

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

**GHANA'S VISUAL CULTURE IN THE ERA OF SMARTPHONE
PHOTOGRAPHY**



DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

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PHOTOGRAPHY**



**A thesis in the Department of Music Education,
School of Creative Arts, submitted to the School of
Graduate Studies, in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the award of the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
(Arts and Culture)
in the University of Education, Winneba**

JULY, 2024

DECLARATION

STUDENT'S DECLARATION

I, Genevive Danso declare that this thesis (except for quotations and references contained in published works which have all been identified and duly acknowledged), is entirely my original work, and it has not been submitted, either in part or whole, for another degree elsewhere.

Signature Date

SUPERVISORS' DECLARATION

We hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of this work was supervised following the guidelines for supervision of the Thesis as laid down by the University of Education, Winneba.

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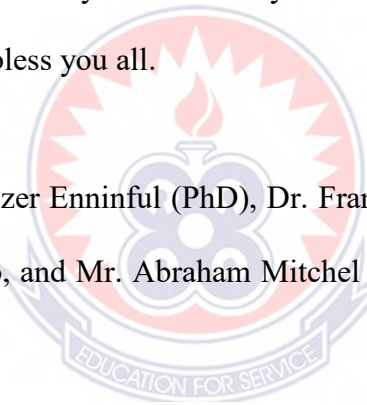
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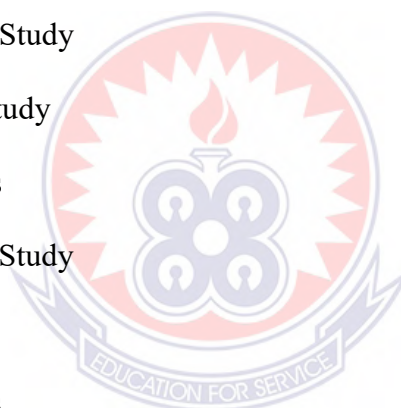
DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to Prophet Albert Obeng without whose endless support this research would not have been possible, and my entire family.



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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the influence of smartphone photography on Ghana's visual culture. The research specifically examines the prevalence and patterns of smartphone photography; the role of social media in shaping visual practices; the ways smartphone photography contributes to the representation of Ghanaian identity and heritage; and the challenges and opportunities it presents for professional photographers. A qualitative research design was adopted, employing interviews, observation, and photographic documentation. The study, using qualitative approach purposively sampled twenty-five participants drawn from Takoradi and Accra, including smartphone users, professional photographers, cultural custodians, photography lecturers and trainers, experts from the Centre for National Culture, and photography students. Data were analysed thematically to identify key patterns, meanings, and interpretations across participants' narratives and visual evidence. Findings indicate that smartphone photography has become pervasive and deeply integrated into everyday life across both urban and rural spaces. Its widespread use, accelerated since the mid-2000s and supported by social media platforms, has democratized visual storytelling and expanded public participation in image-making. Smartphone photography enables individuals to document personal experiences, assert cultural identity, and contribute to evolving representations of Ghanaian life. At the same time, professional photographers acknowledge that smartphones offer new creative possibilities and avenues for collaboration; however, concerns remain regarding declining professional standards, oversimplification of photographic processes, and challenges to cultural authenticity. The study concludes that smartphone photography has become central to Ghana's contemporary visual culture. It promotes inclusivity, creativity, and instant sharing of narratives, yet also requires balanced engagement to sustain professional practices and preserve cultural values. It is recommended that photography educators collaborate with cultural institutions to promote culturally sensitive and ethical visual storytelling. Smartphone users are encouraged to adopt basic photographic techniques and responsible sharing practices. Professional photographers are urged to embrace smartphones as complementary tools, leveraging mobile technologies for innovation while maintaining professional integrity. Future research may compare professional and amateur photographic narratives or explore the impact of smartphone photography on archival and cultural memory systems

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

The widespread ownership and use of mobile phones have significantly contributed to the proliferation of photography as a common practice worldwide (Jensen, 2007). With over one billion individuals owning mobile devices, the accessibility and integration of cameras within smartphones have revolutionized the way people engage with photography (Walsham & Sahay, 2006). This transformation has been facilitated by the multifaceted functionalities of modern smartphone cameras, catering to a myriad of activities beyond mere communication (Schech, 2002). Users now employ their phones not only for making calls or sending messages but also for downloading software, accessing applications, staying updated with news, playing games, managing emails, browsing the internet, enjoying music, watching videos, and capturing moments through photography (Heeks, 2010).

The emergence of modern smartphone cameras has led to a cultural shift in the perception and practice of photography, resulting in an overwhelming increase in the number of pictures taken.

Available studies by Broz (2023) and Thomson and Shehab Uddi (2023) suggest that smartphone cameras accounted for 92.5 percent of all photographs taken worldwide, close to 2 trillion made in 2023. Observations made by Winston (2013) and Freeman (2011) regarding the impact of digitization on imaging technologies have highlighted the pivotal role of digital devices, such as smartphones, in advancing imaging technologies, thereby fostering an environment of artistic freedom and visual literacy (Donner, 2007). This evolution has essentially democratized the process of image capture, eliminated previous constraints, and fostered a sense of creative liberty.

Integrating sophisticated features in smartphone cameras has made capturing and editing images more accessible and user-friendly (Richard, 2010). As a result, nearly everyone has become an amateur photographer, embracing the spontaneity and ease with which moments can be captured, irrespective of location, time, or prior expertise.

Building upon these insights, it is crucial to delve into current trends and issues in smartphone photography. One notable trend is the continuous evolution and enhancement of camera technology within mobile devices (Cruz & Meyer, 2012). Manufacturers consistently strive to improve camera capabilities, introducing innovations such as multiple lenses, enhanced sensors, AI-driven features for image enhancement, and computational photography techniques (Caoduro, 2014). These advancements aim to provide users with better image quality, improved low-light performance, and greater creative control, fostering a continual surge in the popularity of smartphone photography (Chen et al., 2018).

The advent of smartphones since their introduction in 1992 has significantly transformed the technological landscape, with these devices becoming universal tools globally (Chae, 2017). Among the countless functionalities of smartphones, their evolution as visual communication devices has been particularly noteworthy, especially with the monumental advancements in camera technology from the transition of analog to digital photography (Bartholeyns, 2014). This shift, as noted by Busch (2006), brought about tremendous improvements in camera effects, significantly enhancing the capabilities of smartphone cameras.

The integration of digital cameras into mobile phones, as highlighted by Kano (2001), has revolutionized digital photography. Unlike traditional film cameras, smartphone photography eliminates the need for film development and processing,

simplifying the process and making it more accessible to users. This accessibility has led to smartphones becoming indispensable in various aspects of daily life, impacting individuals and societies worldwide, as reported by Singh and Samah (2018). These devices have become instrumental in learning, working, communication, and overall convenience, as emphasized in the study.

However, the pervasive use of smartphones has also led to behavioral shifts, as described by Lee et al. (2014), where individuals have developed a habit of reaching for their smartphones as the first thing in the morning and the last thing before sleeping (Lisha et al., 2017). This dependence underscores the profound influence these devices wield in people's lives, shaping routines and altering habits.

In the context of Ghana's visual culture, which encompasses various visual artifacts such as painting, sculpture, video art, and particularly photography and videography, the impact of smartphones is unmistakable. The democratisation of these visual practices through smartphones has transformed the landscape of visual culture in Ghana. As highlighted by Smith (2008), Yorke (2017), and Ross (2014), visual culture in Ghana spans diverse mediums, from terrestrial to digital platforms like cable, satellite television, internet, and mobile scenic devices.

The accessibility and ease of use of smartphone cameras have empowered both experts and non-experts in Ghana to engage freely in photography and videography. This cultural shift not only reflects the digital revolution but also challenges traditional norms and sociological aspects associated with photography, as observed by Harrison (2004).

Moreover, current trends in smartphone-driven visual culture exhibit a continuous evolution. The proliferation of social media platforms, where these images

and videos are shared, has heightened the significance of visual content. Additionally, advancements in mobile camera technology continue to push boundaries, introducing features such as AI-powered image enhancement, multiple lenses, and computational photography techniques, further shaping the landscape of visual culture.

The pervasive integration of smartphones in daily life has not only transformed the way individuals communicate, work, and learn but has also significantly impacted visual culture, particularly in Ghana. The democratization of photography and videography through smartphones has challenged traditional sociological constructs, reflecting a digital revolution in visual practices. As technology continues to evolve, understanding the ongoing shifts and influences of smartphones on visual culture remains imperative for comprehensive sociocultural analysis.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

In Ghana, as in many other parts of the world, the prevalence of smartphones equipped with high-definition cameras has democratized photography, allowing virtually anyone to engage in this visual practice. However, amidst this phenomenon, there is a growing concern about the impact of smartphone photography on Ghanaian visual culture, particularly its effects on Ghanaian visual culture. The increased computing capabilities of mobile phones and their improved devices, such as cameras, have created significant interest among users globally (Iqbal & Bhatti, 2020; O'Malley et al., 2005; Brown, 2005; Panitz, 1996; Lipponen, 2002). However, this ever-changing phenomenon appears to pose a significant threat to various aspects of Ghanaian visual culture.

Available studies on smartphone usage have shown that more than two billion people worldwide own smartphones and they use them for downloading software,

applications, news, and games, checking email, surfing the web, listening to music, watching movies, or taking photographs (Abid & Bharat, 2021; Statista, 2022; Yin, 2023). The use of smartphones for photography (videography inclusive) is reported to have become increasingly popular globally and has grown into a powerful tool for capturing, documenting, and sharing visual content on social media platforms, and transforming the culture, social life, and other diverse aspects of modern society (Sarwa & Soomro, 2013 & Martiniello et al, 2022).

Historically, photography was a specialized field, a credentialed domain requiring technical and artistic mastery (Berger 2011; Bourdieu, 1990). In Ghana, this was embodied by studio photographers like James Barnor, whose work constituted a curated gaze that intentionally framed cultural identity and ritual with deep contextual understanding. The proliferation of smartphone technology has radically democratized the practice, fostering a participatory visual culture (Jenkins, 2006). However, this shift from a curated to a casual gaze poses a significant challenge to preserving Ghana's visual culture. The spontaneous, fragmented nature of smartphone photography often decontextualizes sacred rituals and events, leading to a potential "de-ritualization" of practice. Furthermore, the ensuing flood of imagery is often filtered through globalized, algorithmic platforms, risking the homogenization of local visual aesthetics (Pink, 2011). Consequently, a paradox emerges: while more of Ghana's cultural life is being documented than ever, the uncurated and ephemeral nature of this digital archive threatens the integrity and authentic preservation of its visual heritage for future generations.

According to researchers such as Sarwar & Soomro (2013) and Darko-Adjei (2019), the availability of mobile photography tools has enabled regular people to participate in the image creation process, particularly for social media sharing. The creation and

distribution of visual content by amateurs has skyrocketed as a result of this advancement. Although this democratization has advantages, such as promoting diversity and allowing for a range of representations, it also poses serious obstacles to Ghana's visual culture's preservation. The intentionality, authenticity, and cultural sensitivity that are frequently linked to professional photography are undercut by the proliferation of unregulated and occasionally shallow content. The proliferation of photographs that might put amusement or aesthetics ahead of cultural significance and archive value has been facilitated by the ease of content creation and distribution (Mirzoeff, 2009; Yankah, 2020).

Scholars and cultural practitioners are therefore becoming increasingly concerned that the prevalence of amateur photography, especially content influenced by algorithms and trends, may dilute or misrepresent traditional Ghanaian values, symbols, and narratives. This problem necessitates a critical examination of the relationship between smartphone photography and cultural preservation, as well as the necessity of developing new frameworks to mediate between the preservation of visual history and technological innovation. As expected, smartphone photography has created a platform for people to have spontaneous access to a variety of phone cameras, and in most cases, high-quality ones, enabling virtually everyone to take part in taking pictures. Perhaps, this is a ripple effect of scholarly consensus on mobile phone addiction becoming heavily problematic for everyone, especially the younger generation (Sarwar & Soomro, 2013; Skierkowski & Wood, 2011; Froese et al., 2012; Kibona & Mgya, 2015, and Ali & Bharat, 2021).

In Ghana, smartphone photography is generally not explicitly addressed in the country's laws. However, there are some legal provisions as posited in Article 18 (2) of the 1992 constitution, which guarantee the right to privacy. It states that “no person

shall be subjected to interference with the privacy of his home, property, correspondence or communication except by law and as may be necessary in a free and democratic society for public safety or economic well-being of the country, for the protection of morals, for the prevention of disorder or crime or the protection of the rights or freedoms of others” Constitution of the Republic of Ghana, 1992.

Ghanaian courts have no definitive ruling on street photography and its lawfulness or otherwise. However, there have been several cases in other common law jurisdictions which may have had a persuasive effect in court, such as *Murray versus Express Newspapers PLC & Another*, 2007 EWHC 1908 (ch) and the case of *Campbell versus Mirror Group Newspaper Ltd*, 2004 UKHL 22 (Wessman, 2019). The law is further fortified by the Data Protection Act (2012), which regulates the collection of personal data, including images. Ghana’s laws on defamation (Criminal Code, 1960) can also be applicable in cases where photographs taken could lead to damaging someone’s reputation.

The culture of smartphone cameras empowering ordinary people to take part in photography and the potential for smartphone use to become problematic has come into increasing research focus (Kent et al., 2021; Winston, 2013; Yang, 2021).

Arbid and Bharat (2021) reviewed relevant literature on smartphone usage among students and also identified the negative effects of smartphones on students by focusing on the social aspect and psychological education. The study recommended further areas of smartphone exploration to ground the phenomenon in literature. Kent et al. (2021) delved into developing and evaluating a digital intervention for problematic smartphone use in a student population. Adopting a mixed-method case series design, 10 students with mild to moderate dependency on the online world (measured via a self-report questionnaire), the study showed that Smartphones have a

positive influence on well-being, online dependency, mindfulness, and sleep. However, the study was delimited in scope to classroom students, leaving other population gaps to be explored.

Similarly, Iqbal and Bhatti (2020) methodologically employed a qualitative approach to explore teachers' perspectives on smartphone usage in higher education in developing countries. Their study aimed to capture the views of 22 faculty members from different academic departments regarding the usage of Smartphones for promoting learning at the tertiary level. The study recommended that cross-cultural studies be conducted to aid in understanding various aspects of smartphone usage.

Other scholars (Rung et al., 2014; Koszalka & Ntloedibe-Kuswani, 2010) have discussed the educational impact of smartphones on students and their performance. Singh and Samah (2018) identified the positive and negative effects of smartphones on students by focusing on education, psychology, and social aspects. Woodcock et al. (2012) explored the various areas of students' lives in an attempt to find out which aspects will change when the smartphone is used as a device to increase their learning knowledge. Froese et al. (2012) conducted a self-report survey to investigate students' mobile phone activity in classes and the potential effect of the activities on students' learning performance.

Abu-Sharab (2015) investigated the influence of Smartphones on Human Health and behavior. Their study concluded that smartphone photography has made the world a global village, and the advent of new touch technologies and the widespread use of smartphones have made humans embrace technology more and depend on it extensively in their lives. The study relied heavily on exploring existing literature related to the negative side of smartphones on human health and behavior by

investigating three major dimensions: health, addiction, and behavior. However, the study was delimited in scope to a public university in Jordan.

Sarahrwah and Soomro (2013) investigated how Smartphones are impacting society and how they can be used to transform the culture, social life, technology landscape, and other diverse aspects of modern society. Their study primarily intended to understand all the positive and negative aspects of Smartphones in society. However, their study touched very little on the impact of smartphone cameras on their study population.

From the aforementioned studies, it is evident that the interest in smartphone photography documentation is a subject of huge importance to scholars, however, despite the scholarly depth on smartphones (Buck, McInnis, & Randolph, 2013; Elder, 2013; Iqbal & Bhatti, 2020; Kent, Masterson, Ali, Parsons, & Bewick, 2021; Litchfield, 2010; Martiniello, Eisenbarth, Lehane, Johnson, & Wittich, 2022; Misra, Cheng, Genevie, & Yuan, 2014; Sarahrwah & Soomro, 2013) there appears to be little scholarly attempt targeted at understanding the impact of the smartphone on visual culture. This phenomenon evokes critical questions in academia, calling for a study of this nature to be conducted. This study seeks to provide insights into Ghanaian visual culture and the impact smartphone photography has on it.

1.3 The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to fill the empirical gap stated earlier by delving into the intricate dynamics between smartphone photography and Ghanaian visual culture. By conducting an in-depth analysis, the study seeks to offer critical insights into how the widespread use of smartphones equipped with high-definition cameras influences the practice of photography and videography in Ghana.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the prevalence and patterns of smartphone photography in Ghana's visual culture.
2. To explore the contribution of social media to smartphone photography in Ghana's visual culture.
3. To investigate how smartphone photography has shaped narratives and representations of Ghanaian identity.
4. To examine the roles of smartphone photography in the creation and dissemination of visual images in Ghanaian societies.
5. To discuss the challenges faced by professional photographers in Ghana due to the rise of smartphone photography.

1.5 Research Questions

What are the prevalence and patterns of smartphone photography in Ghana's Visual Culture?

1. How has social media contributed to smartphone photography in Ghana's visual culture?
2. How has smartphone photography shaped narratives and representations of Ghanaian identity?
3. What are the roles of smartphone photography in the creation and dissemination of visual images in Ghanaian societies?
4. What are the challenges encountered by professional photographers in Ghana in light of increased smartphone photography?

1.6 Significance of the Study

Understanding the impact of smartphone photography on Ghanaian visual culture holds immense significance. This research offers comprehensive insights into the evolving dynamics of photography and videography practices in Ghana, shedding light on how technological advancements are reshaping traditional artistic norms and sociocultural paradigms.

Moreover, the findings of this study contribute significantly to academia by filling the existing gap in scholarly literature, thereby enriching the discourse on the intersection of technology, visual culture, and societal transformations. This research report serves as useful reference material for other researchers who intend to conduct studies on a similar subject matter. The implications of this research extend to the photography industry in Ghana, informing stakeholders and practitioners about the changing landscape and the need for adaptation to technological advancements.

The findings serve as a vital document for consideration on matters or issues relating to policy formulations on the use and misuse of smartphones. This has to do with ethical considerations and privacy.

1.7 Delimitation

The study is delimited in scope to smartphone photography and videography, focusing on their influence on professional visual media practice. Geographically, the research confines itself to Osu and Labone in Accra, within the Accra Metropolitan Area, and Sekondi and New Site in Takoradi, within the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolis, respectively. The researcher selected these two regional capitals in Ghana (ie, Greater Accra and Western) mainly because the two areas are heavily populated with smartphone users and photography experts. The Greater Accra Region has the

smallest area of Ghana's 16 administrative regions, occupying a total land surface of 3,245 square kilometers. This is 1.4 percent of the total land area of Ghana, and it is the second most populated region in Ghana (Ghana Statistical Service, 2004).

Like most local authorities in Ghana, the Sekondi-Takoradi Metropolitan Assembly started as Sekondi-Takoradi Town Council on 1st October 1903 by proclamation in the Gold Coast Colony (Ghana Statistical Service, 2014). The proclamation was dated 15th September 1903 and was made under the Town Council ordinance of 1894. Over time, the population and the geographical area expanded. Many villages, such as Ketan and Tanokrom, were included in the Council's administrative jurisdiction (Ghana Statistical Service, 2014). The status and the name of the Council changed from Town Council to City Council in 1976. The name again changed to Shama Ahanta East Metropolitan Area, which later changed to Sekondi Takoradi Metropolitan Area in December 2007 through Legislative Instrument 1933 when Shama was carved out of the Shama Ahanta East Metropolitan Assembly (SAEMA).

1.8 Definition of Terms

Android: An open-source operating system used for Smartphones and tablet computers.

Aperture: It is a mechanism that opens to allow light to pass through the lens into the camera sensor.

Call Forwarding: This is a service in Smartphones that allows clients to transfer a call
call from one line to another

Call Holding: A service in Smartphones that allows the receiver or caller to

hold up a call till he or she is ready.

Camera: A picture-taking device usually consisting of a light-tight box, a film holder, a shutter to admit a measured quantity of light, and a lens to focus the image.

Camera Obscura: Latin for “dark chamber,” a darkened room with a small opening through which rays of light could enter and form an image of the scene outside. Eventually, a lens was added at the opening to improve the image, and the room shrank to a small, portable box.

Cell phone: A portable telephone operated through a cellular radio network.

Daguerreotype: The first practical photographic process was invented by Daguerre and described in 1839. The process produced a positive image formed by mercury vapor on a metal plate coated with silver iodide.

Darkroom: A room where photographs are developed and printed. sufficiently dark to handle light-sensitive materials without causing unwanted exposure.

Development: The entire process by which exposed film or paper is treated with various chemicals to make a visible image and permanent.

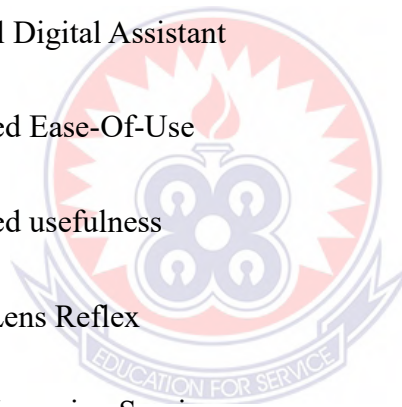
Exposure: The amount of light reaching the light-sensitive material. Specifically, the intensity of light multiplied by the length of time it falls on the material.

- Film:** The material used in a camera to record a photographic image. Generally, it is a light-sensitive emulsion coated on a flexible acetate or plastic base.
- Heliography:** An early photographic process, invented by Niépce, employing a polished pewter plate coated with bitumen of Judea, a substance that hardens on exposure to light.
- International Roaming:** A service that allows the client to use their line even outside the country of service.
- Lens:** A piece or several pieces of optical glass shaped to focus an image of a subject.
- Mobile penetration:** It represents the total number of mobile subscriptions per 100 inhabitants in a geographical area
- Mobile phone:** Also known as a Cell Phone, it is a portable telephone operated through a cellular radio network
- Mobile teledensity:** Same as mobile penetration
- Photography-** It is a process, activity, and art of creating still or moving pictures by recording radiation on a radiation-sensitive medium, such as a photographic film or an electronic sensor.
- Pager:** A small electronic message-receiving device that beeps, flashes, or vibrates to alert the user of a contact. It is often with a small screen.
- Pinhole Camera:** This is a simple camera with no lens and a single very small aperture. Simply explained, it is a light-proof box with a small hole in one side.

- Selfie:** A snapshot of oneself using devices such as a Smartphone and webcam that does not require assistance from another person.
- Shutter:** A mechanical part of a camera that opens and closes the lens aperture to expose the film or plate to light.
- Smartphone:** A mobile phone that does many of the functions of a computer, usually with a touch screen, interface, internet access, and an operating system able to run downloaded apps.
- Snapshot:** A photograph, especially one taken by an amateur with simple equipment.
- Visual Culture:** It is the visual imagery, artifacts, and practices that are produced, circulated, and interpreted within cultural and social contexts. It focuses on the role of visual media such as art, photography, film, television, advertisements, digital platforms, and everyday objects in shaping societal values, identities, and ideologies. The concept emphasizes how visuals operate as a form of communication and influence human perception, thought, and behavior.
- Ghana's Visual Culture:** It is the visual expressions, artifacts, and practices of the people of Ghana, shaped by their historical, cultural, social, and political contexts. It encompasses traditional art forms, modern visual media, and everyday aesthetics, reflecting the country's rich heritage, diverse ethnic traditions, and dynamic engagement with contemporary global influences. Ghana's visual culture is a vibrant mix of indigenous practices, colonial legacies, and postcolonial innovations.

1.9 Abbreviations

CCD -	Charge-Coupled Device
CIS -	Caller Identity Service
DOF -	Depth of Field
DSLR-	Digital Single Lens Reflex camera
GSM -	Global System for Mobile Communication
ISO -	International Organization of Standardization
MP -	Mega Pixel
PDA -	Personal Digital Assistant
PEOU-	Perceived Ease-Of-Use
PU -	Perceived usefulness
SLR -	Single Lens Reflex
SMS -	Short Messaging Service
TAM-	Technology Acceptance Model theory
TRA -	Theory of Reasoned Action
UCC -	University of Cape Coast
UEW -	University of Education, Winneba



1.10 Organization of the Rest of the Text

This research report consists of five chapters. Chapter One, which is the introductory part, has been dealt with, and Chapter Two constitutes a review of relevant literature that is interconnected to the theoretical and conceptual foundations of the smartphone photography surge in Ghana's visual culture. In doing so, considerations were given to the Technology Acceptance Model theory (TAM), Definition, Perceptions, and Concept of Photography, the meaning and concepts of professional photography, the meaning and concept of Smartphones, their capabilities, and development in Ghana, among others.

Chapter Three focuses on the methodology by which the study was undertaken, taking into consideration the study area, design, populations, and methods of data collection and analysis. Chapter Four presents the results and discussions of the study. In doing so, the data gathered were reorganized to have a coherent dialogue for more comprehensive analysis. Chapter Five summarizes the findings, concludes, and makes recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

This chapter tackles the concepts and theoretical perspectives of some of the key works in photography in an attempt to gain the conceptual and contextual clarity of the research objectives and questions. To gain a scholarly focus on the research topic, the review specifically provides the theoretical basis for the concept of visual culture; defines photography; traces the historical development of photography, explains the types of photography (professional and smartphone cameras), and discusses challenges facing photography in Ghana. Also, the concept of visual culture is discussed within the context of smartphone camera photography. The entire empirical review is thematically structured relative to the objectives of the study. However, a comprehensive theoretical literature review that culminated in a theoretical framework for the study was orchestrated before the review of empirical literature.

2.2 Theoretical Review

This section comprehensively elucidates three theories underpinning the research. The first three sub-sections focus on explanations of the theories, and the fourth sub-section stipulates the theoretical framework of the study. The research was underpinned by the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) propounded by Davis, Bagozzi, and Warshaw in 1989, the Theory of Democratization by Johnson (2011) and Sanken (2014), the Phenomenology Social Theory developed by Edmund Husserl (1859–1938), and Performance Theory propounded by Richard Schechner in 1988.

2.2.1 Technology Adaptation Theory

In this theory, Davis, Bagozzi, and Warshaw identified and explained several factors and considerations that have influenced the usage of technology since its emergence. Figure 1 presents a diagrammatic structure of the Technology Acceptance Theory (Davis et al., 1989).

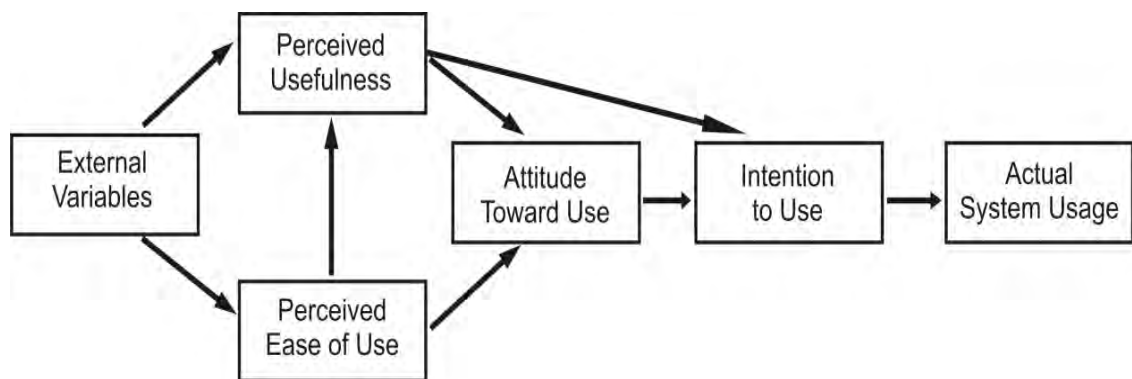


Figure 2.1: The Structure of Technology Acceptance Model.

(Source: Davis et al., 1989).

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) is an information systems theory that models how users come to accept and use technology (Davis et al., 1989). This principle explains that when technology emerged, several factors and considerations influenced the users in making decisions about how to use it. The TAM was developed based on two theoretical constructs of perceived ease of use (PEOU) and perceived usefulness (PU) of technology (Aldas-Manzano et al., 2009; Davis et al., 1989). PEOU, as explained by Davis et al. (1989), focuses on the degree to which a person believes that using a particular technological system would be free from effort.

Also, Davis et al. (1989) defined PU as the level of enhanced job performance that a person/party believes they will derive from using a particular technological system. According to Aldas-Manzano et al. (2009), TAM is used to explain how the

constructs of “Perceived Ease of Use” and “Perceived Usefulness” can affect the attitude of people to accept or decline the use of a new or particular technology. As observed in Figure 1, Perceived Usefulness has a direct impact on Attitude to Use and intention to Use technology. However, Perceived Ease of Use is influenced by Perceived Usefulness (Ezzi, 2014).

Ramayah and Ignatius (2005) have argued that the early application of the TAM included its modification to “predict” why people intend to adopt and use a particular technology, until it was later applied to study the outcome of the actual usage of the technology. This development necessitated the comparison of the prediction and actual usage of new technologies. According to Warshaw and Davis (1985), the behavioral intention of TAM is adapted from the theory of reasoned action and is linked to the theory of planned behavior (Abeka, 2012). This is because behavioral intention defines how people build up a purpose, strategy, or blueprint to either perform or not perform some future behavior.

The theoretical framework of TAM, as discussed herein, provides important perspectives on human and technological development, how the world defines technology, and its acceptance. This suggests that the emergence of smartphone technological devices and their usage in photography is underpinned by users’ technological awareness and sociocultural acceptance. Therefore, if smartphone technology is accepted and consciously used for photographs, it tends to define the visual culture of a person. Since TAM theoretical lenses focus on the influential factors that predict why people intend to adopt and use a particular technology and the outcome of the actual usage of technology, it provided a befitting framework for the current study, which sought to examine smartphone photography in Ghanaian visual culture. In this regard, TAM theory guided the study as it examined the acceptance

and usage of smartphone technological gadgets in the field of photography in Ghana on one end and, on the other end, how smartphone photography is used to showcase Ghanaian visual culture.

2.2.2 Democratization Theory

The specific attribution of the introduction of democratization theory in photography to a single individual with a name and date is not universally documented or agreed upon in the field. The concept of democratization in photography has been an evolving idea, and its discussion has involved various scholars, photographers, and experts over time. As a result, there isn't a definitive record pointing to a particular person, along with a specific date, who first coined or introduced the democratization theory in photography. It is more of a concept that has emerged and evolved as photography technology has advanced, becoming more accessible to a wider population, particularly with the integration of cameras into smartphones and the rise of digital photography.

Democratization theory was first reported in the account of Pennock (1979) as cited in Gagnon (2019) to be extensively applied in the political, social theory, philosophy, economic theory, and public policy administration. The ability for individuals to freely express themselves in decisions and choices is important to democracy. Therefore, a large portion of democratic theory is focused on explaining how this process functions (Downs, 1957; Schumpeter, 1976), as well as the associated ideas that underpin its legitimacy, like representation, accountability, and legitimate coercion (e.g., Warren, 2014; Mansbridge, 2003, 2014). Many modern democratic theorists (Bader 1995; Blokland 2011; Erman 2009; Held 2006; Martí 2017; Moscrop and Warren 2016; Paxton) share a pluralist ethic that is concerned with avoiding an autocratic closure around what constitutes democratic thought.

In photography, the introduction of democratization theory has received several expositions from Johnson (2011) and Sanken (2014) stating that various photographic formats have changed over the years, largely aligned with the impact of the medium/cameras used, with different forms of photography; social, constructed, manipulated and even commercial, are now largely facilitated by the online space, and how this has introduced a new universal immediacy and a renewed sense of inter-mediality to the art. Sankey (2014) further recounts that the democratization of photography (Johnson 2011) has gone hand-in-hand with the advent of the devices used to allow for the ubiquitous production of images that speak to an individual's interaction and engagement with the world around them.

The Theory of democratization is of course in no small part largely due to unrestricted access to the ever-present internet, and internet protocols that have made images so easily accessible for well over two decades now (Margaritidis & Polyzos, 2001). However, this only serves to highlight further that the photographic medium is less important than its underlying social component. In other words, it's all about the relationship between the subject matter, the artist, and how the two provide a unique perspective on our world, and ultimately make these public or keep them private (Sankey, 2014). The theory provides support for unfettered intermedial communication, almost seamlessly bridging with the era of the 'new-media' phenomena (Kress 2010).

Sankey further explains that in the context of photographic democratization theory, it is important to note that every medium is ultimately modally 'mixed', in a way that is more or less unique, allowing different kinds of inter-medial blends with other media consisting of divergent modal combinations (Ellenstrom, 2010). So, where in the past we might have called the practice of photography multimodal, the

internet and smartphones also allow it to be even ‘more’ intermedial. In other words, intermediality has largely been facilitated by the online space and the development of gadgets. Or, the online space has largely made it possible for intermedial practice to flourish, to be disseminated, and experienced.

2.2.3 Phenomenology Social Theory

Social theory refers to explanations, arguments, hypotheses, and speculations about the nature of humans and human social life. Social theory seeks to understand various social phenomena, including power relationships, gender, religion, race, social change, and cultural rebellion. Social theory comprises various analytical concepts, interpretive methods, and research approaches that are part of sociology. Social theory is often synonymous with the term sociological theory. However, social theory is often used in other disciplines, such as anthropology, gender studies, political science, history, and communication studies. Examples of social theory include critical theory, postmodernism, feminist theory, social learning theory, and phenomenology.

Phenomenology is a philosophical movement that started in the 20th century with the primary objective to directly investigate and describe phenomena as consciously experienced, without theories about their causal explanation, and as free as possible from unexamined preconceptions and presuppositions. Phenomenology was developed by the German philosopher Edmund Husserl (1859–1938). Given the spectrum of phenomenologies that have been issued directly or indirectly from the original work of Edmund Husserl, it is not easy to find a common denominator for such a movement beyond its common source. But similar situations occur in other philosophical as well as non-philosophical movements.

2.2.4 Performance Theory

To understand smartphone photography as a performative act, a socially situated, embodied, and deliberate expression, his study draws on Performance Theory. Through this practice, Ghanaians actively create, negotiate, and present their identities in both digital and physical contexts. Performance Theory enables this study to view mobile image-making as an active and dynamic process of identity development and cultural engagement, rather than treating photography as a passive tool of representation. The act of taking and sharing photos, particularly with smartphones, can be viewed as a highly personal and socially mediated performance in Ghana, where visual culture is ingrained in religious expressions, traditional rituals, community gatherings, and commercial aesthetics.

This theoretical framework is based on the groundbreaking research of Erving Goffman (1959), who compared social interactions in daily life to theatrical performances in which people strategically display themselves to others to control the impressions they give off. Similar to Goffman, Ghanaian smartphone users in the digital age curate their photos, positions, attire, and captions to match socially acceptable narratives of success, attractiveness, piety, or modernity. This is known as "front-stage behavior." The act of publishing these images, whether it be a graduation selfie, an Instagram post featuring traditional attire, or a WhatsApp status indicating attendance at a funeral or church service, is a public presentation of self tailored for an actual or imagined audience.

By highlighting the fact that identity is created through repeated social performances rather than being innate or fixed, Judith Butler's (1990) concept of performativity builds on Goffman's ideas. According to this theory, gender, class, ethnic affiliation, and even religion are results of continuous behavioral and visual

enactments rather than fixed characteristics. Mobile photography provides a means of recording, reproducing, and legitimizing such performances in Ghana. A man displaying his lifestyle in an urban setting or a woman posing in traditional kente fabric for a birthday photo session are actively performing identities influenced by digital aesthetics, social norms, and cultural scripts rather than merely capturing a moment.

Another important contribution to performance theory is Victor Turner's (1982) examination of ritual and liminality. Turner maintained that threshold moments are created by specific performative activities, particularly in rituals, where identities are suspended, changed, or redefined. Weddings, naming ceremonies, funerals, graduations, and religious celebrations are just a few of the occasions in Ghana where smartphone photography often interacts with these transitional moments. In these situations, smartphone photos graphically communicate new statuses to larger social networks in addition to marking the change from one period of life to another. With symbolic stances, clothing, and locations that contribute to the visual performance of metamorphosis, the photography itself becomes a component of the ritual structure.

By highlighting that performance is not limited to staged theater but rather is an embodied, practiced, and socially significant activity that takes place in daily life, Richard Schechner (2002) further expands the definition of performance. According to this viewpoint, Ghanaian smartphone photography can be interpreted as a type of social drama, where people practice, stylize, and dramatize aspects of their everyday lives for aesthetic effect. It is possible to view the usage of hashtags, filters, settings, and props as elements of an artistic performance that represent both individual expression and societal norms. Crucially, these performances are increasingly taking

place on digital platforms, especially on social media sites like Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, and TikTok, in addition to being performed in real-world settings.

Therefore, performance theory offers a critical perspective for examining how larger dynamics of power, aspiration, spirituality, and social belonging are reflected and reproduced in smartphone photography. Religious beliefs (such as documenting moments of worship or anointing), gender conventions (such as performative femininity or masculinity), socioeconomic aspirations (such as posing with vehicles or in opulent settings), and political commentary (such as protest selfies or campaign-related visuals) all influence mobile photographs. Additionally, they are understood in a collective context where audiences, both online and offline, validate, critique, and interpret photos as more than just personal artifacts.

This study goes beyond a strictly descriptive approach to photography in light of Ghana's quickly changing visual culture, according to performance theory. It creates analytical opportunities for comprehending how Ghanaians use their smartphones to visually express who they are, what they value, and how they want to be perceived, in addition to using them to capture life. Because of its performative aspect, mobile photography is positioned as a potent cultural practice that has intricate and illuminating relationships with identity, technology, and tradition.

2.2.5 Theoretical Framework Summary

The current study is underpinned by the TAM, the concept of democratization in photography, and the phenomenology of social theory. The TAM, developed by Davis, Bagozzi, and Warshaw, focuses on the factors influencing users' acceptance and usage of technology, particularly in terms of perceived ease of use and usefulness. It posits that users' attitudes toward technology adoption are shaped by their perceptions of its

ease of use and usefulness. This model serves as a theoretical basis for understanding the acceptance and usage of smartphone camera technology in photography, as it examines both users' intentions to adopt the technology and the actual outcomes of its usage.

Furthermore, democratization theory in photography explores how advancements in technology, particularly the internet and smartphones, have democratized access to image creation and dissemination. While there is no single originator of this theory, it has been widely discussed by scholars and practitioners in the field of photography. Democratization theory emphasizes the increasing accessibility of photography to a wider population, facilitated by online platforms and digital technologies. It underscores the importance of intermodal communication and the blending of modalities in contemporary photographic practices.

Moreover, the phenomenological social theory employed in this research facilitates the examination of all observed phenomena. This includes the phenomenon of accepting and using smartphone camera technology in photography, the phenomenon of democratizing to proliferate accessibility of photography to a wider population, as well as the phenomenon of how smartphone camera technology interacts with social media, online platforms, and digital technologies.

Furthermore, a solid analytical framework for understanding the part smartphone photography plays in Ghana's dynamic visual culture is offered by the Performance Theory. At its core, performance theory is concerned with how identity, meaning, and social roles are enacted through representation and behavior. Instead of merely being a recording device, smartphone photography is viewed in this study as a

cultural performance, a deliberate and expressive act that reflects both individual agency and collective standards.

Precisely, the current study highlights the intersection of technology and culture in shaping contemporary photography practices, with the TAM providing insights into users' acceptance of technology, the democratization theory shedding light on the democratization of image creation and dissemination, and the phenomenology social theory facilitating the study of these phenomena. The performance theory frames photography as a mode of self-presentation, ritual, and cultural storytelling. It provides a lens through which to understand how mobile images are not merely captured but staged, circulated, and interpreted within Ghana's evolving visual culture. This theoretical framework offers valuable perspectives for understanding the role of technology in photography and its impact on visual culture.

2.2.6 Smartphone Videography within Visual Anthropology and Ethnographic Theory

The integration of visual anthropology and ethnographic theory inside the study's theoretical framework offers a basis for comprehending smartphone videography as a conceptual and methodological instrument for investigating Ghana's vibrant visual culture. As a branch of cultural anthropology, visual anthropology focuses on using visual media, especially photography and video, to study and depict human societies (Pink, 2007). It asserts that images are essential to the performance, perception, and communication of cultures rather than being only supplemental data.

According to this viewpoint, smartphone videography is a theoretically based tool that supports the ethnographic concepts of immersion, reflexivity, and cultural co-construction in addition to being a technological improvement. To comprehend

how identity, tradition, and modernity interact in daily life, visual ethnography relies on spontaneous, interactive, and context-rich recordings of lived events as they transpire. Smartphones allow the researcher to watch and document cultural performances, symbolic acts, and social rituals in natural settings without creating artificial barriers between the observer and the observed because of their portability, lack of intrusion, and integration into everyday activities.

Furthermore, visual anthropology acknowledges that creating images is a performative and collaborative process. In this sense, people can capture themselves and share digital content by acting as visual storytellers using smartphone videography. This is consistent with the study's more general interpretive framework, which views culture as constantly enacted and reinterpreted, especially in the age of mobile media. Smartphone videography is a conceptually sound method of recording and examining Ghana's visual culture since it captures movement, speech, emotion, and space in a fluid way that reflects its vitality and changing nature.

This study highlights the importance of smartphone videography as a tool for inquiry, interpretation, and cultural engagement in addition to its use as a recording device by placing it within the theoretical traditions of visual anthropology and ethnographic representation. It enables a comprehensive, multimodal comprehension of how Ghanaians navigate identity, tradition, and digital modernity through visual expression.

2.3 Concept of Visual Culture

The abundance of literature on “visual culture” attests to the study of visual culture's potential historical and geographical diversity. Every interaction a spectator, participant, or user has with his or her visual culture opens up the possibility of

conceiving a whole new origin for a concept. According to some other scholars, the term "visual culture" is starting to become commonplace. "Visual culture" appears to be both completely over-determined and nearly meaningless at the same time, existing both everywhere and nowhere. According to Smith (2008), the objects and subjects, as well as media and environments embraced by Visual Culture Studies, can include anything from painting, sculpture, installation, and video art, to photography and film. Others are from (terrestrial, cable, satellite) television, internet, and mobile scenic devices; fashion to medical and scientific imaging; to the graphic and print culture of newspapers, magazines, and advertising; to architectural and social spaces of museums, galleries, exhibitions, and other private and public environments of everyday life.

According to Smith's (2008) description, everything we come into contact with daily is a component of our visual culture. Stressing the importance of a deeper cultural awareness alone might not be enough, as visual culture encompasses more than just studying paintings and drawings; it also includes every visual picture that is in daily life and the cultural components that are included in it. For Mirzoeff (1999), visual culture is concerned with visual events from which information, meaning, or pleasure is sought by the consumer in an interface with visual technology. By using visual technology, Mirzoeff refers to any device made to be viewed or to improve natural eyesight, which includes television, the internet, and oil paintings. For example, "fine art, advertising, popular film and video, folk art, television and other performance, housing and apparel design, computer game and toy design, and other forms of visual production and communication" are all considered to be part of "visual culture," which is defined as "all that is humanly formed and sensed through vision or visualization and shapes the way we live our lives" (Freedman, 2003).

To ascertain the person who first used the phrase ‘visual culture’, and in so doing identify the founding moment of the discipline, Smith (2008) records that, the two often cited winners of this contest are Michael Baxandall for *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth Century Italy, a social history of style and the period eye*, published in Svetlana Alpers for *The Art of Describing: Dutch Art in the Seventeenth Century, a study of Seventeenth-Century Dutch description, representation, images, appearance, cartography, and visuality*, published in 1983. Smith (2008) again states: Long before terms such as "visual culture" or "visual studies" became recognized as academic disciplines, analyses of visual culture were being conducted.

He continues by saying that, in a similar vein, colleges in the UK, including Middlesex and Northumbria, have been offering undergraduate degrees in Visual Culture Studies for more than 25 years without referring to them as such.

According to Smith's allegations, universities in the UK may have been awarding degrees in visual culture studies since 1983 under various course titles. According to Rose (2016), visual culture advances a social theory of the visual by addressing issues of what is made visible, who can see what, and the connections between power, knowing, and seeing. She goes on to say that it explores how internal mental processes and external images or objects interact to produce the act of seeing. Bal (2003) contends that although images can be used to communicate ideas across cultural boundaries, there is also a huge need for original and genuine imagery that captures regional customs, traditions, and culture.

