



Stenden University Qatar

Research Seminar 8

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Privacy and Twitter in Qatar: Traditional Values in the Digital World.

Abstract

The authors explore the meaning of “privacy” from the perspective of Qatari nationals as it manifests in digital environments. Although privacy is an essential and widely respected value in many cultures, the way in which it is understood and enacted depends on context. It is especially vital to understand user behaviors regarding privacy in the digital sphere, where individuals increasingly publish personal information. A mixed-methods analysis of 18K Twitter posts that mention “privacy” focuses on the face-to-face and digital contexts in which privacy is mentioned, and how those contexts lead to varied ideologies regarding privacy. The authors find that in the Arab Gulf, the need for privacy is often supported by Quranic text, advice on how to protect privacy is frequently discussed, and the use of paternalistic language by men when discussing women’s privacy is common. Above all, privacy is framed as a communal attribute, including not only the individual, but the behavior of those around them; it even extends beyond one’s lifespan. The authors contribute an analysis and description of these previously unexplored interpretations of privacy, which play a role in how users navigate social media.

Biography

Dr. Sofiane Abbar started his journey in computer science at Institut National d'Informatique in Algiers, Algeria. He then completed a Master of Science (University of Paris Dauphine, France. 2007) and a PhD in Computer Science (University of Versailles Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines, France. 2010.) During his PhD, Sofiane studied different models for profiling users and usages in on-line content delivery platforms, as part of an Alcatel Lucent Bell Labs funded project. In 2012, Sofiane joined Qatar Computing Research Institute as Senior Software Engineer in the Social Computing division where he contributed to the design and implementation of several large-scale real-time platforms for social analytics, applied to various domains such as News, Health, Resilience, and Smart Cities.

Sofiane has published numerous peer-reviewed papers in top international conferences and journals (WWW, VLDB, ACM SIGMOD, IEEE ICDE, ICWSM, ACM CHI, ACM SIGKDD UrbComp) and has acted as a program committee member in various conferences such as CHI, ICWSM, EDBT, and ER.

Dr. Yelena Mejova is currently a Scientist in the Social Computing Group at the Qatar Computing Research Institute HBKU. Specializing in social media analysis and mining, her work concerns the quantification of health and wellbeing signals in social media, as well as tracking of social phenomena, including politics and news consumption. Recently, she co-edited a volume on the use of Twitter for social science in *Twitter: A Digital Socioscope*, and a special issue of *Social Science Computer Review* on *Quantifying Politics Using Online Data*. Previously, as a postdoctoral member of the Web Mining team at Yahoo! Research Barcelona, Yelena participated in the Linguistically Motivated Semantic Aggregation Engines (LiMoSINE) EU project. The design and evaluation of the resulting entity-based exploratory search system has been awarded the Best Paper Award at the ACM Conference on Information and Knowledge Management (CIKM) in 2013. Also, Yelena has published widely on sentiment analysis and its application to social media and political speech. She has given talks on the subject internationally, including Yandex's Yet Another Conference (Moscow) and American University of Beirut.

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