

Impact of Instagram on Photography

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Abstract

This paper discusses the current state of photography and the effect of social media especially Instagram on photography. It also focuses on the concept of mobility in photography (Smartphone photography) and the new approach to sociality. This study aims to investigate the effects of Instagram and technological development. Social media is one of the fastest-growing internet platforms; if not the fastest, we will analyze the different effects on photography as a creative field. The researched facts and figures will simplify the effects of social media on the field of photography and also how Instagram is shaping the ever-changing canvas of photography.

Keywords: Instagram, Photography, Social media.

Purpose of research

Being a photographer, it is an integral part to know current affairs in the field of photography

Significance of the study

This study focuses on the influence of social media in the field of photography & how social media shapes the ever-changing canvas of photography. Being able to find the effect of Instagram on photography, aspiring photographers can make better decisions because Instagram and photography go hand in hand very well.

Introduction

From 1888 (the camera was placed on the market for sale, it was made by Kodak) to the present, it came a long way and photography is now an integral part of our day-to-day life. We can now see photos almost everywhere. We see photos on advertisement hoardings, newspapers, magazines, social media, internet, etc. Due to the ubiquity of photos, photography, as we know, is far & widespread as a communication medium for different cultures & different communities. Since the dawn of photography, visual communication has been interpreted as the means to find the unknown. Placing connections between different cultures and different communities, we can see these connections have been made with the use of the Internet.

The Internet is also responsible for such ubiquity of photos, specifically online photo-sharing on social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, etc. Such social media platforms are quite useful to different businesses for the growth of their business and for advertising their products online. If we contemplate this thought, we can see the massive potential of photography which goes hand in hand with social media especially platforms like Instagram which has a massive audience and is growing. Nowadays' Instagram changed the social approach through the visual experience. Among all social

media platforms, Instagram is considered the new media, which comes after the evolution of conventional media due to the widespread internet.

Being a photographer in the present world is quite different from being years before digital photography and the internet. Due to the sudden rise of the internet, we can see the omnipresence of photos, videos, and digital imagery. Because of this, the way we use and consume media nowadays is drastically different from the past. Because of this, we can see a sudden change in the canvas of photography as a tool of expression and as an art medium.

The arrival of Smartphone technology significantly changed our approach toward this new media as well as photography itself. Initially, Instagram was made specifically to use on smart phones. With the ease of use, people nowadays constantly use smart phones for clicking photos and sharing them on Instagram. Technological developments also contribute to the widespread of smart phones and social media. In a country like India, cheap data plans and faster internet speed also contribute to this circulation of images on social media, especially on Instagram.

Definitions

- **Photography:** It is a process of capturing light and subject with a camera and creating an image. The camera comes in various forms by a modern interpretation, including cell phone cameras, digital cameras, and traditional analogue cameras. Photography can serve many different purposes such as telling a story, a photo can be a document, commercial purpose, etc.
- **Smartphone Photography:** Nowadays photography is carried out with the use of smart phones. Considering all the technological developments in the field of smart phones, society is at a stage where we can create high-quality photos using our smart phones. So we need not carry bulky cameras and equipment to create high-quality photographic content.
- **Social media:** It is a computer-based technology that shares different ideas, thoughts, photos, videos, news, etc. over the internet. Currently, social media is ubiquitous in almost the entire world. With the rise of the internet, social media is the fastest-growing internet avenue for its users.
- **Instagram:** It is a picture and video-sharing social networking website developed by Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger in the United States. Facebook Inc. purchased the service in April 2012. Users may upload media to the app, which can then be altered with filters and grouped using hashtags and geographical labelling. Posts can be shared with the general public or with pre-approved followers. Users may explore trending material and browse other users' content by tags and places. Individuals may add their material to a personal feed by liking photographs and following other users.

