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A Study on Interpersonal Surveillance on Social Media Using WhatsApp

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Abstract

This paper deals with shifting rules and regimes of visibility on social media, using WhatsApp as a case study. Interpersonal social media surveillance warrants a careful of the virtual self. Yet this care is complicated by social media's rapid growth, and especially WhatsApp's cross-contextual information flows that public otherwise private information. Taking from a series of twenty interviews, this paper focuses on how users perceive and manage their own prominence and take advantage of the visibility of other users. These experiences are tied to shifting understandings of private and public information, as well as new terms like "stalking" and "Instant Massaging" that frame surveillance practices.

Keywords- Surveillance; Privacy; New media; Social media; Instant Messaging; Stalking

Introduction

This paper detailed one axis of perceptibility on social media, Interpersonal surveillance, using WhatsApp as a case study. In adopting WhatsApp as a platform for interpersonal communication, these relations become more surveillance. Users grow comfortable sharing with their peers, but at the same time are troubled by the cumulative exposure to those peers, and others. Interpersonal social media surveillance renders users visible to one another in a way that warrants a care of the virtual self (Whitson & Haggerty, 2008), including both self-scrutiny, and watching over what peers upload, as this may reflect poorly on oneself. Yet even this care is complicated by social media's rapid growth, and especially WhatsApp's cross-contextual information flows that publicize otherwise private information. Visibility on social media makes this care necessary, but not sufficient.

This article uses ethnographic accounts to describe interpersonal surveillance made possible through WhatsApp. The findings below present interpersonal surveillance as a matter of users being both the subject and the agent of surveillance. WhatsApp is an exemplar of social media. Nearly 200 million users (WhatsApp Statistics in India, Feb 2017) maintain status, upload photographs, and share personal information with each other. WhatsApp shares some features

with other social media, like the pervasive construction of an online presence, populated with personal information, but it stands out from many other services, as this presence exceeds any specific social context. Wasps users make their lives visible to each other, and this exchange enables unanticipated kinds of visibility.

Literature Review

User adoption of social media is a new kind of perceptibility, where in everyday interactions more closely resembles surveillance. Surveillance refers to the covert, sustained, and targeted collection of information, often about an individual or group of individuals (Lyon, 2001). Surveillance is more than data collection because it relies on mediated relations, profiling, and asymmetrical relations of visibility. It is the dominant organizational logic of late modernity. WhatsApp, for instance, organizes relations between peers. Not only are interpersonal, social ties mediated on an organizational platform, but interpersonal activity also becomes asynchronous. Users watch over each other, as opposed to communicating directly with one another. Other kinds of surveillance take place through WhatsApp (Trottier, 2011), but peer relations also become more surveillance in nature.

Users experience interpersonal surveillance as a violation, but also come to see it as a pervasive condition of social media, suggesting a further normalization of surveillance (Murakami Wood & Webster, 2009). The intervisibility (Brighenti, 2010) these individuals exhibit and exploit is an increasing feature of contemporary sociality. Interpersonal surveillance is also mutual on social media, as users are able to watch and be watched. The fact that users can choose to watch others as well as make themselves visible adds an empowering dimension to this surveillance (Koskela, 2004; Albrechtslund, 2008), and our respondents were comfortable with some aspects of this visibility. But intentional visibility cannot be disassociated from unanticipated exposure. One function “creeps” into another, and information “leaks” to new contexts (Lyon, 2001).

WhatsApp is a cross-platform instant messaging application for smartphones. It enables users to send and receive location information, images, video, audio and text messages in real-time to individuals and groups of friends at no cost. The nature and intent of WhatsApp messages tend to be social, informal and conversational in nature. (Church & de Oliveira, 2013) WhatsApp has more than 900 million users worldwide (Mashable, September 4, 2015). WhatsApp has been used in secondary and higher education to: Communicate with students; Foster a positive social atmosphere and cultivate a sense of belonging and community; Enable students to share information and work as a team; Improve student access to learning materials (Bouhnik & Deshen, 2014) WhatsApp promotes social interaction and knowledge construction through spontaneous discussions and enables students to assume control and ownership of the learning (Rambe & Bere, 2013).

