

THE HISTORY OF Photo Sharing



PHOTO SHARING HAS COME A LONG WAY.

20 years ago the process of taking, processing, and distributing a photo could take weeks or longer. Now, mobile apps such as Instagram allow us share photos in seconds. What follows is a brief history of photo sharing—where we've been and where we're going.

THE STORAGE LAYER

The storage layer chronicles the physical (hardware) component of photo storage and sharing.

THE HOST LAYER

The host layer chronicles the online dimension of photo storage and sharing.

THE "APP" LAYER

The app layer chronicles the mobile component of photo storage and sharing—paying particular attention to mobile applications ("apps").

1980s

COMPACT DISCS (CDs)

CDs and CD players debut in the 1980s, become standard in PCs in the 1990s.

EMAIL

Widespread use of email began in 1980s—perfect for quickly exchanging digital images!

1990s

DIGITAL VIDEO DISCS (DVDs)

DVDs were developed in the early 1990s and became widely available in 1998.

BLOGGER LAUNCHES

Blogger launches in 1999. It was one of the earliest blogging tools and is credited for helping popularize the format. Blogger was acquired by Google in 2003.

CAMERA PHONES

The first cell phone picture was sent in 1997 by Philippe Kahn using a jury-rigged cell phone. The first commercially available camera phone was the "J-SH04" and came on the market in late 2000.

MEMORY CARDS

In the 1990s, a number of small memory card formats arrived on the market including CompactFlash, SmartMedia, and the "Miniature Card." By the 2000s, most digital cameras supported memory cards.

SHUTTERFLY LAUNCHES

Shutterfly, the web-based photo sharing and printing platform launches in 1999.

2000

USB FLASH DRIVES

IBM began selling the first USB flash drives commercially in 2000.

SNAPFISH LAUNCHES

Snapfish, the web-based photo sharing and printing service, launches in 2000. Snapfish was acquired by HP in 2005.

By 2011 Snapfish had 90 million users.

2001

IPOD DEBUTS

Apple's portable media player launches in 2001. By 2004, the iPod supported picture viewing.

WIKIPEDIA LAUNCHES

Wikipedia, the free, web-based encyclopedia launches in 2001. By the end of 2001, Wikipedia was hosting 20,000 articles. Flying under the "Creative Commons" banner, Wikipedia (and sister projects) explicitly allows the reuse of its content—including its photos—to varying degrees.

2002

DIGITAL OVERTAKES ANALOG

2002 is marked as the first year in which worldwide digital storage capacity overtook its analog counterpart.

PICASA LAUNCHES

In 2002, "Picasa" was launched by Idealab as an image organizer that was integrated with a photo-sharing website. Picasa was acquired by Google in 2004.

2003

In 2011, Twitter announced a partnership with Photobucket, making Photobucket the default photo sharing platform for Twitter.

PHOTOBUCKET LAUNCHES

Photobucket launches in 2003, helps to pioneer social image sharing. In 2007, just four years after its launch, Photobucket had 50 million users.

"ANDROID, INC." FOUNDED

Android, Inc. was founded in 2003 and began developing software for mobile phones. In 2005 Android was acquired by Google.

2004

2004 Shutterfly and others make it easy to self-publish photos.

FICKR LAUNCHES

Flickr was launched in 2004 by Ludicorp. In 2005, Yahoo acquired Ludicorp and Flickr for a reported \$35 million.

In 2010, it was reported that Flickr was hosting more than 5 billion images.

In 2010, Facebook was seeing more than 100 million photo uploads every day.

FACEBOOK LAUNCHES

Facebook, originally dubbed "The Facebook" launches in 2004.

2005

By 2007, Panoramio had achieved more than 5 million photos.

PANORAMIO LAUNCHES

Panoramio, a geolocation-oriented photo sharing site, launches in October. Panoramio was acquired by Google in 2007.

3G IN NORTH AMERICA

Significantly improving the speed and reliability of wireless networks, 3G becomes commercially available in North America in 2005. By 2007, there was nearly 300 million worldwide subscribers on 3G networks.

2006

In 2011, Twitter saw 100 million active users each month, half of which logged in every day.

TWITTER LAUNCHES

Twitter quietly launches in 2006. By the end of 2007, more 1.6 million tweets were generated by Twitter.

2007

By May 2011, over 5 billion blog posts had been made on the Tumblr platform.

TUMBLR LAUNCHES

Tumblr, the microblogging platform, launches in 2007.