According to the researcher, just as Keifer-Boyd, Amburgy, and Knight (2009) imply, "visual culture is significant because it presents ideas and stories that shape people's lives" (p. 46), all of our daily experiences have an impact on our visual

culture. Once more, Mitchell (2002) asserts that the study of visual culture has been essential to understanding and investigating the modern visual culture within a dynamic global framework.

The researcher essentially affirms the idea that visual culture is the process of watching and observing an artistic work via the lens of the mind, appreciating its beauty internally, as opposed to the actual physical presentation or representation that is based on the social field's visual structure. However, this point of view is based on the idea that one can see something as long as the image does not fill one's field of vision. The study of the visual image is only one aspect of the broader discipline of visual studies; it is not the same as image studies.

According to Cooley (2004) and other researchers, using the internet or newspapers requires combining text and image, reading and looking at the same time; going to the movies requires combining sight and sound, watching and hearing at the same time; using video phones requires combining text (texting), image (photographing/videoing), sound (ringtones), and touch (the haptic or tactile connection between the user and his or her device).

However, Smith (2008) believes that the term "visual culture" can also refer to a group of thematic individual or community-based concerns about the ways politically motivated images are created, shared, and consumed to create, support, resist, and destroy articulations of sexual or racial ontologies, identities, and subjectivities, such as gay, black, or feminist culture.

2.3.1 Overview of Ghana's Visual Culture

The contextual basis for this study is provided by Ghana's visual culture. In Ghana, visual culture encompasses the production, interpretation, and dissemination of visual

expressions that convey social values, identity, and heritage. In addition to modern media like photography, fashion, and digital content production, these expressions cover a broad range of indigenous art traditions such as Kente fabrics, Adinkra symbols, sculpture, and architecture. With more than 100 ethnic groups, Ghana is a culturally varied country whose visual representations are intricately linked to social structures, ceremonial practices, collective memories, and creative inventions (Ross, 1998; Fraser & Cole, 1972).

Ghana's visual culture has a long history and is constantly changing. It includes a wide range of visual expressions that people and groups use to convey identity, values, and meaning. Aesthetics, politics, spirituality, and everyday life all connect with Ghana's visual culture, which ranges from traditional symbols and architecture to modern digital photography and social media graphics.

According to Mirzoeff (2009), visual culture encompasses more than just images; it also includes the social behaviors that influence the creation, consumption, and interpretation of images. Visual forms have long been used in Ghana as a means of memory, creativity, resistance, and narrative. Contextualizing the rise of smartphone photography as a technological and cultural evolution requires an understanding of these forms. In order to examine how modern practices, especially those involving mobile photography, continue to transform national and personal narratives, the following subsections provide an overview of the main categories of Ghana's visual culture.

2.3.1.1 Traditional Visual Culture

In Ghana, traditional visual culture is deeply ingrained in the material and spiritual lives of many different ethnic groups. These visual shapes frequently serve

ceremonial, communicative, or utilitarian purposes and have symbolic connotations. The Akan people's Adinkra emblems are one notable component. These ideographic symbols express social ideals like unity, strength, and humility as well as philosophical ideas and proverbs (Willis, 1998). Adinkra motifs have evolved from their traditional use on funeral garments to more modern applications, including business logos, tattoos, fashion, and even smartphone wallpapers.

Another famous visual legacy is kente cloth, which is produced by the Ashanti and Ewe ethnic groups. Kente's geometric patterns and vivid colors convey ideas of morality, dignity, and knowledge (Ross, 1998). Kente has become a worldwide emblem of African pride and identity, having historically been worn by monarchs at religious events. Totems, masks, fertility dolls (like Akuaba), and wood and clay carvings, particularly royal stools, are examples of other traditional forms. These objects frequently stand for social hierarchy, spiritual strength, or veneration for ancestors. Traditional buildings in northern Ghana, like the Kassena people's painted earthen structures, reflect local aesthetics and are used for ritualistic and residential reasons (Prussin, 1969).

Furthermore, body ornamentation such as beadwork, hairstyles, and scarification serve as a visual identity system that denotes social affiliation, age, marital status, and ethnicity. Despite occasionally dwindling in urban environments, these activities continue to have an impact on fashion, photography, and cultural events.

Ghana's visual culture, which reflects the variety of ways Ghanaians interpret their surroundings, is both deeply rooted in history and constantly changing. It includes the various visual forms, customs, and practices that people and groups use to express values, transmit meaning, assert identity, and preserve collective memory.

Ghana's visual culture is a living record that reflects a fusion of tradition, modernity, and worldwide digital connectedness, from the symbolic language of Adinkra and the elaborate designs of Kente cloth to modern street murals and smartphone selfies as start below in fig 2.2.



Figure 2.2: Women in a colorful traditional dress dancing during the Asante festival in Ghana

Source: (Wirestock (Photographer). 2022)

In its broadest sense, visual culture encompasses more than just formal artwork or static pictures. Visual culture is not just about what is seen, but also about how seeing is socially formed, as Nicholas Mirzoeff (2009) highlights. It focuses on the production, dissemination, and interpretation of pictures within particular cultural situations. Visual culture in Ghana is not just found in museums or upscale art venues; it is present everywhere, including in public areas, shopping malls, places of worship, automobiles, homes, and increasingly online. In addition to being a means of artistic expression and cultural resistance, it reflects and replicates the ideals, hardships, and goals of many groups.

Indigenous knowledge systems, colonial impact, post-independence nationalism, and the increasing forces of globalization have all historically influenced Ghana's visual culture. In order to convey moral and philosophical principles, traditional Ghanaian civilizations mostly depended on visual symbols. Adinkra symbols, for example, represent abstract ideas like leadership, harmony, and resilience, whereas architectural forms and ceremonial garb represent cosmological beliefs, spiritual authority, and prestige. These native visual systems were and still are essential for passing down social norms, oral histories, and wisdom from one generation to the next.

Visual culture adjusted to changing political circumstances during the colonial and postcolonial eras. Urban and religious environments were altered by the introduction of new visual languages brought about by Christian iconography and colonial construction. In order to express contemporary African identities and ambitions for self-determination, Ghanaians simultaneously adopted and reinterpreted these forms through the use of fashion, photography, and symbolic imagery. With the development of state symbols like the national flag and the Black Star insignia, the post-independence era witnessed a concerted attempt to employ visual culture in the building of national identity. These images have been crucial in promoting civic pride and a sense of group consciousness.

Digital technology is becoming a more important medium for visual culture in Ghana nowadays. Ordinary people are becoming producers and distributors of visual material due to the widespread use of cellphones and internet connectivity. Social media sites like Instagram, WhatsApp, and TikTok have developed into essential venues for cultural production, social critique, and identity performance. By means of selfies, carefully managed photo albums, memes, and brief videos, people,

particularly urban youth, actively contribute to the national and international portrayal of Ghanaian life. As a result, visual culture is now more instantaneous, networked, and interactive than it has ever been.

Furthermore, societal factors, including gender, class, urbanization, and technology literacy, are intricately linked to the development of visual culture. For instance, socioeconomic disparities are frequently reflected in the availability of digital visual tools, but they also give underrepresented voices new channels for expression and visibility. Among the new visual storytellers redefining what it means to see and be seen in modern Ghana are street artists, vloggers, influencers, and smartphone photographers.

As a result, comprehending Ghana's visual culture necessitates a multifaceted strategy that takes continuity and change into account. It entails examining both modern and traditional visual systems to understand how meanings are negotiated across technological and historical divides. Crucially, Ghanaian visual culture is dynamic, performative, contested, and continually reshaped in reaction to both domestic and international forces.

In this regard, the rise of smartphone photography needs to be seen as a cultural practice ingrained in Ghana's larger visual ecology as well as a technological development. Smartphones are extensions of how people express themselves, create stories, and exercise agency; they are more than just devices for taking pictures. Mobile photography is changing the way Ghanaian visual culture is created and shared, whether it is through photographing weddings, fashion shows, protests, or everyday activities.

The following subsections categorize the dominant strands of Ghanaian visual culture: traditional, colonial/postcolonial, contemporary/digital, religious, and commercial. This classification provides a framework for analyzing how smartphone photography intersects with these historical and contemporary visual forms, contributing to the ongoing reimagining of both individual and national narratives in the digital era.

2.3.2 Colonial and Postcolonial Visual Culture

Indigenous forms were either displaced, challenged, or coexisted with new visual paradigms brought forth by colonialism. Ghanaian visuality was significantly reshaped by Christian imagery, European missionary architecture, and photographic depictions. Forts, castles, and cathedrals are examples of colonial architecture that still physically reflect this period. Structures such as Cape Coast Castle and Elmina Castle serve as visual reminders of Ghana's complicated history of slavery, trade, and Christianity, and are now recognized as UNESCO historical Sites.

Visual culture emerged as a key tool for identity construction and nation-building in the years following independence. To represent Ghana's sovereignty and Pan-African vision, symbols such as the Coat of Arms, the Black Star, and the Ghanaian flag designed by Theodosia Okoh were chosen. Banners, political posters, and murals were used to visualize national leaders and their ideals.

During this time, studio photography also flourished. Photographers like J.K. Bruce-Vanderpuije and James Barnor combined African locations and goals with Western clothes and poses to create images that portrayed a mixed identity (Sprague, 2013). The aesthetics of contemporary Ghanaian citizenship were influenced by these portraits as show below in fig.



Figure 2.3.2: A group of African women and men, with a female leader holding a staff, in a gathering
(Source: British Library (1920) African Colonial Archives)

2.3.3 Contemporary and Digital Visual Culture

In Ghana, colonialism, first influenced by the Portuguese, Dutch, and Danes, and then by the British, brought new visual regimes that profoundly changed the terrain of native expression. Traditional Ghanaian aesthetics were either disputed, coexisted with, or gradually replaced by these foreign visual paradigms. In addition to being political and economic, the colonial encounter was also visual, entailing the imposition of new ways of seeing, representing, and organizing space.

Architecture is among colonial visual culture's most enduring legacies. Originally constructed as trading posts, European-built forts and castles like Elmina Castle, Cape Coast Castle, and Fort Christiansborg later played a crucial role in the transatlantic slave trade. Now recognized as UNESCO World Heritage Sites, these enormous coastal monuments continue to serve as potent visual representations of

human exploitation, colonial tyranny, and the intertwined histories of Africa and Europe. Their enduring significance in Ghana's visual and historical consciousness is demonstrated by their preservation as tourist destinations and museums.

Along with forts, Christian mission architecture brought about by colonialism altered both urban and rural environments. A new visual order in line with Christian principles and Western modernism was introduced with the construction of churches, schools, and hospitals in European styles. For instance, the Basel and Anglican churches created moral and visual hubs that reflected the colonial civilizing goal, in addition to houses of worship. New visual hierarchies of sacred space were created when Christian iconography, such as stained-glass windows, crucifixes, and religious murals, replaced or devalued traditional religious symbols.

During the colonial era, photography emerged as a crucial medium that allowed Ghanaians to experience new ways of seeing and being seen. Originally employed by missionaries and colonial officials to record indigenous life, frequently using voyeuristic or anthropological techniques, photography developed into a potent instrument for self-representation and surveillance. A class of literate elites who eventually adopted photography, journalism, and printed media as outlets for cultural and political expression was also schooled by mission schools and British-style schooling.

Following Ghana's independence in 1957, the postcolonial era saw a significant visual transformation as the nation reaffirmed its identity and cultural sovereignty. Visual culture emerged as a key tool for decolonization and nation-building. To symbolize Ghana's independence, unity, and aspirations for African solidarity, national symbols like the Coat of Arms, the Black Star, and the Ghanaian

flag—all created by Theodosia Okoh and inspired by Marcus Garvey's Pan-African movement—were thoughtfully chosen and displayed in public. Visual nationalism became ingrained in daily life as a result of the widespread use of these symbols on official papers, government buildings, clothing, and schools.

Visual media were also crucial in creating new political narratives during this time. Public banners, murals, and political posters all became commonplace means of political mobilization and communication. Kwame Nkrumah, Ghana's first president, and other leaders were depicted in murals that were more than just ornamental; they were visual declarations of power, loyalty, and ideological support as show below in fig.2.3.3.. They were intended to foster pride and involvement in the national endeavor. To appeal to the general public, these visual pieces frequently included vibrant colors, regional themes, and heroic images.



Figure 2.3.3: Kwame Nkrumah, in a suit, and a woman meeting traditional Ghanaian chiefs and elders in a ceremony
Source: (Getty Images,1963)

The rise and popularity of studio photography was one of the most important developments in the postcolonial visual landscape. Felicia Abban, Ghana's first female professional photographer, James Barnor, and J.K. Bruce-Vanderpuije were

among the pioneering Ghanaian photographers who produced studio portraits that portrayed a contemporary, international Ghana. In these pictures, sitters wore Western suits or regional prints and posed in front of backgrounds that represented goals of success, modernism, and international interaction. Ghanaians were allowed to self-fashion through studio photography, both literally and figuratively, in response to a culture that was changing.

These photo studios were places of cultural negotiation where African identity and Western aesthetics collided, as Sprague (2013) points out. In addition to recording, the camera mediated a new form of citizenship based on class mobility, urban sensibility, and visual self-presentation. Images from this era frequently depicted composite identities that were both African and global, contemporary and anchored. These images became a part of a larger visual economy of status, memory, and desire when they were put on display in houses, utilized in identification documents, or shared among families.

In addition, the years following independence saw a boom in print culture, which included calendars, newspapers, and commemorative posters. Public space became visually saturated as a result of these materials' dissemination of nationalistic themes, religious iconography, and political statements to a larger audience. Ideologies, aesthetics, and historical memories were created and disputed inside the visual field, which turned into a contested space. It is also crucial to remember that subaltern and counter-cultural visuals became alternative forms of expression, whilst state-sponsored visual culture sought to promote national unity. Underground art forms, oppositional murals, and protest posters mirrored social tensions surrounding themes such as corruption, inequality, and regional marginalization while also challenging prevailing narratives.

In conclusion, Ghanaians' perceptions of themselves, their leaders, and their country were shaped by the colonial and postcolonial periods of the country's visual culture. They created a visual engagement trajectory that continues to influence modern practices, moving from state-imposed symbols to citizen-driven iconography. In order to express their viewpoints in the digital age, today's smartphone photographers, digital artists, and content producers work within this legacy by stealing, remixing, or questioning more traditional visual forms. To understand how new visual technologies innovations are not just but extensions and disruptions of a long-standing visual heritage affected by power, resistance, identity, and creativity, one must have a thorough understanding of this historical continuity.

2.3.4 Religious Visual Culture

A fundamental component of Ghanaian social and cultural life, religion nevertheless plays a significant role in the creation and distribution of visual media. Religious belief and practice are richly mediated through visual forms that seek to inform, uplift, safeguard, and sanctify in indigenous African spiritual systems, Islam, and Christianity. By integrating theology into everyday aesthetics, material culture, and geography, these religious images do more than just reflect faith; they actively mold it. Therefore, Ghana's religious visual culture plays a significant role in the country's overall visual environment, impacting both conventional and digital image-making techniques.

2.3.4.1 Christian Visual Culture

The predominant religion in Ghana, Christianity, has produced a particularly rich and noticeable visual culture. Religious aesthetics have been particularly influenced by the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements among their many denominations. From

printed materials to digital content, their strong emphasis on experiential spirituality, often defined by healing, prophecy, and deliverance, has found artistic representation.

Among the most noticeable are billboards, banners, and church posters. They usually advertise forthcoming religious activities like revivals, anointing ceremonies, and all-night prayer vigils, and are erected on buildings, electric poles, and automobiles in urban areas. These images, which are used figuratively to symbolize spiritual struggle and divine intervention, sometimes include dramatic depictions of pastors in authoritative stances, angels, flames, chains shattering, or demonic forms. Such iconography, which frequently emphasizes themes of spiritual breakthrough, divine favor, and miraculous transformation, seeks to both draw attention and physically communicate theological concepts.

The interior design of churches is also quite important. Colorful backgrounds, LED lights, flower arrangements, projection screens, and symbolic objects like crosses, crowns, trumpets, or flames are all common in Pentecostal churches as shown below in fig.2.3.4.1. The performative sacred space created by these visual arrangements is more than just ornamental; it is in line with the Pentecostal emphasis on emotional intensity and sensory engagement. The intense spiritual experience anticipated in such worship places is further reinforced by the visual atmosphere.



Figure 2.3.4.1: Large church congregation, the International Central Gospel Church, Accra
Source:(ICGC Media 2014)

Additionally, religious dress requirements serve as movable markers of identification and spiritual office, ranging from uniforms for church choirs and ushers to clerical robes and prayer garments. These clothes may have symbols or inscriptions of the church's vision or motto and are frequently intended to communicate cleanliness, order, or spiritual authority as shown in fig 2.3.4.1.



Figure 2.3.4.1: IcgC Trinity Temple Greater Workers Service

(Source: ICGC Media 2023)

Crucially, Ghana's Christian visual culture has spread to online media. Digital flyers, Bible verses, prophetic statements, and testimonies are now shared by churches and individual believers on Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and WhatsApp. The modern fusion of religion and media, where spirituality is no longer limited to physical locations but instead circulates through virtual visual economies, is reflected in this digitization of faith.

2.3.4.2 Islamic Visual Culture

Though frequently more symbolically constrained than in Christian traditions, visual expression is equally essential among Ghana's Muslim communities, especially in areas like Northern Ghana, urban Zongo groups, and portions of the Volta Region. Because Islamic principles forbid the portrayal of human or heavenly forms, Islamic

visual culture places more emphasis on spiritual beauty through abstraction, geometry, and calligraphy than on figuration.

The most revered visual form is Arabic calligraphy, which is frequently seen in religious books, mosques, and on walls. These calligraphic pieces, which are usually engraved with names of Allah or passages from the Qur'an, have didactic and religious functions in addition to being purely ornamental. The calligraphy itself takes on a mystical quality, thought to possess moral and protective qualities.

Another important area of Islamic visual culture in Ghana is mosque architecture. Islamic architecture exhibits a fusion of history and modernity, from the famous Larabanga Mosque, a 15th-century Sudano-Sahelian mud construction, to more recent mosques in Accra and Kumasi. The arrangement of minarets, domes, elaborate tile work, and prayer carpets creates a hallowed visual area that aids in spiritual concentration.

The hijab or niqab for women and the jalabiya for males are examples of Muslim clothing that serve as a visual component of religious identification. These attire selections, which are frequently paired with particular hues during prayer or Eid festivities, stand for modesty, faith, and a sense of community.

Ghanaian Islamic visual culture is primarily analog, but it has also embraced digital media. During Ramadan, Eid, or times for individual or group prayer, WhatsApp messages with Arabic slogans, Quranic invocations, or stylized photographs of the Kaaba are frequently shared. These customs demonstrate how Islamic visual culture is becoming more and more integrated into Ghana's digital religious life, much like its Christian equivalent as shown below in fig 2.3.4.2



Figure 2.3.4.2: Three young women posing in blue, yellow, and pink embellished hijabs

(Source: Mosques in Accra 2022)

2.3.4.3 Indigenous Religious Visual Culture

Ghana's indigenous African religion systems include a rich and profoundly symbolic visual culture that is currently practiced in many different forms. With visual representations acting as channels for divine communication, ceremonial mediation, and protection, these traditions highlight the interconnectedness of the spiritual and material realms.

Different visual symbols, including clay sculptures, animal skulls, feathers, white fabric, or colorful beads, are frequently used to identify shrines and sacred gardens. These objects hold spiritual energy and embedded meanings unique to the god or ancestor being worshipped; therefore, they are not just ornaments. A shrine

honoring a river deity, for instance, may include images of water pots or crocodiles, while those associated with war deities may feature weapons or red cloth.

Indigenous visual expression revolves around ritual objects such as divination trays, libation vessels, amulets (gris-gris), and totemic sculptures. Local materials like calabash, leather, feathers, plants, and animal parts are often used to create these handcrafted items. They are employed in seasonal celebrations, healing rituals, rites of passage, and dispute settlement. Each visual aspect in these rites is filled with layers of cosmological meaning, acting as a visual theology founded in oral tradition and collective memory.



Figure 2.3.4.3: Two women in ritualistic body paint and raffia skirts dancing during a traditional ceremony

(Source: Getty Images, 2016)

In certain societies, the body is also etched with visual culture. Tribal scarifications or distinctive haircuts are examples of body markings that can indicate participation in a certain ritual, societal role, or spiritual association. These markings are still a part of

Ghanaian religious life's historical visual repertoire, despite their decline owing to modernization and Christian/Islamic influence.

Some aspects of indigenous spirituality have also been applied to digital media in the modern day. For example, neo-traditional spiritualists now use digital posters, TikTok videos, and WhatsApp broadcasts to promote their services, showcasing their shrines, ritual objects, or customer testimonials. This techno-logicalized indigenous spirituality combines traditional visual forms with contemporary means of community outreach and self-promotion.

2.3.4.4 Convergence of Religion and Digital Visual Culture

Religious belief and digital visual activities are increasingly overlapping in all three faiths. In Ghana, social media and mobile phones have completely changed how religious imagery is created, disseminated, and consumed. Nowadays, Facebook feeds, Instagram stories, and WhatsApp statuses are frequently used to spread religious messages, posters, and motivational images. These images span from straightforward Bible passages to intricate sermon illustrations, and from traditional symbols for luck and protection to Islamic invocations.

There are important ramifications to this convergence. First of all, it makes it possible to spread religious teachings outside of actual locations. Second, it makes it possible for people to practice mobile and customized spirituality, curating religious content as part of their digital identities and carrying holy imagery in their pockets. Thirdly, it blurs the lines between the sacred and the commonplace by contributing to the visual saturation of religion in both public and private life.

In Ghana, religion is a potent visual tradition in addition to a matter of belief or practice. The rich and unique visual cultures produced by Christian, Islamic, and

indigenous religious societies influence how spirituality is understood, expressed, and shared. These images are essential to Ghanaian identity and aesthetics, whether they are displayed through digital flyers, ceremonial artifacts, sacred architecture, or symbolic clothing. The crucial role that religion plays in Ghana's changing visual landscape is being reinforced by the ways that religious visual culture is being reinterpreted, digitalized, and disseminated in the era of smartphones and social media.

2.3.4.5 Commercial and Consumer Visual Culture

In addition to being locations of trade and commerce, Ghana's bustling marketplaces, transportation networks, and informal economies are significant hubs for artistic creativity, visual communication, and cultural identity. Ghana's commercial and consumer visual culture shows how commonplace items and areas may be elevated to rich visual experiences that convey branding, humor, social commentary, popular aesthetics, and spirituality. These images are part of what academics call the "informal visual economy," a dispersed, impromptu system of visual production and consumption that flourishes outside of official establishments like media outlets or galleries (Barber, 2007; Meyer, 2015).

Locally made items are at the center of this visual economy, and their packaging frequently reflects cultural values, beliefs, and goals in addition to marketing the product. Bright colors, memorable names, classic iconography, and evocative fonts are used in product labels and branding, especially for food items, herbal products, alcoholic beverages, and cosmetics. For example, local language is combined with ideas of prestige, power, and cultural symbolism in cosmetic names like "Obaa Hema Cream" (Queen Mother Cream) and herbal bitters like "Alomo

Bitters" and "Castle Bridge." These names appeal to Ghanaian consumers because they conjure images of power, health, royalty, or authority.

Depending on the product's target market as shown below in fig 2.3.4.4, many of these packaging designs use symbolic motifs like animals, national flags, traditional stools, or attractive women and muscular men. They represent the aspirational visual language of success, beauty, and life, in addition to luring customers. These products' aesthetics frequently adhere to visual logics of fantasy and exaggeration, where the image promises social rank or transformation upon intake.



Figure 2.3.4.4: Market seller with traditional Ghanaian Kente cloth, textiles, and accessories

(Source: fantasy images 2023)

Transport art is another important area of commercial visual culture, particularly on tro-tros, which are privately run minibuses that are essential to Ghanaian urban transit. These cars are more than just useful tools; they are moving billboards that make

cultural and spiritual statements. Typically, tro-tros' exteriors are embellished with vibrant hand-painted patterns, aphorisms, religious statements, and celebrity.

Political pictures, sports icons, and portraits. Commonly used phrases include "No Weapon," "Fear Woman," "Nyame Nhyira M'adwuma" (God Bless My Work), and "Trust Nobody." In addition to expressing the driver's opinions, these texts and pictures also emphasize the driver's identity, offer moral or hilarious commentary, and draw in or amuse passengers.

Tro-tros frequently combine public performance with personal spirituality. Pop culture figures like football players, reggae artists, or local performers may be paired with religious imagery, such as Christian crosses, Islamic crescent moons, or indigenous protection symbols. In this way, transit art is a collage of influences, combining secular and spiritual, high and low culture, and local and global elements into a unified visual frame. This type of visual hybridity, according to academics like Ogbachie (2008) and Gratz (2012), represents urban African modernism in its most approachable and democratic form.

Another essential way that visual creativity is expressed in daily business is through market displays. Fruits, vegetables, spices, fabrics, shoes, and smoked salmon are all arranged by vendors in both urban and rural markets in visually pleasing ways to increase visibility and customer appeal. A visual language of commerce that is both sophisticated and intuitive can be seen in the careful pyramiding of tomatoes, the layering of kente and wax print fabrics in a bright chromatic sequence, or the hanging of smoked fish on skewers.

These exhibits show that artistic sensibility is not limited to "high" or elite art venues. Ghanaian merchants and craftspeople carefully arrange their environments to

attract attention and convey messages, even in highly transactional or functional situations. Local understanding of color psychology, spatial organization, and symbolic association, often acquired informally through apprenticeship or community learning, informs this visual curation. For example, green is frequently connected to health and vigor, while yellow and red can be utilized to convey freshness and urgency.

The street-level visual ecosystem includes not just physical displays but also handwritten signs, chalkboard menus, wall paintings, informal marketing, and even loud announcements. To get attention, these images frequently use humor, spirituality, or exaggeration. A hair salon would advertise “London Haircut” or “Obama Style,” while a neighborhood restaurant might put up a picture of a happy goat with the words “Tasty Meat Guaranteed.” These signs, which frequently use proverbs, metaphors, and pop culture allusions, exhibit a fusion of language humor and entrepreneurial inventiveness.

Interestingly, these commercial images have also made their way into the digital sphere. These days, traders and small business owners display their products on social networking sites like Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp. Visual marketing techniques have moved from physical stalls to digital platforms, as evidenced by the stylization and filtering of images of imported goods, cuisine dishes, haircuts, and fashion products to appeal to a wider audience. The continuity between modern digital visuality and conventional market aesthetics is demonstrated by this change.

When taken as a whole, Ghana's consumer and commercial visual culture shows how ordinary existence may be transformed into a platform for artistic expression. In addition to influencing business dealings, these images also convey

humor, goals, social ideals, religious convictions, and a sense of community. They complicate the distinction between art and function, serving as a reminder that artistic expression can thrive in unofficial shopfronts, the open market, and tro-tro stations in addition to galleries and professional studios.

2.3.5 Ghana's Visual Culture as a Multifaceted and Evolving Landscape

With operations in the traditional, religious, governmental, commercial, and digital spheres, Ghana's visual culture is intricately layered and diverse. From the motifs on textiles and buildings to the posters on street corners, from ancestral shrines to WhatsApp status updates, it is ingrained in daily life and is not limited to official art institutions or upscale creative spaces. Ghana's rich history, cultural diversity, and vibrant interaction with both regional customs and international fashion trends are all reflected in this multiplicity.

Deep stores of intellectual, moral, and spiritual knowledge can be found in Ghana's traditional visual systems, which include Adinkra symbols, Kente patterns, ceremonial garb, and oral art forms. Whether in public art, fashion, or logos, these indigenous images are always being reworked and integrated into modern aesthetics, making them dynamic artifacts of the past. They act as strong visual markers of pride in one's culture, ancestry, and identity.

Meanwhile, the symbolic richness of religious visual culture, which includes Christianity, Islam, and indigenous spiritual practices, has changed both public and private areas. A visually charged setting is created by the visual assertion of belief systems and worldviews through posters, altars, calligraphy, and ritual artifacts. These manifestations are now equally prevalent in digital areas, where religious imagery is

extensively shared through social media and mobile devices, thus solidifying the fusion of technology and religion in Ghanaian society today.



Figure 2.3.5: Ghanaian Friends’ Masterpieces in the Pittsburgh Gallery

(Book Source: Steve Greene, MD, December 12, 2022)

National identity and civic consciousness have also been significantly shaped by political and postcolonial visual culture. Visual imagery has long been used to convey ideologies, establish authority, and promote unity, as shown in everything from the symbolic design of the national flag and coat of arms to political murals, leader portraits, and public monuments. For instance, studio photography emerged as a potent tool in the post-independence era for Ghanaians to envisage and embody contemporary identities, fusing African pride with international ambitions.

At the same time, a parallel realm of popular creativity is shown by the commercial and consumer visual culture of markets, tro-tros, stores, and product packaging. These commonplace images, hand-painted signs, slogans, market layouts, and packaging provide insights into humor, aspiration, economic life, and shared ideals. Their spontaneous and improvised style reflects Ghanaian visuality's

democratic and participatory nature, in which all members of the community, artisans, traders, pastors, drivers, and influencers contribute to the visual fabric of the community.

The proliferation of digital technology and the widespread use of smartphones have given Ghana's visual culture a new dimension. The creation and sharing of photographs have become more accessible thanks to social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and WhatsApp, which enable people to record, perform, and share their lives on a never-before-seen scale. In this way, the digital realm has expanded and changed conventional forms of visual culture rather than displacing them. New storytelling techniques, new styles for self-presentation, and new attention economies have all been made possible by digital photography, particularly on smartphones.

The emergence and relevance of smartphone photography in Ghana must be contextualized using this multi-layered understanding of visual culture. Mobile images are influenced by and part of this larger ecology of visual expression rather than emerging in a cultural vacuum. In Accra, Tamale, or Cape Coast, a smartphone shot may incorporate traditional clothing or symbols, be filtered with a Westernized lens effect, incorporate fashion photography aesthetics, and be captioned with a popular proverb or biblical quote, all in one frame.

These hybrid visual practices demonstrate how smartphone photography is a cultural act that is intricately linked to issues of representation, identity, memory, and modernity. It helps people to move their sense of self between the local and the global, between tradition and modernity. Additionally, it restructures the authority to produce, disseminate, and manage visual narratives about Ghanaian life, shifting the power to make images from media outlets and professional studios to regular people.

Thus, examining Ghana's visual culture offers a cultural framework and interpretative lens for comprehending how representation is changing in the digital age, in addition to an artistic or aesthetic viewpoint. It enables us to observe how contemporary technology interacts with traditional cultural logics and how Ghanaian voices are continuously amplified, diversified, and adapted through visual storytelling across time and space.

2.3.6 Contemporary Forms of Visual Culture in Ghana

Rapid urbanization, digital media, and international cultural contacts have all had a major impact on Ghana's visual culture in the twenty-first century. Contemporary forms that represent the dynamic and multifaceted identities of contemporary Ghanaians have arisen, even though traditional artistic expressions are still significant. The way cultural narratives are created, consumed, and perceived is altered by the frequent intersections of these visual forms with technology, activism, consumer culture, and digital platforms.

Ghanaian art holds a profound significance in the realm of African art and cultural heritage. Rooted in centuries of tradition and craftsmanship, it represents the rich tapestry of Ghana's diverse cultures and artistic expressions. From sculpture and painting to textiles and ceramics, Ghanaian art encompasses a wide range of mediums and styles that reflect the country's history, beliefs, and social dynamics. These captivating artworks not only serve as visual delights but also carry deep cultural, spiritual, and societal meanings.



Figure 2.3.6: The Vibrant Tapestry of Ghanaian Art: Exploring the Rich Cultural Heritage

(Source: Berj Gallery, June 7, 2023)

2.3.6.1 Photography and Smartphone Imagery

The widespread use of smartphone photography has been one of the most significant changes in modern visual culture. The creation of visual material has become more accessible due to the growing number of smartphones with high-resolution cameras. Image-making has become ingrained in daily life and is no longer limited to formal studios or professional photographers. Through sites like Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp, Ghanaians from a variety of backgrounds utilize their smartphones to capture and rapidly share photos of political rallies, street life, funerals, weddings, fashion, food, and cultural events (Quarshie, 2021).

In addition to preserving individual memories, these photos also contribute to social criticism and larger cultural narratives. Crucially, especially for young people, smartphone photography is a tool for performance and identity formation. People project lives, goals, and affiliations through carefully chosen photos and digital aesthetics, frequently alternating between local and global cultural imaginaries. Users may now visually respond to issues like gender, corruption, and inequality because of the instantaneous sharing of images and the viral nature of digital information (Darko-Adjei, 2019). As a result, photography is now a dynamic, interactive process of meaning-making rather than a static form of documentation.

2.3.6.2 Visual Arts: Painting, Graffiti, and Installation

Through a range of media, Ghanaian visual artists of today continue to investigate and question social standards. Artists who employ painting and installation to discuss socio-political themes, such as Ibrahim Mahama and Ablade Glover, have attracted attention both domestically and internationally. While Mahama uses found elements like jute sacks and discarded materials in large-scale installations that critique labor, postcolonial economies, and urban ruin, Glover is well known for his expressive use of color and texture to depict urban life and market scenes (Enwezor, 2015).

Furthermore, street art and graffiti are becoming popular visual languages among young people in cities, particularly in Accra and Kumasi. These kinds of art interact directly with viewers and question the established gallery structure. They frequently serve as platforms for expression on walls and in public areas, reflecting societal critique, cultural pride, or political opposition. The work of Ghana's contemporary visual artists is therefore essential to the development of the country's visual culture since they traverse traditional, experimental, and political spheres as shown below fig.2.3.6.2.



Figure 2.3.6.2: The painting showing women carrying items on their heads and wearing colorful African print dresses.

(Source: Yaw Tony,2019)

2.3.6.3 Fashion and Styling

In Ghana today, fashion is a dynamic fusion of identity, creativity, and legacy. Modern cutting, materials, and international fashion trends are ingeniously incorporated with traditional textiles like Kente, Ntoma, and Adinkra themes by contemporary designers and stylists. Both continuity and change in Ghanaian cultural expression are reflected in this combination. The ability of designers like Christie Brown, Ohema Ohene, and Studio 189 to use fabric, design, and styling to express Ghanaian tales has earned them prominence on a global scale (Allman, 2004).

Streetwear and self-styling have evolved into visual communication tools in addition to formal fashion. Particularly among young people, apparel and accessories serve as instruments for internet branding, social differentiation, and cultural performance. Ghanaian fashion culture is now widely disseminated through fashion shows, beauty pageants, Instagram feeds, and style blogs. Therefore, modern fashion

serves as a visual record of shared identity, resiliency, and inventiveness in addition to serving as personal ornamentation.



Figure 2.3.6.3: Ghana's most beautiful women wearing modern, colorful, off-the-shoulder African print dresses at Accra Fashion Week.

(Photo Source: J. Barnor, 2023)

2.3.6.4 Film, Television, and Social Media

Ghana's visual culture has also taken on new forms thanks to visual storytelling on television, film, and digital media. The Ghanaian film industry, often known as Ghallywood, is still developing and creating local stories that capture cultural values, family dynamics, and daily hardships. Furthermore, documentaries, music videos, and television dramas all help create visual tales that appeal to Ghanaian viewers both domestically and abroad.

Social media sites like Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok have become important venues for cultural interaction and visual expression in more recent years. The rise of content creators, influencers, comedians, and storytellers has been made possible by these platforms. They utilize vlogs, short-form videos, skits, and tutorials to explore a variety of topics, from politics and religion to fashion and dance. The

distinction between producer and consumer is sometimes blurred by the accessibility of digital platforms, which enable participation in visual culture by people from a wide range of socioeconomic backgrounds.

The rise of "micro-celebrities" who curate their visual identities for public consumption is another example of how the viral nature of digital content on these platforms has redefined fame and impact. In this sense, social media serves as a potent catalyst for the development, discussion, and propagation of cultural norms and values in Ghana today.



Figure 2.3.6.4: Image depicting film and audio production, including women with headphones and a video camera in the Ghanaian film industry.

(PhotoSource: William Komla Tengey,2022)

These modern visual cultures are a reflection of Ghana's evolving social mores, technological advancements, and aesthetics. They represent changing ways of seeing, being, and belonging more than just new forms of expression. Viral dance videos, designer textiles, urban murals, and smartphone lenses are just a few examples of Ghana's visual culture, which is still a vibrant area of cultural creation and negotiation.

2.3.7 Visual Culture in Takoradi

A distinctive cultural fabric that is both anchored and changing is created by the intricate fusion of traditional Ghanaian aesthetics, coastal identity, contemporary urban lifestyles, and digital media influences in Takoradi's visual culture. Takoradi, a well-known port city and commercial hub in Ghana's Western Region, has long been a hub for social, cultural, and economic interaction. This intersectionality is reflected in the city's visual landscape, which includes street murals, holiday costumes, fashion, religious imagery, digital photography, and commercial ads. The persistence of indigenous aesthetics in modern expression is demonstrated by the continued use of traditional visual components in public festivals and daily life, such as Kente patterns, Adinkra symbols, and masquerade regalia.

At the same time, Takoradi's coastal identity infuses its visual culture with nautical themes. In local branding, storytelling, and art, canoes, waves, anchors, and marine life are frequently included. These images serve as cultural metaphors for mobility, resiliency, and connection in addition to being symbols of economic livelihood (such as fishing and trade). Due to the city's urbanization and increasing youth population, contemporary lifestyle trends have emerged, reshaping the city's visual identity through the usage of mobile phones as self-representation tools, stylish hairstyles, graffiti art, and vibrant fashion scenes.

The way that visual culture is created, disseminated, and consumed in Takoradi has changed dramatically in recent years due to social media platforms and smartphone photography. In order to create new visual narratives that combine local pride with international aesthetics, young people and content creators are increasingly documenting street life, food, festivals, fashion, and social events. In addition to democratizing image-making, these digital expressions support the flexibility of

cultural representation and aesthetic development in postcolonial urban contexts, as defined by academics like Hall (1997) and Meyer (2009). An intricately layered visual environment reflecting historical continuity, modern inventiveness, and the growing impact of digital technologies on Ghanaian cultural expression is the result.

2.3.7.1 The Anko's Festival and Performance Aesthetics

One of the most aesthetically pleasing and culturally significant events in Ghana's Western Region is the Ankos Festival, also called the Takoradi Masquerade Festival. The celebration, held every year around Christmas, transforms Takoradi's streets into vibrant, lively, and rhythmic spectacles. Participants march through the city in colorful and frequently intricately designed costumes, ranging from traditional African garb to satirical and international pop-culture references. They are arranged into several masquerade organizations or "fancy clubs." These costumes are more than just ornaments; they are rich semiotic symbols that convey humor, identity, social commentary, and a sense of community pride as shown below in fig. 2.3.7.1.



Figure 2.3.7.1: The Ankos Festival in Ghana's Western Region

(Photo Source: PaKwai Darko, (Pkay Images) 2023)

The performative aspect of the Ankos Festival is essential. Based on Butler's (1990) theory of performativity and Goffman's (1959) concept of performance, the masqueraders adopt roles that enable them to both hide and expose facets of society and the self. Performers question power systems, mock political or societal concerns, and represent social positions through choreographed dance, imitation, and improvisation. The festival turns into a platform for embodied narrative, where identity, resistance, and cultural memory are all actively debated in public.

Furthermore, the Ankos Festival functions within the dynamic system of representation, identity, production, and consumption that Hall (1997) refers to as the "circuits of culture." The event serves as a venue for visual documentation as well as local performance, with photos and videos being taken, shared, and viewed both domestically and internationally. Due to the widespread use of smartphones, both festival attendees and onlookers take pictures and videos of the event. These photos are immediately shared on social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and WhatsApp, extending the festival's visual reach well beyond Takoradi's actual streets and establishing a digital archive.

Because smartphone photography transforms each participant into a potential cultural curator, this digital mediation changes how the festival is perceived and remembered. Thus, the Ankos Festival serves as an example of how traditional cultural acts and modern digital activities interact, fostering a feeling of community and creating avenues for both individual and group expression. According to Asante and Frimpong (2020), this combination of visual and performance media helps create a hybrid visual culture in which modernity and tradition coexist in inventive and fluid ways.



Figure 2.3.7.1: Group of people performing ankos dance in highly colorful, heavily patterned ceremonial outfits with feathered accents

(Photo Source: PaKwai Darko (Pkey Images) 2023)

Additionally, the festival's aesthetics speak to more general issues in visual culture studies, especially those pertaining to spectacle, visibility, and cultural politics. In methods that are performative, interactive, and visually rich, people establish their identities, critique their reality, and celebrate their heritage through the act of dressing up, acting, and being seen in fig 2.3.7.1. This is a sort of cultural authorship. In this way, the Ankos Festival is not just a joyous occasion but also a dynamic display of Ghanaian artistic expression, anchored in long-standing customs but constantly changing due to digital technology and cross-cultural exchanges.

2.3.7.2 Coastal Identity and Maritime Imagery

Being a large port and coastal city has had a significant impact on Takoradi's visual culture, creating a unique aesthetic language rooted in nautical life. In addition to

influencing the city's economic activity, particularly fishing, trading, and shipping, its closeness to the Atlantic Ocean also influences the visual and symbolic representations that characterize local cultural expression. Numerous visual culture mediums, including murals, public art projects, advertising, architecture, fashion, and everyday photography, strongly represent this coastal character.

Specifically, the visual environment of the city is replete with images of boats, nets, waves, maritime life, and fishermen. These visual symbols have profound cultural meanings that represent both ancestry and economic livelihood; they are not just ornamental. One of the oldest jobs in the area, fishing, for instance, is more than just a business; it is a way of life that has been passed down through the ages. Consequently, boats painted in brilliant colors and ornamented with Akan proverbs, Christian symbols, or family emblems are not just means of labor but mobile visual texts, vehicles of identity and social memory (Yankah, 2012; Quarcoopome, 2005).



Figure 2.3.7.2: Coastal scene with a white stone wall, palm trees, and fishing boats on the beach in Takoradi

(Photo Source: Glamshot studios, 2022)

In Takoradi, murals and public art frequently honor fishing villages by depicting fish markets, ocean waves, and maritime life. These images uphold the city's shared bond with the sea and its influence on regional stories of migration, spirituality, survival, and environmental engagement. In order to bridge tradition and contemporary identity formation, street artists and designers have also integrated coastal imagery into urban aesthetics by fusing marine symbols with modern styles.

Fish markets, ocean waves, and marine life are often shown in Takoradi murals and public art to celebrate fishing settlements. These pictures preserve the city's common connection to the sea and its impact on local narratives about migration, spirituality, survival, and environmental activism. By combining modern styles with marine symbols, street artists and designers have also incorporated coastal imagery into urban aesthetics to bridge the gap between tradition and modern identity formation.

In addition, the seaside economy encompasses aesthetic and emotional aspects in addition to material ones. The city's beautiful identity is enhanced by the everyday sight of boats anchored at nightfall or fishermen casting nets before daybreak. These kinds of moments are regularly captured by smartphone photographers and shared on social media, adding to a digital sea archive. These photographic practices allow Takoradi residents to frame their coastal environment as both home and heritage, reinforcing what Appadurai (1996) might call a “locality of imagination” where geography becomes entwined with cultural production and self-representation.

Moreover, the sea serves as a spiritual and historical marker in Takoradi, where many local beliefs link the ocean to ancestors, deities, and cosmological forces. These

beliefs are frequently reflected in shrine architecture along the coast and in ceremonies that honor marine spirits through visual symbolism, making maritime imagery both aesthetically pleasing and historically significant, thereby preserving cultural continuity in a rapidly modernizing urban environment.

All things considered, Takoradi's coastal character is a potent cultural force that influences how its residents perceive, portray, and describe their surroundings. The city's changing visual culture heavily relies on nautical images, from murals to festival performances, from handcrafted boat art to digital seascapes. It provides a prism through which one can comprehend how livelihood, history, memory, and identity connect in both conventional and modern settings.

2.3.7.3 Digital Media and Smartphone Photography

Takoradi's extensive smartphone use has fundamentally changed visual culture by altering the way people create, exchange, and use photographs in daily life. Image-making, which was formerly the purview of media organizations or professional photographers, has now become more accessible, especially to young people who have embraced mobile photography as a potent medium for social connection, cultural record, and self-expression. People from a wide range of socioeconomic backgrounds can now actively participate in the visual narrative of their communities thanks to the affordability of smartphones with high-resolution cameras and mobile internet access.

