



UNIVERSITY OF GOTHENBURG

Instagram

What motivates young Icelandic women to use Instagram to communicate?

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to determine why young Icelandic women use Instagram to communicate. Social networking services have developed vastly in the last two decades from computer-based websites to social networking applications available on mobile devices. At the same time photo sharing has moved from living rooms to online photo sharing and recently to mobile applications such as Instagram that combines social networking features together with photo sharing. Today the use of these services has become a part of individuals' daily routine to assist their social interactions. Mixed methods were used to gain data for this study. Qualitative semi-structured interviews as well as statistical information regarding the use of the medium. The findings of this study suggested that Instagram provided young Icelandic women with a more private environment, compared to other social networking sites, to communicate with friends and family. Their motivation for using the medium was to see what others were doing and to stay connected and maintain relationships as well as seek entertainment by the use, which supports their need for social connection and bonding.

Keywords: Social media • Social networking sites • Online photo sharing • Instagram • Facebook • Mobile photo sharing application • Privacy

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1. Introduction

This is a study on the usage of Instagram the mobile social networking photo sharing application. Social networking sites (SNSs) have been around since the 1990s but only in the past decade have they attracted millions of users, many of whom have integrated these sites into their daily routine (boyd & Ellison 2008). Social networks are online Internet environments where individuals create their profiles and link to other individuals (users) on the sites, creating a web of personal connections (boyd & Ellison 2008; Donath & boyd 2004).

There are hundreds of SNSs available with different technological affordances supporting a wide range of interests and practices. Even though their basic technological features are fairly similar the cultures that develop around the sites are different. Most sites support already established social networks while others help strangers connect based on shared interests, views, or activities. Some SNSs welcome a diverse audience while others attract individuals based on common language or shared identities. Sites also differ in the degree to which they take advantage of new information and communication tools, such as mobile connectivity, blogging, and video/photo sharing (boyd & Ellison 2008).

Instagram is based on the photo sharing communication tool. The application allows users to take a photo, apply a digital filter to it, and share it on a variety of social networking sites including Instagram's own site (Kerpen 2011). Instagram's popularity and usage has grown rapidly since its launch in October 2010 with 100 million registered users in January 2013 and thereof 90 million monthly active ones (DesMarais 2013). Instagram's success displays the power of photos on the mobile web (Kerpen 2011). The stereotypical view of an Instagram user is of one that is often seen snapping shots of their food, current activities, or new purchases and sharing the photos with short texts in near real-time on SNSs (Instagram 2011). Researchers have found that sharing of everyday experiences online tends to help individuals establish common ground, the feeling of identification with another, and bring individuals together through social media (Donath & boyd 2004; Rheingold 2000). As well as being a SNS Instagram can also be described as a mobile social networking application whereas it is an application available on mobile devices.

Following the introduction of this paper there is a literature review on individuals needs to communicate, development of SNSs, online photo sharing and privacy. Then there is a section on the methodology, results of the study and analysis of them. The paper closes with a discussion on the study as well as a conclusion to sum up the study.

1.1 Purpose and goal

The purpose of this thesis is twofold. First of all the main purpose is to determine why young Icelandic women use Instagram to communicate. To figure out what factors

motivate their use and what kind of needs they might be seeking to fulfill. Secondly to validate the hypothesis concerning whether privacy elements that Instagram provide impacts the women's use of the medium.

In general there are different factors that motivate individuals on their actions. Actions are not always rational so it can be hard for individuals to pinpoint one particular motivation or estimate if they are fulfilling some deep rooted need (Van House 2007). This study is based on semi-structured qualitative interviews consisting of open questions to avoid forcing a particular motivation to be mentioned. The purpose is not to find only a single motivation that is most important in relations to using Instagram. The goal is to let the participants express multiple factors that motivate their use of the medium. The motivations mentioned will then be gathered to see which were the most common among this particular group of participants as well as what need factors those motivations might be seeking to fulfill.

1.2 Hypothesis & Research question

The hypothesis of this study is that young Icelandic women are motivated to use Instagram to communicate through photos because of the privacy the medium provides. It assumes that most Instagram users are also users on other SNSs parallel with Instagram and that users have fewer and more carefully accepted followers on Instagram than on other SNSs. According to Instagram privacy policy the application is not allowed to rent or sell users information to third parties without users consent, unlike some other SNSs. Due to that fact it believes that Instagram users can gratify their need to communicate through shared photos with friends and family, in an environment that they consider safer than other SNSs.

There will be one broad research question (RQ) with more narrow questions following. In order to successfully carry out the purpose of the research, the questions are as follows:

- **RQ:** Why do young Icelandic women use Instagram to communicate?
 - o **RQ:** What motivates their use and what broad sense of needs does the use fulfill?
 - o **RQ:** Does the privacy that Instagram offers impact the use of the medium?

1.3 Expected Research Contribution

A considerable amount of research has been done on individuals need to be connected on SNSs such as MySpace, Facebook and Twitter as well as research on the need to share photos online on services such as Picasa and Flickr. That brings us to the relevant question why there is a need or relevance to research Instagram? It is interesting to explore why Instagram has grown so rapidly with over 100 million new users in just over two years when so many other social media services were already established and providing the photo sharing communication tool. This growth could in some parts be

explained by the technological development of the new generation of mobile phones, which make it easy to take a photo and share on SNS. This paper, however, focuses on exploring why Instagram has become the preferred photo sharing communication tool.

This paper seeks to provide a deeper understanding of the motivations for using Instagram and what needs individuals, specifically young women, are seeking to fulfill. Hopefully the research will act as a starting point for future research as this field of SNSs is in many ways unexplored. In practice the results might offer young women information and insight into which needs they might be able to fulfill using this specific medium. The research could also give entrepreneurs ideas of new advanced SNSs that could fulfill those needs.

