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Nostalgia and iPhone Camera Apps: An Ethnographic Visual Approach to iPhoneography

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Virginia Commonwealth University.

by

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Abstract

NOSTALGIA AND IPHONE CAMERA APPS: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC VISUAL APPROACH TO IPHONEOGRAPHY

By Maria Lourdes De Panbehchi, Ph.D.

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Virginia Commonwealth University, 2016.

Director: Nicholas Andrew Sharp, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Department of English

The iPhone is the most popular smartphone and camera on social media. iPhoneography, the photography taken or edited with the iPhone, has set the trend of nostalgic photography on social media during the 2010s; thus, the iPhone, a high-tech camera, produces low-tech-looking images. This dissertation attempts to find out why iPhone photographers (iPhoneographers) take, edit, and share images that mimic photographs taken with analog photographic equipment. I argue that nostalgia allows iPhoneographers to use the iPhone as a creative tool and to belong to a community. Based on the arguments of Vilém Flusser—who suggested that photographers are more interested in the camera and the process of taking pictures than in the photographs produced—this work focuses first on the iPhone camera and the camera apps. (This work also considers the writings of Roland Barthes, Susan Sontag, and W. J. T. Mitchell, as they pertain to photography and iPhoneography.) It traces the beginning of the nostalgic photograph style to 2008, when the Apple App Store offered apps that behaved like toy cameras and rendered

images similar to those produced by toy and Polaroid cameras. The Hipstamatic app set the trend in 2009, and Instagram made it mainstream. Nostalgia is more a source of inspiration and creativity than a source of melancholy and longing for the past. The iPhoneography community on Facebook tends to form small groups that share and curate specific topics, such as clouds, portraits, flowers, and images produced with Hipstamatic. A small survey of the iPhoneography community shows that the community considers iPhoneography an art.

Introduction

It is the second decade of the twenty-first century. One out of five humans spends minutes or hours a day perusing their friends and family's everyday news and photographs on Facebook¹ and other social media spaces. All social media outlets seem to show images taken with a camera phone or, more specifically, a smartphone with images that, unlike Kodak 35mm photographs, exist only in an intangible form and do not need to pass by a dark room and printing process. The owners of those images do not need to wait an hour, days, or weeks to see, touch, appreciate, and share those images, because they are ready in seconds, but their owners cannot touch, smell, or hear the friction between pieces of photographic paper. Videos—short and long, important or ephemeral—remain in social media sites, instead of boxes or cabinets at home. The public views these photographs and videos by tapping or clicking on buttons and windows in smartphones, tablets, desktop computers, and other electronic devices. The ubiquitous images that tell the current state of our lives may look fuzzy or clear, carelessly taken or well planned, commented and liked, or uncommented and ignored. An ad in *The Camera* magazine from the January 1913 issue was already advising readers about keeping their printed photographs safe by adding them to an album, so that friends would not take the prints with them. A hundred years from now, if social media interactions become available to the public—

¹ Facebook reported that in March of 2015, at least 1.44 billion individuals interacted with the site on a monthly basis, while 1.25 billion users accessed the site via a mobile device. The almost 250 million United States and Canada users represent less than 20% of all daily active users. Facebook.

similar to late-nineteen-century newspapers that are now available in microfilm—the audience will perhaps notice, in spite of the immense number of images, a few universal characteristics: a great percentage of images will have the same tones, colors, and textures; they will depict pets, self-portraits (alone or with friends), food, landscapes, and fashion. The new audience will note that the images first appeared mainly on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Flickr, and that they were taken with a smartphone. Although camera phones first appeared in the late 1990s, it wasn't until the end of the first decade of the 2000s that photographs taken with Apple's iPhone started to flood social media.²

The nostalgic-looking images started with the iPhone, and soon they were also produced by Android, Blackberry, and Windows phones. To paraphrase William Henry Fox Talbot in his introduction to *The Pencil of Nature* and apply his argument to current photography trends, images taken with iPhones and other smartphones are everywhere, to the point that an explanation of the terms iPhoneography and smartphone photography may be unnecessary;³ yet, as many persons may know the images, they may not know this type of photography by name, because it is a very recent style. iPhoneography is the photography captured or edited with an iPhone. iPhoneography started with the iPhone in 2007 and a few years later its style and standards migrated into other smartphone operating systems, the most important of them being iPhone's main rival, Android, which functions with a system coded by Google. Although there

² “Facebook can be understood as constituting an important repository for contemporary people's lives, and it is possible that either its users or cultural institutions will eventually demand that the site's content be archived as a historical record.” Sinn, Donghee, and Sue Syn. "Personal Documentation on a Social Network Site: Facebook, a Collection of Moments from Your Life?" *Archival Science* 14.2 (2014): 95-124. Web.

³ William Henry Fox Talbot. *The Pencil of Nature*. “The term ‘Photography’ is now so well known, that an explanation of it is perhaps superfluous; yet, as some persons may still be unacquainted with the art, even by name, its discovery being still of very recent date, a few words may be looked for of general explanation.”

are more Android smartphones⁴ than iPhones, because there are more companies that sell Android smartphones, usually at a lower price than iPhones, the Google Play store—the equivalent of Apple’s App Store—sells more applications (which are known as “apps” for short), the iPhone has been the most popular smartphone camera. The iPhone has also been the number one camera on Flickr for a few years.⁵ The uniformity of the iPhone market makes this brand more recognizable than any Android smartphone brand. While Apple has released a dozen models of its smartphone and a few models of iPad and iPod touch that are capable of taking and editing photographs, Samsung—one of the leading brands that uses the Android operating system—has more than two hundred models of smartphones and tablets on the market.⁶

The iPhone—and the smartphone in general—has become the camera that captures more everyday moments than any other camera. iPhone users carry a camera with them most of the day; this camera fits in places where bulky analog and digital cameras do not fit or reach. Hundreds of camera apps mimic one or several features of graphic editors, such as Photoshop, with the key difference being that, with an app, editing an image usually takes a few seconds or a minute, instead of several minutes, even hours. It is fair to state that this photography revolution is comparable to the one started by the Kodak cameras in 1888, which snapped a photo with the push of a button and the photographer did not have to develop the film. It is also comparable to

⁴ “Global market share held by the leading smartphone operating systems in sales to end users from 1st quarter 2009 to 3rd quarter 2015” Statista. <http://www.statista.com/statistics/266136/global-market-share-held-by-smartphone-operating-systems/> Accessed 2 December 2015.

⁵ Flickr is the oldest photography social media and also the only one that provides statistics on the cameras. At least since 2011, I have seen the iPhone camera on Flickr statistics. <https://www.flickr.com/cameras>. The numbers for iPhone cameras: Flickr. <https://www.flickr.com/cameras/apple/> Accessed 2 December 2015.

⁶ On Flickr, Samsung Galaxy smartphone cameras rank number two in popularity. Flickr. <https://www.flickr.com/cameras/samsung/> Accessed 2 December 2015.

the revolution that began with the Polaroid cameras, which gave the photographer the ability to see the images develop in a few minutes after capturing the image. In fact, the lens section for the first three models of iPhone are the same size as that of the first Polaroid, the Polaroid Land.

In 1963, in the Foreword for the Polaroid Land camera's manual, Ansel Adams wrote,

It is unfortunate that so many photographers have wrongly thought of the land [*sic*] camera as a "toy," a casual device for "fun" pictures, or, at best, a "gadget to make record pictures!" It is true that tremendous sales have stemmed from purely amateur applications, but the fact remains that the process has literally revolutionized the art and craft of photography —and is still barely across the threshold of development.⁷

In Adams' statement the word land may be exchanged by the word iPhone or smartphone, and the result is smart photography, while fun and record can be switched for Instagram, and the statement fits our current state of photography on social media.

Every smartphone camera has a similar design: a discrete 0.5-4 mm lens with a digital zoom that can be manipulated with one or two fingers from the phone's screen, or with the volume buttons that are usually on one side of the phone. The camera functions tend to be the same for the iPhone and most other smartphones: the camera captures the image, then the photographer has the option to save it, with or without editing it; afterwards, the saved image may stay in the phone's album, then it may be shared either on web pages, on social media mobile apps, via text messaging, or email. Figure 0.1 shows the interface for iPhone's operating system 9, also known as iOS 9. The default or native camera app and the eight basic filters serve as the basis of all other third-party apps; the code for these features is part of Apple's iPhone, iPod touch, and iPad developer's kit software called Xcode. Developers may adapt this code or parts of it when writing their own apps.

⁷ Ansel Adams, *Polaroid Land Photography Manual; a Technical Handbook* (New York: Morgan & Morgan, 1963), 5.

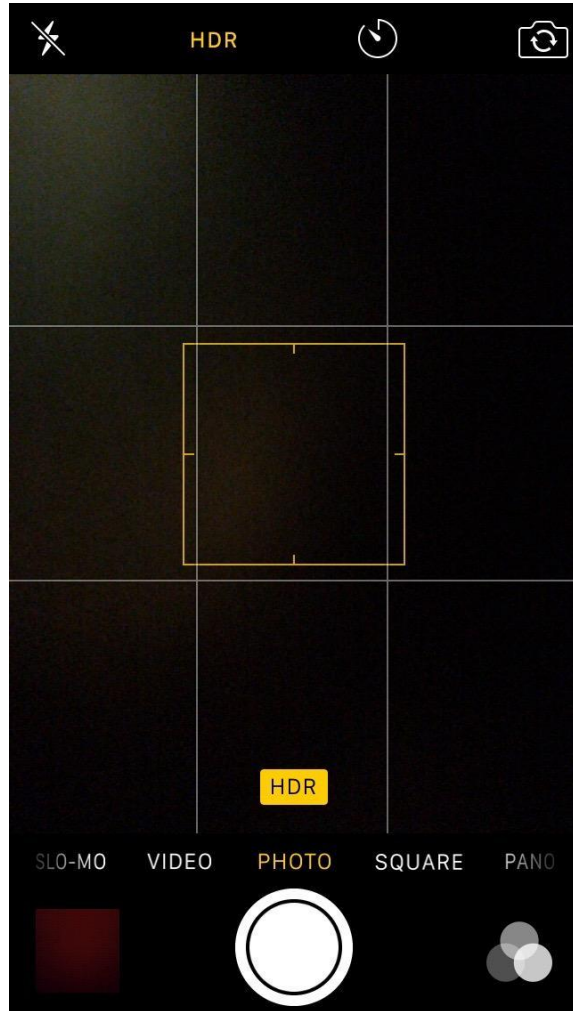


Figure 0.1: iPhone 5s running iOS 9. This is the equivalent of the viewfinder. The interface shows the grid of thirds, the square that represents the center of the image, and a few menu buttons.

Any word or drawing on the screen represents an interactive or live button, except for the grid of thirds. The focus (the yellow square in the middle) changes by tapping on an area on the screen. When tapped, the button on the lower-right corner (Figure 0.1) shows a live preview with the basic filters and other menus for editing, tagging, and adding stickers (Figure 0.2).

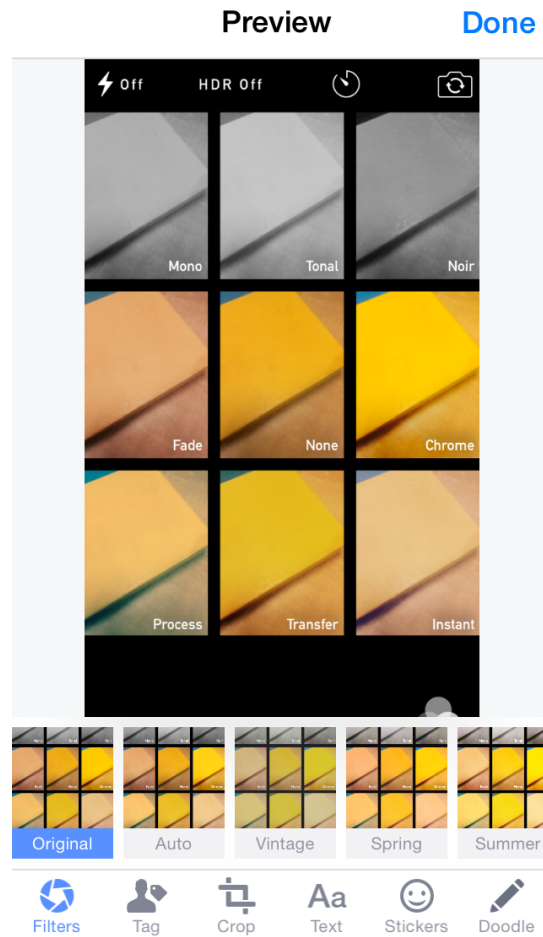


Figure 0.2: iPhone running iOS 9. Live screen and edit menu.

From October to December of 2012, American smartphone owners spent an average of 23:02 hours per month using apps. In 2013, during the same span of time, Americans used apps an average of 37:28 hours each month, which translates into a day and a half per month, and more than 18 days per year, spent mostly on entertainment-related apps—games, music, videos, sports news, books, magazines, and comics—and social media.⁸ Thus, from a business point of view, the camera-related apps are not the most successful apps, since they are not the top sellers,

⁸ “So Many Apps, So Much More Time for Entertainment.” Nielsen. Accessed 12 Oct 2015. <http://www.nielsen.com/us/en/insights/news/2015/so-many-apps-so-much-more-time-for-entertainment.html>

or the most popular types of app on Apple’s App Store or Google’s Play Store. The two stores offer free and paid apps; the latter may cost from \$0.99 to \$999.99.⁹ Usually, the most downloaded apps—either free or paid—are related to games, business, education, lifestyle, and entertainment. For example, in September of 2015, the App Store’s photo and video category ranked number fourteen, just below sports and right above the finance category.¹⁰ A similar situation occurred at the Google Play Store.¹¹ All smartphones include a camera and a default camera app, which may be one of the reasons third-party photography and video apps may not be as popular as games, education, and entertainment, because the average smartphone owner may only need the default camera app. Another reason may be that most social media networks now offer a photography editor. The images produced with photography and video apps seem to be everywhere, in spite of not being as popular as games and entertainment apps; this popularity is based on free and paid downloads.

Although the photography app category does not appear as important or popular with iPhone users, in 2009 and 2010, the App Store named the photography apps Hipstamatic and Instagram “App of the Year” for the iPhone, respectively, while Snapseed was designated “App

⁹ “21 of the most expensive iPhone and iPad apps in the world.” <http://www.businessinsider.com/most-expensive-apps-for-iphone-and-ipad-2015-3?op=1> Business Insider. Accessed 24 September, 2015.

¹⁰ Statista.com, based on PocketGamer.biz” reported that on September 2015 the most popular categories by share at the Apple App Store were: games 22.2%, business 10.41%, education 9.59%, lifestyle 8.83%, entertainment 6.52%, utilities 5.02%—these are apps such as calculators, clocks, etc.—travel 4.32%, books 3.49%, music 2.97%, health and fitness 2.87%, productivity 2.79%, food and drink 2.62%, sports 2.53%, photo and video 2.39%, while finance, news, reference, social networking, and medical apps had each a 2%, and navigation 1.14. <http://www.statista.com/statistics/270291/popular-categories-in-the-app-store/> Accessed 24 September 2015.

¹¹ Statista.com <http://www.statista.com/statistics/279286/distribution-of-worldwide-google-play-app-downloads-by-category/> Accessed 24 September 2015.

of the Year” for iPad in 2010. Snapseed also works on iPhone and Android, and it is owned by Google. The main purpose of Hipstamatic and Instagram is to produce nostalgic-looking images, and they form part of the virtual “camera bag” of many iPhoneographers. Snapseed may produce warmer and darker images than Instagram or Hipstamatic. Snapseed, along with Instagram, seems to be the main camera editor for Android smartphone users.¹²

In June 2015, Apple’s App Store had an inventory of 1.5 million apps. In general, Apple does not offer statistics related to camera-related apps; therefore, it is not possible to know how many camera-related apps have been released at the App Store since its opening in 2007. Third-party services, such as Statista.com, only publish monthly data on the top-seller apps, and they usually focus only on the top ten. At any given time, iPhone users may peruse at least 600 photography and video apps from their device or from the iTunes program in their computers; as it has been since 2010, the apps are divided into three groups of the top-200 most downloaded apps: top paid, free, and top grossing. A very small survey for this project, conducted from November of 2014 to February of 2015, showed that the typical iPhone user does not download a large number of photography apps; he or she produces most images with the regular camera app, and edits them with Instagram or Facebook’s photography editor, while photographers who identify themselves as amateur, professional, or artists use and experiment more with camera apps.¹³

Before 2012, most photography apps mimicked only one type of camera, and the four main options were toy, novelty, high-tech, or art cameras; some apps began to include dozens of

¹² The mobile photography contests in which photographs taken with Android smartphones have been selected as winners or runner-ups have been, for the most part, edited with Snapseed.

¹³ The results of this survey will be discussed in depth in chapter three.

filters, lenses, frames, and/or dozens of effects similar to the graphic-editor software Photoshop. Currently, most photography apps are capable of producing two types of images, the unedited high definition (hi-fi) and the edited pictures. Those edited images may look low-definition (lo-fi), painterly, as if they were drawings, or lithographs; they may also look as if they were produced with a professional digital camera or edited with Photoshop. From 2008 to 2011, there were hundreds of apps that mimicked analog cameras, film, lenses, and developing processes. In contrast, in 2015, it seemed that there were more apps mimicking Instagram or a Photoshop feature. Still, there are dozens of apps that call themselves “cameras.”

This work focuses on iPhoneography and why the trend on social media in the 2010s is to favor nostalgic-looking images more than sharp and high-definition ones. In this project, any photography produced with a smartphone will be called either “smartphone photography” or “phoneography,” and the term “iPhoneography” will be reserved exclusively for iPhone photography. The Apple Store classification for the camera-related apps is “photography” as in “photography and video.” Although most complex photography apps—such as iColorama S or Snapseed—are known as “editors,” dozens of apps pretend to be an analog camera, so all apps related to photography will be called “photography apps” or “camera apps,” since all of them produce photography by using the iPhone camera. It is important to mention that most editor apps have access to the camera as well.

Nostalgic iPhoneography or nostalgic-looking iPhone photographs are images taken and/or edited with an iPhone, and they look as if they were taken with an old camera. Filters, papers, flashes, frames, lenses, films, and developing processes, as well as other analog tools, are usually mimicked. The colors are black and white—sepia, monochrome—and color tones that seem to be from the nineteenth century to the 1980s; the more popular resemble images from the

1970s and 1980s. The images may be composed with more than one app, and the processing of an image may start with a photograph and finish with a drawing or painting app; it may also start with a drawing and end with a photograph. In many cases, the images posted to Facebook, Flickr, or Instagram are a mash-up of analog photographs and drawings alongside iPhone drawings and photography, plus text, stickers, emojis, and glitches. It is not rare to see photograph descriptions on social media explaining that the image was captured with a Canon or Nikon digital camera, then edited with iPhone or iPad apps. In some cases, the information is posted with hashtags. While Instagram and Flickr do not show the exif, Google+ and Flickr include it, thus making it easier to find out the camera and technical information, unless the photographer chooses not to provide it.

The apps producing nostalgic-looking images were first developed for iPhone, then they made their way to other platforms. The default iPhone camera app and thousands of other apps create clear, color photographs, but they become nostalgic images when edited with the default camera app, Instagram, Facebook, and other apps. In actuality, starting with the iPhone 5, these nostalgic photographs have high resolution when they are taken with the front camera, but their tones and filters make them look low-resolution.¹⁴ It is clear that developers create these types of apps because there is a market for them.

My inclination to study iPhoneography began in 2010, while doing research on texting and emoticons.¹⁵ While paying close attention to the interactions that mainly teenagers had with

¹⁴ Screen shots or a portion of a regular photograph is usually a low-resolution photograph. In general, it is not possible to perceive a big difference between high- and low-resolution photographs on social media.

¹⁵ The resulting paper was presented at two different conferences: the Popular Culture Association/American Culture Association of the Southwest conference in 2011, in San Antonio, Texas; and the Mid-Atlantic Popular/American Culture Association conference in 2010, in Fairfax, Virginia.

their friends on mobile social media, I saw a pattern in the type of photographs posted first on Instagram and Flickr, then shared on Twitter or Facebook. Teenagers were not the only ones sharing and commenting on fake vintage images; there were also app developers and bloggers reviewing photography apps, who were interacting with and sharing photos that looked old. I was able to pay attention to those images because I had been sharing the same type of images for more than a year. A simple experiment repeated at least five times on Flickr, Twitter, and Facebook confirmed to me that nostalgic-looking photographs were more popular than others: when I posted analog or digital photographs on social networks, my friends barely commented on them; in comparison, when I shared images produced with Hipstamatic, Instagram, or other nostalgic-looking apps,¹⁶ the images received more comments and “likes” than the analog or digital images.¹⁷ I also found several groups of photographers on Flickr who posted images taken with an iPhone and a few groups of enthusiasts sharing images rendered with Hipstamatic and other apps that mimicked Polaroid and other toy cameras. The participants were very excited about working with apps that filtered photographs and converted them into brand-new types of Polaroids and damaged-looking images. In one group, the participants were missing toy-camera apps that had disappeared from the App Store. Their nostalgia for apps that produced nostalgic-looking images suggested to me that the study of “nostalgia” was perhaps the key lens to study iPhoneography. If the iPhone was able to produce hi-fi (high-fidelity) images, why were the nostalgic, low-fi (low-fidelity), Polaroid-looking images more popular?

¹⁶ Or an image edited with several apps.

¹⁷ “Favorite,” “love,” “like”... every social media network has a different term to call the fact that the participants favor a comment or another type of post. On social media, when an individual decides to include another user’s posts in their own feed, they become “friends” or “followers” of that particular user. They may or may not know one another in person.

In 2011, I presented the paper “Polarized Nostalgia: HiFi and LoFi on Flickr” at a graduate conference on nostalgia. The paper was based on Svetlana Boym’s book *The Future of Nostalgia*, which defines nostalgia as “a sentiment of loss and displacement, but it is also a romance with one’s own fantasy.”¹⁸ I called the low-fi nostalgic images “polarized nostalgia” and pointed out that perhaps photographers were longing for old cameras, films, and other photographic equipment.¹⁹ I presented two more papers: in 2012, I wrote about how Hipstamatic had established the nostalgia-look as a trend and, in 2014, about how most social-media and mobile photography followed the Instagram model of business and filters, which I called the Instagramization of mobile photography.²⁰ I argued that Instagramization means that most iPhoneography tends to employ the warm filters used by Instagram, which, in turn, is based on Hipstamatic.

iPhoneography, and by extension smartphone photography, cannot be classified as a fad, but is rather a bona-fide photography trend that has become the main type of photography in the second decade of the twenty-first century. It is not just the mode of expression of teenagers or young adults, but rather an art tool used by amateur and professional photographers, journalists, bloggers, and visual artists. In *Anatomy of a Trend*, Henrik Vejlgard explains that a fad lasts

¹⁸ Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic, 2008).

¹⁹ “Polarized Nostalgia: HiFi and LoFi on Flickr.” Presented at The 3rd Annual GSHA Conference: “Nostalgia and Amnesia: Avenues of Remembering and Forgetting” March 2011, Claremont Graduate University, Claremont, CA.

²⁰ “Hipstamatic: An App for Nostalgia of the Recent Past” The 2012 SW/TX PCA/ACA (Southwest/Texas Popular Culture Association/American Culture Association) Conference. February 2012, Albuquerque, NM; “iPhoneography and the Instagramization of Mobile Photography.” The 2014 SW/TX PCA/ACA (Southwest/Texas Popular Culture Association/American Culture Association) Conference. February 2014, Albuquerque, NM.

less than a year, while the cycle of a trend lasts roughly three years.²¹ Following this notion, iPhoneography has been a trend for at least six years, and by now it is a well-established style and, in my opinion, a movement in photography and visual arts.

In the 1980s, Czech-born Brazilian philosopher Vilém Flusser proposed that photographers produce “technical images” with an apparatus that is an extension of their bodies, the camera. In *Towards a Philosophy of Photography*, Flusser defined the photographer and the camera; the latter, he explains, is a programmable apparatus with a large number of capabilities, a definition that foreshadows the smartphone, social media, and the state of today’s photography:

The camera is programmed to produce photographs, and every photograph is a realization of the possibilities contained within the program of the camera... Photographers endeavor to exhaust the photographic program by realizing all possibilities. But this program is rich and there is no way of getting an overview of it. Thus photographers attempt to find the possibilities not yet discovered within it: They handle the camera, turn it this way and that, look into it and through it. If they look through the camera out into the world, this is not because the world interests them but because they are pursuing new possibilities of producing information and evaluating the photographic program. Their interest is concentrated on the camera; for them, the world is purely a pretext for the realization of camera possibilities. In short: They are not working, they do not want to change the world, but they are in search of information.²²

If Flusser is right, then the iPhone camera and all the photography apps are perhaps more important for iPhoneographers than the images they capture. Flusser adds, “[i]n short: Apparatuses [the cameras] are black boxes that simulate thinking in the sense of a combinatory game using number-like symbols; at the same time, they mechanize this thinking in such a way, that, in future [*sic*], human beings will become less competent to deal with it and have to rely more and more on apparatuses” (32). The importance of the camera is reflected by the fact that photographers who shoot with an iPhone or specific apps now have a name: iPhoneographers

²¹ Henrik Vejlgard, *Anatomy of a Trend* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2008).

²² Vilém Flusser, *Towards a Philosophy of Photography* (London: Raktion, 2000), 26-27.

(who shoot or edit with the iPhone), Instagramers (who shoot or edit with Instagram), and Hipstographers (who shoot or edit with Hipstamatic).²³ Photographers who use any other smartphone are known as “mobile photographers,” but there are no specific names for users of any other brand of smartphone aside from iPhone, or for users of other apps aside from Instagram and Hipstamatic.

Based on Vilém Flusser, the reason why iPhoneographers produce and share nostalgic photographs on social media is because they are exploring the possibilities of the iPhone, and not because they miss old cameras. It is true that there are billions of what Flusser calls “non-informative” or “redundant” technical images, taken without exploring the camera and attempting to create meaning. However, the small community of self-identified iPhoneographers considers these images art, not just a repetitive image without any meaning. Self-identified iPhoneographers are, in my opinion, the real iPhoneographers, because, as Flusser adds, they are those “photographers [who] wish to produce states of things that have never existed before” (37), the ones who have contributed to the mobile photography movement, in general, and to the iPhoneography and nostalgic iPhoneography, in particular. Flusser predicted the iPhone and the sharing of images via computers; nonetheless, his theory does not explain fully why there is nostalgia on many millions of images.

The short history of the iPhone and its camera translates into a limited source of bibliography on the topic of nostalgia and iPhone photography apps; therefore, in several instances the information presented in this work comes from direct use and observation of the iPhone and several thousands of apps, as well as the virtual attendance of Apple Live events—

²³ Sherry Turkle, "The Secret Power of Things We Hold Dear," *New Scientist* 194, no. 2607 (2007): 50-52; Sherry Turkle suggests that we think with the tools we work with, which supports Flusser's position, that the camera is more like an organ of the photographer's body.

which the company uses to launch new products, apps, and features—and the direct and indirect participation on Facebook groups dedicated to iPhoneography and mobile photography.

There have been several studies that analyze what type of photographs are most popular on Instagram, how people use social media for political or religious purposes, if people post real photographs on their Facebook profile, and how groups function on social media.²⁴ In 2015, Saeideh Bakhshi, David A. Shamma, and Lyndon Kennedy, from Yahoo! Labs, and Eric Gilbert, from Georgia Tech, presented a paper at the 9th International AAAI Conference on Web and Social Media, called, “Why We Filter Our Photos and How It Impacts Engagement.”²⁵ Bakhshi et al. first interviewed 15 mobile photographers who used the Flickr mobile app—owned by Yahoo. The authors asked the photographers why they use filters on their photographs before sharing them on Flickr, and found out that there are two types of photographers: serious and hobbyists. The median age of the participants was 35 years old, and they were between 29 and 53 years of age. The paper points out that “[t]he serious hobbyists apply filters to correct their photos, expose certain objects or manipulate certain colors. More so casual photographers like to add artificial vintage effects to their photos and make them more playful and unique” (10). After the small qualitative survey, the authors used a big-data approach and analyzed more than seven million photographs on Flickr. The main finding was that photographs that had been altered using filters tended to have more views and comments, which coincides with my observations from 2011. The other significant finding was that people tend to use the warm filters more—in

²⁴ Several studies related to groups and how individuals behave on Facebook are mentioned in Chapter 3.

²⁵ The paper is hosted by Georgia Tech’s “The comp.social lab,” which studies social media and is led by Eric Gilbert. Saeideh Bakhshi, David A. Shamma, Lyndon Kennedy, Eric Gilbert. “Why We Filter Our Photos and How It Impacts Engagement.” Accessed 1 May 2015. <http://comp.social.gatech.edu/papers/icwsm15.why.bakhshi.pdf>

other words, the filters that make an image look old, vintage, antique, nostalgic. The paper explains,

Photographically speaking, filters which auto-enhance a photo (e.g. correct for contrast and exposure) drive more engagement. We find the less-engaging filters exhibit transformation effects which are exaggerated and often cause photographic artifacts and/or loss of highlight details. The exception being filters which make a photo look antique. (8)

Unfortunately, the authors do not offer more information on the photographs that look “antique.”

One note from this paper provides a sort of explanation as to why photographers use these filters:

“[m]any of our participants mentioned that changing their photos through filters makes those photos more special and fun” (9). If the edited photographs are fun, then making images look old is similar to a game. Flickr was created before the iPhone, Facebook, Hipstamatic, and Instagram, and in the second decade of the twenty-first century, it is not the most popular social-media platform among casual photographers; the most popular is Instagram, which popularized the warm filters. Nevertheless, Flickr is known for having more statistics available than other networks. Flickr’s most frequently used camera for several years has been the iPhone, and it is safe to assume that a large percentage of the photographs analyzed in the study were produced with an iPhone, and that a large number were edited with Instagram.

The iPhoneography community is part of the mobile-photography community, which tends to interact more on Facebook. As of January of 2016, the iPhoneography community on Facebook consists of several groups; some of them—such as Mobile Monochromes—have a few dozen very active members, while others have thousands of members—such as WiAM-Worldwide iPhoneography Art Movement, which has more than six thousand—but only a few are active. Not all members of these groups share images, and not all of the images are nostalgic-looking; perhaps two-thirds or more of all shared images mimic old photographs. There are several awards and Facebook and Flickr pages that showcase iPhoneography on a daily and

weekly basis. Although Flickr, Instagram, and other photography social media are mentioned, this project focuses mostly on the observation of the iPhoneography community on Facebook.

Why do iPhoneographers produce and share nostalgic photographs? First, according to Flusser, photographers are more interested in the apparatus—the iPhone and the apps—than the nostalgic-looking photographs. In other words, it is more important to be able to produce and share this type of photograph than to discuss the photographs, which means that the image does not matter at all; it just happens to be one option produced by the apparatus. If, for Flusser, the apparatus is more important, then a study of nostalgic iPhoneography apps should pay more attention to the iPhone apps than to the photographs and their meaning. The iPhone and its apps are the apparatus, or the artist’s medium to produce art. Second, Bakhshi et al.’s analysis of Flickr’s filters establishes the warm filters as the most engaging ones, along with the “antique” photographs. Bakhshi et al. also mention that some of the fifteen photographers interviewed in the study employ filters because using them is “fun.” This project argues that, although it is a serious artistic form of expression, iPhoneographers enjoy themselves by using and tinkering with the camera apps. It is not an enjoyment or fun as in playing a game, but rather a way to enjoy themselves by using nostalgia to create lo-fi (low-fidelity) images out of hi-fi (high-fidelity) photographs.

Chapter one of this dissertation, “iPhoneography and Nostalgic Camera Apps,” provides an overview of the development of iPhoneography and camera apps that render nostalgic-looking images. It includes a contextualization of the iPhone, the iPhone camera, and the two apps that have been more important on the production of the nostalgic style, Hipstamatic and Instagram.

Chapter two focuses on “Nostalgia and iPhoneography.” It reviews the concept of nostalgia, in general, and the relationship between photography and iPhoneography, then it

presents a few possible reasons that may explain why nostalgic camera apps are so popular. It discusses nostalgia from a neurological point of view, more as an emotion that allows an individual to create than to suffer melancholy and depression. The concepts of photography—according to Barthes, Sontag, and Flusser—serve as the basis to approach to this study of photography.

Chapter three, “The iPhoneography Community,” includes the methodology used in this project to study the iPhoneography community. This community started on Flickr—the first photography-sharing social media—then it migrated to Facebook, Instagram, and others. In a similar way that Flickr represents the best place to analyze big data related to photography, Facebook is the best to study photography groups and their members’ interactions. This chapter also examines what a trend is and why the nostalgic-style trend may become a long-lasting style. It analyzes a small survey conducted among regular iPhone users and self-identified iPhoneographers.

The conclusion attempts to formulate an answer to the question of why we prefer nostalgic instead of high-resolution images. The main arguments come from Flusser and the recent studies of groups in social media, specifically Facebook.