Literature Review

According to medium.com, Koh D. studies the current changes in photography which includes current ideas/technologies, and ongoing trends/fashion. This states the current aspects of photography regarding how photography is influenced by social media as an art in the world. He also claims what is the relation of photography to its history as well as its evolution. He analyzes the term "state" as it is an analogy to a chemical state of matter (solid, liquid, gas) in which photography is now in a liquid or soft state. As we go further in the article, we see our community/society as an image-driven society. We communicate often through images (Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, etc.)

In his article, the writer also said that our phone cameras have changed how we approach operating in life. Because phone cameras require almost no skill to use (for basics), photography has turned from a skilled hobby to being integrated with our lives as a way of living and communicating. Photography can be used as a pure utility and an extension of our eyes and memory. This is due to the

instantaneous nature of phones. Photos can be used as pure informational transactions. This leads to thin lines in the field of photography.

This study gives information about the thin line between art photography and utilitarian Photography.



Fig.1: The ubiquity of cameras and the rise of an image-driven culture. The above photo shows the difference of 8 years at the same place. (Source: NBC News)

It also distinguishes professional photographers and amateurs.

Art Photography: Photography can be an art form, but not all photographs are created to be artworks or as forms of artistic expression. It took time for photography to be truly recognized as a valid art form. However, in the present day, many art museums and art galleries now exhibit photographic artworks. Photography art genres are fine art photography, still life photography, etc. During the 20th century, both fine art photography and documentary photography were accepted by the art world and the gallery system. At first, fine art photographers tried to imitate painting styles. This movement is called Pictorialism, often using soft focus for a dreamy, 'romantic' look. In reaction to that, Weston, Ansel Adams, and others formed the Group f/64 to advocate 'straight photography', the photograph as a (sharply focused) thing and not an imitation of something else.

Utilitarian Photography: The purpose of photography can vary depending on what the photographer is trying to achieve. For example, documentary and news photographers capture images to provide a detailed account of actual events, while there are other genres of photography as well such as landscape, macro, wildlife, portrait, documentary, fashion, travel, and event photography. Popular genres are portrait, landscape, architecture, fashion, food, sports, wildlife, macro, street, event, and documentary photography. (Koh D. 2017)

In the research, the researcher gives a detailed study about the visuality and mobility of social media modifying individuals by their interpersonal relationships. It also throws light on the ubiquitous use of technology devices which leads individuals towards the development of new forms and conceptions of digital visualities, (Serafineli E. 2017)

The article by Lamberti C. throws light on, not only how photography was in the early stages, but also how photography evolved in digital form/state. The writer also stated that in 2010 the world was introduced to Instagram which quickly transformed from just a photo-sharing platform. The writer also said that Instagram has transformed photography by allowing users to self-caption each photo they post. This takes away from the photo, which is meant to speak for itself and be open to interpretation. Also, the location sharing of the photo gives the exact location of the photo. This enables users to go to that location and capture the exact moment, therefore capturing the same photo which once was unique. The writer further adds that social media have put considerable amounts of pressure on their users to give and get likes and comments on photos. To get more likes and more reach, users tend to remove imperfections for that photo, to do that there are photo editing apps, which can alter the photo. This shows that many users tend to share their photos on social media just for the sake of likes. This article also states that there is always another side of the story. Thanks to millions of users on social media aspiring artists can promote their work to a larger audience. (Lamberti C. 2020)

Guy Prives states in the article on www.digital-photography-school.com/website that social media allows individuals to meet and do collaborations on their work. He further adds in his article that the photographic world is moving in one direction due to recent technological developments. The result of current development is in the form of social media helping the field of photography which reached millions of people. Every one of us has a different perspective which we can see in the form of photos on social media. He further adds in his article that social media allows us to meet new people and see the world through the eyes of others who live in different new interesting places and learn about their culture. We can keep track of people from different countries and see that life in a certain place is not the way we assume or are led to believe. Even the way we see our country can be dynamically challenged when it is reflected in the eyes of another person with different opinions, views, and artistic vision. In the conclusion, he stated that he cannot give any concrete answer to this question, whether social media is destroying photography or not. (Prives, G. 2021)