1.4 Limitations

Due to the scope of the study certain limitations were set. Previous research and theoretical literature on social media is too extensive to be gathered all in this thesis. Therefore the literature review is limited to research on SNSs and online photo sharing focusing on individual motivations, needs and perspectives on sharing and privacy issues. Related issues like marketing and brand usage of Instagram will not be addressed in particular.

The sample of this research was young Icelandic women. Therefore one should be careful to draw conclusions on the general use of Instagram based on this relatively small sample. Further discussion on the limitation of this research can be found in section 3.5 of this paper. Ideas on how to go beyond the limits of this research are presented in section 7.

1.5 Definitions

Computer-mediated communication (CMC) refers to any communicative transaction that occurs through the use of two or more electronic devices (McQuail 2005).

Social media refers to the methods of interactions among individuals in which they create, share, and exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and networks (Ahlqvist, Bäck, Halonen, & Heinonen 2008).

Social networking sites (SNSs) are web-based services that allow individuals to create a public or semi-public profile within a restricted system. Individuals can form a list of other users with whom they share a connection, view and cross their list of connections and those made by others within the system (boyd & Ellison 2008).

Instagram is an online photo sharing and social networking service that allows users to take a photo, apply a digital filter to it, and share the photo on a variety of SNSs, including Instagram's own site (Kerpen 2011).

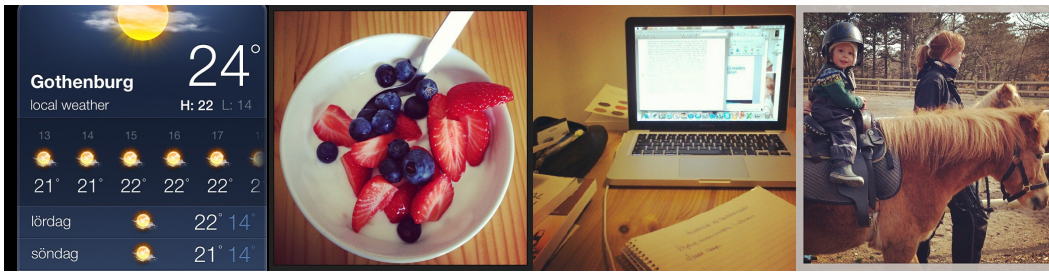


Figure 1.1: A selection of Instagram photos created by the author while producing this thesis.

2. Literature review

“Instagram is more than a social photo sharing tool: it represents a communication revolution” (Statigram 2013). It is perceived that the future of the social web is on the mobile web. Instagram has been very successful in gaining grounds as a mobile SNS and even before it earned its first dollar Facebook, another SNS, had bought the service for USD 1 billion (Kerpen 2011). The frenzy of self-documentation, or self-narration, meant that in May 2012 every second 58 photographs were being uploaded and a new user joined. At that time the total number of photographs uploaded on Instagram had exceeded one billion (Daniells 2012). To understand this frenzy it is helpful to start by looking at the need for individuals to communicate and then move on to how SNS have developed in the last three decades.

2.1 Individuals need to communicate

Communication involves mainly the sharing of information (Allwood 2001). Via Instagram communication is intentional with the purpose of sharing and receiving information. Instagram communication is also considered cooperative as the users want their interlocutors to understand what they are doing which requires sharing at least some information and wise versa.

If individuals have a need to connect with other individuals they will seek to gratify it (Murray 1953). *Needs* have been defined by both Murray and Maslow as forces that push individuals in a certain direction to gratify those needs. They identified a need to connect (Murray 1953) or feel a sense of belonging (Maslow 1987). The uses and gratification approach (U&G) emphasizes social and psychological needs. U&G describes how the active media user selects the medium that meets its needs, wants or expectations, such as desire for information, emotional connection, and status (Tan 1985; Rubin 2009a; Rubin, 2009b Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch 1974). If the medium was gratifying the user will continue its use (Weibull 1985).

According to Allwood (2001) communicators can be seen as rational agents pursuing various motives and goals, which is a similar approach as U&G. *Motivation* underlies action and often involves the wish to seek pleasure and escape pain. According to Van House and colleagues (2004) individuals are able to identify specific

motivations for sharing photos with friends and family, such as the desire to share an experience, or to update others on their activities. This resembles to “active-audience” theories such as U&G (Blumber & Katz 1974; Rubin 2002). On the other hand, recent research suggests that individuals sharing photo online may be less aware of the deeper needs that the activity fulfills, for example self expression and identity creation (Van House 2007).

Previous research suggests that individuals that use the Internet habitually have more social ties than light users (Zhao 2006), and that media has little or no impact on individuals who do not use it (Johnstone 1974). Active use of SNSs gratifies the need for an informal connection with other users (Chen 2011). It is helpful to have the U&G approach in mind while exploring the topic of this thesis whereas its principal elements include individuals’ psychological and social needs and show how media can gratify needs and motives to communicate (Rubin, 2009b).

2.2 Development of social networking sites

2.2.1 From one-sided to interactive

In the beginning the web was all about publishing, not participation (O'Reilly 2007). Then in 1997 SixDegrees, the first distinguishable SNS launched with typical social networking features as we recognize today. They revolve around consumers; users and individuals. Even though the site gained millions of users it failed to become sustainable and closed in 2001. It is believed that the site was simply ahead of its time. Even though individuals were gathering to the Internet, most of them did not have extended networks of friends who were online and most individuals were not interested in meeting strangers (boyd & Ellison 2008).

