album too much of a chore for today's Generation Web, as they are too used to the digital way?

Gone public - The digital family album

Instead of the photographs being privately stored within a sentimental album, the photographs of today are being set free. They are being broadcasted publicly onto the World Wide Web.

The introduction of Web 2.0 has brought us into the Social Networking era – The discussion of Social Networking sites and the use of uploading photographs, will come up more in depth within the next chapter. Many of these sites allow users to upload photographs, placing them into global album for all to see. Personal memories that were once a private sit down affair with the family and close friends are now a very public ordeal. Even strangers get the chance to view the photographs, strangers who would never understand the meaning of the photographs and have no emotional connection to them. Almost all the world has gone public.

In Roland Barthes Camera Lucida, Barthes discusses the emergence of: 'publicity of the private' (1984: 98). He writes that its emergence:

'Corresponds precisely to the explosion of the private into public...the private is consumed as such publicly...But since the private is not only one of our goods (falling under the historical law of property), since it is also the absolutely, precious, inalienable site where my image is free (free to abolish itself), as it is the condition of an interiority which I believe is identifies with me truth, or if you like, with the Intractable of which I consist, I must by necessary resistance, reconstitute the division of public and private: I want to utter interiority without yielding intimacy.' (1984:98)

With all the photographs being published online, is the future of the traditional family album, never expanding with memories of today, or even worst will it become disposable and non-existent? It would not be surprising if all the photographs that are meant to be place within the interment space of a family album end up becoming lost in cyberspace? In Bernard Salt's report: Digital age threatens the family photo album (2008) he believes that:

'The human desire to reflect and remember is a powerful emotion. And for this reason I wonder whether the family photograph album is really in hibernation or whether there will be a revival.

The novelty of having the to take hundreds of photos will wear off within a decade and once again those glorious time capsules of family memories, the photo album, will bloom again.'(Salt: 2008)

Hopefully this is the case and Generation Web will one day when older realise how much photographs represent and how important it is to privately store them, '...snapshot of time that is to be carried forth as proof of an event and as a memory prompt.'(Salt: 2008) and there will be a mad rush to locate and print the images that in their past were carelessly stored or even discarded, to re-live their lives in the leaves of a family album.

In conclusion, this chapter has focused on the history and the sentimental meaning of the traditional family photo album along with domestic photography and with it being the role of the mother to keep the visual family tree going a decade ago, all before the introduction of the Digital Age. The chapter then moved onto the discussion of the shift from analogue to digital and the arrival of the digital camera and how the device threatened the family album with its use of high volume picture taking and the ability to store photos onto the computers without being printed. It had also allowed the picture taking skill to be processed across the family, making the younger part of the family more interested in taking their own photographs rather than participating in taking photographs for the family album. The chapter ended on the start of looking into how we are becoming public with our photographs and how the family albums of today do not offer private reflection and arguably do not offer the powerful and influential emotional affect that traditional family albums once did.

Chapter Two: The digital loop we live in

'I think the web is about connecting humanity. Now we have got to the point where 25% are using it...' (Sir Tim Berners-Lee: 2010 cited in, The Virtual Revolution: 1. The Great Levelling: 2010)

Two billion members of the public are online, that's a quarter of the planet. In the United Kingdom, thirty five million residents go online every day. Today's generation, 'Generation Web', do not know life without the Internet.

As discussed in the chapter before, with the introduction of Web. 2.0 and social networks, we have seen the birth of online information distribution, and most recently, online photo sharing. The main photo distribution sites being, social networking sites: Flickr, MySpace and most recently, Facebook. Out of all three of these sites, Facebook is the most logged onto, to upload photographs. It is believed, that this is because of it's built in photo application that simply allows you to 'tag' your friends within the photos and share an unlimited amount of snapshot albums.

With the photo application being so easy to use, the users have become addicted to uploading photos, to it and have started to live within a 'Digital Loop'. This Loop involves them taking a vast amount of photographs, uploading them to Facebook and tagging the individuals involved in the photo without even a thought about what they are publicly displaying for all to see.

