



EFFECTS OF SMARTPHONE PHOTOGRAPHY ON COMMERCIAL PHOTOGRAPHERS IN BOLGATANGA, GHANA.

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This study investigates the effects of smartphone photography and social media use on the professional photography business, focusing on commercial photographers in Bolgatanga Municipality, Ghana and the Bolgatanga Technical University campus.

Design/Methodology/Approach: A descriptive research approach was used, with quantitative data collected through standardised questionnaires distributed to 196 smartphone users and 23 commercial photographers. T

Findings: The findings show a considerable decrease in demand for commercial photography services due to the widespread usage of smartphones for personal photography and social media sharing. Many smartphone users consider their photographic skills sufficient, resulting in less reliance on professional services.

Research Limitation: The study focuses solely on the commercial photography sector, overlooking other possible impact areas within the photographic industry.

Practical implication: Commercial photographers must adopt new technologies to remain competitive and provide distinctive, high-quality services that smartphone users cannot readily reproduce.

Social Implication: Smartphones have democratised photography by allowing consumers to capture and share visual content on social media platforms, contributing to decreased demand for professional photography. This social shift emphasises commercial photographers' need to integrate their business models with changing customer behaviour in the digital era.

Originality/ Value: This study adds to our understanding of the changing photography landscape, especially in a developing economy. It provides significant insights into how commercial photographers may adapt to the challenges provided by the advent of smartphone photography and social media.

Keywords: *Commercial. digital. photography. smartphone. social media*

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INTRODUCTION

Global smartphone sales were 124 million in 2007 but had risen to 1.43 billion by 2021 (Laricchia, 2022). The widespread adoption of smartphones has practically placed a camera in almost everyone's hands, ready to use at any moment. Smartphone photography—capturing photographs using mobile phones—has increased dramatically, particularly among young people who are heavily involved in social media platforms (Kayode, 2019).

Smartphone photography has been increasingly popular in recent years, owing primarily to advancements in smartphone technology. These developments have enabled even inexperienced users to capture high-quality images. The impact on the photography industry has been severe, with many customers now struggling to justify the cost of engaging a professional photographer. Constant improvements have spurred this trend in smartphone camera capabilities (Tania, 2021). As the digital age evolves, the number of experienced amateur photographers grows while technical obstacles to photography continue to fall (Grundberg, 2021; Price & Wells, 2021; Myerson,n.d).

The photography industry is again shifting, with cell phones as the primary tool for taking photos. Today's smartphones' image quality is comparable to digital single-lens reflex (DSLR) cameras from five years ago. While the consequences of smartphone camera trends may not be immediately visible, younger generations are growing up with technology that leads them to assume they no longer want professional photographers (Aschoff, 2020). This trend has already impacted the camera industry and is anticipated to influence professional photography (Tania, 2021).

In Bolgatanga Municipality, photographers are primarily classified as commercial photographers who record memorable moments for the community. These commercial photographers are often compensated per photograph based on the number of clients and services offered. Their responsibilities include photographing, printing, framing, and archiving digital versions of photos. However, the ubiquitous usage of smartphones and a social media-driven culture of image sharing have resulted in substantial changes in Ghana's commercial portrait photography environment.

The business of commercial photographers in the municipality looks to be dwindling as clients are becoming less interested in posing for classic portrait shots. Instead, many capture and share their photographs on their smartphones. These technology improvements threaten professional photography, especially in commercial contexts. At the same time, they enable smartphone users to generate visual material that influences social media trends and public attitudes. This study seeks to assess the influence of smartphone photography and social media use on professional photography firms in Bolgatanga Municipality, Ghana.



SMARTPHONE PHOTOGRAPHY AND SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE

According to Winston (2013), the evolution of digital photography has resulted in advances in image capture and sharing, mainly via smartphones and other digital devices. These devices use light-sensitive charge-coupled devices (CCDs) to capture images, and they are also integrated into non-photographic equipment like computer tomography scanners and radio telescopes. Digital photography has thus facilitated picture generation through digitalisation, indicating substantial technological progress (Winston, 2013). As a result, photography has become a common practice that anyone can engage in at any time and from any location.

Jurgenson (2019) and Freeman (2011) discuss the democratisation of photography, pointing out that anyone can now create photographic images without constraint. The inclusion of digital cameras in smartphones has made digital photography more accessible, allowing users to exchange photographs instantly without the need for film development and processing (Kano, 2001). This has created a culture of visual communication, with cell phones being used to transmit digital photographs and other graphical communications via social media platforms (Nunoo, 2013).