WhatsApp for Education in Social interaction is viewed as a primary source of learning. When students interact amongst themselves, acquisition-rich discourse is more likely to ensue (Ellis, 2005). Interaction is beneficial to acquisition when students have control of the discourse topic (Ellis, 1999). To foster interpersonal interactions to observe L2 student interactions during a semi- structured daily practice on a mobile instant messaging application (WhatsApp). • Of particular interest is to observe which topics encourage student interpersonal communication and to understand students’ view on the activity.

Scholars like Andrejevic (2005) describe a cultural climate that compels individuals to watch over untrustworthy peers. Yet, an increased reliance on surveillance technology, as we will see, furthers the risk of exposure, and the need to be vigilant. As services like WhatsApp are intimately tied to both identity and communication, they shape how we are perceived and how we interact with others. This warrants what Whitson and Haggerty (2008) call the virtual care of the self, "whereby citizens are encouraged, enticed and occasionally compelled into bringing components of their fractured and dispersed data double into regular patterns of contact, scrutiny and management" (p. 574). New risks emerge as a result of offloading social processes online. Whitson and Haggerty identify practices that mitigate the risk of identity fraud. With WhatsApp, personal reputation is at stake. The findings below suggest users are sorting out responsible use among themselves, but that this is a complex and occasionally contradictory project.

Lateral surveillance is a product of the domestication of media technology. Domestication literature (Silverstone & Haddon, 1996) recognizes technology as a lived experience, and anticipates a qualitative focus on user reception of social media for interpersonal surveillance. Domestication addresses how information and communication technologies are integrated into everyday life, with a focus on the tensions that emerge in consequence. The struggle between privacy and public exposure is a concern, as is the tension between the familiar and the strange when interpersonal relations are mediated (Silverstone & Haddon, 1996). Social media connect familiar relations to unfamiliar and often unwanted kinds of exposure, as a result of the accumulation of personal information and social ties. Also, following Whitson and Haggerty (2008), reputations on social media are treated as an individual responsibility, while in practice exceeding individual control.

Social media adoption endangers privacy, and this troubles users. But privacy is not clear-cut. In its simplest terms, surveillance is a process, and privacy is a value that is endangered by this process. Loss of privacy means unwanted exposure, an inability to manage one's reputation, and a compromised virtual self. Scholars and users both approach social media surveillance by way of privacy, yet these sites underscore the complexity of understanding and maintaining privacy (Nippert-Eng, 2010). Users reconsider while actively managing their privacy on social media (boyd, 2008; West, Lewis & Currie, 2009). These users were experienced in maintaining a degree of privacy from parents prior to social media, and these experiences inform their use of sites like WhatsApp. But they do not just hide information from some users; they actively share it with others. Users maintain a trade-off between ensuring privacy and achieving public exposure when placing their personal content on WhatsApp (Tufekci, 2008; boyd & Hargittai, 2010).

Research Questions

WhatsApp mediates social life, often in a public way. Surveillance on social media is more pervasive than a series of incidents. It is increasingly a lived condition, a product of ubiquitous mobile technology and a rapidly growing user base. In light of these developments, scholarly research needs to interrogate the conditions surrounding peer visibility on sites like WhatsApp. This research asks: what compels users to engage in WhatsApp surveillance, how do they perceive these conditions of visibility, and how do they manage their online presence?