Below is a figure to visualise the 'Digital Loop' regular users of Facebook's photo application are living in:

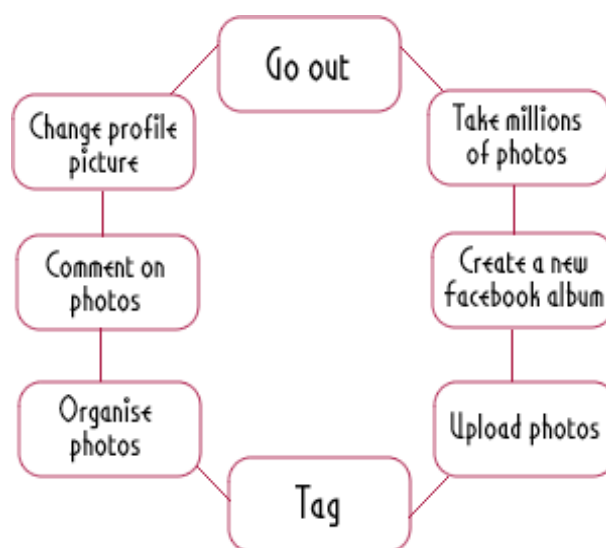


Figure 2.1 – The Digital Loop

This chapter examines the 'Digital Loop', and hopes to show how said loop has become a habit to Facebook users. It will argue that this has affected the emotional aspect of the photograph and made them become meaningless and less precious objects of personal memory. As Facebook users choose instead to broadcast and set them free for all to see.

Web 2.0 and facebook - The beginning of web addiction

In the current climate, the World Wide Web is the most popular way to communicate between friends, family and even strangers. This is all thanks to the introduction of Web 2.0 and social networking sites.

On midnight 24th May 2007 the first Facebook site was born. It began as a network to connect all the Harvard University students, but soon expanded to other colleges around the local area. Eventually it moved onto be a platform that could be used by all University and College students' worldwide. From this came the demand for connection and communication, leading Facebook to expand to a global social network and creating it into a worldwide success.

Facebook now has more than three hundred and fifty million users worldwide, twenty three million of these being in the UK. More than half of these users log on daily for at least an hour, with the most popular activities being even uploading or flicking through photographs within the site. In fact 69% of Facebook monthly visitors worldwide either look at or upload photos.

facebook - Photo application

According to comScore data, somewhat two billion photos a month – or nearly seventy million a day are uploaded to Facebook. This is a towering amount over Yahoo's photo sharing site Flickr's three million uploads a day. So what makes Facebook so popular and are these seventy million photos so meaningless that their only worth is to be placed on the Internet. It could be argued that it is because Facebook users have become addicted to using the simple built in photo application available on the site. This constant use of the application places the users within an 'Digital Loop'.

When you upload photographs to Facebook, you can create an album of a maximum capacity of two hundred photos. The album can be named, inform the location and have an added description. There is also a tab available that allows you to decide on the availability of the photographs, whether it being to 'everybody', 'friends and networks', 'friends of friends' or even the privacy of 'only friends', however the photographs are still going on the Internet and are not being printed and stored privately at home. Once the photographs have been uploaded you can add captions to each photo, change the album front cover and also tag the individuals that are the subjects within the photographs. The Facebook Engineer, Scott Marlette who oversees the

photo application believes that the tagging feature is why photo uploading is so popular on the social network.

Marlette says:

'Being able to tag your friends in a photo and have it show up somewhere else was really powerful...And it turned out to be something that really differentiated the way people used photos on Facebook vs. other sites.'(Marlette, 2009: cited in, Graham, 2009)

The tagging feature involves identifying and labelling the people within the photographs and it automatically ends up on your own profile and stored into their photograph tab on their profile. A notification will be sent to the tagged individuals, eliminating the need to send them an invitation to view the photograph that they are in. Once a person has been tagged within a photo, a link to that particular person's profile will appear underneath the photograph, allowing any viewer of the photograph to be able to click on the link and direct them to the individual's profile page. This is all completed without much effort and time, which could arguably make Facebook users lazy and see any other way of organising photographs as long process chore. In Erick Schonfeld's report – Facebook Photos Pull Away From The Pack (2009), he states:

'This single feature turns a solitary chore – tagging and organizing photos – into powerful form of communication that connects people through activities they've done in the past in an immediate, visual way. I would not be surprised if people click back through to Facebook from those photo notifications at a higher rate than from any other notification, including private messages.'(Schonfeld, 2009)

Even though users do have the option of de-tagging themselves, it can arguably be said that the tagging feature is very impersonal and can expose individuals, as there is no control over allowing photos of you not to be tagged. It may also lead to bad repercussions/results for the individual as there may be certain photographs that they may not wish other to see of themselves. This argument will be covered more within chapter three.

Surprisingly, even competitors of Facebook, such as print sellers Shutterfly¹ and Kodak to storage specialists such as Phanfare² are encouraging customers to share photos on Facebook.

1 <http://www.shutterfly.com/> turns customers photographs into thoughtful and memorable items, that range from photo books to greeting cards.

2 <http://www.phanfare.com/home.aspx> is a site where you can share, manage and archive your digital photos and videos.

Even Photobucket³, owned by News Corp, who also own MySpace (Facebook's main competitor) offers a Facebook sharing button. With all this helping and diverting to Facebook, the photo traffic with the site has grown to 43.3 million visitors compared to 26.5 million the year before.

With there being so many different ways to get your photographs onto Facebook. The current generation has become addicted to using the Internet to share their images and craves the need to view albums, even though they have no emotional attachment to the photos. It has also put regular users into a 'digital loop', where they repeat the same process almost every time they go out, which has left the photographs becoming just another image as, once they are up on the Internet already more photographs are being taken to take the moment away from the previous images.

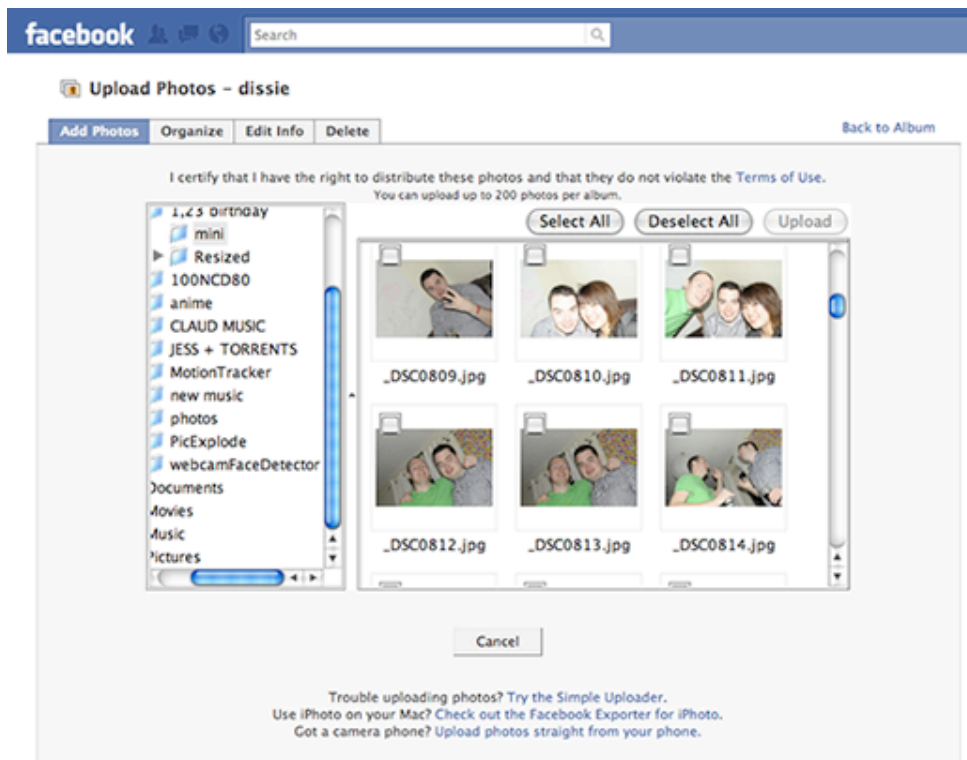


Figure 2.2 – Upload Screen of Facebook's photo application

³ <http://photobucket.com/> upload your photos to Photobucket and you can receive code to add the photo within any site for free.