Professional photographers have always employed expensive cameras and equipment to capture their photos. However, with the rise of smartphone photography, many amateur photographers can now generate high-quality photographs with only their phones (Jurgenson, 2019). As a result, the market for professional photographers has dropped as people increasingly prefer to take their images, whether for personal or business reasons (123RF, 2022; Holland, 2021).

Smartphone photography has also changed the way people view and share photographs. Photos were once printed and displayed in albums or frames, but the rise of social media and photo-sharing platforms has moved the trend toward online sharing (Bell, 2019). This has democratised photography, making it available to anybody with a smartphone and internet access (123RF, 2022; Miller et al., 2021).

According to Kitsa (2019) and Germen (2014), professional photographers, reporters, journalists, and even artists are increasingly interested in smartphone photography due to its numerous benefits. Smartphones enable photographers to shoot images quietly, expanding their expressive and journalistic possibilities. These gadgets have significantly transformed photography habits, making incorporating high-quality cameras in mobile phones a vital consideration in purchasing decisions.

Currently, mobile devices can capture high-quality photographs, drastically altering the landscape of professional photography, particularly in image capture, processing, and distribution (Hand, 2020; Peters & Allan, 2018). Analogue cameras are no longer required for image creation and distribution, as the emphasis has switched toward sharing rather than ownership. This trend has



resulted in excessive image production and sharing, as people emphasise content output over artistic ownership.

The increasing demand for visual content has prompted the evolution of mobile phones into multifunctional devices with advanced connection and capability. Billieux (2014) confirms that mobile phones today provide far more than verbal communication. Smartphones have become an essential component of modern culture, increasing adoption and reliance in many nations, including Ghana.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study was conducted using a descriptive research approach. This design was developed to provide a clear summary of the topic under investigation—smartphone photography and its impact on the photography industry in Bolgatanga Municipality.

Study area

The study was conducted in Bolgatanga Municipality, focusing on young people who use social media regularly. This municipality also has many non-commercial photographers, making it an ideal location for the research.

Sampling procedure

The sample included 196 smartphone users and 23 randomly selected commercial photographers. The unpredictability of the sampling ensured that the participants represented a diverse cross-section of the population being studied.

Research instruments

Structured questionnaires were utilised to collect information from smartphone users and business photographers. Experts in photography and graphic design validated the questionnaires to ensure their relevance and correctness. The questionnaires contained two sections:

- Section A of both questionnaires aimed to collect demographic information about respondents.
- Section B examined smartphone photography, its impact on social media, and its ramifications for Bolgatanga Municipality photography firms.

Data collection

The researchers and five research assistants, who had been well-briefed prior to the activity, administered the questionnaires. The research assistants made it easier to administer the questionnaires using Google Forms by sending out links via email and several social media sites.

- Photographers completed 23 out of 25 questionnaires, resulting in a 92% recall rate.

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- The questionnaire was distributed to 230 smartphone users, yielding 196 replies (85% response rate).

Data analysis

The acquired data was analysed using frequency counts and percentages, providing insights into smartphone photography trends and patterns and their impact on professional photographers around the municipality.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Demographic information of smartphone users

Respondents (N=196)

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Male	102	52%
Female	94	48%
Age		
18-25	101	51%
26-35	67	34.2%
36-45	19	9.7%
46-60	9	5.1%
Academics		
Secondary	25	12.8%
Tertiary	171	87.2%

Table 2: Demographic information of commercial photographers

Respondents (N=23)

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Male	23	100%
Female	0	0%
Age		
18-25	7	30.4%
26-35	12	52.2%
36-45	4	17.4%
46-60	0	0%
Academics qualification		
Secondary	4	17.4%
Tertiary	19	82.6%
Primary	0	0%

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Uneducated	0	0%
Years of Experience in Photography		
1-4 years	6	26.1%
5-9 years	9	39.1%
Less than 1-year	3	13%
More than 9 years	5	21.7%

Tables 1 and 2 present the demographic information of the subjects, thus smartphone users and commercial photographers. It can be seen from Table 1 that the respondents were mostly youth, as indicated by 101 (18-25 years) and 94 (26- 35 years). Also, it can be deduced from Table 1 that the academic level of most smartphone users is tertiary 171, and the remainder is secondary school level, representing 25 respondents. Table 2 indicates that the respondents for commercial photographers are all males, ranging in age from 18 to 45 years, with good academic qualifications. The years of experience in the photography business for most responding photographers is upwards of 5 years. This predates the advent of smartphone photography and social media presence, estimated to be within the present decade. Consequently, the photographers' years of experience is valuable for the evaluation of the effect of smartphone photography on commercial photography in Bolgatanga Municipality. The frequency on the implication of smartphone photography and social media usage on commercial photographers by smartphone users is shown in Figures 1 – 9.