Privacy as a value is being reconfigured through users' familiarity with social media. They may experience privacy violations, but these violations are part of a normalization of social media

visibility. For this reason, this article not only positions privacy concerns alongside publicity, but also situates these values alongside users' broader experiences with WhatsApp. Findings in this article are thematically presented along a narrative charting exposure to, use of, and familiarity with WhatsApp. Joining WhatsApp appears to be a decision that results from peer pressure and convenience. Users then come to realize surveillance and visibility are at the heart of the interpersonal use of WhatsApp. They describe these practices through terms like "IM‟ing" and "stalking." These experiences also lead to a reconsideration of privacy and publicity. Users then develop a set of tactics to manage more problematic forms of exposure. They also regard users as being responsible for caring for their virtual selves, while acknowledging the difficulties involved in this task.

Methodology

This study conducted by semi-structured, in-depth interviews to consider how users coped with peer-to-peer surveillance. A convenience sample of thirty undergraduate students who use WhatsApp were selected for study. Participants were all enrolled at the same mid-sized Canadian university at the time. These students were selected from all faculties at this university and were recruited through a series of posters on campus, as well as notices sent by email to undergraduate mailing lists. Of the thirty students interviewed, twenty-three were women and seven were men. As women are both more likely to use social media in Canada (Dewing, 2010) and to participate in studies (Sax, Gilmartin, & Bryant, 2003), this was expected. Seven respondents were in the first year of their studies, eight were in their second year, five were in their third year, seven were in their fourth year, and three were in their fifth year. Twenty-six students were in the faculty of arts and sciences, three were in health sciences, and one student was in the faculty of education. Twenty-seven students checked their WhatsApp account at least once a day. The three that did not perform daily checks instead received email notifications from WhatsApp. Interviews focused on a set of themes, including describing respondents' WhatsApp usage over time, the types of personal information made available to others and the reasons for doing so, the types of personal information acquired from others through WhatsApp and the reasons for doing so, and the perceptions of information exchange on WhatsApp. When quoted, respondents are identified by their program, year of study, and gender. Interviews were recorded as MP3 audio files, manually transcribed, and coded based on interview questions as well as additional themes that emerged during the interviews.

The interviews are with one population at a specific period of WhatsApp's growth; yet, these findings can be generalized, as the conditions of visibility that respondents describe are common to all users. This research focuses on undergraduate students because they were the first population to embrace WhatsApp. Many respondents report being users since it first became available. Although it has since grown to a more mainstream status, these students belong to the population most familiar with the service. Users have a broad and extended presence on social media, and they are committed to this presence. Their attitudes and behaviours are guided by a care of the virtual self-compelling them to manage their reputation online. Many students use WhatsApp to maintain social relations with friends and family elsewhere, as well as foster new relations with other students. At the same time, they are also entering adulthood and either the job market or postgraduate studies, and thus are increasingly concerned with their public exposure.

Ties That Bind: Peer Pressure and Convenience

Many respondents felt compelled to join WhatsApp due to peer pressure, either from new friends at university or high school classmates. Peer pressure went beyond recommendation or prescription. Some respondents had friends who constructed status on their behalf, and then transferred control of this nascent status to them. In more extreme cases, non-users learned that WhatsApp contained photos and other content about them. This perplexed people who were not familiar with the kinds of visibility in which they were implicated:

I was like, "How can pictures of me be on the Internet?" They would show me and they'd show a picture of me with other people and they'd show comments that other people had made and, like, "How are people making comments on this photo of me and I don't even know it's there? I should be involved in this. I should know what's going on."Many respondents realized they already had a presence on WhatsApp, even if they never intended to join the site. This presence was only manageable by becoming a WhatsApp user.

Examining the way in which we communicate has always been important. Whether it's verbal or nonverbal communication, conveying a message to other individuals is necessary for human understanding and interaction. It not only helps us understand what they are saying, but it also helps us to express our feelings, emotions, and needs (CareSearch, 2016). Humans have found ways to revolutionize communication so that it can become more equipped to our ever-changing needs. Dating back to the times people used Neanderthal cave painting or only spoken word stories to the development of postal services, smoke signals, and handwritten manuscripts delivered by carrier pigeons, humans have gone through an evolution of communication patterns(Atlassian, 2011).