Chapter One: iPhoneography and Nostalgic Camera Apps

This chapter attempts to contextualize the iPhone, its camera, and the common characteristics shared by camera apps that produce nostalgic-looking photographs. It starts with a brief history of the iPhone and camera filters used in most apps, then it describes what is a nostalgic camera app. In the introduction of this work, I argue that iPhoneography is the style of photography that defines our time, in part because its omnipresence on social media has made it the standard photography of the 2010s. The general public recognize the style as an “Instagram” or “Instagrammed” photograph, or by indicating that the image has or lacks a filter. During the first two years of the iPhone, most third-party apps had only one, or less than ten, filters available, and their workflow was simple: take a photograph or choose one from the photo album, then wait a few seconds for the selected or random filter to be applied; then the photographer had the option to save the new image or not. There were several apps that only edited images. Since 2010, most camera apps have had similar characteristics: take, edit, save, share, or delete an image. In the beginning, the social media “share” options were for Twitter only, and when Instagram became popular, the camera app Hipstamatic offered an option to share the images on Instagram. Several apps had the option to add images to a Flickr group. Having the option to share an image from inside the app on social media made the popularization of iPhoneography and phoneography easier. Perhaps it was not the most important or necessary development, because users tend to share the images they have in their phone’s photo albums; however, the option to post from Instagram to Facebook made the Instagram filters the most

popular style on social media. By 2011, the default iPhone camera app had become the most popular camera on Flickr, which at the time was the largest photography social-media platform; at the same time, the Hipstamatic app was the only camera app that was included on Flickr statistics. In 2013, the basic iPhone camera had evolved to include several touchable buttons and a preview of the last image taken (Figure 1.1). Once the photos were snapped, the user had many options to choose from: edit the image by changing the rotation, enhancing the light, eliminating red eyes, or cropping; share the image by email, instant message, or Twitter; print it; use it as a wall paper for the iPhone; show the image on a slideshow, right from the phone; or delete it. The camera apps with their own social-media platform had the option to share the images on that platform and others, usually Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

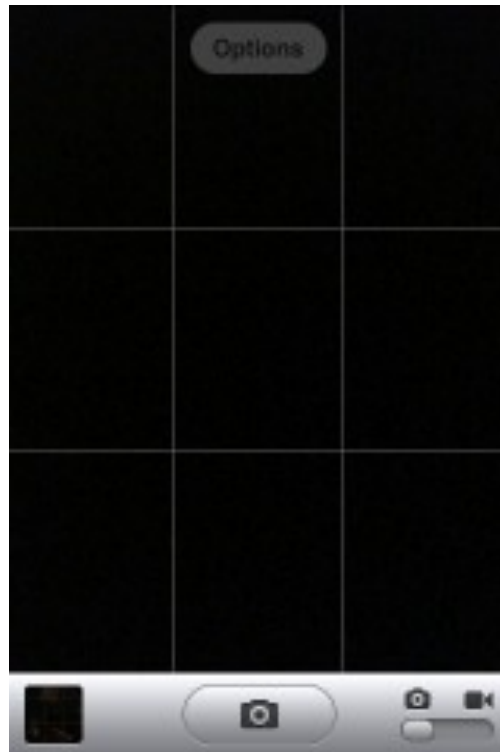


Figure 1.1: The interface of the iPhone basic camera, iPhone 4s version.

Although there are thousands of camera apps and, in some cases, each camera app includes hundreds of filters, all of the camera apps and filters are based on the iPhone's default camera app and the combination of eight primary filters, plus different degrees of light, textures, and other elements, such as frames. The eight primary filters are called "mono," "tonal," "noir," "fade," "chrome," "process," "transfer," and "instant" (Figure 1.2). All filters refer to analog styles of photography, either to the developing or the printing process. For example, "mono" and "noir" allude to the color black, as in black and white photography; "instant" refers to Polaroid prints, while "chrome" reminds users of Kodak's Kodachrome film. Although they are not the only nostalgic feature of iPhoneography, the eight filters represent the first nostalgic element that iPhoneographers and social media consumers encounter when they use iPhone and other smart phones. When users open Instagram and take a photograph, the editing interface offers a series of filters from which the user can choose to transform a high-tech image into a low-tech-looking photograph or video. Since its creation in 2010, Instagram has added a couple dozen filters to its collection. Users may edit the menu to include the filters they use the most. Some filters, such as Valencia and Toaster, have been more popular than others (Figure 1.3). Although the majority of its filters fall into a range of instant, mono, or fade, what most users identify Instagram with is the sepia tone. The OED explains that sepia is "a pigment of rich brown color (used in monochrome water-color painting) prepared from the inky secretions of the cuttle-fish";²⁶ in analog photography, sepia results from dyeing black photographs with sepia ink, and then washing them.

²⁶ "sepia, n." *OED Online*. Oxford University Press, September 2015. Web. 15 November 2015.

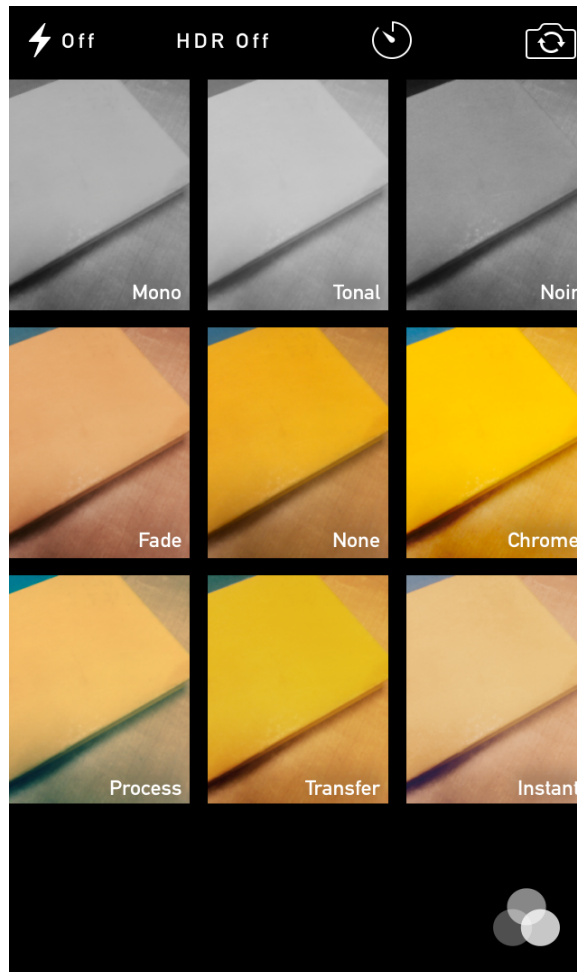


Figure 1.2: The default or basic iPhone camera app, with the filters option on. The image appears nine times, in real time, before taking the photograph; the box in the center has no filters, while the rest represent the basic eight filters all camera app developers may use.

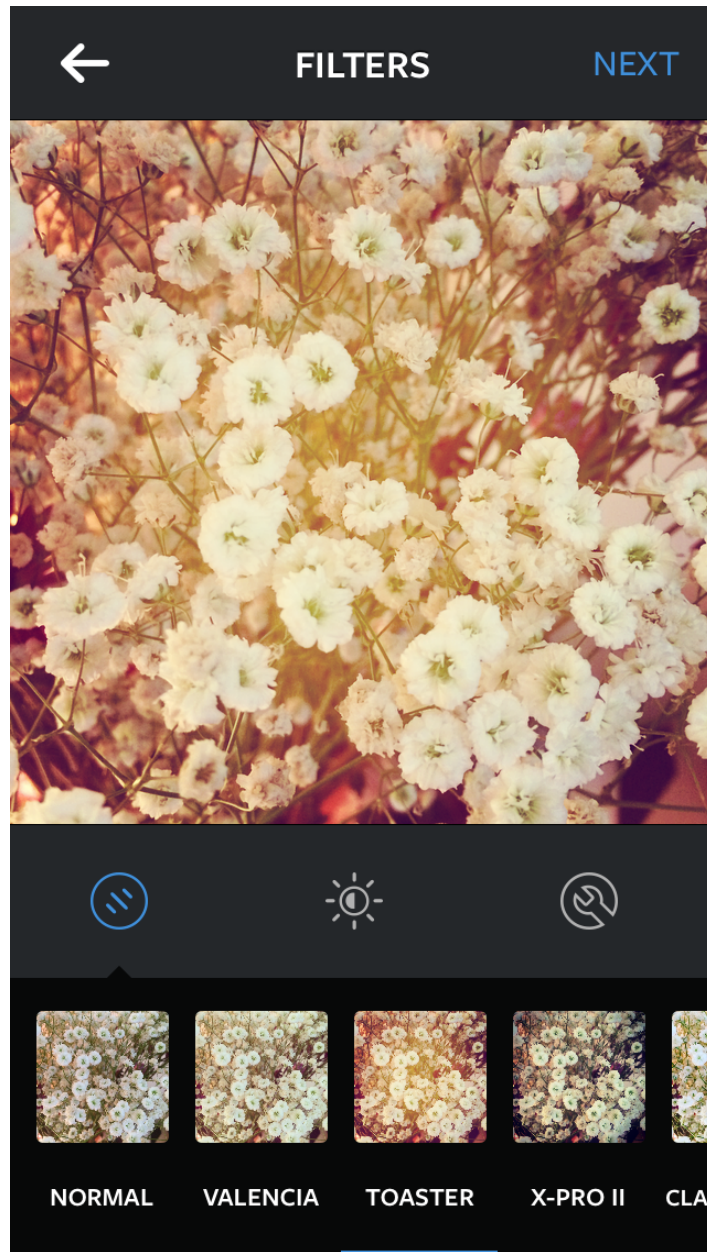


Figure 1.3: Instagram app interface with filters. In this image, the chosen filter was Toaster.

Apple produces the apparatus, the operating system (iOS), and the software to produce apps. When the iPhone was launched, the operating system was known as iOS, which meant “iPhone Operating System”; currently, iOS is used for Apple’s mobile devices, including watches and television. The company offers the software programs Xcode and Swift for free, which produce apps that can run on any of its devices, including laptop and desktop computers.

In order to build photography and video full applications (computer) or mobile apps, developers need to use standard pieces of code from the Xcode or Swift libraries. That code is called “core image filters,” which seem to originate in the old software development kit—or SDK—for desktop and laptop computers. Traditionally, the image filters have been listed by what the software calls “task,” which is a “task” for the camera; the image filters’ tasks are part of the developer library. The list of filters includes the following: blur, color adjustment, color effect, distortion, gradient half-tone, sharp (listed as “sharpen”), stylize (i.e. pixellate, pointillism, and mask), tile, and other features related to geometry.²⁸ The list of tasks resembles the effects menu available on Adobe’s Photoshop and other desktop software for image-editing. Thus, in theory, a mobile app may produce similar images to those edited with Photoshop. Clearly, the difference relies on the fact that images produced using a mobile app will have lower resolution, fewer details, and simpler textures, in part because the camera lens is smaller. To many, this means lower quality; to some it may mean that an iPhone image is more artistic. Most mobile apps’ menus include just a few elements similar to Adobe’s Photoshop. The oldest apps utilize only one or two of those elements; for example, SepiaCamera only produced sepia-tone images, while Polarized converted every photograph into a Polaroid-looking photograph. The apps with the most effects and editing options do not provide the user with the same number of effects that the desktop version of Adobe Photoshop does; although, during the September 2015 Apple Live Event, presenters from Adobe and Apple confirmed that Photoshop has been working on a group of apps that will work with Apple handheld devices in a similar way as they work on desktop computers.

²⁸ iOS Developer Library, “Core Image Filter Reference” Accessed January-March 2014 https://developer.apple.com/library/ios/documentation/GraphicsImaging/Reference/CoreImageFilterReference/Reference/reference.html#//apple_ref/doc/uid/TP40004346

Although a combination of two or three of the apps' core image filters may render nostalgic images, the "color effect filter" serves as the key task, since it contains the code to produce the following color effects: color cross, color invert, color monochrome, color posterize, and false color, plus the effects popularly known as lomo: chrome, fade, instant, mono, noir, process, tonal, transfer, sepia tone, and vignette. With iOS 7 (launched with iPhone 5), the default camera app kept the names from the library code: mono, noir, instant, process, fade, sepia, and chrome, thus making these names the standard. Apple allows developers to use the words *noir*, *process*, *sepia*, and others to describe the filters of their camera apps. However, since the developers may alter the library filters, they may use other names to identify the newly created filters. The most common practice is to identify filters with a unique name or a name related to the type of camera that the app mimics. For instance, one of the most popular filters on Instagram is "Toaster," while a very similar filter on the Flickr app is called "Lomo." Figure 1.4 shows the two filters. Aside from the square format on the second image, the only difference between them is the green tone on the last version of the image.



Figure 1.4: A comparison of filters. *Left*: A photograph taken with the default iPhone camera, with no filters. *Middle*: An image taken and edited with the Instagram app, using the “Toaster” filter. *Right*: An image (which started as the unfiltered photograph on the left) that was edited with the Flickr app, using the “Lomo” filter.

Smartphones and the iPhone

In less than a decade, Apple has sold seven iPhone models whose operating systems and capabilities have changed technology, communication, business models, art, and popular culture—to the point that this time period seems several decades long, instead of only nine years. The iPhone changed the smartphone design and capabilities; before the first model of iPhone, smartphones were more voice and text oriented. The Oxford English Dictionary’s definition of *smartphone* provides, in itself, a micro history of the smartphone, when it explains that it is “Originally: any of various telephones enhanced with computer technology. Later chiefly: spec. a mobile phone capable of running general-purpose computer applications, now typically with a touch-screen interface and Internet access.”²⁹ Although the last part of the definition starts with “now,” the “touch-screen interface” was the main feature of “Simon,” a phone created in 1992 at

²⁹ "smartphone, n." OED Online. Oxford University Press, March 2015. Web. 10 April 2015.

IBM.”³⁰ One of the quotations used by the OED in its definition of “smartphone” is from *Computing* magazine, which notes that, “smartphones” are “mobile phones loaded with data communications software”; this is the main distinction between a cellular or mobile telephone and a smartphone: the use of software and exchange of data. Following the OED definition, the original, or old, smartphones would be the ones with limited access to the Internet and social media, as well as a physical keypad or keyboard (or both) and an array of apps for texting, playing music, and taking photographs; while the current or “later” smartphones are the ones based on the iPhone.

The old smartphones’ main types of communication were voice, texting, and email. They had multimedia features, such as music (mostly intended for creating ring tones), a limited audio recording system, and a small camera. The short message service (SMS), which are text messages with 140-characters or less, became available to the public in the mid 1990s; Neil Papworth sent the first text message on December 3, 1992, and the service became available a couple of years later.³¹ The camera was invented by Philippe Kahn in 1997, who added a point-and-shoot camera to a Motorola mobile phone.³² Thus, by the late 1990s, Nokia and other companies were selling smartphones that had an alphanumeric keypad for texting, a camera with limited sharing capabilities, and a few apps to connect to computers or the Internet. In general, the photographs were kept in the users’ phone, thus the images remained private or semiprivate. Since the camera was point-and-shoot, it did not include analog or digital zoom, flash, or

³⁰ “History of the First Touchscreen Phone.” SpinFold. <http://www.spinfold.com/first-touchscreen-phone/> Web. 10 April 2015.

³¹ “OMG, the text message turns 20. But has SMS peaked?” by Heather Kelly.

³² “Meet the Man Behind the Very First Camera Phone” Samantha Murphy Kelly. Mashable. <http://mashable.com/2012/03/06/philippe-kahn-camera-phone/#eA5oDqRuFqqV> Accessed 20 May 2015

autofocus. Besides the low lens quality, the weight of these devices did not allow users to keep the camera adequately focused and push the shutter button at the same time. The small and out-of-focus self-portraits were called “selfies,” although the word *selfie* became popular in 2013, when it was named the word of the year by Oxford Dictionaries.³³ The cost of data was high, and users were more focused on making calls and texting than sending photographs.

Ilpo Kalevi Koskinen studied how the Finnish used smartphones between 1999 and 2001. He published his findings in the book *Mobile Multimedia in Action*, in which he explains that people mainly used the camera to document their lives, and he concluded that those photos were very similar to the ones taken with a regular camera; in other words, people borrow some forms from regular photography (Koskinen 44-59). The smartphones used by the participants in Koskinen’s study were all made by Nokia, which in the Western hemisphere became the leading old smartphone of the turn of the century.

With what can be called a second generation of the old smartphone, the main type of communication is the written word. The main features are mail and text messaging, to keep the conversation going with co-workers and friends, thus the smartphone becomes similar to email software and services. These phones were similar to an analog calculator and had a small keyboard, and they were much easier to hold with both hands and operate with two thumbs. The governments of several countries and regions, large corporations, and private businesses used this type of phone to take their work with them out of the office, with the idea to increase productivity. The apps included a calendar, an agenda, email, and SMS texting, but were mostly business-oriented utilities. Since the most common use of the smartphone was for textual

³³ “The Oxford Dictionaries Word of the Year 2013 is...selfie” <http://blog.oxforddictionaries.com/2013/11/word-of-the-year-2013-winner/> Accessed 18 November 2013.

communication, and there were no social media networks, the camera was not as popular; besides, it was still cheaper to communicate by text than by sending and receiving images. Users had the option to email the images, then print them from the computer. In the early 2000s, the most popular smartphone in North America was the BlackBerry, a device that was launched in Germany in 1999, by a Canadian company called RIM—which later changed its name to BlackBerry.

In the Western regions, Nokia and BlackBerry competed for most markets during the first decade of the twenty-first century, while Japanese and South Korean telecommunication companies created their own smartphones and sold them in Asia. The multimedia message service allowed users to send text and images, but in North America it was usually slow and expensive. Hoi Wan explains that the first commercially available camera phone, released in Japan, was the Sharp's J-SH04 phone, which produced a 0.1 MP image.³⁴ It seems that Wan does not include the multimedia, old smartphones that Nokia sold in Finland since 1999.

The newest or latest smartphone started with the first iPhone model in 2007, and it was equivalent to having a minicomputer with access to voice and video calls, email, SMS texting, social media, and the entire Internet. It had a touchscreen and was loaded with software applications, or “apps.” Several apps are skeuomorphs, which the OED defines as, “[a]n ornament or ornamental design on an artefact resulting from the nature of the material used or the method of working it;” or “[a]n object or feature copying the design of a similar artefact in another material.”³⁵ iPhone apps’ skeuomorphic feel and design resulted in an easy and quick

³⁴ “Evolution of the Cameraphone: From Sharp J-SH04 to Nokia 808 Pureview” Hoi Wan. Hoists.net <http://www.hoista.net/post/18437919296/evolution-of-the-cameraphone-from-sharp-j-sh04-to> Accessed 20 May 2015.

³⁵ "skeuomorph, n." OED Online. Oxford University Press, September 2015. Web. 4 December 2015.

human-computer haptic interaction. The haptic experience changed because users had to tap a virtual button that appeared and disappeared, depending on the screen, instead of pushing a physical button. It had only five physical buttons: on-off, volume up, volume down, ring tone off-on, and home, which is the round button right below the screen. It also had a microphone, speakers, and sensors. The device itself rapidly replaced several skeuomorphed tools—watch, calculator, calendar, GPS (Global Positioning System), radio, audio recorders, game devices, and compass, among others. Social-media outlets and apps became more popular than texting from one phone to another; instead, users were able to text small and large groups at the same time, and also post to social media apps and web sites. Thanks to social media, photography and video became as important as text. The “old new” smartphones are still in use; they connect to the Internet via the wireless companies’ networks or via Wi-Fi; they have more memory, and a larger screen than smartphones from previous generations. All of these characteristics, plus the lower price of data for consumers, translates into a larger consumption and exchange of games, videos, news, and photographs. The nostalgic-looking photographs started with this smartphone. It became a habit to take, edit, and share photographs daily. Apple has never dominated the market in the same way that Nokia and BlackBerry did before, because there are many companies that produce similar smartphones and because the iPhone is expensive.

The first two iPhone models came with a camera but did not have digital zoom, flash, or editing tools; they also lacked video recording capabilities. The third iPhone model came with the tools the first models lacked; it was also much easier to share photographs via text or email, or to upload photographs to web sites and social media. It did not take a long time for the new smartphone to replace point-and-shoot and low-budget amateur cameras, video camcorders, and even photography-printing businesses. In fact, the competition with analog and digital cameras

had already started with the old smartphone. In April of 2010, the science and technology section of *The Economist* reported that more than one billion people had a cellular phone with a camera,³⁶ while several articles described the demise of the point-and-shoot cameras.

The new smartphone started with Apple's iPhone, and soon after, other companies released their own versions of the device; a group of companies that included Google, Sony, HTC, Sprint, and Samsung attempted to create standards for smartphones and developed the operating system called "Android" in late 2007. Samsung, LG, HTC, Sony, and other companies have used the Android system to compete with the iPhone since 2008.

The newer or latest smartphone models, aside from having all the features of the "old new" smartphones, add two new ways of communication: the user's voice and body. This generation began in 2011 with the iPhone 4s, in which the innovation was Siri, a virtual personal assistant that works with the user's simple voice commands. Siri opens and closes apps, searches the Internet for information, answers sarcastically to silly or complicated questions, and finds out who sings or plays songs on the radio, movies, or television. Android and Windows-based smartphones also have personal-assistant apps. Our body is capable of producing data and now smartphones have the ability to collect that data and send it to friends and family, or social media, if we choose that option. In 2013, iPhone 5 users had the option to connect their iPhone to third-party wearable devices that allowed them to track their heart rate, sleep patterns, steps, and calories burned throughout the day. A few of those wearables are Fitbit, Nike Fuel, and Jawbone. In 2014, Apple announced that its Apple Watch—which is basically an iPhone in the form of a watch—in addition to doing almost everything the iPhone does, also checks blood pressure, heart rate, body temperature, and respiratory rate; plus, it records and analyzes sleep patterns, steps,

³⁶ <http://www.economist.com/node/15865270>

and stairs taken during the day, and it calculates calories burned while resting or exercising. Apple Watch works as a regular watch and looks like an analog or digital timepiece; it connects to the iPhone and other Apple devices. Although it may replace a few wearables, the Apple Watch and other smartwatches on the market have not developed the same cult following as the iPhone or the Samsung Galaxy, for example. The smartphone and the smartwatch may also send all of its user's biological information to a health care provider. Tim Cook—Apple's current CEO—explained, during the event that launched the Apple Watch, that with this device, "If I want to, I can send my heart to a friend."³⁷ What he meant was that a person wearing an Apple Watch can send an animation of their heart—based on the collected data—to a friend, wherever that friend is, close by or far away. What started with just the voice commands for Siri has evolved into collecting and sharing data produced by our bodies; this is data that we cannot change in the same way we change a sentence or the color of a photograph. Meanwhile, the camera quality has improved to the point that smartphone photography can be used with microscopes and telescopes, and it has become the main source of images for professionals, such as surgeons, engineers, and professors, as well as artists. As of December of 2015, Flickr's statistics show that there are more photographs taken with the iPhone 5 and 6 models than with any other iPhone, smartphone, or digital camera³⁸ (Figure 1.5).

³⁷ Apple Live Event from September of 2014.

³⁸ "Camera Finder: Most Popular Brands." Flickr. <https://www.flickr.com/cameras>. Accessed 1 December 2015

Camera Brands used in the Flickr Community

| Rank | Brand | Top Models | Model Types | # of Models |
|------|-----------|--|--|-------------|
| 1 | Apple | iPhone 6, iPhone 5s, iPhone 6 Plus | Cameraphone, Point and Shoot | 23 |
| 2 | Samsung | Galaxy S5, Galaxy S4, Galaxy S6 | Cameraphone, Digital SLR, Mirrorless Camera, Point and Shoot, Video Camera | 276 |
| 3 | Canon | EOS 5D Mark III, EOS 5D Mark II, EOS REBEL T3i | Digital SLR, Mirrorless Camera, Point and Shoot, Video Camera | 256 |
| 4 | Nikon | D7000, D3200, D7100 | Digital SLR, Mirrorless Camera, Point and Shoot | 205 |
| 5 | Sony | Xperia Z3, Xperia Z2, Xperia Z1 | Cameraphone, Digital SLR, Mirrorless Camera, Point and Shoot, Video Camera | 346 |
| 6 | Motorola | Moto G, Moto X, Moto G2 | Cameraphone | 31 |
| 7 | HTC | One, One M8, One M9 | Cameraphone | 91 |
| 8 | LG | G3, G4, G2 | Cameraphone | 26 |
| 9 | Panasonic | DMC-FZ200, DMC-GX7, DMC-TZ5 | Digital SLR, Mirrorless Camera, Point and Shoot, Video Camera | 177 |
| 10 | Olympus | E-M5, E-M1, E-M10 | Digital SLR, Mirrorless Camera, Point and Shoot | 180 |

Figure 1.5: Screenshot of the Camera Finder section of Flickr.com.

The iPhone, which has significantly changed through seven models, is still a touchscreen phone, loaded with data and apps. A simple definition of *smartphone* in this project is “a hand-held, touchscreen computer that runs stand-alone apps, connects to other computers via the Internet, has cameras and sensors, and may make video and phone calls; some apps are skeuomorphic because they work and resemble analog tools.”

The iPhone Camera

Apple’s CEO, Steve Jobs, announced the iPhone in January of 2007,³⁹ and the company made it available in June of that year. The *New York Times*’ main article on the new smartphone did not mention the camera, perhaps because it was not the most outstanding feature. At the time, it seemed that the most important innovation was that this phone was able to run the same operating system that the desktop and laptop Mac computers were running. David Progue wrote on his *New York Times* blog, *Bits*, the following description of the camera:

³⁹ John Markoff, “New Mobile Phone Signals Apple’s Ambition,” *New York Times*, Jan. 9, 2007, <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/01/09/technology/09cnd-iphone.html#>.

The front is glossy black; the back is brushed silver. There's not much on the front but a 3.5-inch touch screen with incredibly high resolution—160 pixels per inch (320 by 480)—and not much on the brushed-silver back except a two-megapixel camera lens. (Only the Apple logo is mirror finish; it doubles as the self-portrait mirror.)⁴⁰

The same year, Progue wrote *iPhone: The Missing Manual*, a book on how to use the iPhone.

Progue dedicated a chapter to the camera: “[T]his is a short chapter on a short subject: the iPhone’s ability to display photos copied over from your computer, and to take new pictures with its built-in camera.” After describing the size of the images, “1600-by-1200-pixel,” Progue then commented that the rendered images looked like they came from a “dedicated camera,” but when shooting “moving subjects or in low light, it’s pretty obvious that you used a cameraphone [*sic*].” Progue’s caption for a vacation photo album stated that this camera was better than having no camera at all.⁴¹ At the end of the chapter, Progue lamented the impossibility of taking a self-portrait. With the popularity of social media and the compulsive necessity to add profile portraits, iPhone and other smartphone users found a very popular solution for the problem of not looking at oneself while taking a self-portrait: the self-portrait in front of a mirror, usually in a bathroom. The weight and size of the phone, plus the fact that a tap moves the apparatus less than pushing a physical button, made it much easier to take a selfie with the iPhone and similar smartphones.

A year after Jobs presented the prototype, Ellen Lee from the *San Francisco Gate* wrote about the most important “fixes” that the phone needed, and pointed out that the tiny camera needed the following:

⁴⁰ Accessed November 30, 2013 - <http://bits.blogs.nytimes.com/2007/01/09/the-iphone-rumors-are-rightfinally/>

⁴¹ Online version. Accessed November 30, 2013.
http://proquest.safaribooksonline.com/book/hardware-and-gadgets/9780596513740/photos-and-camera/photos_and_camera?unicode=vacom

Apple could also integrate video recording to the iPhone. And just as all of Apple's current Macintosh computers come equipped with a tiny camera at the top of the screen, Apple could move the iPhone's camera lens from the back of the device to the front so that users can video conference.⁴²

The company has made those changes over the years. Instead of one camera on the back, the iPhone 4 came with two lenses, the original camera plus one more on the front. The iPhone 4 was launched in 2010; however, it became available in 2011. By 2013, the iPhone 5 and iPhone 5c had a back camera with the capability to take 8-megapixel photos, while the smaller front camera captured 1.2-megapixel images.⁴³ In September of 2014, Apple introduced the iPhone 6 and iPhone 6 plus. Both models shoot 8-megapixel images with the front and back cameras. The FaceTime camera—also known as the front camera—captures up to ten images per second, has a timer, face-recognition, and a feature that Apple calls, “Focus Pixels,” which makes the autofocus and image preview faster than in previous iPhone models. The iPhone 7 (2016) increased the pixels to 12 mega-pixels for the front camera. All these changes have resulted in (a) Apple proclaiming the iPhone as “the world’s most popular camera,”⁴⁴ (b) the large amount of camera apps that mimic all types of analog and digital cameras, and (c) the popularity of the self-portrait or selfie genre. The word *selfie* became the word of the year in 2013, according to the Oxford English Dictionary,⁴⁵ and its definition is related to the use of smartphones: “a

⁴² Accessed November 30, 2013 - <http://www.sfgate.com/default/article/Jobs-expected-to-ring-in-Apple-s-new-iPhone-3211148.php>

⁴³ Apple, accessed November 30, 2013 - <http://www.apple.com/iphone/compare/>

⁴⁴ Apple's iPhone 6 site. Accessed October 2014. <https://www.apple.com/iphone-6/>

⁴⁵ One of the reasons for the OED to choose *selfie* as word of the year was that its use increased by more than 17,000% from October of 2012 to October of 2013. The official announcement for the Word of the year <http://blog.oxforddictionaries.com/2013/11/word-of-the-year-2013-winner/>. The OED blog depicts the importance of *selfie* with a pair of graphics: <http://blog.oxforddictionaries.com/2013/11/an-infographic-of-selfie/> Both pages accessed on November 30, 2013.

photograph that one has taken of oneself, typically taken with a smartphone or webcam and uploaded to a social media website.” Even though the camera has evolved and the selfie seems to be the most popular theme of iPhoneography, the nostalgic feeling image has not disappeared from social media.

The iPhone camera only has a virtual zoom that can be manipulated either with the volume buttons or with two fingers directly on the live screen. Other smartphones have better lenses and image resolution. Several companies sell add-on lenses and filters that can be attached to the smartphone and manipulate it—similarly to a 50mm lens, for instance. Through the wire that connects the phone to the computer, it is possible to take photographs with the iPhone and use the computer as a monitor.

As of 2016, the most popular model, the iPhone 6s, has the iSight camera—the back camera known as the default camera—which has three distinct characteristics: it takes 12-megapixel (12 MP) photographs and has Focus Pixels, which stabilizes the image; it captures 8-million-pixel video, called “4K,” and has a 3840x2160 resolution, instead of HD’s 1920x1080; plus, it has “Live Photos,” which are still photos with video.

It seems that Live Photos is, in fact, video, whose preview is a still photograph. Apple’s description—and advertising—explains this feature in this way:

A still photo captures an instant frozen in time. With Live Photos, you can turn those instants into unforgettable living memories. At the heart of a Live Photo is a beautiful 12-megapixel photo. But together with that photo are the moments just before and after it was taken, captured with movement and sound. You can bring those moments to life anytime simply by pressing anywhere on the photo.⁴⁶

It is very likely that other companies offer the same or even better technologies than Live Photos and 4K video, but they market it with a different name.

⁴⁶ Apple iPhone 6s “Cameras” <http://www.apple.com/iphone-6s/cameras/> Accessed on November 2015.

Nostalgic Camera Apps

The beginning of nostalgic apps and nostalgic iPhoneography can be traced to 2008 when the second model of the iPhone was released. In 2007, all the apps used by the iPhone were made by Apple, but by 2008 third-party companies and individual developers who paid a fee and followed the iPhone design rules were able to create apps and sell them at the App Store.⁴⁷ Starting on July 14, 2008, more than 500 free and paid apps were available for iPhone users. A search of the all the previous versions of an app at the App Store—via the iTunes software—provides enough information to find out when the app was launched, its original description and logo, and information regarding the developer or developers. After a comprehensive search of all the previous versions of more than two dozen apps, I was able to find a few common characteristics of the first camera apps published between 2008 and 2009. There were apps that mimicked digital cameras, others mimicked old cameras, a few were novelties or suggested a future look of the image, and there were apps that had the intention of making the user laugh by distorting the photographs. A few developers focused on producing as many types of camera apps as possible; one of those developers was Takayuki Fukatsu, who began selling a nostalgic camera and a futuristic camera.

According to the order of apps by the date they were released at the App Store, Takayuki Fukatsu produced ToyCamera in August of 2008, which can be considered the first nostalgic app (Figure 1.6). ToyCamera had only a few features, since at this point the iPhone camera did not have a zoom and the focus was not easy to manipulate. Fukatsu's app took photos using the iPhone default camera, and then added random features; among them were the usual lomo or toy-camera styles, vignette, sepia tone, and black and white. A month later, Fukatsu released what he

⁴⁷ Apple's press release from July 10, 2008. Accessed November 30, 2013 - <http://www.apple.com/pr/library/2008/07/10iPhone-3G-on-Sale-Tomorrow.html>

called “a limited version of ToyCamera.”⁴⁸ The new version of the app was named OldCamera, and it rendered monochromatic black and white images and added a few random old styles. Takayuki Fukatsu also launched LiquidPics, an app that allowed the user to morph a regular photograph into an image that seems to be swimming in a dense solution. While the first two apps are listed under the “Photo and Video” category at the App Store, the latter is classified as “Entertainment.” In January of 2009, other options for ToyCamera and OldCamera were added, among them the square format, low and high saturation, yellow and green tones, and the capability to share the photo on Twitter. The following images (Figure 1.6-1.8) were taken with these three apps.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ This is the app’s description provided by Fukatsu. The App Store provides the early version of most current apps with their original descriptions, logos, and images produced by the apps. ToyCamera & Old Camera. App Store. <http://blog.artandmobile.com> Accessed January 2013.

⁴⁹ Note: the developer calls them “Toy Camera” and “Old Camera,” while the App Store’s names are ToyCamera and OldCamera, respectively.

Toy Camera

Wednesday, October 22nd, 2008



Figure 1.6: Toy Camera app interface and photograph. *Left:* Screenshot of the Toy Camera app interface, taken from Fukatsu's blog, <http://blog.artandmobile.com>, accessed January 2013. The entry is from October 2008. *Right:* Rich black and white photo of a toy camera taken with the OldCamera app. This is a medium format Diana, a toy camera sold by the Lomography company

Old Camera

Wednesday, October 22nd, 2008



Figure 1.7: Old Camera app interface and photograph. *Left*: Screenshot from Fukatsu's blog: the interface of the app Old Camera, from <http://blog.artandmobile.com>, accessed January 2013. The entry is from October 2008. *Right*: Saturated photo of a toy camera taken with the ToyCamera app. This is a medium format Diana toy camera sold by the Lomography company. This is the same camera depicted in Figure 1.6.