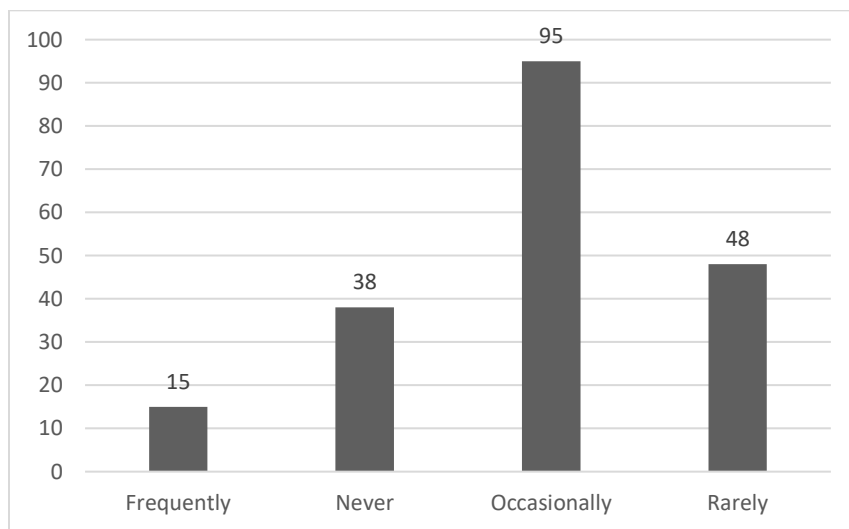


Figure 1: Patronise commercial photographers (smartphone users)



Figure 1, which seeks smartphone users' patronage of commercial photographers, affirms the commercial photographers' claim that there has been low demand for their service since the inception of smartphone photography. In Figure 2, out of the total of 196 smartphone users, 95 indicated that they occasionally patronise commercial photographers, 48 indicated that they rarely patronise commercial photographers, and 38 never. Just 15 smartphone users indicated they patronise the services of commercial photographers.

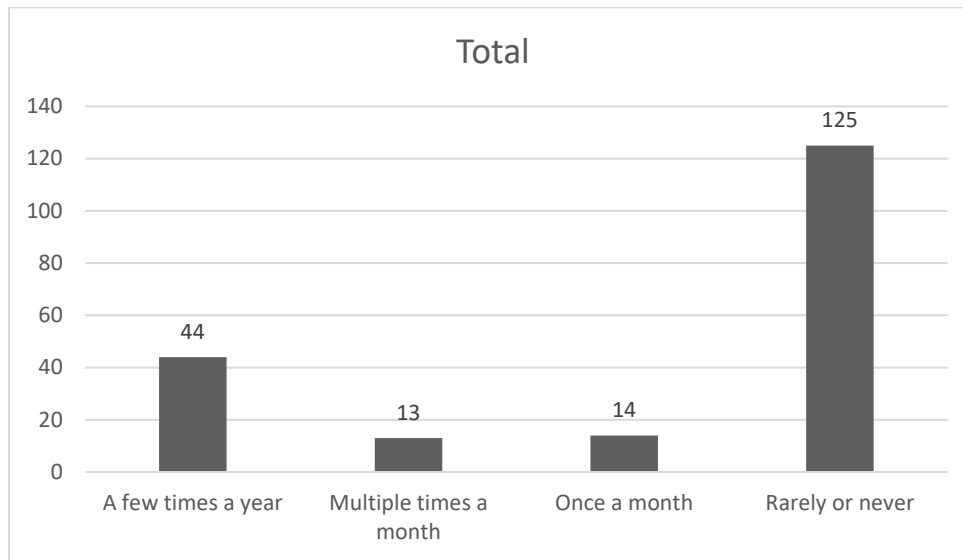


Figure 2: Printing of images from smartphones (smartphone users)

Figure 2 indicates how frequently respondents (smartphone users) print their photographs after using their smartphone to take pictures. Out of 196 respondents, 125 rarely or never print their photographs taken with their smartphones, 44 respondents few times a year print their photograph taken with their smartphone, 14 print photographs taken with their smartphones once a month and 13 respondents print their photographs taken with their smartphones multiple times a month.