Communication is still constantly changing today even though we have already seen incredibly large trend changes within the last few decades including quick, easy, and instant communication. The change of communication influences many factors including message length, delivery time, and rate of response (UK Government, 2007) . The latest edition to the communication evolution in the 21st century: new media. New Media is described by the New Media Institute as "… all things related to the internet and interplay between technology, images and sound" (Socha & Eber-Schmid, 2014). New media includes Social Media which are virtual networks allowing community-based interactions and communication (WhatIs.com, 2016).

The increased rate of Mobile Messaging (MM) (or IM- Instant Messaging) through social media messaging sites has increased significantly over the past few years. This has led to many studies of these trends and the effects it has on all of its users. According to Digital marketing site eMarketer.com, a forecast report shows that by 2018 there will be two billion MM users which represent 80% of smartphone users (eMarketer, 2011).This dramatic change in communication has a significant impact on all individuals because it alters the message standards that we all now consider acceptable. Whether it is face-to-face communication, telephone calls, emails, text messages, or a tweet to another person, these interactions affect the way in which we communicate. In this day and age, WhatsApp is currently the leading instant messaging application globally after they hit the target of 1 billion people in their user base especially among young adults (Sutikno, Handayani, Stiawan, Riyadi, Riyadi, & Subroto, 2016). Thus, the effect this medium has on the public"s interpersonal communication is

important and will be further explored in this research. Previous Research studying technological advancement‟s effect on face to face communication resulted in negative effects in terms of both the quality and quantity of face to face communication (Drago, 2015).

Staying on WhatsApp was seen as too convenient, and leaving it was too costly (Chang & Chen, 2008). Even when some visibility was desirable, these ties posed risks on an everyday basis and required heightened vigilance vis-à-vis offline sociality. What makes social media convenient, namely the way they diffuse information, also makes them risky.

Whatsapp Discernibility as Surveillance

Respondents were fully aware of why WhatsApp would be used for surveillance. They described the site as a vast and accessible resource for personal information. Respondents described interpersonal surveillance on WhatsApp in terms of being watched by others. In addition to former and current romantic partners, respondents were concerned with parental scrutiny. Parental access to status led to a convergence between social contexts that respondents wanted to avoid (Boyd 2008). WhatsApp also provided a distorted representation of the person. One user described how WhatsApp misrepresented him to his father:

Interpersonal surveillance on WhatsApp is also mutual, as watching and being watched both feature prominently. Respondents turned to WhatsApp to discover more about people who were of interest in their romantic lives. This is justified by the availability of relevant information on status, including sexual orientation, relationship status, the kind of relationships the user wishes to pursue, and potential topics of conversation. Respondents described their own exposure as a distinct concern from watching their peers. They held different standards between what they wanted to expose about themselves and what they wanted to find out about others. Yet when considering their own visibility, their ability to access their peers' personal information was the most accessible yardstick:

Peer visibility lead respondents to guard their own information. Knowing they were being watched and knowing the extent to which they could watch others compelled respondents to monitor their online presence for content that they believed others would find objectionable. This kind of self-scrutiny triggered the strategies for impression management detailed later in this article.

WhatsApp's Impact on Interpersonal Relationships

Based mainly on features, usability, functions, and convenience, instant messaging (IM) sites have become increasingly popular, but they could also encompass issues regarding social intimacy and negative feelings (Si, 2012). Instant messaging services such as WhatsApp allow for easy communication with people over long distances. The method has become quick, easy, and inexpensive. It was found in a Study by Lin Si that instant messaging actually increased the amount of social intimacy as well as the desire to want to communicate face to face. It is further indicated that the more you IM someone, the closer the person is to you (Si, 2012).

However, IM‟ing sites such as WhatsApp causes seven negative emotions in users; including anxiety, guilt, pressure, distraction, embarrassment, suspicion, and confusion (Si, 2012). Symptoms of these emotions include worrying and a decreased self-esteem when faced

with long replies, pressure to respond to messages immediately, relationship mistrust with who another person is contacting, confusion with regards to what the intended meaning of the message is, and more. Thus, although there are positive aspects of WhatsApp during interpersonal communication including quick communication with loved ones far away; it could also create communication barriers with different interpretations of a message that may result in a wide array of negative emotions (Si, 2012).