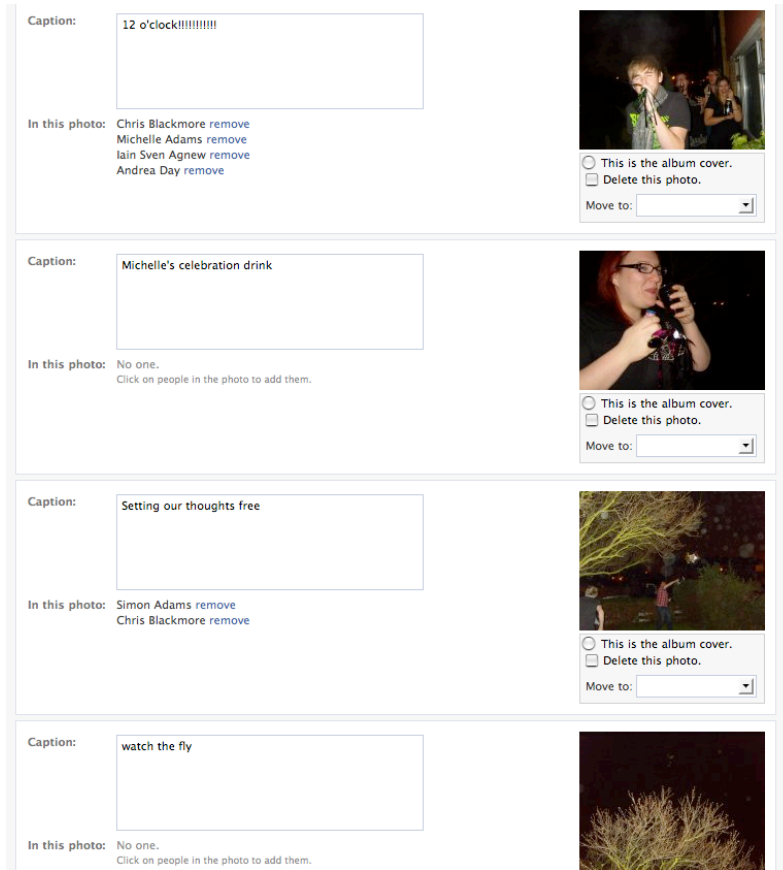


Figure 2.3 – Edit page of Facebook's photo application

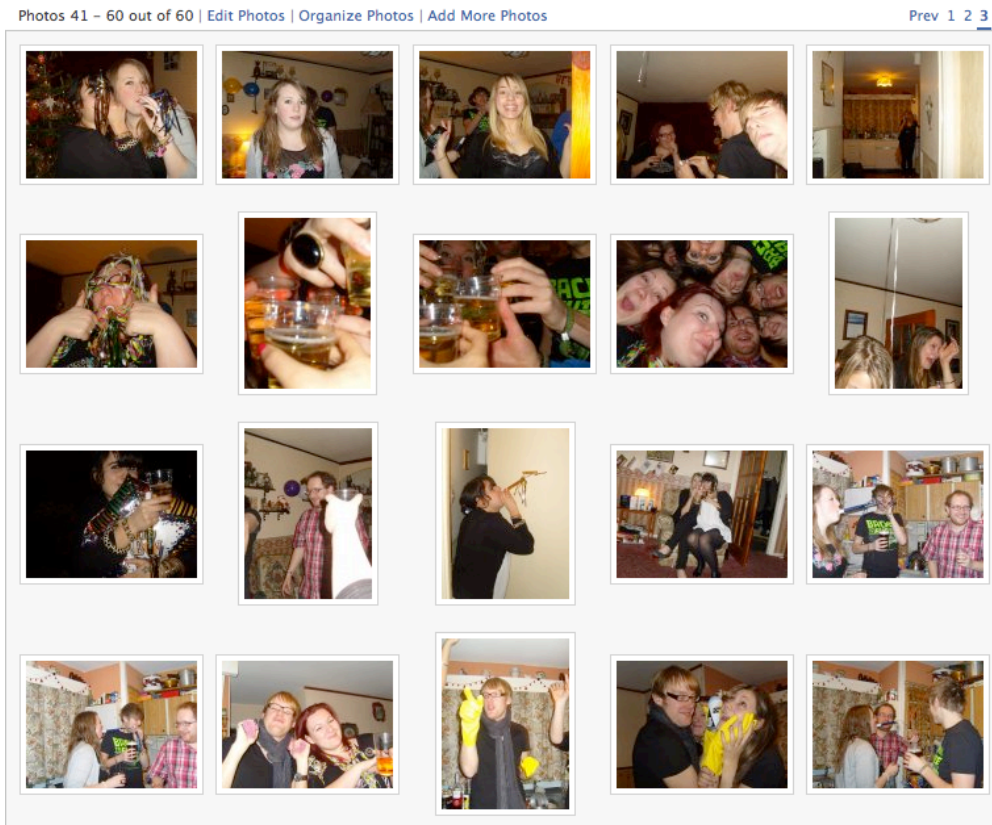


Figure 2.4 – Viewing photo album on Facebook

Living within the Digital Loop

As the photo application built within Facebook is so easy to use and accessible, it could be disputed that people have become addicted to using it as it is right under their noses. Generation Web has adapted into consistently using the application and has started to live within its viral digital loop. The majority of the current day generation will always have a camera at their side; at every social event and trip they attend. This is how, 1890 camera manufacture Kodak wanted it, but, would they want all the photographs that get taken today being placed on social networks, for them to lose their personal, emotional attachment, between taker and subject? With the massive amount of photographs being uploaded in the current climate, it is clear to say that most photographs have just become objects of meaningless exposure that hold no sentimental meaning. Regular users of the photo applications minds are now programmed not take in account how precious these visual memories are but instead how they should get the photographs onto the Internet as quick as possible, tag all their friends and take a photograph perfect enough for their next profile picture.

The process that makes up the digital loop, is built up with 4 different steps:

Take photographs: Whilst out photographs will be taken, including group and individual - along with scenery and place of location photographs. With the use of the Digital camera, hundreds of photographs can be taken within one evening and previewed on the built in screen. The digital camera also includes the option of disposing photographs soon after they are taken, so you can make sure you just keep your preferred snapshots.

Upload to Facebook: Within hours of getting back home the photographs will appear on Facebook. On Facebook's 'Homepage' is a photo tab that takes you straight away to the uploading application. With a few clicks of the mouse the photographs will start to upload, within a customised album and be online for all to see. The photos are transcoded into tiny, 100 – Kilobyte files, so they can be opened swiftly. A full size image is opened at 600 x 400 or 400 x 600 pixels, however with the files being of a small size the quality of the photo is very low.

Organising the photographs: Once the photographs have been uploaded you can organise them into a certain order, add captions and tag yourself and your friends within the photographs, which will automatically send an invitation to the tagged individuals to view the photos, they are in within the album.

Change profile picture: The final part of the loop tends to be the change of profile pictures. Individuals will decide which photograph would portray them best and with the click of a button and an easy crop method the individual will have a brand new profile picture.

With all of the images going online, what was once a personal outing between close friends is now being broadcasted, for friends of friends to see, and maybe even strangers – all of which have nothing to do with the event and would not get the same emotional value and memories from the photographs. Instead these individuals are invading the subject's activities. However as the photographs are up for them to see in the first place, they have been invited to invade the memories.