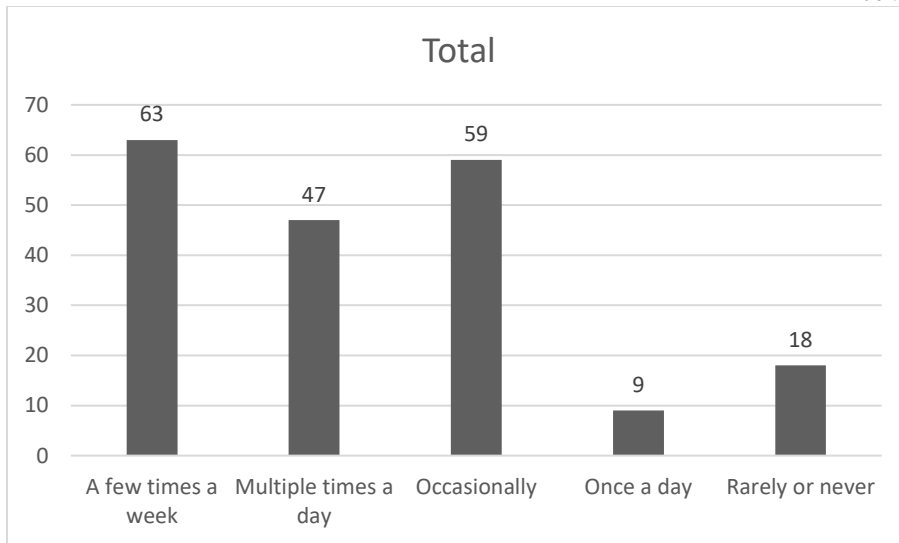


Figure 3: Taking Photographs for social media (smartphone users)

Figure 3 displays the responses from smartphone users on taking photographs with their smartphones for social media. Out of 196 respondents, 63 snap photographs with their smartphones a few times a week for the purpose of social media, 59 occasionally snap photographs for the purpose of social media, 47 snap photographs with their smartphones multiple times a day for the purpose of social media, 9 snap photographs once a day for the purpose of social media and 18 rarely or never take photographs for the purpose of social media.

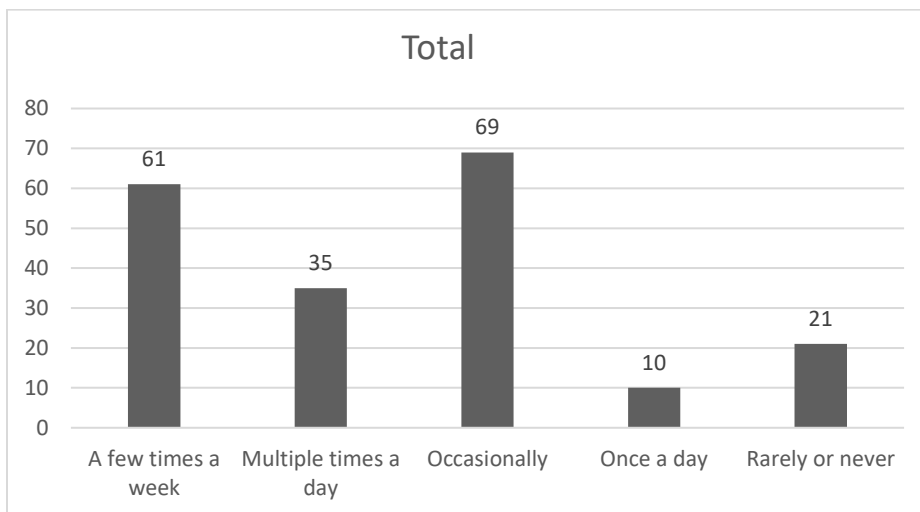


Figure 4: Posting of digital photographs on social media (smartphone users)



Figure 4 shows how frequently smartphone users post their photographs on social media. Out of 196 respondents, 69 post their photographs taken with their smartphones occasionally, 61 respondents few times a week post their photograph taken with their smartphone on social media, 35 post photographs on social media multiple times a day after taking photographs with their smartphone, 10 respondents post their photographs taken with their smartphone once a day on social media, and 21 rarely or never post their photographs taken with their smartphone on social media.