In one of his articles Hockley A., says that Instagram is no longer just a simple photo-sharing platform as it is evolving into something different. Instagram, like Facebook as its parent company, is now all about driving time-on-platform, which leads to more views for selling more advertising. There's a reason why users now see so many sponsored posts on these social media platforms. There's a reason why Instagram added a shopping feature, none of the above features helps photographers as they all are related to shopping. Due to these changes, the algorithm of Instagram, in particular, is changed quite a bit, now Instagram is one of the biggest video-sharing platforms as well, with the addition of video-sharing features, currently Instagram's algorithm push videos more than photos.

Now there are three distinct camps of photographers on Instagram:

1. Those that use Instagram by posting still photos (posts) as they've always done. This group will likely see a stagnant Instagram experience, with relatively low engagement or new followers.
2. Those that embrace the new Instagram mix still photos with stories, reels, and IGTV. These photographers with organic (non-paid) content are now favored by Instagram's algorithms and likely see more engagement and discovery through the app.
3. Those that purchase ads to gain views and new followers. This is the pay-to-play model and replicates the current state of Facebook pages. (Hockley A. 2021)

Objective

1. The objective of this research is to show the relationship between photography and Instagram and is Instagram still a viable option for photographers to showcase their photos online.
2. To get a clear idea about how Instagram is affecting photography as an art.

Hypothesis

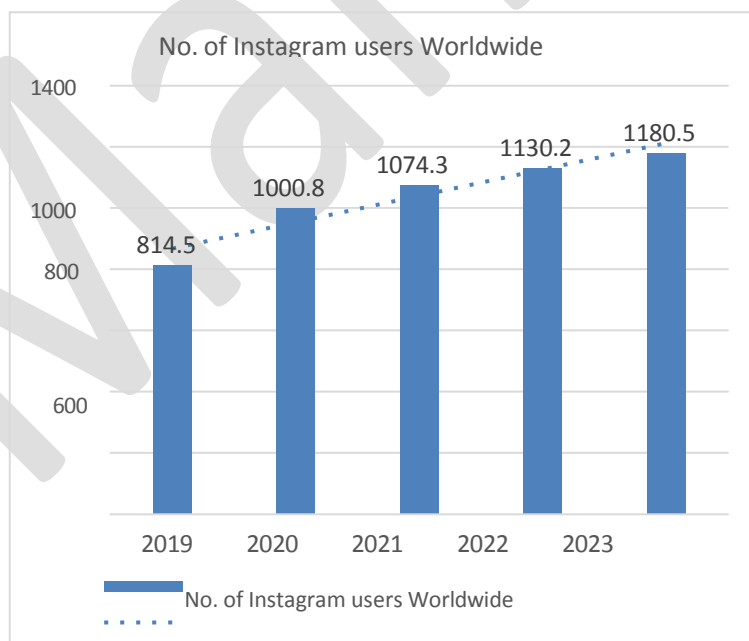
With the help of data collection and interpretation, the researcher made this hypothesis which states that: Instagram is impacting photography and is not a good platform for photographers to showcase their work.

Research Methodology

A quantitative research methodology is used to conduct this investigation.

- Sample size: 40.
- Sample Area: Pune, Maharashtra, India.
- Sample group: People from the photography field & allied fields.
- Sample Age: 18 and above.

Data Analysis



Because of Instagram's global popularity, there are a few statistics and data that have previously been investigated. Various firms obtained this information by conducting surveys throughout the world.

The global Instagram user base from 2019 to 2023 (Published by Statista Research Department, Feb 11, 2022). Every month in 2019, about 815 million people used the photo-sharing website Instagram. According to the most current prediction, this amount is expected to reach approximately 1.2 billion users by 2023. This study was done and published by eMarkrter.com in December 2019.