LiquidPics

Wednesday, October 22nd, 2008

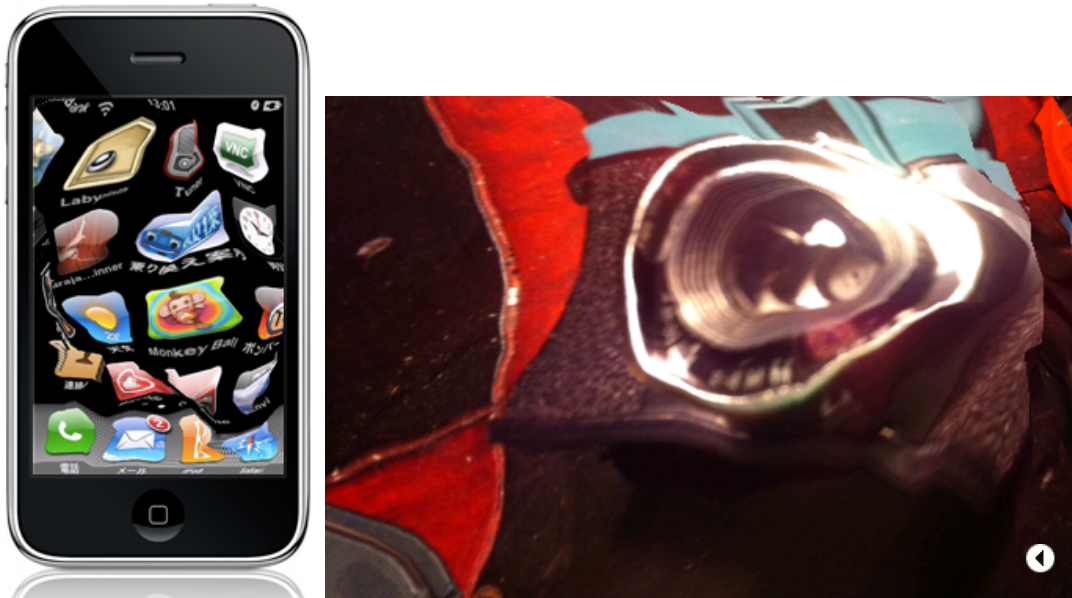


Figure 1.8: LiquidPics app interface and photograph. *Left*: Screenshot of the LiquidPics app interface, taken from Fukatsu's blog, <http://blog.artandmobile.com>, accessed January 2013. The entry is from October 2008. *Right*: Image produced with the LiquidPics app. This original is the same image from Figure 1.6.

In 2009, more apps mimicking analog toy cameras were released; among them were Vignetting Camera, ClassicToy, ClassicPan, and Hipstamatic to name a few. Vignetting Camera was an homage to old and dark images; the developer, iShakeapps.com, subtitled this app “Photo Aging Filters.”⁵⁰ ClassicToy and ClassicPan shared some of the features with ToyCamera: randomness and no way to manipulate photos before taking them. In other words, the app edited the photo with a random filter. In October of 2009, Hipstamatic was launched, and it used the same features as the other apps: saturated and low saturation, square format, styles added at random (before taking the photograph), and, more importantly, Hipstamatic focused on the experience of shooting with analog, small, cheap toy cameras. Thus, by the end of 2009, there was a category of camera apps that may be classified as “toy cameras,” and their style was

⁵⁰ iShakeapps.com's catalog of apps at the App Store. Accessed January of 2013.

supposed to mimic hundreds of real small analog cameras, film, lenses, paper, frames, and developing processes that no longer exist. Basically, the app developers compared the limitations of the iPhone to those of the Kodak disposable cameras from the 1880s or 1930s, the 1960s Polaroid, and the 1970s and 1980s plastic cameras. Hipstamatic became the most popular camera and toy-camera app at the App Store until Instagram was released in October of 2010. Instagram was a toy-camera app capable of processing photos taken with other apps; in addition, it had a sharing platform that allowed iPhone users to post their photos inside the Instagram social network and, at the same time, to add them to other networks, such as Facebook. Users were able to see their photos in their phone only or, by sharing them on Facebook, they were able to appreciate and interact with their photos from a computer. The old-time-style image became even more popular when Facebook bought Instagram for a billion dollars in 2012.

What makes the images look or feel nostalgic? Is it the analog-like gear (the app) that produces them, the colors and visual aesthetic, or the way we pose? These are no longer Kodak, Polaroid, or Leica cameras; Kodak, Fuji, or Agfa film or paper; or the pages of physical albums. This is just data that renders images we cannot touch, smell, or tear up. Since the App Store rejects apps that may infringe on copyright laws, developers cannot name an app after Kodak or Polaroid, unless the eponymous corporations approve the apps. In 2010, there were dozens of apps that used existing brand names of old photography companies, and other apps resembled Kodak, Polaroid, and other cameras—either in design or name—however, most of those apps either changed their name or disappeared from the App Store.

The consensus is that Kodak taught Americans how to use cameras and take photos, what to include in the photo, in which occasions they had to capture the images, how to save the photos, and how to share and pass them onto other generations. The arrival of digital

photography and the January 2012 bankruptcy of Kodak have produced seminal studies focused on Kodak as a company, its founder George Eastman, the advertising campaigns used by the company, and the images of the American individual as well as the image of the American family promoted in those campaigns. Among those studies are Richard Chalfen's *Snapshot Versions of Life*, which dedicates a chapter to the "Kodak Life," and *Kodak and the Lens of Nostalgia* by Nancy Martha West; Marianne Hirsch's *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative, and Postmemory* deals with the images (poses, places, the gaze, people) of family and family members, and how those images generate narratives and identity. Amateur photography magazines since the beginning of the twentieth century, such as *The Camera*, used to run articles on how to buy cameras, how to take photographs (of snow or cats, etc.), how to take care of negatives, and how to print photographs. Other companies and their cameras, such as the Polaroid, also form part of the history of family and social photography in this country. Perhaps app developers are only following the parameters established by Kodak, Polaroid, and photography magazines. Maybe people use Hipstamatic and Instagram because the apps resemble more the old cameras and images than the new ones that anybody can snap. It is possible to paraphrase Koskinen's findings from his study in Finland and state that people tend to produce, share, and like images similar to the ones they already know, while app developers produce what they believe people will recognize and consume.

How can users find nostalgic camera apps? The App Store does not classify photo and video apps as "nostalgic," "vintage," or "retro." Users need to search for these types of apps at the App Store, in magazines, on websites, and by word of mouth. The App Store and every consumer publication have attempted to classify photography and video apps. "Free" and "Paid," "new" and "popular" arrange most lists. The App Store chooses to present the new apps or the

new versions of old apps first. It seems that since December of 2013 there have been three groups of apps at the App Store: “Essentials”—where the user can find Instagram, Snapseed, iMovie, and other apps considered important by Apple—“Animation” and “Pictures in Motion.” There are also three popularity lists: “Top Paid,” “Top Free,” and “Top Grossing.” The more positive reviews an app receives from its users, the more publicity it receives; this makes it likely to be part of one of the lists, or the “Best New Apps,” or any other seasonal section the App Store may create. *iPhone Life* magazine and general photography magazines, such as *PC Magazine* and *Digital Photography*, include sections on iPhone and Android photography apps. These magazines usually mention the most popular apps at the App Store or apps that they consider artistic, funny, easy to use, or worthy enough to use at least once. These magazines do not have a specific section for nostalgic apps.

Dozens of popular manuals on iPhoneography have been published since 2008; the authors usually list the essential apps for a particular camera effect or the essential artistic apps. In general, those books also include well-known professional photographers and their favorite apps as a way to legitimate the merits of those apps.

There are three popular independent websites dedicated entirely to iPhone camera apps: iPhoneography.com, LifeInLofi.com, and TheAppWhisperer.com. Since they need to appeal to every iPhone camera user—new, casual, and professional—they mostly describe the interactive quality and easiness of the app, the quality of the rendered images (which, explicitly or not, are always compared to digital images taken with a Nikon or Canon camera), the price of the app, and its compatibility with several versions of the iPhone. The founders are Glyn Evans (iPhoneography.com), Joanne Carter (TheAppWhisperer.com), and Marty Yawnick (LifeInLofi.com). Evans and Carter are from the United Kingdom and Yawnick from Fort

Worth, Texas. Evans writes from the point of view of an individual who worked developing analog photographs as a young man and as a co-developer of one of the first toy-camera apps, Format126. In contrast, Yawnick writes from the point of view of a graphic-design expert on Photoshop. Carter, whose website and social media company have more writers and contributors, describes herself on her site as a “Professional Photographer and Associate of the British Industry of Professional Photographers, BIPP, as well as a Professional Journalist, specializing in Photography.” The description also points out that, “Joanne is also a Columnist for Vogue Magazine and is Contributing Editor to LensCulture.”⁵¹

According to the iPhoneography.com blog, Glyn Evans coined the term iPhoneography and, in my opinion, this blog contributed to the early popularity of the terms “iPhoneography” and “iPhoneographers.” Evans stopped writing his blog in November of 2013. In September of 2016, the blog reported that Evans will relaunch the blog soon.⁵²

After reading Evans and Yawnick at least once a week for more than four years and Carter’s site and Facebook posts for two, I am able to say that, for Evans, the most valuable apps are the ones that render high-quality black and white photography; he is more concerned about artistic images. For Yawnick, color photographs that may be used in a magazine or advertising seem to be the most valuable ones, while, for Carter and her writers, both types of images are

⁵¹ “Profile.” n.d. <http://theappwhisperer.com/profile/> Accessed 10 April 2015.

⁵² The entry from August of 2016 partially reads, “In November 2008 Glyn Evans from the Southwest of England took two words, ‘iPhone’ and ‘Photography,’ fused them together and formed ‘iPhoneography.’ Glyn then launched ‘The iPhoneography Blog’ to share his passion for shooting, editing and sharing the moments he captured with his iPhone, and thanks to the many who adopted the term, ‘iPhoneography’ became a #tag, eventually finding its place as a sub genre of photography [much as Lomography has].”

“In November 2013, and after an enjoyable and successful 5 years, Glyn decided to step back from the community he helped form, and take some time out.” <http://www.iphoneography.com/> Accessed 15 September 2016.

valid; plus, they tend to highlight images that mimic art. All of the sites publish lists of apps that produce images with a particular effect, provide information on exhibition and publication opportunities, promote contests, give away codes for free app downloads, let the public know when certain apps are on sale or free, announce when the apps that they consider most popular or important will have an update, and provide general iPhoneography information. They also curate virtual galleries—groups—on Flickr and other platforms. There are other blogs, Facebook pages and groups, and websites that offer camera-app tutorials and reviews, but in general, I consider iPhoneography.com and LifeInLofi.com to be the pioneers, and TheAppWhisperer the best of all. Once in a while, these blogs write on one particular effect or type of app, or they classify apps by features, but none of them have provided a history of nostalgic camera apps.

The following section describes what I consider nostalgic camera apps. Although the list of characteristics seems very short, it may be applied not only to nostalgic iPhone camera apps, but also to other types of camera apps and other smartphones. These characteristics—the name of the app, the app’s logo and its visual appearance, the developer’s app description, and the app’s behavior—are based on my own observations and use of nearly one thousand camera apps, plus the reading of descriptions and reviews of three thousand or more apps.

Characteristics of Nostalgic Camera Apps

1. The name. The app’s name refers to an old camera, or the app offers different cameras, film, filters, frames, developing processes, and styles that mimic something old. For example, the apps Polaroid Instant and Polamatic make homage to Polaroid. There were several camera apps, Polarize for instance, that tried to use the Polaroid name and its likeness, but they disappeared from the App Store around 2011, most likely due to copyright issues. ClassicToy pretends to be an old toy camera, while FILMLAB includes a rich list of film brands, dozens of

them in sepia tone for example. Although FILMLAB included dozens of “films” with brand names, it was a very good tool to learn about film; what other apps call “filters,” this one called them “film” (Figure 1.9).



Figure 1.9: Nostalgic-camera app icons. *Clockwise, from top-left:* Polaroid Instant, FILM LAB, Polamatic, and ClassicToy.

2. The logo and appearance of the app. The icon on the screen usually represents the front of the camera. When the user interacts with the icon by tapping on it, the app opens and shows the logo of the camera, which sometimes has also a motto. For example, the Vintage Scene app’s slogan reads “Take a photo back in time with age and fade” (Figure 1.10). There is also a photo or a drawing of an old camera or an old photo; for example, the Lo-Mob app has a

drawing of a camera that perhaps never existed, while Polamatic has a photo of a Polaroid camera.



Figure 1.10: Icons and interface of nostalgic-camera apps. *Top*: Vintage Scene app. *Bottom*: Lo-Mob app. Screenshots taken in September 2014.

3. The developer’s description of the app. This description is provided by the developer or the company that promotes the app, and it points out that the product renders nostalgic, retro, old-time, or old photos. Also, the instructions and names used by the developers refer to old or

analog tools. Figure 1.11 shows the Retro Camera’s App Store description; in this version, the app included five different analog cameras that were “inspired by Lomo, Holga, Polaroid, Diana and toy cameras.”

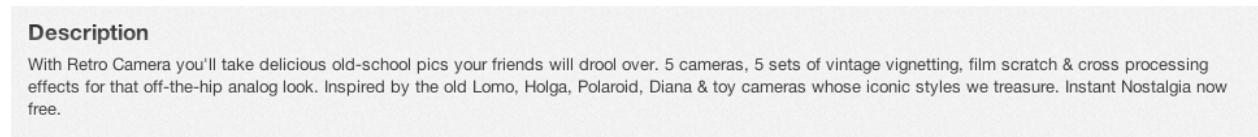


Figure 1.11: Screen shot of the Description of Retro Camera at the App Store, from September 2014. It reads, “With Retro Camera you’ll take delicious old-school pics your friends will drool over. 5 cameras, 5 sets of vintage vignetting, film scratch & cross processing effects for that off-the-hip analog look. Inspired by the old Lomo, Holga, Polaroid, Diana & toy cameras whose iconic styles we treasure. Instant Nostalgia now free.”

4. The app itself “behaves” like an old camera. This interactive design usually includes animation that makes the camera rotate to show the front and back of the camera, and it allows the user to “open and insert a roll of film” or “change” filters, flashes, and other settings (Figure 1.12). Hipstamatic, ClassicToy, and ClassicPAN were among the first apps to redesign themselves as more interactive apps. The cameras that describe themselves as toys generally allow the user to save both the original image and the nostalgic image.



Figure 1.12: Apps that behave like an old camera. *Left:* Vintage Camera’s front. *Right:* ClassicToy’s back, which shows the “film” as well buttons for the flash and the viewfinder.

Every time there is a new operating system or a new iPhone model, developers need to update their apps, otherwise those apps do not run properly in newer phone models and, eventually, they stop working. Also, if they’re not updated for important changes, the App Store erases the apps. Sometimes developers change the interface or the behavior, add new features, or sell add-ons from inside the app, a practice known as “in-app purchase.” In some cases, the new update redesigns the app’s logo or name. The most drastic change with toy-camera apps occurred in 2012 with the iPhone 4, which had the second camera, although Hipstamatic did not change its design to include it, most likely following the logic that it was an skeuomorphic design of a cheap, plastic toy camera.⁵³

Table 1 describes three nostalgic camera apps as they worked from late 2013 to the beginning of 2014.

⁵³ Later in this chapter, I explain that Hipstamatic’s update of September 2015 embraced a more professional camera design.

Table 1: Three nostalgic camera apps, 2013-2014.

| Characteristics / Name of the app | Name of simulated camera | Logo / Body | Description by developers | Interactive Behavior |
|-----------------------------------|--|------------------------------|---|---|
| Hipstamatic | Hipstamatic 100 (which never existed) | Resembles a plastic camera | It promises that, “Digital photography never looked so analog.” | It does not allow the user to choose how the final image will look. The resulting images will be a surprise. |
| Polamatic | Polaroid | Mimics a 70s Polaroid | It “brings back the instant nostalgia of Polaroid pictures.” | The user may see the front and back of the camera. However, the animation is more important when “developing” or showing the final image. |
| Vintage Camera | A generic camera from the 1950s or 1960s | A tiny Leica (German camera) | Its slogan reads, “Add a Retro Style to your Photos!” | The image mimics the drawing of an old camera advertised on a catalog or manual. |

The first four characteristics correspond to apps in general, because the name and description of the app, for instance, are how an iPhone user may find these apps on the App Store. There are hundreds of apps that produce nostalgic images without having any of the above characteristics written on the description provided at the App Store; this means that photographers need to use the apps or learn about them in order to find out what images those apps produce; a few examples are Pro HDR, CameraBag, CameraBag 2, 645 PRO, and Adobe Photoshop Express. Similarly, the graphic editor software Photoshop does not describe itself as a tool to produce nostalgic images; however, it does include options that convert crispy, flawless images into old style photographs.

The nostalgic apps are easy to spot, but when we see images online or in print, how do we know they were produced or edited with an iPhone camera or a nostalgic-camera app? First, it is critical to mention that every time Apple updates the iPhone and its operating system, the

camera changes, in part because the camera is used by several types of apps, even if the app is not primarily a photography app. A few examples of non-photography apps that need the camera are Facebook, Google, and all social networks, email, code readers, and any app that needs the iPhone user's profile photograph. The newer iPhone models produce images of higher pixel quality, which makes it more difficult for the viewer to distinguish the images produced with an iPhone from those produced with digital cameras and altered with Photoshop.

Characteristics of Nostalgic Images

The next section presents a list of characteristics that, in my opinion, describe the images produced with iPhone camera apps. The same characteristics may be applied to images produced with other smartphones that use similar or the same apps that were made for iPhone.

Nostalgic camera app images mimic low quality in several ways:

a. The format used by the app. The square is perhaps the most popular format produced by nostalgic cameras. On Hipstamatic, Instagram, and other famous camera and photo sharing apps, the only format for years was the square. With the launching of iOS 9 in September of 2015, Hipstamatic and Instagram allowed users to take and share non-square images. Another format is panoramic, known also as pan or pano; ClassicPan is one of the oldest apps that uses this format. The iPhone operation system update of September-October 2013 allows the native iPhone camera to shoot square and panoramic photos as well.

b. Color. Antique or nostalgic camera apps use black and white and sepia, besides the tones that mimic colorized (colored by hand) or faded instant photographs from the 1960s or 1970s.

c. Focus and light. In order to mimic plastic and toy cameras, some apps render images with sections that are out of focus. They also show randomly leaked light, originated by the

brand of the camera, flash, filter, or film that the app mimics. In some apps, the rendered photographs show dark spots or blobs of darker or brighter colors.

d. Vignette. The corners are either dark (vignette) or look as if they have been torn “over the years.”

e. Printed frame. This is the frame that results from printing the photo on the paper. One or more sides of the photograph reminds the spectator of the film itself—sometimes the sprocket holes of the 35mm film shows on two sides, or the Polaroid paper frames the image. Some apps provide a simple one-color frame (white, black, sepia), and some have numbers or numbers and letters. The white or sepia margin around the photo may be included here as well; this margin was already recommended by *The Camera* magazine in 1901, because it “will often brighten up an otherwise uselessly flat photograph used in conjunction with a carbon black mount”;⁵⁴ in my opinion, this margin helps iPhone photographs look more reminiscent of a certain era and less flat.

f. The texture. The texture often alludes to the paper that was supposedly used to print the image; the texture adds wrinkles or decay in random areas.

g. The “physical” frame. It looks as if the image was already physically framed with wood, metal, or tape; however, the style resembles Art Nouveau (includes flowers and vines), Art Deco (straight lines and sometimes small geometric figures), or it simply imitates the frames used by museums to present late-1800 or early-1900 paintings. Pinhole HD includes three frames, black, white, and tape.

⁵⁴ M. McBean Johnstone, “Un Unconventional Talk on the Print,” *Camera* 5, no. 1 (1901): 1, accessed 1 Dec 2015, <https://books.google.com/books?id=MjEyAQAAMAAJ&vq=margin&pg=PA4#v=snippet&q=margin&f=false> .

h. Other characteristics. This may include the way the eyes are rendered in portraits, the mimicking of old Japanese photographs or drawings, and details that pretend to correspond to famous photographs or photographers' styles. The French company JixiPix Software sells several apps for Apple and Android phones that add painting styles to photographs; some of JixiPix apps are Moku Hanga and Artista Haiku, which add texture and a sense of old photographs that were finished by adding color or texture.⁵⁵

The following are four examples of nostalgic-looking photos and how they can be described according to the characteristic provided above. Not all the characteristics need to be present in an image to consider it nostalgic.

This first image (Figure 1.13) is a square; the colors are faded and unclear; the subject seems to be out of focus and there is added light around the eyes; each corner looks rounded and forms a vignette; the edges form a very thin, black line; and the texture adds random black spots, especially on the edges, to provide the illusion of a photo printed on a metal surface, or an old photo that has been exposed to dust or water. The main objective of the filters used in this image is to mimic portraits taken with medium-format cameras that needed several minutes to capture an image. In this case, the user may choose the filters, but not the place of the black spots or the extra yellowish light.

⁵⁵ JixiPix mobile apps. <http://jixipix.com/mobile/apps.html>



Figure 1.13: Photo 1: Self-portrait or selfie. Taken with Hipstamatic. No retouching. 2013.

The format of the second image (Figure 1.14) is panoramic. In fact, “pan” or “panoramic” are two popular formats that are usually supported by photo-sharing systems that compete with Instagram, which started accepting a landscape format in 2015.⁵⁶ The sepia and black tones make it difficult to guess the date of this photo; it seems that the building on the right is out of focus and that the Red Cross building is not straight; the trees on the edges of each side provide a small vignette on the bottom corners, but in general the image is not framed by textures, shadows, numbers, or any other random “damages” introduced by the camera app. The “paper” feels as smooth as if this image had been well protected from light, dust, water damage, and other elements.

⁵⁶ Instagram blog. “Thinking Outside the Square: Support for Landscape and Portrait Formats on Instagram” Accessed August 28, 2015. <http://blog.instagram.com/post/127722429412/150827-portrait-and-landscape>



Figure 1.14: Photo 2: The Red Cross Building in Washington, DC. Taken with Pudding Camera, edited with Flickr app. 2013.

The format of the third image (Figure 1.15) suggests a 5 x 7 inch paper photo; the rich black, large out-of-focus areas, and the vignette are the most important characteristics of this image. The excessive shadows and texture provide a frame and the illusion that this image may have been restored from an old medium-format film. The obscure composition adds mystery to the place—a house on the other side of the train tracks—and it becomes almost impossible to recognize it. Most nostalgic apps include at least one black and white filter, and there are hundreds of apps that only produce black and white images.



Figure 1.15: Photo 3: The house on the other side of the tracks. Taken with Pudding Camera, edited with Lo-Mob. Williamsburg, Virginia. 2013.

Perhaps this last photograph (Figure 1.16) does not look as old or nostalgic as the other three. However, the frame and the saturated yellow tone provide it with the look of an old poster, maybe from the early 1970s. This panoramic photo represents the best example of the simulated physical frame. The extra shadow at the end of the frame suggests that this is a three-dimensional object, placed on a well-lit section of a room, perhaps a dedicated light. The inside image includes a vignette, a white frame, and a sepia sky. The image was edited with an app that renders high-dynamic-range (HDR) images, which are not supposed to be nostalgic at all; however, some of the editing options let the user choose sepia, black and white, saturated or low

saturation tones. At the end, Pro HDR transforms high-definition images into rich, nostalgic ones.



Figure 1.16: Photo 4. Taken with Pudding Camera, Edited with Pro HDR. Williamsburg, Virginia. 2013.

Table 2 shows the main characteristics of these four photos.

Table 2: Main characteristics of the four photographs.

| Photograph # | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|----------------|--|--|--|---|
| Format | Square | Panoramic | Portrait | Panoramic |
| Color | This look more like a colored photograph | Sepia tone. | Black & white | Color, predominantly yellow |
| Focus/Light | The focus is on the eyes. There is more light on the eyes | There are not out of focus or leaked light | Only the house and a small area to the front and right of the house are not out of focus | The main tone is yellow, simulating overexposure |
| Corners | Vignette: the inside of the corners are round | Clean | Vignette: the inside of the corners are round. | Vignette: the inside of the corners are soft dark |
| Printed Frame | Black. All sides seem a little burn | Clean | Black. There is a clear black stripe. | Clean |
| Texture | Some part of the image look out of focus. This is not paper, but a metal plate | Clean | The paper looks like canvas or metal | Clean |
| Physical Frame | None | Clean | None | This is a “Gold” classic frame according to Pro HDR |
| Other | Hipstamatic says that this is a C-Type Plate film (1890s style) | The black of the trees is very intense compared to the rest of the image | This photo simulates a 1930s contact photo | This is a matted framed photograph |

Hipstamatic: the Best Example of Nostalgic Camera App

Even though ToyCamera and OldCamera are two of the oldest nostalgic-looking iPhone apps, Hipstamatic and Instagram are the two most important camera apps for smartphones, and also the most important ones in the study of nostalgia and iPhoneography. Since Hipstamatic is older than Instagram, it is clear which app influenced which—at least at the beginning—and that

in turn Hipstamatic borrowed from apps such as ToyCamera, ClassicToy, and others. In my opinion, Hipstamatic popularized nostalgic photos and at the same time it provided most of the characteristics of nostalgic images that now seem to be the fashion on social networks.

Synthetic Corporation⁵⁷ developed and markets the Hipstamatic app. Synthetic, a small company that has produced several apps and sells Hipstamatic prints, tells the story that this “camera” was produced based on a cheap, plastic camera of the same name from the 1980s. The name “Hipstamatic” reminds the user of terms such as *hip*, *hipster*, and *automatic*. Perhaps it means that Hipstamatic may make the user automatically a hipster who produces hip images, or postmodern nostalgic images from old Russia, Taiwan, Portland, Oregon or other places. The name of this app is important, since it sounds more like a trend than a style that will last.

In the first half of the twentieth century, a hipster or hepster was a “man who’s on the know, grasps everything, is alert,” suggests the OED. These words come from the African American pop culture. John Leland suggests that, “hip represents a dream of America” in which blacks and whites learn to negotiate, thus creating a common culture. A hip is in constant renovation, but it does not have a particular place to go. According to Leland, “hip is exactly what it has always been: an undercurrent of enlightenment, organized around contradictions and anxieties. Hip’s trendiness has always been a by-product, not a goal. Hip is not simply the sum of What’s Hot Now... In a society run by information, hip is all there is.” (6-15)

Presumably, Hipstamatic is more than hip and trendy, because it is hot as Leland explains, but it is also cool in the sense that McLuhan suggests in *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. The Hipstamatic app is a simulated toy camera that works inside the iPhone; for a while, there were rumors that it was going to migrate to other smartphones. It represents

⁵⁷ “Synthetic Corporation” became “Hipstamatic” in 2013, therefore I will refer to the company and the app as Hipstamatic.

technology and play. In the 1980s, Vilém Flusser suggested that for photographers the cameras were more interesting than images, and that photographers did not work while taking photographs: “the world is purely a pretext for the realization of camera possibilities. In short: They are not working, they do not want to change the world, but they are in search of information” (26-27). It is possible to say that by playing with the app and sharing photographs on social networks and mass media, the hip Hipstamatic users are not changing the world, but rather the way we all see the world. Even the company’s web site explains that “[t]he Hipstamatic community is made up of millions of high quality content creators who are attune with the latest trends in photography and global, creative culture.”⁵⁸ It is possible to say that the “content” and the “trends” are nostalgic photographs.

Part of Hipstamatic’s appeal—and by extension that of the iPhone and other camera apps—is that it is easy to carry and to choose a process before taking and sharing a photo; it may take a minute or two, instead of the several minutes and skills needed to manipulate a photo with Photoshop or other graphic editing software, plus it has visual and sound effects. The reason I consider Hipstamatic even more appealing than any other camera app is that it has created a desire for images and objects from the recent past, a past that was not digital, virtual, nor part of a smartphone. As mentioned before, Hipstamatic has influenced iPhoneography and smartphone photography in general, and has set the tone, both literally and metaphorically, for the images that identify the current times. Instagram, Lo-Mob, Retro Camera, Snapseed and other apps have followed and expanded this tone. Old-style and novelty images, textures, and frames are also used on Android version of iPhone apps, and other native camera apps. Microsoft, which was the

⁵⁸ Hipstamatic. Partnerships. <http://hipstamatic.com/about/partnerships/> Accessed 20 May 2015.

latest to enter and first one to exit the smartphone market, also had versions of some famous iPhone nostalgic camera apps, and the Hipstamatic and Oggl apps were two of them.⁵⁹

Hipstamatic has been one of the most popular camera apps at the App Store; it was the “App of the Year of 2010” and the app still describes itself as the “Original app of the year.” For several months, perhaps a year or longer in 2010-2011, the US \$1.99 Hipstamatic app was the top seller in the photography category. Its popularity and recognition have gone beyond the App Store and the iPhone. For example, on Flickr.com, Hipstamatic was the first camera app to count as a type of “camera.” However, Flickr’s statistics are not very reliable, since photos taken with Hipstamatic but edited with other apps do not count, because the exif information regarding Hipstamatic disappears when other apps are applied to the photographs. Hipstamatic is also the app that has opened more doors of international galleries for iPhoneographers than any other. Some of those galleries are in Germany, France, Spain, Italy, and the United Kingdom, as well as in some cities in the United States, like New York, Los Angeles, and St. Petersburg. In journalism, Damon Winter, a New York Times photographer, used the Hipstamatic to snap a series of scenes of the Afghan war, in 2010. His photo set was awarded the third place on the competition “Pictures of the Year International.” *W* magazine had a partnership with Hipstamatic to create a package of film, lens, and camera case, for example.⁶⁰

There are several web pages, Facebook pages, and blogs, as well as Tumblr and Twitter accounts, dedicated to showcasing Hipstamatic images only. There are also several iPhoneographers that refuse to shoot with Hipstamatic—for example, Glyn Evans from

⁵⁹ John Callaham “Hipstamatic Oggl Windows Phone apps won’t receive any more updates” June, 24 2015. Accessed 25 June, 2015 <http://www.windowcentral.com/hipstamatic-oggl-windows-phone-apps-wont-receive-any-more-updates>

⁶⁰ Hipstamatic. Partnerships. <http://hipstamatic.com/about/partnerships/> Accessed 20 May 2015.

iPhoneography.com, who compared this app to yeast extract by stating, “Hipstamatic is a bit like Marmite, you either love it or hate it.”

According to Apple’s “iOS App Programming Guide,” all apps use the regular iPhone camera to take the image; what makes each app different is the editing process they create, and whether they allow the photographer to participate in choosing the settings before taking the photo, or adjusting the image. While other apps like Lo-Mob, ProHDR, ProHDR X, Snapseed, and PictureShow let the photographer compose the image after it was taken, the classic Hipstamatic app lets the photographer choose the settings—film, lens, flash—and then it randomly applies those settings to the photo. While ToyCamera, OldCamera, and Instagram kept changing with the operating system, Hipstamatic only introduced a few changes; for instance, it let the photographer choose to take the image as seen in the viewfinder or to take it with a random frame. Instead of changing the app too much, the company created other apps; some of these apps were SwankoLab, Incredibooth, Snap (connected with *Snap* magazine, which only printed Hipstamatic photos), DSPO (which was a camera that two or more photographers were able to use from different phones), and the 2013 Oggl app. Oggl is a photo-sharing app, similar to Instagram, that takes, edits, shares, and curates square Hipstamatic images only. Unfortunately, this social network has not been as popular as either the original Hipstamatic or Instagram, in part because, in order to use all the Hipstamatic “gear,” the user needs to pay an annual fee.

Most newspapers, magazines, and blog reviews published on Hipstamatic highlight the uniqueness of the images it produces, and how fun it is to manipulate the simulated toy camera. Three of the key characteristics mentioned by almost every Hipstamatic reviewer are its “analog” roots, its constant renewal, and its ability to produce random and non-random compositions. The

story that Synthetic tells about how this app was created based on the Hipstamatic 100 analog camera may be only a marketing gimmick. According to several blogs, the analog camera never existed. Nevertheless, Hipstamatic has always behaved like a toy or a semiprofessional analog camera, with its flashes, lenses, and film.

Holga is one of the cameras that Hipstamatic resembles in a few of its films and lenses. For example, the “Helga Viking” lens is a clear homage to the 120-format Holga,⁶¹ a toy camera designed and produced in China, but based on an old Russian camera. As Sam Byford of “The Verge” points out, without the Holga, Instagram would not be possible. Byford also explains that the Holga was unreliable and that

The technical flaws in each photo became a desirable part of the image, and a good Holga photographer could learn to use the camera’s quirks to their advantage. Phones today have big screens and great sensors, but in the late 2000s it wasn’t quite so easy to take and view good mobile photography. The solution hit upon by Hipstamatic, and then Instagram, was to filter photos in such a way that the poor quality appeared deliberate. Exaggerated colors, heavy vignetting, light leaks — all these digital edits were hallmarks of the Holga. And the square format, which looked best on tiny 3.5-inch iPhone screens, persisted as a mandatory feature of Instagram and Hipstamatic until earlier this year.⁶²

Hipstamatic also pays homage to Kodak with the film “Kodot,” which instead of using the bright yellow tone of Kodak films from the 1990s is presented with an almost-pastel yellow and what seems to be a dash of blueish, plus a red line. Hipstamatic has released lenses and film rolls to celebrate living professional photographers, like Ben Watts; however, in my opinion the

⁶¹ The Holga was produced from the early 1980s until 2015; in late November, the US distributor, Freestyle Photographic Supplies, announced that the production of the Holga camera had been stopped, and that the factory in China had said that “all Holga tooling has already been thrown away and there is nothing available for sale.” “Holga Factory Ceases Operation of Holga Cameras!” <http://www.freestylephoto.biz/holga-ceases-operations>. Accessed 25 November 2015

⁶² Sam Byford. “The iconic Holga film camera is dead. Without the Holga, we’d have no Instagram.” <http://www.theverge.com/2015/12/1/9826070/holga-camera-out-of-production> Accessed 25 November 2015

best package of lens, film, and camera case is the Salvador Dalí. Figure 1.17 shows the Helga, Watts, Kodot, and Dalí gear.



