

Studying the ephemeral, cultures of digital oblivion

Identifying patterns in Instagram Stories

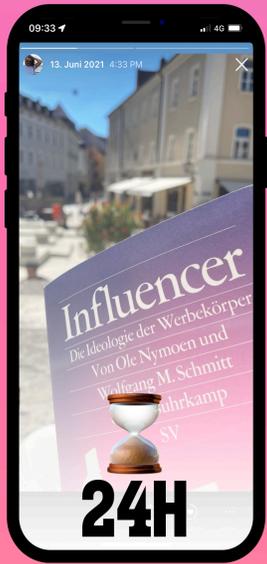
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Motivation

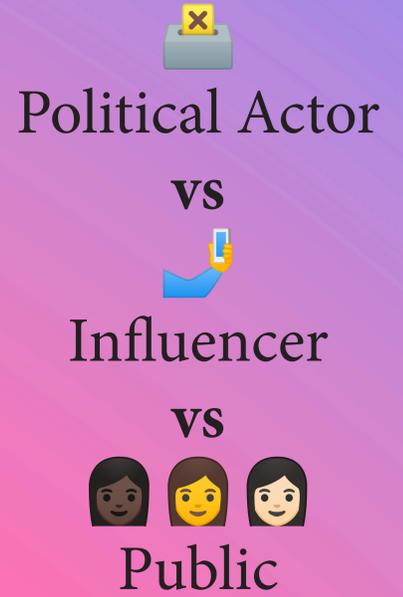


The digital revolution changed the life expectancy of information:

- Remembering is the default today, forgetting the exception (Mayer-Schönberger, 2011: 2)
- In a subtle revolution, remembering swaps with forgetting (Assmann, 2016: 205–208)

Instagram stories turn this concept upside down, being **available for 24 hours only**. How do different groups, political actors, influencers and the public, use this **ephemeral medium** and how do stories compare to regular posts?

Research Questions



Ethical Concerns

Is it **ethically correct** to collect and save stories intended for a **small group of people only** and **expected to expire**? Our answer: **two collection strategies**. Scraping for public figures, Crowdsourcing annotations for private profiles.

Data Analysis

Content Analysis: First coding of the collected images by the authors, supported by codes from the literature. Focus on the content as in “**what does the image show**”, as well as the composition, as in “**which Instagram specific affordances were used**” (Bainotti 2020).

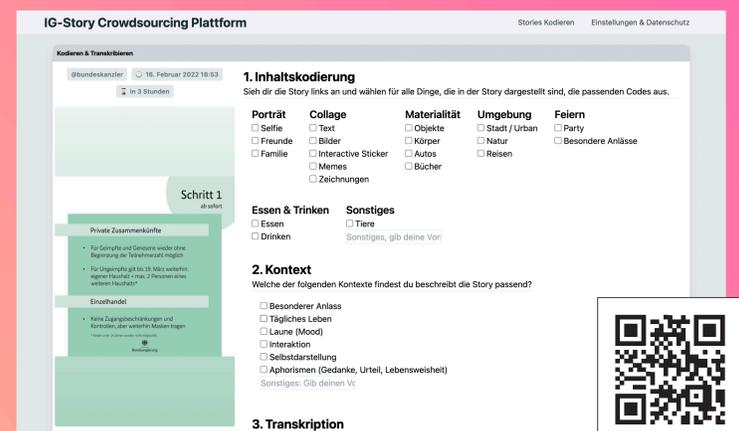
Scraping



Stories and posts were **downloaded** using a custom script (first batch), the installer python package and cron. The **metadata** was saved along in **JSON** format.

Crowdsourcing

Coding & Transcription of private Stories using a custom Chrome-Extension, automated collection of metadata to analyse e.g. sticker use across stories.



Try for yourself:
<https://ig-lab.net>



Current Corpus

13.-26.09.2021
8 Parties
14 Political Leaders
2208 Stories
655 Posts

07.-21.02.2022
20 Influencer Accounts
1699 Stories
346 Posts



Work In Progress

Future Work

Our corpus of coded stories and posts might be used in order to train a machine learning model for automated classification of stories. Automation would allow to analyse larger amounts of data. Furthermore, our tools and workflows might in the future be used by humanists of different disciplines without technical background.

Image Sources

The story and story-screenshot in the motivation section were created by Michael Achmann. The iPhone frame and Instagram elements were created by iiterlok_xolms and licensed on Adobe Stock. The story in the scraping section was downloaded from @abaerbock on Instagram. The JSON-Metadata was rendered using carbon.nowsh

Sources

Assmann A (2016) Formen des Vergessens. Wallstein Verlag.
Bainotti L, Callandro A and Gandini A (2020) From archive cultures to ephemeral content, and back: Studying Instagram Stories with digital methods. New Media & Society. SAGE Publications.
Mayer-Schönberger V (2011) Delete: The Virtue of Forgetting in the Digital Age. Princeton University Press.



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