It could be questioned that if certain networking sites, especially Facebook, did not have the photo uploading application, would our photos once again end up being stored privately in an album, scrap book or even a shoe box under our bed. One thing is for sure, that the photographs would only be seen within a private circle, between the subjects in the photographs. The emotional connection would still be intact, as there would be no outside individuals invading the memory, only the chosen viewers.

facebook - It's not just about the photographs

On the other side of the argument, it has been disputed that online distribution has been a huge breakthrough for photo sharing and communicating between friends and families. As Facebook is the most used social networking site, the individuals who need tagging are most of the time, a member of Facebook. Also, with it being the most used social network when individuals get tagged it can be a way to introduce people to others with the use of identity.

Along with it's easy to use application, users can save photos to their own computer that have been uploaded and use them for their own use.

James Joaquin, a co-founder of Kodak Gallery, believes Facebook photo application is more about communication between friends, rather than what the photograph is about:

'What Facebook did was people-centric, not photo-centric, and that was the huge shift...It's not just about the photo, but the people you care about. Facebook is a communication tool that solved a bigger problem – how to effortlessly share information and photos.'(Joaquin: 2009: cited in, Graham: 2009)

In conclusion to this chapter, it is evident that the current generation – Generation Web - are growing into a life based online, with web addiction. Along with this addiction to the digital world, comes the lost attachment between traditional analogue meaningful objects – such as the

photograph. Nowadays what your next profile picture is going to be is more important than what the photograph represents.

The chapter also included the other side of the argument and how the uploading of photographs is all about sharing and communicating, and that it has created a greater connection between friends and photographs. However it also concluded that it comes down to being more about the people than the photograph, with the emergence of the publicising of privacy.

Chapter Three: Roland Barthes - Camera Lucida

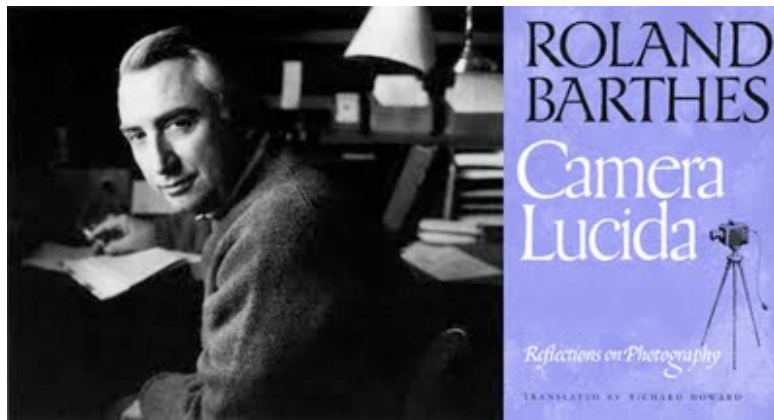


Figure 3.1 – Roland Barthes Camera Lucida

An interesting and connection text to this study is, Camera Lucida by Roland Barthes. During his book Barthes discusses how and why photographs emotionally move him. Sadly whilst writing his book, his mother passed away, with this Barthes privately one night went through old photographs of his mother, and this gave him inspiration on what to write within his second half of his book:

'There I was, alone in the apartment where she had died, looking at these pictures of my mother, one by one, under the lamp, gradually moving back in time with her, looking not the truth of the face I had loved.' (1984, 67)

With most of current climates photographs being stored on computers, on disc or online, would the same connection be so emotional between individual and computer screen? Traditional, developed photographs have physical presence and aesthetics. The photos age along with the individuals, they gain fingerprints, the colour begins to fade, and they ever bend and become creased. It could be debated that there is more of a stronger emotional connection, even an electrical charge gained from these brown stained images over the high definition, perfectly taken images of current day.

Barthes found the one main photograph, where he could find exactly what he was looking for in his mother, the 'true her'. The photograph was an old sepia faded blunt cornered object, that you could only just manage to see the two children's faces within the photo. One child was Barthes uncle at the age of 7 and the other was Barthes mother at the age of 5.