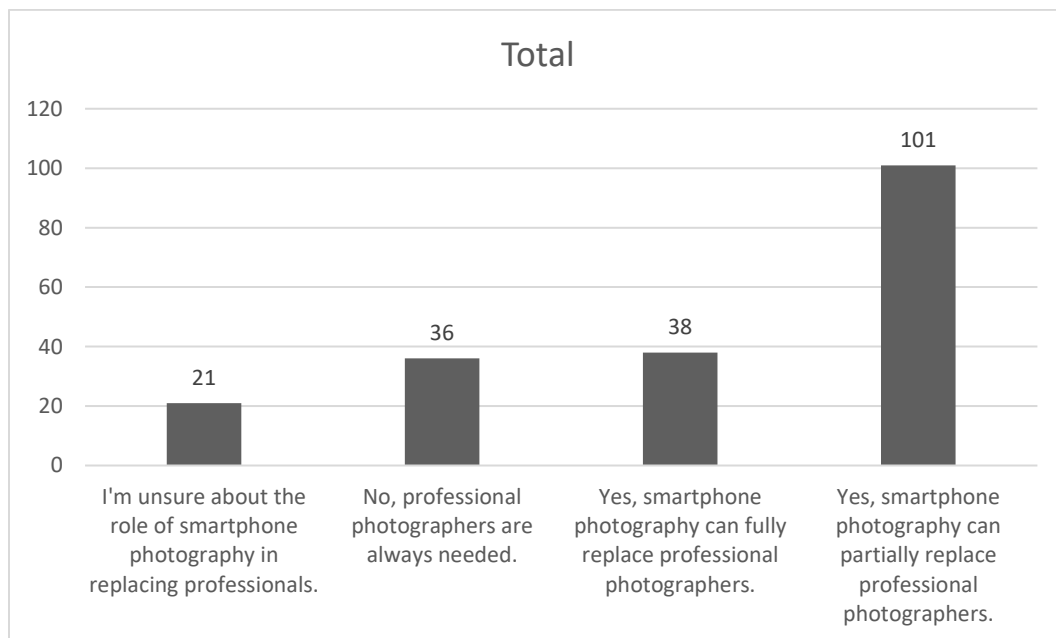


Figure 5: Smartphone photography can replace commercial photographers (smartphone users)

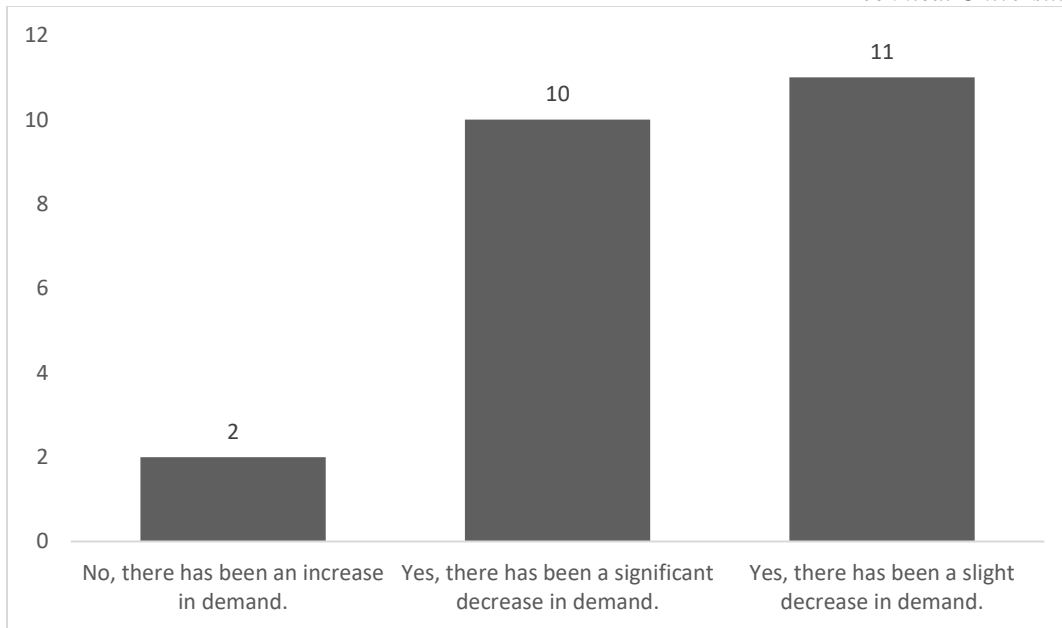


Figure 6: Changes in demand for commercial photography services (commercial photographers)