Distribution of Instagram users worldwide by age group as of January 2022

In January 2022, over 31% of worldwide Instagram viewers were between the ages of 25 and 34. More than two-thirds of overall Instagram viewers were aged 34 and younger, making the site particularly appealing to advertisers. Users of Instagram: Instagram is the most popular social network in the world, with around one billion monthly active members. The social photo-sharing app is particularly popular in India and the United States, which have 230 million and 159 million instagram users respectively.

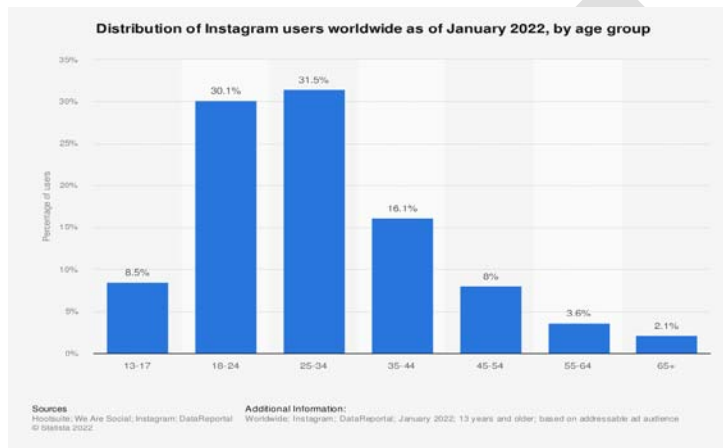


Fig 2. (Sources: We Are Social; Instagram; Hootsuite; DataReportal. Published by We Are Social; Hootsuite; DataReportal.)

Social network penetration in India from 2015 to 2020, with estimates until 2025

In 2020, over 50% of India's population was accessing social networks. It was estimated that by 2025, this penetration of social networks would be 67% of the country's population. This was thanks in part to a booming telecommunication industry, providing cheap mobile data, with Reliance Jio blazing the trail of digital communication for the average Indian.

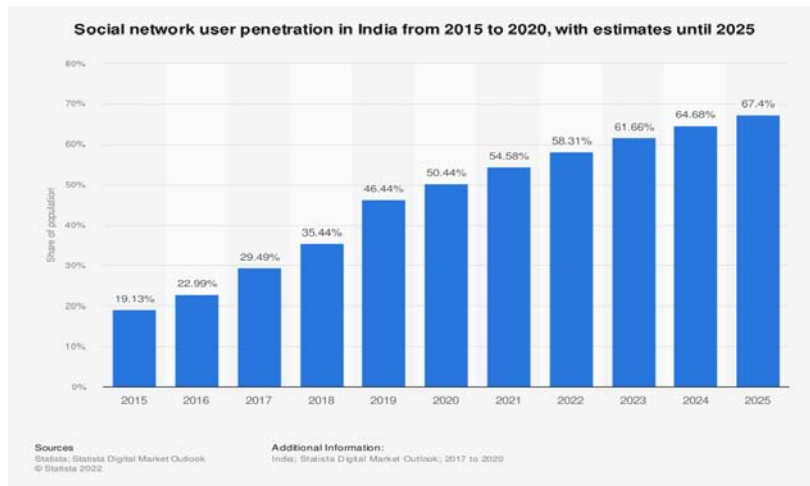


Fig 3. (Sources: Statista & Statista Digital Market Outlook. Release date: July 2020 Region: India. Survey period: 2017 to 2020)

The number of social network users in India from 2015 to 2020 with estimates until 2040 (in millions):

With the ease of access to the internet, India's social media users are expected to reach 518 million by 2020. Furthermore, by 2040, the number of social network users in the nation is predicted to reach about 1.5 billion. This was made possible by the growing availability of internet connections and access in recent years, which was aided by the central government's Digital India project. The increase in social media users was directly proportionate to the number of internet users. Internet penetration has been increasing, with over 34% of Indians having access to the internet in 2017, making India the world's second-largest market after China. Statista.com performed and released this survey in the year 2021.