"Instant Messaging" and "Stalking" on WhatsApp

Commented [T1]:

It's pretty obvious, isn't it? He/she texts you as soon as you change your profile picture and notices that little detail you didn't even know existed. And god forbid your profile picture is a quote from your favourite poem or prose; you're in for a full-fledged, philosophical discussion about life and all it entails. Whether it's the lyrics of a song, an existential life question or a simple status message that says 'Busy', he/she will ask you about its backstory almost immediately and check if you're doing OK . more often than not, notice a 'typing' sign against the chat of this particular crush while mindlessly scrolling through your recent conversations. The typing sign is almost never followed by a message. Whether it lost its way or was never sent, is for you to decide.

Two terms associated with peer surveillance on WhatsApp warrant exploration: "stalking" and "IM‟ing ." Both describe problematic ways of getting information on WhatsApp. IM‟ing was seen as a milder version of stalking, which in turn was meant to reflect more negatively on the user: "It's all a matter of degree. I mean, if you were looking to assign either WhatsApp stalking or WhatsApp IM‟ing to one person's activities, I'd think you would have to do it on a case-by-case basis". IM‟ing was a more involved and targeted way of using WhatsApp, though respondents treated this as a matter of circumstance. IM‟ing involves perusing content: a few pages of wall posts, or a photo album. It is a function of using WhatsApp, as using the site in the way it was intended leads to the prolonged scrutiny of others' information. IM‟ing can also be brought on due to boredom, or simply because content on the user's news feed—the content that first greets people when they sign on—caught their attention.

Some terms, like IM‟ing and stalking, imply that some forms of exposure on WhatsApp are more troubling than others. Yet users generally grew accustomed to this range of visibility, illustrating a tension between accepted and unwanted kinds of interpersonal surveillance on social media. One respondent stated that having his personal information accessible to a network of peers had consequences he was only beginning to realize and accept:

Experiences with IM‟ing and stalking showed respondents what kind of visibility to expect from the site. These incidents lead to greater self-scrutiny and management of their presence, but also to a level of comfort with their exposure. IM‟ing and stalking were not necessarily seen negatively, as users did it themselves. Visibility between users ranges from casually discovering what a close friend did over the weekend, to the targeted and prolonged monitoring of strangers. This range of practices is unique, as they emerge seamlessly from the everyday use of domestic media. For this reason, many respondents suspected WhatsApp was designed specifically for activities like "stalking" and "IM‟ing ." As a domesticated surveillance technology, WhatsApp itself creeps from the familiar to the objectionable.

Making Sense of the Private/Public Distinction

The terms private and public came up frequently when discussing WhatsApp with student respondents. Not only was a public/private binary insufficient to describe WhatsApp, but WhatsApp was also a catalyst to reconsider these values. WhatsApp represents a kind of blurring of private and public, at least as they were generally understood in North America prior to the advent of social media. In addition, the term "personal" crosscuts these discussions, such that personal information appears in public spaces, private spaces, or both. WhatsApp is a public space where users are ostensibly comfortable sharing personal details with friends that they have wilfully chosen. Some respondents, especially those in their first year of studies, drew parallels between their exposure on WhatsApp and the kind of publicity sought by reality TV stars. Clearly one of the key motivations for using WhatsApp was to share specific information with a somewhat amorphous (though occasionally specific) audience.

Other respondents approached WhatsApp publicity with trepidation, making comparisons to real-life exposure to underscore the difficulty of adjusting to the service. One respondent likened the circulation of photos on WhatsApp as if they "had a photo album at my house and somebody came and copied it and then put it in their photo album". Another claimed the wall was modelled after the whiteboard on students' doors in residence, making it a kind of public space. Students also drew comparisons between putting content on WhatsApp and being visible outdoors. The implications of this imagery, however, were not unanimous. While some believed being outside legitimated scrutiny, others believed they still had reasonable expectations against IM‟ing and stalking. These tensions are a product of domestication, and force a reconsideration of privacy and publicity.