From 2003 several new SNSs have been launched. Websites focusing on media sharing began implementing SNS features as the social media and user-generated content phenomena grew and became SNSs themselves. Two examples of that development are Flickr (photo sharing SNS) and YouTube (video sharing SNS). Facebook launched in 2004 and a year later it was available to everyone (boyd and Ellison 2008).

The rise of SNSs suggests a shift in the structure of online communities. Most of SNSs revolve around individuals instead of interests. They are structured as egocentric or personal networks, where the individual is at the center of their own community. Previous research suggests that most SNSs primarily support pre-existing social relations, communications with individuals who are already a part of users extended social network (boyd & Ellison 2008). These pre-existing relationships may be weak ties, but typically there is some common offline element among individuals who “friend” one another (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe 2007). Instagram mostly endorses communication among pre-existing social relations. There are four different ways for Instagram users to find friends (other users) to follow. Users can locate friends through, their own mobile contact list, third-party social media sites, through a search of names and usernames on Instagram or through users suggested by Instagram. Three of the four

available options to find friends require you to have some already gained knowledge of the possible new friends on Instagram (Instagram 2013).

So why seek online communication if there is already existing an offline one? Computer mediated communication (CMC) can be more friendly, social and intimate than face-to-face communication (Thurlow, Lengel & Tomic 2004). When individuals experience CMC more socially desirable and surpassing the level of affection and emotion than what they experience in parallel face-to-face interaction it is referred to as hyperpersonal CMC. Individuals can make impressions and manage relationships in ways more positively than they might be able to do face-to-face. For example when they experience unity, are self-aware, physically separated and communicating in asynchronous CMC it allows them to selectively self-present and edit. That allows them to create and reciprocate representations of their relations without environmental reality interfering (Walther 1996). Hyperpersonal CMC can be one influencing factor in why individuals choose to communicate with pre-existing networks on SNSs. In the next section of this thesis the most recent development of SNSs will be briefly covered.

2.2.2 Social networking goes mobile

In 2001 the first camera phone was introduced by Sharp and soon followed by Nokia. This development would ultimately make cameras a key selling point in the industry's mission to drive new sales of phones in a saturated market. It symbolized an entirely new type of photographic device, where communication was the primary purpose and photography secondary (Sarvas & Frohlich 2011). The photos produced on mobile phones are digitized, and therefore resulting in little or no cost in production or reproduction on a large scale. This material and economic environment supports and enables the development of tools for communicating in new situations, and on a much larger scale (Frey 2012).

Today phones do not only have cameras, they also have GPS, Wi-Fi and high-speed broadband cellular network. This development has moved networked information and communications access away from traditional home-based computers into new socio-spatial contexts with greater mobility, and deeper integration into the personal and ephemeral spaces of daily life (Berg 2012). Mobile data services that can be accessed by mobile social software applications are massively increasing. This software supports interaction among mobile users by providing anytime/anyplace convergence and integration. They connect individuals with similar interests and profiles (Lugano 2006). Individuals are constantly tied to their mobile devices. The device is being used to access the Internet from the second individuals get up in the morning till the time they lay in bed preparing to go to sleep at night (Ericsson 2011).

As referred to Allwood before, communications main purpose is sharing of information. All communication devices require two actors, a sender who is willing to share information and a receiver who is willing to listen to it; mobile social media is no exception of that factor. This fact raises relevant thoughts concerning mobile social media such as why individuals pay the effort to check-in at a certain location, just to provide detailed information about where they are located. The concept of self

presentation (Goffman 1959; Schau & Gilly 2003) which states that individuals are willing to disclose information about themselves if this information is in line with the way they want to be seen by others (Kaplan 2012) and self-disclosure which refers to any personal information an individual shares with others (Collins, N.L. & Miller, L. C. 1994) are reasons for this activity. Additionally previous research suggests that self-disclosure is more likely and more intense in CMC than in face-to-face settings (Henderson & Gilding 2004).

The impulsive theory gives another explanation, the theory states that individuals constantly battle between giving into short-term temptations and displaying long-term control (Ainslie 1975; Hoch & Loewenstein 1991; Thaler & Shefrin 1981). For those reasons individuals might be willing to upload a photo on Instagram on their way to work for exactly the same reasons they would buy a candy bar at the grocery store cashier, although it is not in line with their long-term plan to live a healthier life (Kaplan 2012). Why do friends care to read and respond to this type of information? Awareness produced through regular and constant reception, and/or exchange of information portions through social media, also called ambient awareness, is one driving factor. Knowing where your friend has been throughout the day, along with casual comments every now and then, can in some cases tell you more about him than for example a written e-mail (Chandon, Wansink, & Laurent 2000). Now that mobile social networking has been explained it is relevant to move on to explain the development of online photo sharing.

2.2.3 Development of online photo sharing

Photography is ultimately a social medium, where the main motivation is sharing something, possibly personal, with others (Kindberg, Spasojevic, Fleck, & Sellen 2005; Van House, et al. 2005), which is driven by the need to share one's experiences. The use of photo sharing differs among individuals. Some individuals share photos as an art form where photos are to be appreciated for their style and content. Others use photos as records to enrich the experience of historical events, or serve as confirmation. Then others use photos for the purpose of personal medium to form and uphold memories of individuals and events. For that purpose photos are taken by individuals to present them to someone they know with the purpose of sharing the content: an individual, object, or event for example (Oeldorf-Hirsch & Sundar 2010). Instagram is a content-sharing platform (Instagram 2013) and this study will mainly focus on personal photos individuals present to their followers, which are known others, with the purpose of sharing.