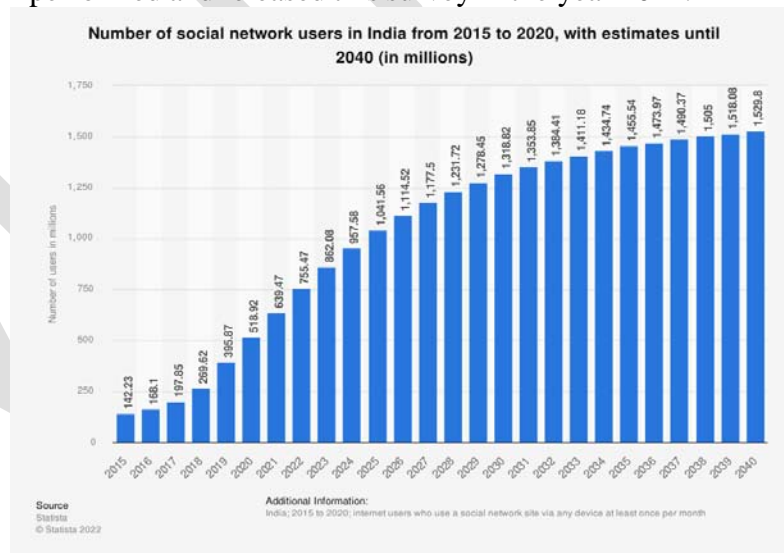


Fig 4. (Sources: Statista & Statista Digital Market Outlook) Leading countries based on Instagram audience size as of January 2022.

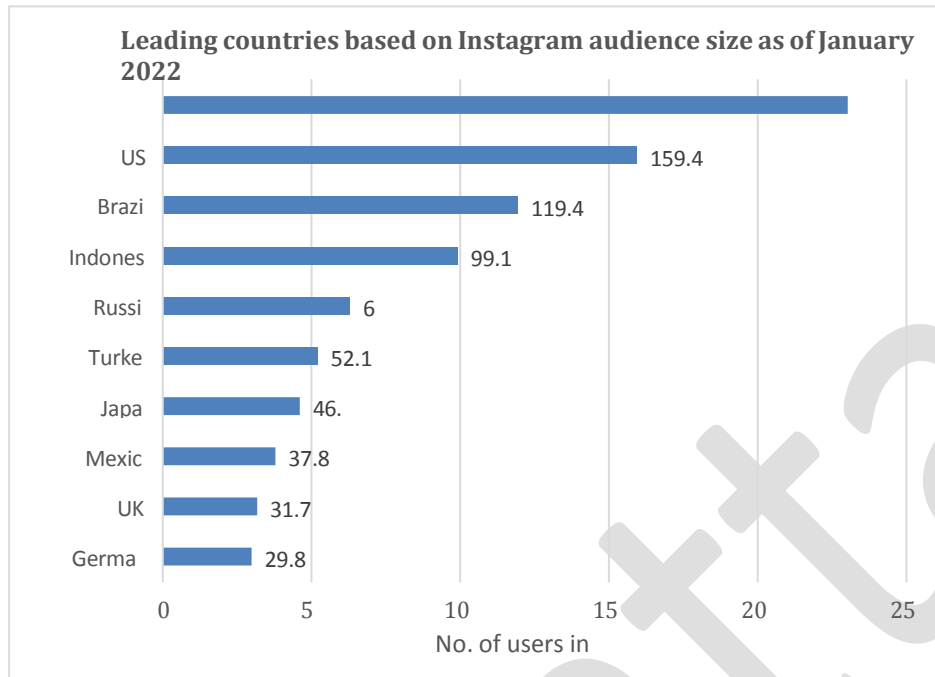


Fig 5. (Sources: We Are Social; Hootsuite; Release date: January 2022)