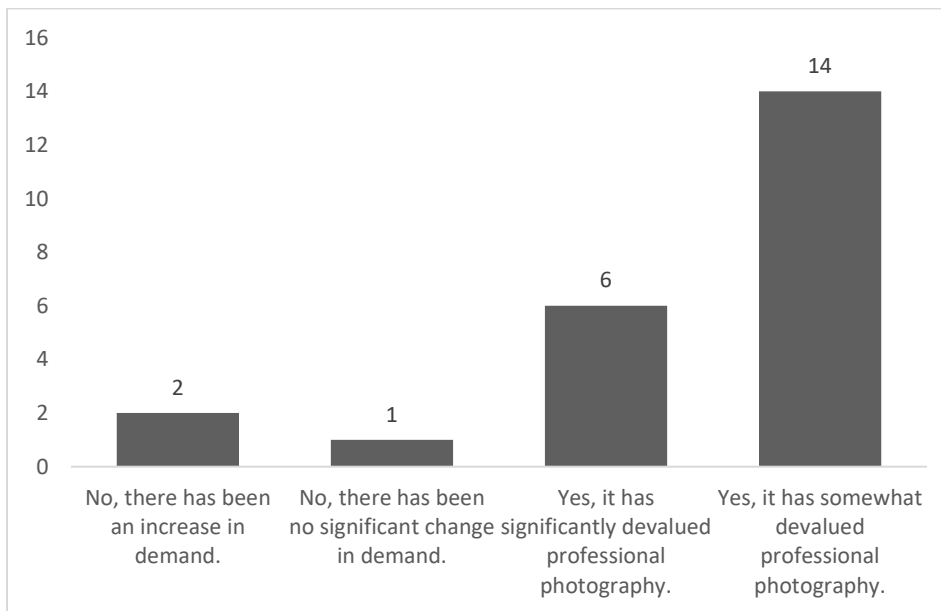


Figure 7: Smartphone photography has affected the perceived value of commercial photography