Online photo sharing on websites and services for uploading and storing digital photos such as Picasa, Flickr etc., had existed before Instagram's mobile photo sharing, and gave rise to a new form of mediated communication (Oeldorf-Hirsch & Sundar 2010; Van House, et al. 2004). In addition to specified online photo sharing sites one of the most common activities on Facebook is photo sharing which is interesting due to the fact that originally the site was not marketed as a photo sharing service (Joinson 2008). Online photo sharing has allowed personal photography to become an independent

medium for personal communication. Sharing photos online has become a norm. According to a recent study 85% of digital camera owners consider it important to share photos with friends and family. Also 55% said that they felt guilty for not sharing even more photos with friends and family (Reuters 2008).

Van House and associates (2004) have studied the importance of personal photography, why individuals take and share photos online and through camera phones. They have acknowledged three higher-order social uses for this activity. First, constructing personal and group memory. Second, creating and maintaining relationships. Finally, self-expression and self-presentation. They realized that even though individuals like viewing their own photos to ease memories, viewing photos was also a very important social activity. Family members and activities are often the subject of personal photos so viewing those photos is important in maintaining current relationships especially when individuals are spread out geographically and photos are used to keep up on each other's daily lives. Then photos can allow for distant closeness; knowing about others, keeping others informed about oneself, without direct interaction (Van House 2006). To be able to experience distant closeness suggests that online photo sharing is an influential medium for maintaining relationships and intimacy in the same way an individual might have done by sharing photos with friends in a traditional venue (Van House, et al. 2004).

Sharing personal photos through online network sites is in some ways different from sharing them in a physical setting. For example one reason is that photo-sharing services offer a wide variety of features that allow for new types of communication, such as tagging or leaving notes on photos from other users. According to Van House and colleagues (2007) the online environment for sharing photos functions more as a social environment where individuals share current photos with others and less as an environment where individuals store photos that represent memories.

In a previous research Oeldorf-Hirsch and Sundar (2010) explored the motivations for viewing and uploading photos online, on SNSs such as Facebook, MySpace and Flickr. The findings were categorized into four different gratifications: seeking and showcasing experiences, website affordances/technological reasons, social connection/bonding, and reaching out/bridging. The research results indicate that photo sharing as a form of communication is motivated by social needs and is enabled by a variety of interface features for uploading, viewing, downloading, tagging, commenting, and distributing images online, with significant implications for theories of technology as well as user psychology. Now that an overview of photo sharing has been conquered it is relevant to move on to virtual communities.

2.2.4 Virtual communities

Edward T. Hall's (1963) theory of proxemics, the impact of the use of space (proxemics behavior) on interpersonal communication, is often considered in developing new communication technologies. Even though it is not possible to achieve physical proximity when individuals are connected virtually, perceived proximity can be attempted and research suggests that it is a crucial indicator in the effectiveness of

virtual communication technologies (O'Leary, Wilson, Metiu, & Jett 2008). Previous studies imply that regardless of the distance several individual and situational factors affect closeness between individuals (Zajonc 1968). This indicates that the more an individual communicates virtually with another individual; he becomes more able to envision that person's appearance and space. This promotes a sense of personal connection, (O'Leary, Wilson, Metiu, & Jett 2008), and the affect is called virtual communication.

SNSs are the most obvious type of virtual community (Quan-Hasse & Young 2010). They are platforms that focus on the core motivations of usage that are communication, maintaining and creating relationships (Quan-Hasse & Young 2010; Dwyer, Passerini, & Hiltz 2007). Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram are all virtual communities. On these services individuals create a profile or account, add or follow other users. These services allow individuals to connect and look for support using the SNS as a gathering place. It allows individuals to keep up to date with their friends, family and acquaintances' activities without having to make much of an effort (Quan-Hasse & Young 2010).

Popular activities include updating others on activities and locations, sharing photos and self presentation (Dwyer, Passerini, & Hiltz 2007) to name a few. Research has shown how networked practices reflect, support, and alter known everyday practices, particularly with respect to how individuals present, and hide, aspects of them and connect with others (boyd & Ellison 2008). This was a short overview of how SNSs are considered virtual communities. The next section touches on privacy within the virtual community of Instagram.

2.3 Privacy

Trust is a critical element of sharing information and developing new relationships when communicating in physical proximity (Fukuyama 1995; Lewis & Weigert 1985). Trust is also a very important element for successful interactions online (Coppola, Hiltz, & Rotter 2004; Jarvenpaa & Leidner 1998; Meyerson, Weick, & Kramer 1996; Piccoli & Ives, 2003). In examining trust on SNSs researchers argue that trust and usage goals may affect what individuals are willing to share. SNSs need explicit policies and data protection mechanisms in order to deliver the same level of social privacy as found offline (Dwyer, Passerini, & Hiltz 2007).

On the level of human social behavior, users tend to give away their privacy when they trust the other users with the information that they share with them. It depends on the level of trust between those individuals the quantity of information shared. Lugano and Saariluoma (2007) analyzed the trade-offs between privacy and trust amongst users and explained that users go through 5 steps. First, the user chooses whether to trade privacy or not. Second, users determine the minimal damage. Third, they process the gain from trust. Forth, the trade takes place if the gain is greater than the damage. Fifth and finally, users select the set that causes minimal damage.

When users select their set of friends on mobile social networks applications it mainly depends on three things: the user, the message and the recipient. Here it is

relevant to come back to the fact mentioned before that communicative interaction is claimed to always involve some degree of cooperation, which Allwood defines as; two individuals cooperate to the extent that they take each other into cognitive consideration, have a joint purpose, take each other into ethical consideration and last but not least trust each other with regard to previously mentioned factors (Allwood 2001). For those mentioned reasons it is vital to involve trust for communication to be effective and cooperative.