Figure 1.17: Helgi, Watts, Dalí, and Kodot gear. *Clockwise, from the upper-left:* Helga Viking lens, with the original Classic Black case; Ben Watts lens, with the Eggshell White case; the Salvador 84 lens, with the Dalí Dreamscape case; and the Kodot XGrizzled film. (This composition was made with the regular iPhone camera and the Pic Stitch app)

Since its release, Hipstamatic has had the most “realistic” interface of all toy-camera apps and perhaps all iPhone camera apps. The interface resembles a plastic toy camera, in particular the Holga. Its bulky, plastic texture, the animations of the menus, and the several seconds it takes to start relate Hipstamatic more to game apps than to the common camera apps. While other

cameras had a simple interface that included an icon with the photo of the front of an old camera, plus a background photo of the back of the camera, Hipstamatic started with simple animation that made the human-computer interaction a much easier and better experience. After the iPhone started using retina display and a high-definition screen, this app has used more sophisticated images to depict the toy camera and its behavior—the way it turns around, opens and closes when changing a virtual roll of film. The Hipstamatic photographer may change lenses, film, flashes, and camera cases, and needs to wait every time there are nine photos in the roll that need to be developed. The virtual camera has a handle to switch between low, medium, or high image-resolution. Unlike the analog toy cameras, Hipstamatic includes an album with “Recent Prints,” which allows sharing the digital images, as well as buying the analog prints from Hipstamatic, if one desires.

While the experience contributes to the popularity of the app, and it has become the trend to follow for other cameras, the negative effect is the use of more memory and battery than apps that mimic professional cameras, such as Camera+ and ProCamera. As long as the iPhone has enough battery and memory—or the iOS is a newer version—for the Hipstamatic user, the iPhone becomes the toy camera.

Synthetic Corporation offers the following services: it sells the Hipstamatic app and add-ons call HipstaPaks, which are the extra lenses, film, flashes, cases; it sells other apps related to photography and photography news; it sells high-quality analog prints; and, for a couple of years in the early 2010s, it sponsored several contests, the goal being to find an image or a series of images that could be used in indie videos or album covers. In some contests, the award is the inclusion of a print in an exhibition at a museum or gallery; for example, the Dalí Museum in St. Petersburg, Florida, had an exhibition on January 11, 2011, in which the best in show and the top

nine finalists were featured in the museum. Hipstamatic also partners with professional photographers. It has a presence in most social networks, an email newsletter, and a web site. In 2011 Hipstamatic started selling t-shirts and iPhone 4 cases. The Hipstamatic app sells for \$1.99, but every few weeks there is a new HipstaPak that sell for US\$0.99; a few HipstaPaks are free of charge. There are more than more than 35 HipstaPaks, and the number will likely keep growing every first Friday of the month. As mentioned above, Hipstamatic was at the top of the sales chart for months; however, since the introduction of Apple's in-app purchase in 2010, the sale of the original Hipstamatic app has declined. It is very likely that the company sells more HipstaPaks than the app itself. A few times a year, the company sells new gear and discontinues the sale of old items. This marketing gimmick, which works very well for movie studios, also seems to work for Hipstamatic add-ons: the old lenses come back for a weekend, then go back to the vault, which constitutes an event perhaps as important as releasing new gear.

In general, this iPhone app and the company mimic Lomography,⁶³ or Lomo for short, which is an Austrian company that produces and markets analog toy cameras, as well as film, flashes, cases, handbooks, and prints. Lomography sells 35mm and medium-format versions of the Holga camera.

Hipstamatic and other toy-camera apps use what I call “polarized nostalgia,” because they use high technology (Hi-Fi) in order to produce low technology (Lo-Fi) images. The camera design may look very simple, while in actuality the iPhone and the app represent some of the most sophisticated technologies.

⁶³ <http://www.lomography.com/>

Svetlana Boym explains that we cannot superimpose the two images of nostalgia (past and present, for example), because they break.⁶⁴ This superimposition of two images can be applied to the images produced by Hipstamatic and other apps that render photographs mimicking old technology. One image is the perfect, pure photograph made out of pixels, while the other image seems old and resembles an imperfect photograph taken with a cheap, plastic toy camera and analog film—or in other words, a less mediated photo. Perhaps the most original Hipstamatic features are the Salvador Dalí-style lens and film the Salvador 84 lens. The lens produces a random superimposition of two versions of the photographed image, in which one version can be larger than the frame (Figure 1.18), or it mirrors the original (Figure 1.19). In a way, the Salvador 84 photographs embody the concept of nostalgia that Boym proposes, because the moment the user erases either image, the photograph loses its appeal. Besides, it would take several minutes or hours of work to edit a Salvador 84 image, either with another iPhone app or Photoshop.

⁶⁴ Boym, p. XIII-XIV.



Figure 1.18: Superimposition 1: Hipstamatic's Dalí style image, Salvador 84 lens and DreamCanvas film. Photo taken in downtown Richmond, Virginia.



Figure 1.19 Superimposition 2: Hipstamatic's Dalí style image, Salvador 84 lens and DreamCanvas film. Photo taken in Richmond, Virginia.

One of the main complaints about the classic Hipstamatic is the fact that this app only provides the user with one processed image, instead of saving two images to the camera album, like most apps do—until September of 2015, Hipstamatic only saved the processed or edited image because of its camera behavior. The classic mode added a layer of chance and nostalgia to the Hipstamatic experience and made each photograph unique, in the same way the analog cameras did. Once a photograph was taken, there was no way to use a different setting to reprocess it with the same app, a practice very common among iPhoneographers. Unlike the home-and-abroad, past-and-present images referred to by Boym, the images captured with the

Salvador 84 represent the moment-ago or immediacy that now has become part of the past, that “instant nostalgia” that the Retro Camera app promises to create.

Synthetic Corporation, which changed its name to Hipstamatic LLC, released the app Oggl in May 10, 2013. Oggl represents an attempt to compete with the main Hipstamatic app and with Instagram. Oggl is classic Hipstamatic with editing and curating capabilities, plus a sharing community. The free membership does not allow photographers to use all the lenses and films, but a \$10-per-year membership does.⁶⁵ Since Hipstamatic does not publish statistics related to its apps, it is not possible to know how many users it has or how much money it makes. In May of 2015, the original Hipstamatic app was on the top-10 list of “Top Grossing iPhone Apps,” in part because of the new or retro Paks or HipstaPaks that sells every few weeks.⁶⁶

With the arrival of a new operating system for the iPhone in the fall of 2015, Hipstamatic rebuilt its flagship app and made it look more like its Oggl app and cameras that mimic high end professional cameras, such as Camera+ or others. Figure 1.20 is a screen shot of the in-app Hipstamatic version history; basically, it suggested that the randomness and analog camera experience had ended, thus pointing that Hipstamatic had surrounded and had stopped its hipster feel.

⁶⁵ “Oggl.” n.d. <http://hipstamatic.com/oggl/#welcome> Accessed 10 April 2015.

⁶⁶ “Top Grossing iPhone Apps” Photography and Video category. AppStore. Accessed 1 May 2015.

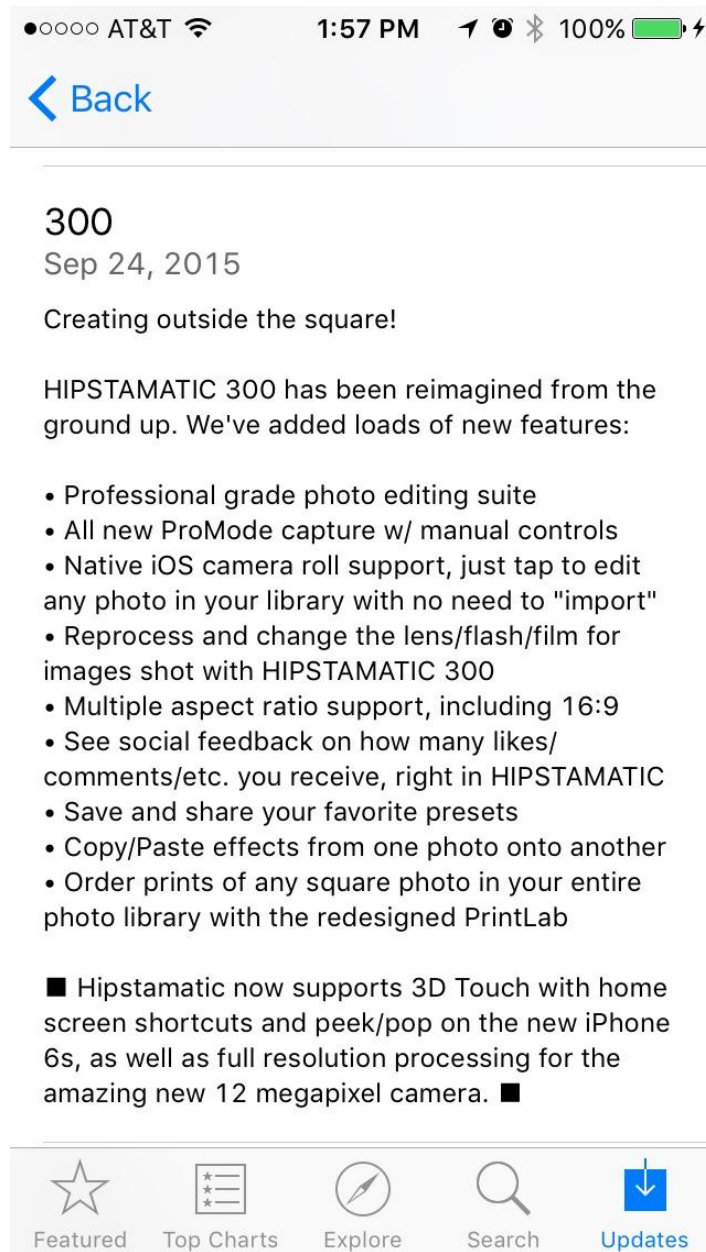


Figure 1.20 Hipstamatic update from September 24, 2015.

The new app design had two interfaces, the photo editor with a live preview and the “classic” camera look. Besides the access to the iPhone default camera, the default interface included what Hipstamatic called a “professional grade photo editing suite,” with the options to shoot and edit images in different ratio formats, not just the square. Since toy cameras do not have front and back lenses, Hipstamatic never had access to the front camera, which changed

with the 300 version. Figure 1.21 shows Hipstamatic’s default interface next to the interface of Camera+; the first app has the back/front/classic camera option located in the upper-right corner. Most toy camera apps still available at the App Store use the front camera, including Takayuki Fukatsu’s OldCamera, ToyCamera, MonoPro, and SepiaCamera.

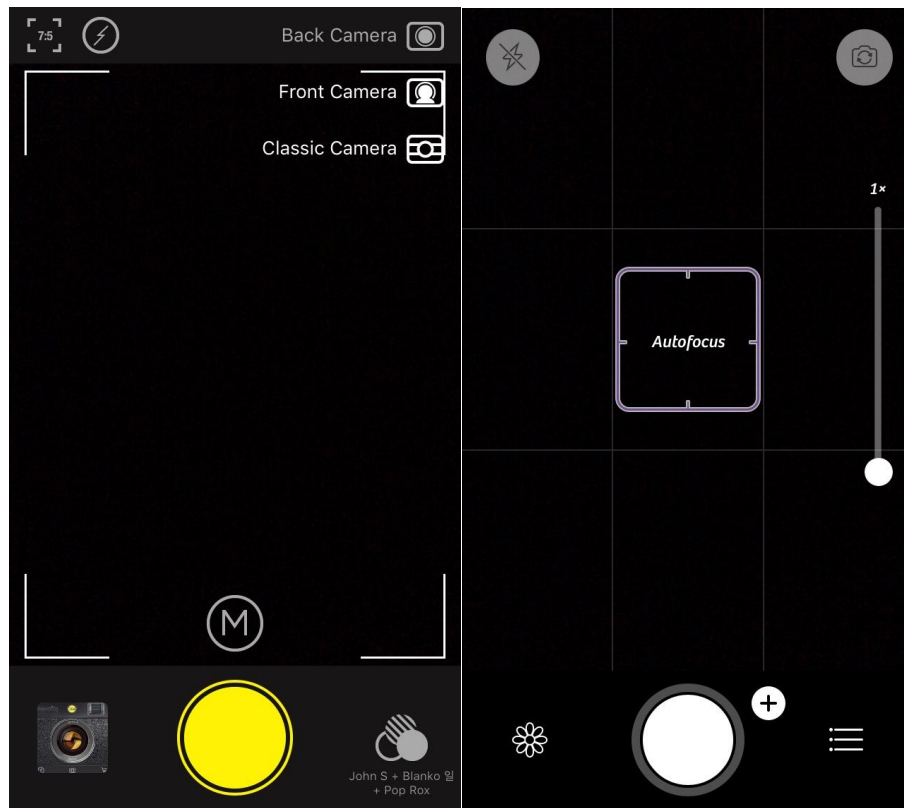


Figure 1.21: Interface of the Hipstamatic and Camera+ apps. *Left*: The default interface of the Hipstamatic 300-304 version. *Right*: The Camera+ app interface with the “Autofocus” option on.

The motto “Creating outside the square!” turned out to be problematic due to technological issues and users’ complaints. In every iPhoneography Facebook group, a few photographers wrote asking for help because the app continuously crashed in some iPhone 5 models; however, most photographers wrote expressing their disgust. Hipstamatic 300 quickly went through three versions and updates to “fix bugs” that prevented photographers from using the app, according to the developer’s description. It was more likely the complaints than the

memory or slowness of the app that made the company change the app again in December of 2015. The screen shot in Figure 1.22 shows the update information for the Hipstamatic 304 version, in which a “turn off Pro Camera” and a “Classic Lock” (Figure 1.23) was added to let photographers use the classic toy camera experience without the photo editor section of the app. The rest of the update mostly fixed bugs affecting the access of photos in albums, plus processing and sharing of images. However, the “Classic Lock” seemed more important because it was at the beginning of the list of updates and because it was perhaps the best way to make the app users happy.

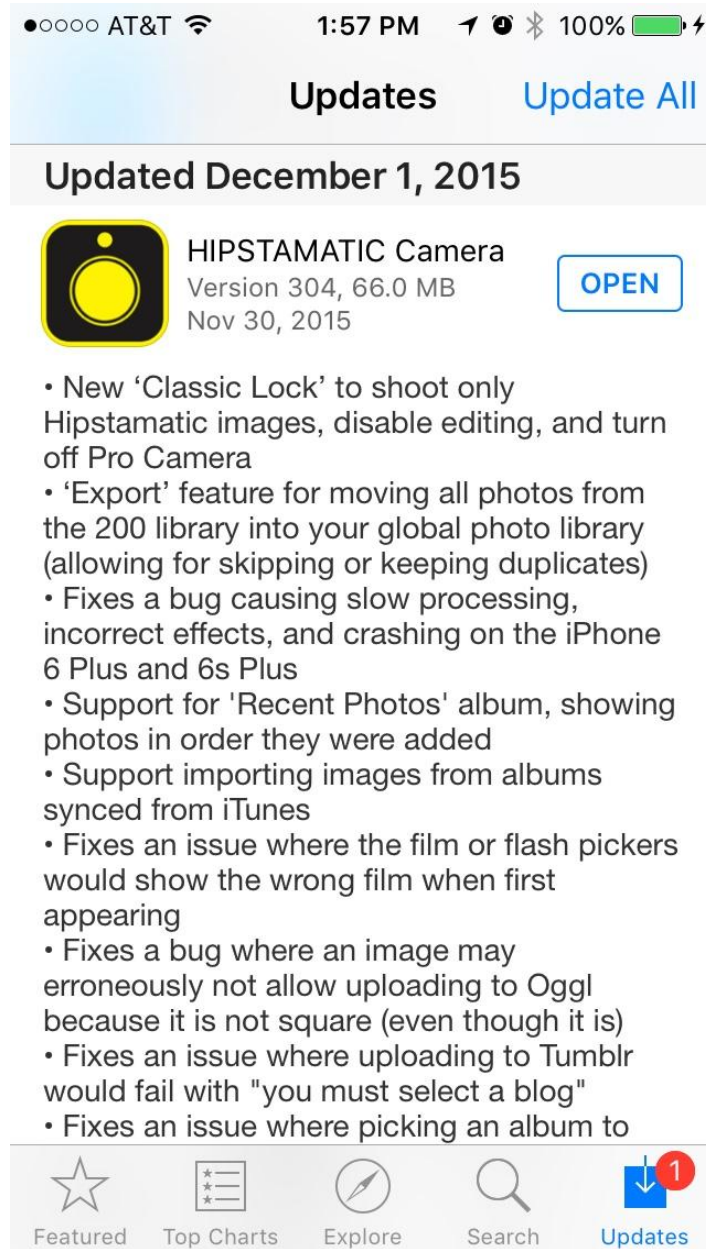


Figure 1.22: Screen shot of the update notice for the Hipstamatic 304 version, from December 1, 2015.



Figure 1.23: Hipstamatic’s “Classic Lock” button.

Inside the classic toy camera, users see the “Classic Lock” (Figure 1.23), which features a thumbnail image of the camera body with the first camera case that emphasizes the “plastic” look and the “John S” lens, the first lens included in the app. The text accompanying this button may be read as “information” and as part of Hipstamatic’s marketing: “Lock the camera in classic mode, save only the Hipstamatic image, and disable all editing features. Analog all the way!” The first sentence summarizes what this app’s identity has been since 2009—old style, non-editable random images. The second sentence sounds more like a rebellious and festive chant that destroys the “Creating outside the square!” by going back to a manifesto, “Analog all the way!”

With its last big version, version 300, Hipstamatic attempted to attract more customers by becoming a photo editor more than a toy-camera app. In my opinion, the fact that Hipstamatic had to add this new “Classic Lock” translates into a reassurance that the nostalgic camera app

and nostalgic iPhoneography style are not dead yet, and that the app will stay for at least a couple of more years.

Instagram: Sharing the Nostalgia

Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger released a free app named Instagram in October 6, 2010. The word “Instagram,” clearly a portmanteau of “instant” and “telegram,” refers to the old “instant” cameras, according to the site’s FAQ. The site offers the following definition,

Instagram is a fun and quirky way to share your life with friends through a series of pictures. Snap a photo with your mobile phone, then choose a filter to transform the image into a memory to keep around forever. We’re building Instagram to allow you to experience moments in your friends’ lives through pictures as they happen. We imagine a world more connected through photos.⁶⁷

Instagram started as an editing and sharing platform. As explained before, users were able to edit photographs taken with the default iPhone camera app or with other apps, then they shared them on this platform. Instagram had “quirky” filters with names like Valencia or Toaster, which rendered “memories” with faded colors and with a few light splashes. Most of the filters mimicked developing process used in the 1970s and early 1980s; as mentioned before, Instagram and Hipstamatic followed the Holga camera style. Photographers had the option to share their 1970s-style photos on Instagram’s feeds inside the app and on other social media, while Hipstamatic gave users the option to share their creations on Instagram without having to open Instagram. While Hipstamatic focused on the experience of having an instant toy camera (by not enabling users to edit the images), Instagram kept the editing phase simple by only providing filters for color alteration. After a very quick edit, Instagram users were able to share their memories with or without title, and they had the option to choose in which topics or feeds their

⁶⁷ Instagram. “FAQ” n.d. <https://instagram.com/about/faq/> Accessed 1 February 2015.

images were going to appear, by adding a hashtag—which is the number symbol (#) plus a word or combination of numbers and words. Hashtagging images made it simple to search and find topics, and to create new topics. A hashtag classifies and identifies images.

System and Krieger were probably right when they stated that they “imagine a world more connected through photos.” Instagram photographs quickly became very popular. Unlike Hipstamatic users, Instagramers⁶⁸ had access to other people’s images immediately, even if they did not share any. Facebook noticed the trend, and in April of 2012 it purchased Instagram for one billion dollars. In my opinion, the Instagram’s brand name and number of users continue to grow, in spite of being part of Facebook and competing with it. Even though Facebook added the photography editor to its smartphone app, it does not offer as many filters as Instagram.

The number of iPhoneographers who share nostalgic-looking images may remain a mystery. As mentioned before, Hipstamatic does not share statistics. There may be a few millions of smartphone users who routinely take photographs with Hipstamatic and share them on Instagram, or use Instagram to edit and share the photos. Instagram’s statistics for the press show that there are more than 300 million users who have shared more than 30 billion photographs since October 6, 2010. In the month of April of 2015, Instagramers shared 70 millions of images and liked images 2.5 billion times daily. Only 30% of users are from the United States.⁶⁹ Taking into consideration that, (a) not all photographers apply Instagram’s filters to their images, (b) sometimes the images already look nostalgic because they were shot with

⁶⁸ “Instagramer” June 04, 2014. Urban Dictionary. <http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=instagramer> Accessed 1 December 2014. “Someone who is on Instagram for EXTREMELY long amounts of time or never gets off Instagram.” By extension, any Instagram user may be referred to as “Instagramer.”

⁶⁹ “Stats.” April 2015. Instagram Press News. <https://instagram.com/press/> Accessed 3 April 2015.

Hipstamatic or a similar app, and (c) not all Instagram users post images on Instagram but they post them on other sites, it is possible to guess that at least half of the 30 billion photographs look nostalgic, perhaps more than 20 billion. A good number of Instagram images are reposted to other apps and sites, among them Facebook, Tumblr, EyeEm, Twitter, Google+, and Flickr.

Conclusion

The iPhone has changed the smartphone design and the way we take, share, and look at photographs. The nostalgic style, which started in 2008 with toy-camera apps produced by developer Takayuki Fukatsu, became popular with Hipstamatic and Instagram. A nostalgic camera app usually has a name, description, and interface that remind the photographer of old analog cameras and photographic materials, such as film, paper, and lenses. This nostalgic style became popular thanks to social media and the popularity of the smartphone. In the next chapter, I discuss more the connection between photography and nostalgia.

Chapter Two: Photography, Nostalgia, and Nostalgic iPhoneography Trends

Photography by nature relates to the past. Whether the image was taken with a camera obscura, a pinhole camera, a medium format digital camera, or a smartphone, a photograph represents the depicted subjects in a moment that belongs to the past. At first look, nostalgia and iPhoneography resonate as two opposite concepts; while usually nostalgia refers to the past, iPhoneography seems to point to the newest technology and the future. The focus of this chapter is theory, or the definitions of nostalgia. First, it is necessary to focus on photography and iPhoneography, since the latter is a form of the former; then, the focus changes to nostalgia and iPhoneography in an attempt to explain why they do not mutually exclude. There is also a section that explores the issue of aggression in photography, in particular mobile photography, which can be aggressive with the number of photographs taken, the abuse of how many photographs are posted on social media, and the abuse towards the apparatus—the iPhone.

Nostalgia is a common human feeling that up to the nineteenth century was more related to depression than today. In the past, the traveler, the soldier, and the immigrant were more prone to feel nostalgic for their homeland and its everyday life; poets wrote about the past to provoke nostalgia on their readers; while today, a nostalgic individual may feel the need to watch images or acquire objects from the past. However, that individual may not necessarily be depressed about a homeland or be longing for the Victorian era, for example. For the purpose of this study, the working definition of nostalgia is as follows:

It is longing for a place or environment where we do not live anymore, it is the longing for objects that were part of our earlier life or may have been part of it, and the longing for objects and images that never belonged to us, but rather belonged to our ancestors or a popular individual. Nostalgia is an emotion that is more positive than negative when producing, looking, or sharing photographs.

Photography

It is easier and faster than ever to take and share a photograph. iPhoneography and smartphone photography are everywhere. It is impossible to study iPhoneography without connecting it to analog and digital photography. In *What Photography Is* James Elkins⁷⁰ suggests that photography is usually studied from three points of view, as a fine art, its social aspect, and how it captures the world. Elkins reveals that he does not have interest on any of those perspectives, and that, “photography is essentially not about art, society, or representation: I find seeing is essentially solitary, and photography is one of the emblems of that solitude.” (viii) It is true that seeing depends on one’s eyes and cultural references, making the contemplation and study of photography a personal task. Elkins decides to go back to Roland Barthes’ *Camera Lucida*, because Barthes’

“book is too full of light to capture what photography does. *Camera Lucida* is generously lit with metaphors of memory and sentiment, but its thoughts are very carefully tended, as if its subject were tender and prone to wilt in the glare of harder inquiry. Of the many things elided in Barthes’ book...the most important is photography’s inhumanity. For me, Barthes gets photography perfectly right when he sees how it hurts him...and badly wrong when he images it mainly as a vehicle of love and memory. *Camera Lucida* is at the beginning of a flourishing interest in affect, feeling, and trauma in the art world, and that may be the best explanation of its staying power. (xi)

⁷⁰ Elkins, James. *What Photography Is*. New York: Routledge, 2011. Print.

Elkins' decision to go back to Barthes gives analog photography more importance than digital and smartphone photographs. It seems that Elkins is interested on the elements of memory and sentiment, which are part of nostalgia as I will describe later in this chapter. Elkins confession of considering photography emblematic of solitude may apply to every piece of art, because the appreciation of photography—and art in general—depends on the spectator's eyes, cultural references, and memory. The inhumane side of photography comes from the trauma and hurt that an image may bring to the photographer and the spectator, especially if those photographs are snapped with a smartphone and share in seconds with the rest of the world. I do believe that iPhoneography, due to its abundance and being present in all social media, represents an aggression and may create trauma for a few reasons. First, in the past the importance and impact of a photograph was much higher than today; it was difficult and expensive to take one-thousand photographs in an hour or two, especially if the photographer did not have disposable money; today, the only expense of taking one-thousand photographs is draining the phone battery. Second, the printed image from the past was not destroyed by comments and likes, and it was not easy to steal the image without permission; it is common to push people to high levels of stress by making unwelcomed comments on their photographs. Third, in the past a photographer would take one-thousand photographs of a subject, then use the best image; while today, the same subject all one-thousand images may be deleted or simply use the worst image to share with friends and family. All these types of aggressions may identify today's photography as playful, but also as inhumane and aggressive. Photographs today may hurt the humans portrayed and the cameras themselves, the iPhone.

In the same way James Elkins turned to Roland Barthes for his study, I will also go back to Roland Barthes as well as Susan Sontag, W. J. T. Mitchell, and Vilém Flusser in an attempt to

analyze iPhoneography. The following pages see photography and iPhoneography from the point of view of aggression and perhaps an inhumane context.

When we talk about the process of photography, we use verbs like “to take,” “to shoot,” more than “to photograph.” In social networks, we do not “show” our images, we “post” them, which resembles more a street poster or announcement than a private photo album. “To take” denotes to apprehend, to capture, to appropriate and other verbs that indicate that something or somebody changes places; while one of the first meanings of “to shoot” that comes to mind is opening fire and killing a person or an animal. Susan Sontag suggests that, “[w]hen we are afraid, we shoot. But when we are nostalgic, we take pictures” (*On Photography*, 7). The act of taking photographs with a smartphone at any time of the day and everywhere, may be defined as intrusive, even violent. It can also be said that thanks to smartphones and small digital cameras, we have been able to know more and faster news, for example the 2007 shooting at Virginia Tech, the photos taken by American soldiers of prisoners at Abu Ghraib, the protests in Egypt and Iran from 2011, or the 2015 elections in Venezuela. Photography in general means an intrusion and therefore an aggression of daily life, because the photographer needs a camera to produce the image. “There is an aggression implicit in every use of the camera,” mentions Sontag in *On Photography* (7), because any type of camera or photographic device constitutes an interruption and an addition to any environment, to the subject’s life. Smartphones may be completely silent when capturing, editing, and sharing an image, but they are interrupting nonetheless. Unlike literature, drawing, painting, and sculpture, photography cannot be done “by memory,” by recalling images or words stored in our minds. However, the further manipulation of images with a developing process, Photoshop or other software may take advantage of those memories as well. Still, the image must be captured by an analog, digital, or mobile device; and

in the case of cyanotypes, the lifeless objects or the film negatives need to be on top of the curated paper. Photographers need to interrupt, arrange, or invade other people's activities and peace in order to capture a still image or a quick movement. They may also blend or pretend to hide in the environment in order to take multiple shots of an athlete running or a patient's brain. Even when the subject of the photograph is nature or a still life, the photographer becomes part of the photograph by dissecting the context and choosing what will be part of the final image.

Sontag's essay "In Plato's Cave" states this idea as follows,

In deciding how a picture should look, in preferring one exposure to another, photographers are always imposing standards on their subjects. Although there is a sense in which the camera does indeed capture reality, not just interpret it, photographs are as much an interpretation of the world as paintings and drawings are. Those occasions when the taking of photographs is relatively indiscriminating, promiscuous, or self-effacing do not lessen the didacticism of the whole enterprise. This very passivity—and ubiquity—of the photographic record is photography's 'message,' its aggression." (7)

Sontag dislikes the idea of the photographer taking photos to show the spectator a certain point of view; perhaps because by taking a photograph of any type, despite staging reality we may think of the resulting image as reality itself. "Images which idealize (like most fashion and animal photography) are no less aggressive than work which makes a virtue of plainness (like class pictures, still lifes of the bleaker sort, and mug shots)." (*On Photography*, 7)

The photographer needs to take several photos to choose the one that best displays his or her idea. In the case of iPhoneographers and other smartphone photographers, most apps take and process the image without having to use software outside the phone. Sontag explains that the great photographers of the 1930s had to shoot several times the same subject, until "they had gotten just the right look on film." Some of those photographers were Walker Evans, Dorothea Lange, Ben Shahn, and Russell Lee (*On Photography*, 61). Even with the advent of digital and mobile photography, professional photographers need to take large number of photographs, since they must learn their tools—cameras, lenses, filters, software and mobile applications, lights,

etc.—and study their subjects. If we, then, add all the photographs taken by amateur photographers, who want to document every Kodak moment of their lives, then we do have an incredible amount of images that show something to the spectator. As Sontag points out several times in her two photography books, we live in world surrounded by images.

In *Regarding the Pain of Others*, Sontag analyzes war photography, which should be even more important than agricultural, fashion, or wedding photography. Susan Sontag, Roland Barthes, and W. J. T. Mitchell emphasize that each photograph has an element of death included. For example, in the second part of *Camera Lucida*, Barthes shows a more human side when he talks about a photograph that depicts his mother, who was dead by the time he was writing the book. Sontag tackles the topic of death and photography because,

Ever since cameras were invented in 1839, photography has kept company with death. Because an image produced with a camera is, literally, a trace of something brought before the lens, photographs were superior to any painting as a memento of the vanished past and the dear departed. (24)

Sontag focuses on the images of war presented by the newspapers, film, and television. “Being a spectator of calamities taking place in another country is a quintessential modern experience,” she states (18). However, those images have been repeated so many times by the media that are also losing their impact. “Flooded with images of the sort that once used to shock and arouse indignation, we are losing our capacity to react” (108). Sontag rejects Jean Baudrillard’s idea that we only pay attention to “simulated realities” (109-110). Although she does not provide a very clear argument why we do it, she states that we care about our own pain, for example the images of September 11, 2001 made the American public react and care more than any other images in recent history.

War and other people’s pain may never end, however Sontag prefers the aggression of the photographic process than that of guns when she affirms that “[e]ventually, people might

learn to act out more of their aggressions with cameras and fewer with guns, with the price being an even more image-choked world” (*On Photography*, 15). There are currently wars and conflicts involving guns, but people have acted more with their cameras and cell phones than ever. Every time a demonstration or violent event takes place, people tend to record video or take photographs in the same way they capture the images of a wedding or a birthday party.

Susan Sontag, Roland Barthes, W. J. T. Mitchell, Vilém Flusser, John Berger, Jacques Rancière, and others agree that one image has more than one interpretation, because the image can be both a document and a work of art; it can also have one meaning of the subject it depicts and another of the process used to produce that image.

The meaning of an image is precisely what Mitchell explores on *What Do Pictures Want?: The Lives and Loves of Images*, in which the first essay or section is called “Vital Signs | Cloning Terror.” Mitchell starts with the idea that an image has vital signs that we, the spectators, attribute to them. This book, Mitchell explains, was born out of the reception he had for his book *Picture Theory*, in particular the review from the newspaper *The Village Voice*, where there was a complaint: the title of the book should be “What Do Pictures Want?” Then, Mitchell explains that, “If the question, *what do pictures want?* Makes any sense at all, it must be because we assume that pictures are something like life-forms, driven by desire and appetites (6, italics added). Once we take the photos, we tend to make them public, and in several cases those photos become what defines an individual or individuals in a given situation. Memes are images, either visual or textual, that are famous because people feel compelled to interact with them by liking, commenting, or sharing them in large numbers. Memes reflect the news or popular ideas.

As Sontag explained in *On Photography*, when the photographer takes a photograph, we seem to believe that she or he is recording, documenting a piece of reality. Mitchell goes further

by arguing that people have a dual attitude towards pictures. People know that pictures have no life of their own, but at the same time they believe that those “pictures have a power to influence human beings, demanding things from us, persuading, seducing, and leading us astray” (7). This dual attitude, continues Mitchell, corresponds with a “deep and abiding feature of human responses to representation” (8). We may have different opinions of pictures at a different stage of our lives, and we may believe that some pictures are more powerful than others. For example, we may have a different response towards religious images than we have towards pop art images.