Privacy also mattered to respondents, especially when personal information leaked in unanticipated or undesirable ways. One respondent who described WhatsApp as private referred to its extensive privacy controls, yet also acknowledged a public element insofar as the site is open to all: While conversations about the public and private on WhatsApp are messy, there is no boundary separating the private from the public, even though some spaces are designated as more private than others. Private information may become public in consequence later. Respondents treated social media as a kind of public where users balance consensual visibility against unwanted exposure.

Responsibility and Futility

Respondents felt responsible for their exposure on social media and extended this responsibility to others. In the event of privacy violations or other unwanted consequences, respondents believed users only had themselves to blame. This suggests a perceived locus of control when users upload information to WhatsApp: "you can exercise so much control over what's visible, it's boggling to me, honestly. If I didn't want people to see my status, I'd make it private, and that would be that". Because of this sense of agency, the idea of users encountering trouble with their status was met with little sympathy. Respondents claimed that by uploading information onto their status, users were "inviting people to look into their life". Here users were seen as deliberately uploading information about themselves in a public setting and then complaining about consequences they clearly should have anticipated. Respondents did treat their own IM‟ing and stalking as problematic, but self-judgement was tempered by the perception that users are responsible for the care of their virtual self. As a result, they justified

their lateral surveillance of others by citing the other user's decision to upload this information, or their failure to use more stringent privacy settings: "If I'm looking at it, I feel like if she has it public, then I can just look at it and I don't feel bad".

Respondents felt responsible for managing their online visibility; yet, they also acknowledged that this was challenging. Attempts to manage privacy are often case-based; that is, to stop specific information at a specific point in time. Many respondents believed information would still leak beyond an intended audience. The sheer volume of information and social ties complicates an online presence. Respondents claimed that simply having information on a status, whether public or private, left users open to considerable risk because of the growing number of people who would have access to that information: "I guess we all tend to forget is that what we put on WhatsApp isn't personal or private in any means because of the hundreds and sometimes thousands of people that you allow to see your status". This respondent compared this unexpected exposure to the "reply all" button on email interfaces, where users accidentally send a message meant for one person to an entire community. Respondents also described the non-friend friend (a WhatsApp friend but a stranger otherwise) as a potential vulnerability:

The quantity of seemingly trusted friends prevents a user from managing their entire audience. Even when respondents placed the locus of control—and blame—on individual users, they acknowledged that WhatsApp is primarily a public domain, and that attempts to limit exposure are futile. Social media are domestic technologies that creep and leak in unanticipated directions. Respondents were aware that proper conduct on WhatsApp is based on a contradiction: individual users are expected to be vigilant, but this vigilance will not offset all potential risk. Safe use is necessary, but not sufficient on social media.

The above suggests an acknowledgement of partial futility: if information is uploaded it will most likely leak. WhatsApp surveillance is a product of information convergence, as so many people are using it. The challenges for visibility and exposure posed by WhatsApp are augmented as more people join it, and as it takes on a greater presence in different social contexts:

Like, WhatsApp is so new, like, we don't know what kind of social implications it's going to have. And it's becoming such a momentous force that I don't think, like, it's like people jumped on board before they knew where it was going. Much as interpersonal surveillance is rooted in the everyday use of social media, mitigating the risks of unwanted exposure is embedded in mundane practices like un-tagging photos and choosing not to upload damaging content. As these risks are tied to information flows between previously distinct contexts, respondents used privacy settings extensively to ensure these leaks are kept to a minimum. Some respondents were overwhelmed by WhatsApp's opportunities for public exposure, and cited this as a reason to not be diligent:

I'm pretty sure all my private information is already long gone. There's no sense of privacy in this modern world and because everything I do is basically online these days, I feel like there's little or no safety and, therefore, I don't need to curb what I'm doing on WhatsApp. This respondent was ambivalent about her comfort with WhatsApp. She grew accustomed to being visible, but this was in response to the overwhelming exposure on the site. She actively participated in her visibility, but this was not necessarily the kind of social media she wanted.