Nowadays, the visual ecosystem of Takoradi revolves around digital platforms like Instagram, Snapchat, WhatsApp, and TikTok. These platforms are especially used by young people to take and share pictures and short videos that show a variety of everyday activities, from religious rituals, traditional events, and nightlife scenes to street fashion, beach excursions, street food, and urban life. The term "vernacular

visualities," coined by Couldry (2000) to emphasize how non-professionals develop their own visual languages to represent themselves and their worlds, is reflected in these digital practices. These visualities, which reflect a hybrid cultural logic where tradition and modernity converge, are both highly localized and globally aware in Takoradi.

In Takoradi, smartphone photography serves as a social and cultural act in addition to being a pastime or artistic endeavor. People, particularly young people, participate in a type of "digital self-making" that creates identity through visual performance through carefully chosen selfies, group shots, reels, and visual narrative (Twum-Danso, 2023). This is consistent with Butler's (1990) theory of performativity, which holds that the self is made and remade through repeated acts, in this case, photographic gestures. Many people use sharing a well-cut image or brief video as a means of asserting their visibility, accumulating social capital, and engaging with modern culture.

The lines between the public and private spheres are also blurred by these digital visual acts. Markets, homes, school grounds, and even places of worship are used as backgrounds for visual content production. Through a smartphone lens, what was once hidden or uninteresting is suddenly made visible, frequently reframed with imaginative emojis, music, captions, or filters. Takoradi's daily life is artistically recreated in the digital realm through this process, which helps to give rise to what Mirzoeff (2011) calls "the right to look," the notion that people, especially those who have historically been excluded from prevailing visual narratives, can now actively create and disseminate their images.

Additionally, Takoradi is positioned within a global digital conversation through the use of hashtags, geo-tags, and comment threads. Even while the content is still rooted in the local community, its distribution method crosses geographical borders, enabling Takoradi's young people to both consume and create global digital culture. Since creative people and companies today use mobile photography and video material as marketing tools to exhibit their goods and services, this visibility has an impact on tourism, entrepreneurship, and cultural awareness.

Crucially, these behaviors also mirror more general shifts in Ghanaian media ecology and cultural creation. Digital storytelling and mobile photography have become new forms of cultural engagement that allow people to get beyond institutional gatekeepers while traditional media channels struggle to hold on to younger audiences. Smartphone photography in this situation serves as a tool for both documentation and agency, enabling people to define their own realities and make cultural claims according to their own standards.

2.3.7.4 Religious and Political Imagery

Religious and political iconography are prominent in Takoradi's visual landscape, and they are essential to the city's modern visual culture. There are billboards, banners, flyers, and posters advertising churches, spiritual leaders, and political candidates on nearly every lamp post, wall, and street corner. These products, which frequently include strong fonts, vibrant colors, dramatic lighting effects, and highly stylized portrait photography, are not only widely available but also aesthetically arresting. They are effective symbolic communication strategies intended to draw attention, establish authority, and elicit strong feelings in a variety of audiences.

Large, digitally produced posters are widely used in the religious sector by churches, particularly Pentecostal and Charismatic ministries, to advertise crusades, anointing sessions, prophetic evenings, and campaigns for miracles. Enlarged photos of charismatic leaders are frequently included in these images, posing with assured expressions and frequently adorned with spiritual symbols like crosses, fires, doves, or illuminating auras. By portraying pastors as both religious leaders and representatives of supernatural authority, such imagery seeks to visually encode divine power and spiritual legitimacy. According to Birgit Meyer (2009), these visual methods are an example of "aesthetic formations," which are how communities use common visual styles, sounds, and symbols to produce affective atmospheres and foster a sense of spiritual and communal belonging.

In Takoradi, religious visibility is also performative. Religious image staging and framing frequently follow media and popular culture norms, such as celebrity portraiture and glamor photography. The distinction between religious and secular visual codes is blurred by this aesthetic overlap, allowing pastors and churches to vie for public attention in the same visual economy as politicians, influencers, and entertainers. The result is a spectacular religion that uses visual media to perform faith in a convincing way in public as well as to convey it.

Simultaneously, political ads equally take over the visual landscape, particularly during election seasons. Similar tactics, such as photographic idealization, national symbolism, and emotional appeals, are used in billboards and posters that showcase politicians from major political parties (such as the NDC and NPP) as seen below in fig 2.3.7.4. Candidates are usually shown looking either straight at the camera (to represent transparency) or off into the distance (to symbolize vision and leadership), dressed in well-ironed clothing, national colors, or traditional costume. By carefully

selecting these visual representations, political engagement is transformed into a type of visual performance that conveys skill, credibility, and dependability.



Figure 2.3.7.4: Logos and slogans for the New Patriotic Party (NPP) and the National Democratic Congress (NDC)

(Photo Source: J Ben Graphics,1996)

Furthermore, it is not unusual in Takoradi for religious and political aesthetics to converge. It is not uncommon to hear election-related prophecies being graphically recorded and disseminated online or to see political personalities in church activities. This interaction is a reflection of Ghana's larger social environment, where politics and religion constantly reinforce one another and their visual cultures frequently mix. These areas are visually combined to create a moral order that visually legitimizes power, faith, and leadership while reinforcing prevailing ideas.

The spread of these photos has been accelerated by social media. Nowadays, a lot of political candidates and churches create content especially for Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp. A "portable public sphere" has been created where influence flows freely over both digital and physical barriers as a result of this move into the digital sphere, which has expanded the reach of religious and political imagery beyond public walls and onto individual mobile displays.

In conclusion, Takoradi's profusion of religious and political images is a perfect example of how visual media can be a place for both emotional and ideological mobilization. These aesthetic forms influence how people perceive authority, envision communities, and react to appeals for loyalty or devotion through the deliberate use of graphic design, photography, and symbolic iconography. They demonstrate how, far from being neutral or ornamental, visual culture is essential to the construction and challenge of power in daily urban life.

Summary

Takoradi's visual culture is a dynamic and constantly changing tapestry made from localized digital practices, worldwide media flows, and traditional beliefs. Takoradi's visual landscape, which is situated at the intersection of history, geography, and modernity, is dynamic, contested, and reflective of larger social trends. The city's visual expressions reflect both cultural continuity and adaptation, from the timeless symbolism of fishing and maritime imagery to the colorful and theatrical displays of identity during the Ankos Festival.

Residents of Takoradi, particularly the younger generation, actively contribute to the development of its visual narratives as the city continues to urbanize and digitize. The limits of cultural involvement have been redrawn by social media and smartphone photography, which enable regular people to take pictures, tell stories, and curate creative works. Ordinary moments are stylized and captured through apps like TikTok, Instagram, and WhatsApp, turning the ordinary into the spectacular and turning private identities into public performances.

At the same time, street photography, fashion, hairstyles, and murals serve as potent means of societal criticism, community identification, and self-definition.

These artistic manifestations, which reflect a hybrid cultural identity that is distinctively Takoradi yet resonates with larger Ghanaian and African urban experiences, are frequently influenced by both indigenous aesthetics and outside influences.

Powerful organizations like churches and political parties also visually influence the city's landscape by using digital graphics, billboards, and posters to spread messages of morality, power, and belonging. In addition to adorning public areas, these pictures create symbolic meanings that affect how people interact with religion, politics, and communal memory.

In this context, visual culture becomes both a mirror and a map, a mirror that reflects the identities, values, and aspirations of Takoradi's people, and a map that charts their navigation through changing social, technological, and cultural terrains. Whether it is displayed on a wall, worn, photographed, or shared online, every visual act adds to a collective story of change, ingenuity, and cultural resiliency.

Takoradi's visual culture is therefore more than just an artistic or aesthetic field; it is a dynamic archive of modern life that is influenced by the interaction of media, performance, tradition, and imagination. It shows how people interact with the world in ways that are both socially significant and visually expressive, as well as how they view themselves and how they would like to be perceived.

2.3.7.5 Visual Culture in Accra

The dynamic and changing ways that visual forms such as pictures, symbols, artwork, digital media, street art, fashion, architecture, signage, photography, and advertisements are created, viewed, and used in Ghana's capital city are referred to as Accra's visual culture. Ghana's cultural, political, and economic center, Accra,

provides a vibrant environment for artistic expression that blends traditional and international styles. This visual culture functions as a social practice that enables people and communities to create, negotiate, and convey meanings, identities, and ideologies in addition to serving as a vehicle for aesthetic exhibition (Mirzoeff, 2015).

Ghanaian ideas, humor, spirituality, and aspirations can be understood through the intersection of visual artifacts like billboard advertisements, religious banners, and trotro slogans with everyday life in Accra's streets, marketplaces, and transportation networks, which function as living galleries (Quarcoo, 2019). The prevalence of religious imagery in public areas, which frequently mirrors conventional, Christian, and Islamic cosmologies, emphasizes how visual media mediate religious experience and authority (De Witte, 2008). Accra is now a hub of visual connectivity thanks to digital technology and social media platforms, where images, videos, and fashion content are shared all over the world on YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok (Armah, 2023).

By providing venues for alternative and experimental forms of expression, artistic events like the Chale Wote Street Art Festival have also helped to reshape the city's visual culture. By using performance art, mural painting, graffiti, and installations, these interventions rethink public space and question conventional narratives (Meyer, 2009). Furthermore, Accra's urban fashion, hairstyle, and digital content production are increasingly influenced by diasporic aesthetics, Afrofuturism, and Pan-African visual politics, which show a blending of local tradition with international visual currents (Allman, 2004).

Accra's visual culture is therefore a continuous process of visual negotiation that exposes the conflicts, aspirations, and complexity of urban Ghanaian life rather than a

static representation of tradition or modernity. It serves as a mirror and a medium, reflecting sociopolitical realities and influencing people's perceptions of the world and themselves.

1. Urban Aesthetics and Everyday Life

The visual culture of Accra is intricately woven into the fabric of daily urban life and is especially evident in the city's streetscapes, transit networks, and unofficial business districts. Religious teachings, political criticism, pop culture allusions, and amusing slogans coexist in the public eye inside this multi-layered and colorful visual landscape. This is particularly noticeable in trotro (shared minibus) signage, billboards, kiosks, painted walls, and murals, all of which combine to create a unique visual lexicon that is expressive and communicative (Quarcoo, 2019). These shapes serve as spiritual affirmations, socio-political commentary, and even survival tactics in the highly performative urban street. They are not only ornamental.

Whether it's a comical trotro message like "No Food for Lazy Man," a political campaign sign, or a religious statement like "Jesus is Coming Soon" on a commercial vehicle, every visual aspect in Accra's streets frequently conveys a story. As folk semiotics, these colloquial visuality forms convey identity, ideology, and desire in easily understood, regional ways (De Witte, 2008). In urban Ghana, these visual media serve as sensory interfaces that allow people to negotiate social and spiritual meanings in quickly changing metropolitan environments (Meyer, 2009).

Hotspots for this vibrant urban style include Teshie, Jamestown, Nima, and Osu. Accra's reputation as a city that unites tradition and innovative modernity is mostly attributed to Jamestown's historic architecture, street graffiti, and traditional fishing murals as seen below in fig.2.3.7.5.1. In addition to providing backgrounds for

artistic expression, these areas are also cultural hubs where locals, artists, visitors, and merchants engage in a common visual economy.



Figure 2.3.7.5.1: Jamestown lighthouse, Red and white striped lighthouse, and surrounding buildings against a clear blue sky in Accra, Ghana

(Photo Source: James Fort, 1930s British colonial era)

The Chale Wote Street Art Festival, which began in 2011, is one of the most well-known events that showcases this urban aesthetics. Every year, Jamestown hosts Chale Wote, which turns the area into a huge outdoor gallery with body painting, digital installations, performance art, murals, photography, and fashion as seen below fig.2.3.7.5.1. By taking art to the streets, where it becomes a part of the everyday lives of Ghanaians, the festival challenges the dominance of institutional art spaces. Particularly among young people and artistic collectives, it has been essential in forming Accra's alternative visual culture (Sutherland-Addy & Van Gyampo, 2020). The festival's interactive format also allows underrepresented voices to regain visual and spatial agency in the city.



Figure 2.3.7.5.1: Two men in body paint and traditional attire performing at a Chale Wote Street Art festival on an urban street in Accra

(Photo Source: J. Barnor, 2023)

Therefore, Accra's everyday visual culture, from ordinary signage to carefully planned festivals, reflects the city's performative, pluralistic, and politically active urban nature. It illustrates how, in a fast globalizing African metropolis, aesthetics are ingrained in everyday life not only as art but also as instruments of expression, resistance, and cultural continuity.

2. Fashion and Identity

Fashion is a potent performative component of visual culture in Accra, where it is intricately linked to manifestations of resistance, inventiveness, status, and identity. Beyond only clothes, fashion is a visual language that people and groups use to express social criticism, generational ideals, cultural affinities, and personal narratives. Fashion in Accra combines Western styles with Afrocentric aesthetics to create a hybrid sartorial identity that is both Ghanaian and globally relevant in daily

urban life, from the marketplaces of Makola to the hallways of corporate offices (Allman, 2004).

The combination of modern fashion styles like jeans, blazers, sneakers, and designer accessories with traditional textiles like kente, batakari, and wax patterns is a striking example of this visual performance of identity. Particularly for urban youth navigating both local customs and international fashion trends, these style combinations represent symbolic acts of cultural continuity and modern adaptation. In her research on African urban fashion, Hansen (2004) points out that clothes are not just about style; they are also a means of negotiating legitimacy, modernity, and belonging.



Figure 2.3.7.5.2: Model wearing a woven, multi-colored outfit and a wide straw hat on a fashion runway.

(Photo Source: Studio One Photography,2023)

Social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok have increased Accra's fashion culture's visibility and impact. These sites are frequently used by young Ghanaians, influencers, and designers to build digital identities through cultural fashion storytelling, styling reels, and fashion photography as seen above in fig.2.3.7.5.2. Accra is repositioned as a fashion-forward metropolis in Africa's creative landscape thanks to these visual narratives, which also help to create a global Ghanaian identity (Armah, 2023). In addition to showcasing apparel, hashtags like #AccraFashion and #AfricanStyle are used to establish exposure and presence in international digital platforms.

Additionally, Ghanaian designers and traditional textile industries have been promoted through official and informal channels such as Accra Fashion Week, The Wear Ghana Campaign, and streetwear pop-ups. By promoting sustainable practices, indigenous design aesthetics, and Afro-diasporic pride, these venues enable local fashion businesses to challenge prevailing Eurocentric fashion standards. Designers and consumers of fashion actively contribute to the creation of a visual history of contemporary Ghanaian identity that is grounded in tradition yet daringly avant-garde and focused on the future.

Therefore, fashion in Accra is a location of identity politics, cultural affirmation, and visible opposition in addition to being an aesthetic choice. Fashion becomes a creative and strategic instrument for influencing how Ghanaians view themselves and are perceived by others, whether on a university campus, at a music video shoot, or through digital advertisements.

3. Photography and Social Media

As a cultural and documentary technique that captures the complexity of city life, photography is essential to the formation of urban visual narratives in Accra. Professional photographers, social media influencers, content producers, and regular people all use smartphones and DSLRs to capture a variety of moments, from private events like weddings, naming ceremonies, and graduations to public gatherings like protests, political rallies, and urban festivals. Ghanaians can now take part in and contribute to the visual historiography of their city thanks to the growing repository of common urban experiences established by these visual practices (Meyer, 2009).

In Accra, the democratization of photography through cellphones has had a profound impact on the creation and dissemination of visual culture. People may now collect and share self-representations because of mobile internet connections, reasonably priced camera phones, and easy-to-use editing programs, changing conventional ideas of image-making that were formerly exclusive to media organizations or professional studios (Armah, 2023). This change is part of a larger trend where citizen photography is used as a tool for sociopolitical commentary, identity building, and agency.

These photos are now primarily displayed on social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and Snapchat. Using hashtags like #AccraDiaries, #GhanaPhotography, and #ThisIsAccra, local content is geotagged and made global, turning Accra into a "visual city" that is more and more envisioned and represented through digital photographs. Through these platforms, users may create visual narratives about urban living that dispel preconceptions, encourage travel, highlight architecture and fashion, and capture the richness of culture. Young people in Accra

utilize these platforms to "curate digital selves" that are both internationally focused and locally rooted, as noted by Armah (2023).

Furthermore, Accra's photographic representations connect with deeper cultural and political themes in addition to being aesthetically pleasing. Newer voices like Nana Kofi Acquah and the Everyday Accra group, as well as photographers like James Barnor, use photography to make statements on historical memory, gender, inequality, and urban growth. These visual interventions frequently challenge prevailing narratives and present alternative viewpoints on African urban life that are based on creativity, intimacy, and resiliency (Wendl, 2007).

Accra's visual representations of geography, identity, and memory have been transformed in this digital age by the combination of social media and photography. It has made it possible for people and communities to actively create visual culture, influencing not only Ghana's visual legacy worldwide but also local self-perceptions.

4. Media, Religion, and Symbolism

With Christian and Islamic imagery widely shown on billboards, posters, vehicle decals, television screens, store signs, and church banners, Accra's metropolitan landscape is infused with religious visual culture. These images contribute significantly to the city's public aesthetic, where religion is performed in public and visually transmitted in addition to being practiced discreetly. The cityscape of Accra is transformed into a hallowed visual landscape where belief and branding collide due to the prevalence of religious imagery, which includes everything from smiling prophet pictures to dramatic depictions of miracles, heavenly emblems, and quotes from the Bible (De Witte, 2008).

The Christian charismatic and Pentecostal movement, which has successfully used media and visual technologies to enhance spiritual authority, draw followers, and symbolize heavenly might, is where this religious imagery is most noticeable. In order to create an air of charisma, legitimacy, and supernatural access, churches and pastors frequently use visual branding strategies that mimic commercial advertising approaches. These strategies include high-resolution photos, graphic representations of miracles, and heavenly imagery (Marshall, 2009). The city is visually saturated with flyers and billboards promoting services like "Prophetic Encounters," "All Night Deliverance," and "Anointing for Breakthrough," which combine spirituality with commercial culture and give both religious hope and breathtaking images.



Figure 2.3.7.5.4: Poster advertising a series of 'Revival Saturdays' religious events featuring Mensa Otabil and other speakers

(Photo Source: lgc design team)

These visual forms serve as instruments of mediation, allowing religious leaders to be present in everyday urban life outside of the pulpit as seen above in fig.2.3.7.5.4. They are not just for communication. De Witte (2008) claims that these pictures act as "material anchors of spiritual presence," bringing the divine into the mundane world and making it visible to the general population. Therefore, Accra's

religious visual culture is not passive; rather, it is highly performative and participatory, urging viewers to believe, follow, or partake in spiritual goods.

Furthermore, this representation of religion is not exclusive to Christianity. Islamic decals and posters featuring Qur'anic verses, crescent moons, or images of esteemed leaders can also be seen in mosques, taxis, and stores. Islamic visuality, which reinforces moral values and a sense of community through sight, contributes equally to Accra's multimodal religious landscape while having a less commercial visual tone (Soares, 2006).



Figure 2.3.7.5.4: Studio portrait of a woman in a dark green hijab and abaya showing off her henna-decorated hands

(Photo Source: Studio One Photography,2023)

Religious visual media function as a social force in both faiths, influencing behavior, fostering religion, and creating moral geographies in urban areas. These images also negotiate the power dynamics between media technology and heavenly authority,

modernity and tradition, and sacred and secular. In this way, Accra's visual culture's media, religion, and symbolism are not distinct fields but rather linked themes that shape the city's social, artistic, and spiritual life.

5. Political Imagery and National Symbols

Visual communication is a key tactic of political expression in Accra, especially during election seasons and public protests. To convey messages of loyalty, identity, and political power in the public eye, political parties and their supporters use a variety of visual aids, such as party colors, candidate portraits, printed slogans, branded items (like t-shirts, caps, and flags), and vehicle decals (Ninsin, 2006). Street corners, lampposts, city walls, and marketplaces are all covered in these pictures, which add to what could be called a visual spectacle of politics.

Political campaign imagery frequently consists of striking photographs of party leaders who are portrayed as inspiring and visionary individuals. In a setting where oral and visual communication methods continue to predominate, these pictures are intended to evoke strong feelings in voters and build visual authority (Osei, 2020). As visual shorthand for political loyalty, party colors like red, white, green, and blue are easily identifiable and have significant symbolic implications. Supporters use these colors to visibly "brand" themselves during election seasons in both ceremonial and daily clothing, transforming the body into a symbol of political affiliation as seen below in fig.2.3.7.4.



Figure 2.3.7.4: Logos and slogans for the New Patriotic Party (NPP) and the National Democratic Congress (NDC)

(Photo Source: J Ben Graphics, 1996)

Beyond party politics, murals, graffiti, protest art, and public installations commonly take national symbols such as the Black Star, the Ghanaian flag, kente fabric patterns, and the likes of figures from the independence era (such as Kwame Nkrumah). These symbols are employed to express national pride or to criticize alleged shortcomings in leadership, and they have both patriotic and oppositional functions. For example, to express urgency, annoyance, and demands for change, protesters imaginatively redesigned Ghana's flag and national coat of arms during youth-led demonstrations like #FixTheCountry (Boateng, 2021).

Furthermore, Accra's political visibility extends beyond election seasons. Political commentary is intertwined into the fabric of urban visual culture and can be observed in trotro inscriptions, wall paintings, school murals, and even fashion choices. In visually interpreting national symbols, artists, designers, and street muralists are essential because they present fresh viewpoints that challenge historical accounts or honor cultural resiliency. According to Barber (2020), visual political culture in

African cities is dialogical; it engages people, communicates to them, and reflects the paradoxes and rhythms of postcolonial democracy.

In conclusion, Accra's national symbolism and political iconography are more than just decorative components. In the center of Ghana's urban and political life, they serve as cultural texts and mobilizing tools that shape civic identity, public discourse, and collective memory.

2.3.8 Historical Background of the Smartphone

The aspect of our everyday lives that uses visuals to interact with the objects in our ever-changing surroundings is known as visual culture. Ghanaians' visual culture has evolved significantly since the country's independence. The majority of the changes are for the better and are due to Ghanaians discovering faster, more effective ways to complete tasks with the use of technology. From printing to graphic design, fine arts to photography, advertising to packaging, one may document various degrees of technological and developmental advancements that have significantly improved Ghanaians' daily lives. Documents indicate that Ghana's post-independence cultural policy was based on the idea of an "African personality." African personality, according to UNESCO (1975), was simultaneously a creative philosophy that aimed to introduce an African perspective into modern African politics and ways of life, and a philosophy of revival that attempted to restore African cultural values.

Hagan (1991) however indicates that, when 1958 the Bill establishing the Art Council of Ghana came up for debate, there was no reference in the debate to the need to develop Ghana's Cultural programs to enter into cultural exchanges with other African states and achieve African unity; and there was no reference to the concept of African personality as a guiding principle for Ghana's cultural development. Hagan

further argues that the general impression left by the debate was that Ghana's cultural policy had to have a Ghanaian focus and to develop Ghana's wealth of ethnic culture as the means of projecting Ghanaian "national culture," which was accepted all around as an existing fact.

It was often believed that Ghanaians directly documented visual occurrences through oral traditions that were passed down from generation to generation before photography was introduced to the country. However, since photography was introduced to the nation, images have gradually supplanted other forms of documentation as the primary way to verify our culturally significant visual activities. According to Oguiibe (1996), the earliest recorded use of photography in Africa is thought to have occurred on November 16, 1839.

According to Cole and Ross (1985), European missionaries and traders brought photography to Ghana as early as the Gold Coast era. Everything started when a few Portuguese sailors brought the Daguerreotype camera to the shores of Elmina (Schweizer, 2000). According to Schweizer, this happened a few months after Daguerre revealed his formula for the creation of the Daguerreotype, an image-capturing apparatus, in 1839, the year it was made accessible in America. As a result, the Daguerreotype camera was the first device introduced in Ghana to improve photography using natural vision.



Figure 2.2: Pictures taken by the Basel Missionaries in Ghana

(Photo Source: The Red Book of West Africa, 1968)

Cole and Ross (1985) said that the primary goals of photography's introduction to Africa were to provide visual documentation of the Basel Mission's efforts on the continent and to depict the conditions that prevailed at the time. Cole and Ross (1985) confirmed that these photos were used to raise money for the missionary work that was being done on the Gold Coast at the time. The photo they took at the time is seen in Fig. 4; it was black and white and extremely hazy.

Ghana adopted photography at the same time that advancements in camera technology were occurring. As a result, the advancement of the camera coincided with shifting trends in photography culture. Oguibe (1996) points out that before Africans, including Ghanaians, accepted photography as a way to document cultural events with visual significance, the people on the continent believed it to be blasphemous against God and a mystic covered in superstition. According to Oguibe, this had an initial impact on how photography developed in Africa.

Even though some Ghanaians had previously chosen photography as a career, the growing number of elites between 1900 and 1910 contributed significantly to the shift in Ghanaians' perceptions of the medium. According to Schweizer (2002), Fred Grant, a professional Ghanaian photographer, was operating in Cape Coast as early as 1874. Schweizer goes on to say that during the early 20th century, Africans held photography in high regard as a vocation. African photographers were welcomed and trusted by the locals. Consequently, photography emerged as a tool for documenting momentous occasions in Ghanaian communities. Using photography, the black elites showcased their acquired European style to the globe (Schweizer, 2000). Thus, they snapped pictures of themselves as they were standing in front of their recently constructed European-style residences, cars, stores, etc. Fig. 3 and Fig. 4 are pictures of some Ghanaian elites standing by their properties.



Figure 2.3: Ghanaian elites standing in front of their shops and automobiles
(Photo Credit: The Red Book of West Africa, 1968)



Figure 2.4: The premises of W. Bartholomew and Co. in Accra

(Photo Source: The Red Book of West Africa, 1968)

Every time the shutter was pressed on a daguerreotype camera, which housed the image recorder in a large square box, one image was captured over fifteen minutes of exposure. The equipment did not store the image for later use, thus it had to be taken again to get an identical picture. Further advancements in camera technology resulted in improved image quality from blurry to considerably sharper and more colorful photographs that could be saved and produced at a faster pace, driven by the need to introduce efficiency and pace to photography.

The way that people in Ghana now view photography is likewise different from how people in Europe and the rest of the globe view art, etc. According to Sturken and Cartwright's (2009) theory, aesthetic decisions like focus and framing were made for consumer-oriented video and still photography cameras as if by the camera itself. Nonetheless, social and aesthetic standards like readability and clarity were taken into account when designing these cameras.

Schweizer (2002) asserts that the advent of journalism and newspaper publishing, along with the escalating anti-colonial movement in the 1930s, enabled Ghanaian photographers such as Christian Gbagbo to broaden their scope to attain increased recognition and credibility. Photographs from the 1940s through the 1960s

were not so much of affluent Ghanaian elites flaunting their newly acquired European money as they were of a variety of events, including education, women's dress and hairstyles, ceremonial gatherings, sports, and family life.



Figure 2.5: Photographs from the Post-independence era (March 1962)

(Photo Source: The Red Book of West Africa, 1968)

Even though the majority of the photos taken during the post-independence era were on film, there was still a noticeable shift in the caliber of the images that were created. Before independence, photography was predominantly monochromatic from 1957 until the early 1980s. But over time, the quality of the photos gradually improved, moving from grainy, stiffly posed shots to sharper, more detailed shots that showed people engaged in various activities. Figures 5 and 6 are some examples of photographs taken in Ghana during the early post-independent era (between 1960 and 1962).



Figure 2.6: Photographs from the Post-independence era (1960s)

(Photo Source: The Red Book of West Africa, 1968)

A steady transition from monochrome (black and white) to color photographs also occurred. Leopold Mannes, Leopold Godowsky, and Eastman Kodak worked together to introduce Kodachrome in 1935, allowing cameras to capture and produce color images with a single exposure. However, color photography did not arrive in Ghana until the 1980s, when it was thought that the country's residents saw color as more realistic and subtle than black and white and that black and white was less abstract.



Figure 2.7: Picture taken in the mid-1980s

(Photo Source: The Red Book of West Africa, 1968)

However, the introduction of digital cameras and digital imaging technologies during the late 20th century saw a significant evolution of photography in Ghana. Several effects and changes were made to the images captured by the camera using digital imaging software. Digital imaging is a highly manipulative medium and allows for a degree of image post-processing that is comparatively difficult in film-based photography and permits different communicative potentials and applications. Digital image capturing and display processing techniques have made it possible to develop “light field photography,” often referred to as synthetic aperture photography. This procedure enables the selection of focus at different depths of the field after the picture has been taken. This advancement also improves the quality of photos even more. Figures 10 and 11 are digital camera images with the foreground and background purposefully blurred.

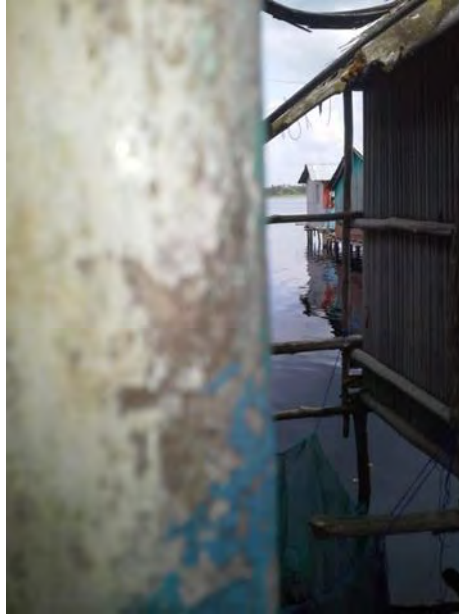


Figure 2.8: A deliberately blurred foreground using a digital camera

Photo Source: Field Study, October 2017



Figure 2.9: A deliberately blurred background effect using a digital camera

Photo Source: Field Study, October 2017.

Since 2000, additional advancements in digital camera technology have led to the release of smaller models, some of which have phones engraved on both sides. These changes, along with the rise in the number of self-portraits and other still photos

shared on social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and WhatsApp, among others, have encouraged many Ghanaians, particularly the younger generation, to record their everyday lives by snapping pictures of themselves with an arm-length camera. The term "selfie" was created as a result of this global phenomenon, and according to Haynes (2016), they are images taken by the person who is also visible in the picture.

Haynes (2016) went on to say that the photographer can be with a group or by themselves. An arm that protrudes to the side of the frame, appearing as though it is holding the camera, or the use of a mirror to reveal the camera in the subject's reflection, can be used to identify such a photograph.



Figure 2.10: A picture taken of a lady taking a Selfie

Photo Source: Field Study, July 2022



Figure 2.11: A couple taking selfies.

Photo Source: Field Study, July 2022

In Ghana, after gaining independence, people continue to view photography as an essential part of daily life, particularly when it comes to visually recording events. But with the technical advances of the late 1990s, photography's symbolic meaning and perceived worth have been called into question. Ghanaians saw photography as an accurate depiction of what was visualized from the pre-independence era to the post-independence era. According to Sturken and Cartwright (2009), photography was developed during a period when positivist science was prevalent. The positivist viewpoint holds that visual evidence can be used to prove empirical truths. They continued by implying that people frequently saw photos as an unfiltered replica of reality, a glimpse of reality lifted straight from the surface of existence. Hale was cited by Agyenim-Boating (2009) as saying that images were employed as concrete evidence of a family's right to a stool or throne in chieftaincy cases, for instance. Photographs were therefore seen as authentic, pure representations of events, as demonstrated by the image of Ghana's "Big Six" in Figure 12.



Figure 2.12: Ghana's Big Six

(Photo Source: The Red Book of West Africa, 1968)

Even though it is still regarded as an accurate way to document significant visual occurrences, digital imaging technologies have brought about additional changes to photography in Ghana. With the advent of digital imaging software, any image could be altered to such an extent that it became difficult, if not impossible, to verify its validity. "The widespread use of digital imaging technologies since the 1990s has dramatically altered the status of photography, particularly in the new media," according to Sturken and Cartwright (2009). Therefore, it may be claimed that the public's confidence in the veracity of photography and the use of camera images as evidence has been somewhat damaged by the use of digital imaging software. Can be said to have, in part, undermined public confidence in the veracity of photography and the image captured by a camera. Images can now be altered to improve or distort reality, and both impacts affect the real world. For instance, the picture in Fig. 13 is a modified copy of the original "Big Six" image in Fig. 12. The face of someone who wasn't originally part of the composition has been substituted for the face of the second person from the right in this instance.



Figure 2.13: A manipulated photograph of the “Big Six”

(Photo Source: The Red Book of West Africa, 1968)

In summary, technology has played a significant role in shaping Ghana's evolving photographic trends in visual culture. Even while photography is still used to record visual occurrences, advancements in digital imaging software and current technologies have improved the quality of photography. Even then, Sturken and Cartwright claim that these advancements have also "eroded" our confidence in static images. As a result, it becomes challenging to accept some of the still photos we view as accurate representations of reality.

2.8.1 Smartphone

A smartphone is a mobile communication device that combines the functionalities of a traditional mobile phone with those of a personal computer, enabling advanced computing capabilities alongside standard voice calling and messaging features. Unlike basic feature phones, which primarily support voice calls, SMS, and limited multimedia, smartphones are equipped with operating systems (such as Android, iOS, or HarmonyOS) that allow users to install and run third-party applications, access the internet, and perform a wide array of tasks typically associated with desktop or laptop computers.

Smartphones integrate various technological components, including high-resolution touch-screen displays, internal storage, memory (RAM), central processing units (CPUs), and multiple sensors (e.g., accelerometers, gyroscopes, and proximity sensors). These features enable not only communication but also multimedia production (photography, video, audio), real-time location tracking (via Global Positioning Systems), mobile banking, social media engagement, and even remote work and learning.

According to West and Mace (2010), the smartphone can be conceptualized as a portable mini-computer, combining the functionality of personal digital assistants (PDAs), digital cameras, internet browsers, and traditional cellular phones into a single device. This integration has enabled unprecedented levels of mobility, connectivity, and personalization, positioning the smartphone as an essential tool in both everyday life and professional domains.

Moreover, smartphones support a high degree of interactivity and convergence, allowing users to multitask, synchronize data across platforms, and remain connected across global networks. This convergence of functions has redefined human-computer interaction and transformed the smartphone into a critical device for communication, entertainment, productivity, and self-expression.

In socio-cultural terms, the smartphone is more than a technological gadget; it is a symbol of modernity, access, and digital participation. Its ubiquitous presence across societies particularly in urban and semi-urban spaces underscores its role in shaping new forms of social interaction, cultural production, and knowledge exchange (Goggin, 2012).

2.8.2 Smartphone, Historical Growth and Usage

The evolution of the smartphone's camera has come a long way from regular camera phones of their first forms. At the beginning of the camera phones' popularity, they expected mobile phone operators to bring a huge change in the way people exchange text messages, particularly switching from traditional messaging to "picture messaging" (also known as MMS or multimedia messaging services), especially with the new picture capability (Nguyen, 2018). Camera phone sales indeed experienced a huge leap at the time, Japan for instance, took up 50% of the mobile phone market in 2004, as iPhone, a large mobile phone operator, announced more than 70% of their customers subscribed to MMS (Kindberg et al., 2004). It was estimated that the increasing worldwide sales of Smartphones are devices that have become very familiar to people in the modern world. It is no longer just a communicational tool but has also become a device serving multiple entertainment purposes, with most of the abilities that a computer has. (Ha, 2016, p.4 as cited in Nguyen, 2018).

The one thing that a smartphone undeniably defeats any camera is that it fits in a pocket and can be easily accessed whenever the user feels the need to. On the other hand, a smartphone is made for photography purposes precisely; therefore, it can have the advantage of functionality and picture quality compared to any phone. Take the iPhone X for example, the current price of it is EUR 1,101.00 (Amazon, 2018 as cited in Nguyen, 2018). An equivalent DSLR camera for this phone in terms of price would be the Canon EOS 80D with the Canon 18-55mm lens, costing EUR 1,129.00 in total (Amazon, 2018). Below are a few features from both devices put side by side for comparison.

Even though very few people use smartphones frequently (more than once a month), conventional (film) and digital cameras were nevertheless widely held in the early stages of the camera phone era (Kindberg et al., 2004). They further report that scenarios requiring higher-quality photos were the main uses for both digital and analog cameras, especially at special events. A smartphone camera, on the other hand, was mostly used for impromptu moments in everyday life, and its ability to transfer photographs from one device to another set it apart from other photography equipment. (Kindberg and Associates, 2004; Davis and House, 2005).

Nguyen (2018) opines that, during the early stages, there were two main dimensions of motives when it came to capturing photos with camera phones. People either did it for the “affective” versus “functional” purposes, meaning images with a sentimental versus practical value, or “social” versus “individual purposes, meaning images that are meant to be shared with others versus images that are meant to be kept personally. Mutual experience under the "Affective" category refers to experiences that were shared simultaneously by numerous persons. When photos were generated for this kind of purpose, they usually featured a single user, if not a group. Occasionally, an object connected to the event was included. The majority of the shared experiences took place in public settings like eateries or bars, parties held at friends' houses, etc. It could also be a journey with friends or a vacation (Kindberg et al. 2004).

Regarding personal photographic practices with camera phones, a study (House & Davis, 2005) identified ways that people went about using their phones, including managing social relationships, constructing memory, self-presentation, and self-expression. Together with this finding, the study also showed 3 ways that camera

phones were interpreted by their users, such as personal memory storage, a communicative device, and an expressive device (House & Davis, 2005).

In comparison with digital and conventional cameras, camera phones have higher mobility and, therefore, are more often present when needed. Thus, images, especially from camera phones, were not only made to capture momentary memories but also to be kept and built as a sort of visual diary of one's life. Due to this very factor, personal photography using a camera phone also helped users reflect and enhance their relationships by providing images of their loved ones and a platform to share these photos. It was the lack of quality in these pictures that made picture-sharing a much more mundane activity and encouraged people to engage in their daily photography, all while socializing. Another very important use of the camera phone in photography was self-presentation, often known as "selfies" in today's language. This particular use was surprisingly found very early, and commonly before smartphones took it to another level. As camera phones were not taken (seriously by society as a photo capture device, pictures that people took of themselves were perceived as funny and silly and, therefore, very acceptable. Nguyen (2018) asserts that smartphones were used by photographers to express themselves, by making images that are "artistic", expressive, etc. Although those people very much represented the regular public rather than professional artists, and these photos may not necessarily always be presented to an audience, most of them thought photography is a great way to express their view of the world and using the camera phone as a tool was much easier and less intimidating to themselves and people around them (House & Davis, 2005).

Dzukey (2015) defines a smartphone as a mobile phone with features of advanced computing capabilities and connectivity. Similarly, Yuan (2005) defined a smartphone as a mobile phone that has computer values such as a web browser, an

email client, a personal information manager, a media player, a camera, and video games. An example of a Smartphone is shown in Fig. 14.



Fig. 2.14: Smartphone

Source: Researcher's collection

Sarwar and Soomro (2013) have observed that Smartphones have been adopted all over the world in the consumer markets. They, however, argue that the Smartphone seen today has been around since 1993 when it was introduced in the mass consumer markets by Apple. However, there have been some differences noticed between the Smartphones that are used today and those used in the early days.

A key difference, according to Reed (2010), is that the Smartphones introduced earlier were predominantly used by corporate executives and as enterprise devices since they were expensive compared to the ones we have today, which are for general consumers. This was identified to be the first era of Smartphones where the target was corporations and the phones had unique features such as the Internet

(Email, Web browsing), Fax, and Camera (Niccolai & Gohring, 2010). According to the study of Sarwar and Soomro (2013), the cost and application of Smartphones during the first era gave the perception that Smartphones are for businesses, with an established popularity in corporations. The BlackBerry was the technological device introduced in this era.

The introduction of the iPhone marked the second phase of the Smartphone in 2007. This was seen as a major revolution in Smartphones in that era (Querashi, 2012). The third era rationally started in 2008 when attempts were made to close the gap between the corporate-centric Smartphone and the general consumer. The Smartphones were generally upgraded and improved in their display quality and technology, with powerful batteries and enhanced user interface and features. Some of the usage capabilities of the Smartphone include the display of pictures, games, Audio/video playback, navigation, audio/visual recording, email, internal camera, internet, and more. This era increased the spread and use of smartphones among corporate and general consumers. (Sarwar & Soomro, 2013).

The key Smartphone vendors were essentially Apple, Samsung, HTC, Motorola, Nokia, LG, and Sony. The Smartphone came with common mobile Operating Systems such as iOS, Android, BlackBerry OS, and Windows Mobile. The manufacturers concentrated on exciting features and devices that have made the Smartphone a utilitarian device and functional for many purposes, including taking photographs. This novelty has brought the Smartphone into competition with stand-alone cameras, as considered in the subject of this study. There was, however, consensus in the literature that Android was found to be very instrumental during this

period in providing opportunities for all the ventures to fashion their devices on the Android technology. (Querashi, 2012; Costello, 2012; Ziegler, 2011).

After the revolutionary advancement of Smartphones, some studies have been carried out on them to establish their impact on photography through mobile imaging and content creation. (Germen, 2014). Sarwar and Soomro (2013) confirmed this by revealing that due to the permeating nature of Smartphones, today, it has gained social acceptance in education, medicine, and photography. Despite its social acceptance in image creation and photography, Germen (2014) argued that, technically, Smartphones are not comparable to professional cameras as they have a low megapixel (MP) value, which defines the quality and clarity of Smartphone pictures, weak high-ISO performance, and lack of optical zoom capacity.

In the argument, German (2014) said since Smartphones are not initially meant as imaging devices, photographs taken with them are highly defective, having noise, light leaks, and awkward composition. It was, however, observed that these technical shortcomings are the basis for which Smartphones are not technically advisable to be used for professional photography.

Based on these assertions, it can be argued on the premise of the subject of this study that Smartphones and stand-alone cameras are distinguished in their capabilities to perform the functions of photography. This determines their usage in professional photography if the purpose is to achieve a high-quality output that is devoid of noise, light leaks, and awkward composition. This explains why professional photographers still prefer to use stand-alone cameras to undertake photographic tasks.

In his study, Dzukey (2015) identified and discussed five types of convergence of Smartphones. These are technological convergence, economic convergence,

vertical convergence, cultural convergence, and global convergence. Convergence, as revealed by Dzukey (2015), is the assembling of two or more distinct entities or technologies in a single device. And for this write, it will be prudent to only look over the first convergence: technological convergence.

According to Dzukey (2015), due to its different embedded technological capabilities and features, the Smartphone is considered today as a technologically converged device for taking snapshots of photographs and performing other functions other than making calls. In a related study, Rouse (2005) said the converged technology has influenced the integration of the camera into the Smartphone to drive digital photography towards a social system of visual communication.

The contemporary Smartphone has the convergence of all the stand-alone devices, including a digital camera, recorder, computer, calculator, telephone, microphone, and many others, to make the device able to perform various tasks. This is essentially possible due to the development of Information Communication Technology. The most widespread technological convergence is the internet, which is one of the features of Smartphones to facilitate the sharing of digital photographs with others through visual communication on the web, and this has gained recognition globally.

The key issue in globalization is technological convergence with multiple dimensions of advancement in visual communication in Smartphones. The most obvious example of technology convergence is the integration of digital cameras into Smartphones. Technology is regarded as the main driver for convergence in this era of the quest for elegance, simplicity, and convenience (Fowler, 2002).

Cruz and Meyer (2012), however, revealed that the preference for Smartphones for digital photography is due to their convenience and people's delight in technology. They argued that since Smartphone provides users with the preferred convenience in association with emerging technology, it has had a positive impact on the acceptance of digital photography. This is linked to the Technology Acceptance Model (Davis, 1989).

The technological convergence of Smartphones is linked to their economic convergence. This economic convergence provides additional satisfaction to users, whereby they get an economic sense of multiple integrations of stand-alone devices in Smartphones (Kano, 2001). According to Kano (2001), the integration of the camera into the Smartphone is not to make it complex but to increase its economic convenience through converged technology.

Another form of convergence linked to the technological convergence of Smartphones is the vertical integration of manufacturing companies. The dynamics of the market and the growing consumer need not only led to technological and economic convergence but also necessitated the need for other companies to be involved in the manufacturing of smartphones. (Dzukey, 2015).

Significantly, it has been observed that technology convergence is the key to cultural convergence. This is confirmed by the wide use of technology across different cultures to bridge the gap that exists due to cultural divergence. According to the Texas Education Agency (2017), cultural convergence describes the likeness of different cultures that occurs through communication.