SNS users have become increasingly reluctant to reveal themselves. These users reveal little on their public profiles and resort to private channels or interaction modes with access control for information sharing with trusted friends only (Park, Jin & Jin 2009). The privacy of the communication tool is related to comfort of disclosing intimate topics (Frye & Dornisch 2010). The possibility for users to have their mobile social services either private or public supports users decisions on what they share (Lugano & Saariluoma 2007).

Instagram users can choose to have their user content (photos, comments and other material) public or private. If users choose to have their user content private they will have to accept friend requests and therefore choose who can view their content. If users choose to have their content public it is then searchable by other users without permission. Once users have shared user content or made it public, that user content may be re-shared by others (Instagram 2013). It is not unlikely that users that choose to have their users content public use Instagram for other purposes than those who choose to have their content private.

According to Instagrams Privacy Policy (Instagram 2013) the application will not rent or sell users information to third parties outside Instagram or the group of companies of which Instagram is a part of without users consent. Except Instagram can share users content and information with businesses that are legally part of the same group of companies that Instagram is part of, or affiliates that become part of that group. Affiliates may use the gained information to help understand, provide and improve the service and their own services. But the affiliates will honor users settings and will not show photos that users have private. Instagram has also the right to share users information with third-party organizations that help them provide service for users as well as with third-party advertising partners. Instagram is allowed to remove parts of data that can identify users and share anonymized data with other parties. They are also allowed to combine users information with other information in a way that it is no longer associated with the users and share that combined information (Instagram 2013). It is possible that Instagrams privacy policy influences what individuals choose to share, that variable was kept in mind when gathering and analyzing the data.

3. Methodology

3.1 Methodological approach

To paint a picture of what it means to communicate through Instagram a qualitative method seemed most useful. Semi-structured interviews were conducted and used as the

main data source. They often function as the only data source for a qualitative research project (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree 2006). However, in this study statistical information was used along with the interviews. It is considered that through this method it will be possible to gain the deepest understanding of the motivations that drive young Icelandic women to use Instagram to communicate.

3.2 Methods of data collection

A qualitative questionnaire consisting of 20 open questions was designed for the purpose of leading the interviews. The questions were based on previous research and literature. First, respondents were asked to fill out a statistical information form about their Instagram use. Secondly, interviews were conducted to gain understanding of the participants' motivations for using Instagram to communicate as well as to gain an overall understanding of the use of Instagram. The statistical information functioned as background information to view during the interviews as well as used to give statistical information about the participants in the research.

3.3 Selection of participants

Given that the aim of this study was to reveal shared understanding of a particular sample, participants should be rather homogeneous and share critical similarities connected to the research question (McCracken 1988). The sample consisted of 10 individuals that were recruited online through the researchers own SNSs, Facebook and Instagram. It was observed through Instagram that they were active Instagram users in terms of frequent activities. The recruitment of the participants was based on the facts that they had to be both active Instagram users as well as active Facebook users. They had to be Icelandic, female and between the age of 24-28 to fill the requirements of a homogeneous sample.

All the recruited participants were willing to participate in the research. The average age of the respondents was 26,2 years old. It should be kept in mind that it might be possible to draw some cultural conclusions from the results. But due to the size of the sample it will not provide general results, it provides a way to reach a small group of users to understand their motivations for using Instagram to communicate.

3.4 Methods of qualitative analysis

The analysis of the motivations observed from the interviews relied on previously mentioned online photo sharing research by Oeldorf-Hirsch and Sundar (2010) due to the fact that their research is closely related to the topic of this study and they had used their method successfully. They gathered 42 motivations for sharing photos online and categorized them in four different factors of gratifications: seeking and showcasing experiences, website affordances/technological reasons, social connection/bonding, and

reaching out/bridging. By using this previous research to rely on it allowed for comparisons of results from both the researches.

First, audio recordings from the interviews were transcribed and coded for different motivations for using Instagram. A list composed of all mentioned motivations was made. Comparable answers e.g. “to show what I am doing” and “to show what I am up to” were combined into more extensive motivations and the number of times a motivation was mentioned was limited to once per participant. Even though a participant mentioned the same motivation for the use of Instagram more than once during the interview it was marked as once, all mentioned motivations had the same value. Each participant was able to mention different motivations and the number of mentioned motivations by each participant varied.

Secondly, motivations were categorized into Oeldorf-Hirsch and Sundar factors to see which of the four categories held the most mentioned motivations. Each participant might represent more than one motivation under each need factor. Thirdly, other data supporting the hypothesis of this study was considered. The amount of Instagram followers and Facebook friends was compared and answers from interviews that might reflect the compared amount of followers and friends. Participants were not asked straight out if the amount of Instagram followers versus Facebook friends influenced their use on Instagram to avoid the opinion to be forced. In the result section the 10 participants are displayed with the alphabetical letters A-J.

3.5 Possible limitations regarding selected methods

Due to the fact that the sample was homogeneous it did not provide an overview of all Instagram users and their motivations for using Instagram to communicate. The fact that the interviews were qualitative participants might have held back some information that would have been easier to explain in privacy. The fact that the participants were part of the researchers social network they might also not have been as willing to share their thoughts. It could also have worked the other way around.

4. Results

4.1 Activeness

Table 4.1 represents elements related to participant’s activeness on Instagram. On average the participants used Instagram 6,7 days a week, for average 22 minutes per day. The participants gave on average 21,8 likes and wrote 4,2 comments weekly.