As per a few sites (we Are Social, Hootsuite, DataReportal, and so on) following is the information that is accumulated around the world. It shows the Main nations because of Instagram crowd size as of January 2022(in millions). As of January 2022, India had a sum of 230.25 million Instagram clients, the biggest Instagram crowd on the planet. The US had 159.75 million clients, and Brazil had 119.45 million. Indonesia, Russia, and Turkey are positioned in fourth, fifth, and 6th positions, individually. Brunei is the main country for Instagram crowd reach, with 92% of the populace. 147. As per Meta's publicizing devices in India Instagram had 230.3 million clients in India in mid-2022. This figure proposes that Instagram's promotion reach in India was comparable to 16.4% of the all-out populace toward the beginning of the year. Nonetheless, Instagram limits the utilization of its foundation to individuals matured 13 or more, so it's useful to know that 21.0% of the "qualified" crowd in India involves Instagram in 2022. It's likewise significant that Instagram's advertisement reach in India toward the beginning of 2022 was comparable to 35.0% of the neighbourhood web client base (paying little heed to progress in years). In mid-2022, 26.6% of Instagram's promotion crowd in India was female, while 73.4% were male.

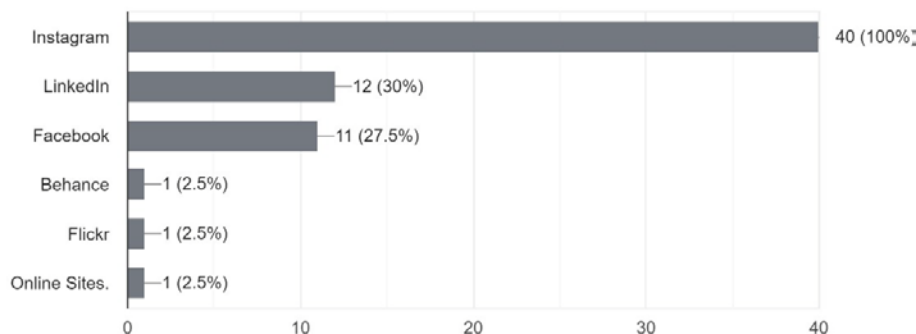
By looking at the above data, it is safe to assume that currently, Instagram is the biggest social media platform with roughly 1.13 billion users in the world (fig1). It is also the fastest-growing social media platform in the world. Since Instagram already has such a big audience, photographers tend to use this in their favour by showcasing their work on Instagram and creating their online presence. The platform empowers photographers across the world to have their work viewed thousands, if not millions, of times over. The community behind the social network cannot be underestimated either, openly sharing a wealth of knowledge and inspiring their like-minded peers to take their passion to the next level. Instagram has become one of the most powerful tools for modern photographers to manage & promote their work, & their business. Since Instagram is growing so rapidly, photographers can get a bigger audience for their content. The age distribution of Instagram users, the most active age group on Instagram is 25 to 34. The age group 18 to 24 come in second (fig2).

The internet penetration in India is around 58.3% thanks to the booming telecommunication industry, cheap data plans, and higher internet speeds. If this continues it is estimated that by 2025, the internet penetration will be at 67.4% (fig3). Currently, in India, there are roughly 755.47 million users on social media (fig4). Out of which 230 million users come under the category “active users”. From the above data, the researcher found one thing that, India has the biggest Instagram audience with currently 230 million active users hence for photographers, it is a great opportunity to showcase their work to such a large audience. It is easy for photographers to create their online presence due to the ease of Instagram and the necessary tools to manage their content as well as their business.

Q1. As a photographer which of the following social media platforms are used more often to showcase your work.

According to the survey conducted by the researcher, 40 participants participated in this survey. The researcher asked participants about different social media platforms they are using currently to showcase their photographic work. All the participants said that they are using Instagram to showcase their photographic work and to get new ideas and inspiration from Instagram. 12 participants said they use LinkedIn as well to create a professional network and showcase as well. 11 participants said that they use Facebook in collaboration with Instagram to showcase their work. 1 participant said he use Behance, and 1 participant said he use flicker to showcase their photographic work. 1 participant said that he uses different photo-sharing sites.