Interestingly, Jenkins (2006) posits that Smartphones have been the central part of interpersonal communication which resulting in cultural convergence, which is

now changing people's understanding of visual communication. The results have therefore shown that there has been widespread Smartphone usage among the young generation. Existing demographic data shows that young people use Smartphones for photography and visual communication transmission through internet connectivity. The global spread of Smartphone technology brings cultures together through ease of communication.

2.5 Smartphone Photography

The evolution of the smartphone's camera has come a long way from the regular camera phones of their first forms. At the beginning of the camera phones' popularity, they expected mobile phone operators to bring a huge change in the way people exchange text messages, particularly switching from traditional messaging to "picture messaging" (also known as MM Sing or multimedia messaging services), especially with the new picture capability (Nguyen, 2018). Camera phone sales indeed experienced a huge leap at the time. Japan, for instance, took up 50% of the mobile phone market in 2004, as iPhone, a large mobile phone operator, announced more than 70% of their customers subscribed to MMS (Kindberg et al., 2004). It was estimated that the increasing worldwide sales of Smartphones are devices that have become very familiar to people in the modern world. It is no longer just a communicational tool but has also become a device serving multiple entertainment purposes, with most of the abilities that a computer has. (Ha, 2016, p.4 as cited in Nguyen, 2018).

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their view of the world and using the camera phone as a tool was much easier and less intimidating to themselves and people around them (House & Davis, 2005).

2.5.1 Historical Development of Smartphone Photography

The evolution of the smartphone is deeply rooted in the technological convergence of computing, telecommunications, and internet-based systems. This convergence enabled the creation of a multi-functional device that could support not only voice communication but also data processing, multimedia, and wireless connectivity. The emergence of the smartphone marked a significant shift in digital technology, paving the way for a globally connected, always-online society.

The first commercially available smartphone, the *IBM Simon Personal Communicator*, was introduced in 1994 by IBM in collaboration with BellSouth. This device was revolutionary for its time, combining a mobile phone with features such as a touchscreen, calendar, address book, email access, and even fax capabilities. Although its battery life was short and its interface rudimentary by today's standards, the IBM Simon set the foundation for what would become the modern smartphone (West & Mace, 2010).

However, the mainstream adoption and transformation of smartphones began in the early 2000s, particularly with the release of BlackBerry devices in 2002. BlackBerry smartphones were equipped with physical keyboards and push email services, making them highly popular among business professionals and corporate users. The devices facilitated real-time communication and were considered a status symbol in both developed and emerging markets.

A major turning point occurred in 2007 with the introduction of the Apple iPhone. Apple's innovation lay in its capacitive multi-touch screen, user-friendly

interface, and the development of the iOS operating system, which allowed for the creation of downloadable third-party applications through the App Store. This ecosystem radically changed the smartphone landscape by transforming the phone into a customizable platform for productivity, entertainment, and social connectivity. Apple's design philosophy also influenced hardware aesthetics and user interaction globally.

Shortly after, in 2008, Google's Android operating system was introduced, beginning with the HTC Dream (also known as the T-Mobile G1). Android offered an open-source alternative to iOS, allowing multiple manufacturers such as Samsung, Huawei, and Tecno to produce affordable and diverse smartphone models. This flexibility accelerated smartphone penetration in both developed and developing countries, making Android the dominant mobile operating system worldwide.

In Ghana, the adoption of smartphones followed a similar trajectory, albeit with localized dynamics. The early 2000s saw the liberalization of the telecommunications sector, resulting in increased competition, reduced costs, and expansion of mobile network infrastructure. Telecom providers such as MTN, Vodafone, AirtelTigo, and Glo contributed to widespread mobile access by expanding 2G and later 3G/4G networks across urban and rural areas (Darko-Adjei, 2019).

The initial wave of smartphone use in Ghana was concentrated among urban elites and business professionals. However, as low-cost smartphones, particularly from Chinese brands such as Tecno, Infinix, and Itel, entered the market, access broadened significantly. These devices cater to local needs by offering dual SIM capabilities, long battery life, and affordability, making them accessible to students, artisans, traders, and rural populations.

By the mid-2010s, smartphones had become widespread across Ghana, transforming communication patterns, media consumption, and socio-cultural practices. With increasing access to mobile internet and social media platforms, smartphones have evolved from being mere tools of communication to platforms for cultural production, digital entrepreneurship, political engagement, and identity expression (Quarshie, 2021).

Smartphone camera photography has embarked on a captivating journey of evolution, tracing its roots from humble beginnings to becoming an integral facet of modern-day smartphones. Its historical development unveils a fascinating narrative, marked by significant technological leaps that have redefined the art of capturing images and reshaped the landscape of visual storytelling.

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, the inception of mobile phone cameras marked a modest beginning. However, these early models merely offered rudimentary imaging capabilities, presenting low-resolution images as additional features rather than central functionalities of mobile devices.

The turning point arrived in the mid-2000s when higher-resolution cameras found their way into smartphones. Companies like Nokia, Sony Ericsson, and Motorola pioneered this shift, introducing cameras with improved megapixels and basic imaging capabilities, gradually steering mobile phones toward becoming more than mere communication devices.

The true revolution of smartphone photography unfolded in the late 2000s and early 2010s with the advent of game-changing devices like the iPhone. Apple's groundbreaking iPhone release in 2007, followed by subsequent iterations, set new standards by integrating high-quality cameras as fundamental components of

smartphones. This pivotal moment not only elevated the bar for camera quality but also brought attention to both hardware and software enhancements in imaging technology.

As the 2010s progressed, the race for innovation intensified. Smartphone manufacturers relentlessly pursued advancements in camera technology, focusing on enhancing image quality, sensor capabilities, and low-light performance, and introducing multiple lenses. This era witnessed the incorporation of wide-angle and telephoto lenses, providing users with a diverse range of perspectives for their photography endeavors.

The latter part of the decade ushered in an era of computational photography and artificial intelligence (AI) applications. Smartphones began employing AI-driven features and sophisticated computational techniques for image processing. These advancements enabled portrait modes, night modes, and intricate image enhancement algorithms, elevating the art of smartphone photography to new heights.

Today's smartphones boast highly sophisticated cameras, equipped with AI-driven capabilities and cutting-edge sensors. They not only excel in capturing images but also empower users with professional-level photography tools, fostering creativity and innovation in visual content creation. This evolution in smartphone photography has democratized the realm of image capture. Individuals across the globe have become amateur photographers, leveraging social media platforms to share their perspectives and stories through visual content. This paradigm shift in personal expression has not only transformed individual creativity but has also influenced visual culture, challenged traditional norms, and opened doors for diverse forms of artistic expression in the digital age.

In conclusion, the historical development of smartphone photography narrates an intriguing story of progress, from basic camera functionalities to the sophistication of modern imaging technology. Its journey continues to redefine the perception of photography, shaping visual culture and offering new avenues for creative expression in our technologically driven world.

2.5.2 Influence of Smartphone Photography on Social Media

The intersection of social media and smartphone photography has sparked a revolution in the way individuals capture, share, and consume visual content. This symbiotic relationship has transcended mere technological advancements, shaping a new paradigm of visual communication and societal engagement. Social media platforms have evolved into digital galleries where smartphone photography takes center stage. These platforms, from Instagram to Snapchat and TikTok, have become hubs for visual storytelling, revolutionizing how people across the globe interact with images and videos. One of the most profound impacts of social media on smartphone photography is the democratization of visual expression. Gone are the days when photography was confined to professionals with specialized equipment. Now, armed with smartphones, individuals of all backgrounds can craft visually stunning narratives, sharing their lives and stories on a global scale.

The emergence of social media has shifted storytelling from text-centric to visually immersive narratives. Smartphone photography, when coupled with these platforms, enables users to convey emotions, experiences, and messages through captivating images, reels, stories, and live videos, fostering an unparalleled level of engagement and connection. Influencer culture, a dominant force on social media, has a significant impact on smartphone photography trends. These digital trendsetters curate meticulously crafted images, defining aesthetics and dictating trends in fashion,

travel, lifestyle, and more. Their visual content shapes the preferences and aspirations of millions of followers worldwide. Social media's immediacy facilitates the rapid sharing of smartphone-captured content. A single image or video has the potential to go viral, spreading across platforms at lightning speed, capturing attention, and sometimes even initiating cultural movements or societal conversations. The hunger for visually captivating content on social media continually propels smartphone camera technology forward. Manufacturers race to introduce cutting-edge features like AI-based enhancements, creative filters, augmented reality effects, and live video functionalities, catering to users' cravings for unique and appealing content.

2.5.3 Cultural Impact and Social Influence:

Beyond aesthetics, social media's impact on smartphone photography extends to shaping cultural norms and influencing societal perceptions. Images shared on these platforms often carry powerful social, political, or cultural messages, sparking conversations, activism, and societal change.

The amalgamation of social media with smartphone photography has transcended mere visual documentation. It has democratized creativity, reshaped storytelling, dictated trends, and amplified voices globally. This inseparable relationship underscores the pivotal role of social media in shaping modern visual culture and communication, heralding a new era where everyone holds the power to visually narrate their stories to the world.

2.6 The Use of Smartphones for Social Media

The incredible portability of a smartphone directly contributed to its rapid rise in ownership and has created a mutual stage for photo and video sharing in modern-day social media interaction. Nguyen (2018) opines that 58% of the world's population

owns a smartphone (while generally 92% own a cell phone). Mobile applications such as Instagram and Snapchat have been made to tap into the users' demand to capture and share visual content on social media.

2.6.1 Instagram

It is a mobile phone application that provides a platform where users can share their photos and videos instantly after capturing them with their smartphones. The app was launched in October 2010 and has attracted over 800 million active users monthly by the end of 2017 (Aslam, 2018). According to Pew (2012) as cited in Nguyen (2018) it is reported that in September 2012, pictures and videos had become the “key social currencies” online, with 46% of users of the adult age posting content in the form of pictures and videos made by themselves, and 41% of people who take these same types of content online and repost them on other online image sharing platforms (Rainie et al., 2012). In the same research, it was shown that Instagram was dominated by young adults, and 27% of internet users aged ranging from 18 to 29 used the app (Rainie et al., 2012).

2.6.2 Snapchat

Snapchat is a mobile application that allows its users to communicate by sharing text, ephemeral photos, and videos, which disappear once they are opened and seen. Senders determine the amount of time that a recipient can view the image; after that period ends, the content becomes unavailable (Duggan, 2013). The app was launched in September 2011, and in over a year, in December 2012, its user base had grown to 10 million. By 2013, Snapchat users were generating 60 million Snaps daily. (Blaney et al., 2016) In 2017, the network had attracted over 150 million users and a long list of companies and brands (Johnson, 2017). The app is popular, especially for audiences between the ages of 18 and 29 (Duggan, 2013).

A “Snap” is a capture that could either be a photo or a video that is taken through Snapchat to one or multiple recipients. Similar to Instagram, Snapchat offers a wide range of fun filters for its users to explore, including graphics, animation, distortion, or themes that are relevant to different holidays, seasons, locations, etc. (Johnson, 2017). One of the interesting things that a lot of people did not realize when Snapchat came out was that it operates very similarly to how people communicate in person. In reality, interactions and moments vanish after they happen. Unlike in any other traditional social platform since the beginning of the internet, data in Snapchat is not stored and archived (Kamleitner, 2016). One of the many reasons why people love using Snapchat, while there is a good variety of other competing social networks, is that it creates artificial scarcity. The fact that a snap can only be viewed for up to 10 seconds and Snapchat Stories for 24 hours makes the recipients pay more attention to each message that they get, knowing that it was made privately only for them and will disappear shortly. Compared to other social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, etc., Snapchat’s users are not required to invest so much thought into what they capture and how to express themselves, as the content is sent selectively and will not be stored anywhere. This takes away the pressure and anxiety that the senders might have had with other platforms. It also enhances the feeling of security when users are most likely free from any responsibility or embarrassment for what they send after they send it. Furthermore, Snapchat does a great job of simplifying its features; therefore, it is not much of a multitasking platform for people when they want to take a snap and share it while going about their daily routine. (Kamleitner, 2016).

2.7 The Role of Smartphone Photography in the Creation and Dissemination of Visual Images.

The role of smartphone photography in the creation and dissemination of visual images in Ghanaian societies has garnered significant attention in academic literature and research. Scholars have explored various aspects of this phenomenon, including its cultural, social, and technological implications. The review of related literature provides insights into the multifaceted nature of smartphone photography in Ghana, highlighting its impact on visual culture, social interaction, and cultural representation.

Studies have emphasized the cultural significance of smartphone photography in Ghana, highlighting its role in documenting social events, cultural practices, and everyday life. Okoro et al. (2020) conducted a qualitative study examining the cultural implications of smartphone photography among Ghanaian youth, revealing how smartphone cameras are used to capture and share cultural experiences, rituals, and traditions. The authors argue that smartphone photography has become an integral part of Ghanaian cultural practices, enabling individuals to preserve and transmit cultural heritage through visual imagery.

The proliferation of social media platforms has facilitated the widespread dissemination of smartphone photography in Ghanaian societies. A study by Mensah (2018) explored the impact of social media on visual communication practices in Ghana, highlighting the role of platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and WhatsApp in shaping the visual landscape. The author argues that social media has democratized image sharing, allowing individuals to participate in visual storytelling and cultural exchange through smartphone photography.

The continuous advancement of smartphone camera technology has led to significant improvements in image quality, enabling users to capture high-resolution photographs with their devices. A study by Amankwah-Amoah et al. (2019) examined the evolution of smartphone photography in Ghana, tracing the development of camera features and image processing techniques. The authors highlight how technological advancements have influenced the adoption and usage of smartphones for photography, contributing to the growth of a vibrant visual culture in Ghanaian societies.

The rise of smartphone photography has raised ethical considerations regarding the representation of cultural practices and traditions in Ghana. A study by Boateng and Danso (2021) explored the ethical challenges of smartphone photography in documenting cultural events and rituals, emphasizing the need for sensitivity and cultural awareness in visual representation. The authors argue that while smartphone photography offers opportunities for cultural preservation, it also poses risks of misrepresentation and distortion of cultural narratives.

Smartphone photography has fostered community engagement and participation in visual storytelling initiatives in Ghana. A study by Adom et al. (2020) investigated the role of smartphone photography in community development projects, highlighting how residents use smartphones to document social issues, environmental challenges, and community events. The authors argue that smartphone photography empowers communities to advocate for social change and promote cultural awareness through visual storytelling.

In summary, the review of related literature underscores the significant role of smartphone photography in shaping visual culture and cultural representation in

Ghanaian societies. Scholars have highlighted the cultural, social, and technological dimensions of smartphone photography, emphasizing its transformative impact on cultural practices, social interaction, and community engagement. However, ethical considerations regarding representation and cultural sensitivity remain important areas of concern in the discourse on smartphone photography in Ghana.

2.8 The roles of Smartphone Photography in the dissemination of visual culture.

Smartphone photography stands as a key protagonist in the contemporary dissemination of visual culture, playing a pivotal role in how individuals perceive, create, and disseminate visual content in the digital age. This technological revolution has significantly transformed the landscape of visual culture dissemination in several impactful ways: The accessibility of smartphones equipped with high-quality cameras has democratized visual expression. Previously, engagement in photography required specialized equipment and expertise. Now, with the ubiquity of smartphones, virtually everyone has the power to capture and share visual narratives. This democratization has diversified the pool of visual creators, allowing individuals from various backgrounds to contribute to and shape visual culture.

Social networking, which makes use of smartphones' network access, has grown to become a significant new visual communication phenomenon. This is prevalent in several industries, including business, education, and entertainment (Multisilta & Milrad, 2009; Okabe, 2004). With the use of numerous sizable social networking tools and platforms, friends and relatives can instantly view visual photographs from cell phones. These platforms include YouTube, Facebook, Flickr, Vibe, and WhatsApp, among others that rely on the internet. It is possible to communicate photographs and movies with these services. Okabe and Ito (2009), referenced by Multisilta & Milrad, state that camera phone photography is

encouraging the internet's visual newsworthiness. According to them, "the camera phone is intimate and has a ubiquitous presence that invites a conversation, unlike the traditional camera."

Smartphone photography facilitates instant image capture and sharing, breaking down geographical barriers in disseminating visual content. With a few taps, images and videos captured through smartphones can be instantly shared across various social media platforms, reaching a global audience within seconds. This immediacy has accelerated the circulation and consumption of visual culture, fostering a dynamic and interconnected global visual community.

The proliferation of smartphone photography has reshaped cultural norms and aesthetic standards. Social media platforms serve as digital galleries where diverse visual content flourishes. Trends and visual aesthetics are rapidly established and disseminated, often influenced by the amalgamation of different cultures, styles, and individual expressions. This democratization of aesthetics through smartphone photography contributes to the evolution and diversification of visual culture.

Smartphone photography has become a medium for personal storytelling and self-expression. Individuals use their smartphones to document daily experiences, share personal narratives, and advocate for social causes. Through images and videos captured on smartphones, personal stories are shared, societal issues are highlighted, and diverse perspectives find a voice, fostering empathy and understanding across communities. In addition to reshaping contemporary visual culture, smartphone photography plays a significant role in cultural preservation and documentation. Communities globally use smartphones to capture and preserve their cultural heritage, traditions, and events. This digital archiving contributes to the preservation and

dissemination of diverse cultural identities, ensuring their legacy for future generations.

The prevalence of smartphone photography has contributed to the enhancement of visual literacy. Individuals engage more actively with visual content, fostering critical thinking, interpretation, and analysis of images. Moreover, in educational settings, educators leverage smartphone photography as a tool for visual learning, encouraging students to explore and express themselves creatively through visual media.

Smartphone photography stands at the forefront of disseminating visual culture in our interconnected world. Its accessibility, instant sharing capabilities, influence on cultural norms, empowerment of personal narratives, and impact on cultural preservation collectively contribute to the evolution and democratization of visual culture, shaping a diverse, dynamic, and interconnected global visual landscape.

2.9 The Use of Smartphones for Social Media

The use of smartphones for social media has become an integral part of modern life, transforming the way people communicate, share information, and connect with others. Smartphones provide instant access to various social media platforms, enabling users to stay connected regardless of time or location (Fallon, 2018a). One significant aspect is the convenience smartphones offer. With social media apps readily available on these devices, people can effortlessly share moments, thoughts, and experiences in real time. The ease of taking photos or recording videos and instantly uploading them to platforms like Instagram, Snapchat, or TikTok has revolutionized self-expression and content creation (Larsen, 2008a)

Furthermore, smartphones enhance connectivity. through social media, individuals can maintain relationships, engage in discussions, and participate in communities regardless of geographical barriers. Whether it is messaging apps like WhatsApp, Messenger, or WeChat, or platforms like Facebook, Twitter, or LinkedIn, smartphones facilitate instant communication, fostering a sense of belonging and enabling collaboration on a global scale (Lisha et al., 2017b)

This convenience and connectivity come with challenges. The addictive nature of social media, combined with the ease of access through smartphones, has raised concerns about excessive screen time, mental health issues, and privacy breaches. Constant notifications and the pressure to stay updated can lead to distraction, anxiety, and a blurred line between online and offline life.

The use of smartphones for social media has sparked debates about privacy and data security. While these platforms offer connectivity, they also collect vast amounts of user data, raising questions about how this information is used, shared, and monetized. Issues surrounding data privacy, algorithmic biases, and the spread of misinformation have emerged as critical concerns in the digital age.

Despite these challenges, smartphones remain indispensable for social media usage. They empower individuals, businesses, and communities to communicate, share, and collaborate in unprecedented ways. As technology evolves, the responsible use of smartphones for social media becomes increasingly vital, necessitating a balance between connectivity and digital well-being.

Deducing from the aforementioned discussion, smartphones have revolutionized social media, providing unparalleled convenience, connectivity, and opportunities for self-expression. However, their pervasive use also brings forth

challenges related to addiction, mental health, privacy, and data security. Striking a balance between leveraging the benefits of smartphones for social media while being mindful of their potential pitfalls is crucial in navigating the digital landscape responsibly.

2.10 The Impact of Smartphone Camera Photography on Global Visual Culture.

The impact of smartphone camera photography on global visual culture is profound and multifaceted, influencing how people across the world create, share, and consume visual content. The widespread accessibility of smartphones equipped with high-quality cameras has democratized photography, revolutionizing the way cultures express themselves visually and interact with imagery on a global scale (Lisha et al., 2017b). One of the most significant impacts of smartphone photography is its role in democratizing visual storytelling. With smartphones ubiquitous and nearly everyone having access to a camera, people from diverse backgrounds and cultures can capture and share their unique perspectives. This has led to a more diverse, inclusive, and authentic representation of global visual culture, breaking down barriers and allowing for a broader spectrum of narratives to emerge (Larsen, 2008).

The immediacy of smartphone photography has altered the pace at which visual stories are shared worldwide. Moments are captured instantly and shared across social media platforms, providing real-time glimpses into cultures, events, and daily life across the globe. This immediacy enables a direct and unfiltered connection between individuals of different cultures, fostering a deeper understanding and empathy (Fallon, 2018a).

Social media platforms play a pivotal role in shaping global visual culture through smartphone photography. Platforms like Instagram, Snapchat, and TikTok

serve as melting pots of diverse visual content, facilitating the exchange of ideas, traditions, and trends from different corners of the world. Hashtags, geotags, and viral challenges enable content to transcend geographical boundaries, creating a shared global visual language.

The accessibility of smartphone photography has empowered individuals to document and share their cultural heritage. People can showcase their traditions, rituals, art, and landscapes, preserving and sharing cultural elements that might have otherwise been overlooked or forgotten. This preservation and dissemination of cultural heritage contribute to a richer understanding and appreciation of diverse cultures globally (Chae, 2017b).

Moreover, smartphone photography has become a tool for activism and social change on a global scale. Through the lens of their smartphones, individuals capture social injustices, protests, and movements, amplifying these narratives and shedding light on important societal issues. This visual documentation has the power to mobilize communities worldwide, fostering solidarity and driving change (Bartholeyns, 2014b). However, alongside its positive impact, smartphone photography also raises challenges within global visual culture. The sheer volume of visual content created and shared daily can lead to oversaturation and desensitization. Standing out amid this flood of images becomes increasingly challenging, potentially overshadowing meaningful narratives in favor of superficial or sensationalistic content.

Additionally, the authenticity and credibility of smartphone-generated visual content can be called into question. The ease of editing and manipulation raises concerns about the accuracy and truthfulness of the narratives conveyed. This

challenges viewers to critically evaluate and discern between genuine storytelling and altered or misleading imagery.

Furthermore, the widespread dissemination of visual content through smartphones raises ethical concerns, particularly regarding privacy and consent. The inadvertent capture and sharing of private moments or individuals' images without their permission can lead to breaches of privacy and ethical dilemmas, highlighting the importance of responsible and respectful photography practices (Yang, 2021).

In conclusion, smartphone photography has had a profound impact on global visual culture, democratizing visual storytelling and fostering a more diverse, inclusive, and interconnected world. Its accessibility, immediacy, and ability to transcend geographical boundaries have transformed how cultures are represented and shared globally. However, challenges related to oversaturation, authenticity, and ethical considerations emphasize the need for responsible creation and consumption of visual content in the evolving landscape of smartphone-driven global visual culture.

2.11 Smartphone Camera Transformation of Visual Culture

Smartphone camera photography has fundamentally transformed the dissemination of visual culture, revolutionizing how individuals capture, create, share, and interact with images. This shift has significantly impacted various aspects of society, from personal expression to professional photography, and has reshaped the way visual content is consumed and understood (Bowen, 2023).

One of the most striking aspects of smartphone photography is its accessibility. Almost everyone now possesses a powerful camera in their pocket, democratizing photography and allowing individuals of diverse backgrounds and skill

levels to engage in visual Storytelling (McLeod, 2023). This accessibility has democratized the creation of visual content, enabling anyone to become a creator and shaping a more diverse and inclusive visual culture.

Moreover, the immediacy of smartphone photography fuels the rapid dissemination of images. With the ability to capture moments instantly and share them across social media platforms, smartphone photography has accelerated the spread of visual information, leading to real-time documentation of events, news, and personal experiences. This immediacy has empowered citizen journalism, providing a lens through which the world observes and understands events as they unfold (Caoduro, 2014).

The integration of social media platforms with smartphone photography has amplified the impact of visual content. Images captured on smartphones are easily shared, liked, commented on, and reshared, allowing them to reach a vast audience within seconds. Platforms like Instagram, Snapchat, and TikTok have become hubs for visual storytelling, cultivating trends, and influencing cultural norms through images and short videos (Cruz & Meyer, 2012).

Furthermore, smartphone photography has redefined the concept of authenticity in visual culture. The candid nature of mobile photography, coupled with various editing and filter options, has shifted the emphasis from polished, professional images to more raw, unfiltered snapshots of life. This authenticity resonates with audiences, fostering connections and relatability through visual narratives that feel genuine and personal (Andersen, 2016).

The proliferation of smartphone photography has also transformed industries such as advertising, journalism, and art. Brands leverage user-generated content and

influencer marketing on social media platforms to engage with their audiences authentically. Journalists utilize smartphone cameras to capture breaking news, while artists explore new creative possibilities by pushing the boundaries of mobile photography as a legitimate art form (Fallon, 2018).

However, the ubiquity of smartphone photography also raises questions about its impact on visual literacy and the value of professional photography. With the sheer volume of images produced daily, distinguishing between high-quality, meaningful content and disposable snapshots becomes increasingly challenging. This oversaturation of visual content can potentially dilute the significance of impactful images and narratives.

Additionally, concerns about privacy, digital manipulation, and the ethical use of images in the era of smartphones persist. The ease of taking, editing, and sharing photos raises issues regarding consent, intellectual property, and the spread of misinformation or altered images, challenging the authenticity and credibility of visual storytelling (Cruz & Meyer, 2012).

In conclusion, smartphone photography has undeniably revolutionized the dissemination of visual culture. Its accessibility, immediacy, and integration with social media have democratized visual storytelling, fostering a more inclusive and diverse landscape of imagery. While it has empowered individuals and transformed industries, it also poses challenges related to authenticity, visual literacy, and ethical considerations. Balancing the democratization of photography with responsible creation, consumption, and interpretation of visual content is crucial in navigating the evolving landscape of smartphone-driven visual culture. How the Use of Smartphones

has significantly influenced storytelling within visual culture. The use of smartphones has significantly influenced storytelling within the visual culture (Lisha et al., 2017)

2.12 The Use of Smartphones Has Influenced Storytelling within Visual Culture.

The use of smartphones has significantly influenced storytelling within visual culture, reshaping the ways narratives are created, shared, and consumed. Smartphones, equipped with high-quality cameras and versatile editing tools, have democratized the storytelling process, enabling individuals to become active participants in shaping visual narratives. One of the most impactful aspects of smartphone storytelling lies in its accessibility. With smartphones becoming ubiquitous, almost everyone can capture and share visual stories. This accessibility empowers individuals from diverse backgrounds and cultures to share their unique perspectives, fostering a richer and more inclusive tapestry of narratives within visual culture (Larsen, 2008).

The immediacy of smartphones also plays a pivotal role in storytelling. Through real-time documentation and instant sharing on social media platforms, users can engage in live storytelling, providing audiences with immediate access to unfolding events, personal experiences, and significant moments. This immediacy has transformed how stories are perceived and absorbed, creating a sense of connection and empathy among viewers (Yang, 2021).

Social media platforms serve as powerful media for smartphone-driven storytelling. Platforms like Instagram, Snapchat, and TikTok offer versatile tools and formats, encouraging users to craft engaging visual narratives. From photo essays and video diaries to interactive stories, these platforms facilitate the creation of immersive and compelling narratives that resonate with diverse audiences across the globe (Jensen, 2007).

Moreover, the intimacy of smartphone storytelling enhances its impact. The personal nature of capturing moments on a device that is always within arm's reach allows for more authentic and relatable narratives. Users can share their everyday experiences, struggles, triumphs, and emotions in a raw and unfiltered manner, creating connections and fostering empathy among viewers. The fusion of visuals, text, audio, and interactivity on smartphones creates multidimensional narratives. Users can combine photos, videos, captions, emojis, music, and interactive elements to craft immersive and engaging stories. This multidimensionality adds layers of depth and emotion to storytelling, enabling creators to evoke powerful responses and convey complex messages in ways that transcend traditional forms of storytelling (Olatokun, 2009).

Furthermore, smartphones have democratized the creation of documentary-style storytelling. The portability and inconspicuousness of smartphones allow storytellers to capture candid moments and document authentic stories that might have been otherwise inaccessible. This capability has empowered citizen journalists, activists, and artists to shed light on underrepresented stories and social issues, amplifying marginalized voices within the visual culture (Molla & Saheer, 2007).

However, the democratization of smartphone storytelling also raises challenges. The sheer volume of content shared daily across various platforms can lead to oversaturation and attention fragmentation. Standing out amid this digital noise and ensuring meaningful engagement with audiences requires creators to innovate and craft compelling narratives that resonate amidst the abundance of visual content (Gigler, 2011).

Ethical considerations surrounding the authenticity and credibility of smartphone-driven storytelling also come into play. The ease of editing and manipulation raises concerns about the truthfulness and accuracy of visual narratives. This challenges viewers to critically evaluate and discern between genuine storytelling and manipulated or misleading content. Additionally, the commodification of storytelling on social media platforms poses challenges for creators. The pursuit of likes, shares, and virality can sometimes overshadow the authenticity and sincerity of storytelling, leading to a focus on sensationalism rather than genuine narratives (Richard, 2010).

In conclusion, smartphones have revolutionized storytelling within visual culture by democratizing the creation and dissemination of narratives. Their accessibility, immediacy, and versatility empower individuals to share diverse perspectives, fostering inclusivity and connection. However, challenges related to oversaturation, authenticity, and ethical considerations highlight the need for responsible storytelling practices in navigating the evolving landscape of smartphone-driven visual narratives.

2.13 Visual Communication of Smartphone Camera Photography

Photography is perceived as a visual language that can be likened to verbal communication, which uses the representation of images to communicate meanings (Moran & Tegano, 2005). Duchemin (2009) further explained that photography is likened to verbal communication because it possesses the characteristics of spoken language, and it is universally understood as a common language without the expression of words. Some studies reveal that Smartphone devices come with photography apps that allow users to capture and share photographs on social media platforms for public view or among a group of friends (Dzukey, 2015).

One of the features that makes Smartphone photography appreciable is its reasonable ownership. Many people who use their smartphones to capture images own them and have reasonable access to them. Through this development, Smartphone photography is seen to be promoting a society that is gradually moving visual communication technology by facilitating the transfer of images via the internet. The quest to share pictures and tell stories through them, according to Frascara (2004), creates a concept of visual communication.

This is communication through the aid of photographs. The communication is significantly dependent on vision, which presents two-dimensional images. According to Freeman (2011), the democratization of Smartphone photography allows the occurrence of visual communication to take place among people who are regarded as having little or no technical skills in photography. This also, however, takes photography from the exclusive preserve of technically skilled photographers to be freely practiced by most Smartphone users since they are automatically operated.

The interesting aspect of visual communication is the development of a virtual community that is created among amateur smartphone photographers as well as professionals in an online setting, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and WhatsApp, among other social media sites that provide platforms for posting photographic images (Cecilia & Niklas, 2014).

By this, the visual communication of Smartphone photographs promotes and encourages the immediate transfer of images through the new phenomenon of social media for entertainment, business, and education (Multisilta & Milrad, 2009). Based upon the theoretical framework of the study, the model adopted for this study shows that security, perceived usefulness of the technology, and perceived ease of use of the

technology are likely to influence an individual's decision to adopt the use of Smartphones for photography. This, however, postulates in Fig. 23 that the impact of Smartphones on professional photography is influenced by certain factors, including security, perceived usefulness, and perceived ease of use.

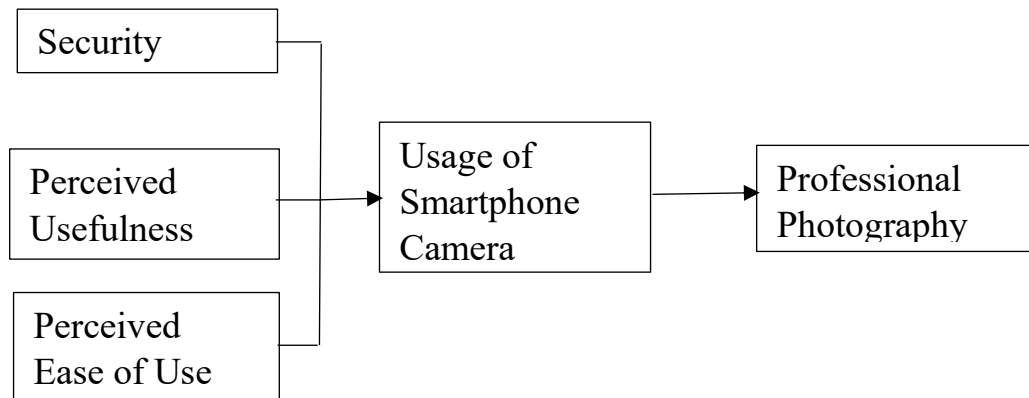


Fig. 2.15: Photography Conceptual Framework

Source: Adapted from Davis et al.

2.13.1 Security of Smartphone Usage

Previous studies have empirically established that one of the main reasons for the adoption of technology is security. In their opinion, Polatoglu and Ekin (2001) considered security as the capability of a technology to provide users reliability of use, safety dimensions, and privacy. In an article by BullGuard (2017), it is observed that Smartphones are gathering momentum in these security issues. The article, however, shows that Smartphones provide various security features, such as the use of PIN/Keylock code to protect data from being stolen.

Apart from the PIN/Keylock code, the option of “rooting” the phone also encourages the use of a Smartphone, since it allows users access to system-level resources and to modify read-only files, backup their data, and install other security

software to protect both the device and access to data (photographs). This study postulates, based on the subject of the usage of Smartphones and their impact on professional photography, about security that the use of smartphones for photography allows users to protect pictures that are private to them (such as nude pictures) under certain security dimensions that cannot be obtained from printed photographs. It is observed from the literature review by Polatoglu and Ekin (2001) and BullGuard (2017) that this perceived feature of the Smartphone tends to impact professional photography.

2.13.2 The Perceived Usefulness of Smartphones

In the model, the perceived usefulness of a Smartphone is considered as the extent to which users feel that the use of a Smartphone would enhance their job performance or improve their ability to perform their tasks in photography (Ismail, Kit, Chan, Buhari, & Muzaini, 2012). However, Kleijnen, De Ruyter, & Wetzels (2004) reiterated that the perceived use makes a user of a Smartphone find it convenient to integrate a Smartphone closely related to their daily activities since it affords them availability and accessibility anytime and anywhere.

In terms of advertising, the use of smartphones has helped in advertising the works or services of individuals and organizations, including professional photographers. This is because smartphones have enabled people to create their micro-cultures and engage in trade activities through social networks, Nurfits (2012). For instance, smartphones have helped individual artisans to commercialize their activities by sending sample shots of their works to friends and other people through WhatsApp.

2.13.3 Perceived Ease of Use of Smartphone

It was noted by Davis, Bagozzi, and Warshaw (1989) that the perceived ease of use is employed to define the level of belief that an individual attach to the use of a particular system. It is, however, argued in the literature that the reason why people like to use smartphones for photography depends on how easy it is to use the technology. It was further disclosed that perceived ease of use is viewed as a paramount feature of consideration in promoting the adaptation of innovation. Consequently, this is increasingly becoming the reason for the adoption of Smartphone technology among many people (Rogers, 1983). Cooper and Zmud (1990), however, posit that the reason why people adopt new technology is that it affords effortless use and facilitates processes. This means that the adoption of Smartphones for photography is more likely to occur if the process of usage is easy for people (Cudjoe, Anim, and Tetteh 2015).

2.14 Factors Influencing the Adoption of Smartphone Camera Photography

The prevailing literature on factors affecting the acceptance of Smartphones is the study by Elogie (2015), who undertook the study to investigate the factors that affect the adoption of Smartphones among undergraduate students at Ambrose Alli University, Nigeria. The study found that the adoption of Smartphones is guided by the relative advantage and complexity of the phone.

However, Smartphone is perceived as the most ubiquitous technology that allows users to have social interaction through calls and messaging. The inclusion of social media has also been perceived to be among the most common reasons for its adoption. Consequently, the integration of a camera into a smartphone is said to be

based on the functionality of social interaction, where users can take photographs, record videos, and share them on Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and other platforms.

In the study of Elogie (2015), the researchers empirically investigated how demographic and technological characteristics can affect the adoption of Smartphones. However, the study found that there is no significant relationship between demographic characteristics and Smartphone adoption. This finding is in variance with the studies of Morris and Venkatesh (2000) and Rogers (1995), which state that the demographic characteristics of individuals affect their adoption of new technology. According to Elogie (2015), there are other intrinsic factors, apart from demographic and technological characteristics, that affect the adoption of Smartphones in photography.

Invariably, many studies have identified that gender/sex significantly determines the adoption of technology (Gefen & Straub, 1997; Morris & Venkatesh, 2000). For instance, the perceived usefulness of a technology may highly influence the decision of men to adopt the technology as compared to women, who may adopt the technology based on perceived ease of use. While this finding was made, Wei and Zhang (2008) also found age, gender, and educational background to be determinants in influencing the adoption of Smartphones.

Apart from the fact that demographic characteristic is considered necessary for the adoption of Smartphones, similarly, Putzer and Park (2010) also suggested that behavioral intention and social interaction largely affect the perceived usefulness and attitude toward the adoption of Smartphones. Supporting this fact, Hong et al. (2008) also added that Perceived Usefulness, Perceived Ease of Use, and internet efficacy influence the adoption of Smartphones. Relatively, the usage of Smartphones will

have an impact on professional photography since they tend to have features that afford users some level of effortless use and facilitate the photographic processes.

In another perspective, psychological orientation in mobile technology is also viewed to be linked to people's perceptions, attitudes, and expectations toward Smartphones (Peters, 2007). Other factors including relative advantage, compatibility, and observability are also observed to be possible predictors for the adoption of Smartphones (Al-Jabri & Sohail, 2012; Putzer & Park, 2010).

Significantly, Rogers (1983) attributes the adoption of Smartphones to the complexity, trialability, compatibility, observability, and relative advantage. Given this, Rogers (1983) argued that people will adopt new technology if they realize that it is better than the old one. This explains why digital photography is significantly influencing the adoption of Smartphones which in turn affects analogue photography. The complexity of technology also affects the adoption of technology since users want to know whether understanding the new technology is more difficult than the old one. Invariably the author argued that the complexity of a technology hinders its adoption.

Relatively, Rogers (1983) further explains the concept behind the trialability of technology to mean the ability of users to try or experiment with a new idea to be able to develop an opinion about the idea. Rogers (1983) argued that people are more likely to adopt or reject a new technology if they have tried the idea and find out that the idea is more than the existing one. Furthermore, Rogers (1983) suggested that the faster adoption of technology results from the observations made about the use of the technology. This means the fast adoption of the Smartphone is facilitated by its ease of use and effectiveness.

2.15 Challenges Associated with Smartphone Camera Photography

Smartphone photography, an integral part of contemporary visual culture, has ushered in a new era of visual storytelling and communication. However, amidst its transformative impact, this burgeoning form of expression encounters multifaceted challenges that reverberate across technological, ethical, social, and environmental domains, shaping the landscape of visual culture dissemination. At the forefront of challenges in smartphone photography lie technological limitations. Despite remarkable advancements, smartphones inherently possess constraints, including smaller sensors and limited optical zoom, impacting their ability to produce professional-grade imagery (Smith, 2016; Edwards & Smith, 2018). These technological confines impede the depth and quality of visual narratives, underscoring the persistent gap between smartphone cameras and professional-grade equipment. Furthermore, the pervasive use of filters and editing tools raises ethical concerns, blurring the line between authenticity and manipulation. The prevalence of such enhancements fosters a climate where genuine documentation collides with digitally altered representations, impacting the credibility of visual narratives (Jenkins et al., 2019; Lin & Lu, 2020). This trend prompts critical reflections on the ethical boundaries and integrity of smartphone photography.

Privacy and ethical dilemmas loom large in the realm of smartphone photography. The ease of image capture and sharing accentuates concerns regarding inadvertent intrusion into personal space and unauthorized dissemination of private content (Eaton et al., 2017; Robinson & Brown, 2019). Balancing freedom of expression with respect for individual privacy remains an ongoing challenge. Cultural and societal implications emerge amidst the deluge of visual content flooding social media platforms. The abundance of images leads to visual noise, potentially obscuring

valuable content (Martinez et al., 2018; Kim & Han, 2021). Moreover, rapid image circulation can perpetuate stereotypes, reinforce biases, and foster misinterpretation, influencing societal perceptions and cultural representations.

The digital divide persists as a significant challenge, hindering equitable access to the technology required for smartphone photography. Socioeconomic factors create disparities in smartphone ownership and access to high-speed internet, impeding certain communities' participation in the visual culture discourse (Servon & Nelson, 2018; Whittaker & Richardson, 2020). Environmental concerns also cast a shadow over smartphone photography's proliferation. The rapid pace of technological innovation contributes to electronic waste generation, posing challenges to responsible disposal and sustainable technology usage (Mont et al., 2019; Hilty et al., 2021).

In navigating these challenges, a balanced approach encompassing technological innovation, ethical guidelines, cultural sensitivity, and equitable access to technology is imperative. Efforts toward responsible usage, ethical awareness, inclusive representation, and sustainable practices are fundamental in steering smartphone photography toward a more conscientious and harmonious integration within the ever-evolving tapestry of visual culture.

2.6 Meaning, Historical Development, and Types of Photography

This section explores the meaning of photography, its historical development, and its various types from a global perspective, with specific reference to the Ghanaian context.

2.6.1 Meaning of Photography

According to Spencer (1973), photography is the art, science, and practice of creating durable images by recording light or other electromagnetic radiation, either chemically using a light-sensitive material such as photographic film or electronically using an image sensor.

Photography as a discourse has defied a single-jacket definition. Loughnane (2011) affirms that the term "photography" provokes complex scholarly responses, thereby averting the need to consider the diverse roles and characteristics of the photograph itself when attempting to define photography. This suggests that in explaining photography, a critical focus should be placed on what a photograph entails. Amidst the dilemma associated with defining photography, some compelling explanations have been suggested by photography experts and scholars.

From a simple definitional point of view, photography is the process of capturing light and creating an image with devices such as cell phone cameras, digital cameras, and traditional analog cameras (Eden Gallery, 2021). In an attempt to explain photography, Ringsmuth (2017) separates the word into parts, indicating that "photo" comes from the Greek word meaning light, and the word "graph" is also derived from the Greek word meaning drawing. From that etymological background, "photography is essentially drawing with light" (Ringsmuth, 2017, p. 6). Ahlawat and Birla (2018, p. 2) concur that photography has "Greek roots $\phi\omicron\tau\omicron\varsigma$ (phôtos), genitive of $\phi\omicron\varsigma$ (phôs), light, and $\gamma\rho\alpha\phi\acute{\eta}$ (graphé) representation using lines or drawing, together meaning drawing with light". In furtherance, Asinas, Belela, Chavez, Cometa, and Escabel (2017) and Campbell (2005) corroborate that the meaning of photography is derived from its Greek etymological words, photos, which means light, and graphé, which also means drawing (Asinas, Belela, Chavez, Cometa &

Escabel, 2017; Campbell, 2005). Since the etymological meaning of photography is drawing, it is consistent when studies define it as a process of recording an image - a photograph - on light-sensitive film or, in the case of digital photography, via a digital electronic means to create an image that can be stored, shared, and reproduced (Ahlawat & Birla, 2018; Ringsmuth, 2017; Loughnane, 2011). However, according to Ahlawat and Birla (2018), whichever way photography is defined, it should simply be seen as the process of painting with light, which makes it both a form of art and a science. Ahlawat and Birla clarify that physics is considered a science because there are basic principles of physics that govern its validity, and as art because the beauty portrayed in photography is subjective and can mean different things to different people.

From both artistic and scientific perspectives, photography refers to the “application and practice of creating durable images by recording light or other electromagnetic radiation, either electronically using an image sensor or chemically using a light-sensitive material such as the photographic film” (Ahlawat & Birla, 2018, p. 2). The aforementioned holistic explanation offered by Ahlawat & Birla appears succinct, as Merriam-Webster (2005) corroborates that photography is defined as the art and science of producing images by the action of radiant energy and especially light on a sensitive surface such as film or an optical sensor (as cited in Asinas, Belela, Chavez, Cometa & Escabel, 2017). In the context of this study, photography is defined as the art of producing still and motion visuals (images) and audio-visuals (videos) through the use of specially designed digital cameras and smartphone cameras.