IPHONE DEBUTS

Apple's smartphone launches in 2007. Within 4 years they will sell nearly 130 million units.

DATA STORAGE GROWING

In 2007 it was determined that hard data storage (including PC hard drives, disc-based media, etc.) had reached nearly 300 exabytes (about 300 million terabytes).

ICHC LAUNCHES

I Can Has Cheezburger? (ICHC) launches in 2007, popularizes animal based image macros and "lolpeak."

ANDROID O.S. LAUNCHES

In 2007 a major distribution of the open source mobile operating system "Android" is unveiled along with the founding of the Open Handset Alliance.

THE MOBILE SHARING BOOM BEGINS

FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO THE BOOM:

- Major launches of smartphones and smartphone operating systems.
- Major improvements in the quality of smartphone hardware (camera, processor, etc.).
- Improvements in network/cellular speeds. Debut of cloud storage products for delivery/access of photos.

2008

POSTEROUS LAUNCHES

Posterous, the super-simple blogging platform, launches in 2008.

TWITPIC LAUNCHES

In 2008, TwitPic kicked off the Twitter photo sharing phenomenon. Dozens of copycats hurry to pile on.

2009

2009 Facebook reaches 300 million users in 2009, popularizes photo-sharing and tagging.

FOURSQUARE LAUNCHES

Foursquare, the location-based social networking site for mobile devices, launches in 2009, adds improved photo-sharing capabilities in 2011.

DAILYBOOTH LAUNCHES

Dailybooth launches in 2009 as a photoblogging site for users to take a photo of themselves every day with a caption.

Foursquare grew 3400% in 2010, and by 1/2011 had 6 million users.

FOODSPOTTING LAUNCHES

In 2009 Foodspotting launches an online platform to share and recommend specific food dishes via photos. They launch an iPhone app in 2010.

INSTAGRAM LAUNCHES

Instagram launches in 2010 as an app for the iPhone which allows you to quickly take a picture, apply a number of different filters, and share it.

INSTANT IMAGE EDITING

The very well being of Instagram and Picplz (and others) could potentially be because of their ability to easily manipulate, edit, and overlay cool filters on photos—all within the application.

PRIVACY OF SOCIAL SHARING

"Path" and "Color" are two good examples of how the privacy of mobile sharing apps can be approached differently. Path, for example, is a relatively private platform—generally allowing only your closest 50 friends to eavesdrop on your sharing. Color, on the other hand, originally allowed anyone within a certain distance to see your photos.

PICPLZ LAUNCHES

"Picplz," the location-centric photo streaming service developed by Mixed Media Labs (founded in 2010), allows you to upload photos, apply a number of different effects and share them.

PATH LAUNCHES

Path launches in 2010. Seeks to help "capture life's most personal moments with photos – add context of people, places, and things – and share them with your 50 closest friends and family."

2010

Photos taken from Facebook's most-shared news stories of 2011

PHOTOVINE LAUNCHES

Google launches Photovine for the iPhone in August, which centers around community storytelling.

FACEBOOK PHOTO APP?

In July, rumors emerge of a possible native Facebook photo-sharing app.

JANUARY 2011 Ted Williams and his "Golden Voice" captivate the internet

EYEEM LAUNCHES

In August, EyeEM launches an app for iPhone and Android that allows you to take photos, apply filters, and tag not just your location, but also what you were doing in each photo.

TWITTER PHOTO-SHARING

Twitter partners with Photobucket, rolls out it's photo-sharing feature to the masses in August.

MARCH 2011 Fukushima nuclear disaster

COLOR LABS PIVOTS

Color Labs pivots in September, and debuts a new photo-sharing app that is deeply integrated with Facebook.

GLMPS LAUNCHES

GLMPS launches for the iPhone in August, allows users to post "visual status updates" on social networks.

OCTOBER 2011 Death of a Legend

POSE LAUNCHES

Launching for iPhone, Pose offers a mobile platform for real-time discovery and sharing of fashion, shopping and style.

MOBLI GETS \$4 MILLION

In October, Mobli (a real-time sharing platform highlighting usage by celebrities), gets \$4 million in funding from notable investors including Leonardo DiCaprio.

WHAT'S NEXT?

The photo-sharing market is ripe for innovation, and the future is looking bright. Postagram debuted in 2011, allowing you to print and ship photos you've taken with Instagram. Metalayer has an API that can be used for auto-tagging and indexing the objects within your photos, which is already helping to springboard new developments of apps and image search technology.