

INFLUENCE OF MOBILE PHOTOGRAPHY ON OUTDOOR COMMERCIAL PHOTOGRAPHERS IN FEDERAL UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY, AKURE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT: *The influence of mobile photography in recent times is enormous as the number of persons with camera fitted smartphones increase. The World is engrossed in images from mobile photography through social media feeds. Many of these images may fall short of professional quality, due to limited skill of actors, nonetheless, they are increasing being deployed for visual communication. The business of commercial campus portrait photographers is threatened by these nascent mobile photographic developments. This study examined the impact of mobile photography and its corresponding social media usage on the business of commercial portrait photographers in Federal University of Technology, Akure (FUTA), using a descriptive research approach. 294 staff, 267 students and 13 photographers who were sampled randomly for the study were administered structured questionnaire. Their responses were analyzed using test of proportion and percentages. The results obtained reveal that many members of the university community use their smartphones for capturing images of self and of others. The results further reveal a decline in the demand for print copies of photographs. Consequently, these developments signify reduced patronage of campus commercial photographers, who made the confirmation from reduction in their engagements and earnings. Many of the photographers are already making adjustments in their service offerings, as recommended by this study, if the campus must remain a viable business environment for them.*

KEYWORDS: mobile photography, outdoor commercial photographers, federal university, technology, Akure, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

Picture taking and sharing has become the preoccupation of many socially inclined persons. The revolutionary changes in photographic tools of production and media of transmission, coupled with its current ubiquitous nature, have fostered the ambers of photographic activities especially among youths. Hardly will any day pass by without a *selphie* or group shots with friends and family for many socially active persons using smartphone. According to Dare (2018), the world is engrossed in images from mobile photography to never ending social media feeds. Virtually everybody carrying smartphone has a camera handy and may be able to capture and use images at varying degrees of proficiency. Although Moore (2015) asserts that “anyone privileged can pick up an iPhone and take a photo, it takes a more skilled photography to create a truly great image”. Mastery of focus, exposure, composition and photo-editing techniques are necessary for creating great images. Observably, mobile photography (taking pictures with mobile phone) is on the rise, especially among youths who are very active on the social media platforms.

Saragadam (2018) observes that better mobile cameras are potential selling point for many smart phones. This is necessitated by the tremendous increase in the number of people inclined towards social media and image sharing applications. Consequently, there is higher demand for smart phones that have inbuilt camera. Excitingly, this high demands have sparked phone manufacturers to always come up with astonishing array of features and accessories, such as dual or triple camera setups; portrait, selfie and panorama modes. Others are external lenses of various types; phone mounts and handles; Bluetooth shutter remote and instant printer to mention a few.

Nowadays, the combination of digital camera and phone has led to more visual communication initiatives among people in the institutional campuses and by extension, the social society. Scott (2008) observes that the ease and minimal cost associated with mobile photography have allowed people to amass large personal photograph collections. Increasingly, despite all encomiums, the social media has experienced widespread popularity in Nigeria as a result of emerging digital technology (Henze and Boll, 2008). While this popularity continues to grow, the use of photographs on the social media has become an important factor for dissemination of information and interaction among the users. Ibiwoye (2016) notes that one of the popular ways of interaction among individual and group users of the social media platforms is the sharing of photographic images. Morgan (2006) also observes that digital cameras, camera phones, online sharing, and other innovations are opening up appealing ways in which people interact with and respond to mobile photography.

Photography has many aspects depending on purpose, subject, technique/equipment. Consequently, nomenclatures such as sports, food, landscape, nature, fashion, portrait, mobile, product, documentary, wedding, macro/micro, underwater, headshots, architectural and commercial photography exist to reflect the different aspects. Many of the listed aspects of photography have overlap of function, form and purpose and as such may form subsets of a larger classification. Commercial photography by popular notion is a business-to-business kind of photographic engagement where photographers capture images for clients who use them for the purpose of marketing products and services (Link, Lindberg, Meade, House and Britt n.d). Ryan and Conover (2004) opine that “many photographers who work primarily in other areas, may create commercial work in addition to their area of expertise.