2.6.2 Historical Development of Photography

To trace the historical development of photography is to delve into its etymological origin and its trends of development. With Greek etymological roots, $\phi\acute{o}\tau\omicron\varsigma$ (phôtos), genitive of $\phi\acute{o}\varsigma$ (phôs), light, and $\gamma\rho\alpha\phi\acute{\eta}$ (graphé), which put together mean drawing with light (Ahlawat & Birla, 2018; Asinas et al., 2017; Ringsmuth, 2017; Campbell, 2005), photography has witnessed significant trends of development. Historically, after the prehistoric era of photographic activities, photography as an established discipline is said to have been invented in 1839 by Niepce and Daguerre (Forrester, 2020; Doble, 2016; Caraffa, 2011; Akbaba, 2009; Schenk, 2005; Tissandier, 1876; Watkins, 1949; Newhall, 1937). The 1839 invention of photography by Niepce and Daguerre requires the understanding of two scientific ideas, one concerning physics and optics, and the other involving chemistry (Forrester, 2020). The optical idea was that of the camera obscura (Latin phrase for dark room), which involved light reflected from an object passing through a pinhole in the side of a box or room and an upside-down image of the object appearing on the far inside wall of the box or room (Forrester, 2020; Doble, 2016; Tissandier, 1876).

Forrester adds that the camera obscura herein referred to has been known since classical times and has been used by Arab astronomers since the 9th century to look at the sun, stars, and the moon. The camera obscura was variously used from the 13th century to the 15th century, until the 16th century when a lens was used in place of the pinhole (Forrester, 2020; Doble, 2016; Tissandier, 1876). Fast forward through the 18th century, and it was established that silver nitrate and silver chloride, blackened on exposure to sunlight, through which Thomas Wedgewood and Humphrey Davy are said to have taken the first photographs in 1802, though all attempts to make them permanent proved futile (Forrester, 2020).

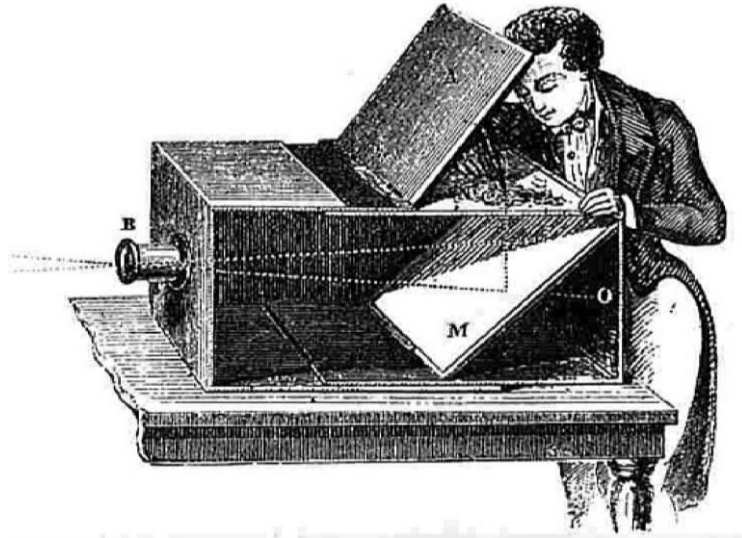


Figure 2.16: 18th-century camera obscura

(Source: Doble, 2016)

However, in 1827, a Frenchman, Joseph Niepce, discovered how to make a photograph permanent (Figure 3) through the use of a resin called bitumen of Judea to coat a glass plate and expose it to an image in a camera obscura, where when the light hit the plate, the resin hardened and turned white (Forrester, 2020; Tissandier, 1876). The unhardened areas were darkened with iodine vapor to contrast with the white parts, but the Niepce process has the grave limitation of an exposure time of many hours (Forrester, 2020; Tissandier, 1876).



Figure 2.17: First permanent photograph taken by Niepce with camera obscura known as 'View from the Window at Le Gras' (Source: Doble, 2016).

In 1839, a more practical method of producing a photograph with an exposure time of about 30 minutes was invented by Jacques Daguerre, but with some collaboration with Niepce (Forrester, 2020; Daniel, 2004; Tissandier, 1876). Daguerre used a silver plate coated with a layer of silver iodine, a compound very sensitive to light. When the plate was exposed in the camera, the picture appeared and was developed using mercury vapor, and the image was fixed with sodium hyposulfite. The process soon became known as the Daguerreotype. (Forrester, 2020, p. 3) At a meeting of the French Academy of Sciences in Paris in 1839, an official announcement was made about Daguerre's invention of photography known as the Daguerreotype, which had the potency forever to change the nature of visual representation in the world (Daniel, 2004; Tissandier, 1876).



Figure 2.18: A typical studio camera of the 19th century

(Source: Doble, 2016).

Forrester reveals that in the same year, 1839, a further photographic process was independently invented by William Talwhiche which was later improved upon in 1841. Talbot's process, which was eventually referred to as Talbotype, had the added advantage of producing as many positives as possible from one single negative, as a result, it was preferred over Daguerreotype, which produced only one photo for each exposure (Forrester, 2020). In 1851, Frederick Archer developed a photography process with less than 10 seconds of exposure time through the use of the wet collodion process, which superseded both the Daguerreotype and Talbotype processes (Forrester, 2020). Frederick Archer's collodion process involved using a glass plate for the negative image rather than paper, whereas liquid chemicals such as nitrocellulose and silver bromide were poured on the glass plate, which was placed in the camera and exposed while the glass plate was still wet. Although the exposure time was short, the photography process was not user-friendly as the photographers did not only get the chemicals over their hands, arms, and clothes; they also had to carry substantial equipment around to do their photography (Forrester, 2020).

To address the shortcomings associated with Frederick Archer's wet collodion process, dry plates, which did not require instant development and reduced the amount of equipment photographers had to take around, were first used in experiments around 1853 (Forrester, 2020). However, the long exposure times of the early dry plates made them rarely employed until Richard Maddox invented the gelatine-bromide dry plate in 1871, which quickly had a one-second exposure time (Forrester, 2020). A quick and inexpensive method for producing many prints from a single negative was developed between 1874 and 1880 (Forrester, 2020). Using gelatine-coated paper that had been sensitized with silver bromide - a substance that is

extremely sensitive to light part of the procedure. The method eliminated the need to expose the print paper to sunlight to create prints in a dark room (Forrester, 2020).

However, in 1888, George Eastman invented the Kodak camera. The Kodak camera employed a flexible roll of paper covered in a light-sensitive emulsion (Forrester, 2020; Doble, 2016). George Eastman's Kodak product introduced significant flexibility in the field of photography and witnessed increased public patronage (Forrester, 2020; Doble, 2016). In 1889, the George Eastman Kodak Company manufactured the first flexible transparent roll film, resulting in easier and less expensive film processing (Forrester, 2020; Doble, 2016). In 1900 a simplified Kodak roll film camera was produced labelled as the Brownie camera (Figure 5) which was easy to use (Doble, 2016).



Figure 2.19: The First Kodak Brownie camera of 1900

(Source: Doble, 2016).

Although experiments with color photography occurred in the late 19th century, Louis and Auguste Lumiere produced the first workable technique of color photography in 1907 (Forrester, 2020). Using glass photographic plates covered in red, green, and blue grains, which functioned as color filters to let certain light rays

through and reflect others, they created autochrome images. Also, smaller hand-held cameras were first introduced in the 1920s and 1930s, along with other color photography methods (Forrester, 2020; Doble, 2016). Specific reference could be made to the first successful introduction of the 35mm camera (Figure 6) by Leica in 1925 (Doble, 2016). The 35mm camera was compact and easy to carry and produced quality photos, as a result, it became the standard camera used for photography (Doble, 2016). Doble further reveals that in 1949, a company known as Contax produced the first 35mm pentaprism SLR (Figure 19), which allowed eye-level viewing. The small, easily hand-holdable SLR design became the camera of choice for photographers for the next fifty years (Doble, 2016).



Figure 2.20: 1925 35mm camera introduced by Leica (Doble, 2016)



Figure 2.21: 1949 Contax 35mm Pentaprism SLR (Doble, 2016).

Subsequently, the Casio QV-10 digital camera (Figure 8) was invented in 1995 (Doble, 2016) for photography. According to Doble, the Casio QV-10 was the first LCD-equipped digital camera that served as the viewfinder as well. The screen displayed a scene in real-time before the shot and the finished image instantaneously (Doble, 2016). It gained popularity right away despite having low resolution and being relatively expensive when compared to a film camera (Doble, 2016).



Figure 2.22: Casio QV-10 digital camera invented in 1995 (Doble, 2016).

Although photography has witnessed several trends of change and development from the very beginning, the invention of the digital camera for photography has survived to date. This could be compared with the era when 35mm and single-lens reflex cameras were fashionable photography gadgets. Today, photography is inundated with different versions of digital cameras. A good example is the Lytro light-field camera (Figure 9), which was recently introduced and uses state-of-the-art technology (Doble, 2016). With the Lytro light-field camera, Doble further reveals that instead of taking a picture, it photographs light-field data. In 2021, the German camera lens maker K|Lens announced the launch of the first light field lens in the world (WPC, 2021).

The first light field lens camera comes with 3D light field depth mapping techniques (Multiview Super-resolution algorithm) that precisely and sharply capture information regarding the intensity of light in a scene and light rays traveling in space, thereby contrasting with conventional cameras, which record only light intensity at various wavelengths (WPC, 2021). Also, the light field camera has a quite large lens and uses a system of mirrors to project nine slightly different perspectives of a scene onto the camera sensor simultaneously, thereby producing the best-ever quality photos and videos (WPC, 2021; Schneider, 2021).



A



B



C

Figure 2.23: (A, B & C): First Light Field Lens Camera, Invented by K|Lens (Schneider, 2021).

In this digital era, photography is not limited to the use of professionally designed digital cameras. The invention of smartphones has witnessed the incorporation of digital cameras of varied qualities, which are variously used for photography (McNamara, 2012). The digitalized world has transformed photography into a much more flexible activity that continues to profoundly impact society in many aspects (Doble, 2016). In science, images of everything from stars and galaxies to enlarged insects are captured using telescopes and microscopes, yielding precise and long-lasting images, just to mention the few impacts of photography on society (Doble, 2016). In Art, photography has witnessed significant development replacing the function of the portrait painter and generating a large number of other images previously created by artists (Doble, 2016). Because of this, art began to focus more on abstract imagery, which photography could not capture until recently (Doble, 2016). From social and cultural perspectives, photography is continuously deployed to meet the needs of people, families, and others in this contemporary era.

2.5. Chapter Summary

The literature review was conducted to make an insightful contribution to the study of smartphone photography in Ghana's visual culture. The literature identified relevant sources related to the study. After introducing the chapter, a comprehensive review of the theories underpinning the study was conducted. This review culminated in the theoretical framework of the study, based on the TAM, the democratization theory, and the phenomenology social theory.

The original technology acceptance model of Davis (1989) was modified with the introduction of other concepts such as security, along with perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use all being moderated by demographic characteristics and training workshops and how the smartphone photography on Ghana's visual culture.

The modification of the model was used to develop the conceptual framework for the study.

To be within the context of the study, a review was carried out on the concept of visual culture, an overview of Ghana's visual culture, meaning, historical development, and types of photography, smartphone photography, the historical development of smartphone photography, influence of social media on smartphone photography, the use of smartphones for social media, the role of smartphone photography in the dissemination of visual culture, the use of smartphones for social media, the impact of smartphone photography on global visual culture, smartphone transformation of visual culture, challenges associated with smartphone photography. The review was however reduced to consider the factors that affect the adoption of smartphone, smartphone photography, challenges associated with smartphone photography on professional photography, and the use of smartphone photography on Ghana's visual culture.

It is however, concluded that the literature on the adoption and smartphone camera photography and its impact on Ghana's visual culture is scanty and virtually non-existent. This has however created a huge gap in literature on the phenomenon. However, inference could be drawn from other technology acceptance models to understand the phenomenon.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The methodology defines the framework and seeks to present the research design used in ensuring the successful conduct of this research. This chapter outlines the research approach, design, population for the study, sampling design, the sample, primary and secondary data, data collection instruments, validation of instruments, administration of instruments, data collection procedures, and data analysis plan.

3.2 Research Approach

This study sought to empirically conduct a study of smartphone photography and in the same vein ascertain its impact on Ghana's visual culture. With the aforementioned nature of the study, the investigator employed a qualitative approach to the study whereby the research participants' lived experiences on the subject matter were contextually explored. Qualitative research is a field of investigation that cuts across disciplines and subject matters and was developed by anthropologists and sociologists. It is a style of inquiry that emphasizes participant observation and in-depth interviews that allow the researcher to acquire information first-hand. Qualitative research is open-ended, and exhaustive and seeks amorphous responses that reflect the person's opinions and sentiments on the subject. Rubin and Babbie (1997) maintain that the qualitative research paradigm also emphasizes the depth of understanding and the deeper meanings of human experience used to generate theoretically richer, albeit more tentative information.

Bryman and Bell (2007), however, describe the strength of the method as one that allows the researcher to collect data that provides an understanding and description of people's thoughts and personal experiences of the phenomena. This

method emphasizes that words and the data collected are in the form of narrations and it is concerned with qualities and non-numerical characteristics of the data.

The choice of qualitative research approach is in tandem with the assertion that qualitative research is an interpretative approach, which attempts to gain insight into the specific meanings and behaviors experienced in a certain social phenomenon through the subjective experiences of the participants (Creswell, 2013; Palmer & Bolderston, 2006). Similarly, Creswell (2009) postulates that qualitative research is an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The researcher therefore consistently builds a complex and holistic picture, analyses words, reports views of informants or practitioners, and restricts the study to its natural setting. As opined by Osuala (2005), it helps to gain an insider's view of the field. It has the advantage of generating awareness in terms of history, the capability of understanding trends in development in programs, and an approach to enquire about the course of occurrences; and enables the researcher to gain new insights, develop new concepts, and discover problems that exist within the phenomenon.

This study, therefore, adopted the interpretative modalities of the qualitative approach to textually reconstruct the worldview of the research participants regarding Smartphone photography in Ghana.

3.3 Research Design

The research design directs the researcher in planning and implementing the study in a way that is most likely to achieve the intended goal. It is a blueprint for conducting the study (Burns & Grove 1998). Since the study sought to explore a phenomenon associated with smartphone photography, a phenomenological design was employed.

The purpose of the phenomenological approach was to illuminate the specifics and to identify phenomena through how they are perceived by the actors in a situation (Lester, 1999; Hycner, 1985; Moustakas, 1994). Phenomenology is concerned with the study of experience from the standpoint of the individual, 'bracketing' taken-for-granted assumptions, and usual ways of perceiving. This normally translates into gathering 'deep' information and perceptions through inductive, qualitative methods such as interviews, discussions, and participant observation, and representing it from the perspective of the research participant(s). The common challenge with phenomenological research where Laser and Strauss (1967) reveal that participants drawn from a spread context and statistical sampling hampers reliability, Trustworthiness of data was assured in the context of this study, since statistical data was not heavily relied on considering its qualitative nature. If the sample size is increased a common misunderstanding is that the results should be statistically reliable. Ensuring that participants are drawn from a spread of contexts is critical for qualitative research, as highlighted by recent studies (Creswell & Poth, 2018). While statistical sampling in quantitative research focuses on reliability and often on differences between contexts, qualitative sampling aims to capture the diversity of experiences and perspectives (Patton, 2015). In qualitative research, it is essential to select participants from a wide range of contexts to capture diverse experiences and perspectives (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Unlike quantitative research, which uses statistical sampling to ensure reliability and compare differences across contexts, qualitative sampling focuses on the richness and variation of individual viewpoints (Patton, 2015).

However, once the study intends to draw responses from experiences and a smaller sample size it sits well within a phenomenological design. The historical aspect of the

study is positioned in the historical research design, entailing a vivid description of historical events with recourse to rigorous analysis and interpretation of gathered data which leads to sound conclusions (Schutt, 2009). The focus was to recreate the past through existing records and establish their relationships with the present which may inform the future. Selecting a historical research tool as one of the research designs was greatly informed by the first objective of the study which sought to give a historical account of smartphone photography in Ghana.

Additionally, the study employed a descriptive research design to systematically obtain information to describe in answering research objectives three, four, and five. Descriptive research design is a scientific method that involves observing and describing the behavior of a subject without influencing it in any way. Many scientific disciplines, especially social science, and psychology, use this method to obtain a general overview of a subject under investigation. Similarly, Hassan (2023) asserts that it aims to describe or document the characteristics, behaviors, attitudes, opinions, or perceptions of a group or population being studied and does not attempt to establish cause-and-effect relationships between variables or make predictions about future outcomes. Instead, it focuses on providing a detailed and accurate representation of the data collected, which can be useful for

3.4 Study Population

Generally, population refers to a large collection of individuals or non-human entities with one or more commonalities (Essel, 2017. Shukla, 2020). The non-human entities include objects, dwellings, and geographic areas (Koul, 1997 as cited in Onivehu, 2002). The population, on the other hand, refers to the set or group of all the units on which the findings of the research are to be applied or a set of units that possess variable characteristics under study and for which findings of the research can be

generalized. Population involves all the subjects that the researcher wants to study. It is 'any group of individuals that have one or more characteristics in common that are of interest to the researcher' (Best, 1981, p.8). The research population comprises all the individuals, groups, organizations, or other entities one seeks to understand and to whom or to which the study results may be generalized or inferred (Casteel & Bridier, 2021; Murphy, 2016). Casteel & Bridier explain that the research population creates boundaries for the scope of a study and provides environmental and context cues for the reader. Such boundaries place natural delimitations upon the research to afford the researcher the proper focus so as not to present a one-size-fits-all set of results (Casteel & Bridier, 2021).

The population for the study consisted of smartphone users, professional photographers, cultural custodians, Photography lecturers, Photography Trainers, The Centre for Cultural Experts, and Photography students in the western and Greater Accra Region of Ghana. These groups of respondents have the relevant information that shaped the outcome of the study. For instance, the experts in photography were the real professional practitioners who were in a better position to tell the history of smartphone photography in Ghana and also outline the challenges facing the profession as a result of smartphone photography. The smartphone users and cultural experts were better positioned to expose the effect of smartphone photography on Ghana's visual culture.

3.5 Target Population

According to Creswell (2012), a population is a group of individuals who have the same characteristics. Furi (2007) stated that the population is the whole subject that will be investigated in research. For this research, the target population encompasses the entire group the researcher is interested in within the Greater Accra and Western

Region. The target population includes professional and amateur photographers, artists, historians, activists of cultural activities, smartphone users, cultural custodians, Photography lecturers, Photography students, and Photography trainers.

3.6 Accessible Population

The accessible population is more narrowly defined due to practical considerations such as geographical location, time constraints, and resource limitations (Draugalis, Coons, & Plaza, 2008). As regards the accessible population for the research topic under study, it refers to the specific portion of the target population that the researcher could study or realistically, reach and collect data from both Accra and Sekondi/Takoradi Metropolis. In other words, the accessible population was a section of the broader population associated with smartphone photography and Ghanaian culture. They included smartphone users, cultural custodians, Photography Lecturers, Photography Students, Professional photographers, and Photography Trainers. They were 25 in number.

3.7 Sample and Sampling Techniques/Procedure

The sample is the set of units selected to represent the population of interest, the sampling technique entails a strategic way of selecting a given number of subjects from a defined population as representative of that population (Gravetter & Wallnau, 2017; as cited in Casteel & Bridier, 2021).

The study employed two sampling techniques (Purposive and Simple random) deployed to arrive at a suitable sample size for data gathering. A simple random sampling technique was employed to sample Ten (10) smartphone users. The purposive (expert) sampling technique was used to select two (2) cultural custodians, three (3) photography Lecturers, three (3) Professional Photographers, Three (3)

Photography students, three (3) Photography Trainers, and the Centre for National Culture (1). In all a total of twenty-five (25) respondents were sampled for the study.

Smartphone (With Camera) Users	10
Cultural Custodians	2
Photography Lecturers	3
Photography Students	3
Professional Photographers	3
Photography Trainers	3
The Centre for National Culture	1
Total	25

A homogenous sampling technique was used to sample respondents for the professional photographers' category because they had similar characteristics.

3.6 Criteria for Selection

The researcher employed a benchmark for selecting participants for the study. The criteria for selecting professional photographers were based on 20 (twenty) years of experience in the field of professional photography practice. Photographers whose experience has taken them across the country and beyond were taken into consideration. The experts in the field were similarly considered within the same criteria. The segment dedicated to Photography Trainers plays a pivotal role in shaping the future of photography education and practice within Ghana. Comprised of seasoned professionals and educators, this cohort represents the custodians of

knowledge and skill transmission in the realm of photography. These trainers possess a wealth of experience, expertise, and a passion for nurturing photographers, equipping them with technical prowess and a deeper understanding of visual storytelling. Their inclusion offers insights into how these trainers navigate the evolving technological landscape, integrating traditional teachings with contemporary tools, thus fostering a new generation of photographers who encapsulate innovation while preserving the richness of Ghana's visual heritage. Their perspectives shed light on the challenges, advancements, and opportunities that define the educational landscape and professional development within the realm of photography in Ghana. Selecting smartphone users was based on users of smartphones with cameras who have been actively practicing the act of photography with their smartphones for ten years.

The criteria for selecting the respondents were anchored on the reason that this category of respondents was best positioned to deliver useful information that was capable of shaping the outcome of the study.

3.7 Data Collection Instruments

The study adopted a mixed instrumentation to gather data. Tracing the historical antecedents of smartphone photography in Ghana required the use of interviews to allow respondents to narrate their versions of the smartphone story. Document review and photography were also used to gather relevant information (archival documents and photographs) to shape the outcome of the study. Observation complemented other data sources like interviews and document reviews, helping to triangulate findings and ensure a holistic understanding of smartphone photography's impact on Ghanaian visual culture.

Both text-based and non-textual primary and secondary data were collected for the study. Primary data are original eyewitness accounts and documents. In other words, it is the first-hand record of events or situations in a textual and non-textual form, such as minutes of meetings, law reports, diaries, autobiographies, and photographs. As a fertile area, primary data was the main source of data used and supplemented with secondary data.

3.7.1 Observation

Observation was employed in this study as a qualitative data collection instrument to gain a deeper understanding of how individuals interact with smartphone photography in everyday Ghanaian life. This non-intrusive technique allowed the researcher to systematically watch, document, and interpret real-time behaviors, practices, and environments in which smartphone photography is embedded.

The study employed observation as one of the means of data collection. Observation, as the name implies, is a way of collecting data through observation. This data collection method is classified as a participatory study because the researcher has to immerse herself in the setting where her respondents are while taking notes and/or recording (Dudovskiy, 2023). The observation data collection method may involve watching, listening, reading, touching, and recording behavior and characteristics of phenomena.

The process of observation has to do with the active acquisition of information from a primary source and the term may also refer to any data collected during the scientific activity. Observations can be qualitative, that is, only the absence or presence of experiences is noted, or quantitative if a numerical value is attached to the observed phenomenon by counting or measuring. Whenever direct observation is

possible it is the preferable method to use and is probably the most common and the simplest method of data collection which does not require much technical knowledge (Mwaikusa, 2022). The researchers, adopting this method, attempt to understand behavior and societies by getting to know the persons involved and their values, rituals, symbols, beliefs, and emotions.

The study employed observation both obtrusive and unobtrusive but much emphasis was placed on the unobtrusive to gather data for the study. The study employed both obtrusive and unobtrusive observation methods, with greater emphasis placed on unobtrusive observation to ensure participants natural behaviour was captured without interference. The researcher blended into public and communal settings such as festivals, marketplaces, educational institutions, and cultural events, quietly observing and taking detailed field notes on how individuals used smartphone cameras in real time. No direct engagement with participants occurred during these sessions. The goal was to document authentic behaviors, such as photo-taking practices, social interactions around photography, image-sharing habits, and engagement with cultural symbols, without influencing participants' actions or making them self-conscious. The use of observation as a data collection tool offered the researcher a more distinct way of collecting data and did not rely on what people say they do, or what they say they think. It is more direct than that. Instead, it draws on the direct evidence of the eye to witness events first-hand. It is a more natural way of gathering data. This reduced the respondents' social reactant effect and aided in examining the impact of smartphone photography on Ghana's visual culture. Unobtrusive observation belongs to the epistemological interpretivism theory that supports seeking the subjective meaning of social action and behaviors (Webb, Campbell, Schwartz & Sechrest, 2000; Bryman, 2004; Marrelli, 2007). In the context

of the study, “subjective meaning of social action and behaviors” connotes individuals use smartphone photography to express personal and cultural identities. Rooted in interpretivism (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005), it emphasizes understanding actions through participants' lived experiences, values, and symbolic meanings (Creswell, 2013; Patton, 2015).

3.7.2 Interviews

The semi-structured interviews enabled the respondents to share their lived experiences in photography regarding the demands of the research questions. Open-ended questions were crafted to allow the respondents to narrate their stories. Follow-up questions meant to seek further clarification of the told lived stories were posed during the interview sessions. Specifically, the semi-structured interviews explored respondents' personal experiences and perspectives on smartphone photography, focusing on its everyday use, impact on Ghanaian visual culture, evolving practices, challenges for professionals, and image sharing within communities. Open-ended and follow-up questions enabled participants to freely narrate and clarify their views on these key themes. The researcher used an informed consent form to consider the ethical issues in conducting the study. The identities of respondents were concealed. With the consent of the respondents, the interviews were audio-taped. After the data was transcribed by the researcher, it was read to the respondents to verify the content. The researcher paid a visit to a cultural expert and an expert in photography for face-to-face interviews.

3.7.3 Photography

Photography is a useful data collection instrument (Magnusson, 2011) used to present data in visual images (Barbour, 2014). This includes film, video, painting, drawing, collage, sculpture, artwork, graffiti, advertising, and cartoons. Photography, largely

considered a visual methodology, is a new and novel approach to qualitative research derived from traditional ethnography methods used in anthropology and sociology and has witnessed recent enthusiasm for its use in qualitative research (Barbour, 2014). Photography adds value to already existing methods of data collection instruments by adding more grounded evidence and a broader dimension of understanding the data (Balmer, Griffiths, & Dunn, 2015). Photography helps to capture rich multidimensional data (Mah, 2015) and adds valuable insights into the everyday worlds of participants (Barbour, 2014).

Edner, Andersson, Magnusson, and Lutzen (2009) have shown that using these methods can be a particularly effective way of understanding phenomena, add additional layers of meaning to the data, and are a viable method for qualitative research. Deep, rich, and interesting data emerge from this method, potentially creating more understanding and knowledge about the subject under investigation.

Therefore, considering the need for pictorial evidence to support the data elicited through other means of data collection, the study adopted photography to elicit data on important information that contributed to shaping the focus of the study.

3.7.4 Document Review

Document review served as one of the qualitative instruments employed to enrich the triangulation of data collection in this study. It involved the systematic examination and interpretation of both primary and secondary textual materials relevant to the research objectives. Document review, as defined by Denzin and Lincoln (2011), is a systematic procedure for evaluating printed and electronic materials to extract meaningful data that contribute to a study's empirical foundation. In qualitative

inquiry, it offers contextual insights that complement data drawn from interviews, observations, and visual materials.

In this study, document review was used to examine selected archival and contemporary records that reflect the historical development, usage, and impact of smartphone photography within Ghana's visual landscape. These included policy documents, photographic archives, social media records, photographic exhibition catalogues, and relevant literature published by cultural institutions, professional associations, and governmental bodies. The review of these documents served three main purposes: To provide historical grounding for understanding the evolution of photography in Ghana and the transition from analog to digital practices. Secondly, to validate and cross-reference participants' narratives, especially those related to the emergence of smartphone photography in cultural, professional, and educational contexts. Finally, to uncover institutional and policy-level discourses surrounding visual media production, copyright, and the digital economy of photography. This process enabled the researcher to identify patterns, themes, and contradictions within the photographic ecosystem, offering an additional lens through which to interpret the data elicited from human participants. The reviewed documents were selected based on their relevance to the study's thematic focus and their potential to illuminate both the historical trajectories and contemporary shifts in photographic practice.

As Bryman (2016) notes, document review can compensate for certain limitations of other data collection methods by offering unobtrusive insights that are less prone to participant bias. Similarly, Creswell (2013) affirms that document analysis enhances the credibility and comprehensiveness of qualitative studies, particularly when used in tandem with interviews and observation. In this research, it helped contextualize visual trends, frame cultural transitions, and support the researcher's interpretative

narrative of the synergy between smartphone and DSLR technologies. Through this process, the study drew from the existing body of visual and textual evidence to build a more holistic account of the shifting dynamics within Ghana's professional photography landscape.

3.8 Data Analysis Plan

To analyze the collected data, this study utilized a combination of descriptive-analytical and thematic analysis approaches. This ensured a comprehensive examination of both the explicit content and the underlying patterns within the data.

The qualitative data, including transcribed interviews, were systematically examined using the six-step thematic analysis framework established by Braun and Clarke (2006). The process began with immersing ourselves in the data to gain familiarity, followed by generating initial codes. These codes were then grouped into potential themes, which were rigorously reviewed and refined to ensure they accurately represented the dataset. Finally, each theme was clearly defined and named before being incorporated into the research narrative. Complementing this, a descriptive-analytical approach was employed to provide detailed, coherent descriptions of the findings. This involved presenting the data in both textual and visual formats to facilitate a holistic understanding of the study's outcomes. This integrated methodological process ensured the data was accurately processed, meaningfully interpreted, and rigorously validated, resulting in findings that are reliable and firmly grounded in the participants' own perspectives.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

Every research is guided by rules and regulations. Ethics deals with moral problems related to the practice of research. Bos (2020), as cited in Mirza, Bellalem & Mirza (2023), Ethics is an inquiry into right and wrong, and what researchers ought to do. The focus is on the responsibilities of researchers towards the rights and interests of their participants, their audience, their academic community, and their Society (Cameron et al., 1994; Judd et al., 1991; British Educational Research Association BERA, 2004, 2018). Researchers must usually refer to some ethical guidelines to ensure they have adhered to the principles of good research practice (Judd et al., 1991).

Given that ethical considerations are of keen importance to a study of this nature, the researcher served all potential research participants with an official introductory letter as well as informed consent forms to pave the way for entry into the study area for the collection of data. This was done in addition to respect for the confidentiality and anonymity of respondents through the use of pseudonyms to replace the real names of the participants (Akaranga & Makau, 2016; Arifin, 2008).

3.10 Ensuring Trustworthiness

Qualitative research is trustworthy when it accurately represents the experiences of the participants. To ensure that the data collected remained trustworthy during and after collection, the researcher discussed the data collection instruments with the supervisors before it was administered. The suggestions from the supervisors helped the researcher to modify the data collection instruments. Not to skew the interpretation given by the participants, the researcher maintained a degree of neutrality in the findings. Four criteria proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985) were

employed to measure the trustworthiness of the quality data: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

3.10.1 Credibility

This qualitative study sought to identify an authentic understanding of a specific phenomenon (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982). Thus, the credibility of the human experience, explained in categories, reflects an assurance that the phenomenon exists. Triangulation, as noted by Lincoln and Guba (1985), is a validity measure that makes use of different sources, theories, and methods to analyse the same information. In this study, the use of triangulation was demonstrated by using interview guides and observation checklists as essential data collection instruments. To further enhance the reliability/authenticity of the study, the researcher once again carried out member checking. Member checking in the study refers to an examination of interpretations, categories, and conclusions with the stakeholder groups from which data were originally collected. These processes were carried out to ensure clarity and accuracy while collecting qualitative data.

3.10.2 Transferability

Transferability is established by providing readers with evidence that the research study's findings could apply to other contexts, situations, times, and populations (Bhattacharjee, 2012; Kusi, 2012). The researcher achieved this in his study by extensively and thoroughly describing the process that was adopted for others to follow and replicate. Thus, the researcher kept all relevant information and documents regarding the study. Again, the research context and methodological processes were provided. These could enable other researchers to apply the findings of this study to similar settings of their choice, thereby regarding the findings in this

study as answers in their chosen context. Furthermore, there was adequate background information about the respondents and the research context and setting that allowed others to assess how transferable the findings are. The researcher kept accurate records of all the activities while carrying out the study. These include the raw data (transcripts of the interviews) as well as details of the data analysis.

3.10.3 Dependability

Dependability corresponds to the reliability of findings in qualitative research (Merriam & Associates, as cited in Kusi, 2012). Guba and Lincoln (1985) admit that there could be no credibility without dependability in qualitative research. Also, it is concerned with whether we would obtain the same results if we could observe the same thing twice (Trochim & Donnelly, 2006). Dependability in this study was related to consistency, and it was ensured by making sure that the researcher checked whether the analysis process was in line with accepted standards for the design of the study. Extensive and detailed evidence of the process in which the research is conducted was documented so that others can replicate and ascertain the level of dependability. To ensure dependability, interpretive researchers must provide adequate details about their phenomenon of interest and the social context in which it is embedded to allow readers to independently authenticate their interpretive inferences (Bhattacharjee, 2012).

In this study, dependability was established through the establishment of appropriate inquiry decisions. This included a review of interviewer bias to resist early closure and, at the same time, prevent the provision of unreliable data due to boredom on the part of the respondents because of prolonged interview sessions. In addition, information from the literature assisted the researcher in developing questions that elicit appropriate responses to answer the research questions that are

formulated to guide the study. There was a systematic data collection procedure that reached the point of saturation. The extensive documentation of the data (transcriptions of interview narratives), methods, and decisions in the memo are steps in proving the dependability of the data. Thesis supervisors assessed the work to find out whether or not the findings, interpretations, and conclusions were supported by the data.

3.10.4 Confirmability

Trochim and Donnelly (2006) declare that confirmability means the degree to which the results could be confirmed or corroborated by others. Also, confirmability refers to the extent to which the findings reported in interpretive research can be independently confirmed by others, typically, participants. This is similar to the notion of objectivity in functionalistic research. Since interpretive research rejects the notion of an objective reality, confirmability is demonstrated in terms of “inter-subjectivity”, that is, if the study’s participants agree with the inferences derived by the researcher. To establish confirmability, the researcher, after coding and transcribing the audiotapes, interview questions, and all other relevant information and documents regarding the study, was given back to the participants to confirm the responses. The researcher effected changes where necessary and gave the transcribed data back to the participants again for them to authenticate the inferences derived by the researcher. The researcher then took the final transcribed data from the participants as a true record of what the respondents factually provided. Confirmability was also achieved through neutrality. The purpose of the above was to ensure that the interpretation of the data would not be based on the researcher's particular preferences and viewpoints but rather to be fully grounded in the data collected.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS, ANALYSIS, AND DISCUSSIONS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter marks the pivotal stage in unveiling the essence of the gathered information, delving into the distinctions, and deriving valuable insights. It presents a descriptive analysis of interviews from selected groups of respondents, with each contributing a unique insight and attempting to illuminate the interplay of thoughts, perceptions, and experiences that collectively shape the narrative of photography in diverse contexts. Among them, cultural custodians, photography students, and photography lecturers, entrusted with imparting knowledge and shaping future talents; photography trainers, bridging the gap between theory and practice; professionals, entrenched in the industry's ever-evolving landscape; and smartphone users, representing the integration of photography into daily life. A total of twenty-five (25) respondents were sampled for the study.

4.1 Prevalence and Patterns of Smartphone Photography in Ghana

The first version of a smartphone was invented in 1992 by International Business Machines Corporation. Called the Simon Personal Communicator (or just IBM Simon), it was made available for purchase in 1994 and sold by the tens of thousands. IBM Simon distinguished itself from previous generations of cell phones with features like the ability to send and receive emails and a touch screen. It also came with built-in programs including Calendar, Address book, Appointment scheduler, Standard and predictive stylus input keyboards, electronic notepad, and handwritten annotations. The design, tools, and performance capabilities of smartphones have evolved massively over the years; however, many of the same features found in the

IBM Simon and other early models are now standard in today's smartphones. In Ghana, Mobitel, now Tigo, a telecommunications firm owned by Millicom Ghana Limited, first appeared in 1992, and approximately 19,000 Ghanaians were devoted to their network at that time. After six years, the figure increased to 43,000, and by mid-1999, it had reached 68,000 due to the entry of additional network providers into the telecommunications industry. The increase persisted until 2012, when it was estimated that 24.4 million people in Ghana were using smartphones (Addo, 2013; Eto, 2012; Ofosu-Asare, 2011; Dzukey, 2015).

Ghana's history and acceptance of smartphones mostly follow international patterns; however, certain distinctive features are influenced by global considerations. In Ghana, smartphones dominated the mobile device market in the early 2000s. These phones had little functionality; therefore, their main uses were calls and simple texting. But as technology developed, smartphones started to appear. The year 2007 saw the release of the first iPhone and the beginning of the smartphone age; 2014 saw the release of the first smartphones with multiple cameras in the previous ten years (Lumas, 2023; Montgomery & Mingis, 2022; Peidis, 2021; Thomson, 2019). Even though the first digital camera was created in 1970, the technology wasn't extensively used until the late 1990s and early 2000s, since the device wasn't lightweight, inexpensive, or able to produce images with enough resolution. In fact, until 2003, film cameras were still more popular than digital ones (Cook, 2004).

In Ghana, smartphones such as Blackberry, Nokia Symbian, and early Android models began to become popular. Beyond just making and receiving calls, these gadgets also allowed users to browse the internet, use apps, handle emails, and take photographs.



Figure 4.1 First Blackberry Smartphone -BlackBerry 5810

Source: (German, 2013)



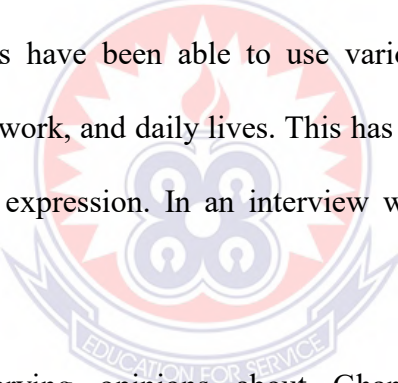
Figure 4.2 Nokia's first Smartphone, the Nokia 9120 Communicator.

Source: (Foresman, 2010)

Smartphone photography gained significant attention in the late 2000s, with several factors contributing to a notable growth in smartphone accessibility in the mid-2010s. During this time, several businesses began to provide smartphones at lower prices, increasing their accessibility and camera quality to a wider range of Ghanaians. In an interview with respondent F. Opoku, it was revealed that within the mid-2000s the camera became a key component of the smartphone which paved the way for people to take pictures by themselves and companies such as Blackberry,

Samsung, and Nokia converted simple call phones into camera-oriented devices (F. Opoku, personal communication, May 16, 2023).

Smartphone Camera was overwhelmingly embraced due to their convenience and accessibility of capturing moments using their phones, hence leading to a vibrant smartphone photography culture. The quality of mobile device cameras greatly increased in the 2010s as a result of developments in camera technology worldwide. Higher-quality photographs were made possible by better lenses, better sensors, more megapixels, and better software. The proliferation of social media platforms such as Instagram, Snapchat, and Facebook during this era led to an increased need for improved mobile photography experiences. Since the advent of smartphone photography, Ghanaians have been able to use various social media platforms to exhibit their culture, artwork, and daily lives. This has made smartphone photography a medium for creative expression. In an interview with respondent S. Mensah, he stated that:



People had varying opinions about Ghana's history with smartphone photography. When smartphones with cameras first became popular, there was considerable doubt about their ability to take high-quality pictures. Many questioned the capabilities of smartphone cameras and thought dedicated cameras were better. But as smartphone camera technology advanced, opinions shifted. Ghanaians adopted smartphone photography over time as they realized how accessible and convenient it was. Individuals began experimenting with utilizing their smartphones to take pictures of daily objects, the outdoors, cultural events, and landscapes (S. Mensah, personal communication, February 23, 2023).

The statement from the respondent confirms the assertion of (Kindberg and Associates, 2004; Davis and House, 2005) that the smartphone camera, nonetheless,

was mostly utilized for spontaneous moments in daily life, and what distinguished it from other photography equipment was its capacity to move photos from one device to another. Smartphone cameras have started to match some entry-level digital cameras in terms of quality. Ghana saw a boom in smartphone photography as a result of this advancement. People adopted smartphone photography as a way to capture moments since it was convenient and accessible, and this resulted in a thriving smartphone photography culture. Smartphones combine the ability to report events as they happen with the built-in digital camera functionality of a cell phone. This was either impossible or less common a while ago, but current social and technological forces are permanently altering photojournalists' roles.

Often, as news breaks, the reporters of the events are members of the general public who just happen to be on the spot and supply timely images (Prakel, 2010). The evolution of smartphones and their integration with photography has woven an intricate narrative within the fabric of Ghanaian society. The historical trajectory of smartphones and their transformative impact on the art and practice of photography within the Ghanaian context. Like many other people worldwide, Ghanaians have embraced the use of smartphone photography for narrative, self-expression, and life documentation. The evolution of smartphone photography in Ghana has shaped the nation's visual culture and narrative in addition to reflecting technology improvements and people's evolving methods of capturing and sharing moments.

The study revealed that the widespread availability of smartphones since the mid-2000s, particularly after 2010, has led to a surge in photography activity. Smartphone cameras are now a standard feature, and nearly every user engages in photography, be it for social sharing, personal memory, or creative expression. The culture of taking

and instantly sharing photos via platforms like WhatsApp, Facebook, TikTok, and Instagram is now deeply embedded in both urban and rural lifestyles.

4.1.1 Patterns of Smartphone Photography in Ghana

The analysis of the findings from interviews and observations indicates that smartphone photography in Ghana reflects a complex interplay of cultural, economic, generational, and spatial patterns. These patterns are deeply embedded in the everyday lives of users and reveal how mobile photography has evolved from a functional communication tool into a cultural phenomenon that shapes self-representation, business practices, and social expression.

4.2.1 Cultural and Content-Based Patterns

One of the most striking patterns emerging from the data is the content that users frequently capture using their smartphones. Ghanaian users often photograph everyday life, fashion, food, religious and social events, festivals such as Chale Wote, and natural landscapes. These visual themes serve as cultural documentation and self-expression. Photography is no longer limited to formal or staged occasions; instead, the smartphone has become an extension of daily observation and storytelling.

A participant noted:

“I take pictures of everything – my food, my outfits, my makeup, even the roadside hawker. It’s like, everything around me is part of the story I’m telling.” (Participant A, Personal Interview, April 2023).

This statement illustrates how smartphone photography is used to construct and communicate personal narratives. The ability to document one’s life visually has democratized storytelling in Ghana, aligning with the views of Hjorth and Pink

(2014), who argue that mobile photography transforms everyday moments into significant visual artifacts, allowing users to reframe their social realities. Festivals also present important photographic opportunities. Participants highlighted the importance of visually preserving cultural heritage, not just for personal memories but for global audiences on platforms like Instagram and Facebook as shown in the picture below in figure 4.1.



Figure 4.1 Smartphone Camera used to capture cultural display

Source: (Researcher's fieldwork, 2025)

These shared images become part of Ghana's digital cultural archive, supporting the claim by Adegaju and Oyeboade (2015) that mobile technology has become a medium through which African traditions are preserved and reinterpreted.

4.2.2 Economic and Purpose-Oriented Patterns.

The economic utility of smartphone photography is another dominant pattern in the findings. Participants frequently use smartphone photography for online branding, business promotion, and digital entrepreneurship. Vendors, tailors, makeup artists, and food sellers all use smartphone cameras to take product shots, build personal brands,

and reach wider audiences through platforms like WhatsApp Business, TikTok, and Instagram. A participant explained:

“I don’t have money to hire a photographer all the time. My phone does everything. I take pictures of my new styles and post them. That’s how people know I’m good.” (Participant B, Personal Interview, May 2023)

This quote underscores the role of smartphones as economic tools. For many informal sector workers, smartphone photography provides affordable access to visual marketing. The images taken serve as both evidence of work and promotional material, aligning with the argument made by Horst and Miller (2012), who describe mobile phones as socio-economic enablers in developing contexts.

Furthermore, younger Ghanaians are leveraging smartphone photography for influencing and content creation, building digital brands that generate income through partnerships, advertisements, or services. These entrepreneurial uses demonstrate a shift in how photography is perceived, not just as art, but as a strategic economic asset. According to Okon and Adedoyin (2020), smartphone photography on social media has enabled African youth to become digital entrepreneurs, promoting everything from fashion to music and lifestyle.