Mitchell takes Barthes’ concept of punctum, which is the small wound that a photograph provokes on the spectators to demonstrate that photographs resist having only one meaning. “The punctum, or wound, left by a photograph always trumps its studium, the message or semiotic content that it discloses.” In order to demonstrate that photographs are magical and have a life of their own, Mitchell tells the experiment that one of his colleagues does with their students: “ask them to take a photograph of their mother and cut out the eyes” (9). The image has a double meaning for most of us, even if we only pretend that images are living organisms. In order to prove that images have a certain power and desires, like any other organisms, Mitchell analyzes two images that defined the first decade of the twenty-first century, Dolly the sheep and the World Trade Center towers. In 2005, when Mitchell’s *What Do Pictures Want?* was published, these images represented “uncertain futures...the sensuous spectrum of image anxiety... ranging from the overwhelmingly traumatic spectacle of mass destruction on the one hand to the subtle creepiness of the cloned sheep” (12). While the sheep reminds the spectators that now we are able to clone animals and perhaps human beings, just like science fiction novels and films have long suggested; the World Trade Center image tells of possible, quick destruction of life and bad use of technology. Both images are symbols and dimensions of biotechnology, research,

capitalism, and a God-like future for humans, and of course of Western civilization. The scientists that cloned Dolly were taking God's place, by making a living thing to the image of another; while the towers were destroyed by fundamentalists who believed that the buildings were icons of Christianity (13-18). What do the billions of photos on Facebook want? What are all those Instagram sepia or bluish images are telling their viewers?

Next, Mitchell dissects the two iconoclast laws: (1) the idolater of images "is always someone else," and (2) "the iconoclast believes that idolaters believe their images to be holy, alive, and powerful." The second law applies to "our beliefs about the beliefs of other people," thus resulting in a believe structure that includes other people and ourselves (19-20). If we follow Mitchell's ideas, then we are all somehow idolaters and iconoclasts when interact with images online. Sometimes we upload images to bully others, or we desecrate images by editing or writing off-color comments on them. If Mitchell asks, "what do pictures want?" we may extend this question to the millions—soon to be billions—of phone photographers who take and share images in social networks, "what do photographers want?"

Inspired by Nietzsche's *Twilight of Idols*, Mitchell ends "Vital Signs | Cloning Terror" by suggesting the study of pictures from an approach he calls "critical idolatry." Unlike Nietzsche's desire to destroy idols, Mitchell expects to keep the pictures untouched, because critical idolatry "recognizes every act of disfiguration or defacement as itself an act of creative destruction for which we must take responsibility" (26). Images are aggressive because they want us to pay attention to them, to read them and provide a meaning to them. In my opinion, what Mitchell proposes is to make our interaction with images less aggressive, which at the end would make all images in social networks less important, since what matters on social networks is the interaction, the commentary, the act of sharing and even editing the images.

With the proliferation of cell phones with cameras, the aggression increases. The process of taking and publishing a photograph takes now a few seconds—depending on the Internet connection—not minutes, hours, or days like it used to be with analog and even digital photography. According to the Pew Internet & American Life Project, almost half of the adult population and almost one third of teenagers in the United States owns a smartphone—iPhone and Android are the most popular smartphones. There are more cell phones and more smartphones that can easily take, process, and share photographs and videos; there are as well more photographs that want to be tagged, commented, shared, re-shared, recycled as memes, and perhaps “deleted” from online spaces. Friendships and relationships start, stay alive, or die because of images uploaded to Facebook, Pinterest, or Twitter, for example. It seems that everybody has a camera ready to shoot any subject, anywhere, be it an everyday or an emergency situation, a space, an object, or a living organism. Each act of taking and sharing a photograph represents an act of aggression. Sometimes, the aggression is not that one photograph has been taken, but the numbers of photographs that people take of the same subject. Instagram, Facebook, Flickr, and other photography sharing services are full of similar shots of famous landmarks like the Eiffel Tower or the Washington Monument, pets, foods, flowers, babies, friends and family.

Why do we take photographs? And why do we take so many? It seems that we have the idea that we can photograph any and everything, and everybody from ourselves to unknown people on the street; and by extension we can share those images anywhere we please. Richard Chalfen, Nancy Martha West, Ilpo Kalevi Koskinen, and Eric Freedman⁷¹ all have studied how

⁷¹ Richard Chalfen, *Kodak Culture* (1987), Nancy Martha West *Kodak and the Lens of Nostalgia* (2000), Ilpo Kalevi Koskinen *Mobile Multimedia in Action* (2007), and Eric Freedman *Transient Images* (2011)

Kodak created the American habit of taking photos of public spaces while traveling, and also how the same company encouraged the capture of private spaces and events. Eric Freedman suggests that Kodak in the 1920s, Polaroid in the 1960s and 1970s, and Nikon in the 2000s have respectively contributed to the idea that we must take photographs of the road, the national parks, and our towns; and that we have to share those photographs with others (p. 7-11). Apple and Google have also advertised their smartphones by showing how easy it is to take photographs. In fact, the image changes introduced by Apple from 2011 to 2015—retina display, live photos, and 12MP resolution—allow a better display and render better images for iPhone and iPad. However, none of these books and none of the companies answer clearly why we take photographs, or why we share many images of the same subject.

There is also the aggression of hacking other people's images and infringing copyrights left and right. Several politicians have lost their job because of accidental sharing of compromising images. There have been cases in which friends or hackers have made public private photos of everyday and famous people. One example is Scarlett Johansson, who took semi-nude self-portraits with her iPhone and later were posted and shared millions of times on Twitter, Facebook, and other sites. The Internet, and in particular Facebook, have contributed to bullying. As a result, several web sites have regulations against photographs that portrait bullying, self-cutting, anorexia, and other habits that involve violence against oneself and others. Tumblr and Pinterest express in their user agreements that they have the right to take down images and content "that encourage people to hurt themselves" (Pinterest / Etiquette).

If there is an impulse to take, share, and comment photographs, how do we stop it? Other countries block Internet access when people protest or the government does not allow free

speech, such have been the cases of Iran, Morocco, Tunisia, China, Venezuela, and Cuba, among others.

Susan Sontag complained in *On Photography* that we live in an “image-choked world” (15). Just on Facebook that statement seems to be true. It may not be an exaggeration to say that currently the Internet has images of every work of art known to humanity, plus images of every place where ordinary and professional photographers have access to, every type of animal, plant, food, dress, ritual, etc. The standard photos of family and marriage, traditions and rites, nature, and travels that before were hidden inside museums, private houses, and albums are stored and readily available online. On Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, and Flickr users post any type of photo, private or public, serious or funny, blurry or clear, of good taste and bad taste.

In her book, *Mediated Memories in the Digital Age*, José Van Dijck starts with the problem that she has to digitize several boxes of photographs she keeps in her closet. Aside from taking up space, the physical images need to be digitized in order to live in the online world. Once digitized those photos can be shared by email and on social media. Van Dijck realizes that she must categorize, store, and tag the thousands of analog images, which are part of her personal cultural memory. The process inspires her to write several articles and finally the book. (xi-xiii) Two concepts from her work are important to this study. First, the concept of “personal cultural memory,” which Van Dijck explains that has to do with “the acts and products of remembering in which individuals engage to make sense of their lives in relation to the lives of others and to their surroundings, situating themselves in time and place” (6). In a way, when we share images on Facebook, Flickr, or any other social media context, we are making sense of our daily life; and when we have the possibility of looking at the images by a group of friends, family or individuals from the same area, that means that collectively we are creating a visual

account of parts of the history of that group or community. The second concept from van Dijck's book is the title of her book, the digital mediated memories. She states, "I introduce the concept of mediated memories not only to account for the intricate connection between personal collections and collectivity, but also to help theorize the mutual shaping of memory and media ... I hope to turn the items in our private shoeboxes into valuable objects for cultural analysis" (2). Van Dijck expresses several times the affection she feels for her photographs and how the notion of losing the originals and keeping only the mediated memories makes her feel uncomfortable.

Every time a person uploads several images to Flickr, Instagram, Pinterest, or any other social network, that person empties a shoebox of mediated memories for everybody else to see, discuss, and share. Young Internet users may feel more comfortable dealing only with mediated photographs, but according to several reports by the Pew Internet & American Life Project, more seniors are buying e-readers and tablets that allow them access the Internet aside from just reading.⁷² One of the reasons seniors join social media is because they want to look and interact with photographs of their grandchildren?

Vilém Flusser, who wrote during the 1980s and 1990s, expressed in his two books—*Towards a Philosophy of Photography* and *Into the Universe of Technical Images*—that in the near future robots and computers will do everything for us. He was right when he predicted that the act of taking, sharing, and looking at photographs was going to be automated, even telematic. A photograph is a memory and if we do not share that memory it may disappear. If "[m]emory [is] the opposite of death," according to Flusser (144), then, it is possible to say that the reason we take photographs and share them is because we have machines that do most of the work for us.

⁷² See <http://www.pewinternet.org/>

An iPhone helps take, edit, share, see, and comment on small or large batches of photographs. Why do we digitize old, paper photos, or framed analog photos? Because in the Internet and Facebook age, if we do not share those photos, they will die.

While most readers expect high resolution images from news outlets and commercial sites, quality is not an issue when images depict friends and family, and other everyday images. Images do not need to be clear or to be aesthetically pleasing in order to attract attention. In fact, the usual low quality of smartphone photos contributes to the “authenticity” of the moment captured. In *Regarding the Pain of Others*, Susan Sontag explains that,

Pictures of hellish events seem more authentic when they don't have the look that comes from being “properly” lighted and composed, because the photographer either is an amateur or—just as serviceable—has adopted one of several familiar anti-art styles. By flying low, artistically speaking, such pictures are thought to be less manipulative—all widely distributed images of suffering now stand under that suspicion—less likely to arouse facile compassion or identification. (27)

In this passage, Sontag discusses war photography, however, this aesthetic of low-quality-looking photographs is very prevalent online thanks to camera phones. In my opinion, low-tech and nostalgic looking photography has become the standard on Instagram, Facebook, and in some Flickr groups, thanks to several camera applications for iPhone and Android. After more than six years of observing and using an iPhone, I have classified iPhoneography—the photography produced or processed with iPhone—into three types of images: (1) clean, clear images that may look similar to images produced by semiprofessional cameras; (2) the novelty image, which adds items that make the subjects look funny, or may decimate the pixels in the image; and (3) the camera that imitates the photographs from a time period, either the process, the camera, the film, the paper, development, and frames. The third type of image was already discussed in chapter one.

All these types of images are competing against each other at the same time, especially in the Apple format, which includes iPhone, iPod Touch, and iPad devices.⁷³ On Instagram represent, iPhoneography and mobile photography are competing against each other and against digital photography—the latter type of images mimic now smartphone photographs. Vilém Flusser suggested in *Towards a Philosophy of Photography* that for photographers the cameras are more interesting than the images, and that photographers do not work while taking photographs, because “the world is purely a pretext for the realization of camera possibilities.” He explains that “[i]n short: They (the photographers) are not working, *they do not want to change the world*, but they are in search of information” (26-27, italics added). According to Flusser, it is possible to say that by playing with camera apps and sharing photographs on social networks and mass media, iPhoneographers and smartphone users in general are not changing the world, but rather the way we all see the world. It is not that most trees or food became yellowish or sepia tone, it is that hundreds of people chose yellowish or sepia tone filters on Instagram or other networks.

Nostalgia

This project looks at the concept of “nostalgia” from the point of view of history, sociology, and psychology. In spite of its origin as a medical condition, the concept of nostalgia has evolved to describe an emotion instead of a series of symptoms in need of a drug prescription or the need to go back home. It is possible to say that millions of Facebook and Instagram users

⁷³ All the references to smartphones are based on my observations and use of the iPhone and iPad. Some iPhone camera applications have been developed also for Android phones, but the iPhone has the most applications of this type.

do not feel that they need to take an antidepressant pill after casually interacting with a few photographs per minute; most likely they feel amused by the images.

The terms oldie, vintage, retro, saudade, and nostalgia denote something old⁷⁴ and they are frequently used in the advertising of furniture, music, life styles, and other products and services. A person may be oldie, but this term also describes music or film that are “still popular,” which means that the popularity never went away, or that they are still popular because they are not too old; “oldie” implies affection, therefore it carries some degree of emotion. Vintage, whose etymology derives from the French “vendange” and relates to the harvest of grapes and the age of wine, has this figurative sense: it is a “characteristic of the best period of a person’s work,” or it is something “classic.” Both parts of this definition translate into a very personal point of view when deciding what vintage is, because the meaning of the first part relates to an individual’s life, while the second one does not offer any delimitations for the concept of “classic.” Then, if we take only the “classic” part, there may not be any feeling or emotion related to it. If vintage equals classic, then this term is not be useful for this project, because not all the camera apps produce images that the public recognize as classic. Besides, if camera apps mimic only “classic” photography, then only a few cameras, lenses, film, and filters would be represented. The adjective retro points out primarily to the contexts of fashion, music, and design; thus, while oldie signifies something an item that has not lost popularity, a retro item tends to imitate or revive something from a relative recent past. A retro piece may not be considered classic but it may be nostalgic; however, pure nostalgia may not be the main reason why a fashion designer or a musician might create a retro piece. Retro gives more the idea of

⁷⁴ The definitions of vintage, saudade, retro, and nostalgia on this section come from the Oxford English Dictionary (OED), unless indicated otherwise. All entries accessed on 11 December 2012.

something that goes in the opposite direction, similar to the astronomic term retrograde motion. Several iPhoneography apps include the term “retro,” either in their names or the filters names, for example Retro Camera Plus and Retrica. Saudade is a Portuguese and Galician noun, which the OED defines as “longing, melancholy, nostalgia, as a supposed characteristic of the Portuguese or Brazilian temperament.” The word “longing” evokes the desire to go back to something that no longer exists or may never exist. Brazilian poets and musicians have popularized saudade as a motive. Saudade comes from the Latin *solitas* and it describes loss and lack of something or somebody, but it also involves love. In other words, an individual who experiences saudade for somebody has also the hope that he or she will be in contact with that person again.⁷⁵ Saudade is the only word of this group whose meaning is closer to the original connotation of nostalgia, since both involve emotion; however, as I discuss later in this chapter, an individual who experiences nostalgia may not necessarily experience melancholy or hope to see somebody again. Oldie, vintage and retro have been used to describe camera apps, while saudade has not been used to describe photography apps at all.

The word nostalgia has been used since the 1600s and it has been popular with scholars in the last two decades. Nostalgia has evolved from a medical term to a concept with several meanings, ranging from the synonym of “retro” to a philosophical approach that examines literary texts, photography, political systems, and general behavior. There are hundreds of academic and consumer books and articles dedicated to nostalgia in films, literature, politics, art, and medicine. The study of the nostalgia felt for material culture from the first half of the twentieth-century—and even for the Reagan era and the fall of the Berlin Wall, for example—has yielded dozens of dissertations and books. A few examples are, *Material Culture in America:*

⁷⁵ See “Ecologies of Affect: Placing Nostalgia, Desire, and Hope” Tonya K Davidson, Odine Park, and Rob Shields, editors.

Understanding Everyday Life by Helen Sheumaker and Shirley Teresa Wajda.⁷⁶ Christian W. Haerpfer's *Democracy and Enlargement in Post-Communist Europe*, for example, analyzes the nostalgia for the daily life in communist regimes; while *Yesterday's Self: Nostalgia and the Immigrant Identity* by Andreea Deciu Ritivoi focuses on nostalgia for the homeland of immigrants in the United States. In some cases, nostalgia acts as synonym of retro or saudade, or it simply justifies buying collectible items from a previous era. Elizabeth E. Guffey's *Retro: the Culture of Revival* represents a good example of the retro literature, while saudade is used as the main theme in the photographic study by Claude Lévi-Strauss and Sylvia Modelski's *Saudades do Brasil: a Photographic Memory*.

The Meaning of Nostalgia

Originally, nostalgia did not necessarily mean something that runs in the opposite way of the present, as the term retro suggests, nor it meant that we hope we will see or meet a person or a place again as when we experience saudade. The word *nostalgia* was coined by the Swiss medical student Johannes Hofer in 1678, and he used it a year later to name his dissertation, "Dissertatio Medica de Nostalgia, oder Heimwehe." The OED explains that Hofer juxtaposed the ancient Greek term *νόστος* or *nostos*, which means "return home," and the suffix *-αλγία* –or *algia*—a combined form also from the Greek that possibly means "to take care, mind form." The

⁷⁶ Haerpfer, Christian W. *Democracy and Enlargement in Post-Communist Europe: the Democratisation of the General Public in Fifteen Central and European Countries, 1191-1998*, London; New York: Routledge, 2002. Ritivoi, Andreea D. *Yesterday's Self: Nostalgia and the Immigrant Identity*. Lanham, Md: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002. Print. Sheumaker, Helen, and Shirley T. Wajda. *Material Culture in America: Understanding Everyday Life*. Santa Barbara, Calif: ABC-CLIO, 2008. Print. Guffey, Elizabeth E. *Retro: The Culture of Revival*. London: Reaktion, 2006. Print. Lévi-Strauss, Claude, and Sylvia Modelski. *Saudades Do Brasil: A Photographic Memoir*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1995. Print.

OED mentions that the German word “Heimweh” that appears on the second part of Hofer’s title means “home-sickness.”

In his dissertation, Hofer used the term “nostalgia” to baptize a physical condition that had a psychological origin. Hofer explained that a person who suffered from “nostalgia” was homesick and had the desire to go back to his or her homeland; in his study he found out that nostalgia was more prevalent in soldiers. The nostalgic soldier was the focus of *Modern Nostalgia: Siegfried Sasson, Trauma and the Second World War* by Robert Hemmings. This book analyzes poetry written during the two World Wars. Hemmings explains how English poets who wrote poems while fighting in Italy during World War II longed for a less industrialized England, a society that existed a generation before them, while the poets from the beginning of the Industrial Revolution felt nostalgic for a more rural England, even for the England of the Renaissance. Linda M. Austin points out in *Nostalgia in Translation, 1780-1917* that the word *nostalgia* has changed “from an occasional disease (of displaced soldiers during wartime) to a cultural aesthetic—a way of producing and consuming the past.” (2)

In the last decade, the dominant scholar on nostalgia studies has been Russian historian Svetlana Boym with her seminal book *The Future of Nostalgia*. Boym has been heavily cited in sociology, politics, literature, culture, and migration studies. I have attended two nostalgia conferences, “Nostalgia and Amnesia: Avenues of Remembering and Forgetting” in March 2011 at Claremont Graduate University in Claremont, California, and the “1st Global Conference-Exploring Nostalgia” in July 2015 at Mansfield College at the University of Oxford. The conference in California included only graduate students and most papers were focused on literature and politics, and only a few of them were about popular culture and art; whereas the Oxford conference had papers on current politics, nostalgia for communist regimes and their

everyday objects, literature, fine arts, museums, and cinema. Svetlana Boym was the main source of bibliography for the majority of participants who presented literary or political research at both conferences. From my point of view, the conference in Oxford should have included Boym in the title or the program, since most of the 25-plus presenters—who also attended every talk—knew almost word by word Boym’s definition, to the point that by the second panel, the presenters avoided reading the definition and quotes from *The Future of Nostalgia*.

Svetlana Boym starts her book by expressing the nostalgia that Russian émigrés experience while looking at a photograph of old Russia. Boym affirms that,

Nostalgia is a sentiment of loss and displacement, but it is also a romance with one’s own fantasy. Nostalgic love can only survive in a long-distance relationship. A cinematic image of nostalgia is a double exposure, or a superimposition of two images—of home and abroad, past and present, dream and everyday life. The moment we try to force it into a single image, it brakes the frame or burns the surface. (XIII-XIV)

Boym’s explanation of nostalgia seems closer to *saudade* than retro—or vintage or oldie—for the simple reason that she believes that love and romance form part of the nostalgic feeling. Since the Soviet Union may never be a reality again, there is no hope to see it again, which may be why Boym emphasizes the existence of dichotomies such as past and present, two different spaces, and here and there. I mentioned in chapter one that Hipstamatic’s Salvador lens may represent Boym’s idea of superimposing two images, one larger than the other one; perhaps the app’s developers are playing with the iPhoneographer’s fantasy of shooting original products by Kodak, Polaroid, Holga, AGFA and other companies from the past. I believe that, “loss and displacement” do not apply to iPhoneography, although this was the most quoted part of Boym’s definition in the two congresses I attended.

Amy Sodaro, who in part follows Boym’s ideas of nostalgia, analyses “Memory, History, and Nostalgia in Berlin’s Jewish Museum.” Sodaro mentions that this is not a “memorial museum,” but rather a new type of museum that celebrates “the heritage and culture of groups

that were victimized, instead of focusing on the negative past of victimization,” thus putting aside the “politics of regret” and “giving way to a politics of nostalgia.”⁷⁷ In this museum, Sodaro explains Germany’s contradiction of wanting to embrace both its past and present, however “embracing the past is sometimes easier than embracing present efforts at multiculturalism and integration of Berlin and Germany’s minorities, especially the Turkish community.” (88-89) Sodaro’s suggestion that nostalgia celebrates more than regrets the past, even when dealing with a very delicate subject as the Jewish Holocaust, helps make the case that nostalgia avoids confrontation, even when there is contradiction.

Anne Winkler proposes that the nostalgia about East Germany may be called “postmodern nostalgia.” Winkler’s essay, “‘Not Everything Was Good, but Many Things Were Better’ Nostalgia for East Germany and Its Politics” argues that,

Postmodern nostalgia, or nostalgia of style, involves no sense of loss, makes no reference to embodied memory, and consequently does not entail an appeal to recreate the past. Rather, individuals use material signifiers of Ostalgie arbitrarily as expressions of hipness. (28)

In my opinion, iPhoneographers may experience postmodern nostalgia, since they may not have first-hand experience using analog photographic equipment. iPhoneographers are living a mimicked experience using “old” cameras and viewing “old” photographs that are not as fragile as the real objects from past decades; if one photograph does not meet expectations, the photographer may decide to take one, two, or a thousand more, and that decision will not break the camera or waste rolls of film and boxes of paper, because—aside from time invested, and the smartphone’s battery and memory—nothing is lost. The “expression of hipness” through nostalgic iPhoneography and the consumption of nostalgic images form part of the fantasy

⁷⁷ Sodaro, Amy. "Memory, History, and Nostalgia in Berlin's Jewish Museum." *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 26.1 (2013): 77-91. Print.

marketed by Hipstamatic, Instagram, all the camera apps with the purpose of reproducing the experience of using a camera, and the App Store. Also, iPhoneographers and most smartphone camera users do not want to recreate the past by printing images and adding them to albums, by touching film and paper, or by changing by dealing with a lens that they can focus with their hands.

American sociologist Janelle L. Wilson has also contributed to the discussion with her book *Nostalgia, sanctuary of meaning*, in which she proposes that, “nostalgia connotes emotion, thought, and, in some sense, behavior.”⁷⁸ In other words, we are conscious when we buy an object, because we remember how we had one of those when we were young, or perhaps we like an image that mimics the times when our grandparents were adolescents. For Wilson, nostalgia implies more than mere sentimentality than a strong sense of loss and melancholy; because in her opinion nostalgia signifies a feeling that allows us to express our personality, to make friends by exchanging information on the objects or situations we feel nostalgic about. Wilson offers four perspectives to examine nostalgia: (1) “an intra-personal expression of self” that allows “a sense of continuity;” (2) “an interpersonal form of conversational play, serving the purpose of bonding;” (3) “a form of ideologizing or mystifying the past;” and (4) “a cultural commodity derived from the experience of a particular age-cohort and transformed into a market segment.” (xxiii) The first perspective falls into psychological and neurological studies that will be discussed later in this chapter. The other three perspectives seem to function together to form a community and help individuals with their identity, because it provides them with a sense of belonging to a community, even if that community was formed based on its buying power. In

⁷⁸ Wilson, Janelle L. *Nostalgia : Sanctuary of Meaning*. Lewisburg: Bucknell UP, 2005. Print.

Wilson's study, car collectors, for instance, need not only time and money to acquire their collectibles, they also need time and money to maintain and showcase the cars.

The iPhone and its skeuomorphic app design that reminds users of analog tools is an expensive smartphone that lets its owners belong to a community, which in some countries is more exclusive than in others. Occasional and self-proclaimed iPhoneographers belong to the iPhone community at large and to the smaller nostalgic iPhoneography at the same time. In 2015, the Swiss bank UBS compiled an index based on the average daily salary of residents of dozens of cities around the world. According to this index, a New Yorker needs to work only 3 days (24 hours) to buy an iPhone, while a Londoner works 40 hours, a resident of Mexico City must work for 217 hours (more than a month), and a worker from Kiev must work more than 627 hours, which equals to more than three months.⁷⁹ The more than two hundred and fifty dollars plus the telephone company contract that the low version of iPhone usually cost in the United States do not mean only three days of work in other places of this country. At least from 2007 to 2012 Apple's iPhone was the dominant smartphone in the United States, however its share has diminished to less than twenty percent, according to Statista. The iPhone price does not include the data plans, taxes, and contract related fees, which may reach one hundred dollars or more per month; while most Android smartphones are free with a plan or only cost a fraction of the iPhone.

As it has been mentioned in the Introduction and Chapter One of this project, the iPhone design influenced the smartphone industry,⁸⁰ computers, technology, and popular culture. The

⁷⁹ Alana Petroff. "How much do you have to work to afford an iPhone?" CNN Money. <http://money.cnn.com/2015/09/17/pf/iphone-cost-cities/> Accessed 18 September 2015

⁸⁰ Samsung and Apple have been in a constant fight in which the latter alleges that the former has copied several of iPhone patents; finally in December 2015 a California court ruled in favor of Apple. Mikey Campbell. "Samsung agrees to pay Apple \$548M in patent row" Dec 4,

iPhone community has buying power and influences the taste for certain trends, in this case nostalgic iPhoneography. In April of 2012, Instagram was made available to Android users,⁸¹ which helped the app grow its community faster than saying with the iPhone platform only. A few months later, Facebook's app included a series of filters, similar to the ones included with the iPhone default camera app, although it seemed that Facebook was going to compete with Instagram, it did not; by June of 2015, Facebook added stickers and text to its mobile app. Flickr, Yahoo!'s photography social network, had an iPhone app to upload photos to Flickr accounts. It did not have an appealing design and it was not as popular either as camera or a social network app. This situation changed in August of 2013, when Flickr relaunched its app with new filters and editing tools, all of them for free.⁸² Several blogs praised Flickr as the best photography app of that year, however it never was able to compete with Instagram, in part because Instagram has hundreds of celebrities posting still and moving images every day, while Flickr has been more a place for amateur and professional photographers, as well as a free place to store photographs online. Several Instagram-like apps became popular in 2012; Tadda and EyeEm, two German photo editors with their own social media platform similar to Instagram, became also more famous in 2012, the same year that the Korean Pudding.to app was launched.⁸³ With all these social media photography platforms—Instagram, Facebook, Flickr, EyeEm, Tadda, and

2015 <http://appleinsider.com/articles/15/12/04/samsung-agrees-to-pay-apple-548m-in-patent-row> Accessed 4 December 2015.

⁸¹ Jason Cipriani. "Instagram for Android is now available" Cnet. April 3, 2012. <http://www.cnet.com/how-to/instagram-for-android-is-now-available/> Accessed 4 April 2012

⁸² Flickr App. Version 2.20.1134 from August 29, 2013. App description at the App Store. Accessed 30 November 2015

⁸³ Pudding.to died after a year due to the lack of support from its parent company. It sent an email in April of 2013 to all its users urging them to download their photographs, because they were going to shut down the sharing service.

Pudding.to—what occurred is that instead of fading out, iPhoneography grew in number of users and images, and at the same time nostalgic iPhoneography solidified its popularity.

Even if Hipstamatic has created the most memorable camera app, Instagram has set the standard for sharing and popularizing nostalgic iPhoneography. In February of 2014, I presented a paper in Albuquerque at the Southwest/Texas Popular Culture Association/American Culture Association Conference entitled, “iPhoneography and the Instagramization of Mobile Photography.” I argued that Instagram had become the standard for mobile photography and most camera apps and photography social networks had adapted to Instagram’s look and way to edit and share photographs. Instagramization also means that by learning how to navigate Instagram, most users learn how to use other photography and video apps. The Instagramization of mobile media also translates into a democratization of nostalgic iPhoneography, because more diverse people have access to producing, curating, and consuming nostalgic iPhoneography and nostalgic phoneography—which includes Android and other lesser used operating systems. Phoneographers with a less expensive smartphone or who live in places where the Internet and mobile phone access work very slow—or for a substantial fee—still have the opportunity to play a role in this new way to produce and to think of photography. Besides, the word “Instagram” is also used as a verb, something that has not happened with Hipstamatic and that, in my opinion, has contributed to the popularity of Instagram outside of the nostalgic iPhoneography community.

In *Consumed Nostalgia: Memory in the Age of Fast Capitalism*, Gary Cross⁸⁴ studies oldie music, vinyl records, old television shows, and memorabilia related to heritage. Cross provides enough evidence that Svetlana Boym’s definition of nostalgia is not enough to explain

⁸⁴ Cross, Gary S. *Consumed Nostalgia: Memory in the Age of Fast Capitalism*. 2015. Print.

why people collect objects related to their childhood. Cross argues that even if something failed in the past, we collect it, because by collecting these objects, which he calls consumed nostalgia, “we recover our personal childhood.” The connection or rescue of “personal childhood” may not apply to iPhoneography—whether low or high resolution— because there are no actual physical objects to be touched, but rather a simulated camera that did not exist before; millions of Instagram users did not exist when the old Polaroids were popular, and the adolescents of today were young children when the simulated camera was born in 2009. For some iPhoneographers producing and consuming nostalgic images may help coping with fast-speed life as Cross suggests, but then why are iPhoneographers using one of the latest models of a handheld computer? The nostalgia for products that may no longer work in the way they did before is important in this case, since nostalgic iPhoneography praises the glitches and mistakes of analog cameras, the imperfect paper and lens, as well as faded instead of the clear images. For Cross, there are four types of nostalgia, “the communal, familial, fashion, and modern consumerist” and in all of them “the experiential quest is paramount.” (1-14) As explained earlier, the iPhoneography community may be identified as a synonym of consumer power. On Instagram, the themes of family, fashion, community and consumerism are evident, but the fashion is not from the past. Celebrities use the platform to promote their new looks, for example, and several companies use this platform to find models and spokespersons for their products and services. Cross argues that, “[t]oday’s nostalgia seems to help us cope with the extraordinary speed-up of time by letting us return to childhood.” (16) The notion of consumed nostalgia proposed by Cross offers some elements that would describe nostalgic photography perfectly if we were discussing Lomography—the company that produces and sells analog cameras, film, paper, and

other photographic equipment—but does not quite fit the nostalgia for sepia images produced by smartphones and posted on social media.

In *A Careful Longing: The Poetics and Problems of Nostalgia* Aaron Santesso⁸⁵ studies nostalgia as a literary genre; he mentions that both academic and medical scholars part from Hofer's definition to study the concept of nostalgia, in part because the word was actually not widely used until well into the twentieth century. He explains that this term nostalgia is known now thanks to the poets of the eighteenth-century. For Santesso, the concept of nostalgia "today is no longer simply a synonym for homesickness: we can be 'nostalgic' for hula hoops and ancient Greece; we can be 'nostalgic' for homes we never had and states we never experienced." Santesso proposes that nostalgia can be defined as "an intimately personal longing for the past" and also "as an impersonal, highly literary mode of idealization responding first and foremost to the concerns of the present." (13-15) Then, he lists the elements or tendencies of nostalgia: "it is historical...flexible but [it] prefers certain objects and tropes; and, significantly, it is a 'universal' sentiment..." (16) Literary analysis with the lens of nostalgia may be useful to study literature written by members of a diaspora or a minority group; it may also be useful to study visual arts and photography. The following pages deal with the notion of nostalgia from a psychological and physiological perspective, which match with Santesso's idea that nostalgia is a universal feeling.