The photographers on various campuses in Nigeria may be classified as portrait photographers who engage in commercial work of giving members of university communities memorable images. Campus commercial portrait photographers work on pay-per-photograph basis with income proportionate to client base and services rendered. Their engagements include snapping, printing and preserving of films or soft copies of images. It is for these services, they put up charges for earnings. The pervasive practice of mobile photography and the use of photographs by both staff and students on social media, have provoked many changes in the practice of commercial portrait photography on campuses across Nigeria. Patronage of campus photographers seems to be reducing, as their presence and solicitation no longer evoke much desire to pose before their cameras for portrait shots as it did some years back. All these innovative mobile photographic developments can be disruptive to professional photography, especially those with commercial inclination. They provide ample opportunities for mobile phone users to create visual communication that steer emotions on social media. This paper seeks to measure the impact of

mobile photography and its corresponding social media usage on the business of commercial portrait photographers in Federal University of Technology, Akure, Nigeria.

METHOD

The study adopted a descriptive research approach. Focus was on Federal University of Technology Akure, where concentration of youths from different part of Nigeria, who are active social media users, are found. The University campus equally harbours an appreciable number of outdoor portrait photographer. 294 staff, 267 students and 13 photographers were randomly sampled for the study. Structured questionnaires of the Likert model were used for the study. Two set of questionnaires, validated by four experts in Graphic Design and Management Technology, were used to elicit responses from students/staff and campus portrait photographers. The questionnaires consisted of two sections. Section A in both questionnaires sought to gather demographic information about the respondents. The Section B of the questionnaires focused on the permeation of mobile photography, its use in social media and implications for portrait photography business on campus.

The administration of the questionnaires was done by the researchers and 5 research assistants. The assistants, after proper briefing before the exercise, were used to facilitate the administration of the Staff/Student questionnaire. 13 copies of the questionnaire were administered on the photographers and 10 copies retrieved, representing 77% retrieval rate. 294 copies of questionnaire were given to staff who returned 229 (94%). While 267 student questionnaire administered on students returned 241 (90%). Frequency counts, percentages, cumulative frequency and test of proportion were used to analyze the data collected.

Results and Discussion

Table 1: Demographic information of commercial portrait photographers in FUTA
Respondents (N=10)

	%
Sex	
Male (9)	90
Female (1)	10
Age Range, years	
18-25	0
26-35	20
36-45	70
46-60	10
Academic qualification	
Primary & Secondary Education	0
OND/NCE	0
HND	30
First Degree	40
Higher Degree	30
Years of Experience in Photography	

5-10	10
11-15	40
16-20	40
21-25	10
26 and above	0

Table 2: Demographic data of Staff and Students*Respondents (N=470)*

	%
Sex	
Male	49.4
Female	50.6
Age Range, years	
18-25	47.3
26-35	5.8
36-45	30.2
46-60	16.7

Tables 1 and 2 above presents the demographic information of the subjects- commercial portrait photographers and staff/students. From Table 1 it can be deduced that male gender between the ages of 36 and 45 years, with good academic qualification, dominate the commercial portrait photography business in FUTA. The years of experience in photography business, for many of the photographers is in the upwards of ten years. This predates the advent of mobile photography and social media fad, which is estimated to be within the present decade. Consequently, the photographers' long enough experience is valuable for the evaluation of the effect of mobile photography on campus portrait photography.

Table 3: Test of proportion on implication of mobile photography for commercial portrait photographers (Staff and Students)

(H₀: Mobile photography has no significant implication on campus commercial portrait photography)

Variable	Proportion	SE	z	P-value	Decision
Patronage	0.955	0.0096	19.612	0.000	Reject H ₀
Taking Selfie	0.315	0.214	8.026	1.000	Accept H ₀
Printing of Selfie Photo	0.882	0.0149	16.520	0.000	Reject H ₀
Printing of Digital Photo	0.925	0.0122	18.371	0.000	Reject H ₀

Table 3 above presents the result of the test of proportion based on individuals who no longer do each of the variables examined. the proportion of individuals who do not patronize the commercial photographers (0.955) is significantly greater than 0.5 (average value for equal proportion) which implies that majority of the people no longer patronize commercial photographers on FUTA campus. For individuals not taking selfie, Table 3 shows that the proportion (0.315) is significantly less than 0.5 (average value for equal proportion) which implies that majority of the people take selfies and by extension, no longer patronize the commercial photographers. The proportion of

individuals who do not print selfie photographs (0.882) is significantly greater than 0.5 (average value for equal proportion) which indicate that majority of the people do not print their selfies.