The use of visual content as a tool for activism and advocacy also emerged during the interviews. Social movements, environmental campaigns, and civic education efforts often begin with a single viral image captured by a smartphone user. Smartphone photography thus serves multiple purposes, expanding its role beyond leisure to advocacy and influence.

4.2.3 Generational and Behavioral Patterns

Generational differences emerged as a significant theme. The youth, particularly those between 18 and 35, are the most active demographic in smartphone photography. They are more likely to use image-editing apps, filters, and platforms like Snapchat and Instagram Stories to enhance and share their photos. Their engagement is deliberate, curated, and often aligned with identity construction and peer validation. Older generations, however, tend to use smartphone photography more conservatively, primarily for memory preservation, documentation of family events, or communication through platforms like WhatsApp. Their photographic habits are more functional than expressive.

One respondent intimated:

“I take pictures at funerals or when we visit family. I send them to my sister in the UK on WhatsApp. I don’t know how to use Instagram or all those fancy apps.” (Participant C, Personal Interview, April 2023)

This illustrates the generational digital divide, where younger users see smartphone photography as a social and creative outlet, while older users approach it from a utilitarian perspective. This behavioral pattern supports findings from Livingstone and Haddon (2009), who emphasize the role of age in determining how digital technologies are adopted and utilized.

Despite the generational gap, both groups recognize the value of visual documentation, though the interpretation and intent differ. The younger demographic focuses on aesthetics, reach, and digital performance, whereas the older group values emotional connection, memory, and private sharing.

4.2.4 Spatial and Technological Patterns

The respondents revealed that Spatially, there exists a distinction between urban and rural smartphone photography practices. In urban areas like Accra and Takoradi, photography is more dynamic and experimental, influenced by better internet connectivity, availability of tech accessories, and exposure to global digital trends. Participants frequently referenced using ring lights, tripods, editing apps, and scheduling content for social media. These users are not only creating content but are also aware of its strategic timing and audience targeting. Urban youth especially understand how photography can shape public perception and engagement.

In contrast, rural areas exhibit slower uptake but a growing interest in smartphone photography. The increasing affordability of entry-level smartphones and expanding network coverage are enabling rural users to participate more actively in digital visual culture. However, photography in these areas is still largely functional, capturing ceremonies, community events, and agricultural activities for sharing or recordkeeping.

Another participant intimated:

“Before, we didn't care about taking pictures. But now, my students and I use our phones to take pictures during clean-up days, school plays, and farming lessons. We send them to the district office or post them on the school's Facebook page.” (Participant D, Personal Interview, March 2023)

This statement reflects the shifting role of photography in rural life. What was once a luxury has become a tool for documentation and community engagement. Research by Duncombe (2012) confirms that mobile technology adoption in rural Africa often starts with communication but gradually incorporates other uses such as documentation, entertainment, and knowledge sharing. Moreover, in both rural and

urban contexts, smartphones serve as bridges between local realities and global platforms. The ability to instantly share images from a village gathering or street fashion event with audiences across the globe represents a significant spatial reconfiguration of visibility and participation.

4.2.5 Aesthetic and Creative Trends

An emerging pattern is the growing concern with aesthetics and image quality among Ghanaian smartphone users. Participants noted the increasing desire to improve their visual output through filters, framing techniques, angles, and lighting. This creative engagement is a direct result of exposure to global standards on platforms like Instagram and YouTube tutorials.

A participant noted:

“When I post a photo, I want it to look professional, even if I used my phone. I watch tutorials, I use VSCO, Snapseed, all those apps. You don’t need a camera to create good photos anymore.” (Participant E, Personal Interview, May 2023)

This suggests that smartphone photography is not just about accessibility but also about aspiration. Users seek to produce content that rivals professional standards, using mobile tools alone. This aligns with Miller and Sinanan (2014), who assert that the camera phone is not only a tool for visual recording but also a site of aesthetic experimentation and identity crafting. The emphasis on visual quality also intersects with social pressure and digital performance. Users often delete and retake multiple shots before posting a single image, reflecting a curated visual culture where the image must align with one’s digital persona.

4.2.6 Platform-Specific Usage

Another key behavioral pattern is the platform-specific use of smartphone photography. WhatsApp is commonly used for family and community-based sharing, Instagram for aesthetic and brand-oriented photos, Facebook for general life updates, and TikTok for video/photo storytelling hybrids. Each platform shapes the kind of photography produced. For instance, photos for Instagram are usually edited and stylized, while WhatsApp photos tend to be unfiltered and event-based. This reflects the findings of Marwick (2013), who notes that social media platforms each come with their norms, expectations, and photographic conventions.

To complement interview data and better understand the actual practices surrounding the pattern of smartphone photography in Ghana, the study also employed non-participant observation in both urban and rural settings. A cursory look at some participants revealed that smartphone use for photography was not limited to intentional documentation but had become embedded in routine behavior ranging from selfies and group photos to spontaneous captures of cultural artifacts and social moments. For instance, at public events such as the Chale Wote Street Art Festival in Accra (*as shown in figure 4.2 below*) and church conventions at Takoradi, participants were frequently seen taking pictures with their smartphones, often adjusting their poses, lighting, and backgrounds multiple times before capturing the final image. This behavior confirms the increasing normalization and aesthetic consciousness surrounding smartphone photography. These findings demonstrated that the use of smartphones for photography was not just restricted to purposeful documenting but had permeated everyday activities, ranging from group shots and selfies to impromptu recordings of social events and cultural items.



Figure 4.2 A scene at the Accra Charlewote festival, where some participants are freely taking pictures with smartphones
Source (Researcher's Fieldwork, 2024)

As shown in the figure 4.2 above, people were regularly observed using their iPhones to take pictures at public events like the Chale Wote Street Art Festival. They would typically alter their backgrounds, lighting, and stances several times before snapping the final picture. This conduct supports the growing aesthetic awareness and acceptance of smartphone photography. It was also observed that people frequently took breaks during activities to record or share their surroundings on social media sites like Instagram, Snapchat, and WhatsApp. The predominance of smartphone photography as a daily cultural practice was validated by this empirical evidence, which corroborated interview descriptions of frequent image-taking and sharing habits. The researcher also observed how some users enhanced their photos by adding accessories to their cellphones, such as tripods, clip-on lenses, or tiny ring lights. These observed activities show how users of smartphones are improving their visual output in addition to the increasing sophistication of mobile shooting methods.

4.2 Influence of Social Media on Visual Culture

Findings from the study indicate that social media has been profoundly influenced by the proliferation of smartphone photography in Ghana. Data gathered from participants reveal that social networking platforms, powered by the widespread accessibility of internet-enabled smartphones, have evolved into dominant visual communication ecosystems within the Ghanaian sociocultural landscape. This development has redefined how individuals create, share, and consume visual content, signalling a paradigm shift from traditional visual culture to one that is digitally mediated and participatory in nature. The enhancement of smartphone camera technologies has played a pivotal role in this transformation, as noted in prior studies (Multisilta & Milrad, 2009; Okabe, 2004). The integration of advanced optical features, artificial intelligence, and editing applications has positioned smartphones not only as communication devices but also as creative tools for visual expression.

The ubiquity of platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, Flickr, Instagram, TikTok, and WhatsApp has enabled instantaneous sharing of visual imagery and videos, thereby accelerating the circulation of visual narratives across diverse social strata. Through these media, friends, family members, and professional networks are able to exchange visual experiences that transcend physical distance and temporal constraints. Okabe and Ito (2009), as cited in Multisilta and Milrad (2009), observed that camera-phone photography contributes to the “visual newsworthiness” of the internet—transforming everyday users into active producers of visual content. This phenomenon is not only reshaping how stories are told but also redefining authorship and authenticity in contemporary communication spaces.

The study further established that the rise of smartphone photography has engendered a culture of instant sharing and consumption. This immediacy has, in turn, fostered a

growing demand for high-quality, aesthetically compelling imagery. In response, smartphone manufacturers have continuously upgraded their devices, incorporating features such as multi-lens systems, AI-assisted image correction, and high-dynamic-range (HDR) sensors to meet the creative aspirations of users. Moreover, social media platforms have evolved into interactive learning spaces where users exchange photography and editing techniques. This democratisation of photographic practice has blurred the boundaries between amateur and professional production, cultivating a vibrant, peer-driven learning community that thrives on collaboration, feedback, and innovation. A participant, a smartphone photography enthusiast, remarked:

“Social media has changed the game for smartphone photography. It’s amazing how platforms like Instagram and TikTok let me instantly share my photos and see what others are creating. The constant stream of creative content from fellow users not only inspires me but also pushes me to try new techniques and improve my skills. Getting likes and comments on my posts motivates me to experiment and capture even better shots. It feels like I have a global stage and a supportive community right at my fingertips, all thanks to my smartphone (B. A. Owusu, personal communication, April 19, 2023)

This statement encapsulates the participatory and motivational aspects of social media engagement. It aligns with Ertmer and Ottenbreit-Leftwich’s (2019) observation that mobile technology and social media have simplified and accelerated the process of content creation and dissemination. The convergence of accessibility and interactivity has made visual self-expression both a personal and communal practice, reflecting a shift from passive consumption to active co-creation.

4.2.1 Cultural Identity and Digital Representation

Beyond its communicative and aesthetic dimensions, social media’s visual culture also exerts a profound influence on the representation and preservation of cultural identity in Ghana. The proliferation of smartphone photography has

facilitated the visual documentation and global circulation of indigenous practices, festivals, and rituals. As one participant, a Cultural Custodian, recounted:

The influx of smartphone photography has introduced both opportunities and challenges in safeguarding and promoting our cherished practices in Ghana. The impact of smartphone photography on social media and its attendant implications on Ghana's cultural practices is undeniable. On one hand, these devices have facilitated the documentation and dissemination of our cultural rituals and traditions. The ease of capturing moments through smartphones has enabled us to share our customs and ceremonies with a broader audience, transcending geographical boundaries and fostering a sense of cultural pride

(Cultural Custodian, personal communication, April 8, 2023)

This perspective underscores the dual role of social media as both an archive and a stage for cultural representation. Visual narratives shared online contribute to the construction of a collective cultural identity, allowing Ghanaians—especially younger generations, to engage with heritage in dynamic and contemporary ways. Simultaneously, however, the digital mediation of culture raises concerns about authenticity, commodification, and the potential distortion of traditional meanings in pursuit of visual appeal or global recognition. In this light, social media emerges as a powerful agent in shaping Ghana's evolving visual culture. It mediates the interplay between modernity and tradition, between global visibility and local authenticity. As digital spaces increasingly function as arenas for cultural negotiation, the Ghanaian visual landscape continues to expand beyond physical spaces into a fluid, interactive domain where identities are both performed and preserved.

In a similar account, respondent Lecturer 2 stated that.

The accessibility and prevalence of smartphones have fundamentally altered the educational approach toward representation within Ghanaian visual culture, particularly with the convenience of social media. As a lecturer, I've adapted my teaching methodologies to incorporate the

influence of smartphone photography. It's essential to acknowledge the democratization of image creation. The emphasis lies in guiding students to critically analyze and construct narratives that reflect diverse perspectives, ensuring that accessibility does not compromise authenticity and cultural sensitivity (Lecturer 2, personal communication, May 9, 2023).

Despite the concerns raised about maintaining the authenticity and sanctity of our cultural practices in the digital age, the assertion of Cultural Custodian 1 confirms the scholarly account of Doner (2007), Winston (2013), and Freeman (2011) that the introduction of contemporary smartphone cameras has caused a cultural revolution in how people view and use photography. Taking into account what Winston (2013) and Freeman (2011) have to say about how digitalization has affected imaging technologies is evident in the assertion of respondent Cultural Custodian 1.

Also, respondents, Smartphone users, posited that:

Social media has completely transformed smartphone photography for me. It's incredible how easy it is to share moments with just a few taps, and the constant inspiration from others on platforms like Instagram and TikTok keeps me experimenting with new techniques and styles. The feedback and engagement I get also push me to improve and be more creative with my shots. It's like having a global audience and a community of fellow photographers right at my fingertips, all thanks to my smartphone (C Appiah, personal communication, April 9, 2023)

The statement by respondent above reveals how smartphone users reflects several key aspects of how social media has impacted smartphone photography. Social media platforms have indeed transformed how people engage with smartphone photography. The statement is in synch with the findings of Li and Bernoff (2020) that social media has democratized content creation, allowing users to become both creators and consumers with ease (Li & Bernoff, 2020). Similarly, Alhabash and Ma (2017) show that social media platforms act as sources of inspiration and learning, providing users with exposure to diverse photographic styles and techniques. The statement by

participant C Appiah above is further indicated in the figure 4.4 and 4.5 below where some Ghanaians smartphone users share images on social media platforms such as titok and Instagram.

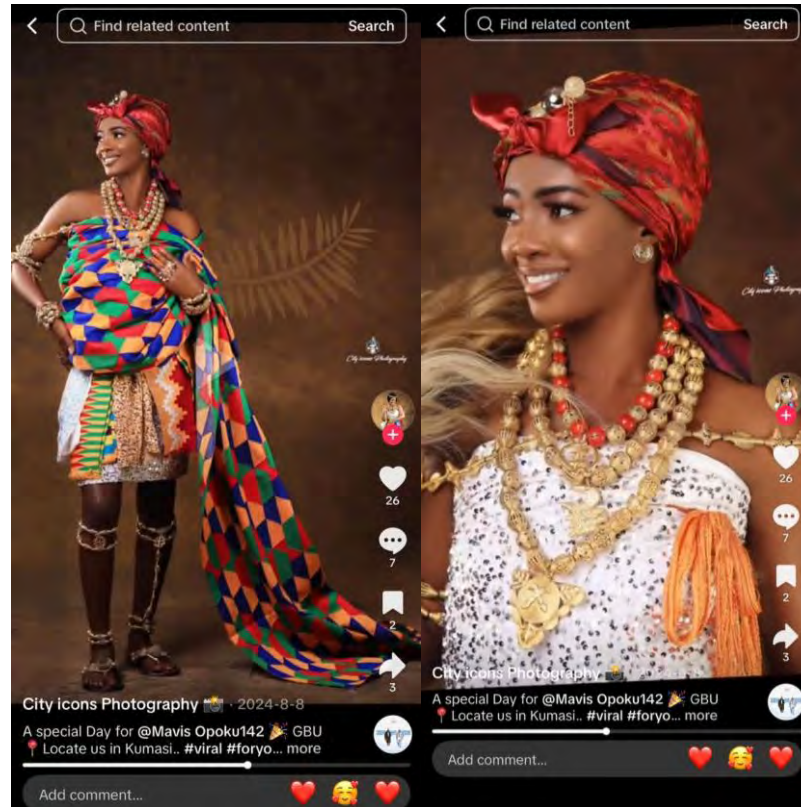


Figure 4.4 Ghanaian smartphone users share images on social media, Titok

Source: (Fieldwork, 2024)

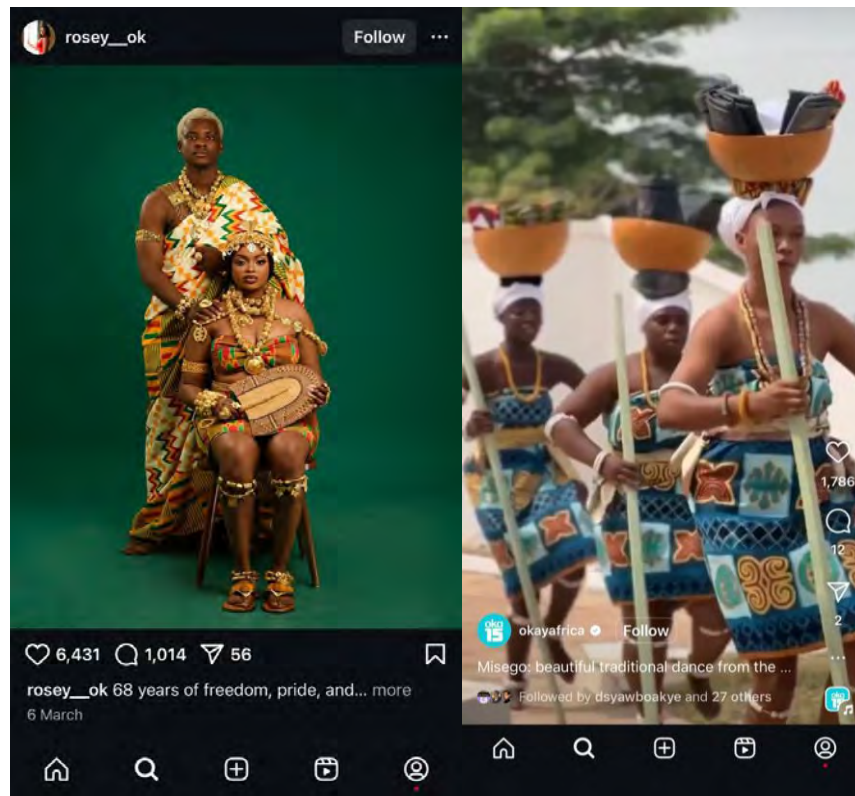


Figure 4.5 Ghanaian smartphone users share images on social media, Instagram.

Source: (Fieldwork, 2024)

This constant influx of visual content encourages users to experiment and develop their skills (Alhabash & Ma, 2017). This transformation is evident in the way users now utilize smartphones not just for capturing images, but for curating and sharing their visual narratives on various platforms. The ease of sharing images with just a few taps is a significant feature of social media. This aspect aligns with the findings of a study by Ertmer and Ottenbreit-Leftwich (2019), which highlights how mobile technology has simplified the process of content distribution, making it more accessible and immediate (Ertmer & Ottenbreit-Leftwich, 2019). This immediacy contributes to a more engaged and connected user experience. Smith et al. (2021) further reveal that the interactive nature of social media allows users to receive instant feedback, which can enhance their motivation and drive for improvement (Smith et al., 2021). This feedback loop is crucial for personal growth and creative development

in photography. Dhir et al. (2018) further postulate that social media creates a sense of community among users with shared interests, providing them with a platform to connect, share, and collaborate (Dhir et al., 2018). This global connectivity is a direct outcome of social media's reach and accessibility. They have emphasized how important social media has influenced the development of imaging technology, which in turn promotes an atmosphere of creative freedom and visual literacy (Donner, 2007).

Another respondent revealed that;

The transient nature of social media content contributes to superficial engagement, potentially diluting the depth and significance of Ghanaian cultural heritage. Moreover, the emphasis on visual appeal and virality in digital spaces might prioritize aesthetics over the accurate representation or understanding of cultural practices. Striking a balance between leveraging digital platforms for promotion while preserving the integrity of our cultural heritage remains an ongoing challenge (G. Bamfo, personal communication, April 9, 2023).

It was evident in the responses gathered that the influence of smartphones on social media encourages superficial representations or misunderstandings of Ghanaian traditions and culture. There is a risk of certain key and prominent individuals in society being misrepresented or reduced to mere spectacles of ridicule for social media consumption, potentially diluting their profound significance. For instance, on the 12th of January, 2020, Ghana's National Security Minister (Mr. Kan Dapaah) was trolled on social media over a leaked video of him modeling" in his dark-blue dotted pajamas at the request of a young woman in the said leak video. A conduct many security analysts argued that it made him too vulnerable to handle the security affairs of Ghana. Similarly, on July 6th, 2017, Videos and Photos of Kumasi Girls Senior High School Students dancing half-naked on camera in their dormitory went viral on social media (e.tv Ghana, 2017). An act that was condemned heavily by Ghana's

Ministry of Education in a report, citing the act as inimical to the moral fiber and code of conduct, was by far condemned by Ghanaians. In an interview with a respondent smartphone user, it was recounted;

Social media platforms continuously evolve, shaping how smartphone photography is consumed, shared, and appreciated. We anticipate a further democratization of visual storytelling, with an increased focus on authenticity and real-time engagement. As these social media platforms advance, emerging trends and aesthetics will continue to be influenced by the evolution of smartphone photography in Ghana. With technological advancements, we foresee more sophisticated editing tools and features that will enable photographers to enhance their creativity. The collaborative nature of social media fosters greater connections and learning among photographers, fueling innovation and pushing the boundaries of artistic expression (S. Mensah, personal communication, March 15, 2023).

A similar account from Cultural Custodian recounted that the ease of sharing smartphone photographs on social media platforms also presents challenges in preserving the sanctity of Ghanaian cultural artifacts and practices.

There's a risk of oversimplification or misinterpretation of our traditions when condensed into digital images for rapid consumption. The superficial representation of cultural artifacts or practices on social media may undermine their complexity and significance, potentially distorting their true essence. Maintaining the integrity and authenticity of our cultural heritage amidst the fast-paced and sometimes superficial nature of social media remains a concern for custodians (Cultural Custodian 2, personal communication, May 17, 2023).

On the contrary, the response from Cultural Custodian 2 above reveal that social media has impacted smartphone usage positively in the context of accessibility and ease of sharing. Smartphone photographs on social media have significantly amplified the visibility of Ghanaian cultural artifacts and practices. The influence is seen in promoting Ghanaian cultural practices significantly through advocacy and education. There is seemingly a surge in the exposure of our cultural heritage to a global

audience as a result of the influence of smartphones on social media, allowing instant documentation and dissemination of our cultural artifacts and practices.

Social media platforms act as virtual galleries, enabling us to showcase our traditions, artifacts, and practices to a vast and diverse audience. The increased visibility has sparked interest and dialogue, fostering a greater appreciation for Ghanaian culture both locally and internationally (G. Bamfo, personal communication, April 9, 2023).

In a similar statement by respondent Professional 2, it was recounted that;

...Smartphone photography provides individuals within Ghanaian visual culture with a tool for self-expression and self-representation. It grants them the ability to document their experiences, share their stories, and showcase their perspectives. This empowerment fosters inclusivity and diversity in visual narratives, allowing individuals to challenge existing narratives and contribute to a more comprehensive representation of Ghanaian visual culture... The accessibility and user-friendly nature of smartphone photography empower individuals within Ghanaian visual culture to capture and share their stories effortlessly. It allows them to document their daily lives, cultural events, and societal issues, offering a platform for authentic self-expression. This empowerment fosters a more diverse and nuanced representation within Ghana's visual culture, amplifying various perspectives and voices (Participant Professional 2 personal communication, October 16, 2023).

The assertion of respondent professional 2 is in tandem with the position of Bartholeyn (2014) that smartphone photography has become a tool for activism and social change on a global scale. People record social injustices, protests, and movements using their smartphones (as shown in figure 4.6 below), magnifying these stories and bringing significant societal issues to light.



Figure 4.7 A social protest in Ghana captured and posted with Smartphone photography, 2024.

Source: <https://www.adomonline.com/fix-the-country-demo/>

Communities throughout the world can be mobilized by this visual evidence, which promotes solidarity and accelerates change. A similar opinion was shared by the respondent Cultural Custodian.

The utilization of social media and digital technologies in promoting Ghanaian cultural heritage through smartphone photography presents remarkable opportunities. These platforms serve as powerful tools for cultural advocacy, allowing us to reach a vast audience instantaneously. Smartphone photography coupled with social media amplifies the popularity of our cultural heritage, attracting attention and fostering engagement among diverse audiences. The immediacy and accessibility of these platforms aid in cultivating interest and appreciation for Ghanaian cultural traditions among younger generations (Participant Cultural Custodian personal communication, April 8, 2023).

In a similar vein, respondent Professional, 2 recounted that;

Well, the influence and impact have been great. Many people now have smartphones, and the temptation of presuming that you are a photographer because you have a camera attached to your smartphone is there. But it does not mean everyone holding a camera is a professional photographer... However, not all smartphones have cameras. We have a camera and we have a camera. I have ever had a phone that, if I use it to photograph myself, I am unable to recognize myself. You become a minority on the phone. So, it will depend on the quality of the camera we

are using on the smartphone... When we were in school, if you stood for exams, people would send you success cards. During Christmas, they will send you maybe a Christmas card, and now everything is becoming electronic. So, the influence and impact of smartphones is very high. People are now going for digital outputs more than what the traditional photographer had been doing some thirty years ago (B. Sebeh, personal communication, November 12, 2023).

Traversing this assertion of respondent Cultural Custodian 1 requires a delicate balance between embracing the convenience of smartphone photography and preserving the essence of Ghanaian cultural heritage. It is crucial to ensure that the documentation of cultural practices through smartphones is done with reverence and accuracy, respecting the sanctity of our traditions while leveraging the potential of digital platforms to amplify the appreciation and understanding of Ghanaian cultural richness as recounted in the studies of Nguyen (2018).

Another respondent stated;

For photographers in Ghana, social media has been a game-changer because it's an expansive platform and an easy way to share photographs taken with a smartphone. It's a digital canvas that allows photographers to show off their work to a worldwide audience in real time, democratizing exposure and giving up-and-coming talent a way to be recognized and appreciated. Sharing work immediately on social media increases visibility and helps photographers carve out a niche for themselves. Photographers can curate their portfolios on sites available on smartphones like WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook, or Twitter, interact with a diverse audience, and even draw in potential customers or collaborations. Social media has effectively eliminated geographical barriers (S. Bamfo, personal communication, December 23, 2023).

The influence of smartphone cameras on social media offers a convenient medium through which people can engage and educate a global audience about the depth and diversity of Ghana's cultural system. Through the lens of a smartphone, people can capture and share the essence of cultural practices, cultivating interest and appreciation among younger generations. The visual allure of smartphone-captured images can serve as a gateway to our cultural heritage, captivating the interest of the

youth and fostering a deeper connection with our traditions. However, respondents largely agreed that there is a responsibility to portray Ghanaian cultural practices accurately and respectfully in the digital realm, particularly in the wake of social media and its attendant smartphone influence. The implications are recounted in the responses of Lecturer 1 that;

Smartphone photography in Ghana's visual culture is transformative... It continues to reshape power dynamics by decentralizing storytelling, allowing individuals to reclaim agency over their storytelling... I anticipate a shift towards more diverse and inclusive representations in visual storytelling, challenging historical norms... we must encourage students to embrace technological advancements while upholding ethical standards to equip them to navigate this evolving landscape with sensitivity and creativity (Lecturer 1, personal communication, October 22, 2023).

The responses of Lecturer 1 resonate with the studies of Donner (2007) that the pivotal role of digital devices such as smartphones in advancing imaging technologies, thus fostering an environment of artistic freedom and visual literacy, has seemingly ethical implications. This is even more evident in the account of respondent Professional 1

Smartphone photography empowers individuals within Ghanaian visual culture by offering a medium for self-representation and narrative storytelling. It grants immediate access to a powerful tool, allowing individuals to capture and share their experiences authentically. This democratization of storytelling enables marginalized voices to be heard, challenging traditional power structures and fostering a more inclusive representation within the visual culture of Ghana (E Aquaah, personal communication, September 19, 2023).

Smartphone photography serves as a tool for individuals to reclaim control over their representation and narratives within Ghanaian visual culture. It enables them to document their lives, cultural events, and societal issues, presenting their unique perspectives. The immediacy and ease of use offered by smartphones empower individuals to tell their stories authentically, fostering a more diverse and inclusive representation within Ghana's visual landscape.

Ensuring that the portrayal of Ghanaian traditions through smartphone photography retains their authenticity and dignity is critical. Balancing the influence of social media on smartphones with the preservation of the sacredness of Ghanaian cultural practices is pivotal in using this ever-growing social digital space as a means to promote and safeguard Ghanaian cultural heritage. Generally, one can make deductions from the responses above that because smartphones are small, light, and satisfying to use, people use them for visual communication through smartphone photography. Through smartphone pictures, users establish their own identities. The technological convergence, interactions becoming more interconnected, and people are getting closer than they were previously.

The researcher also observed and documented how smartphone photography intersects with everyday social media practices in both urban and semi-urban Ghanaian settings. The fieldwork took place in locations such as university campuses, marketplaces, cultural festivals, commercial centers, and community events. This provided critical visual and behavioral insights that went beyond what was shared in interviews. For instance, during cultural events like the Made in Tadi Festival, participants were seen actively taking and immediately uploading pictures to Instagram Stories, TikTok, and Facebook Live. Observation confirmed the habitual

use of ring lights, selfie sticks, and editing apps on the spot, with individuals sometimes stopping mid-event to edit, caption, and tag posts. This behavior mirrored respondents' verbal accounts and reinforced the claim that smartphone photography has created a culture of instant visual storytelling, supported and driven by the social media ecosystem. In classroom settings at the tertiary level, students were frequently observed taking snapshots of whiteboard notes, lecture slides, and even creative moments from class projects, which were then shared on group WhatsApp pages or personal Instagram feeds. This demonstrated that smartphone photography is not only aesthetic or expressive but also functional and collaborative, particularly within educational and professional contexts.

The visual behaviors observed among users also affirmed an aesthetic consciousness shaped by social media norms. Individuals were seen positioning themselves against murals, flower walls, and branded backdrops to enhance visual appeal for their social media posts. In cafes and restaurants, food photography for platforms like Snapchat and Instagram was common, often with carefully arranged lighting or filters applied even before posting. These interactions reflect an emerging visual culture shaped by platform expectations, where likes, shares, and comments influence not just the kind of images shared but also the effort and style behind them.

These observed patterns align with the statement made by a smartphone user:

“Social media has changed the game for smartphone photography. It’s amazing how platforms like Instagram and TikTok let me instantly share my photos and see what others are creating. The constant stream of creative content from fellow users not only inspires me but also pushes me to try new techniques...” (Smartphone user, personal communication, April 19, 2023).

The visual engagement and behavioral rituals seen during observation, such as participants taking multiple shots for the “perfect angle” before uploading, were consistent with academic insights from Li and Bernoff (2020), who emphasized that social media fosters user creativity, encourages content curation, and supports continuous engagement through feedback loops.

4.2.2 Digital Aesthetics and the Rise of Visual Trends

Another salient theme emerging from the findings concerns the evolution of digital aesthetics and the rise of visual trends driven by social media algorithms and community preferences. The proliferation of visual content on platforms such as TikTok and Instagram has given birth to trend-based aesthetics, filters, poses, and compositional styles that shape how Ghanaian users visualise beauty, fashion, and identity. A participant who is a university student and digital content creator noted:

Sometimes it feels like we are all chasing the same ‘look’, bright colours, clear skin, and perfect lighting. The more likes a picture gets, the more others copy that style. It’s like social media teaches us what beauty should look like.

(University Student, personal communication, April 10, 2023)

This statement reveals the algorithmic influence on aesthetic preference, where visibility is tied to conformity with popular styles. Yet, this homogenizing tendency also stimulates creative resistance, as some users deliberately experiment with localized visual codes and alternative narratives. As another respondent, a smartphone User, commented:

“I try to use my phone to tell stories that show the real Ghana, our streets, our people, our colours. I mix the trendy editing tools with traditional symbols so my pictures stand out (Smartphone User, personal communication, April 12, 2023).

Such practices illustrate how Ghanaian creator’s appropriate global digital trends to local contexts, producing hybrid aesthetics that reflect both modernity and heritage. Moreover, this dynamic interplay between global influences and local

reinterpretations underscores the fluidity of visual identity in the digital age. A third respondent further articulated this negotiation of values, stating:

Social media has made me more conscious of how I present myself. I blend African prints and hairstyles with modern outfits because I want my photos to show both where I come from and where I am going (Fashion Influencer, personal communication, April 15, 2023).

These expressions collectively affirm that social media not only mediates the production of visual content but also shapes aesthetic sensibilities and cultural self-awareness among Ghanaian users. The resulting visual culture is characterised by hybridity, where global digital aesthetics intersect with indigenous visual traditions to produce new modes of representation. From the afore discussions the influence of social media on Ghana's visual culture is multifaceted, encompassing technological innovation, cultural redefinition, and aesthetic transformation. It has transformed visual communication into an interactive, borderless process while simultaneously serving as a site for negotiating identity, authenticity, and creative expression

4.3 Smartphone Photography in Shaping Narratives and Representations of Ghanaian Identity.

The advent of smartphone technology has profoundly altered how visual narratives are created, shared, and interpreted in contemporary Ghana. As smartphones become increasingly integrated into everyday social life, photography—once confined to professional or ceremonial spaces, has evolved into a ubiquitous cultural practice that mediates personal and collective identities. Within this context, smartphone photography functions not merely as a technological tool but as a medium of self-expression, social commentary, and cultural documentation. This study sought to explore how individuals in Ghana employ smartphone photography to construct, negotiate, and project identities within both physical and digital spaces. The data

revealed that through social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, and WhatsApp, users actively participate in visual storytelling that intertwines personal experience with collective heritage. These platforms have become contemporary arenas for the performance of identity, spaces where visual narratives reflect evolving conceptions of Ghanaian modernity, cultural pride, and belonging.

4.3.1 Representation and Identity Construction through Smartphone

Photography

Under this objective, the study revealed that smartphone camera photography has significantly altered the platforms and methods used for sharing visual images in Ghana. Social media platforms that accompany smartphone usage, especially Instagram, Facebook, and WhatsApp, have emerged as primary channels for sharing photographs. These platforms offer instantaneous sharing capabilities, facilitating connections with diverse audiences locally and globally.

We've observed a surge in short-form content like Stories and Reels, providing dynamic ways to share moments and fostering greater engagement. Additionally, the use of photography-centric apps and editing tools has increased, allowing us to enhance and personalize our visual narratives before sharing them (Smartphone User, personal communication, 12th November 2023).

Consensually, the respondents posited that smartphone photography is instrumental in reshaping Narratives and Representations of Ghanaian Identity. Its ability to democratize the narrative by providing individuals, regardless of socioeconomic status, with a platform to voice their perspectives is more evident. This, however, disrupts the conventional power structures held by established media or authoritative figures. As a result, there's a decentralization of storytelling authority, allowing grassroots voices and marginalized communities to challenge and redefine

mainstream narratives. It challenges the historically dominant narrative perspectives controlled by mainstream media or designated authorities. Individuals wielding smartphones hold the power to document and disseminate information, amplifying diverse and often overlooked stories. This redistribution of storytelling authority fosters a more inclusive representation within the visual landscape, challenging the monopoly of traditional power structures in shaping societal perceptions.

4.3.2 Transformation in Storytelling

The study further revealed that Smartphone photography has catalyzed a profound transformation in storytelling methods, revolutionizing the way events and narratives are captured, shared, and consumed. Traditionally, stories were conveyed through elaborate setups, planned shoots, and meticulously crafted visuals. However, the advent of smartphone photography has democratized storytelling, rendering it more immediate, accessible, and participatory. The shift from traditional methods to smartphone-based storytelling is marked by spontaneity and authenticity. Smartphone photography has empowered individuals to capture and disseminate stories in real time, altering the traditional way of presenting and representing stories from preconceived compositions to new ways of representation. This shift has democratized storytelling, making it more inclusive and enabling diverse voices to contribute and share their narratives effortlessly.

Smartphone photography has fundamentally altered the paradigm of storytelling. It has dissolved the barriers between professional and amateur storytellers by granting accessibility and immediacy to everyone. Unlike traditional methods that rely on specific equipment and setups, smartphones offer a versatile tool that fits into our pockets, ready to capture and communicate stories at a moment's notice. The visual narratives depicted through smartphone lenses emphasize raw emotions, spontaneous occurrences, and authentic portrayals, departing from the meticulously planned and staged visuals of traditional storytelling methods. The rise of smartphone photography has shifted the storytelling

landscape to one that thrives on the authenticity and immediacy of the captured moment (A. Arhin, personal communication, October 5, 2023).

In a similar account by respondent Professional 2 stated.

Smartphone photography is significantly altering the traditional power dynamics inherent in visual storytelling in Ghana. It empowers individuals to become active contributors to the narrative, challenging the monopoly historically held by institutionalized media. This decentralization of storytelling authority redistributes power, allowing for the amplification of diverse viewpoints and narratives. Consequently, smartphone photography disrupts the hierarchical control of information dissemination, offering a more inclusive and nuanced portrayal of Ghanaian society (G. Asare, personal communication, October 11, 2023).

This assertion of respondents Professional 2 and Expert 3 confirms the opinions of Benjamin and Underwood (2008) and Berger (1972), who contend that the technologies available to us at a given time influence how we perceive and convey visual images. They further reiterate that these emerging technologies spontaneously give rise to a shift in previous ways of doing things. Different cultural factors and technological advancements have different effects on how people in a culture perceive and express their vision than on how cultures relate to space.

Adapting to the evolving landscape of representation and storytelling through smartphone photography is crucial. Embracing this change involves proactive engagement with digital tools and platforms. We can utilize smartphones as effective tools for cultural advocacy and preservation. By actively participating in digital storytelling initiatives and leveraging social media platforms, we can showcase our cultural heritage in innovative ways while ensuring accuracy and authenticity in the representation of our traditions. Integrating smartphone photography into cultural preservation efforts can amplify the visibility and reach of our cultural narratives (J. Nketiah, personal communication, August 14, 2023).

The assertion of Respondent Photography student 1 resonates with the studies of Bowen (2023) that the shift in smartphone photography has had a profound effect on many facets of society, from professional to personal expression, and it has changed how people view and comprehend visual content. It is evident that, regarding the changing dynamics of modern photography, smartphone photography has shifted the traditional way of representation and storytelling. The situation is further stated in the reactive response from respondent Photography Expert 2 and Lecturer 2

...due to how smartphone photography has changed the traditional way of representing stories, Professional photographers, however, find it difficult to remain unafraid. Professional photographers are an increasingly scarce commodity, thanks to aggressive cost-cutting by newspapers and magazines, and smartphone photographers there is exploiting technological advances to produce stunning images, often using no more than their mobile phones (G. Asare, personal communication, October 11, 2023).

Respondent Lecturer 2 stated

Smartphone photography has democratized the process of storytelling, allowing individuals from all walks of life to participate. This shift has led to a vibrant interplay of visual narratives that capture the essence of Ghanaian culture, traditions, and contemporary life. As a lecturer, I emphasize the transformative potential of smartphone photography in empowering individuals to tell their stories authentically.

The opinions of respondent photography expert 2 present a mixed reaction to the increasing changes smartphone photography incorporates in the new world of photography. As reported by Thompson and Uddin (2023), mobile phone technological developments over the past years have enabled new cultural practices and uses, which have affected what is photographed and how it is photographed. Though cameras have gradually become lighter and smaller over time, however,

anytime photographers needed specific effects, it required additional equipment, unlike smartphones that contain built-in functions. When cameras became coupled to phones in 2000, it revolutionized how photography was used and what became fair game for documenting. Having a camera with oneself at practically all times led to practices such as documenting one's activities (Okabe & Ito, 2006). In an interview with respondent photography student 1, it was recounted that

Smartphone photography has revolutionized the accessibility and inclusivity of visual storytelling in Ghana. Its advent has democratized photography, making it more accessible to a broader spectrum of individuals regardless of their background or expertise. The ease of use and affordability of smartphones have removed traditional barriers to entry, allowing anyone with a smartphone to participate in visual storytelling. This inclusivity has diversified perspectives, allowing a wider range of narratives to emerge. As photography students, we've witnessed how smartphones empower individuals to capture and share their unique stories, fostering a more inclusive representation of Ghanaian life. Moreover, smartphones have facilitated the documentation of diverse experiences, cultures, and societal issues that might have been overlooked otherwise, thus enriching the tapestry of visual storytelling in Ghana's photography industry (E. Baiden, personal communication, September 10, 2023).

A similar opinion was shared by respondent student 4.

"Smartphone photography has empowered countless individuals in Ghana to represent their own stories and experiences authentically. For instance, individuals from underserved communities have utilized smartphones to showcase their daily lives, shedding light on their struggles, triumphs, and aspirations. Through platforms like Instagram, Facebook, or Twitter, Ghanaians have shared personal stories about cultural heritage, societal issues, or personal achievements, giving voice to narratives that were previously underrepresented or ignored. In

addition, during social movements or protests, smartphone photography has served as a tool to document and share firsthand experiences, providing unfiltered glimpses into important moments and advocating for change. Furthermore, artists, activists, and everyday citizens have utilized smartphone photography to initiate conversations, raise awareness, and challenge stereotypes, allowing for a more diverse and nuanced representation of Ghanaian life and experiences (J. Nketiah, personal communication, October 7, 2023).

It is evident from the responses of photography students 1 and 4 that the photography industry has evolved inextricably by embracing the shifting possibilities of using smartphone photos to tell tales. We've adjusted by embracing the instantaneity and accessibility that smartphones provide, utilizing them as effective instruments to record and communicate our tales genuinely. In the words of respondent photography expert 3, it was recounted that 'We appreciate the opportunity to offer a variety of experiences from distinctive perspectives, therefore we've applauded the move toward more intimate and relevant storytelling'.

Smartphone photography has had a profound influence on the aesthetics and style of visual images in Ghana. The portability and convenience of smartphones have shaped a more spontaneous and candid approach to photography. The immediacy of capturing moments has led to a shift towards authenticity and raw emotion in visual storytelling. Additionally, the advent of mobile editing apps and filters has influenced the aesthetics of visual images. There's a growing trend toward vibrant and stylized visuals, influenced by the various editing tools available on smartphones... The square format of many social media platforms like Instagram has popularized new compositional styles and visual narratives. As photography students, we've observed how smartphone photography has encouraged experimentation, allowing us to explore diverse visual styles and aesthetics, contributing to the evolving visual language in Ghanaian photography (A. Mensah, personal communication, October 17, 2023).

The response from photography student 2 above confirms the studies of Caoduro (2014b) that smartphone photography has accelerated the spread of visual

information and contributed to evolving visual language, leading to real-time documentation of events, news, and personal experiences. This change in representation has empowered citizen journalism, providing a lens through which the world observes and understands events as they unfold. It is evident from the responses that the change in traditionally representing photography is targeted at enabling a positive adaptation in the ever-changing visual environment. The shift also permits the investigation of diverse creative approaches, such as experimenting with alternative viewpoints, editing styles, and inventive storytelling tactics. These synthesized perspectives aim to encapsulate the shared experiences and observations of smartphone users in Ghana regarding the changes in sharing platforms, narrative shifts, and adaptation to the evolving storytelling landscape influenced by smartphone photography. The perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, attitude towards using behavioral intention to use, and actual usage greatly impact the changing power dynamics and serve as a powerful force in challenging the traditional way of storytelling. In an interview with respondent student 3, it was stated that;

"Smartphone photography serves as a potent force in challenging and reshaping traditional power dynamics within visual storytelling. Its accessibility has empowered individuals to reclaim agency over their narratives, challenging the traditional top-down approach where established entities dictated the stories portrayed. Through smartphones, marginalized voices have found a platform to challenge societal norms, inequalities, and injustices. This shift in power dynamics allows for a more democratic representation of diverse perspectives and experiences. As photography students, we've observed how smartphone photography disrupts conventional hierarchies, allowing individuals from various backgrounds to assert their narratives, thus contributing to a more inclusive and representative visual landscape in Ghana. Moreover, the immediacy and viral nature of social media platforms have amplified

grassroots movements and shed light on social issues that might have been overlooked (H. Okosso, personal communication, August 15, 2023).

Based on the above responses of student 3, it is evident that smartphone photography has gone through transformative phases and serves as a tool for more than just a means of documentation; they are a powerful instrument for storytelling, advocacy, and immediate recording of events. Cultural diversity and stories of underrepresented communities using smartphones empower them to be catalysts for change. Smartphone photography is used as a platform to shed light on social injustices, amplify marginalized voices, and raise awareness about pertinent issues. Additionally, social media platforms offer a global stage for students to share their visual narratives, fostering dialogue, empathy, and collective action.

The paradigm shift brought by smartphone photography is disrupting entrenched power dynamics in visual representation across Ghana. It challenges the established norms where traditional media controlled narrative authority. With smartphones becoming ubiquitous, individuals hold the power to capture and share their realities, bypassing traditional gatekeepers. This shift redistributes storytelling authority, enabling marginalized voices to challenge hegemonic narratives and fostering a more equitable representation of societal experiences (A. Arhin, personal communication, November 14, 2023).

Smartphone photography represents a seismic shift in the power dynamics of visual storytelling within Ghana. It disrupts established hierarchies by granting individuals the tools to document and broadcast their stories independently. This democratization challenges the control traditionally held by media institutions, empowering individuals to challenge and diversify the prevailing narratives. As a

result, there's a decentralization of storytelling authority, enabling a more democratic representation of diverse perspectives within Ghanaian visual culture.