As a photographer which of the following social media platforms are used more often to showcase your work.
40 responses



Q2. Do you think that Instagram is useful in your profession?

Further, the researcher asked whether they (participants) use Instagram or whether Instagram is useful in their profession? Out of all participants who participated in the survey, 31 participants (77.5%) think that Instagram is useful to them in their profession. The sample group was from the photography field and allied fields.

Do you think Instagram is useful in your profession?
40 responses

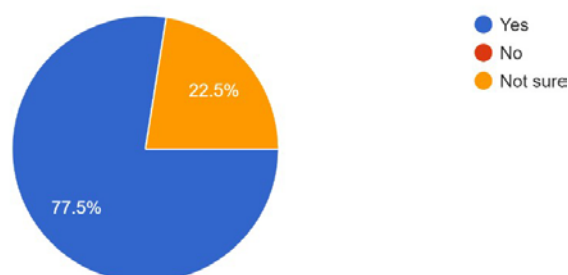


Fig 7. Source: Survey (Google forms)

The remaining 9 participants (22.5%) said that they are not sure. More than half of the participants said that they are using Instagram in their field in some way.

Q3. With the introduction of Instagram reels do you feel that Instagram is changing its algorithm for photos?

The researcher asked participants whether Instagram is changing its algorithm due to the introduction of Instagram reels. Out of 40 participants, 80% (32) participants said that Instagram is changing its algorithm. 5 participants (12.5%) said that Instagram is not changing its algorithm and the remaining 3 participants (7.5%) remained unsure about the question.

With the introduction of Instagram reels do you feel that Instagram is changing its algorithm for photos?

40 responses

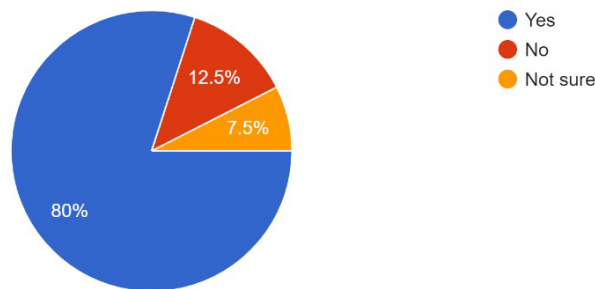


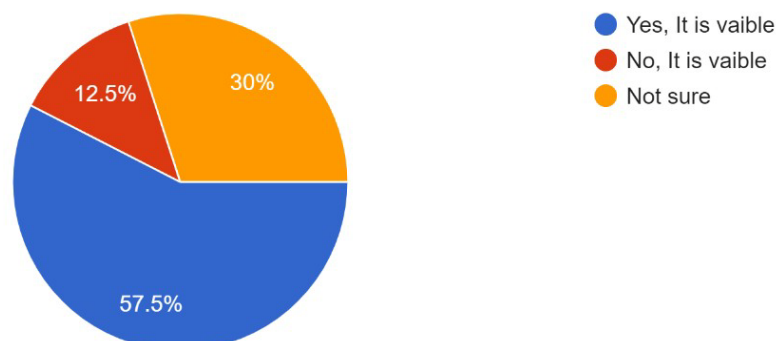
Fig 8. Source: Survey (Google forms)

4. Looking at the current state of Instagram, do you feel that Instagram is still viable for photographers to showcase their work.

Later, in the next question, the researcher asked participants about the current state of Instagram and whether Instagram is still a viable option for photographers to showcase their work. On this question, out of 40, 23 participants (57.5%) said that Instagram is still a viable option for photographers to showcase their work. 5 participants (12.5%) said that Instagram is not at all viable for photographers to showcase their work. 12 participants (30%) were unsure about the current state of Instagram

Looking at the current state of Instagram, do you feel that Instagram is still viable for photographers to showcase their work.

40 responses



Q10. Do you agree that Instagram is affecting photography as an art?