'I stare intensely at the Sovereign Good of Childhood, of the mother, of the mother-as-child.' (1984: 71)

His emotional connection grew stronger as he studied the litter girl, even though she was just a little girl he could see the women he admired and loved:

'In this little girl's image I see kindness which has formed her being immediately and forever...' (1984: 69)

Barthes had taken care of his weak mother everyday and night before her death, so finding this treasured image was a great ordeal for Barthes and in some way a reward for his hard work. He saw it as the last greatest emotional connection he had left between him and his mother, a private affair between mother and son.

For this reason Barthes does not reproduce the so private photograph within his book, as he does not want his memory to be taken away from just him and also because he believes that the photograph meant everything and more to him. To any other viewer it would mean nothing and be just another photograph that there is not symbolic or emotional connection. So it is to be kept private to him and him only:

'I cannot reproduce the Winter Garden Photograph. It exists only for me. For you, it would be nothing but an indifferent picture, one of the thousands manifestations of the "ordinary"; it cannot in any way constitute the visible object of a science; it cannot establish an objectivity, in the positive sense of the term; at most it would interest your *studium*: period, clothes, photogeny; but in it, for you, no wound.' (1984, 73)

Almost 30 years on from *Camera Lucida*, it is questioned whether this same need to keep photographs private and whether we can gain the emotional affect from an image still exists. Has the current day technologies made us believe sharing is best and having a treasured private memory only for our eyes, is a thing of the past? If Barthes himself had wrote *Camera Lucida* today, would he have published The Winter Garden Photograph within his book for all to see just as an "ordinary" picture, and would he have the same strong emotional connection to photograph, that was gained in 1984?



Figure 3.2 – Roland Barthes and his mother - 1924

Chapter four: Publicity of private

The aim of this study was to argue whether the Internet and new technologies have made photographs emotionally meaningless and not represent personal, safely kept, magical, memory moments anymore. With the use of digital photography and its high volume picture taking and social networking sites such as Facebook with its built in photo application, that has placed its users into a 'Digital Loop' of uploading and tagging photographs on a global scale.

Now this study is going to concentrate on the implications of being public with photographs. Its going to look at the effects of being so public and whether people are really thinking about where their photographs are going. Even about what it could lead to in the future. This chapter will also include a discussion about an incidence when Facebook users personal photographs, ended up being used within an advertisement. A study into how the 'tagging' feature of Facebook is very impersonal will be included and it will think about how it can effect the other users of Facebook, who tend to not want to be expose and hide behind a 'buddy icon' or 'aviator' as profile pictures. It also looks into, how we are all living like celebrities and products of the Internet. To conclude the chapter I will discuss the future and how in years to come, will nobody have their own private visual memories, as they will be all on the Internet. Or will thing take a backward turn and the present habit and interest of taking thousands of photographs and exposing them to all, die out and the emotional attachment between subject and photograph be born again?

Being public - Need to think twice

'People have to think more about what information they want to put out and how it should be used.' (Bill Gates, Co-founder of Microsoft: 2010 cited in, *The Virtual Revolution*, 3. *The Cost of Free*: 2010)

Two billion photographs a month are getting uploaded to Facebook and once on the web it is almost impossible to erase and remove the photographs off of the Internet. Are these photographs that in 40 years time, individuals will want floating around for anybody to locate in cyberspace? It may have consequence on people, relationships, careers and friendships – let alone be images that they would prefer their children to not discover.

We are living in a self-promoting world, where everybody has a chance to be seen – you don't have to be anybody to be somebody. Is the publicity of our privacy really what we want or is it because we feel the need to upload these photographs and tag our friends because it is so accessible, in a way it could be argued that we have been forced to hand over our photographs.

Not just your own photographs

In the summer of 2009 a controversy erupted, when Cheryl Smith a Facebook member and user of the photo application, found one of her personal photographs being used within an advertisement, without her approval and permission.

The Social Media Consultant image appeared in a dating advertisement, which included the tag line “Hey Peter, hot singles are waiting for you!” It was Cheryl's husband who discovered the advertisement, when it appeared up on his news feeds.