Respondents, particularly Trainers, acknowledge the prevalent perception and expectations surrounding smartphone photography, which may potentially lead to the devaluation of traditional photography. The widespread use of smartphones has created a perception that anyone can be a photographer, leading to a misconception that professional skills and creative vision may be less important. Respondents are worried about these crucial perceptions by emphasizing the distinction between casual smartphone snapshots and the depth of professional photography. Trainers aim to educate students and the general audience about the intricate technical skills, artistic sensibilities, and storytelling expertise involved in traditional photography. By imparting a deeper understanding of the craft, trainers strive to cultivate an appreciation for the artistry and dedication required in professional photography. Moreover, trainers advocate for the coexistence of both mediums, emphasizing that while smartphone photography offers accessibility, traditional photography provides a depth of creativity and technical mastery that continues to hold immense value in the industry.

Objective 4

4.4 Roles of Smartphone Photography in the Creation and dissemination of Visual images in Ghanaian Societies?

4.5 Role of Smartphone Photography in Image Creation and Dissemination

Smartphone photography and image creation are mutually constitutive and ever-changing as a result of technological advancement. It is changing more dramatically,

particularly with the widespread use of social media and more democratic technology like smartphone cameras, which are employed in a variety of contexts and methods. The emergence of advanced smartphone cameras with higher definition, lighting systems, and lenses. Smartphone photography plays a pivotal role in creating and disseminating visual images that capture the essence of Ghanaian cultural practices. The respondents consensually recognize the power of smartphone photography as a tool for creating and sharing visual images.

In an interview with Respondent Professional 1, it was revealed that smartphone devices allow people to create, document, and share visual narratives that encapsulate the richness and diversity of our cultural heritage. 'Through smartphone lenses, we create images of our traditions, artifacts, and practices, offering a window into Ghana's cultural tapestry to a global audience.' However, the reliance on smartphone photography for creating and disseminating visual images of Ghanaian cultural practices requires careful navigation. While smartphones offer accessibility and immediacy, there's a need for vigilance in ensuring that the portrayal of cultural practices maintains authenticity and respect. The challenge lies in using smartphone photography as a means of expression while preserving the sanctity and depth of our cultural heritage. Striking a balance between accessibility and accuracy remains integral in utilizing smartphone photography for the dissemination of visual images representing Ghanaian cultural practices. Similarly, respondent photography student 1 shared the same opinion as respondent professional 1, stating;

...The introduction of smartphones has ushered in a transformative era in Ghanaian photography. It's not merely a tool for capturing moments; it's a game-changer that democratizes photography. Smartphones have empowered everyone with a camera in their pocket, revolutionizing how we view and interact with visual storytelling. It's made photography more accessible, allowing us to explore our creativity effortlessly. This

accessibility has democratized the art, breaking down barriers that once limited photography to professionals or those with expensive equipment. Now, with a simple click, we capture moments spontaneously, unearthing the beauty in everyday life. The immediacy of smartphone photography has reshaped how we perceive and document our surroundings, fostering a more intimate connection with our environment and enabling us to express ourselves more authentically (E. Baiden, personal communication, October 6, 2023).

The current landscape of visual imagery in Ghanaian societies is heavily influenced by the omnipresence of smartphone photography. It has emerged as the primary means through which individuals document and share their daily lives, cultural events, and societal occurrences. Smartphone photography acts as a reflection of societal trends, serving as a dynamic archive that captures the essence of Ghanaian culture. Its role in disseminating visual narratives across social media platforms not only showcases individual stories but also fosters a collective representation of the nation's cultural mosaic. With the role of smartphone photography in the creation and dissemination of visual images, respondent Expert 1 also posited that;

The rise of smartphone photography has significantly altered the platforms and methods used for sharing visual images in Ghana. Social media platforms, especially Instagram, Facebook, and WhatsApp, have emerged as primary channels for sharing photographs. These platforms offer instantaneous sharing capabilities, facilitating connections with diverse audiences locally and globally. We've observed a surge in short-form content like Stories and Reels, providing dynamic ways to create and share moments and fostering greater engagement. Additionally, the use of photography-centric apps and editing tools has increased, allowing us to enhance and personalize our visual narratives before sharing them (G. Baafour, personal communication, May 4, 2023).

One of the key outcomes of the responses presented above from respondent Expert, Respondent student, and respondent professional was that smartphone photography plays a major role or aids in capturing moments that can't be done with the traditional approach to photography. The respondents consensually agreed that with the advent of smartphones, you wouldn't need to go in search of a professional

photographer who takes a considerable amount of time to generate visual images of moments. Indeed, the ratio between photos made on smartphones and stand-alone cameras has been rapidly changing since cameras were introduced into mobile phones. For instance, according to Bonnington (2011), cell phones only accounted for 25 percent of all photos taken in 2011. Ten years later, however, smartphones are predicted to be responsible for almost 92.5 percent of all photos taken annually (Broz, 2023). So, given these rapid developments over a relatively short period, it is evident that the role of smartphones in the creation and dissemination of visual images cannot be underestimated. In the views of the respondents, the study consensually established five areas of roles of the smartphone camera photography in the creation and dissemination of visual images in Ghanaian societies;

- Convenience,
- Accessibility,
- Quality,
- Creativity,
- Social sharing.



4.5.1 Convenience:

Regarding the technological convenience of smartphone cameras and associated technologies, respondents noted ease of use, portability, and storage capability. Additionally, they recounted some automated features of cameras and camera rolls, such as portrait mode, which blurs the background artificially, AI-generated photo collections featuring recurring themes (people, pets, sunsets, or locations), and "one-year-ago moments," which participants thought was a "nice prompt to revisit that deep library of content that sits on your phone." Participants also mentioned how

much they liked being able to "heart" or "star" photos to more easily locate and arrange them in their camera rolls, as well as how some camera apps' editing interfaces allowed them to toggle edits on and off with a simple finger tap, making it simple to compare an edited photo's before and after versions. One of the respondents intimated that smartphones, as used in photography, provide instant access and portability. One of the respondents, a smartphone user, stated that;

Smartphones are compact and always at hand, eliminating the need to carry a separate camera and making it easy to capture moments on the go. With a smartphone, the camera is readily accessible within seconds, allowing for quick capturing of moments without any setup time (R. Gertrude, personal communication, November 16, 2023).

The statement by respondent Smartphone users emphasizes the convenience of smartphones being compact and always available, which eliminates the need for a separate camera. Research supports this view by noting that smartphones' portability is a significant advantage. According to Kurniawan (2021), the compact nature of smartphones makes them a preferred choice for everyday photography, as they are easier to carry compared to traditional cameras (Kurniawan, 2021). This aligns with the idea that smartphones' compactness enhances their accessibility for capturing moments quickly.



Smartphone cameras have multiple shooting modes and settings, catering to various photography needs without the need for additional equipment or lenses. It also provides editing on the Go: Editing tools and apps on smartphones enable users to edit and enhance photos instantly, eliminating the need for specialized software or computers. Once captured and edited, photos can be instantly shared across various social media platforms or with friends and family, enhancing the speed of communication.

In public places like markets, transport terminals, churches, and community gatherings, the researcher observed that individual smartphone users conveniently reach into their pockets or handbags to swiftly capture spontaneous moments with their smartphones. These ranged from snapping photos of street vendors and family interactions to taking selfies with cultural backdrops and during leisure events. The immediacy and low-barrier access to smartphone cameras foster a culture of on-the-go documentation. Unlike DSLR cameras, which require setup and handling, smartphone photography thrives on its frictionless usability. These real-time visual

captures often become instant content shared through platforms like WhatsApp statuses and Facebook Stories, giving rise to a culture of “live storytelling” where documentation and dissemination occur almost simultaneously (Kumar & Nayar, 2014; Van House, 2011) *as shown in figure 4.7 below.*



Figure 4.7 Smartphone Users Conveniently taking pictures

Source: <https://abc13.com/smartphone-camera-point-and-shoot-taking-good-pictures-with-your/3615919/>

The everyday use of smartphone cameras in mundane and special moments aligns with Miller and Sinanan’s (2014) idea of ubiquitous capture, where the device is always “ready-to-hand,” making photography a seamless part of daily life. In the Ghanaian context, this ease and mobility promote a fluid mode of visual engagement, capturing the present without disrupting it (Tuwor & Adu-Gyamfi, 2020). This frictionless integration of photography into everyday routines reinforces the smartphone's role as a portable archive and broadcasting device, enhancing its convenience and socio-cultural relevance.

4.5.2 Accessibility:

Almost everyone owns a smartphone, making photography and the creation of visual images accessible to a wider audience. Regardless of their economic status.

Smartphones come in various price ranges, offering diverse camera capabilities. Even budget-friendly options often provide decent camera functionalities, ensuring photography is accessible to a wider demographic. Smartphone cameras are designed to be user-friendly, requiring minimal technical expertise. Auto modes and intuitive interfaces allow beginners to take quality photos without extensive training. The accompanying ease of use and the simplicity of tapping an icon to open the camera app mean that people of all ages can easily access and use smartphone cameras, *as shown in figure 4.8 below.*

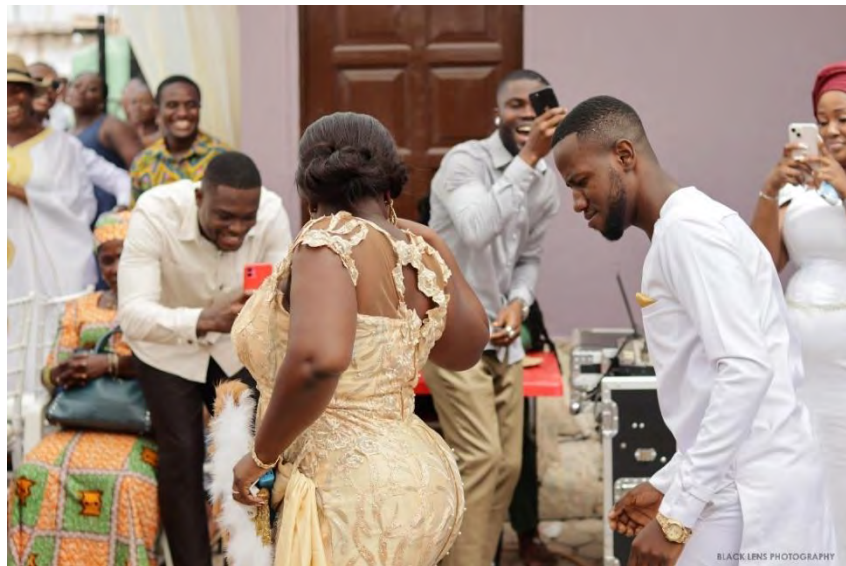


Figure 4.8 Smartphone Users freely accessing their phones and Engaging in Phtography
Source: (Fieldwork, 2025)

One of the participants recounted that “the seamless integration of smartphone cameras with social media platforms facilitates the sharing of images instantly, allowing users to engage in visual communication effortlessly. Overall, the respondents consensually posited that the accessibility of smartphone photography is largely due to the widespread ownership of smartphones, their affordability, ease of use, and the elimination of barriers like the need for specialized skills or equipment. This accessibility democratizes photography, enabling more people to express

themselves visually and share their perspectives with the world. In response to this, respondent Professional photographer 3 highlighted that.

Accessing smartphone cameras compared to traditional photography cameras is by far easier and simpler to use. This situation enables users to create their visual images by capturing moments and scenes as and when they feel comfortable (Professional Photographer, personal communication, October 11, 2023).

The statement made by respondent Professional photographer is in tandem with the assertion of McLeod (2023) that, in recent times, practically everyone carries a powerful smartphone camera around in their pocket, democratizing photography and enabling people of all backgrounds and abilities to participate in visual creations. Because of its accessibility, anyone may now produce visual material, democratizing the process and fostering a more inclusive and diverse visual culture.



Figure 4.9 Smartphone users easily having access to photography on a trip

Source: <https://medium.com/@timibadass/https-medium-com-timibadass-friends-650b9e7e0e1a>

The study, based on observation also revealed that in both urban and rural spaces, people of various age groups and socioeconomic backgrounds use smartphones ranging from high-end models to basic Android devices for taking photos and videos. Notably, school children were observed using shared smartphones to document community clean-up exercises and school events, while traders used

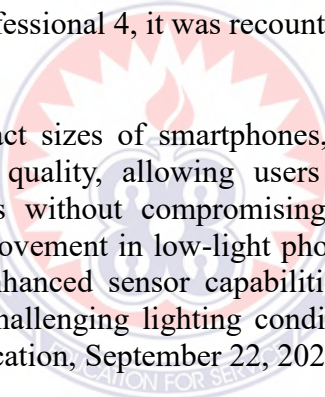
them to market goods via social media. These real-time, self-initiated visual practices occurred without professional supervision or training, indicating an embedded and intuitive use of smartphones across demographic lines.

This reflects the democratization of image creation, as previously highlighted by respondents. Even individuals with limited formal education or photography training were confidently navigating their devices to create and disseminate visuals. Smartphone photography has removed traditional barriers to participation in visual culture, empowering people at all levels of society to create and control how they are seen and remembered. This aligns with McLeod (2023), who emphasizes that the ubiquity of smartphones has enabled a broader demographic to engage in image-making and visual storytelling. Similarly, Gómez Cruz and Lehmuskallio (2016) argue that mobile photography is not limited by professional gatekeeping but is practiced widely as part of everyday life, often enabling underrepresented groups to take control of their visual identities.

Furthermore, this observation echoes Ito and Okabe's (2005) earlier studies in mobile visual communication, which found that the casual and personal use of mobile phones for documentation fosters a participatory media culture. The accessibility and user-friendliness of smartphone cameras, combined with their integration into everyday activities, enhance the ability of ordinary citizens to become creators of meaningful visual content (Lobinger, 2016). In the Ghanaian context, this has opened up new pathways for inclusive cultural documentation and social representation, allowing communities to shape their own narratives from the ground up.

4.5.3 Quality

Advancements in technology have significantly improved the quality of smartphone cameras, allowing for high-resolution and detailed images. The continuous advancements in smartphone camera technology have significantly improved image quality. High-resolution sensors, better lenses, and advanced image processing capabilities have narrowed the gap between smartphone and traditional camera quality. There are advanced software enhancements: AI-powered features, computational photography, and software-based image processing algorithms that enhance image quality. These technologies optimize details, colours, and dynamic range, producing high-quality results and portability without compromise. In the account of respondent Professional 4, it was recounted that;



Despite the compact sizes of smartphones, modern smartphones offer impressive image quality, allowing users to capture high-resolution photos and videos without compromising on portability. Low-Light Performance: Improvement in low-light photography using features like Night Mode or enhanced sensor capabilities enables users to capture better images in challenging lighting conditions (Photography lecturer, personal communication, September 22, 2024).

It is evident from the above statement that the user-friendly interfaces of smartphone cameras empower users to capture high-quality images effortlessly, whether through automatic modes or manual controls for more experienced photographers. Overall, the role of smartphone photography in terms of quality has drastically changed, with smartphones now capable of producing images that rival those from dedicated cameras, making them a reliable choice for capturing high-quality photos and videos in various situations



Figure 4.9 Quality pictures taken with smartphone Camera

Source: (<https://www.myjoyonline.com/pure-akan-reignites-hearts-at-concert-with-senku-live/>)



Figure 4.10 Quality pictures taken with smartphone Camera

Source: <https://www.newsunzip.com/wiki/black-sherif/>



Figure 4.11 Quality pictures taken with smartphone Camera

Source: <https://www.bellanijastyle.com/the-unofficial-christmas-party-2022/>

The researcher also observed that, during events such as wedding receptions, funerals, and naming ceremonies, some attendees used their smartphones to capture content alongside professional photographers. In many cases, their images were shared more widely and faster than the official photos. Observed smartphone footage on platforms like Instagram and TikTok featured sharp images enhanced with filters, slow-motion effects, and stabilized video, even in low-light conditions. Many of these features were automatically applied through built-in artificial intelligence and real-time image processing features present in modern smartphones.

These behaviors corroborate respondent Professional photographer's (above) view that modern smartphones now offer image quality once thought to be exclusive to DSLRs. Observational data show that users trust their smartphones to produce professional-grade visuals, especially with in-built editing, stabilization, and AI correction tools. In effect, smartphone photography is setting new standards for what constitutes "quality" in visual dissemination. This observation supports Manovich's (2017) argument that smartphone photography is no longer a compromise on quality,

as computational photography techniques such as HDR, depth mapping, and neural image processing have greatly enhanced the technical capacity of smartphone cameras. Similarly, McLuhan and Powers (2010) highlight that the medium itself transforms perception. Smartphones have evolved into aesthetic tools that not only record but artistically interpret the world in real time. Moreover, as Broz (2023) notes, the rapid adoption of smartphones with high-performing cameras has normalized visual excellence in casual photography, where users expect DSLR-like quality without needing professional equipment.

As smartphone cameras become more embedded with AI-assisted shooting modes and cinematic filters, the gap between amateur and professional visual output continues to narrow (Sagner, 2021). This reflects a shifting cultural expectation that quality is no longer defined by the gear used, but by the visual impact, speed, and shareability of the content.

4.5.4 Creativity:

Smartphone photography encourages creativity through various apps, filters, and editing tools available, enabling users to enhance their photos easily. The role of smartphone photography in the creation and dissemination of visual images within Ghanaian societies is multifaceted and pivotal. Smartphones have become a ubiquitous tool that empowers individuals to explore high-level creativity through capturing and sharing visual narratives instantly. In this context, the respondents consensually see smartphones not just as devices but as catalysts for cultural preservation and expression.



Figure 4.12 Smartphones used to take high-level pictures and sharing visual narratives instantly.

Source: (Researcher's fieldwork, 2024)

In an interview with respondent photography student 2, it is described as a creative democratizing agent that enables users to create, document, and share diverse aspects of Ghanaian life, from everyday moments to cultural celebrations. The immediacy and accessibility of smartphone photography facilitate the creative component of the storytelling process that empowers individuals to showcase the richness and diversity of Ghanaian society. Moreover, the role of smartphones in disseminating visual images fosters a sense of cultural pride and awareness, connecting people across diverse backgrounds and geographical locations. According to respondent lecturer 2, a more striking account of creativity was the balance between the convenience of smartphone photography and the development of technical skills and creative vision.

Respondent Lecturer 2 revealed;

Guiding photography students to strike a balance between the convenience of smartphone photography and the development of technical skills and creative vision is a crucial aspect of their training. Trainers emphasize the importance of understanding that while

smartphones offer convenience and immediacy, they should not overshadow the necessity for honing technical skills and nurturing creative vision. By instilling a foundation of traditional photography techniques, trainers provide students with a robust understanding of composition, lighting, storytelling, and artistic vision. Emphasizing technical proficiency enables students to elevate their craft beyond the limitations of smartphone photography, fostering a deeper understanding of the art form. However, trainers also recognize the value of smartphone photography as a tool for creativity, experimentation, spontaneity, and immediate storytelling. Encouraging students to strike a balance between both worlds allows them to leverage the accessibility of smartphones while continuing to develop their technical skills and creative vision, thereby enhancing their versatility and adaptability in the ever-evolving field of photography (C. Darko, personal communication, November 12, 2023).

The researcher observed that, on university campuses and youth gathering spots (such as Takoradi Fest and Labadi Beach), individuals were observed engaging in purposeful visual storytelling, curating compositions, adjusting light angles, and using editing apps in real-time. Some arranged props or guided their peers to take “perfect shots” using the rule-of-thirds or low-angle framing. Others were seen reviewing filters and layouts before posting. This supports the idea that smartphone photography fosters artistic experimentation and visual literacy. Students and youth, especially, were seen using platforms like VSCO, Snapseed, and Lightroom Mobile, revealing a growing culture of editing finesse and intentional aesthetics. Thus, smartphones are no longer seen as casual gadgets but as creative studios, enabling users to frame not just images but meaning and emotion. This aligns with Caoduro’s (2014) argument that smartphones facilitate the cultivation of visual habits and aesthetic practices that go beyond mere documentation, functioning as tools of creative self-expression. Similarly, Hand (2017) observes that digital photography via mobile phones has ushered in an era where users consciously produce images that are curated, edited, and stylized, often mimicking professional techniques. In addition, Pangrazio and

Selwyn (2019) emphasize that young people develop visual and platform literacy through regular engagement with editing apps and visual platforms, blending creativity with digital fluency.

Furthermore, Lister et al. (2009) argue that digital technologies redefine the relationship between media users and creative production. Through intuitive apps and immediate feedback loops from social platforms, smartphone users learn to think visually and compositionally, a trait previously reserved for trained photographers and artists.

4.5.5 Social Sharing:

Smartphone photography facilitates instant sharing of photos across social media platforms, fostering communication and storytelling. Instant Sharing of visual images is a key role that smartphones play in this regard. Smartphone cameras allow immediate capture and sharing of moments on social media platforms. This immediacy fosters real-time communication and connection with friends, family, and wider audiences. As reported by Broz (2023), Images captured on smartphones become a tool for storytelling. Users share their experiences, emotions, and narratives visually, engaging their audience through compelling visuals on various social platforms, in a similar opinion shared by respondent expert 2.

Due to Social media platforms centered around smartphone photography, users to create and share their work, receive feedback, and engage with a community of fellow photographers, fostering learning, inspiration, and collaboration (E. Asare, personal communication, December 4, 2023).

Compelling smartphone-captured images can quickly gain traction, going viral and reaching a vast audience within a short span, impacting conversations, awareness,

and trends. Smartphone photography plays a crucial role in personal and brand image building. Consistently sharing high-quality, visually appealing content can shape perceptions and influence audiences. In essence, smartphone photography's integration with social media platforms has transformed and enhanced the creation of visual images and the way people communicate, share experiences, build communities, and influence perceptions by leveraging the power of visual content.

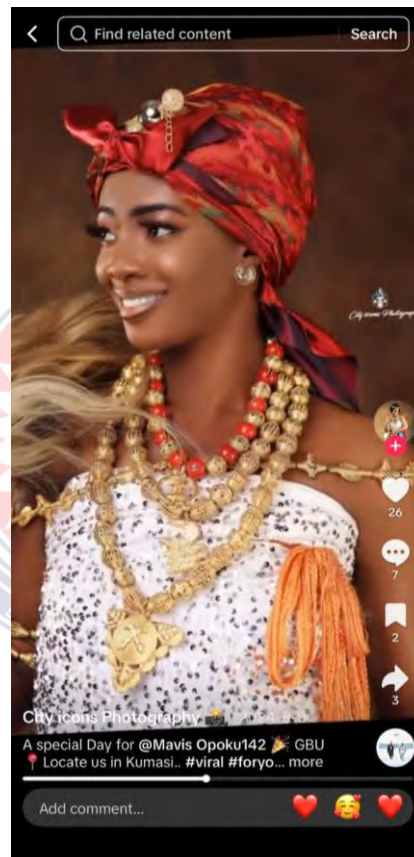


Figure 4.13 Social Sharing with smartphone Photographs

Source: (City Icons Photography, 2024)

Also, the role of smartphones in facilitating social sharing as a result of the creation and dissemination of visual images is vividly accounted for in the response of respondent Expert 3.

Smartphone photography holds a pivotal role in our personal experiences of creating and sharing visual images in Ghana. These devices have become indispensable tools that empower us to document our daily lives, cultural events, and societal occurrences. They offer convenience,

allowing us to capture moments instantaneously and share them seamlessly on various platforms. Our smartphones serve as our creative companions, enabling us to express ourselves artistically and preserve our memories... Moreover, smartphone photography has democratized visual storytelling and has allowed us to reclaim control over our creations and share authentic and diverse perspectives of Ghanaian life. These images showcase our culture, traditions, and societal experiences, contributing to a more comprehensive portrayal of our country's visual landscape. They foster connections, promote understanding, and highlight the richness of Ghana's cultural diversity (personal communication, December 4, 2023).

In Ghanaian societies, smartphone photography occupies a prominent role in shaping contemporary visual narratives. Its accessibility and immediacy have facilitated a shift in the way stories are told and shared. Individuals leverage smartphone cameras to document cultural practices, social issues, and personal experiences, thereby contributing to a multifaceted representation of Ghana's cultural heritage. The proliferation of smartphone-generated content disseminated through social media platforms has amplified the visibility of Ghanaian visual culture, reaching diverse audiences both locally and globally. The prevalent use of smartphone photography has redefined the creation and dissemination of visual images in Ghanaian societies. It functions as a democratic tool for self-expression, enabling individuals to reclaim control over their representation and narratives. Smartphone cameras have become instrumental in capturing pivotal moments, cultural celebrations, and everyday life, fostering a shared visual language that transcends geographical boundaries. This visual storytelling medium reflects the mosaic of Ghanaian societies, showcasing the country's cultural richness and diversity.

Across all sites observed, images captured were frequently and immediately uploaded to social media platforms. WhatsApp statuses were the most used, followed by Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok. During a traditional dance performance in Cape Coast, observers noted how several teenagers live-streamed the event or posted short

clips minutes after capturing them. In another instance, a street artist in Jamestown was observed photographing his mural with a smartphone and uploading it to Facebook.

These behaviours reflect smartphone photography's centrality in social participation and cultural documentation. Users act not just as passive consumers but as active creators and curators of Ghanaian visual culture. This "instantaneous sharing" fosters digital connectivity, amplifies cultural visibility, and often serves advocacy purposes, especially in contexts of social activism or community mobilization. This aligns with Van Dijck (2013), who argues that social media platforms have transformed the logic of image sharing from personal memory-making to public social participation, where users engage in real-time dissemination of visual content. Similarly, Couldry (2012) emphasizes the "mediatization of everyday life," where individuals increasingly use digital platforms to represent, share, and perform cultural identities. In Ghana specifically, Meyer and Moors (2006) observe how digital media practices contribute to cultural circulation and visibility, particularly among youth communities who blend traditional symbols with digital aesthetics to reach broader audiences.

Furthermore, Highfield and Leaver (2016) highlight the importance of "vernacular creativity" on social media, where everyday users document local events and cultural practices through smartphone images, creating bottom-up archives of contemporary life. This participatory image culture allows users to construct and project identity, build community, and shape collective memory through shared visuals.

4.5 Challenges Faced by Professional Photographers in Ghana Due to the Rise of Smartphone Photography.

The rapid proliferation of smartphone technology has democratised image-making, allowing virtually anyone with a mobile device to capture and distribute photographs instantly. While this development has expanded access to visual expression and documentation, it has also disrupted the traditional structures of professional photography in Ghana. The findings from this study reveal that the rise of smartphone photography has introduced a complex set of challenges for professional photographers, ranging from economic displacement and market competition to issues of artistic authenticity, copyright, and evolving client expectations. Participants indicated a number of challenges that confront that has led to a growing perception among clients that professional photography is no longer indispensable for certain events or purposes. Furthermore, the accessibility of editing applications and online tutorials has enabled non-professionals to replicate some aspects of professional photography.

4.5.1 Challenges for Professional Photography

Few innovations in the quick-paced field of photography have had as big an impact as the emergence of smartphone camera photography. Clearly, from the accounts of participants, the introduction of cameras on smartphones signaled a revolution in photography. With the constant advancement of camera features, such as pixel count and sophisticated image processing algorithms, smartphone photography has become increasingly popular as a competitive substitute for conventional digital cameras. While smartphones have brought a new level of convenience and accessibility into the photography landscape, professional photographers are caught between the following identified challenges and opportunities they present, according to the respondents.

- Interference with Professional Practice
- Dominance
- Threat to professional Creativity
- Intensive Competition
- Attack on photography ethics.

4.5.1.1 Interference with Professional Practice

The emergence of smartphone photography has significantly disrupted the professional photography landscape in Ghana. Many respondents noted that the increasing accessibility of smartphones equipped with advanced camera systems has diminished public reliance on professional photographers for both personal and commercial purposes. As professional photographer 1 observed,

“...because so many people may now shoot their images for personal or even commercial use, there is less of a need for professional photographers. Having more amateur and smartphone photographers in the practice of photography might be distracting and make it more difficult for professionals to catch unscripted situations... Additionally, event planners can decide to depend entirely on participant-generated content, which could underestimate the skill and knowledge that professional photographers bring to the table” (E. Aquah, personal communication, September 19, 2023).

This concern was echoed by other respondents who expressed frustration about the growing intrusion of non-professionals into what was once a specialised field.

Professional Photographer 2 remarked that,

“These days, every guest at an event holds a phone and wants to take the best shot. They stand in front of us, block our view, and sometimes ruin the main photo moment. It feels like fighting for space in our own profession” (K. Nartey, personal communication, September 21, 2023).

Similarly, Professional Photographer 3 lamented the decline in client appreciation for photographic artistry, stating,

“People now think photography is just about owning a good phone. They forget that behind every great image is composition, lighting, and a creative eye trained over years of practice” (A. Mensah, personal communication, September 24, 2023).

Another respondent highlighted the commercial implications of this shift, noting that,

“Clients now negotiate poorly, saying, ‘my nephew can take it with his iPhone.’ It has reduced our earnings and the respect attached to our work” (J. Osei, personal communication, September 25, 2023).

These field insights align with McCosker and Wilken’s (2020) argument that the widespread use of smartphones for photography has blurred the boundaries between amateur and professional practice, often limiting photographers’ creative autonomy. The oversaturation of photographic images in digital spaces makes it difficult for audiences to distinguish between high-quality professional work and smartphone-generated content. Professional photographers, however, maintain that their expertise, honed through years of technical and aesthetic training, enables them to manipulate light, framing, and editing in ways no automated smartphone function can replicate. Empirical evidence from the field further illustrates how smartphone users have gradually encroached on traditional professional spaces. For example, Figure 4.13 shows smartphone photographers competing with professionals during a marriage ceremony in Ghana, often obstructing professional camera angles and interrupting workflow.



Figure 4.13: Smartphone photographers taking over professional photographers' space at a marriage ceremony in Ghana

Source: (Fieldwork, 2024)

This phenomenon is consistent with historical trends in the evolution of photography. When professional photography first became coupled with mobile phones in the early 2000s, Thomson and Shebab-Uddin (2023) observed that it revolutionised the practice by making cameras constantly available to users. As Okabe and Ito (2006) explained, having a camera at hand at all times encouraged people to document their daily lives and social experiences, making image-making a habitual part of social interaction. With continued technological improvements, smartphones surpassed standalone cameras in popularity in the 2010s (Peidis, 2021). These devices now include features such as enhanced low-light sensors, multiple lenses, and built-in editing algorithms, making photography both easier and more automated. However, as McCosker and Wilken (2020) caution, the same automation that enhances image quality also diminishes the photographer's creative agency by imposing algorithmic

interpretations of visual scenes. This trend mirrors the sentiments of Ghanaian photographers who feel that their artistic control is being replaced by machine-led composition and digital enhancement. In sum, the testimonies of professional photographers, supported by existing scholarship, reveal that smartphone photography has not only altered the tools and techniques of image-making but has also disrupted the professional economy, creative authority, and social value once accorded to the photographic profession.

4.6.2 Dominance

The prevailing dominant takeover by smartphone photography poses a serious challenge to professional photographers. The proliferation of social media and photo-sharing platforms has led to a shift in how people consume and share photos. People used to print out their photos and put them in albums or frames to hang in the house, but now that smartphone photography has become more popular, anyone with a smartphone and an internet connection can share their photos online, opening up photography to a wider audience. In an interview with respondent professional photographer 3, it was stated;

One notable challenge is the overwhelming dominance of smartphones and digital media. The allure and convenience of smartphones have overshadowed the appreciation for traditional artistic expressions. Educating the youth about the depth and significance of our traditional forms requires innovative approaches that bridge the gap between the appeal of smartphones and the historical importance of traditional photography and art forms. Balancing the intrinsic value of traditional art forms with the appeal of modern technology remains a pressing challenge (A. Mensah, personal communication, December 4, 2023).

In a similar vein, another respondent recounted;

The pervasive rise of smartphone photography poses several challenges for professional photographers, artists, and creatives within the Ghanaian visual culture. The accessibility and prevalence of smartphones blur the

distinction between amateur and professional work. This phenomenon challenges professionals to differentiate their expertise and artistic merit amid a landscape where smartphone cameras cater to widespread photographic needs. The competitive nature of the visual culture driven by smartphone photography necessitates continuous innovation and differentiation for photographers and artists to maintain their distinctiveness and relevance.



Figure 4.14 Smartphone users dominantly taking pictures at functions

Source: (Researcher's fieldwork, El, Studios, 2024)

The above responses of respondents Professional 1 and Professional 3 confirm the studies of Lumas (2023), Montgomery & Mingis (2022), Peidis (2021), and Thomson (2019) that the birth of smartphones with multiple cameras within the last decade has given rise to an overwhelming dominance in the act and art of photography. Considering the responses of the participants of the study, the photography industry has been greatly impacted by the advent of smartphone photography. It has altered how people see and share photographs and made smartphone photography more approachable and dominant than the traditional art of photography by professionals.

4.6.3 Intensive Competition

The rise of smartphone photography and the intensive competition it seemingly poses to professional photographers has changed the way that people consume and share photos. In the past, photos would typically be printed and placed in albums or frames to be displayed in the home. However, with the proliferation of social media and

photo-sharing platforms, many people now choose to share their photos online, Since there is no specific mechanism for screening the type of visual image disseminated and quality checks, Professional photographers in Ghana face a dual landscape of challenges due to the widespread use of smartphones for photography. Some perceive the influx of smartphone-generated content as intensifying competition and diminishing the perceived value of professional expertise. However, others view it as an opportunity to adapt their skills, diversify services, and leverage social media platforms for wider reach and engagement.



Figure 4.15 Smartphones with available editing softwares
Source: (Researcher's fieldwork, 2025)

In the estimation of the respondents, a chunk of these smartphone photographs regarding the high functionalities of the devices they use threatens the available opportunities and work of professional photographers. Practically, everyone has the opportunity to engage in photography, as anyone with a smartphone and an internet connection can now share their photos with the world. In an interview with respondent professional photographer 3, it was revealed that

While smartphone photography has made the field more accessible, it also poses an intensive competitive challenge, an intensified competition between the ailing professional photographers as a result of smartphone emergence. The phenomenon appears to be changing industry standards and evolving client preferences. Maybe the onus lies on professional photographers navigating the evolving technological landscape and continuously upgrading skills to remain relevant in a digitally-driven era (G. Asare, personal communication, October 11, 2023).

A similar opinion was shared by respondent professional photographer 3

The photography industry is cutthroat, and the challenges of being a photographer are endless. With a pool of talented photographers, all vying for the same bookings and clients, it can be tough to stand out from the crowd. After all the efforts you put into your photography business, it might be frustrating, to say the least, when you're not seeing enough bookings or struggling with the confidence to raise your prices because of the advent of smartphone photography... with an iPhone, someone can take up your work (A. Mensah, personal communication, November 2, 2023).

The responses of professional Photographer 4 and professional Photographer 3 corroborate the studies of Allan (2014a; Glaser, 2007; Grahek, 2023) that smartphone photography has become omnipresent, and this technology has changed the public's reaction to dramatic situations: People used to stand there in shock, but now they take a picture (Lacey, 2011).

The proliferation of millions of mobile devices equipped with easy-to-use, high-resolution cameras has ushered in what Twist (2005) terms "*pocket journalism*." This phenomenon has transformed audiences into active participants and content creators who can capture, edit, and disseminate visual narratives in real time from virtually any location. In Ghana's visual culture, this democratization of image-making has blurred the boundaries between professional and amateur practice, giving rise to a new form of competition in the photography and videography industry.

Professional photographers now contend with a growing population of smartphone users who position themselves as visual storytellers capable of producing

commercially viable content. This shift has introduced significant challenges in areas such as client engagement, exhibition opportunities, and creative project collaborations. Many clients perceive smartphone photography as a cost-effective and accessible alternative, often prioritising convenience over artistic and technical quality. As a result, professional photographers face reduced opportunities to secure assignments and showcase their work in formal exhibition spaces.

This sentiment was captured succinctly by **Professional Photographer 1**, who remarked:

Competition with smartphone photographers poses specific challenges in client engagements, exhibition opportunities, and creative projects within Ghana's visual culture. Clients often perceive smartphone photography as a viable and cost-effective alternative, impacting professional photographers' ability to secure engagements. Furthermore, exhibitions and creative projects might incline towards smartphone-generated content due to its immediate accessibility and reliability. This creates a challenge for professional photographers to demonstrate the depth of their artistic vision and technical expertise. As a lecturer, I advocate for photographers to emphasize the value of their specialized skills, unique storytelling abilities, and the emotional depth conveyed through their work to stand out in a competitive environment (E. Aquah, personal communication, September 19, 2023).

The views of this respondent reflect a wider industry concern about the undervaluation of professional artistry in an era dominated by digital convenience. Similar findings by McCosker and Wilken (2020) reveal that the proliferation of smartphone-generated content has eroded the distinctiveness once associated with professional photography, as audiences often find it difficult to differentiate between curated artistic expression and algorithmically enhanced images. Likewise, Peidis (2021) notes that advancements in smartphone technology, such as AI-powered image enhancement and automated video stabilization, have further intensified this competition by allowing non-professionals to produce high-quality visual outputs with minimal effort.

Consequently, the assumption that smartphone photography holds equal merit to professional work undermines both the economic and creative sustainability of professional photographers and videographers. Beyond financial implications, this shift also challenges the recognition and institutional appreciation of photographic craft in exhibitions, competitions, and academic settings. Professional photographers are thus compelled to reassert their creative authority by foregrounding elements that technology alone cannot replicate, such as narrative intentionality, emotional resonance, and mastery of composition and lighting. In essence, the rise of smartphone photography has transformed Ghana's visual culture into a contested space where technological accessibility meets artistic professionalism. The testimonies from the field underscore the urgent need for professional photographers and videographers to adapt, innovate, and educate audiences on the enduring value of their craft amidst growing digital competition.

4.6.4 Attack on Photography Ethics and Ghana's Cultural Practices

The study revealed that the rise of smartphone photography within Ghana's visual culture has brought profound ethical and cultural implications for professional photographers, artists, and other creatives. Respondents consistently expressed concern that while technological innovation has made image-making more democratic, it has also diluted the ethical and cultural foundations upon which professional practice was built as observed *in figure 4.16 below*.



Figure 4.17 A Smartphone User Unethically displaying use of smartphone photography

Source: (Researcher's fieldwork, 2025)

Professional photographers in particular observed that the ease of capturing and disseminating images has led to a blurring of ethical boundaries relating to privacy, consent, and accuracy in visual storytelling. Many participants argued that smartphone photography has disrupted the delicate balance between creative freedom and cultural respect. Ethical dilemmas often arise from the uncontrolled circulation of images, where photographs taken in private or sacred spaces are shared on social media without permission or cultural sensitivity. This has led to instances of misrepresentation and exploitation of Ghanaian traditional ceremonies, festivals, and communal events. The photographers interviewed highlighted the need for clear ethical guidelines and responsible digital practices to preserve authenticity, safeguard subjects' dignity, and uphold the cultural integrity of visual narratives. As Professional Photographer 3 lamented,

“Some people now record sacred moments on their phones and post them online without understanding the cultural meaning behind them. What used to be private or spiritually significant is now turned into entertainment. This is not only unethical but erodes respect for our traditions” (A. Mensah, personal communication, September 24, 2023).

This sentiment was reinforced by Professional Photographer 2, who noted that the commodification of photography through smartphone use has weakened public appreciation for the depth, craftsmanship, and cultural symbolism that professional photographers bring to their work. The immediate gratification of capturing and sharing images often overshadows the contemplative and interpretive processes that define professional visual art. The findings thus suggest that smartphone photography, while expanding participation in visual culture, has simultaneously challenged professional ethics and traditional values in Ghanaian artistic practice. As scholars such as McCosker and Wilken (2020) and Peidis (2021) argue, the ubiquity of smartphones has transformed photography from a specialised art into a social performance governed by digital immediacy rather than reflective creativity. For Ghanaian professionals, the core challenge now lies in harmonising technological advancement with cultural respect, ensuring that photography continues to serve as a medium of truth, reverence, and identity rather than mere spectacle.

The ubiquitous presence of smartphones has led to a commodification of photography and artistic expression. There's a risk of overlooking the depth, skill, and cultural significance inherent in traditional photography and artistic endeavors. The challenge for professionals lies in balancing technological advancements with the essence of artistic expression to maintain the integrity and value of their work within the evolving landscape dominated by smartphone photography. This was evident in the responses of respondents Professional Photographer 3 and Professional Photographer 2.

Initially, the practice of smartphone photography was limited to taking personal pictures and capturing moments... currently, users are abusing the practice to the extent that prominent people in society, government officials are subjected to social media abuses through the exposure of their nudes and terrible images in the visual space (G. Asare, personal communication, October 11, 2023).

A respondent (Professional photographer) stated that:

People pictured are in public positions, with no reasonable expectation of privacy being divulged. However, each of the photos is captioned in an amusing, but often derogatory way, which can amount to defamation of character and thus, libel (A. Mensah, personal communication, November 2, 2023).

It is evident from the responses above that professional photographers feel threatened in the wake of smartphone photography, which directly has legal implications on the face of Ghana's 1992 Constitution regarding human rights abuses. In Ghana, Article 18 of the 1992 constitution guarantees the fundamental right to privacy of citizens. It provides that;

No person shall be subjected to interference with the privacy of his home, property, correspondence, or communication except by law and as may be necessary for a free and democratic society for public safety or the economic well-being of the country, for the protection of health or morals, for the prevention of disorder or crime or the protection of the rights or freedoms of others.

There are also provisions within legislation, such as the Electronic Transactions Act [4] and the Data Protection Act (5), which protect the collection and use of personal information and private data, such as house addresses and telephone numbers. In the criminal context, sections 67 and 68 of the Cyber Security Act (6) explicitly prohibit the sharing and the threat of disclosing private, sexual photos or videos of another person without their consent. While the legal debate over smartphone photography privacy invasion continues, smartphone owners have the freedom to take pictures and videos of anyone venturing out into public space for consumption, hence the challenge.

Trainers (respondents) recognize the potential challenges and opportunities inherent in the ethical considerations associated with sharing smartphone photographs on social media platforms. One of the primary challenges involves the absence of training or exposure of smartphone users to comprehend the ethical implications of their visual images in a digital age. Privacy, consent, and cultural sensitivity are crucial aspects that trainers emphasize when sharing photographs on social media. Additionally, the ease of sharing images on these platforms can lead to issues of copyright infringement or misuse of visual content. With the lack of guidance on responsible image-sharing practices, understanding digital rights, and respecting cultural sensitivities, trainers empower students to fall victim to these challenges ethically. Moreover, social media offers immense opportunities for exposure, networking, and engagement. Meanwhile, Smartphone users, instead of leveraging these platforms as tools for professional growth, building a digital presence, and reaching diverse audiences while upholding ethical standards, the situation is the reverse.

4.6.5 Threat to Professional Creativity

The respondents consensually recounted that the accessibility and prevalence of smartphones have blurred the distinction between professional and amateur work. As a result, there's heightened competition for professional photographers and artists to differentiate their craft in a market where almost everyone has access to a camera on their smartphones. Regarding certain events or casual photography needs, clients opt for more cost-effective smartphone photographers rather than hiring professionals. However, there remains a considerable demand for specialized skills, creative expertise, and distinctive artistic vision that professional photographers and artists bring to the table. Their ability to offer unique perspectives, technical expertise, and

high-quality, curated visual images continues to be valued, especially in commercial, editorial, or specialized photography services.

In an interview with Photography Trainer 1, it was stated that

...mobile editing apps and filters have impacted the style of visual images, with trends leaning towards vibrant, stylized visuals and creative manipulations... Social media platforms like Instagram have popularized new compositional styles and storytelling techniques. Furthermore, smartphone photography has encouraged experimentation, allowing photographers to explore diverse visual styles and aesthetics, thus contributing to the evolving visual language in Ghanaian photography. Trainers emphasize the importance of acknowledging these influences while nurturing students' abilities to critically analyze and innovate within this changing landscape (G. Baafour, personal communication, October 3, 2023).

The response of Photography Trainer is a pressing challenge that has significantly influenced the creative aesthetics and style of visual images in Ghana, shaping a new history in the presentation of visual images. Trainers acknowledge that the accessibility of smartphones has democratized photography, fostering a shift toward more candid, immediate, and authentic visual storytelling. The prevalence of smartphone cameras has influenced aesthetics by introducing a preference for spontaneous, raw, and unfiltered moments captured in everyday life.

In a similar vein, it was revealed by Professional Photography 3 that.

The growing prevalence of smartphone photography poses challenges for photographers, artists, and creatives. One challenge lies in the perception that anyone with a smartphone can be a photographer, which may lead to a devaluation of professional expertise. This could impact the livelihoods of professional photographers and artists as clients might opt for more cost-effective options. Moreover, the sheer volume of visual content flooding social media platforms creates a challenge for artists and photographers to stand out amidst the noise. As a professional, I emphasize the need for photography professionals to differentiate their work by emphasizing their unique artistic vision, storytelling, and technical proficiency. Additionally, navigating the ethical considerations

and maintaining authenticity amidst the saturation of visual content becomes imperative for professionals (A. Mensah, personal communication, November 12, 2023).