Activeness	Average
How many minutes per day participant spends on Instagram	22
How many days per week participant uses Instagram	6,7
How many likes participant gives per week	21,8
How many comments participant gives per week	4,2

Table 4.1: Average participant’s activeness on Instagram

4.2 Qualitative exploration of motivation

Analysis of the interviews resulted in 31 different motivations for using Instagram to communicate through photos. The most common motivations mentioned by all of the 10 participants were to “show what I am doing” and “stay connected/maintain relationships”. Other common motivations were “entertainment/fun”, “see what others are doing”, “share photos with friends and family”, “give likes”, “receive likes” and “like seeing photos”. See Table 4.2 for a list of all 31 motivations mentioned by participants and the number of participants that mentioned each motivation.

Motivation	Mentions	Motivation	Mentions
Show what I am doing	10	Deeper connection	3
Stay connected/maintain relationships	10	Curiosity	3
Entertainment/fun	8	Informative	3
See what others are doing	7	Share personal photos	3
Share photos with friends and family	7	Share emotions	3
Give likes	7	Convenient	3
Receive likes	7	Editing features	2
Like seeing photos	7	Show of my talent	2
Closeness with people abroad	6	Receive comments	2
Selective group of followers	6	Give comments	2
See others	6	Less censored	2
Show myself	6	Receive requests	1
Easy share	4	Express my opinion	1
Keep up on current events/trends/news	4	Memories	1
Ease of sharing	4	Others are doing it	1
Share something funny	4		

Table 4.2: Motivations for using Instagram

Factor 1 (Table 4.2.1) contains 4 motivations that are part of *seeking and showcasing experiences*, or keeping up with what is happening in the world.

Motivation	Mentions
Like seeing photos	7
Share something funny	4
Curiosity	3
Show of my talent	2

Table 4.2.1: Factor 1: Seeking and showcasing experiences

The motivations that were mentioned by most participants categorized under seeking and showcasing experiences through Instagram were “like seeing photos” and to “share something funny”.

Factor 2 (Table 4.2.2) contains 7 motivations regarding *website affordances/technological reasons* such as “ease of sharing” and “editing features”.

Each of these items referred to an affordance of the application, Instagram, or a feature that allowed users to carry out a useful function.

Motivation	Mentions
Selective group of followers	6
Ease of sharing	4
Easy to share	4
Share personal photos	3
Convenient	3
Editing features	2
Less censored	2

Table 4.2.2: Factor 2: Website affordances/technological reasons

The motivation that was mentioned by most participants categorized under website affordances/technological reasons was that the application allows for “selective group of followers”. Motivations “ease of sharing” and “easy to share” were mentioned by 4 participants each.

Factor 3 (Table 4.2.3) contains 13 motivations concerned with *social connection/bonding*, consisting of motivations such as “show what I am doing” and “see what others are doing”.

Motivation	Mentions
Show what I am doing	10
Stay connected/maintain relationships	10
Entertainment/fun	8
See what others are doing	7
Share photos with friends and family	7
See others	6
Show myself	6
Closeness with people abroad	6
Keep up on current events/news	4
Informative	3
Share emotions	3
Deeper connection	3
Memories	1

Table 4.2.3: Factor 3: Social connection/bonding

The two motivations that all of the participants had in common in this category were: “show what I am doing” and “stay connected/maintain relationships”. Additionally 8 participants mentioned motivation “entertainment/fun”. Those three motivations were the motivations that most of the participants in this study had in common.

Factor 4 (Table 4.2.4) contains 7 motivations about active *reaching out/bridging* to the network with motivations such as “give likes” and “give comments”.

Motivation	Mentions
Give likes	7
Receive likes	7
Receive comments	2
Give comments	2
Others are doing it	1
Receive requests	1
Express my opinion	1

Table 4.2.4: Factor 4: Reaching out/bridging

In this category the motivations “give likes” and “receive likes” were mentioned by 7 participants each.

4.2.1 Examples regarding motivation for use

Following are examples from the interviews when participants were asked why they use Instagram:

Participant B: *“I feel it is a fun way to show my friends photos and specially now that I live abroad it is really fun to share photos with the people in Iceland. It is also just a way to show what I am up to.”*

Participant D: *“I use it to see what others are doing and to show what I am up to. If I am for instance cooking a good dinner or out in the good weather then I find it fun to show others what I am doing.”*

Participant G: *“To some extent, out of curiosity it is fun to view others. Also it is just fun to share my life with others.”*

Participant H: *“In order to observe people, observe friends and then just to have fun. Mostly curiosity but also to be able to post what I am doing and allow others to enjoy.”*

Participant J: *“To show myself to friends and family in a fun and pictorial way”.*

4.3 Findings regarding hypothesis

The following chart (Chart 4.3) compares the number of Instagram followers and Facebook friends for each participant. The letters from A-J represent each participant and the numbers on the left side of the chart represent the amount of friends. The chart shows that all of the participants had at least twice as many friends on Facebook than followers on Instagram.

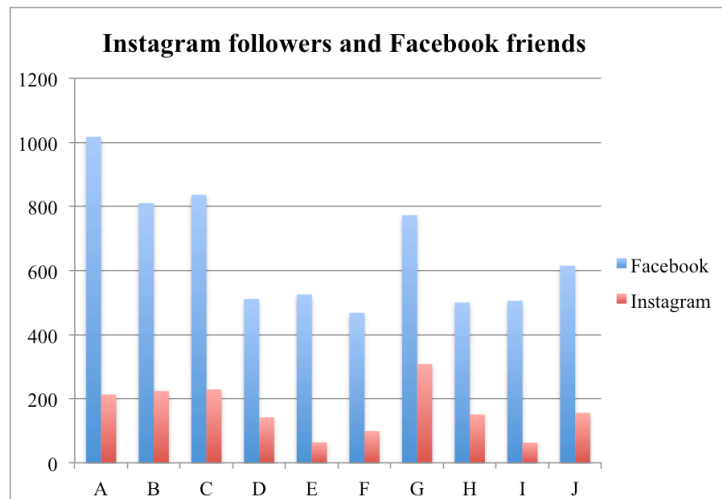


Chart 4.3: *Instagram followers and Facebook friends*

The participants were not asked straight out in the interviews if the number of Instagram followers versus Facebook friends influenced their Instagram use. However, many of them answered open questions that reflected possible explanations. Here are five examples of what participants answered when asked what Instagram provided them that other SNSs did not:

Participant A: *“I think that people are now more sharing photos on Instagram and not on Facebook, because photos are personal”.*

Participant D: *“I think it's a very good forum to share photos, more personal photos than I would share on Facebook because on Instagram I have far fewer friends. My Instagram followers are much more carefully chosen than my friends on Facebook”.*

Participant E: *“I think Instagram is somewhat more personal. But it depends a lot on how people use it like I just have really few friends which are all really good friends of mine unlike on Facebook where I have people who were with me in elementary school, people that I haven't talked to in 10 years but this is more personal. That is what makes it fun”.*

Participant I: *“I think it is an advantage with Instagram that you have fewer friends there, so that when you want to share something you can put it there but do not have to share it with everyone on Facebook. Because I have a much more open profile on Facebook and I have a lot more friends there. I would say that I censor myself more on Facebook”.*

Participant J: *“You choose who you are surrounding yourself with, as you do of course also on Facebook, but more carefully on Instagram”.*

Here are two examples of what participants answered when asked what kind of photos they would share on both Instagram and Facebook:

Participant B: *“Most of the photos I put on Instagram I do not put on Facebook. The reason is for example that on Instagram I do not have nearly as many friends. It is much more selective there who can see my photos. On Instagram I have a more selective group of people”.*

Participant C: *“I do not often share photos also on Facebook that I put on Instagram. Because I feel like on Instagram, I have far fewer friends there and then I can have it more personal and such. But like when you have Facebook you have many more people there that are just acquaintances, so there I just kind of share impersonal things”.*

Participants were asked if they were familiar with the content of Instagram privacy policy, 9 of the participants answered simply “no” and 1 participant said “yes, I read it when the new policy came out but I do not remember what it was about”.

Additionally, all of the participants had their Instagram profile private and none of them had made new relationships on the medium. Participant F expressed this opinion when asked if she had made connections to strangers on Instagram: “No. That I have not done. I would consider that really strange”.

5. Analysis

5.1 Motivations analyzed

The research results indicate that the use of Instagram as a form of communication is mainly motivated by social needs. The highest number of motivations was categorized under the need to be *socially connected and bonding* (Factor 3). Even though this research is based on Oeldorf-Hirsch and Sundar (2010) research the results differ. In their analysis the highest number of motivations was categorized under the need for *seeking and showcasing experiences* (Factor 1). Factor 1 is quite similar to Factor 3 but different in the sense that Factor 3 is more intimate or personal. Factor 1 involves keeping up with a broad network of individuals and events, but Factor 3 is more focused on close friends and family. However, regarding the importance of each particular motivation Oeldorf-Hirsch and Sundar’s study showed that the means for the items in Factor 3 were higher than those in Factor 1. This indicates that some individuals consider it more important to use online photo sharing for fostering close social ties than just for broad networking.

That fact is more in line with the results of this study, given that not only was the highest number of motivations in Factor 3 but they were also the motivations mentioned by most of the participants. As mentioned earlier a conclusion will not be drawn as to whether those motivations are more important than others. That being said,

all of the participants in this study mentioned the motivations “show what I am doing” and “stay connected and maintain relationships”. This suggests that these factors generally motivate young Icelandic women to use Instagram to communicate. It can also be considered to be the motivation to be entertained by the use. The results from this analysis show that social ties are considered by more participants than reaching out to a broad network, which in some ways supports the hypothesis of this study because it predicts that young Icelandic women use Instagram to communicate with friends and family in a closed environment.

5.2 Hypothesis analyzed

The hypothesis of this study predicted that young Icelandic women use Instagram to communicate because of the privacy the medium provides. First, it was predicted that Instagram users were also users on other SNSs as well as Instagram. Due to the chosen sample that variable did not need to be researched.

Secondly, it was predicted that the participants in this study had fewer followers and more carefully accepted ones on Instagram than on other SNSs. The statistical information gained about the number of followers on Instagram versus the amount of friends on Facebook showed that the environment that individuals share information with and communicate to on Instagram is significantly smaller than the environment on Facebook (Chart 1). In addition all the participants had their profile on Instagram private, i.e. restricted access to it, so that only followers could see their photos. This supports the contention that they seek a closed environment. Under Factor 2 the motivation that was mentioned by most participants that represents website affordances and technological features showed that the application provided users with an environment where they could have a selective group of audience, which also supports the hypothesis of this study.

During the interviews 7 out of the 10 participants mentioned that the small environment and, in some cases, more carefully accepted one on Instagram affected their use, even though they were not asked directly about that fact, see examples in section 4.3. A couple of the participants also mentioned that they felt that they could share more personal photos on Instagram than on other SNSs due to the privacy the medium provides. The participants’ answers did not indicate that Instagram’s privacy policy had an affect, as had been predicted, and only one of them had to some extent studied the policy.

This study suggests that Instagram has become the preferred photo sharing communication tool for young Icelandic women because it provides them with a more private environment, compared to other SNSs, to communicate with friends and family. Their use is driven by the motivation to see what others are doing, to stay connected and maintain relationships. This supports their need for social connection and bonding. In the following section results from this study will be viewed in relation to previous research mentioned in the literature review. The purpose is to identify similarities and whether new perspectives could be provided to this researching field.

