

Facebook photos 'damage relationships'

Posted on Thursday 8th August 2013

Sharing photographs on Facebook could damage relationships with friends, family and colleagues, a new study has found.

The quantity and subject matter of the pictures have an impact on the level of support and intimacy within relationships, according to research carried out at the University of Birmingham, the University of the West of England, the University of Edinburgh and Heriot-Watt University.

Dr David Houghton, a lecturer in marketing at Birmingham Business School and lead author of the report, said: "Our research found that those who frequently post photographs on Facebook risk damaging real-life relationships. This is because people, other than very close friends and relatives, don't seem to relate well to those who constantly share photos of themselves.

"It's worth remembering that the information we post to our 'friends' on Facebook, actually gets viewed by lots of different categories of people: partners; friends; family; colleagues and acquaintances; and each group seems to take a different view of the information shared."

The study, entitled: "Tagger's delight? Disclosure and liking in Facebook: The effects of sharing photographs amongst multiple known social circles" found that partners who shared more photographs of events led to a decrease in intimacy. Similarly, a close friend who shared more photographs of friends could also expect to it to have a negative impact on the quality of that relationship.

The report states: "Partners sharing more photographs of family is positively related to support, whereas partners sharing more photographs of friends is related negatively to intimacy."

Researchers also suggest that big brand advertising campaigns, which encourage people to post photographs of themselves with the product on Facebook, risk damaging the relationships between their "fans".

"While benefitting brand awareness and critical mass of a Facebook fan page for a brand, organisation or cause, sharing photographs may be harmful to those asked to participate," the report states.

Dr Ben Marder, early career fellow in marketing at the University of Edinburgh Business School, who contributed to the research, said: "My advice for people sharing photos or links with a fan site is think twice and share once. Be cautious when sharing and think how it will be perceived by all the others who may see it. Although sharing is a great way to better relationships it can also damage them."

Notes to Editors

- Please read the full report: ***Tagger's delight? Disclosure and liking in Facebook: the effects of sharing photographs amongst multiple known social circles*** (<http://epapers.bham.ac.uk/1723/>)
- The authors of the report were Dr David Houghton from Birmingham Business School, University of Birmingham; Professor Adam Joinson from the University of the West of England, Bristol; Dr Nigel Caldwell, Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh; and Dr Ben Marder, University of Edinburgh.

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