The assertion of respondent Professional 3 is in line with the findings of Yang (2021) that smartphone photography has had a profound impact on global professional photographic practice and visual culture, democratizing visual storytelling and fostering a more diverse, inclusive, and interconnected world. Its accessibility, immediacy, and ability to transcend geographical boundaries have transformed how cultures are represented and shared globally, creating an oversaturation, authenticity, and ethically unacceptable situation as posited by Bartholeyns (2014b).

On the contrary, respondent Lecturer 1 shares a different opinion that the evolution of smartphones and their integration into photography has revolutionized the photography industry in Ghana, with the democratized smartphone photography, making it more accessible to a wider population. Smartphones have become ubiquitous, serving as portable, high-quality cameras that people carry with them daily. This accessibility has led to an explosion of visual content creation, empowering individuals to document and share their perspectives effortlessly. Additionally, it has transformed the way photography is perceived, challenging traditional norms by blurring the line between amateur and professional photography. As a lecturer, I emphasize to my students the importance of adapting to these advancements, leveraging smartphone technology as a tool for creativity and storytelling while ensuring a continued focus on honing foundational photography skills. Concerning the threat to professional creativity, another opinion shared by respondent Lecturer 2 was that;

I foresee an increased decentralization of storytelling, where individuals have greater control over their visual image creation. This evolution may disrupt

existing hierarchies within visual representation, providing opportunities for marginalized voices to gain prominence. This infusion of masses into the field of photography to a large extent limits instilling critical thinking, ethical awareness, and a deep understanding of cultural sensitivity; hence, impacting creativity greatly (C. Darko, personal communication, October 9, 2023).

The impact of smartphones on photography in Ghana, as described by Lecturer 2, *“cannot be overstated; it has completely reshaped both how we consume and how we produce images.”* The lecturer explained that the convenience and accessibility of smartphones have facilitated an immediate and continuous flow of visual content, altering how individuals engage with photography and visual narratives. This technological evolution has shifted photographic practices towards spontaneity, immediacy, and intimacy. As Lecturer 2 elaborated, *“Photography has become more of a daily ritual; people capture moments as they happen without waiting for special occasions or professional setups.”* This reflects how smartphones have blurred the boundaries between professional artistry and everyday self-documentation. However, the rise of smartphone photography has not been without consequence for Ghana’s professional photographers. Professional Photographer 3 lamented that, *“Nowadays, everyone with a phone thinks they are a photographer. Clients often don’t see why they should pay more when a friend can take similar pictures on their phone.”* This sentiment underscores the growing challenge of devaluation of professional expertise within an oversaturated visual market. The accessibility of smartphones has lowered the entry barriers into the creative space, resulting in intensified competition and shifting audience expectations. As the respondent continued, *“The flood of phone pictures on social media has made it harder for us to stand out. Sometimes it feels like our years of training and investment in equipment don’t count for much anymore.”* This perceived erosion of professional credibility aligns with Smith (2016) and Edwards and Smith (2018), who caution that the technological invasion of

smartphone photography compromises the depth and quality of visual storytelling, widening the gap between smartphone imagery and professional-grade productions. Furthermore, Jenkins et al. (2019) and Lin and Lu (2020) note that the prevalence of digital enhancements in smartphone photography has blurred the line between authenticity and manipulation, raising questions about the ethical integrity of visual narratives. Professional 2, in this study, reinforced this concern, stating that, “*There’s so much editing now that truth is often lost. You look at a photo and can’t tell what’s real anymore.*” The influx of smartphone-generated imagery has consequently created a professional environment where maintaining artistic integrity and originality is increasingly difficult. **Photographer 1** commented that, “*You must adapt fast or be forgotten. The trends change every few months — filters, poses, editing styles — and clients expect you to follow.*” This adaptation pressure, while fostering innovation, also risks diluting creative identity. As professionals seek to balance artistic expression with commercial viability, they find themselves negotiating between technology-driven trends and the essence of traditional photographic craftsmanship. Despite these challenges, smartphone photography has significantly democratised visual storytelling in Ghana. It has empowered ordinary individuals to document and share their personal experiences and social realities. Student Photographer 4 observed that, “*My phone gives me the power to tell my own story, I don’t need to wait for a professional or a journalist to represent me.*” This accessibility has amplified previously marginalised voices, fostering inclusivity and diversity in Ghana’s visual culture. Cultural Commentator 1 noted that, “*For the first time, we are seeing everyday Ghanaians narrate their own stories through pictures, from market women to trotro drivers, everyone is a storyteller now.*” Such democratisation aligns with the idea that smartphone photography functions as a tool of empowerment and self-

expression. It enables citizens to reclaim control over their visual identities, challenge stereotypes, and contribute to collective memory. The immediacy of smartphones fosters real-time storytelling, bridging personal and communal narratives. As Lecturer 3 put it, *“Photography is no longer a luxury; it’s a language that everyone speaks daily through their phones.”* Moreover, the integration of social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, and WhatsApp has intensified the participatory nature of smartphone photography. Respondent 6, a young creative, expressed that, *“Posting my photos online and seeing people like and comment makes me want to do more; it pushes me to improve and experiment.”* This feedback loop not only nurtures creativity but also enhances visibility and motivation among emerging photographers. According to Participant 7, *“Social media has become our exhibition space. We don’t need galleries anymore to show our work.”* This shift towards virtual platforms signifies a redefinition of artistic spaces and audiences in the digital age. However, the rise of social media as a visual sharing arena brings its own set of ethical and psychological challenges. Professional photographer 5 remarked that, *“The pressure to post perfect pictures can be exhausting. Sometimes it feels like we’re performing for likes rather than telling real stories.”* The demand for consistency, audience engagement, and algorithmic visibility often shapes creative choices, leading to a commodification of visual expression. These dynamics mirror the concerns of Tifentale (2021), who argues that digital photography has transformed from a medium of expression into a tool of social validation and self-promotion. In the Ghanaian context, the proliferation of smartphone photography has also influenced the types of stories being told. As Professional photographer observed, *“Now, people show everyday realities the street food seller, the rainy day, the celebration in the village, things we never used to see in professional studios.”* This shift from posed,

commercialised imagery to authentic, candid narratives enriches the nation's visual culture with diverse and relatable perspectives. It has also encouraged cultural documentation, allowing the visual archiving of contemporary Ghanaian life in its unfiltered form. Nevertheless, tensions remain between innovation and preservation within the professional community. Professional Photographer 2 cautioned that, "*If we rely too much on phones, we'll forget the craft, the lighting, composition, and discipline that make photography an art.*" This concern underscores the need for balance between embracing new technologies and upholding professional ethics and standards. Ultimately, smartphone photography has redefined the boundaries of Ghana's photographic landscape. It has made photography more inclusive, interactive, and immediate, while simultaneously challenging notions of professionalism, authorship, and authenticity. As Lecturer 2 aptly summarised, "*The smartphone has become both a gift and a test for Ghanaian photography, it gives everyone a voice but also forces us to question what makes an image truly valuable.*" The collective responses reveal that while smartphone photography empowers individuals and broadens participation in visual culture, it also provokes existential questions for professional photographers striving to maintain artistic depth and ethical integrity in a rapidly evolving digital ecosystem.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter recaps the major findings of the study. Based on the finding's conclusions were drawn, from which corresponding recommendations have been given. It also offers potential areas for further research based on the outcome of the study. The findings, conclusions, and recommendations have been itemized for ease of verification.

5.2 Summary of Findings

Throughout the preceding chapters, the study delved into various facets of smartphone camera photography, the prevalence and patterns of smartphone camera photography in Ghana and dissected its influence on Ghanaian visual culture to reveal the influence of smartphone camera photography on social media and its impact. The study explored the democratization of visual storytelling facilitated by smartphones, highlighting how these devices have empowered individuals across diverse socio-economic backgrounds in Ghana to engage actively in image creation and dissemination. It probed into the shift, considering aspects such as the redefinition of traditional art forms, the evolution of visual narratives, and the democratization of artistic expression.

Regarding the prevalence and patterns of smartphones and their cameras, the early 2000s saw smartphones dominate Ghana's mobile device market; these phones were primarily used for calls and basic texting due to their limited functionality. However, as technology advanced, smartphones began to appear; the first iPhone was released in 2007, ushering in the smartphone age, and the first smartphones with multiple cameras were released in 2014.

Global factors have an impact on some unique features of Ghana's smartphone acceptance and history, but overall, the country follows international trends. Early in the new millennium, smartphones dominated Ghana's mobile device market. Due to their limited functionality, these phones were primarily used for texting and making simple calls.

The research illuminated the intersections between technology, identity, and cultural heritage, shedding light on how smartphone photography acts as a catalyst for the preservation, re-interpretation, and dissemination of Ghanaian cultural practices, rituals, and heritage sites. By examining how individuals leverage these devices to capture and share moments of everyday life, festivities, and rituals, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of how technology intertwines with cultural identity in Ghana.

The evolution of smartphone photography in Ghana mirrors global technological trends but also reflects unique national developments. The first smartphone, the IBM Simon, launched in 1994, laid the groundwork for today's multifunctional devices. In Ghana, smartphone adoption began in the early 1990s with networks like Mobitel (now Tigo), with usage growing significantly by the early 2000s.

Initially used for basic communication, smartphones evolved with internet access, apps, and cameras, becoming integral tools for photography. By the mid-2010s, increased affordability and camera improvements made smartphones widely accessible in Ghana, boosting their popularity as photographic tools. Brands like Blackberry, Nokia, and Samsung pioneered this shift. Respondents highlighted how

smartphones enabled self-documentation and spontaneous photography, reshaping the visual landscape.

Smartphone photography was initially met with skepticism, but advances in camera technology, paired with social media growth (e.g., Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp), transformed it into a powerful medium for self-expression, cultural preservation, and real-time reporting. It democratized photography, allowing ordinary citizens to document and share their lives, cultural events, and public happenings.

The prevalence of Smartphone photography has become a dominant visual practice in Ghana, driven by increasing access to affordable mobile devices. The widespread availability of smartphones since the mid-2000s, particularly after 2010, has led to a surge in photography activity.

Smartphone photography in Ghana reflects cultural, economic, generational, and spatial patterns. Ghanaians use smartphones to document daily life, promote businesses, and express creativity. Youth focus on aesthetics, while older users prioritize functionality. Urban users have more resources than rural ones. Social media platforms like WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok influence content style, reinforcing photography's role in storytelling and self-representation.

Regarding the influences of social media on Smartphone Photography and its impact on Ghanaian visual culture, the study showcases a pivotal transformation, aligning with fundamental human rights provisions. It aptly connects the use of smartphones for visual expression to the fundamental right of freedom of expression, in resonance with the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948. It further roots the practice in the constitutional fabric of Ghana, notably through Article 162 (3) of the 1992 constitution. This constitutional provision

explicitly safeguards the establishment and operation of media without undue government interference or censorship, underscoring the freedom of editors and publishers from governmental control regarding their editorial content. The research delved importantly into the ethical considerations woven into this right. It highlights the limitations of media freedom, as outlined in Article 164 of Ghana's constitution, which subjects the freedom of expression to reasonable limitations. These limitations are crucially linked to national security, public order, public morality, and the safeguarding of other individuals' reputations, rights, and freedoms. This connection between constitutional rights and ethical boundaries aligns with real-world examples prevalent in Ghana. Notably, the incidents involving the National Security Minister and the Kumasi Girls Senior High School students exemplify instances where the dissemination of certain media content breached ethical boundaries and elicited strong societal reactions. These incidents underscore the delicate balance required between media freedom and responsible usage, as unchecked dissemination can potentially compromise individuals' privacy, reputations, and public officeholders' credibility. Ultimately, the study provides a comprehensive understanding of the profound integration of smartphones into Ghanaian society. It elucidates the nuanced interplay between constitutional rights, ethical boundaries, and societal repercussions, offering invaluable insights into the intricate relationship between media freedom, ethical responsibilities, and societal values within the context of smartphone photography in Ghana.

Regarding how smartphone photography has modified the way stories are traditionally told, the platforms and techniques used in Ghana to share visual images have changed dramatically as a result of the popularity of smartphone photography. Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp, and other social media sites that go hand in hand

with smartphone use have become the main venues for sharing photos online. The research augments its findings by illuminating the role of smartphones in reshaping Ghana's visual narrative. Thanks to technological advancements, smartphone photography and image creation are mutually constitutive and constantly evolving. It is evolving more quickly, especially with the growing popularity of social media and more accessible technology, such as smartphone cameras, which are used in a range of settings and ways. The study established four key roles of smartphone photography in changing the traditional power dynamics of photography: convenience, accessibility, quality, creativity, and social sharing. It emphasizes the democratization of visual storytelling, empowering marginalized voices and amplifying diverse perspectives. However, amidst this empowerment, ethical considerations regarding privacy, cultural sensitivity, and misrepresentation loom large.

The widespread adoption of smartphones for photography in Ghana reflects the principles of the Technology Acceptance Model. According to TAM, the perceived ease of use and usefulness of a technology influence its adoption. In the context of smartphone photography, the convenience, accessibility, and affordability of smartphones have contributed to their rapid acceptance among Ghanaians. As discussed above, democratized photography has enabled more people to express themselves visually and share their perspectives with the world. This aligns with the TAM's focus on user perceptions and attitudes towards technology adoption.

The democratization of photography, facilitated by smartphones, is evident in the discussion of how smartphones have empowered individuals to document their lives, participate in visual storytelling, and challenge traditional power structures in representation. Smartphone photography has made storytelling more immediate,

approachable, and inclusive, allowing diverse narratives to emerge and be shared on social media platforms. This resonates with the concept of Democratization, which emphasizes the broadening of access and participation in cultural production and representation.

As camera features like pixel count and advanced image processing algorithms continue to advance, smartphone photography has become a more competitive alternative to traditional digital cameras. Even though smartphones have made photography more accessible and convenient, respondents to a survey on the subject said professional photographers are facing the following issues. The difficulties that professional photography faces from smartphone photography have been one of the biggest innovations in the fast-paced field of photography. According to the participants' accounts, the advent of smartphones with cameras marked a revolution of challenges confronting professional photographers, such as Interference with Professional Practice, Dominance, Threats to Professional Creativity, Intensive Competition, and an attack on photography ethics.

5.3 Conclusions

Research Objective One: The prevalence and patterns of smartphone photography in Ghana.

Global factors have had an impact on the development of Ghana's smartphone acceptance and history, but overall, the country (Ghana) follows international trends regarding its smartphone inception. Early in the new millennium, smartphones dominated Ghana's mobile device market. Due to the limited functionality of the earlier phones, they were used primarily for texting and making simple calls. However, as technology advanced, smartphones became more prevalent. The first iPhone was released in 2007, ushering in the era of smartphones. Smartphones like

Blackberry, Nokia Symbian, and early Android models started to gain popularity in Ghana because these devices not only allow users to make and receive calls, but they can also be used for email management, internet browsing, app usage, and photo taking. Due to their ease of use and accessibility in taking pictures with their phones, smartphone cameras were widely adopted, sparking a thriving culture around smartphone photography. Global advancements in camera technology throughout the 2010s led to a significant improvement in the quality of mobile device cameras. However, the smartphone camera was primarily used for impromptu moments in daily life, and its ability to transfer images from one device to another sets it apart from other photography equipment. The quality of some entry-level digital cameras has begun to be matched by smartphones. This development led to a boom in smartphone photography in Ghana. Due to its accessibility and convenience, people began using smartphone photography to record moments, which led to the growth of a thriving smartphone photography culture to date.

The evolution of smartphone photography in Ghana encapsulates a broader narrative of technological adaptation, cultural expression, and social transformation. From its early roots in basic communication to its current role as a tool for storytelling, entrepreneurship, and digital identity, smartphone photography has become deeply embedded in everyday Ghanaian life. Its widespread use across diverse demographics and spaces shaped by economic access, generational behaviors, and platform-specific norms highlights its significance not just as a technological trend but as a cultural practice. As smartphone technology continues to advance, its influence on Ghana's visual culture, self-representation, and social engagement is likely to deepen, affirming its place as a powerful medium of modern expression.

Research Objective Two: The contribution of social media smartphone photography.

The use of smartphone camera photography for social media has had a big impact and influence on Ghanaian visual culture. The responses obtained made it clear that social media (networking), which utilizes the network access of smartphones, has developed into a noteworthy new visual communication phenomenon in the Ghanaian communication space. The rise of the instantaneous sharing culture brought about by smartphone camera photography has increased demand for aesthetically appealing, high-quality photographic content. As a result, to satisfy consumer demand, smartphone makers are constantly enhancing camera capabilities and launching new features like AI-assisted photography, multiple lenses, and improved image processing. In addition to democratizing the art form and fostering creativity among smartphone photographers, social media provides a forum for the exchange of photography tips and editing techniques.

Research Objective Three: How Smartphone Photography Has Shaped Narratives and Representations of Ghanaian Identity and Heritage.

The oversimplification or misinterpretation of our traditions, which have been reduced to digital images for quick consumption, has posed a risk. This is because, despite the advantages of smartphone photography, which allows people to document their lives, cultural events, and social issues while showcasing their viewpoints and giving them a tool to regain control over their representation and narratives, social media representations of cultural practices or artifacts that are too simplistic have misrepresented their actual significance and minimized their complexity. Therefore, preserving the genuineness and essence of our cultural heritage remains a significant concern amidst the superficial and rapid nature of social media. Smartphone photography and image creation are interconnected and always changing due to

technological advancements. It is changing at a faster rate than before, particularly in light of the expanding use of social media and more widely available technologies like smartphone cameras, which are put to use in a variety of contexts. Therefore, there is a release of high-tech smartphone cameras with better lens technology, lighting, and high-definition resolution. It is estimated that a huge percentage of all photos taken each year are taken on smartphones. It is clear from these quick developments that smartphones play a crucial role in the production and distribution of visual images, and their significance cannot be undervalued. Developments show that smartphones play a crucial role in the production and distribution of visual images, and their significance cannot be undervalued.

Research Objective Four: Examining the roles of Smartphone Photography in the Creation and dissemination of Visual images in Ghanaian Societies

The study established five roles, and these were convenience, accessibility, quality, creativity, and social sharing, unanimously recognized by the respondents. Users can communicate visually with ease as a result of the easy integration of smartphone cameras with social media platforms, which makes it easier to share images instantly. Overall, the respondents agreed that the widespread ownership of smartphones, their affordability, their ease of use, and the removal of barriers like the need for specialized training or equipment are largely responsible for the accessibility of smartphone photography and its convenience of use. The convenience role of smartphones has democratized photography, enabling more people to express themselves visually and share their perspectives with the world. Technology advancement has tremendously enhanced the quality of smartphone cameras, enabling the capture of detailed and high-resolution photographs. The ongoing developments in

smartphone camera technology for photography have resulted in a notable improvement in image quality, compelling photography, and smartphone devotees to own a smartphone; a larger audience can now access photography and the creation of visual images. Smartphones are available with a range of price points and camera features. Even inexpensive models frequently have respectable camera features, making photography available to a larger range of people. Instantaneous photo sharing on social networking platforms through smartphone photography promotes dialogue and narrative. One of the main functions of smartphones in this context is the instantaneous sharing of visual images. Instantaneous moment capture and social media platform sharing are made possible by smartphone cameras. Real-time communication and connections with friends, family, and larger audiences are facilitated by this immediacy. In Ghana, the use of smartphones for photography is fundamental to individuals' experiences in producing and disseminating visual content. These gadgets have developed into essential tools that enable us to record social events, cultural events, and everyday life.

The prevailing dominant takeover by smartphone photography and the proliferation of social media and photo-sharing platforms have led to a shift in how people consume and share photos. People used to print out their photos and put them in albums or frames to hang in the house or share, but now that smartphone photography has become more popular, anyone with a smartphone and an internet connection can share their photos online, opening up photography to a wider audience and saving them in a more digital and protective space. Smartphones have become an indispensable instrument that empowers people to explore high-level creativity through the capture and instantaneous sharing of visual narratives. Smartphone photography plays a multifaceted and pivotal role in the creation and dissemination of

visual images within Ghanaian societies. Users can easily enhance their photos with the many apps, filters, and editing tools that are available.

The respondent's accounts make it evident that the advent of smartphones with cameras heralded a revolution in photography. As camera features like pixel count and advanced algorithms for image processing keep getting better, smartphone photography is becoming a more and more competitive alternative to traditional digital cameras. People with smartphones can record and share information, bringing to light diverse and frequently ignored stories. This redistribution of storytelling authority promotes a more inclusive representation in the visual landscape, undermining the monopoly of traditional power structures in forming societal perceptions. The emergence of smartphone photography has historically made storytelling more immediate, approachable, and interactive. Authenticity and spontaneity characterize the transition from traditional storytelling techniques to smartphone-based storytelling. With the advent of smartphone photography, people can now record and share stories in real-time, changing the way stories are traditionally presented and represented from preconceived compositions to fresh approaches. The research participants recognize the prevailing attitudes and anticipations regarding smartphone photography, which could potentially result in the devaluation of traditional photography. Given that smartphones are so widely used, there is a misconception that anyone can take photos, which makes professional training and artistic vision seem less significant. The difference between casual smartphone photos and the depth of professional photography worries respondents about these important perceptions.

Research Objective Five: *Discuss the challenges faced by professional photographers in Ghana due to the rise of smartphone photography.*

Although smartphones have brought a new level of convenience and accessibility to the field of photography, professional photographers face challenges like interference with professional practice, dominance, threats to professional creativity, intense competition, and attacks on photography ethics. People involved in the practice of smartphone photography now shoot their images for personal or even commercial use, and there is less of a need for professional photographers. This is anchored on the basis that smartphone photographs regarding the high functionalities of the devices threaten the available opportunities and work of professional photographers. Practically, everyone has the opportunity to engage in photography, as anyone with a smartphone and an internet connection can now share their photos with the world. More so, the equipment market for professional cameras has been impacted with respect to low patronage due to the advent of smartphone photography. Professional photographers used to take their pictures with expensive cameras and take time to render the output; however, with the popularity of smartphone photography, a lot of non-professional photographers can now capture comparable quality photos with just their phones.

For professional photographers, the increasing popularity of smartphone photography presents difficulties. One issue is the belief that anyone with a smartphone can take pictures, which could result in the value of professional experience being diminished. Professional photographers and artists are losing out on their livelihoods as a result of clients choosing less expensive options. This mass infiltration of smartphones in the photography industry restricts the ability to inculcate ethical consciousness, critical thinking, and a profound understanding of cultural

sensitivity.

The absence of ethical considerations as smartphone photography changes the power dynamics in representation is a great source of worry for professional photographers. They address issues with accuracy, privacy, and responsible storytelling. The ease of content sharing and the possibility of misrepresentation give rise to ethical quandaries.

A growing amount of content created with smartphones is thought to be increasing competition and devaluing professional knowledge. Smartphones with simple, built-in cameras have given rise to “pocket journalism,” which has converted viewers into potential professional photographers who compete by capturing and sharing events in real time.

The democratization of smartphone photography also poses challenges, such as the oversimplification or misrepresentation of cultural practices and the devaluation of professional expertise. These challenges underscore the need for critical engagement and ethical considerations in the context of democratized visual culture.

The conclusion of the research on smartphone photography in Ghanaian visual culture reflects the principles of the TAM, the concept of democratization, and the phenomenological social theory, highlighting the transformative impact of smartphone cameras on photography practices while also addressing associated challenges.

5.4 Recommendations

Based on the conclusions drawn from the findings of this study, in line with the research objectives, the following recommendations are made:

Objective One

Ghana has historically become a retail hub for smartphone producers, where production is made in Western countries and purchased to be sold for use in Ghana. It is recommended that, to ensure holistic and pragmatic development and protection of Ghana's Visual Culture (heritage), the Ghanaian culture must be the basis for technological development, with legislation guiding smartphones that are imported into the Ghanaian economy. There must be a conscious effort to take pride, preserve, and project the Ghanaian cultural heritage in the production and use of Smartphones for photography. In the longer term, there should be a conscious effort by professional photographers and photography lecturers to encourage their learners to develop locally relevant smartphone applications that can further enhance the utility and value of smartphone photography anchored on Ghanaian cultural values for Ghanaian users. Ghana can foster innovation and create solutions tailored to the specific needs and preferences of its population when the initiative is implemented. Building on the existing smartphone photography culture, stakeholders such as professional photographers, photography trainers, and smartphone users should explore local opportunities to promote and showcase and improve talent development in this field. This could involve organizing competitions, exhibitions, and workshops to celebrate creativity and foster community engagement. By implementing these recommendations, Ghana can continue to harness the transformative potential of smartphones to drive socioeconomic development, empower its citizens, and contribute to the global digital economy.

Objective Two

Based on the conclusion that smartphone camera photography has significantly influenced social media and Ghanaian visual culture, while also presenting risks to the preservation of cultural heritage, it is essential to develop strategies that leverage the benefits of social media while mitigating potential negative impacts.

The Centres for National Culture must consider initiating educational programs and awareness campaigns to promote cultural sensitivity among social media users and smartphone photographers. This could involve collaborating with cultural Experts, community leaders, Cultural Custodians, and Social Media influencers to provide context and background information on cultural practices and traditions about the usage of Smartphones for photography. Smartphone users must adhere to ethical guidelines for smartphone photography and social media usage, particularly concerning the representation of cultural heritage. Photography experts and trainers are entreated to instill in their learners the photography culture of respect, integrity, and complexity of cultural artifacts and practices, and discourage oversimplification or misrepresentation for the sake of popularity or engagement.

The Centres for National Culture and Photography experts must advocate for policies and regulations that promote responsible social media usage and protect cultural heritage. This could involve working with government agencies, industry associations, and civil society organizations to develop guidelines and standards for content moderation, digital preservation, and cultural representation online. In a similar vein, smartphone photographers should be encouraged to prioritize quality over quantity in their social media posts, focusing on capturing meaningful and authentic moments that reflect the richness and diversity of Ghanaian culture,

storytelling, and narrative depth, rather than simply chasing likes or followers. By implementing these recommendations, Ghana can harness the power of social media and smartphone photography to celebrate and preserve its cultural heritage, while also safeguarding against potential risks of oversimplification and misrepresentation.

Objective Three

Based on the conclusion that smartphone camera photography has shaped Narratives and Representations of Ghanaian Identity and Heritage, it is essential to implement educational programs and awareness campaigns aimed at promoting visual literacy among the general public. This includes teaching individuals how to critically evaluate and interpret visual images, regardless of the medium used for their creation.

Professional photographers should consider the institution of a strong professional body that celebrates and recognizes the artistic expression and expertise of professional photographers, emphasizing the unique skills and creative insights they bring to their craft. This could involve showcasing their work in exhibitions, competitions, and online platforms, highlighting the value of professional training and experience. This will go a long way in sustaining the profession and advocating for the establishment and enforcement of professional standards and regulations within the photography industry. Though smartphone photography is changing the traditional power dynamics of photography, it is important to raise awareness about the ethical implications of smartphone photography, particularly regarding issues of consent, privacy, and authenticity. Encourage responsible storytelling and respectful representation of diverse perspectives, ensuring that visual narratives are presented truthfully and ethically.

Professional Photographers are encouraged to adapt to a hybrid approach that combines the strengths of traditional photography techniques with the accessibility and immediacy of smartphone photography. This could involve integrating smartphone photography into professional workflows, using it as a tool for scouting locations, capturing behind-the-scenes moments, or engaging with audiences on social media. Ghana can embrace the transformative potential of smartphone photography while preserving the integrity and value of traditional photography practices. This approach promotes a more inclusive and diverse visual landscape while upholding professional standards and ethical principles within the photography industry.

Objective Four

Based on the established roles of smartphone photography in this study and the crucial role it plays in the creation and dissemination of visual images within Ghanaian societies, it is prudent that smartphone photography is deeply intertwined with technological advancements, social media integration, and cultural practices.

Professional photographers and Photography trainers are encouraged to promote digital literacy programs and educational initiatives aimed at empowering learners and users with the skills and knowledge to effectively utilize smartphone photography tools and platforms. This includes providing training on basic photography techniques, editing software, and responsible online sharing practices. The documentation and preservation of Ghanaian cultural heritage through smartphone photography initiatives should be encouraged, with the Centre for National Culture collaborating with cultural institutions, tech institutions, and community leaders to create digital archives of cultural artifacts, traditions, and events, thereby ensuring their longevity and accessibility to future generations.

Objective Five

Smartphone camera photography grants opportunities, but also poses challenges to professional photographers, due to the significant transformation that the photography industry is undergoing. To address the concerns regarding the challenges raised in the study, it is recommended that;

Professional photographers should prioritize continuous learning and skill development to stay ahead in a competitive market. This could involve attending workshops, seminars, and training sessions focused on advanced photography techniques, post-processing, and storytelling.

For professional photographers to distinguish themselves from amateur photographers using smartphones, professional photographers should focus on niche markets and specialized services. By offering unique value propositions such as fine art photography, event coverage, or specialized portraiture, photographers can cater to clients seeking high-quality, bespoke imagery. Rather than viewing smartphones as a threat, professional photographers should embrace technology as a complementary tool in their practice. This could involve integrating smartphone photography into their workflow for behind-the-scenes shots, social media content, or quick previews for clients.

Professional photographers should actively advocate for ethical standards and responsible storytelling in photography and should build a strong network of fellow photographers and industry professionals, which can provide support, collaboration opportunities, and shared resources. By fostering a sense of community, photographers can navigate challenges together, share insights, and collectively promote the value of professional photography.

Professional photographers should effectively communicate their unique value proposition to clients, emphasizing the expertise, creativity, and professionalism they bring to their work. This could involve updating portfolios, showcasing testimonials from satisfied clients, and highlighting the benefits of hiring a professional photographer over relying solely on smartphone imagery.

Professional photography is key to the survival of the photography industry; therefore, while maintaining the integrity of professional photography, in the presence of the inevitable presence of smartphone photography, professional photographers should adapt to emerging market trends and consumer preferences. This could involve offering flexible pricing models, exploring new revenue streams such as stock photography or digital licensing, and embracing emerging technologies such as virtual reality or augmented reality photography. This will enable professional photographers to differentiate themselves in the market and continue to thrive as trusted and respected professionals in the photography industry.

5.5 Suggestions for further studies

1. Comparative Analysis Between Professional and Amateur Photographic Narratives in Ghana.
2. Impact of Smartphone Photography on Archival Practices and Cultural Memory.
3. The Role of Social Media Algorithms in Shaping Ghanaian Visual Culture
4. Smartphone Photography and Visual Ethics in Ghana.
5. Rural vs Urban Visual Storytelling Through Smartphones

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

INTERVIEW GUIDE

(Culture Custodian)

1. How has the advent of smartphones and smartphone photography impacted Ghanaian cultural practices and traditions?
2. Can you mention specific instances where smartphone photography has played a role in promoting Ghanaian cultural practices?
3. How has the accessibility and ease of sharing smartphone photographs on social media platforms impacted the visibility and preservation of Ghanaian cultural artifacts and practices?
4. What are some potential benefits and drawbacks of social media and digital technologies on the popularity and promotion of Ghanaian cultural heritage through smartphone photography?
5. How would you describe the role of smartphone photography in the creation and dissemination of visual images?
6. What role does smartphone photography play in the creation and dissemination of visual images in Ghanaian societies?
7. how has smartphone photography changed the traditional way of representing stories?
8. How can cultural custodians adapt and embrace the changing landscape of representation and storytelling through smartphone photography in Ghana?
9. Have you encountered any challenges in terms of educating the public, especially the younger generation, about the importance of traditional photography and art forms in the Ghanaian visual culture?
10. What challenges do you perceive for photographers, artists, and other creatives with the rise of smartphone photography in the Ghanaian visual culture?

APPENDIX 2

INTERVIEW GUIDE

(Photography Students)

1. How has the introduction of smartphones impacted photography in Ghana?
2. Can you identify any significant changes in photography practices and trends in Ghana since the rise of smartphones?
3. How has the accessibility and ease of sharing smartphone photographs on social media contributed to the visibility and exposure of Ghanaian photographers?
4. Looking ahead, what do you think will be the future impact of social media and digital technologies on the popularity and evolution of smartphone photography in Ghana, and how can photography students adapt to these changes?
5. How would you describe the role of smartphone photography in the creation and dissemination of visual images within Ghanaian societies?
6. What impact does smartphone photography have on the accessibility and inclusivity of visual storytelling in Ghana?
7. Can you identify any specific ways in which smartphone photography has influenced the aesthetics and style of visual images in Ghana?
8. How do you perceive the role of smartphone photography in challenging and reshaping the traditional power dynamics of representation and storytelling in Ghanaian visual culture?
9. Can you identify specific examples where smartphone photography has provided individuals with a platform to represent their own stories and experiences in Ghana?
10. How does the prevalence of smartphone photography impact the demand for professional photographers and artists in Ghana, and what challenges does this create for aspiring photographers like yourself?

11. Looking ahead, what do you anticipate as the future challenges and opportunities for photography students and emerging artists in the Ghanaian visual culture in the context of smartphone photography, and how do you plan to navigate them?



APPENDIX 3

INTERVIEW GUIDE

(Photography Lecturers)

1. How has the evolution of smartphones and smartphone photography impacted the field of photography in Ghana?
2. How can photography lecturers incorporate smartphone photography into their curriculum to reflect the changing landscape of the industry?
3. As a photography lecturer, what challenges do you see emerging for photographers, artists, and other creatives with the growing prevalence of smartphone photography in the Ghanaian visual culture?
4. How do you address the perception and expectations surrounding smartphone photography, and the potential devaluation of traditional photography and other art forms among your students?
5. What is the significance and impact of smartphone photography in the creation and dissemination of visual images within Ghanaian societies?
6. What are the opportunities and challenges that smartphone photography presents to photographers and visual communicators in Ghana?
7. How has the accessibility and prevalence of smartphones influenced the role of photography lecturers in educating students about representation and storytelling within Ghanaian visual culture?
8. Looking ahead, what are your insights into the future implications of smartphone photography on the traditional power dynamics of representation and storytelling in Ghanaian visual culture, and how can photography lecturers prepare students for this evolving landscape?
9. Can you identify specific challenges in terms of competition with smartphone photographers in terms of client engagements, exhibition opportunities, or creative projects in the Ghanaian visual culture?
10. How do you help your students leverage their unique perspectives, technical skills, and creative vision to overcome the challenges posed by smartphone photography in the Ghanaian visual culture?

APPENDIX 4

INTERVIEW GUIDE

(Photography Trainers)

1. How can photography trainers incorporate smartphone photography into their training programs to prepare apprentices for the evolving industry?
2. What are the potential challenges and opportunities that trainers should address in the context of the prevalence of smartphone photography in Ghana?
3. How can trainers help photography students navigate the challenges and ethical considerations related to sharing smartphone photographs on social media in Ghana?
4. Looking ahead, what do you anticipate as the future influences of social media and digital technologies on the popularity and evolution of smartphone photography in Ghana, and how can trainers prepare photography students for these developments?
5. How can trainers guide photography students to strike a balance between the convenience of smartphone photography and the development of technical skills and creative vision?
6. Can you identify any specific ways in which smartphone photography has influenced the aesthetics and style of visual images in Ghana?
7. What strategies or techniques can photography trainers employ to help students harness the potential of smartphone photography in challenging traditional power dynamics and shaping narratives?
8. How can photography trainers guide students to use smartphone photography as a tool for social change and amplifying diverse narratives in Ghana?
9. How do you address the perception and expectations surrounding smartphone photography, and the potential devaluation of traditional photography and other art forms among your trainees?
10. What strategies and guidance do you provide to your trainees to differentiate their work from smartphone photography and other forms of visual expression in Ghana?

APPENDIX 5

INTERVIEW GUIDE

(Photograph Professionals)

1. How has the advent of smartphones impacted the photography industry in Ghana?
2. What challenges or opportunities have emerged for professional photographers in Ghana due to the prevalence of smartphone photography?
3. How have other digital technologies, such as photo editing apps or online photography communities, contributed to the popularity and growth of smartphone photography in Ghana?
4. Looking ahead, what do you anticipate as the future relationship between social media, digital technologies, and smartphone photography in Ghana, and how can professional photographers adapt to these changes?
5. How would you describe the current role of smartphone photography in the creation and dissemination of visual images within Ghanaian societies?
6. How has the accessibility and convenience of smartphones affected the participation and engagement of individuals in creating and sharing visual images in Ghana?
7. In what ways do you think smartphone photography empowers individuals to take control of their representation and tell their own stories within Ghanaian visual culture?
8. Are there any ethical considerations or concerns that professional photographers should be mindful of when navigating the changing power dynamics of representation through smartphone photography in Ghana?
9. As a professional photographer, what challenges have you encountered with the rise of smartphone photography in the Ghanaian visual culture?

10. Looking ahead, what do you foresee as the future challenges and opportunities for professional photographers and artists in the Ghanaian visual culture in the context of smartphone photography, and how do you plan to navigate them?



APPENDIX 6

INTERVIEW GUIDE

(Smartphone users)

1. How has smartphone photography influenced the way you capture and share images of your daily life?
2. Have you experienced any cultural shifts in Ghana due to the prevalence of smartphone photography?
3. How has social media influenced your interest in smartphone photography in Ghana?
4. How has sharing smartphone photographs on social media impacted your engagement with smartphone photography?
5. How would you describe the role of smartphone photography in your personal experience of creating and sharing visual images in Ghana?
6. What changes have you noticed in the platforms and methods used for sharing visual images due to the rise in smartphone photography in Ghana?
7. Mention changes you have identified in the types of stories and narratives being shared through smartphone photography compared to traditional visual media in Ghana.
8. How have you embraced the changing landscape of representing stories through smartphone photography in Ghana?
9. As a smartphone user engaged in photography, what challenges have you encountered in terms of competing with professional photographers and other artists within the Ghanaian visual culture?
10. How do you navigate the balance between the convenience and accessibility of smartphone photography and the need to develop technical and creative skills to stand out in the Ghanaian visual culture?

APPENDIX 7

INTERVIEW GUIDE

(The Centre for National Culture - Experts)

1. How has the advent of smartphones and smartphone photography impacted Ghanaian cultural practices and traditions?
2. Can you mention specific instances where smartphone photography has played a role in promoting Ghanaian cultural practices?
3. How has the accessibility and ease of sharing smartphone photographs on social media platforms impacted the visibility and preservation of Ghanaian cultural artifacts and practices?
1. 4 What are some potential benefits and drawbacks of social media and digital technologies on the popularity and promotion of Ghanaian cultural heritage through smartphone photography?
4. How would you describe the role of smartphone photography in the creation and dissemination of visual images?
5. What role does smartphone photography play in the creation and dissemination of visual images in Ghanaian societies?
6. How has smartphone photography changed the traditional way of representing stories?
7. How can cultural centers adapt and embrace the changing landscape of representation and storytelling through smartphone photography in Ghana?
8. Have you encountered any challenges in terms of educating the public, especially the younger generation, about the importance of traditional photography and art forms in the Ghanaian visual culture?

9. What challenges do you perceive for photographers, artists, and other creatives with the rise of smartphone photography in the Ghanaian visual culture?



APPENDIX 8

Observation Checklist

General Information

1. Location:

- Urban
- Rural

2. Date and Time:

- Date:
- Time:

3. Event/Activity:

- Type of event (e.g., social gathering, festival, everyday activity)
- Description of the event

Prevalence and Patterns of Smartphone Photography

4. Number of people using smartphones for photography:

- Approximate count
- Age group (e.g., children, teenagers, adults, elderly)
- Gender distribution

5. Types of Photos Taken:

- Selfies
- Group photos
- Scenery/Landscape
- Candid shots
- Event documentation

6. Frequency of Smartphone Photography:

- Occasional (few photos)
- Moderate (several photos)
- High (continuous photography)

Influence on Social Media and Visual Culture

7. Social Media Activity:

- Number of people posting photos on social media
- Platforms used (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp)

8. Content Shared on Social Media:

- Types of photos shared
- Hashtags or captions used
- Interaction (likes, comments, shares)

Narratives and Representations of Ghanaian Identity

9. Themes in Photos:

- Cultural practices
- Traditional attire
- Historical sites
- Modern lifestyle

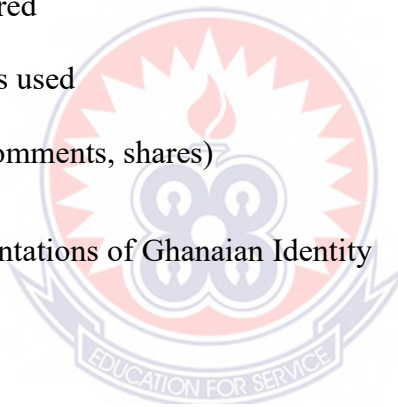
10. Representation of Ghanaian Identity:

- Positive representation (pride, cultural heritage)
- Negative representation (stereotypes, misrepresentations)

Creation and Dissemination of Visual Images

11. Photo Editing and Filters:

- Use of editing apps



- Types of filters applied

12. Sharing Methods:

- Direct sharing (Bluetooth, AirDrop)
- Social media
- Messaging apps

Challenges Faced by Professional Photographers

13. Presence of Professional Photographers:

- Number of professionals at the event
- Type of equipment used

14. Interaction between Smartphone Users and Professional Photographers:

- Cooperation
- Competition



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APPENDIX 9

Informed Consent Form

Responsible Project Investigators: Prof. Patrique deGraft-Yankson and Dr. Ebenezer Acquah **Investigator:** Gennevive Danso Box 287 Adum-Kunasi

Purpose of this Research

The purpose of this study is to fill an empirical gap by delving into the intricate dynamics between smartphone photography and Ghanaian visual culture. By conducting an in-depth analysis, the study seeks to offer critical insights into how the widespread use of smartphones equipped with high-definition cameras influences the practice of photography and videography in Ghana.

What you will be expected to do

If you agree to participate in this research, you will be asked to participate in a guided interview with the investigator (tape-recorded). Then, you will be tape-recorded while conversing about matters relating to the impact of smartphone photography on Ghanaian visual culture. This study will take approximately 30 minutes of your time.

Your rights to confidentiality

The obtained data will be treated with absolute confidentiality. A random number will be assigned to you to conceal your actual identity. No information will be released to expose your identity. The audio recordings and background information will be stored in a secure location and only the responsible project investigator and his research consultants will have access to them.

Your right to ask questions at any time

You may ask questions about the research at any time by emailing the responsible project investigator at by phone at 024 -343-2729.

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Your right to withdraw at any time

Your participation in this research is voluntary. You may withdraw from it or discontinue participation at any time. You may also request for the destruction of your data without any consequences.

Benefits

Your participation in this research is significant since it would offer comprehensive insights into the evolving dynamics of photography and videography practices in Ghana, shedding light on how technological advancements are reshaping traditional artistic norms and sociocultural paradigms. The findings of the research would also serve as a vital document for consideration on matters or issues relating to policy formulations on the use and misuse of smartphones. This has to do with ethical considerations and privacy.

Possible risks

To our knowledge, there are no risks or discomforts involved in this research beyond those found in everyday life.

Dissemination

The results will be disseminated through a PhD. dissertation. They may also be disseminated at conferences and in journals.

Giving consent to participate

By signing the consent form:

- You certify that you are 18 years of age or older, that you have read, and understand the above, that you have been given satisfactory answers to questions concerning the research, that you are aware that you are free to withdraw your consent and to discontinue participation in the research any time, without any prejudice.
- If you cannot obtain satisfactory answers to your questions or have comments or complaints about your participation in this research, you may contact: Prof. Patrique deGraft-Yankson at 0248882966 and Dr. Ebenezer Acquah at 0507391013.

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Adult Participant Written Informed Consent

Participant: I have read and understand the above information and voluntarily agree to participate in this research.

Name

Signature

Date

Please keep a copy of this consent form for your records.



APPENDIX 10

The Letter of Introduction



OUR REF.: SCA/DME/I.1/VOL.2/95

YOUR REF.:

23rd May, 2023

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Dear Sir/Madam,

**LETTER OF INTRODUCTION
GENNEVIVE DANSO**

I write to introduce, Ms. Gennevive Danso, a Ph.D student of the Department of Music Education, University of Education, Winneba, who is conducting a Research on the topic: *"Smartphone Photography on Ghana's Visual Culture"*

I would be very grateful if you could give her the assistance required.

Thank you.

Yours faithfully,

**DR. (MRS.) AUGUSTA ARKO-MENSAH
AG. HEAD OF DEPARTMENT**