For the last question, the researcher asked whether the participants feel that Instagram is deteriorating the quality of their photos as an art piece or Instagram is affecting photography as an art? About 47.5% of the participants (19 participants) agreed that Instagram is affecting their photography in some or another way. 11 participants (27.5%) disagreed with the above statement and 10 remained (25%) neutral that they were not sure about how Instagram is affecting photography.

Do you agree that Instagram is affecting photography as an art?
40 responses

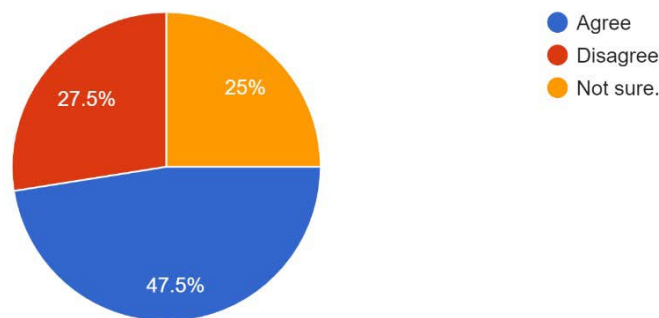


Fig 10. Source: Survey (Google forms)

Result

There are two results for the above data analysis as this investigation initially had 2 objectives.

1. The objective of this investigation is to show the relationship between photography and Instagram and is Instagram still a viable option for photographers to showcase their photos online.
2. To get a clear idea about how Instagram is affecting photography as an art?

To verify the 1st objective, the researcher asked several questions regarding the state of Instagram, is Instagram still a viable place for photographers, etc. initially the researcher asked whether participants use Instagram in their profession. 77.5% of participants said that they use Instagram regularly in their profession. To verify the current state of Instagram researcher asked the next question related to the algorithm of Instagram and 80% of the participants said that they agree that Instagram is changing its algorithm after the introduction of Instagram reels. 12.5% of participants said that Instagram is not changing its algorithm and 7.5% participants were not sure. After that, the researcher directly asked participants whether they think that Instagram is still a viable place for photographers to showcase their work. In response to this question, roughly 58% of participants said that even if the algorithm changes, Instagram is still a viable option for photographers to showcase their photographic work. 12.5% said Instagram is not suitable for their showcase while 30% of the participants were not sure about the situation.

To verify and get a clear vision of the second objective, the researcher asked different questions related to the objectives of this investigation. As observed in the literature review earlier, there are mainly two types of photography. The first is art photography, and the second is utilitarian photography. In art, photography photographers try to create art pieces but in contrast to art photography, utilitarian photography must have a purpose to be carried out. Utilitarian photography is photography with at least some utility. Most photographers out there are not there to create art pieces every day. Though photography is considered art the utilitarian side of photography is quite big compared to the art side. Since nowadays everything is going online and digital, every brand/business

needs good photos of their products to advertise their photos. This kind of photography does not come under art photography. With the help of fig 10, it is safe to assume that only 47.5% of the participants agreed that Instagram is affecting photography as an art, 27.5% of participants have disagreed and 25% of participants remained neutral.

Conclusion:

With the analysis of data that was collected by the researcher with the help of different sources, the researcher concluded that:

- Photography and Instagram have a relationship that is favorable to photographers by getting exposed to a large audience. On Instagram, photographers can promote their photographic work.
- Every photographer is not there to create an art piece, it is safe to assume that Instagram is a good platform to promote utilitarian photography. Everyday photographers typically use Instagram to showcase their photography so that they can have monetary gains from it by getting new clients.

Future Scope

Photographers still prefer Instagram over any other social media for their online presence. Why do photographers still tend to validate Instagram as a valid social media avenue to showcase their photographic work despite Instagram becoming a social media marketing platform? Currently, due to the algorithm of Instagram videos, especially Instagram reels getting more reached and more attention despite this, the photographer still prefers Instagram over any other social media platform.

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