A Psychological and Physiological Meaning of Nostalgia

In "Pancultural Nostalgia: Prototypical Conceptions Across Cultures," Erica G. Hepper and twenty other researchers from around the world interviewed hundreds of university students

⁸⁵ Santesso, Aaron. *A Careful Longing : The Poetics and Problems of Nostalgia*. Newark: U of Delaware, 2006. Print.

across eighteen countries, in five continents. Hepper and her team's objective was to find out if nostalgia can be considered a universal emotion. In their article, Hepper and her team state that most research related to emotions has been done with facial emotions, while those emotions that are expressed with language and social context—known as “self-conscious emotions”—have been difficult to study. Examples of self-conscious emotions are “guilt, shame, and pride.” Hepper describes nostalgia as a “widely recognized ... emotion, [that] appears prevalent in human experience, and serves pivotal psychological functions.” (734–735) The results of the study show that university students in other countries experience nostalgia in a similar way that students from the United States and the United Kingdom do. The authors propose that nostalgia “is a common emotional experience,” and then they provide the definition of what they consider “pancultural nostalgia,”

Thus, prototypical nostalgia is universally considered to involve remembering or reminiscing about fond memories from the past that may have personal meaning and/or involve relationships with others—and crucially, it is universally considered an emotion, especially one of longing. (742-743)

In spite of limitations of the study, which include the age and occupation of the participants plus the fact that only 18 countries were represented, Hepper concludes that “cultures share strikingly similar conceptions of nostalgia and agree that it is a complex emotion, with intriguing subtle differences in perceptions of some features.” (745)

Aside from being a universal emotion, psychologists have linked nostalgia to creativity, in this case, “induced nostalgia.” In “The State, Not the Trait, of Nostalgia Increases Creativity,” a 2013 study from Hong Kong, Ye, Ngan, and Hui conducted an experiment to find out if an individual exposed to nostalgic experiences would demonstrate more creativity; then, they studied “the effects of nostalgia” on narrations created by each participant. Ye, Ngan, and Hui explain that nostalgia promotes well-being and self-esteem, and that it may change how people

see the past, which sometimes may not be as good as they believe, “particularly in counterfactual thoughts.” The researchers point out that “counterfactual thoughts are notions with false antecedents and consequences brought by regularities of people who mentally and selectively” choose what parts of their past they will believe to be true. Thus, counterfactual thoughts may help an individual cope with daily life during periods of traumatic events. (318)

Ye, Ngan, and Hui argue that they found “clear evidence that the state, not the trait, of nostalgia was related to creativity. In other words, the effects of nostalgia on creativity come more from the activities aroused by nostalgia, rather than the nostalgia propensity of the individual.” (318) This means that iPhoneographers who create nostalgic-looking images may not necessarily feel melancholic. According to Ye, Ngan, and Hui’s study, two-hundred and eighty university students completed a questionnaire in which they answered questions such as, “How often do you experience nostalgia?” Participants also had to answer with detail open-ended questions about what had triggered nostalgia in them, when, and how they felt. (319) The questionnaire is similar to the one used by Hepper to find if nostalgia was a universal emotion. Ye, Ngan, and Hui discuss that,

When being primed with nostalgic experience, individuals recollect and reconstruct memories, which could activate brain areas, including MTL [medial temporal lobe] and hippocampus, to facilitate creativity performance... nostalgia affects creativity through the cognitive more than the emotional process, [and] these findings show that the amount of nostalgia narrative positively contributed to creativity, whereas the positivity of the content or salience of self in the writing had no significant effect. (321)

Based on Ye, Ngan, and Hui, it is possible to argue that by being exposed to photographs produced by nostalgic camera apps, iPhoneographers may become more creative, even if the resulting photographs may not be considered high art. Perhaps social media affects more the cognitive process of its users than their emotional process.

Nostalgia involves memory and how we remember the past. Endel Tulving suggests that there are several types of memory, one of them is what he calls episodic memory, which is related to nostalgia. Tulving explains that,

Episodic memory, very roughly speaking, is the kind of memory that allows one to remember past happenings from one's life. The definition implies that there are other 'kinds' of memory that do not have the same properties that episodic memory does, and that do not serve the same function. (1505)⁸⁶

Tulving proposes that memory means constructing, storing, retrieving, and reconstructing memories. Since the topic of this project is nostalgia for photographic styles that most iPhoneographers did not experience in their life before, it is important to see what Tulving says about "false memories," because not all retrieved memories are true. Tulving suggests that an individual does not need to be suffering "from any neurological or psychiatric dysfunction, nor need one be very young or very old, to have false memories and to remember events that never happened;" and the latest research supports the fact that "sometimes people remember events, say the 'miniature' event of a word or picture having appeared in a visually presented to-be-remembered list, that in fact did not appear." (1507) Therefore, it is possible to have memories or to be nostalgic for images that we never saw or touched.

Retrieving a memory equals traveling back and forth in time. Mental traveling, a science fiction sounding term, has been one of the focus of memory studies in the twenty-first century. Thomas Suddendorf and Michael C. Corballis explain that, "mental time travel is a term we coined to refer to the faculty that allows humans to mentally project themselves backwards in time to re-live, or forwards to pre-live, events" (p. 299); thus, one can be nostalgic by pre-living futures events. It is possible to say that by choosing what photographs we will share on social

⁸⁶ Baddeley, A., M. Conway, J. Aggleton, and Endel Tulving. "Episodic Memory and Common Sense: How Far Apart." *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences* 356.1413 (2001): 1505-515. Print.

media or other contexts we are predicting and “pre-living” the reactions of others. Suddendorf and Corballis concluded that humans “may be the only species capable of mental time travel because the others competing in our niche have become (or have been made) extinct.”⁸⁷

Nostalgia, Emotion, and Technology

The study of nostalgia and technology includes also emotion—or affection—and Human-Computer Interaction (HCI, for short). This section deals with the relationship between nostalgia and emotion and how users interact with handheld devices, in particular the iPhone. I propose that iPhoneographers interact with the iPhone cameras and produce nostalgic-looking images because they feel the need to control high technology, which otherwise would make them feel like machines.

A cool medium includes other media, suggested Marshall McLuhan in his essay “Media Hot and Cold.” One of the differences between hot and cold is that hot media are saturated with information, to the point that the users do not need to complete anything. “Hot media are, therefore, low in participation, and cool media are high in participation or completion by the audience.” (23) Following this principle, the design of new technology needs to take into consideration old media and thus resemble old interfaces. When the functions are easy to follow and the interface looks familiar, users tend to interact more with the new device. Most new technologies claim that they are as easy to operate as pushing a button, and in the case of handheld mobile devices some of the features work by pressing simulated buttons. When we look at most apps for Apple products, we realize that most of them refer to something old (either analog or digital) and familiar, and that anything new this week will become “dated” in a few

⁸⁷ Suddendorf and Corballis, "The Evolution of Foresight: What Is Mental Time Travel, and Is It Unique to Humans?" *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 30.3 (2007), 313.

months, even days. But the best apps are the ones that look and feel cool, like Angry Birds or Hipstamatic, or the ones that are so innovative that surprise us.

The iPhone is a cool medium because it includes other media. It is a telephone, an Internet browser, an iPod, a calculator, an instant messenger, email, one or hundreds of cameras, a photography album, etc. The iPhone allows users to interact with it in several ways: as musicians, photographers, social networkers, writers of text messages, and dozens of more activities and identities.

Lev Manovich⁸⁸ recalls the story of how in 1984 the Apple Computer corporation hired the Blade Runner's director Ridley Scott "to create a commercial to introduce" the Macintosh personal computer. For Manovich this is a historical event, because both the movie and the computer "defined the two aesthetics that, twenty years later, still rule contemporary culture."

Manovich explains that,

In contrast to the dark, decayed, 'postmodern' vision of the Blade Runner, the Graphical User Interface (GUI), popularized by Macintosh, remained true to the modernist values of clarity and functionality. The user's screen was ruled by straight lines and rectangular windows that contained smaller rectangles of individual files arranged in a grid. The computer communicated with the user via rectangular boxes containing clean black type rendered against a white background. (63)

A dialogue between a user and a computer was not a new concept at the time. Science fiction films, television, and literature had already explored this type of communication as topic. But the clean dialogue between a computer user and the computer was a revolution. Manovich affirms that this clean interface design was followed by the Palm Pilot in the 1990s, and later by other small devices like smartphones and other computers. Currently, most smartphones mimic a few functions of the iPhone, while tablets and e-readers have imitated the iPad.

⁸⁸ Manovich, Lev. *The Language of New Media*. 1st MIT Press Pbk. ed. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT, 2002. Print. Leonardo (Ser.) (Cambridge, Mass.).

Rosalind W. Picard was perhaps the first one to suggest that computers should have emotions. On her book *Affective Computing*⁸⁹ Picard argued that since people spend a large number of hours a day in front of a computer, then computers should have feelings similar to those experienced by humans. (2-5) Since the beginning, computers were based on mathematical and logical functions. Lev Manovich emphasizes that products created with computers can be described with numbers and they can be manipulated with algorithms. (27) Picard challenges computer designers and researchers not to focus on cognitive functions and computers, but rather center on emotions, because “[e]motions are important in human intelligence, rational decision making, social interaction, perception, memory, learning, creativity, and more. They are necessary for intelligent day-to-day functioning” (47). Picard not only challenged researchers to create intelligent computers and software, on the second part of her book she also offered a blueprint for what emotions should be part of computers.

At the end of the 1990s and the first part of the 2000s, researchers from the Scandinavian countries conducted numerous studies on emotions and texting. Ilpo Kalevi Koskinen, for example, studied what type of media Nokia smartphone users sent to each other. He concluded that the most important media were texting, photographs, and sound (music). Perhaps the reason why there was an abundance of research in those countries was that the Scandinavian corporation Nokia was the first company to create a smartphone, the Nokia 9000.⁹⁰ Nokia’s smartphone concept was announced in 1998, while the actual product entered the market in 2000.

Sherry Turkle has written several books on how different groups like seniors and children, for example, interact with virtual pets and small robots and develop emotional

⁸⁹ Picard, Rosalind W. *Affective Computing*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT, 1997. Print.

⁹⁰ The official Nokia 9000 brochure is located at: press.nokia.com/wp-content/uploads/mediaplugin/doc/evolution_of_voice_and_beyond_in_nokia_nseries.pdf

relationships with them. In *Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other*,⁹¹ Turkle begins with the idea that technology shapes the way we act, because it seduces us:

Technology is seductive when what it offers meets our human vulnerabilities. And as it turns out, we are very vulnerable indeed. We are lonely but fearful of intimacy. Digital connections and the sociable robot may offer the illusion of companionship without the demands of friendship. Our networked life allows us to hide from each other, even as we tethered to each other. We'd rather text than talk. (1)

Later, Turkle explains that new technology and the connection to the Internet have made people feel more secure. Technology impacts creativity, scholarship, education, businesses, etc. One of the examples Turkle provides to demonstrate the love for technology is that corporations baptize phone with names of “candies and ice cream flavors, chocolate, strawberry, vanilla.” She adds that “[t]he word ‘apps’ summons the pleasure of tasks accomplished on mobile devices, some of which, only recently, would not have dreamed possible.” (151) For Turkle, one of the risks of being constantly connected to others is that we may end up treating others like objects, or just numbers that we can easily manipulate. It is not unusual to read Facebook posts and tweets that brag about reaching a certain number of friends and followers. People tend to get emotional when someone unfriends or unfollows them, even if they do not know the other person in the real world. On Twitter and Instagram, pornographers create large numbers of accounts with ghost names and avatars with nude women and sexually graphic, short biographies; in order to avoid cancellation, most of these biographies sound more like those of housekeepers or women who believe they are popular. These ghost women follow Twitter and Instagram users, who generally choose to block or report those accounts as SPAM. In 2011 one of the most common complains on Twitter was, “I had to block several PORNO accounts in the last hour.” It is possible to say

⁹¹ Turkle, Sherry. *Alone Together : Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other*. 2011. Print.

that people who block the SPAM accounts do so because they feel violated. Somebody or something—a robot—has selected them and made them part of a larger number of something. Several YouTube and Instagram popular users have erased their accounts because they feel that they have been dishonest with themselves and their followers. The most mentioned excuse has been that they only were looking for more “likes” and “followers” than having fun or doing something right for others. Klout, a hybrid of social media and analytics, retrieves users’ social interactions from different social networks and creates a number from 1-100 to rank the users’ influence on the networks they usually interact. Klout has not been as popular as other social networks, perhaps due to the fact that friends and interactions become an algorithm that decides how popular we are, without taking into consideration the quality of the friendships, the type of comments, or the significance of images, emotions, or situations.

It is actions like the cleaning of SPAM, unfriending people, neatly arranging the timeline on Facebook, or deleting unwanted comments on photographs that make our online life much manageable and contribute, according to Turkle, to our unwillingness to go out and have a face to face relationship. “Today, our machine dream is to be never alone but always in control. This can’t happen when one is face-to-face with a person. But it can be accomplished with a robot or... by slipping through the portals of a digital life” (157). Turkle approaches HCI as a sociologist and psychologist. Although her book does not distinguish between regular computer and handheld devices, her ideas can be also applied to iPhone users. There are several memes titled “Zombie Apocalypse” that depict large number of smartphone users walking and with their eyes on the small screens; they do not pay attention to anything else, but the screen. Although these memes make fun of iPhone users, the scene has become real, to the point that in 2013, Arizona Senator John McCain was caught playing a game on his phone while he was pretending

to pay attention to the Senate session. Angry Birds, Words with Friends, Candy Crush, and other games have interrupted or prevented millions of people from going outside their house, from making small talk to people next to them, or along with texting they have been the cause of reckless driving.

Shades of Loneliness: Pathologies of a Technological Society by Richard Stivers⁹² studies our relationship with computers from a psychological point of view. For Turkle, the more sophisticated the technology the more it seduces and makes us feel comfortable; but Stivers believes that the contrary happens: “the technological utopianism” is actually the “‘religious’ myth that justifies technology.” (108) Stivers also affirms, that “Technology exacerbates our sense of powerlessness in two major ways. First, to the extent that technology becomes a system, power becomes objectified and abstract . . . Second, the more technology is applied to nature and society, the more life becomes unpredictable . . . We are thus double victims of our own logic.” (115) As a response to the increase of technology use, Stivers says that our defense mechanism is to act irrationally. Thus, is everybody online act irrational? Is every photograph taken with a smartphone a reminder that we have all lost our minds? Even mature and old individuals snap photographs, send and read text messages, and interact on social media. Both, Turkle and Stivers, make excellent points about how we have a very close relationship with our phones and by extension our computer and other devices. Even if Stivers only presents the negative impact of technology, I do believe that not every iPhone user acts completely irrational. Most of the one billion individuals who use Facebook monthly follow the rules and protocols imposed by the company, or by the different communities.

⁹² Stivers, Richard. *Shades of Loneliness : Pathologies of a Technological Society*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004. Print. New Social Formations.

Vilém Flusser explains in *Towards a Philosophy of Photography* that automatic photographic apparatuses (cameras) are programmed to produce photographs without any value. The camera has programmed the photographers, thus they produce information instead of images; and that the information is sent automatically from computer to computer. This results in a robotization of our life, and the loss of freedom. (80) Flusser explains that only experimental photographs have any meaning, because experimental photographers “are conscious that image, apparatus, program and information are the basic problems that they have to come to terms with. They are in fact consciously attempting to create unpredictable information...They know they are playing against the camera.” (81) Let us remember that Flusser wrote the essays gathered in this book at the beginning of the 1980s, when the use of the personal computer was very limited. Then, according to Flusser’s ideas, iPhoneographers and photographers in general who follow the crowd and apps, and do not experiment with their cameras are creating empty symbols. Thus, most Instagram accounts, Flickr photostreams, and Facebook albums are completely worthless. Yes, they go from one computer to another, but that fact does not make them art or provide them with any value.

Flusser’s last book, *Into the Universe of Technical Image*,⁹³ explores the same four elements of image, apparatus, program and information, but in a collection of essays named with infinitive verbs, which in my opinion indicates an active way of seeking, making, and questioning meaning. The essay entitled, “To Interact,” closes with the following paragraph,

Technical images must first destroy the old society so that a new one may appear. Today we are witnessing, not decadence, but the emergence of a new social form. And we can actually see this now. The relationship between people and images is descending into entropy, a fatal boredom is setting in, generating an impulse toward a new consciousness

⁹³ Flusser, Vilém, Roth, Nancy Ann, and Poster, Mark. *Into the Universe of Technical Images*. Minneapolis, MN: U of Minnesota P. Electronic Mediations. Web.

opposed to mass culture and in favor of a humane visual culture. This new structure can be seen, with a bit of optimism, as a transitional phase in the rise of a new culture. (68)

The optimistic part of this statement is that perhaps the way we take so many boring photographs may change soon, while the pessimistic side is the boredom, which has not disappeared and has resulted in more worthless images floating online, instead of on a new consciousness.

Trends

iPhoneography's old-style photography is less than eight-years-old, if we count from March 2009 when Hipstamatic was launched to today; this may be seen as a fad to many, yet the definition of "fad" by Henrik Vejlggaard states that a fad lasts "only for less than a year." (12) Instead, the nostalgia in iPhoneography falls into what Vejlggaard calls a "trend," a term that he defines as, "a process of change that (sometimes) comes about because of product development that (sometimes) results in new products." (8) In fashion, he writes, designers must have a product every year to stay current and visible, although a trend does not start every year, but rather every three years. (183) If the three-year cycle of trends is true in fashion, then nostalgic iPhoneography is a bona fide trend that has also re-invented itself every time Apple has upgraded its software. In the Internet and social media, the three-year cycle may be a one-year cycle instead, while in the app context, a three-year old app may be seen as on the "essentials" according to the App Store.

According to the chart of art trends by Vajlggaard, the art styles of the last 100 years have lasted 20 or less years.

Table 3: Art styles of the last 100 years.

| Trend | Number of years it lasted | Years when it happened |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Cubism and early abstract painting | 10 years | 1909-1920 |
| Constructivism and abstract painting | 20 years | 1920-1940 |
| Abstract expressionism | 15 years | 1945-1960 |
| Pop art | 10 years | 1960-1970 |
| Conceptual art | 7 years | 1965-1972 |

Source: Henrik Vejlgard, *Anatomy of a Trend* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2008), 195.

If conceptual art lasted only seven years in the 60s and 70s, then the eight-year-old nostalgic iPhoneography qualifies as an art style, and since the Internet accelerates the trends and shortens how long a trend lasts, this style may either be close to reaching a climax or, perhaps, reaching its final days.

In my opinion, it is fair to classify iPhoneography as an art and also to name it as the most relevant photography art of the 2010s. Nicholas Mirzoeff⁹⁴ states that traditional photography is dead, because “[t]he claim to represent the real has gone.” (65) Mirzoeff then calls Internet photographs “virtual photographs,” because they are computer products and the viewers have access to them via computers; in spite of their virtuality, he adds, they fall into the same categories of traditional photographs. (92-123) Therefore, if iPhoneography is virtual photography that mimics traditional photography, then it can be art. Although nostalgic iPhoneography may not become a higher art or an art trend as important as cubism, or abstract expressionism, it is nonetheless part of a broader style that may have a name later in this decade. For now, “nostalgic iPhoneography” may be the most descriptive name. The Apple Developers manual, the App Store, and the apps themselves call it “lomo,” which is short for “lomography.”

⁹⁴ Mirzoeff, Nicholas. *An Introduction to Visual Culture*. 2nd ed. London ; New York: Routledge, 2009. Print.

I reject this label since “lomo” usually refers to only those images produced with toy cameras, and, as I have mentioned in other chapters, nostalgic iPhoneography may produce images that mimic daguerreotypes and other early types of photographs. In 2011, I called this style “polarized nostalgic” to contrast the high technology with the low resolution images.

Henrik Vejlgard notes that “trends are always created by people, so trend spotting is about watching people who create or are preoccupied with new and innovative styles.” (27) Vejlgard offers the following anatomy of a trend: it starts with trendsetters, continues with trend followers, next come early mainstreamers, then mainstreamers plus late mainstreamers, and finally the conservatives. On this list, “the trendsetters [represent] the most open and curious individuals with regard to style and taste,” while the conservatives will only change if they cannot longer find the products they have used for years, even decades. (71-72) Vejlgard mentions that artists, celebrities, rich people, gay men, and subcultural groups are usually the trendsetters; and that those who start the trend tend to belong or have connectedness with polysocial groups. (41-53) Vejlgard considers that people and their friends, plus the people they influence, are essential for a trend; and thought Hollywood and television may participate in the dissemination of the new style, the trend does not result of a commercial campaign.

In regards to nostalgic photography apps, the look did not start from zero; it came from the lomo effect; besides, the “lomo effect” is based on analog cameras and some of those effects have been offered by Photoshop for several years. Following Henrik Vejlgard, the trendsetters then are the app developers and the early adopters of these apps. The trend originated with the developers and users of the apps OldCamera, ClassicToy, Format126, Polarize, and a few others, but they were not connected to a social-sharing network of their own, and they did not have a strong identity to influence millions of social network users. When Vejlgard says that Madonna

is a trendsetter and people ask why Madonna instead of her hairdresser, for example, he explains that he considers Madonna the trendsetter because she is the one that has connectedness and influences several social groups; and that the trend takes off simply because Madonna adopted it. In the same style of argument, I propose that the Hipstamatic developers—and early users of this camera app—can be counted as the trendsetters, Instagram would be the trend follower, Facebook the early mainstreamer, while the default camera app, Snapseed, and iColorama S are the mainstreamers. In the same fashion, Instagram would be the trendsetter of social-sharing apps, and Snapseed the trendsetter for iPad art.

iPhoneography: A Polarized Nostalgia

I mentioned early in this chapter that there are three different types of camera applications for iPhone, aside from the standard camera. Some cameras produce clean, professional-looking images, others render novelty images, and a third type mimics nostalgic, period cameras, or what I call polarized nostalgia. I define this term as follows:

a. It is the use of high technology (Hi-Fi) to compose a low technology (Lo-Fi) or analog-looking product; and

b. It also refers to the Polaroid camera and developing process, which is frequently simulated in iPhone applications.

App designers and iPhoneographers tend to be conscious that they are using one of the most sophisticated and latest technologies—the iPhone—to render photographs that resemble images produced by an analog, plastic, cheap, toy camera. Polarized nostalgia can also be applied to other categories of apps, for example music, board and card games, as well as handwriting apps. This notion can also be applied to design in general.

If we apply the ideas of Turkle, Stivers, and Flusser to polarized nostalgia, it is possible to say that the conscious use of high technology to simulate low technology, plus the “cute” names⁹⁵ of some nostalgic apps may make us feel more comfortable interacting with technology in general and with the iPhone camera in particular. But this polarized nostalgia needs to be an ongoing experiment, otherwise the apparatus (the iPhone camera apps) will end up programming the photographer to produce and share useless, boring symbols, as Flusser suggests, and it will take away the freedom of the photographer.

Nostalgia and iPhoneography

It is important to study how nostalgic iPhone camera apps have changed our perception of images, art, the past, and the future; as well as the way we act when we produce, edit, and share images. A nostalgic-looking photograph involves positive emotion, creativity, aggression, and either comfort or discomfort using a high tech tool—the iPhone. It is possible to state that when iPhoneographers produce, interact with, and share nostalgic-looking photographs they are conscious of the following: (1) The images are not 100% like the images from the past; (2) the experience of using an iPhone and an analog camera are not the same, even if the photographer has never touched or known an analog camera similar to Hipstamatic or an “instant” camera; (3) the nostalgic images may become a source of creativity; and (4) iPhoneographers may predict and pre-live what reactions their images will provoke.

Nostalgia is a universal emotion and it takes place thanks to memory travel, which is a human trait. Taking photographs constitutes an aggression to others and nature, but images allow us to remember the past better or to only remember what we photographed. I choose to believe

⁹⁵ Some of those names are ToyCamera, ClassicTOY, ClassicPAN, Hipstamatic, RetroCamera, PinholeHD, and Lumière.

that nostalgia helps individuals with their well-being and their creativity, and that the use of nostalgic camera apps helps iPhoneographers to reduce the stress of using high technology when producing future memories.

Chapter Three: The iPhoneography Community

The objectives of this chapter are to describe the methodology used on this project, to define the iPhoneography community, and to discuss the results of a small survey conducted in this community. The survey attempted to find out the reason or reasons why iPhoneographers prefer to produce nostalgic-looking iPhoneography, which is the dominant style of photography on social media. An individual who experiences nostalgia, as described in chapter two, does not necessarily long for the past; nostalgia may be seen as a creative tool. The reason for sharing and interacting with black and white, monochromatic, faded, or any other old-style mobile photography may not be nostalgia itself, or because the images look nostalgic. In this chapter, I will argue that the reason the nostalgic style exists is because iPhoneographers are having fun while producing and sharing those images. The method is the ethnographic visual approach to observe the community. The iPhone community is comprised of self-identified iPhoneographers or mobile photographers who have formed groups on Facebook and Flickr; they also publish their art on Instagram, EyeEm, Ogg!, and other lesser known photography social media apps. iPhoneographers frequently contribute with images and comments to blogs dedicated to mobile photography, and submit images to contests and magazines dedicated to this type of art. An iPhoneographer who belongs to this small community shoots and edits still or moving images with an iPhone and contributes with images, comments, or as a curator of images produced with certain apps. Thus, not every individual who owns an iPhone may self-identify as iPhoneographer, and not every iPhoneographer may be part of this fragmented community. This

chapter is divided into two sections, the first section defines the ethnographic visual approach and the iPhoneography community, while the second section focuses on the small survey and its results.

First, it is important to reiterate that I define myself as an iPhoneographer; and second, that I actively contribute to the iPhoneography community; I am what Lai and Chen call a “poster” because I usually post my photographs on several groups on Facebook and other social network systems.⁹⁶ At the same time, I am a “lurker,” because I am a passive member of the community whenever there are exhibits, competitions, or curation projects, in part because I am also studying the online interactions. Since 2009, I have tested and used thousands of iPhone photography and video apps. Besides, I actively belong to several photo-sharing services (Flickr, Instagram, Oggl, EyeEm) and about a dozen groups related to mobile photography on Facebook, among them iPhoneographers, MPA (Mobile Photography Awards), WiAM (Worldwide iPhoneography Art Movement), NEM KARMA (New Era Museum Karma), Mobile Monochromes, NEM Self (New Era Museum Self), and iColorama, among others. My photographs have been included in a traditional gallery in Italy and an online gallery with base in New York, the EyeEm blog, and the Life in Lofi blog. A couple of images were published by an academic journal.⁹⁷ I have used my images in several presentations at the PechaKucha Williamsburg Night event.⁹⁸ I have also been part of the testing process of the EyeEm app and created the EyeEm entry on Wikipedia.

⁹⁶ Lai, Hui-Min, and Chen, Tsung Teng. "Knowledge Sharing in Interest Online Communities: A Comparison of Posters and Lurkers." *Computers in Human Behavior* 35 (2014): 295-306. Print.

⁹⁷ Monsters and the Monstrous Journal

⁹⁸ PechaKucha presentations are known as short presentations about art and design. Presenters show 20 slides, each one for only 20 seconds. <http://www.pechakucha.org/>

My inclination to study iPhoneography began in 2010 while doing research on texting and emoticons.⁹⁹ While reading the Pew Internet Research data on the interactions that teenagers had with their friends on mobile social media, I noticed that besides communicating with text and video in most social platforms, teenagers and adults were posting photographs produced with toy camera apps, which at the time were mainly Hipstamatic, Instagram, ToyCamera, and a few other apps. There was a stream of photographs depicting present life but with old style images. There were also app developers and bloggers reviewing photography apps who were interacting and sharing photos that looked old. In several occasions, I posted analog or digital photographs on social networks and my friends or followers barely commented on them. In comparison, when I posted photographs taken with Hipstamatic, Instagram, or other nostalgic-looking apps,¹⁰⁰ the comments and likes appeared rapidly and in larger numbers.¹⁰¹ Aside from my observations of people interacting with my own photographs, I started reading online comments on Flickr groups, posts on Facebook pages and groups, and comments on Instagram and other photography sharing platforms. In a 2011 presentation at the Popular Culture Association / American Culture Association of the Southwest, I explained that in 2010-2011 there were groups on Flickr in which participants were asking and looking for apps that had already disappeared from the App Store. At the time of those posts, the participants felt nostalgic for a group of toy camera apps, even though the apps had only been missing from the App Store for two or three months. Two of

⁹⁹ The resulting paper was presented at two different conferences, the Popular Culture Association/American Culture Association of the Southwest 2010 in San Antonio, Texas; and the Mid-Atlantic Popular and American Culture Association 2010 in Fairfax, Virginia.

¹⁰⁰ Or an image edited with several apps.

¹⁰¹ Favorite, love, or like; every social media network has a different term to call the fact that the participants favor an post—text, photograph, audio, video, link, or emojis—or a comment to the original post.

those apps were Format126 and Polarize, which produced images with low fidelity (low-fi) and Polaroid-style respectively. In my opinion, the fact that iPhoneographers were longing for those apps and inquiring about how to bring them back, or preserve them in their phones, was “instant nostalgia,” a term that sounds as an oxymoron and may imply an artificial feeling, but I used it to refer to something recently lost. It is impossible to know whether those comments were expressed only because the photographers wanted to collect the “old” apps, or if it was because they wanted to produce nostalgic-looking photographs as opposed to producing crisp and clean images. The discussions on this Flickr group did not continue for a long time. It seems that those groups and discussions migrated to Facebook, where there is more interaction inside community pages or groups. At the time when I read all the discussions, I had three of the missing apps in my phone. All the apps used mostly randomness to produce an image. None of these apps ever returned to the App Store.

I started this project in 2012 with an emphasis on Flickr more than Facebook or Instagram. Since then, I have become friends with more than a thousand iPhoneographers on Flickr and more than five hundred on Facebook. Perhaps half of my Facebook friends are from North America, and the rest are from Europe, East Asia, Australia, and a handful from Africa. On Flickr, the system automatically extracts the Exif (exchangeable image file format) data from each photograph. That data is not 100% reliable, especially when an image is produced using several apps. Flickr also has a much better system to count how many times a photograph has been seen and interacted with. When individuals share content on social media, they also share part of their daily life, their knowledge, and view of the world. Zeng and Wei propose that members of Flickr and other image-sharing networks, not only share the photographs, but also produce “content exhibiting their idiosyncratic interests, tastes, and skill sets.” Members of these

online communities learn about each other's photographs while they socialize.¹⁰² There have been several cases in which community members tell a similar story, that when they started using Facebook, Instagram, or any other photography social network, they did not consider themselves photographers or artists, but after a few years of being part of a community they describe themselves as artists or photographers. I have met two women in this situation on Facebook. Magdalena Olszanowski explains in "The 1x1 Common" that three of the four women she interviewed for the article did not have "professional photography practices before [they] started Instagramming."¹⁰³

On Flickr there are groups in which members compete to have a certain number of "visual comments"¹⁰⁴ that are basically stars, rings, diamonds, or any other item that works as a

¹⁰² Xiaohua Zeng, Liyuan Wei. "Social Ties and User Content Generation: Evidence from Flickr." *Information Systems Research* 24.1 (2013): 71-87. Web. Zeng and Wei's study has several limitations, since they studied when two Flickr members became friends, and then how often they uploaded images to the site. Unless a person follows specifically another Flickr member, usually the interaction does not occur in the same way as it does on Facebook. Personally, I do not believe that Flickr members influence each other in the same way they do on Facebook. While on Facebook "friends" may follow each other, or members of a group may interact in the group's space, on Flickr members do not need to follow each other in order to interact with their photographs. This results on less personal interactions.

¹⁰³ Olszanowski, Magdalena. "The Role of Instagram's Hashtag in the Development and Maintenance of Feminist Exchange." In N. Rambukkana. *Hashtag Publics : The Power and Politics of Discursive Networks*. 2015. Print. One of the women mentioned by Olszanowski is one of my Facebook friends.

¹⁰⁴ While on Facebook members may hit "like" or a few emotions to react to a post, on Flickr members add an image as a "favorite;" however, in some groups, the comments are visuals generated by an html code that members must add with their comment. The code renders images of rings, diamonds, or any other item that for the group means appreciation or praising. After a certain number of "comments" on the first level, the image goes to a different level of the group. If you post on a group, you must "comment" on other images and you also need to keep an eye on your image. Some level contests last a few hours or days. It is time consuming and there are not that many meaningful interactions. Once a few images make it to the last level, the one with the most comments at that level wins the contest. In 2012-13, most groups that had this dynamic did not accept images taken with an iPhone, or if they did, those images did not make it far since the quality of the iPhone images was not as high as the ones taken with larger cameras.

type of currency for the group, without writing a constructive or meaningful critique, on Facebook the groups have a less competitive and more quality feedback. On Facebook the photographers voluntarily disclose the apps used to produce the image. Based on experience using the apps and the groups where the images are posted, a Facebook user may know if the photographer is, in fact, using an iPhone and with which apps they worked to produce an image. Since it is much easier for me to interact with Facebook than Flickr groups, I have paid more attention to Facebook than to any other social media platform.

Over the last two years, a few of my friends have switched from iPhone to Android due to the iPhone's high price, or because they grew tired of the phone; as a result, their Android photographs have better resolution, and limited nostalgic filters added. Most self-identified iPhoneographers have not switched to Android, or if they did, they kept their iPad or iPod as a camera and image editor.

iPhoneography may be a modest source of income for professional and amateur photographers. There are a couple of English speaking bloggers who make a modest living reviewing apps. There are more fashion and commercial photographers who shoot or edit with iPhone. In some social networks such as Flickr and EyeEm, members may license their photographs through Getty Images and other image agencies, thus making their hobby and social interaction a modest source of money. Usually the images sell for less than ten dollars and the photographer earns only a portion of the sale.

There are other groups in which participants provide more feedback, and even others that are only a gallery or showcase for events or contests that took place outside of Flickr.

The Ethnographic Visual Approach and the iPhoneography Community

“Modern life takes place onscreen” stated Nicholas Mirzoeff in 1999, because in the industrialized western countries cameras are everywhere, from surveillance to personal computers. (1) It may not be an exaggeration to assert that in the 2010s—by choice—a great percentage of people’s lives takes place on the small screen of smartphones, tablets, and wearable devices. For Mirzoeff, the interaction “with visual apparatuses” becomes an event composed of “the visual sign, the technology that enables and sustains that sign, and the viewer.” (13) Chapters one and two explain the sign and the technology, or the iPhone photography apps and what is nostalgia and the main photography apps that produce nostalgic-looking images; in this chapter, the focus changes to the last component of Mirzoeff’s statement: the viewer who may also be the producer of those images. Stephen Spencer explains in *Visual Research Methods in the Social Sciences*¹⁰⁵ that in the last few years,

There have been changes in the form and fluidity of new media technologies permitting a succession of new forms of visual experience. This plasticity of digital communications allows the simultaneous experience of visual, audio, verbal data as fluid and easily manipulated...” (12)

Most social media services follow in one way or another Facebook’s style; they mix images, text, individual user’s posts mixed with advertising. This visual mix of legitimate news, personal news, community commentary, jokes, and advertising is called “feed” or “news feed.” In my opinion, the Facebook feed represents the best example of Spencer’s simultaneous experience, because it places in front of the user the following components: text, still and moving images, links to multimedia files, single and multiplayer games, and the possibility of making video-calls, plus the “ads feed” that includes similar components to the rest of the page, but in a

¹⁰⁵ Spencer, Steve. *Visual Research Methods in the Social Sciences: Awakening Visions*. London ; New York, NY: Routledge, 2011. Print.

smaller area. The visual experience of each user is different, since it depends on algorithms with numbers from several sources of the user's information; among the sources are the user's demographics, his or her interaction with the platform either online or through the mobile app, and the interaction with other users and ads. Throughout the years, Facebook, Instagram, Flickr, Twitter, EyeEm, and Pinterest have tweaked their designs with the intention to offer their users a similar experience online and on the mobile apps.¹⁰⁶ This visual plasticity changes on a smartphone screen. If the social media page opens on an app is different from when it opens on a browser; still, the feed of personal and friends' news is there, plus still and moving images, and some advertising.