The proportion of individuals who do not print digital photographs (0.925) is significantly greater than 0.5 (average value for equal proportion) which indicate that majority of the people do not print their digital photographs. The results show that majority of the people examined do no longer patronize the photographers but instead indulge in mobile photography and postings on social media. This was in agreement with Andrade (2015) who stated that the idea of carrying around a camera phone in pocket and having the possibility to snap at the tip of fingers without any limits has generated an exponential growth in the production of images that have overloaded the Internet. Scott (2008) also observed that the ease and lack of cost associated with mobile photography have allowed people to amass large personal photograph collections. It also reveals that printing of photographs, either mobile or digital photographs, is gradually fading away or going to extinction. It is therefore accepted that mobile photography has implication for commercial photographers on campus. This assessment was in agreement with Ibiwoye (2016), who stated that when patronage reduces, income also reduces.

Table 4: Frequency distribution of responses to question on level patronage before the advent of social media and mobile photography (commercial photographers)

Response	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
Very often (1)	7	70.00	70.00
Often(2)	3	30.00	100
Total	10	100	

Table 5: Frequency distribution of responses to question on current level of patronage with the advent of social media and mobile photography (Commercial Photographers).

Response	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
Moderately (1)	2	20.00	20.00
Rarely (2)	8	80.00	100
Total	10	100	

Table 6: Frequency distribution of responses to question on how printing of photographs declines as a result of mobile photography (Commercial Photographers).

Response	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
Very often (1)	8	80.00	80.00
Often (2)	1	10.00	90.00
Moderately (3)	1	10.00	100.00
Total	10	100	

Table 7: Frequency distribution of responses to question on number of shots taken averagely on weekly basis before the advent of mobile photography (Commercial Photographers).

Response	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
26 and Above (5)	10	100.00	100.00
Total	10	100	

Table 8: Frequency distribution of responses to question on current number of shots taken averagely on weekly basis (Commercial Photographers).

Response	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
5-10 shots (1)	7	70.00	70.00
11-15 shots (2)	2	20.00	90.00
16-20 shots (3)	1	10.00	100.00
Total	10	100	

The frequency distribution for the assessment of commercial implications of mobile photography for commercial photographers was assessed through questions based on past and present experiences of the commercial portrait photographers on FUTA campus. Results are presented in Tables 4 – 8. From Table 4, 70% of commercial photographers sampled, support that level of patronage before the advent of mobile photography was very high while the remaining 30% support that level of patronage before the advent of mobile photography was high. It is evident, therefore, that all the respondents support the fact that the level of patronage, before the advent of mobile photography, was higher. Table 5 shows that 20% of commercial photographers sampled moderately get patronage while the remaining 80% responded that they rarely get patronage with the advent of mobile photography. It is evident; therefore, that majority of the photographers nowadays rarely have patronage unlike before the advent of mobile photography when the patronage was higher. Table 6, 80% of commercial photographers sampled, support that level of reduction in commercial printing of photographs is very often, while 1% support the level of reduction as being often and another 1% supports the level of reduction as being moderate. It is evident, therefore, that all the respondents support the fact that commercial printing of photographs has declined as a result of mobile photography. In Table 7, all the sampled commercial portrait photographers (100%), support that the number of shots taken averagely on weekly basis before the advent of mobile photography was between 26 and above. This shows that, before the advent of mobile photography, people patronized and engaged commercial portrait photographers for photography services. In Table 8, 70% of commercial portrait photographers sampled, indicated that the current number of shots they take averagely on weekly basis is between 5 to 10 shots. 20% agreed to 11 to 15 shots, while 10% indicated 16 to 20 shots. This implies that the current number of shots being taken by majority of the photographers is rated very low for a good business.

CONCLUSION

Taking pictures with mobile phones has become a common practice in everyday life. This practice, popularized by the availability of good camera fitted smartphones, has diminished the need for commercial photography services from professional portrait photographers on FUTA Campus. The services of snapping, printing and preserving of images formerly and exclusively offered by campus portrait photographers, before the advent of digital and mobile photography have become easy-to-do tasks for staff and students who carry sophisticated smartphones. The implication of this nascent development in photography is a disruption of the business of portrait photography and erosion of a source of livelihood for campus photographers which has led to the shutting down of many photography stands in FUTA. Some innovative commercial photographers are

incorporating video services, instant photo printing services and document printing as additional services to boost earning and to stay relevant to needs of members of the university community.

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