In considering the negative outcomes associated with WhatsApp, respondents described a mix of outrage from undue risks, coupled with an acceptance of these vulnerabilities based on individual responsibility and agency. The accumulation of social ties on WhatsApp means there will be unexpected and undesirable forms of visibility.

Discussion

Respondents have a growing familiarity with interpersonal surveillance on WhatsApp, but this familiarity is mixed with uncertainties and tensions. Users join at the behest of their friends, and maintain visibility to communicate with these friends. The kind of visibility required for surveillance from WhatsApp is borne out of everyday practice, with users maintaining relations with their colleagues. Peer pressure notwithstanding, users willingly supply information about themselves to this platform, making it suitable for interpersonal scrutiny. An ever-growing friendship network means unanticipated risks occur, but choice and responsibility are placed on users themselves, despite this complexity. Visibility and exposure on WhatsApp is normalized. Exposure is not limited to any specific instance, but rather is a pervasive condition of social life on social media.

Users express some ambivalence in their responses. They grow accustomed to WhatsApp visibility, yet its effects remain chilling. These developments complicate efforts to manage their online presence. Users feel responsible for their presence, but are aware that managing this presence is beyond their control. They perceive their online reputation as being a personal responsibility, even while acknowledging that caring for the virtual self by way of vigilant self-scrutiny is not enough. Student users are aware that different audiences and social contexts intersect on the site, but they still construct a visible status for close friends. This is emblematic of interpersonal visibility on WhatsApp: an online presence is built from mundane contributions by users and their friends. Users join because their peers are online, and they build a presence to remain visible to these friends. No single act seems risky or malicious, but when taken together over time, maintaining an online presence can have damaging consequences. Moreover, WhatsApp's continued growth—in terms of audience, contexts, and features—increasing chats adds importance to the content on the site.

Conclusion

Communication among young adults has shifted from traditional interpersonal communication that includes face to face conversations to various websites and applications limited to online communication. Because of the efficiency and convenience that online social media platforms provide, it is a preferred means by which people can communicate with others whenever they please (Sponcil & Gitimu, 2013). WhatsApp, the 1st most downloadable application in the world is used for communication through instant messaging, is downloadable to mobile phones, and has 4.69 million users in the UAE alone (Global Media Insight, 2017). WhatsApp is now even more popular in the UAE after the subscription fee was abandoned and it became free to its users in the beginning of 2016(George, 2016). With more than 56% of the UAE population being active on social media and more than 3.5 hours spent online a day, the study of social media trends is highly significant to the social trends in the country

This article has focused exclusively on interpersonal social media surveillance. Surveillance concerns for users are primarily individualistic. They report and anticipate surveillant relations with family, friends, romantic interests, and classmates. They are generally concerned with

situated and immediate forms of surveillance. They want to maintain boundaries that separate different social contexts. From their perspective these concerns eclipse other kinds of scrutiny conducted through WhatsApp. Subsequent research should consider these other kinds of surveillance through social media. As law enforcement branches, marketers, employers, and governments take a continued interest in sites like WhatsApp, the visibility produced by interpersonal social media surveillance will undoubtedly augment the scope and capacity of other kinds of social media surveillance. This research is also limited to digital youth in a university environment. While this provides specific context for user concerns, subsequent research should focus on how a more diverse population is settling into WhatsApp, as well as the population's conditions of inter-visibility.

More often than not, notice a 'typing' sign against the chat of this particular crush while mindlessly scrolling through your recent conversations. The typing sign is almost never followed by a message. Whether it lost its way or was never sent, is for you to decide.

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