Create Your Own Quiz >



Figure 4.1 – Cheryl Smith, advertisement on Facebook. 2009

Scott Marlett, Facebook's Engineer, explained that it was a third-party application developer that grabbed the photo and that it was a mistake that will never happen again: 'We're really concerned with the users' privacy and any threat that could be perceived.' (Marlett, 2009: cited in, Graham, 2009). Facebook took action and dropped the company from the site.

Cheryl accepted Facebook's apology and still continues to upload photographs and use the photo application daily:

'With any new form of technology, you don't want to throw the baby out with the bath water because somebody used it poorly...Facebook is still a fabulous way to communicate, and I believe Facebook has taken really good measures to make sure what happened to us won't happen again.'
(Smith, 2009: cited in, Graham, 2009)

Not everybody wants to live celebrities

However not everybody wants to be exposed in large amounts on the Internet and have their personal identity pasted all around Facebook. These individuals tend to hide behind an image as their profile picture, so as not to broadcast their own face. These commonly are, cartoon characters, aviators, images of famous people or a picture of their pet. These people are very self-conscious and they tend to never really be tagged within photographs as they have de-tagged

themselves. However, even though they have untagged themselves there will still be photographs on the site of them that they would prefer not to be on site. Self-conscious people are very aware of themselves and to have this insecurity and worry of being tagged in photographs. It is not a pleasurable experience. It is in fact a fear within many individuals. In the words of Susan Sontag:

' Most people are anxious when they're about to be photographed: not because they fear, as primitives do, being violated but because they fear the camera's disapproval. People want the idealized image: a photograph of themselves looking their best. They feel rebuked when the camera doesn't return an image of themselves as more attractive than they really are.'(1978, 85)

Does this mean that, these individuals who do not want to be broadcast should not participate in act of photo taking? Not even appear in photographs, so there is no risk of their identity appearing on the Internet, as they know their friends will upload the photographs. Author of Free, Chris Anderson believes:

'You should lead your life different, you should not post a photo, probably shouldn't take a photo that you don't want spread' (Anderson: 2010 cited in, The Virtual Revolution, 3. The Cost of Free: 2010)

He continues:

'The fact that your just a regular person does not entitle you to guarantee that pictures of you drunk and passed out are not going to be spread across the Internet, and so in a sense, we have to live like celebrities, because there's that potential we will be treated like them.' (Anderson, 2010 cited in, The Virtual Revolution, 3. The Cost of Free: 2010)

This idea of us living like celebrities suggests that in the years to come, we may lose all privacy and personal memories altogether. With all our visual memories being uploaded for anybody to see, will we still gain such memories and associations, as in the end, we will have been overloaded with photographic images?

In conclusion to the final chapter, it is clear that Facebook photo application users should think twice about what they upload and where their photos are really going and how they can be used by anybody, anywhere.

Also is the use of online distribution a curse to people who do not want to be broadcast across the web. With it having them results in not taking place within a snapshot with their friends, as they know the photographs will end up tagged on Facebook.

Conclusion

In conclusion to the study it would seem that the emotional attachment and meaning of the photograph has changed, and almost dissolved along with the forgotten photographs stored within the traditional family photo album. With online distribution being a part of the future, the family album has become a thing of the past, it has turned into a public display rather than the private reflection affair it once was.

Facebook's photo application has placed the current generation within a digital loop that results in millions of photos being uploaded and tagged to the Internet daily. All of this completed without any thought about what the users are really giving away. It could be argued that users have been forced and even programmed to believe this is the only necessary for photographs, and to upload photographs as everybody else is doing this. There are also effects of being so public that the users seem to forget about. For instance, where their photos are really going and who can access them and use them in anyway that they like.

There has been current discussions that Facebook from July 2010 will start charging users £3.99 for them to be able to user the site. This will certainly effect the site's popularity but will this result in our photographs becoming private and holding emotional meaning once again as they will not be broadcast across the social networking site for all to see. Also would this result in the limitation of photo taking, making more of an exciting and enjoyable hobby again?

Word Count: 8658

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