6. Discussion

Young Icelandic women are part of today's society of millions of individuals that have integrated SNSs into their daily lives (Table 4.1). The fact that the research small group of participants' mentioned 31 different motivations for using Instagram supports Van House's (2007) conclusion that actions are in many cases not rational and that it is hard for individuals to pinpoint one particular motivation for sharing photos online. Among other things the women used Instagram to communicate with already established social networks as previous research shows that most SNSs do. Results showed that even though SNSs have developed tremendously since the 1990s most individuals are still not interested in meeting strangers.

Young Icelandic women are stereotypical Instagram users, according to Instagram's definition, because their most popular motivation for using Instagram to communicate was to show others what they were doing. The motivation to see what others were doing was also common. Those two motivations revolve around current activities which supports previous research suggesting that sharing photos online functioned more as a social environment where individuals shared current photos with others and less as an environment where individuals stored photos to represent memories. Only one participant mentioned memories as a motivation for use. It seems that the use of Instagram for the women was more focused on keeping friends and family up to date and communicating on a daily basis through photos, rather than using the medium as an archive for memories.

The conclusions can be drawn that the young women considered the social environment informal and fun whereas they were less aware of the deeper needs the activity of sharing photos fulfilled such as self-expression and identity creation. This supports previous research by Van House (2007). The women were more aware of lighthearted needs such as entertainment/fun, examples in section 4.2.1 show that the entertainment/fun motivation was never far away. The motivation was common in relations to other motivations such as to show what they were doing and to see what others were doing. This also supported previous research which had found that active use of SNSs gratifies the need for an informal connection with other users. Additionally it supported Allwoods (2001) definition of motivation regarding the fact that individuals are motivated to communicate to seek pleasure.

The results supported the notion that sharing of everyday experiences brought the women closer to their friends and family that they were not directly interacting with in person. Instagram allowed for distant closeness as the motivation to stay connected/maintain relationships was mentioned by all of the participants. Many of them also mentioned that closeness with people living abroad motivated their use. The action of showing what you were doing was in line with the main purpose of photo sharing in general; to share your experiences with others. This also supports virtual communication. Sharing daily life helped the women to experience common ground (Donath and boyd 2004) as they identified with each other by giving and receiving "likes" frequently, which motivated many of them to use Instagram.

Recent research has shown that individuals have become increasingly reluctant to self-disclose on SNSs and seek venues where they experience privacy (Park, Jin & Jin 2009) to disclose intimate topics (Frye & Dornisch 2010). The fact that the women had all chosen to have their Instagram profile private supports this. The fact that they selected followers carefully supports previous research by Lugano and Saariluoma (2007) that states that the level of trust between the individuals affects what they are willing to share. However, the women were not aware of Instagram privacy policy so this study does not support Dwyer and colleagues (2007) research that showed that SNSs need explicit policies and data protection mechanism in order to deliver the same level of social privacy as found offline.

The study showed that the women used Instagram to communicate with pre-existing friends and family in a private and carefully selected environment where they felt they could share personal matters. The first thing that comes to mind when thinking about what might encourage them to communicate online, instead of face-to-face, is the fact that the medium allowed the women to communicate intimately with friends and family that are geographically separate. But other explanations come into play because the individuals also use SNSs to communicate with friends and family that are not geographically separate. The medium is probably providing the individuals some way to communicate that they do not feel they are able to do in face-to-face communication.

As mentioned in section 2.2.1 Walther's (1996) theory on hyperpersonal CMC could give a possible reason for this. Instagram users might be able to make impressions and manage relationships in ways more positively there than they might be able to do face-to-face. Instagram can be more friendly, social and intimate and allow for self-presentation and message editing. Instagram users might experience that through the medium, as it is easier to "like" a photo or comment, for example say "you look good" under a friend's photo than to express that in face-to-face communication. Instagram is the perfect venue for self-presentation and editing whereas individuals share cropped and filtered photos of themselves and/or their actions which provides the users followers with a well thought of image of the user, something that would be harder to create in face-to-face communication. Those are only possible explanations and are not to be thought of as complete, never the less interesting to study further. In the following section a summary of contributions and possibilities for future research will be viewed.

7. Conclusion

This study suggested that the main motivation for young Icelandic women to use Instagram was to show others what they were doing, stay connected and maintain relationships as well as seek entertainment by the use. Those motivations all suggested that using Instagram helped the young women seek to fulfill their need to be socially connected and to bond. The hypothesis of this study was that Instagram provided the sample of the study with a more private environment, compared to other social networking sites, to communicate with friends and family. The results supported the hypothesis and also supported previous research related to the topic of this study.

The study provided a deeper understanding of why young Icelandic women had chosen to use Instagram to communicate. Due to the size of the sample it is not possible to draw the conclusion that all Instagram users use the medium for the same reasons as the sample of the study. However, the results can act as a starting point for further research. It might be interesting to perform a larger study to see if those findings could be generalized for all Instagram users, and for that matter if those findings could be the reason for the growth of Instagram users in such a relatively short amount of time.

Throughout the execution of this study, the researcher considered Hofstede's cultural dimension theory and how the use of social networking services such as Instagram might be similar between cultures with comparable scores. For example Icelandic women score high on the scale of considering Icelandic culture individualistic and low on the scale of masculinity, i.e. considering Icelandic culture feminine (Aðalsteinsson, Guðmundsdóttir & Guðlaugsson 2011). Those dimensions are interesting to compare with similar and different cultures to see if there can be seen any relations between cultural dimensions and the use of Instagram to communicate.

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