Internet users interact with nostalgic visuals, either on large or small screens. Thus, the place of this research is the Internet and mobile devices. Elisenda Ardévol¹⁰⁷ suggests that for sociologists Internet research became a legitimate field in the 1990s with cyberspace studies. (75) Sarah Pink, who has written extensively on visual research and methodology, agrees with Ardévol, then points out that Internet visual research changed considerably from the early 2000s to the 2010s, in part due to mobile devices, turning the Internet not into one, but rather several spaces. (113-121) Ardévol also proposes that "the Internet, as well as visual media, can be understood from two different research perspectives: as a subject of study and as a research tool" with a reflexive approach; in other words, the Internet and, by extension, mobile social media are the places where the researcher finds a community subject to study and, simultaneously,

¹⁰⁶ Although the user has the option to interact or not with the news feeds on the screen, she or he cannot manipulate every aspect of the visual plasticity that surrounds him or her; the extreme example of visual plasticity without the public's direct interaction is the surveillance systems that prevail in public and commercial spaces.

¹⁰⁷ Ardévol, Elisenda. "Virtual/Visual Ethnography: Methodological Crossroads at the Intersection of Visual and Internet Research" Sarah Pink editor. *Advances in Visual Methodology*. London ; Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2012. Print.

communicates with the members of that community by using the Internet. (Ardévol 75-86) It is necessary to add social media to Ardévol's statement, because currently the researcher may study and communicate with the Internet and social media. Pink takes the concepts of "multi-sensoriality" and "movement" and states, "I understand places in visual Internet ethnography as constituted by intensities of flows that converge, become interwoven or entangled, and in which the visual ethnographer her-or-himself becomes implicated." Most research focused on small social network communities or interviews of members of those communities requires researchers to have some affinity to the community and belong to the community, because otherwise researchers would not have access to that community. Taking into consideration Ardévol and Pink, it is necessary to define first the iPhoneographer community, and then approach that community by using the Internet, which is what I have done in the previous pages of this chapter. Thus, the place of research of this dissertation is the Internet—accessed either by desktop, laptop, or mobile devices, it does not matter if the photographs were produced with mobile apps—and the methodological approach is ethnography.

In the context of traditional research, my involvement as an iPhoneographer and producer of nostalgic-looking images translates into a methodology problem. Bill Gillham warns about this situation when he asserts that before starting the research, "do not fall into the trap that you already know the topics...[because] we don't know the group as a researcher."¹⁰⁹ Claudia Mitchell¹¹⁰ points out that visual research may "raise many new questions and suggest new blurring of boundaries: Is it research or is it art? Is it truth? Does the camera lie?" among other

¹⁰⁹ Gillham, Bill. *Small-scale Social Survey Methods: Real World Research*. (New York: Continuum International Pub. Group, 2008), 33.

¹¹⁰ Mitchell, Claudia. *Doing Visual Research*. Los Angeles, Calif. ; London: SAGE, 2011. Print.

questions. (12) Thus, as Sarah Pink declares, the Internet ethnographer becomes involved in his or her own research.

Anthropologists Bochner and Ellis explain that autoethnography allows the researcher to be part of the community being observed.¹¹¹ Autoethnography has been used mostly in the fields of psychology, education, and art; fields in which the personality of the researcher and his or her life experience guides the research and, generally, becomes the most important participant of the research. As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, I belong to several photosharing platforms, but not all them allow communities that exchange information on apps and iPhoneography itself. The first platform I attempted to work with was Flickr, a site that provides more statistics than others. The downside of Flickr, in spite of having large groups of iPhoneographers and nostalgic iPhoneography, is that the community does not interact as much on Flickr. Although the amount of iPhoneographer “followers” I have on this site may be close to 1,500, Flickr has proved to be a storage place for photographs or to showcase one’s work as a collection or slideshow.¹¹² Instagram, EyeEm, Oggl, and other similar apps do not allow groups in the same way Facebook does. There are groups on Instagram and their members communicate with each other outside of Instagram. The use of hashtags on Instagram allows the groups to find each other’s images. Since the images are not in one place or section as they are on Facebook, the conversations are difficult to observe.¹¹³ Twitter and Tumblr are used more to broadcast the

¹¹¹ Bochner, Arthur P., and Ellis, Carolyn. *Ethnographically Speaking: Autoethnography, Literature, and Aesthetics*. AltaMira Press, Walnut Creek, Oxford, 2002.

¹¹² When I asked my “followers” on Flickr to help me with a survey for this project, only one of more than 4,500 answered “yes,” while on Facebook there were more answers from a smaller group of friends.

¹¹³ Magdalena Olszanowski, a visual artist, does research on feminism and Instagram. She belongs and writes about women’s groups and censorship. One of her articles is "Feminist

addition of an image to a gallery than to comment on them. In general, most iPhoneographers with whom I interact share their images on more than one platform, for example, they may post the same image on Instagram, Facebook, and Flickr; still, they interact more with Facebook “friends” than with Flickr and Instagram “followers.” In my experience, individuals interested on quantitative research related to topics identified with hashtags—for example food, fashion, politics, selfies, pets—may benefit more from Flickr and Instagram, while those interested on qualitative research may be able to interact more with the community on Facebook.¹¹⁴

Any community or group has a space and rules for its members. The realm of mobile social media and the Internet is the space of the iPhoneography community, while the main unwritten rules to belong to the community are 1)to produce nostalgic images, 2)to interact with or curate nostalgic images, and 3)to identify themselves as an iPhoneographer. Millions of individuals around the globe own iPhones and they may take and share photographs; still, not all of them produce nostalgic images. Thus, not all iPhoneographers who produce nostalgic images may identify themselves as iPhoneographers, as it happens with millions of social media users. For the purpose of this project, any individual who owns an iPhone and has used at least one app that produces nostalgic-looking photographs may be counted as part of the nostalgic iPhoneography community. Members may not be aware that they belong to the community; in fact, they may not even realize that nostalgic iPhoneography is now an established style of photography. It is important to point out that according to Sinn and Syn, more than ninety

Self-Imaging and Instagram: Tactics of Circumventing Sensorship." *Visual Communication Quarterly* 21.2 (2014): 83-95. Web.

¹¹⁴ This has been the situation from 2013 to 2016. Flickr’s website allows more interaction than Instagram, but it is still more difficult to interact on Flickr than on Facebook. Instagram belongs to Facebook, which may be the reason why Instagram may never compete with its parent company and continue as a photosharing app only.

percent of typical Facebook users provide photographs of themselves and almost six of every ten users snap pictures “with Facebook in mind.” (13-14)¹¹⁵ The number of iPhoneographers who shoot photographs planning to post them on Facebook or other social media may be even larger, since each group has different rules and challenges. For example, the group Hipstamatic 365 creates a different challenge each week: Hipstographers—iPhoneographers who shoot with the Hipstamatic app—must share photographs taken with a specific set of lens and film; otherwise, the images may be deleted from the group. Thus, Facebook may be in the minds of a large number of iPhoneographers when they shoot or edit their photographs.

The Nostalgic iPhoneography Community

The general definition of community provided by the OED is, “[a] body of people or things viewed collectively.” A more useful meaning for this project, also from the OED, comes from the Internet era. It states that a community is “[a]n online facility, such as an electronic bulletin board, forum, or chat room, where users can share information or discuss topics of mutual interest.” This definition contains three sample quotes from the years 1988, 1997, and 2007. The first quote’s source was an article called “Re: Cyberpunk Vocab” from the Usenet’s newsgroup alt.cyberpunk; in that quote “community” equaled “the Internet,” because it mentions that it was a collection of computers or “The Net,” where “info (sic) is exchanged.” The second quote mentions that AOL (America Online) is a “community” with email and live chats, while the last quote gives advice on websites with software and tools for blogs.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁵ Sinn, Donghee, and Sue Syn. "Personal Documentation on a Social Network Site: Facebook, a Collection of Moments from Your Life?" *Archival Science* 14.2 (2014): 95-124. Web.

¹¹⁶ "community, n." OED Online. Oxford University Press, December 2015. Web. 28 December 2015.

A large number of iPhoneographers, if not all, belong to the nostalgic iPhoneography community because most self-identified iPhoneographers produce images that mimic those taken with analog cameras. Therefore, the definition of “iPhoneography community” applies to the “nostalgic iPhoneography community.” Based on the OED’s Internet community definition, the “iPhoneography community” may be defined as,

The sum of dozens of social media groups and blogs where iPhoneographers share, curate, and interact with images captured and edited with iPhone, and, by extension, with iPod touch and iPad.

In this project, the definition stops with “iPhone,” because the photography apps originated with the iPhone; besides, there are no iPadeographers or iPodeographers, for instance. Hundreds of iPhoneographers also own an iPad¹¹⁷ or an iPod touch—an iPhone without the phone capability—and they use them to capture or edit images; the apps may be the same and therefore, it is not possible to recognize which apparatus produced the image. The iPad helps to work with smaller details and render more painterly compositions. Only a few artists post their iPad mini photographs on iPhoneography groups.

The iPhoneography community belongs to a larger and even more fragmented community, the mobile or smartphone photography community, an umbrella that groups iPad, iPod, Android smartphones, Windows smartphones, tablets, watches, GoPro, and any other mobile device that includes a camera. Several photography camera and editor apps have a Facebook app page in which they provide news related to the app and photography in general. Some of those pages allow their followers to post on the page, similar to a group; while other pages do not allow any individual posts to the page, and they only let users comment on posts.

¹¹⁷ The iPad has become the preferred canvas for drawing and painting.

Chapter one mentions that the most important and popular apps to produce nostalgic-looking images are Hipstamatic, Instagram, and Snapseed; other apps are iColorama S, Oggl, and EyeEm. During the first week of May 2016, the Instagram app Facebook page had more than 30 million likes; in contrast, Hipstamatic's app page had close to 145,000 likes, EyeEm more than 131,000, Snapseed more than 24,000, and iColorama more than 3,000. Each one of these apps has several pages, usually related to a region; for example, there pages for Hipstamatic UK, Snapseed Thailand, EyeEm Porto (Portugal), and Instagram Italia (Italy). These pages represent the community at large or the community in different languages and regions. The 30 million Facebook users who like the Instagram app page may not be dedicated iPhoneographers or the iPhone may not be their camera of choice. EyeEm and Snapseed are in similar situation. If Facebook users like the Hipstamatic page, it does not necessarily mean that they use the app. In other words, the app page likers may not be part of the community.

Perhaps the best places to find the nostalgic iPhoneography community on Facebook are the groups that are independent from app developers and app pages, and, that in turn, are administrated and curated by amateur or experienced iPhoneographers. The community members interact in clusters of iPhoneographers on Instagram, Flickr, Facebook, and EyeEm, for example. First, it is important to examine the large groups, then the smaller groups.

Two of the largest Facebook groups are The Mobile Photography Awards ([facebook.com/mobilephotoawards](https://www.facebook.com/mobilephotoawards)), which in February of 2016 had more than 7,500 members (Figs. 3.1 and 3.2); the other is the Facebook public group WiAM – Worldwide iPhoneography Art Movement ([facebook.com/groups/iPhotox](https://www.facebook.com/groups/iPhotox)), founded by Mariano Luchini, a group that has more than 6,100 members.



Figure 3.1: A screenshot of The MPA, The Mobile Photography Awards, on Facebook. The page is called “Mobile Photo Awards,” most likely because it is shorter and easier. February of 2016, facebook.com/mobilephotoawards.

| PAGE INFO | |
|-------------------|---|
| Start Date | Founded on August 24, 2011 |
| Short Description | The Official Facebook page of the Mobile Photo Awards |
| Long Description | The official Facebook page of the Mobile Photo Awards - the world's largest competition and open gallery call for mobile photography and art. |
| Website | www.mobilephotoawards.com www.the-mpas.com |

Figure 3.2: A screenshot of The MPA’s page info on Facebook. Screenshot taken on February 2016 from Facebook, facebook.com/mobilephotoawards.

The MPA’s Facebook page and website provide instructions on how to enter the awards, who the judges are, where the exhibits have taken and will take place, and the awards’ results. However, visitors cannot find the place where the brick-and-mortar organization is located. The

website’s “About” section includes the start year and the long description from the Facebook page. It also explains that,

If it’s true what Henri Cartier-Bresson says, that our first 10,000 photos will be our worst, then mobile photography has given people an historic opportunity to quickly get past 10,001. The MPA is a showcase for photographers and artists who have embraced this decisive moment. The awards sponsors are photography apps, blogs dedicated exclusively to iPhoneography, blogs that inform on mobile photography, and art galleries.¹¹⁸

The MPA shared on its Facebook page two posters announcing the 2015 fifth annual awards.

One of the posters shows a white Samsung smartphone and the other a black iPhone. Although the awards are open to all brands of smartphones and tablets, most—if not all—the winners and honorable mentions are iPhoneographers.¹¹⁹

The WiAM- Worldwide iPhoneography Art Movement has about 1,400 members less than MPA, yet there is more interaction at WiAM. (Figure 3.3) The reason may be that WiAM is a group where anybody can post an image or a comment, and the post may be seen by all members who visit the page or subscribes to the group’s notifications. On the MPA page only the page’s administrators may post images or links and page users may only comment or like the posts. Italian painter and photographer Mariano Luchini, WiAM’s founder, mentions on this group’s description that iPhoneography for him “is the freedom to create, when I want where I want, a very special art form.”¹²⁰ He also explains that,

WiAM’s members, who are both amateur and professional photographers, aim to capture and reveal the hidden beauty that exists in all our daily lives[.] iPhoneography becomes

¹¹⁸ FAQ. Mobile Photo Awards, accessed February 1, 2016
<http://mobilephotoawards.com/faq-2/>

¹¹⁹ I know this because most winners since 2013 are my friends on Facebook and we belong to several iPhone-related groups.

¹²⁰ WiAM- Worldwide iPhone Art Movement. Description. Accessed December 28, 2015. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/iPhotox/>

the meeting point and dissemination of this new movement and the connection between the online and offline worlds of photography.

For Luchini, iPhoneography is the medium to take a photograph from the offline to the online world.



Figure 3.3: A screenshot of the WiAM- Worldwide iPhoneography Art Movement public group on Facebook. WiAM Public Group Facebook page. Accessed February 2016, [facebook.com/groups/iPhotox](https://www.facebook.com/groups/iPhotox).

The WiAM group page offers the best definition of iPhoneography and it is tempting to say that this group is the synonym of the iPhoneography community and the nostalgic iPhoneography community. It is difficult to estimate how many iPhoneographers have an account on Facebook. Taking into consideration that there a few dozens of iPhoneographers have two or more Facebook accounts, and that after joining the WiAM a few dozens more stopped using iPhone or simply do not participate in the group, it may not be accurate to say that the 6,100-plus WiAM community is the entire iPhoneography or nostalgic iPhoneography community. Since it is a page for users proficient in English, users who do not read English may stay away from it. Many users may not know of this community, and there might be others who do not consider themselves iPhoneographers, but they are actually producing art with their

iPhones. A side note, the WiAM group warns that it will erase any “inappropriate” images, a rule that may also deter individuals from joining the group.

The Nostalgic iPhoneography Community

In my opinion, a small Facebook group has less than 500 members and it is the best way to be part of the community in general and the nostalgic iPhoneography community in particular. The small groups tend to have more daily interactions, to the point that friendships or at least camaraderie usually forms amongst photographers after a few weeks of joining the group. The NEM (New Era Museum) groups are the best organizations where to find trendsetters of the nostalgic iPhoneography. NEM groups are usually closely moderated by at least one member of the group and every few weeks the curators pick the best images and post them in the group’s feed. NEM groups also have a blog where they post their curations. As of May of 2016, most NEM groups counted with less than 400 members and each group had a very specific topic or type of photography. There are NEM groups for Hipstamatic, black and white photography, human portraits, clouds, and the color red to name a few. The small groups allow participants who have an affinity for a topic to share images and comment on that topic. For example, the NEM Clouds members share only photographs of clouds and their discussions revolve about the place, the sky on the photograph, and if they shot a cumulus or another type of cloud. On their study on Flickr members, Zeng and Wei explain that this phenomenon is called “homophily” and it “could be due to opportunity, shared true intrinsic characteristics, or affinity. (74)¹²¹ iPhoneography allows constant experimentation, therefore one iPhoneographer may produce several types of images and may be active on several small groups everyday: drawings,

¹²¹ Xiaohua Zeng, Liyuan Wei. "Social Ties and User Content Generation: Evidence from Flickr." *Information Systems Research* 24.1 (2013): 71-87. Print.

paintings, clear and/or nostalgic-looking photographs, gifs or vines—one to six-seconds flickering videos—and videos. In contrast, it is not unusual to encounter iPhoneographers who only publish black and white images, or who decide to publish strictly images they shoot with Hipstamatic; other photographers only use Instagram filters. Photographers tend to look for an affinity group where they can post their work and learn from others.

Niland et al¹²² studied a small group of 18-25 year-olds from New Zealand who used Facebook daily; they found out that these users “made sense of friendship as ‘fun times together’, an ‘investment’ and ‘protection’, and these friendship themes were evident when Facebook was taken up as a tool to ‘do’ friendship.” Although most dedicated iPhoneographers seem to be middle-aged, they do invest time knowing each other by providing feedback on their photographs, interacting with each other’s text posts, and in a few cases by visiting each other face-to-face. The continuous interaction makes the community stronger; Hashim and Tan explain¹²³ that, “[e]ncouraging continuous knowledge sharing can help [the] community have a greater likelihood of retaining members who are willing to contribute their knowledge or experience,” which in this case is sharing knowledge of the release of a new app, the characteristics and limits of an app, an add-on gadget, or an iPhone model; as well as information on when apps can be downloaded free of charge, plus exhibitions and community-volunteering opportunities.

¹²² Niland, Patricia, Antonia C. Lyons, Ian Goodwin, and Fiona Hutton. "Friendship Work on Facebook: Young Adults' Understandings and Practices of Friendship." *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology* 25.2 (2015): 123-37. Print.

¹²³ Hashim, and Tan. "The Mediating Role of Trust and Commitment on Members' Continuous Knowledge Sharing Intention: A Commitment-trust Theory Perspective." *International Journal of Information Management* 35.2 (2015): 145-51. Web.

For iPhoneographers, sharing images may equal to networking with other photographers and also sharing personal information on Facebook, and thus documenting their daily life. Donghee Sinn and Sue Yeon Syn argue that for the typical user, “Facebook and other social network services will function as personal documentation tools as long as they satisfy users with their services pertaining to networking and entertaining.” (121)¹²⁴ In a small study of South Korean Facebook users, Choi, Jung, and Lee¹²⁵ found out that, “[m]aintaining relationships and connecting with friends are the strongest motives for using SNSs [social network sites] in general. However, among other motives, only the entertainment motive has a significant relationship with the intention to use Facebook.”¹²⁶ (2672) If it is assumed that Facebook users—including photographers—use the site as personal documentation tool and a source of entertainment, it is fair to also assume that editing and sharing photographs are part of the documentation and the entertainment. The personal documentation may equal the knowledge that iPhoneographers acquire by using and mastering apps.

For the iPhoneography community that produces nostalgic-looking images, sharing and commenting on each other’s work means networking; while the entertaining part mentioned by Sinn & Syn and Choi et al may come from networking, and capturing and sharing the images.

¹²⁴ On their study, Sinn and Syn were focused on the use of Facebook as a “personal documentation” tool. Artistic photography may count as part of a Facebook user’s “personal documentation. Sinn, Donghee, and Sue Syn. "Personal Documentation on a Social Network Site: Facebook, a Collection of Moments from Your Life?" *Archival Science* 14.2 (2014): 95-124. Web.

¹²⁵ The study included 162 participants who answered an online survey. The authors intended to find out why South Koreans preferred to use Facebook instead of its Korean equivalent, CyWorld.

¹²⁶ Choi, Jung, and Lee. "What Causes Users to Switch from a Local to a Global Social Network Site? The Cultural, Social, Economic, and Motivational Factors of Facebook’s Globalization." *Computers in Human Behavior* 29.6 (2013): 2665-673. Print.

Groups with less than 500 members allow for more networking activities—posting images and comments—which means that there are more posters than lurkers. Sanna Malinen¹²⁷ reminds us that, “[s]ome users are focused on self-promotion and share content in order to obtain personal gain, whereas others prefer to share content that is useful for others with the aim of helping other community members.” (236) It is assumed that by joining the small Facebook groups, members support and promote phoneography and iPhoneography at the same time they promote themselves. Once in a while, a few photographers attempt to lecture the group or several groups on a topic related to photography and art in general, or app features and iPhoneography in particular.

The interactions on small Facebook groups are entertainment, they are “enjoyable” because of the group administrators’ enthusiasm, or because of the way the group members interact. As Sanna Malinen explains, Facebook group administrators may create better communities if they know what motivates passive users—lurkers—to join the communities, as well as what motivates “long-term users to continue to participate.” (233) Hui-Min Lai and Tsung Teng Chen¹²⁸ studied the extrinsic, intrinsic, and intra-community motivations that inspire posters and lurkers to share knowledge on online communities. They mention that,

This study suggests that perceived moderator’s enthusiasm is very important for attracting potential posters. [...] This study also suggests that offline activities are critical for encouraging lurkers to participate. Thus, community moderators could hold community gatherings, or community platform developers could create features for members to make contact with each other, and members could make friends with those who have common interests through offline activities. Finally, anticipation of the enjoyability of interest communities significantly influenced both posters and lurkers to

¹²⁷ Malinen, Sanna. "Understanding User Participation in Online Communities: A Systematic Literature Review of Empirical Studies." *Computers in Human Behavior* 46 (2015): 228-38. Web.

¹²⁸ Lai, and Chen. "Knowledge Sharing in Interest Online Communities: A Comparison of Posters and Lurkers." *Computers in Human Behavior* 35 (2014): 295-306. Web.

engage in knowledge sharing, with no significant difference between the two groups. (304)

As mentioned before, several small groups organize contests that exhibit the winner images in brick-and-mortar galleries. There are also dozens of iPhoneographers who know others in person.

Lai and Chen explain that community members experience “enjoyability” or “enjoyment of playfulness” when they see the contents posted on the community’s space and when they interact with the rest of the community. “The enjoyability the member derives from virtual community content and interactions with others might lead to an intention to share knowledge with the community.” (300)

The iPhoneography groups feeds contain mostly images that change every few minutes, which translates into an ever changing exhibition of photographs with a common theme, images produced or edited with a specific app or filter, and images that mimic paintings. I have seen for years that in World iPhoneography Art Movement (WiAM) and other large groups that most images receive little to no interaction, perhaps because in large groups there are less close relationships and less enjoyment; as a result, there are more lurkers than posters. In groups with less than 1000 members, and especially those with less than 500, photographs may get from one to a few dozens of likes and a few comments. Images may become popular for minutes and they may be forgotten in a week; however, the groups that have curators instead of moderators, tend to have more posters than lurkers. The photographs with the most interactions or the ones that curators choose as the best of the month, for instance, usually show all the characteristics of what is considered good photography practices—i.e. composition, angle, point of view, light, theme—plus innovative uses of an app or filter. In a few groups, the moderators or curators press the like

button of every image posted to the group feed, thus showing that the image follows the aesthetics and themes described in the group's rules.

The act of "liking" an image may mean just that, accepting that the image genuinely pleases its spectator. It may also mean that liking the image equals accepting it because it fits the group's rules, or an appreciation for the artist's body of work. Unlike the competition Flickr groups, on Facebook the members of a group are not pushed to like or comment on other members' work in order to have permission to post an image, or to keep the membership in that group. On the Facebook groups, in a few cases, "liking" an image equals literally that the liker¹²⁹ appreciates and values the image. If in the small iPhoneography groups, "like" also translates into the acceptance of an image because it follows the groups' rules, then it is possible to speculate that liking in the Facebook iPhoneography community context equals enjoyment because the image complies or exceeds the rules.

Liking may also show support for the photographer's work, because her or his images are an inspiration for the liker, or because the images push the app's limits. The latter means that the photographer is sharing not only art, but also knowledge. As with any social media group, there are iPhoneographers who do not accept criticism, provide negative comments, post the same image in several groups, or cheat by using cameras and desktop software. There are also other iPhoneographers who dedicate time, money, and resources to promote the community and the iPhoneography in general. One way these photographers help the community is by promoting the community with exhibitions and contests, writing and publishing articles on blogs or print media.

This community did not exist in 2009 when Hipstamatic became the most popular app, or a few months later when Instagram became mainstream. The original trends perhaps started with

¹²⁹ In social media, a "liker" is a person who hits the "like" button to show his or her appreciation for a post.

the developers and a few photographers. Nowadays, the trends start inside the Facebook groups and continue on other social media platforms, among them Instagram and Flickr. The blurry lines between photography, drawing, and painting may also be a source of fun and enjoyment for iPhoneographers; however, this may be the topic of future research in which the objective is to focus on apps such as iColorama, Snapseed, Waterlog, ArtRage, SketchBook, Sketches, and others that render painterly and paint-like images.

Although the community seems disperse, there about two-hundred iPhoneographers who seem to belong to several Facebook groups and post very often. Obviously, contest winners and group leaders are more popular than other members. It is important to mention that during the last week of January of 2016 a well-known male iPhoneographer from Amsterdam died after being less than a week in a comma.¹³⁰ The Dutch photographer had participated in several meet-ups in Amsterdam with other members of the community. Several iPhoneographers asked Hipstamatic to help remember him and in February, only a few weeks after his death, Hipstamatic released the “Arjan BW film.” For a couple of weeks, the community posted a large number of black and white images with the hashtag “#ArjanBW.” At the time Arjan BW was released, Hipstamatic had released more than 65 films and almost the same number of lenses. It seems that this was the first time Hipstamatic named a film or lens after a member of the community. Figure 3.4 shows the film description by Hipstamatic.

¹³⁰ A female iPhoneographer from Texas also died after a day in a comma during the same week. Both were my friends, although I interacted more with the nurse/iPhoneographer from Texas. She was starting to be recognized but she was not as popular as the Dutchman.

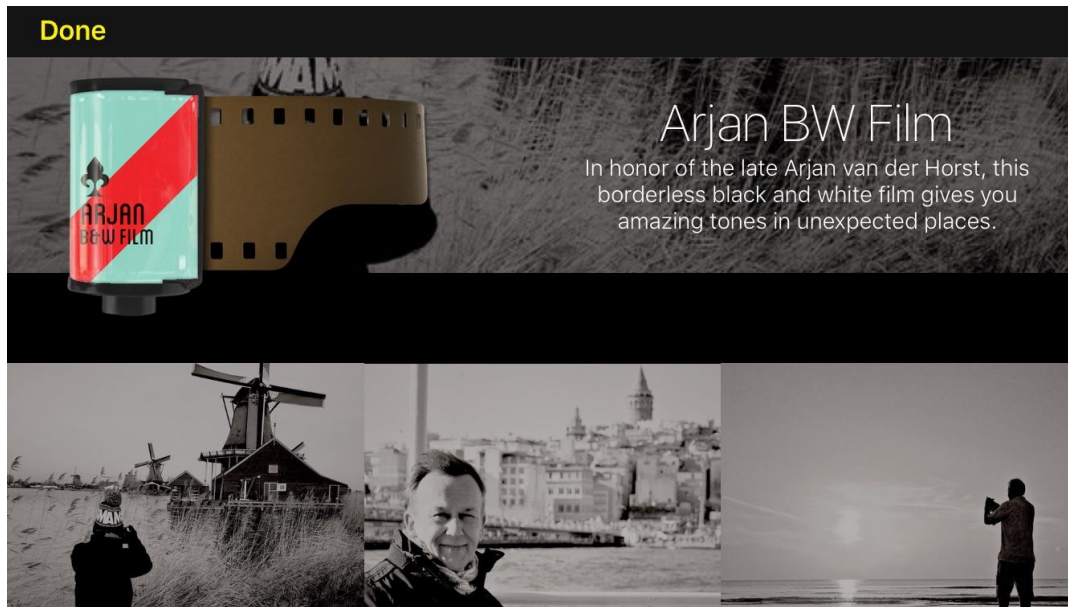


Figure 3.4: The Arjan BW Film by Hipstamatic. The description reads, “In honor of the late Arjan van der Horst, this borderless black and white film gives you amazing tones in unexpected places.”

Another example of the community changing apps’ features is iColorama’s community. Teresita Alonso Garit,¹³¹ who is one of the developers of iColorama (iPad version) and iColorama S (iPhone and iPod touch version), administrates the Facebook iColorama Community App Page, which has more than 3000 members who may post images edited with iColorama. At the App Store, the app’s full name is “iColorama S – Photo Editor and Brush Painter,” which makes it one of the most very versatile apps. See Figure 3.5.

¹³¹ According to the app description on the App Store, in May of 2016 the developer of iColorama and iColorama S was Enrique Alonso. In October of 2016, the developer was Katerina Aliexsieienko. I do not have any information regarding this change.



Figure 3.5: Screen shot of the iColorama Community App Page. Taken in May 1, 2016.

Teresita Alonso Garit continuously surveys the iColorama users to find out how the app is working and what new features should the app include or fix. The act of crowdsourcing ideas has helped iColorama establish itself as one of the essential apps of self-identified iPhoneographers; while the developer has become the most accessible developer and a trendsetter. Alonso Garit also promotes training videos and tutorials¹³² to make a better use of iColorama's features. Often, this developer runs a contest in which the winner image becomes part of the launching process of the app. In other words, when an iPhone has not enough memory, it takes a few seconds for an app to open. iColorama is one of the few photography-related apps that takes more than 300MB of memory.¹³³ Therefore, when users open it, they will likely see a sample image created by a member of the Facebook iColorama Community. The

¹³² The videos are produced by Alonso Garit or her friends. The videos are always free and they represent some of the best resources to produce high quality, painterly images.

¹³³ As of February 10, 2016, the iColorama app file took up more than 340 MB of memory; in comparison, Google's Snapseed is 82MB, Hipstamatic 47 MB, Instagram 26MB, while Facebook took almost 138 MB of memory. In perspective, several popular games take between 100 to 150 MB of the iPhone's memory, and Apple's GarageBand—which is one of the largest, if not the largest app I have used—takes more than 728 MB.

developers of EyeEm and Hipstamatic have befriended hundreds of iPhoneographers on Facebook, however Alonso Garit has been the most dedicated and accessible developer of all I have met. In a casual Facebook Messenger interaction, I asked her if she thinks that iPhoneography now is mimicking painting more than photography and her answer was yes; and when I asked her, “do you think that iPhoneography is more related to surrealism or impressionism?” Alonso Garit responded that in iPhoneography “there is everything. (It is) Probably (more related to) “surrealism.”¹³⁴ The reason I asked Alonso Garit this question is because, in my opinion, iPhoneography has been following certain painting and photography movements, for example oil painting, impressionism, surrealism, minimalism, abstract art, pop art, and cartoons; plus daguerreotypes, cyanotypes, tint types, instant, and toy camera photography, among others. I have followed the evolution of iColorama and it is fair to mention that this app provides all the tools to render surrealist, Dadaist, or pop art-style images. I believe that iColorama is an editor with more visual art users than photographers; it is perhaps a more essential app for iPhoneographers than Snapseed, and the main reason is the participation of the iColorama artists on the process of evaluating and testing the app.

Surveying the Community

Once the iPhoneography community is defined, it is easy to find the nostalgic iPhoneography community, because the latter is smaller portion of the former. If app developers and early adopters of apps that render nostalgic-looking images—the trendsetters—are the only ones surveyed, then it is difficult to find out why the everyday iPhoneographer has also adopted the style. Several commercial how-to books and the apps themselves emphasize the fact that

¹³⁴ Teresita Alonso Garit. “iPhoneography and Art.” Personal message via Facebook Messenger. 18 December 2014.

famous analog and digital photographers use now iPhoneography for their projects, such as Annie Leibovitz, Ben Watts, and Diego Uchitel. If only the famous photographers are included, then it becomes difficult and perhaps expensive to interview those photographers.

I am an iPhoneographer doing autoethnographic visual research on nostalgic iPhoneography. Following Henrik Vejlgaard's *Anatomy of a Trend*, this particular activity of doing visual research, plus being part of the small community make me a trend spotter, and allows me to propose that there can be several quick answers to the question, "Why iPhone users produce, share, and interact with nostalgic-looking images?" I have also observed and read for months my fellow community members' conversations and it is not possible to answer this question by paying attention only to the iPhoneography group interactions, even if those are small groups. It is clear that the main motivation to join the groups and stay active is to post images and share and learn from other photographers, but why do they choose to post more analog and nostalgic-looking images than digital images? The immediate answer would be that nostalgia for film and analog camera is not the main reason why

I have compiled a list of six possible simple answers, all of them based on early observations and interactions: (1) The means to produce nostalgic-looking images form part of the essentials of most photography and video apps,¹³⁵ which may make users believe that those are the only tools they have available. (2) The App Store has promoted the nostalgic feel by choosing Hipstamatic, Instagram, and Snapseed, as the best photography apps. This promotion, by default, has supported the trend of the nostalgic style for several years. (3) In general, people tend to believe that black and white and sepia photography have more artistic value, therefore they feel more inclined to choose images that mimic old-style, analog photographs. (4) Since the

¹³⁵ As of March 2016, only a few apps will not render old-style images. Even the default iPhone camera app offers eight filters that can be applied before taking the photo.