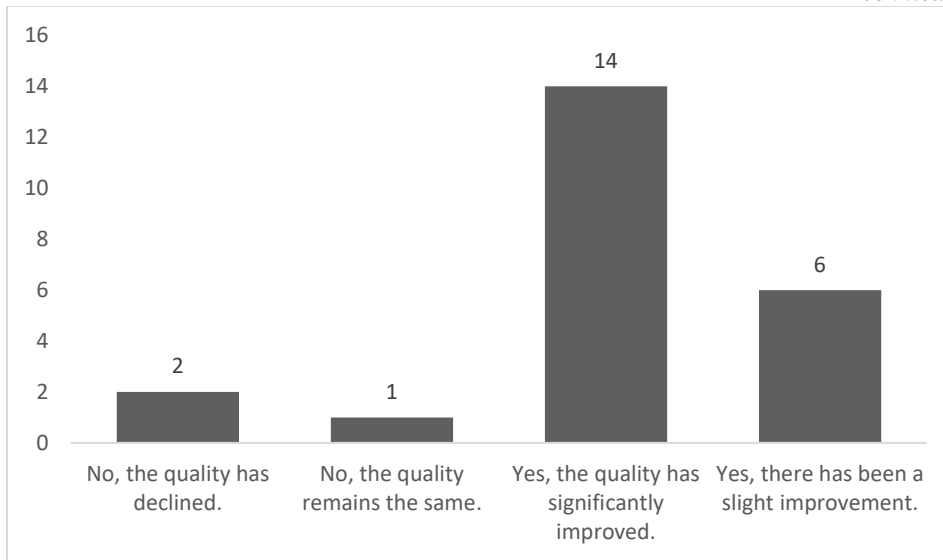


Figure 8: Quality of smartphone photography over the past few years

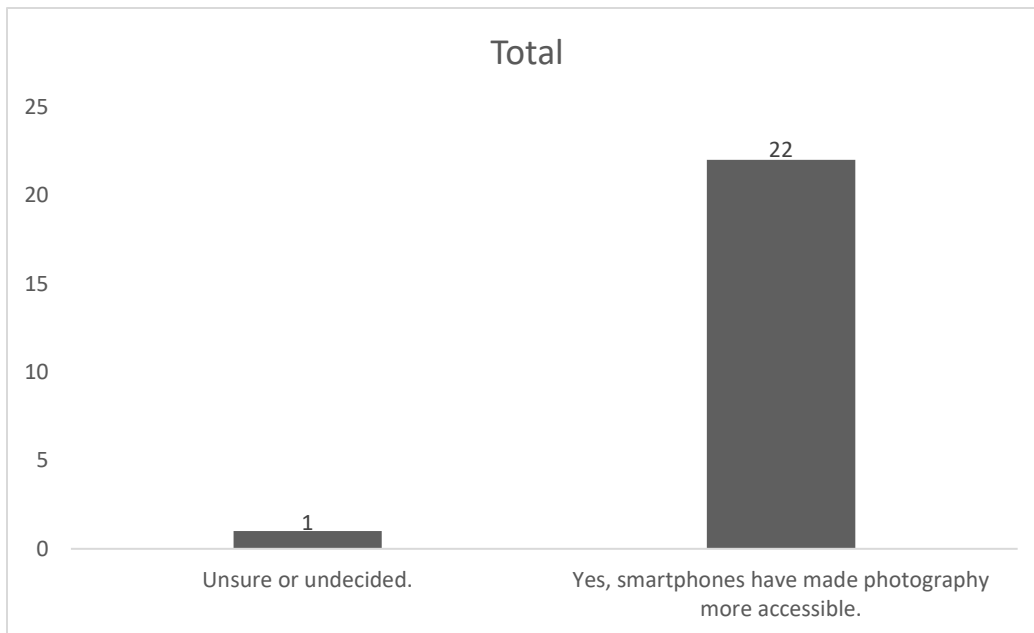


Figure 9: Accessibility of photography using smartphones



The frequency distribution for assessing commercial implications of smartphone photography for commercial photographers was assessed through questions based on past and present experiences of the commercial photographers in Bolgatanga Municipality. Results are presented in Figures 6 – 9. *Figure 6* shows the changes in demand for their service from commercial photographers in the era of smartphone photography. From *Figure 1*, 11 commercial photographers indicated that yes, there has been a slight decrease in demand, with 10 commercial photographers indicating yes, there has been a significant decrease in demand for commercial photography services, and two (2) out of the total 23 commercial photographers indicated No, there has been an increase in demand.

Figure 7 shows the commercial photographers' responses to whether smartphone photography has affected the perceived value of commercial photography. Fourteen believed that it has somewhat devalued professional photography, and six responded that it has significantly devalued it. In contrast, two respondents responded that there had been an increase in demand, and one respondent indicated no significant change in demand.

Figure 8 seeks the commercial photographer's view on whether they have noticed a change in the quality of smartphone photography over the past few years. Fourteen of the commercial photographers indicated yes, the quality has significantly improved; 6 responded yes, there has been a slight improvement; 2 indicated no, the quality has declined, and one responded no, the quality remains the same.

Figure 9 Out of the 23 commercial photographers who responded, 22 believe smartphones have made photography more accessible to the general public, while one respondent was unsure or undecided.

Discussion

Implication of smartphone photography and social media usage on commercial photographers by smartphone users

Figures 1–4 statistics provide valuable insights into the ramifications of smartphone photography and social media usage for commercial photographers in Bolgatanga Municipality, Ghana. These findings indicate the shifting dynamics of consumer behaviour and preferences for photography services.

Figure 1 indicates a clear trend of smartphone users' poor patronage of commercial photographers. Most respondents said they rarely or never use commercial photographers' services. This data supports commercial photographers' contention that demand for their services has decreased due to the proliferation of smartphone photography (123RF, 2022; Holland, 2021). Smartphone consumers' use of professional photography services is declining, which aligns with worldwide trends. Many people, especially in the age of social media and user-generated content, rely on their



smartphones for photography (Tania, 2021). This behavioural shift has an immediate influence on the commercial photography sector.

Figure 2 shows how infrequently respondents print images taken using smartphones. Many smartphone users rarely or never print their images, while a smaller proportion prints their smartphone photographs only a few times each year. This represents the trend away from traditional printing and toward digital photo sharing and storage (123RF, 2022; Miller et al., 2021). The decline in interest in printing photographs is consistent with the digital age and the ease of sharing images via smartphones and social media (Winston, 2013). Many users regard social networking sites as virtual photo albums, minimising the need for actual prints. This move impacts commercial photographers who have traditionally provided printing and framing services.

Figure 3 demonstrates that a considerable percentage of smartphone users take images for social media purposes, with many doing so numerous times each day. This conduct emphasises the importance of smartphones in creating content for social networks (Laricchia, 2022). The emphasis on developing visual content for social media aligns with the global phenomenon of people utilising smartphones to share their lives and experiences online. Smartphone cameras provide rapid satisfaction, while social media platforms allow you to share your photos with a large audience.

According to Figure 4, most smartphone users routinely share smartphone-captured images on social networking networks. This statistic highlights the close relationship between smartphone photography and social media usage, with many users sharing their photographs online (Bell, 2019; 123RF, 2022; Miller et al., 2021). The widespread use of smartphone-captured images on social media platforms is consistent with the "visual culture" concept in the digital age. Individuals utilise social media to chronicle and share their experiences, and visual content visually has become a fundamental mode of communication.