Internet seems flooded with nostalgic-looking images produced by Instagram and other apps, people tend to follow the mainstream trends and styles. (5) The contact with high technology inspires iPhone users to produce low-tech or nostalgic looking images, because users long for low-tech tools and analog images. (6)Users enjoy the idea of playing with images, in other words, they have fun transforming recently taken photographs into images that pretend to be from a different time. Thus, playing with images means only that, “playing.” In other words, people have fun producing and sharing nostalgic images.

The first two points focus on the tools readily available to iPhoneographers, a camera with editing capability and easy access to the App Store. The iPhone itself has changed from having only a camera to adding the basic eight filters that make the basis of all photography apps. The belief that black and white photography has a higher degree of artistry combined the tendency of people on social media to follow trends—points three and four from the list above—may explain people’s beliefs and social media behaviors; while the last two refer to human-computer interaction. iPhone users may take clean, poster-like, adorned, and nostalgic photos, and yet they choose to focus on nostalgic ones. From the list above, numbers 2 and 3 would support the use of any style of photography; while number 5 would justify the use of any app that resembles an analog tool. Number 4 goes along with Vajlgaard’s trend theory; while number 5 was somehow discussed in previous chapters. As mentioned in the introduction of this chapter, my belief is that iPhoneographers are having fun by using the iPhone, starting or spotting and following trends. As expressed above, Apple produces the camera and has promoted the nostalgic look.

Point number 3 on the list of possible answers touches on a very common idea: that black and white, sepia, and any monotone or monochrome photographs have more artistic merit than

color and digital photography. It might be that black and white has been around longer than color photography. Mirzoeff states that,

Even today, artistic photography is far more likely to be in black-and-white than color even though everyday photography is almost exclusively in color. In this view, the intrusion of color into the photographic image disrupted its claim to be accurate by distracting the eye. Its mechanical exactitude nonetheless prohibited its being considered art. The impossibility of classifying colored photography shows that the formal rules that had governed the visual image since the early modern period no longer held good. (62)

The rejection of the smartphone's "mechanical exactitude" may also explain why photographers prefer to produce low-quality-looking images instead of color and clear photographs. Usually, my black and white profile photos on Facebook receive more attention than colorful images,¹³⁶ and most photos curated by iPhoneography blogs are also black and white or monotones. Thus, the iPhone not only mimics photography, but also appropriates the same rules of analog and digital photography. If everybody with an iPhone may become an iPhoneographer, then, do all iPhoneographers have the same idea that black and white photography is more artistic? What happens with all the very young iPhoneographers who may not even know a toy camera or who have never taken a roll of film to develop at the pharmacy or the photography shop?

Answers 1 to 5 from the list provide the background for last one, which in my opinion is the strongest answer. Again, there are other styles—apps and filters—available, like the grunge, bokeh, and decimated effects. Perhaps, I am wrong and all the answers are equally right. Number 6 on the list of possible answers alludes to the act of playing with images and the iPhone. "Play" denotes more than a dozen of concepts, but three of them are important in this context; one: engage in a sport or a recreation; two: to take part in a game; and three: to gain approval.

(Merriam-Webster) Taking and interacting with photographs has become a sport or a recreational

¹³⁶ There are photographs that get a great amount of attention due to the nature of the news they announce, for example the end of an illness, achieved weight loss, a new look, or a similar situation. They may be selfies, group shots, or any other type of photography.

game of some sorts for most social media participants; in my experience, I have observed that people are concerned with the number of photos they post online and the reaction their friends have. There are games on imgur,¹³⁷ Flickr, and third companies connected to Instagram in which the image with the most interaction wins virtual or real prizes; similarly, there are several blogs and Facebook pages that curate images, either based on the interaction they have on a social media space, or according to the blogger or page administrator's point of view. Participating in a Flickr group that has a contest, being selected for the blogs iPhoneography.com, Life In Lofi.com, or App Whisperer, may require little or no action on the photographer's part. On Flickr, for example, photographers may comment on another photographer's image with the hope that the other photographer will reply with a comment on a photo they have in one of the contests. On Reddit¹³⁸ people vote for an image by viewing it and commenting on it; the image may be featured on a Reddit group or section page; while on Facebook the most commented on or liked images would show as "important news" on several people's news feed.

The second meaning of play falls into "gaming," which in this context has the sense of playing an online game, either individually or in a multiplayer mode; this type of play would be one or more steps from the meaning of play explained above.

The last concept of play, "to gain approval," forms part of the evolution of a trend in the context of Henrik Vajlgaard's theory. Then in this sense, the late mainstreamers and conservatives would be the ones using nostalgic images to gain the approval of others in social media. In my opinion, it would be very difficult to find out if there are groups being reluctant to join the large numbers of nostalgic iPhoneographers—or nostalgic Android photographers.

¹³⁷ Pronounced "ee-ma-ger," imgur.com

¹³⁸ Reddit.com has become the social media space where most memes originate. A meme includes text and an image, either a photograph, a graphic, or a drawing.

Play or playing, having fun, and entertainment, and enjoyment all seem too close and too important on social media networks, specially on Facebook, where people may spend hours playing games alone or in group. It is possible to say that iPhoneographers play with their phones, but rather than a being an action close to a game app, this play is closer to exploring the features and limits of apps. The phrase “having fun” may contain all the other terms, because to a person is having fun when he or she experiences enjoyment that results from playing and being entertained. From a grammatical point of view, the gerund having translates into an ongoing situation.

I propose that iPhoneographers publish nostalgic, low-tech style images because they are having fun because they are playing with the tools available to them on their iPhone. I do not believe that the interactions with others—either on small or large groups—on Facebook are as important as creating images, neither as fun as manipulating photographs. Having fun results from two activities: a)the use of nostalgic camera apps, and b)sharing the photographs on social networks. Both activities may occur while users are either in public, or alone at home inspecting, commenting and re-sharing images, as Turkle suggests on *Alone Together* and Flusser predicts in his two books on images and photography. If iPhoneographers and iPhoneography spectators were not having fun with nostalgic images, then why did the App Store declared Hipstamatic, Instagram, and Snapseed each one “App of the Year” instead of Camera+, ProCamera, and apps that render clean-looking or futuristic images? Why, then, did Facebook choose to pay one billion dollars for Instagram?

The artistic merit of nostalgic or black and white images may be far away from most iPhoneographers’ mind, but it may be on the trendsetters’ point of view. I can say that at least from 2009 to 2011, Hipstamatic, Instagram, and Snapseed produced the most original nostalgic

images. App developers and early app adopters—trendsetters—played with nostalgic images and made them mainstream.

The Survey

In order to prove or disprove that iPhoneographers produce and share nostalgic-looking images because they are having fun, it was necessary to survey the iPhoneography community. The tool was a small study based on five demographic questions (gender, age range, nationality, country of residency, the survey number, and iPhone/smartphone ownership) plus twenty questions that inquire about iPhone usage and nostalgic photography. The twenty questions were designed to find out what apps iPhoneographers use to take, edit, and share their images, as well as what they think about nostalgic-looking images. Some of the questions also cover the six possible answers offered above—the iPhone as the apparatus that contains the tools to create nostalgic-looking images, the influence of Apple and its App Store, the belief that black and white is better than color photography, the photography trends on Instagram and other social networks, the use of high-tech to produce low-tech-looking images, and the use the production of old images as way to play or pass time. The following are the survey questions, without the demographic section.

Table 4: Survey questions.

| |
|---|
| 1.How long have you been taking photos with your iPhone or other smartphone? |
| 2.What percentage of the use of your iPhone would you say is dedicated to taking, editing, sharing, printing, and seeing photographs? |
| 3.How many apps do you think you have used or remember using? |
| 4.Which apps do you use the most? (up to 10) |
| 5.Mention the apps you like the most even if you don't use them frequently. |
| 6.Which apps do you use more frequently to take photos? |
| 7.Which apps do you prefer to use to take photos? |
| 8.In general, what percentage of the photos you take do you edit? |
| 9.Do you share your iPhone photos online? |
| 10.How do you share your photos online? |
| 11.Which apps do you prefer to use to share your photos? |
| 12.What type of photo do you take the most, black & white or color? |
| 13.What type of photo do you prefer to take, black & white, color, or pixelated/glitched? |
| 14.What photo would you rather produce, a photo that looks old, a photo that looks very professional, or a photo that looks silly? |
| 15.If you take or prefer to photos that look old, why do you prefer to produce this type of photo? |
| 16.What themes do you prefer to photograph, selfies, shoes, dogs/cats, food/daily life, landscapes/nature, family/friends, sky, or other? |
| 17.Why do you take, edit, and share photos taken with your iPhone? |
| 18.Do you own other cameras? |
| 19.Do you use other cameras to take daily photos? |
| 20.Do you have any other comments related to apps, iPhoneography, or mobile photography in general? |

Although the original plan was to follow Bill Gillham's suggestion of collecting data by conducting interviews either in person or video in order to obtain a higher response,¹³⁹ (59) it became evident at an early planning stage that in order to have more than 20 one-on-one interviews, it would have taken several months of scheduling and planning, plus dozens of gigabytes of memory to record and store video. Thus, the most efficient way to conduct the interviews was online, without video or audio recording.

Virginia Commonwealth University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved this survey and assigned it the number HM20002903. The approval includes the survey in English

¹³⁹ Small-Scale Social Survey Methods.

and Spanish, its hosting on SurveyMonkey.com, plus advertising on Flickr, Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook. The invitation to participate in this survey (see Figure 3.6) was in English and Spanish; it informed the public that they needed to be at least 18-years-old, to own an iPhone, and have an email address in order to receive the link to the survey—each language had its own link—and a code for the survey. This code was from EN01 to EN250 for the answers in English, while SP01 to SP250 for the answers in Spanish. When participants received the email, they had instructions to click on a link to the SurveyMonkey.com survey, that their information they provided was going to be used in this project without names, and there was also an invitation to write me back should they had any questions or comments.

Hello,
I am writing my dissertation on
nostalgia and iPhone camera
apps. Would you help me? You
only need to answer a survey
about how you use your iPhone
to take, edit, and share photos.
You must be 18-years or older to
answer the survey. Participants
will have a chance to win a
US\$25 [Amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) gift card.
Send me a private message and I
will send you the link for the
survey.
<http://www.flickr.com/notascari>

María L. De Panbehchi

Figure 3.6: The poster inviting iPhoneographers to answer the survey. English version.

Since the posters—which had the format of iPhone screen-shots photographs—were in English and Spanish, the survey was for speakers of those languages only, because those are the languages that I speak (see Figure 3.7). However, several photographers who participated are

native speakers of French, Portuguese, Italian, German, and Swedish. The time when this survey was conducted was between the last week of November of 2014 and the first two weeks of January of 2015. Most questionnaires were answered during December.

Hola:
Estoy escribiendo mi tesis doctoral sobre nostalgia y apps de cámara para iPhone. ¿Me ayudaría? Solamente tiene que responder una encuesta de cómo usa usted su iPhone para tomar, editar y compartir fotos. Debe tener 18 años o más para responder la encuesta. Los participantes tendrán la oportunidad de ganar una tarjeta de regalo de US\$25.00 de [Amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com).
Envíeme un mensaje privado y le enviaré el enlace para la encuesta.
<http://www.flickr.com/notascari>

María L. De Panbehchi

Figure 3.7: The poster inviting iPhoneographers to answer the survey. Spanish version.

The goal was to collect the answers of 250 iPhoneographers in six weeks. Even though at that time I had 5,000 followers on Flickr, over 1,800 on Twitter, and more than 200 on Instagram, less than ten iPhoneographers from those networks volunteered to participate on the survey. The total numbers of volunteers was 125 and 103 were friends and friends of friends from Facebook, while 14 contacted me in person when they learned that I needed to conduct a survey. Of the 125 questionnaires, eleven were discarded because the respondents did not have an iPhone—even though they had responded they owned one—or they answered only the demographic questions. Of the 114 completed questionnaires, 12 were in Spanish and 102 in English. Roughly half of the respondents did not consider themselves iPhoneographers, still they used their iPhone to snap and share mostly unedited photographs; while the other half were amateur or professional iPhoneographers. The low response on most social media to my plea for

help with this project proved that Facebook is the place where iPhoneographers tend to pay more attention to images and comments. It also implies that friendship is less important on Flickr, Twitter, and Instagram. As mentioned before, it might also be the nature of Facebook, where friends tend to know more about each other than on any other social network.

The Community Answers

Seventy percent of the individuals who participated were women. The most popular iPhone version was the iPhone 5. The individuals who considered themselves iPhoneographers were between 35 and 54 and had been using the iPhone as a camera for more than four years. Only one-third of the respondents admitted sharing nostalgic-looking photos and most of them are the ones who identify as iPhoneographers. The type of photographs they share the most are landscapes, nature, the sky, family and friends, pets, and street photography. Almost 80% of the participants chose the iPhone default camera app as the app they use the most, followed by Instagram and Hipstamatic. The default camera app, Instagram, and Hipstamatic were the three top favorite apps; other popular apps mentioned were Snapseed, Camera+, VSCO, iColorama, SlowShutter, Distressedfx, PhotoFx, TinType, ProCamera, and 645. All of these apps may produce a nostalgic-looking image.

The main reason for 75% of the photographers to download camera apps was because the apps were free. For half of respondents, the reason they downloaded the apps was that they saw somebody using it, while just over 40% answered that a friend recommended the app to them. More than half of the respondents (55-57%) believes that taking and editing nostalgic-looking images was “very easy” and it was “a way to enjoy” themselves; however, it seems that this was not a game for those who consider themselves iPhoneographers.

Two-thirds of the respondents said that they take more color photographs, while one third said that they shoot more black and white. The reasons why they shared them were because nostalgic images are more artistic, they liked black and white photos, and because this type of photo is easy to produce with the iPhone; less than one-third said that they missed old photographs. Before iPhoneographers shared nostalgic images, they spent more time editing the image and shooting several times. One-third (28%) of the photographers answered that they only share the image, almost the same number (27%) shares the image and tags it, writes comments, replies to comments, and posts the image into contests or photography groups.

When asked if the nostalgic-looking photographs taken and edited with iPhone are as good as the ones they take with professional or semiprofessional cameras, more than fifty percent answered, “Yes, some times” the iPhone images are comparable, while 7% said the iPhone images are better. Only 23% said that the iPhone does not take the best photographs. Sixty percent of respondents said that sharing nostalgic images is not important; in contrast, most self-identified iPhoneographers believed that sharing nostalgic-looking photographs is important; the reasons that were cited more often were because nostalgic photographs are artistic or because it is a form to express oneself. One photographer wrote that he or she shares nostalgic images, “[b]ecause it brings an artistic flair to me.” Five photographers expressed that they have shared iPhone images and made people believe that the images were old; they used Instagram, Hipstamatic, and/or Snapseed to produce those images. Forty-one photographers answered that they have posted the same photograph in color and in black and white; twelve wrote that the black and white version was more popular than the one in color, while seven mentioned that the one in color. The other twenty-two did not remember which one of the photographs had more comments or they said that both versions had the same reaction from their friends. Sixty-nine

photographers said that taking, editing, and sharing photographs with iPhone is definitely not similar to playing a game; perhaps the sentence that best describes the answers provided is the following, “(iPhoneography) is more creative than playing a game.”

Ninety-five percent of the participants answered “yes” to the question, “Do you think that photographs taken with an iPhone can be considered art?” When questioned “Why?” The most common response was that “photography is an art” and that the iPhone is a creative tool. Roughly two-thirds said that they do not miss old cameras and film; when asked “Why?” they wrote that they never used them or that they like automatic cameras. A few of the other one-third that misses old cameras and film stated that old cameras were simple and easier to work with than working with the iPhone.

Why iPhone users produce, share, and interact with nostalgic-looking images? Earlier on this chapter, there were six simple answers to this question, all of them based on observations. Although the last statement was the one that guided the survey questions, it is fair to review the other statements. The first possible answer was, (1) The means to produce nostalgic-looking images form part of the essentials of most photography and video apps, which may make users believe that those are the only tools they have available. The second part of this phrase may not be possible to prove with the answers collected, yet the iPhone default camera may help produce nostalgic images.

iPhone users in general do not pay enough attention to the App Store, or at least they do not recognize its influence. This makes the second possible answer invalid, (2) The App Store has promoted the nostalgic feel by choosing Hipstamatic, Instagram, and Snapseed, as the best photography apps. This promotion, by default, has supported the trend of the nostalgic style for several years. In comparison, the community answered that the most popular photography apps

were the default camera, Instagram, and Snapseed, in that order. The survey also revealed that the main reason to download an app is that it is free.

In general, iPhoneographers believe that black and white images are more artistic than others, thus making the third possible answer valid: (3) In general, people tend to believe that black and white and sepia photography have more artistic value, therefore they feel more inclined to choose images that mimic old-style, analog photographs.

Similar to the first statement, the fourth one was not possible to answer with this survey, (4) Since the Internet seems flooded with nostalgic-looking images produced by Instagram and other apps, people tend to follow the mainstream trends and styles. It may be possible to prove this idea with a quantitative survey instead. Although there are billions of black and white, sepia, and other analog-looking photographs on social media, most responses pointed that iPhone users do not miss old cameras, therefore the following can be considered false: (5) The contact with high technology inspires iPhone users to produce low-tech or nostalgic looking images, because users long for low-tech tools and analog images. Most self-identified iPhoneographers answered that they do miss old cameras and a modest number wrote that they own and use old cameras.

The last statement, which is also the working thesis of this project, reads,

(6) Users enjoy the idea of playing with images, in other words, they have fun transforming recently taken photographs into images that pretend to be from a different time. Thus, playing with images means only that, “playing.” In other words, people have fun producing and sharing nostalgic images.

Most iPhone users may have more fun interacting on Facebook and other social media, while self-identified iPhoneographers tend to have fun while creating the images. Yet, roughly half of the participants said that they spend more time capturing and editing images than

commenting on them. Forty-eight participants said that taking old-style photographs is very easy and almost the same number (forty seven) mentioned that taking old-style photographs was “a way to enjoy myself.”

Producing and sharing nostalgic images cannot be compared to a game, or at least the typical iPhone game according to the survey. Still, iPhoneographers enjoy creating images with their iPhone and posting them to groups during certain times, as required by the group administrators.

The last question in the survey invited the participants to provide any other comments about iPhoneography and nostalgic photography. Roughly, one half of the participants wrote a comment. One of the comments mentioned that this was the first time they had paid attention to the type of images they were sharing; I also received a couple of emails that expressed a similar observation.

It seems that most members who identify themselves as iPhoneographers—either as beginners or highly recognized in the community—usually produce three types of images: high-definition and nostalgic-looking photographs, plus images that mimic paintings. It is possible to say that in order to participate as a spectator, author, and curator in this community, it is an imperative to know and use apps that render analog-like images, such as Hipstamatic and Hueless; photo-editors like Snapseed, iColorama S, and, recently, Enlight, and other image-blending apps. Additionally, members of the NEM Black&White, Mobile Monochrome, and other groups that only share black and white images, must know how to use the apps Ansel, Lo-Mob, Dramatic Black & White, and others. The nostalgic-looking photographs posted to Facebook groups may be part of the iPhoneographer’s record of his or her daily life, as most

users think of their Facebook posts,¹⁴⁰ even more, they may be a record of their learning of this particular medium—the iPhone and the apps—and the groups to which they belong.

Conclusion

Although nostalgic iPhoneography may be more represented on Instagram, where several millions of photographs with nostalgic-style filters are posted daily, the place to study the iPhoneography community is Facebook. Research shows that enjoyment and entertainment are two of the main reasons why people interact on Facebook groups. A small survey of this community showed that the default iPhone camera app, Instagram, and Hipstamatic are the most common camera apps to produce nostalgic or artistic images; Instagram is the most influential of all on the production of nostalgic images. An overwhelming majority agreed that black and white photography has a higher artistic value than color photography. With this survey, it was not possible to prove that a high-tech apparatus is the inspiration to produce low-tech or nostalgic images, but it was clear that participants invested more time capturing and editing photographs than interacting with them online. iPhoneography and the production of old-style photographs are not a game for photographers, this may be in part because photography is art and by extension iPhoneography is art, a serious one.

I propose that nostalgia helps while “having fun” producing nostalgic photographs. Having fun, then, equals creativity and art. Nostalgia, as discussed on chapter two, allows time-traveling and represents a way to relieve stress. iPhoneography, like nostalgia, helps traveling to the past, a past where the photographer belonged or not.

¹⁴⁰ Sinn, Donghee, and Sue Syn. "Personal Documentation on a Social Network Site: Facebook, a Collection of Moments from Your Life?" *Archival Science* 14.2 (2014): 95-124. Print

In a further step of this project, one-on-one interviews with popular iPhoneographers and a couple group administrators and curators may provide more information and may reveal more motivations for producing nostalgic images. It is possible to speculate that the fun is not only the group interaction, but also the process of taking, editing, and posting the photographs.

Conclusion

The smartphone is a Swiss Army knife–style tool with entertainment, social media, Internet access, calendars, games, and apps for almost every age, profession, and field of study. It is also the most popular type of camera of the second decade of the twenty-first century. Most individuals use smartphones as a camera to document their daily life and, in many cases, to document their work. Nowadays, more than one billion of the world’s population shares and comments on intangible photographs on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and other social media. Private photographs stay on social media instead of in albums or on walls. Artists also use the smartphone camera to produce everything from magazine covers to website graphics to gallery pieces. Even though the most widely used smartphones in the world run the Android operating system, made by Google, the most recognized smartphone is still the iPhone, made by Apple. There are dozens of companies who produce Android smartphones with better cameras than the one the iPhone has, and, every few months, Android cameras and lenses go up in quality. As of August of 2016, hundreds of smartphone brands running the Android operating system have better cameras than any generation of the iPhone. Yet, the most popular photography apps, such as Hipstamatic and Instagram, started on iPhone; several hundreds of those apps have an Android version.

Mobile photography is photography taken with any mobile device; among those devices are smartphones, tablets, and iPods. The photography taken with the iPhone has a particular name, iPhoneography, and the photographers who shoot with iPhone are called iPhoneographers.

There are no specific names for the photographs taken with other brands of smartphone—or, at least, those names are not used on Flickr, Facebook, or Instagram.

The old-style, nostalgic photography that has been a trend on social media since 2009 was born with the iPhone in 2008. The nostalgic-looking photographs mimic images taken with analog cameras and equipment; the resulting images, which are taken with a very advanced and high-tech camera, look low-tech: black and white, or monochromatic—sepia, blueish, reddish, or greenish—faded, scratched, or with “accidental” mistakes, such as blubs of light or splashes of random colors. iPhoneography started in August of 2008 with very small and low-quality-looking photographs rendered with apps that mimicked old toy cameras. One of those apps was Old Camera and was created by Takayuki Fukatsu. From August 2008 to October 2009, there were several toy-camera apps available at the App Store. In October 2009, the App Store started selling the Hipstamatic app, and the nostalgic-style, which had been a novelty only available to iPhone users, became a novelty for social media users, because iPhoneographers were able to share their photographs on Facebook and other platforms. A year later, Instagram let users take photographs with 1970s-style filters; it also had the objective to encourage photographers to create memories by sharing images. While Hipstamatic behaved and sounded like a toy camera with different lenses and films, Instagram quickly changed from being a toy-camera and photography-sharing app to a social-media platform with an easy photography editor. Instagrammers—photographers who use Instagram—had the options to comment and like photographs inside Instagram, as well as to send their images to Flickr, Facebook, and Twitter. Instagram, the synonym of nostalgic photographs, was famous when it started in 2010, then it overpowered all other toy-camera and photography-sharing apps when Facebook bought it in 2012.

The old-style or nostalgic photography has been the most popular on Instagram and Flickr as confirmed by big data. Saeideh Bakhshi, David A. Shamma, Lyndon Kennedy, and Eric Gilbert confirmed in 2015 that the images edited with sepia filters were the most popular on Flickr. The “antique” style was more widely used and preferred in photographs than the filters that deformed the images, according to their analysis.

Nostalgia is not only longing for home, old places, or decades-old photographs; as explained in chapter two, nostalgia also represents a force that allows mental traveling and helps with creativity. A vast number of iPhone photographs look nostalgic, as if they were taken decades ago. Nostalgic iPhoneography, or old-style photography, is most widely represented on Instagram, where several million photographs are posted daily; however, it is part of all social-media platforms. Instagram is now a synonym for mainstream photography, because users have accepted it as the normal photography on social media in general. It is difficult to study Instagrammers and Instagram, in part because not every Instagrammer is an iPhoneographer, and also because the platform does not officially have groups, and a user can only follow a group if they know the hashtag or hashtags that the group uses. On Flickr, the statistics are open to everybody, and the personal statistics form part of the professional account; yet, the Flickr groups have different dynamics, and, in some, the activity has declined over the years. Facebook offers a different context to study the iPhoneography community, using the ethnographic visual approach. It is possible to study a community and, at the same time, belong to that community, if the community is online or in social media. It would be impossible to study the community as an outsider because an individual who does not belong to the community does not have access to that community. There are dozens of groups on Facebook dedicated to iPhoneography and to different apps, such as Instagram, Hipstamatic, iColorama, Snapseed, and others. In my personal

experience, it is easier to follow the interactions and images produced by groups with 500 members or less. The groups from the NEW—the New Era Museum—have, perhaps, the best organization, since they have formed according to an app, a color, or a topic—for example, Hipstamatic, the color red, and flowers. Research shows that enjoyment and entertainment are two of the main reasons why people join, interact, and stay on Facebook groups.

The focus of this project is nostalgia and iPhone photography apps, and the main question is, “why do iPhoneographers prefer to share nostalgic photographs?” One possible answer is that black and white photography is seen as art; in the survey, more than ninety percent of the respondents agreed that black and white photography is more artistic, even more than sepia or monochromatic images. However, not all the photographs shared on social media are black and white; they mostly have sepia tones. Photographers do not overwhelmingly miss old and analog cameras, and they believe that the iPhone is capable of producing artistic images, similar to those produced by big cameras. iPhoneographers do not believe that producing and sharing photographs is similar to playing a game, but they do enjoy themselves while taking and editing images. If this is not a game, but they enjoy taking photographs that are art, and if they do not miss old cameras, but regard black and white images as art, then nostalgia may not be the reason why they produce images; rather, these images are the result of playing with the iPhone and hundreds of photography apps.

I propose that the most important reason why iPhoneographers produce nostalgic-looking images is because they are having fun with their iPhone, or as Lai and Chen call it, they experience enjoyment—not by interacting with other photographers on Facebook, but by producing the images. In the survey, individuals who have used the iPhone as a camera for several years mentioned that they spend more time planning, taking, and editing their

photographs than sharing and commenting on the resulting images. The fun may not necessarily equal that of playing games, watching videos, or consuming entertainment media on their phones, because taking, editing, sharing, and commenting on photographs is not seen as a sort of photography gamification, but rather a type of fun that other members of Facebook experience when they share information with their friends. It is not a game because there are no points to win or lose, or objects to chase or to save. Here, having fun and enjoyment equals creativity and art. Nostalgia serves more as a constraining tool to produce art than a longing for images produced with old cameras, film, and other photographic equipment. On the Facebook groups, the discussion usually focuses more on the process of creating the images than on the newly created images that mimic old-memories. iPhoneography, like nostalgia, allows traveling to the past and to the very near future (with the crispy, high-tech images). iPhoneography also lets users learn about old cameras, equipment, and photographic processes—old and new—by pretending to use those cameras, equipment, and processes. For example, the Moku Hanga app pretends to be “the Japanese method of wood-block printing,” according to the app’s description,¹⁴¹ and the Analogue app offers large-, medium-, and small-format camera models in black and white, as well as a simulated darkroom. The app description asks, “Have you ever dreamt of trying an old darkroom, but don’t have the equipment or the time? Now you can, and without the hassle.”¹⁴² In the same way that medical and nursing students learn and practice the delivery of medicine with robotics, photographers learn photography and practice using analog cameras by using smartphones and apps, especially the iPhone. The reason why this type of app

¹⁴¹ “Moku Hanga. Discover the artistic style of Japanese wood-block printing” App description. Version 1.28. Created by JixiPix Software. Last version November 7, 2015. Accessed May 2016.

¹⁴² “Analogue – edit image in a real B&W darkroom.” Created by Marcus Carlsson. Version 1.4.1 June 5, 2016. Accessed August 9, 2016.

is more prevalent at the App Store than at Google Play may be because iPhone users in general have more disposable money than Android users. The iPhone is a much more expensive smartphone, in which all the apps that can be downloaded will run without a problem. Android apps may run well with one brand of telephone but not with all of them.

The past suggested by the images may be a place and a time to which the photographer did not belong, and the longing for that time period may be more related to the app and the process of producing the old-looking image than to the time period itself. By now, most social media users know that these photographs are not old, in part because the topics are current—selfies, pets, food, fashion, landscapes and architecture—and in part because a large part of the population knows that Instagram has filters to make photographs look old or antique.

Based on my observations of the iPhoneography community on Facebook, aside from the nostalgic or old-style photography, the other two trends are glitchy photographs and painterly images. The glitch is used to deform and transform ordinary photographs. This type of editing may be related to a more futuristic read of popular photography. Painterly photography, or virtual drawings and paintings produced with photographs, may soon replace old-style filters. Already, Snapseed and iColorama are used by photographers and visual artists to produce surrealistic-looking images. Since this type of image requires more time to produce, and since there are no Instagram-like platforms, painterly photography may not become as popular as the images edited with the Valencia, Toaster, and Kevin filters from Instagram. Or, perhaps it is already here, and it is simply called mobile art, iPhone art, iPad art—or art.

Nostalgia may be easily confused with retro merchandise or vintage objects. It may also be taken as a synonym of longing for a past that did not belong to us. For some, it may signal depression and even a stale situation in which there is no room for creativity or innovation. It is

important to note that, currently, middle-aged humans have a collective nostalgia for the time when computers did not have a place in our everyday lives, a nostalgia for the twentieth century and for more physical photographs. There is also the nostalgia that accompanies international or regional immigrants, who may or may not go back to their place of origin. However, as discussed before, nostalgia may be a creative motive and a vehicle for time-traveling without buying anything. I personally doubt that the millions of teenagers and 20-somethings posting sepia-toned images on Instagram and other social media are actually feeling *saudade* or nostalgia for times and photographs that they did not personally know. The artists and trendsetters seem to be interested in creating a piece that evokes the past and analog films more than the present. This does not mean that artists do not reflect about nostalgia, but that they rather think about the final product (the nostalgic photograph) and how it connects them to the public and other artists.

When the iPhoneography community answered the survey about nostalgic images produced with the iPhone, many of the respondents commented—via social media or email—that they had not thought about the nostalgic feel of the images they are producing. They also pointed out that most of their images are not related to the past or the analog tools, but to the present. The next step for this project would be to conduct a series of one-on-one, in-depth interviews with at least a dozen of the most representative Facebook iPhoneography group administrators, plus fifty other iPhoneographers who belong to five or more of these groups. This will also help to discuss the future of iPhoneography and the photography styles of the near future.

Nostalgia is the vehicle, not the goal. Vilém Flusser explains that photographers are more interested in the camera itself and the production of photographs than in the world they are photographing. Flusser suggested that, for photographers, it is more important to tinker with the

apparatus (the camera) than to comment on the images. In the case of the iPhone, I believe that, when producing nostalgic images, iPhoneographers tend to be more interested in the iPhone and the apps (the apparatus), because in many cases what is discussed on the Facebook groups is not the merit of the image, but rather how an app works. In many cases, the interactions in the small Facebook groups serve as a learning process for new iPhoneographers or for iPhoneographers who desire to use an app for the first time. In my opinion, having an iPhone loaded with a few dozen photography apps is similar to owning a few hundred cameras from the late-nineteenth and twentieth centuries, even if the “cameras” are virtual, not physical objects. Although nostalgia has been a lens to study politics and literature, it may be also applied to study photography and other visual arts, with the understanding that in most cases the nostalgia applied to the final product does not come from a profound desire to go back to the past. It is necessary to be cautious with the nostalgia theme, because nostalgia may be a mere visual style that does not reflect a profound longing for the past, and instead reflects a way for the artist to conquer the machine (the iPhone) by making it produce old-style images with high resolution, instead of the machine producing crispy, clean, high-fidelity photographs. In other words, the production of nostalgic photography creates the illusion of the iPhoneographer being above the machine, and not the machine above the iPhoneographer. Mastering the apparatus, as Flusser called the camera, means making it produce unique, artistic images. It is possible that iPhoneographers will soon get tired of pushing the iPhone to its limits, and then they will go back en masse to either digital or analog photography, similar to what has happened with music: vinyl has come back, and maybe Hipstamatic and Instagram will produce toy cameras with filters and films.

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Vita

Maria Lourdes De Panbehchi, née María Lourdes Espinoza Elenes, was born in September 30, 1969 in the town of Miguel Alemán in the municipality of Guasave, Sinaloa, Mexico. She immigrated to the United States in 1993 and has dual citizenship of Mexico and the United States of America. De Panbehchi attended high school at Colegio Guasave, a private school that offered her a full scholarship. She studied at Universidad Autónoma de Chihuahua in Chihuahua, Mexico, where she received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Spanish (1992) with focus on literature from Spain. She received her Master of Arts degree in Spanish (1995) with focus on Latin American literature from New Mexico State University. She has worked as a college Spanish instructor for more than 20 years in the United States. Currently, she works at Virginia Commonwealth University as a Spanish Instructor and as a Teletandem Coordinator and at John Tyler Community College as a Spanish Adjunct Instructor. De Panbehchi has been an iPhoneographer since 2009; she is also an analog and digital photographer.