Commercial photographers' opinion on commercial implications of smartphone photography on their business.

The results of Figure 6 show that commercial photographers have a mixed reaction to changes in demand for their services in the age of smartphone photography. While two respondents reported an increase in demand, the majority reported a drop in demand, with several reporting a significant fall. This illustrates smartphone photography's impact on the professional photography market (Tania, 2021). The fall in demand for professional photography services due to the proliferation of smartphone photography is not unique to the municipality of Bolgatanga. According to studies, people increasingly use smartphones for imaging (123RF, 2022; Miller et al., 2021). These findings emphasise the importance of professional photographers adapting their business strategies to remain competitive. Figure 7 depicts commercial photographers' perceived devaluation of professional photography in response to smartphone photography. According to the findings, some

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respondents felt that smartphone photography had devalued their jobs somewhat or severely. This perception can affect price, market positioning, and overall industry dynamics (Tania, 2021). The perception of devaluation is a prevalent worry in the photographic industry. The democratisation of photography, in which anybody with a smartphone may create and share photos, has changed consumers' perceptions of professional photography (Freeman, 2011). As the quality of smartphone cameras improves, some people may question hiring a professional photographer (123RF, 2022; Holland, 2021).

Figure 8 illustrates that many commercial photographers recognise the progress in smartphone picture quality over the last few years. This awareness of improved smartphone image quality means that professional photographers face a growing competitive challenge (Germen, 2014). Smartphone camera technology advancements have enabled users to shoot high-quality photographs previously reserved for professional cameras. This development has resulted in a shift in consumer expectations, with many now believing that smartphone photography can provide professional-quality images (123RF, 2022; Holland, 2021). The perception of improved quality corresponds to the reality of the rapidly evolving smartphone camera business.

In Figure 9, the overwhelming agreement among commercial photographers is that smartphones have made photography more accessible to the general people. This is consistent with the democratisation of photography, which enables individuals to create, distribute, and interact with visual information more efficiently than ever before (Freeman, 2011). Smartphones' enhanced accessibility to photography is a worldwide phenomenon. Smartphone cameras' simplicity and instant access to sharing platforms have brought photography to a broader audience (Winston, 2013). This shift in accessibility highlights the shifting dynamics of the photography industry.

CONCLUSION

The rise of smartphone photography and its impact on commercial photographers in Ghana's Bolgatanga Municipality is an important concern for the photography industry. As evidenced by this study, the growth of smartphone cameras and social media platforms has contributed to the shifting environment of photography.

According to the data, smartphone photography has reduced commercial photography demand. Smartphone users increasingly capture and share images on social media, often choosing ease and accessibility over quality. This has influenced the perceived value of professional photography, with many smartphone users believing that their photographic talents are sufficient for their purposes.

However, the professional photography industry is not extinct. Commercial photographers who can adjust to changing times can still find work. Diversification of services, ongoing skill development, an internet presence and adaptation to social media trends are all necessary for

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photographers to remain competitive. Collaboration between smartphone and commercial photographers might result in new initiatives and talent exchange.

Finally, while smartphone photography and social media have altered the landscape of photography, commercial photographers in Bolgatanga Municipality may prosper by embracing technology, providing unique services, and remaining committed to quality and professionalism. Although the photography industry evolves, it remains resilient and adaptable to changing technologies and consumer preferences.

Recommendations

Commercial photographers in the Bolgatanga municipality can adopt or improve on the following recommendations to boost their business even with smartphone photography's massive presence and patronage.

Diversification of Services: Commercial photographers in Bolgatanga Municipality may consider expanding their services to adapt to the changing photography landscape. They can give one-of-a-kind and creative services that smartphones cannot, such as specialist photography, post-processing, and creative direction.

Online Presence: Commercial photographers should build a strong online presence by creating professional websites and leveraging social media platforms to promote their work and interact with potential clients. Effective online marketing can help them reach a larger audience and attract clients who value quality photography.

Adaptation to Social Media Trends: As a marketing tool, commercial photographers should embrace social media. They should understand how to use these channels to reach their target demographic and keep in touch with clients. Understanding the social media dynamics can help photographers promote their work and interact with potential clients. To counteract the influence of smartphone photography, business photographers should focus on quality differences. Compared to smartphone photographs, they can underline the distinct quality, inventiveness, and professionalism they bring to their job. This can help to justify the more significant costs of professional photography.

Customer Experience: Improving the overall customer experience is critical. Commercial photographers should provide exceptional customer service, tailored consultations, and a smooth process for clients to enhance their experience of dealing with a professional photographer.



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