ARTISTIC AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC VALUE OF DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY IN NIGERIA.

BY

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Abstract:
This study is titled Artistic and Socio-economic Value of Digital Photography in Nigeria. Digital photography has emerged as a ubiquitous medium in contemporary Nigerian society, influencing artistic expression, cultural representation and economic activity. This study employs qualitative method to explore the artistic and socio-economic value of digital photography in Nigeria, aiming to provide a comprehensive understanding of its impact on the cultural and economic landscape. The research sets the stage by contextualising the development of digital photography in Nigeria, highlighting its historical trajectory and current status. Key stakeholders in the digital photography industry, including photographers, artists, consumers, policymakers and others are identified to understand their roles and perspectives. Data collection involves a mixed-methods approach, including surveys, interviews, observations and document analysis. The analysis focuses on the artistic aspects of digital photography such as aesthetics, creativity and cultural significance as well as its socio-economic impacts, including economic value, job creation and social change. The finding reveals that digital photography plays a significant role in the Nigerian economy, contributing to economic growth, job creation and income generation. It also serves as a powerful medium for artistic expression, enabling photographers to explore diverse themes and narratives. This study concludes that challenges such as technological limitations, market competition and copyright issues are identified, indicating the need for strategic interventions to enhance the industry's growth and sustainability. The recommendations that policymakers, practitioners and researcher to enhance the artistic and socio-economic value of digital photography in Nigeria. These include policy recommendations to support the industry, educational initiatives to develop skills, talent and industry collaborations to promote the cultural and economic significance of digital photography.

Keywords: Artistic, Socio-Economic Value, Digital Photography, Nigeria.

Introduction

In a digital age characterized by rapid technological advancements, the intersection of artistic expression and socio-economic value within the realm of digital photography holds significant importance for a country as culturally diverse and dynamic as Nigeria. The artistic value of digital photography in Nigeria emerges as a force of creative versatility. Digital technology has empowered photographers to experiment with a broad spectrum of styles, colours, and techniques, pushing the boundaries of artistic expression. Furthermore, digital photography serves as an invaluable tool for cultural documentation, preserving and promoting the diverse heritage and traditions of Nigeria. Digital photography's global reach is evident in the international recognition it affords Nigerian photographers. As a result, Nigerian photography not only documents local cultures but also contributes to the broader conversation on the global stage. Additionally, the digital landscape has expanded the market for photographers, enabling them to reach a wider audience and explore various avenues for economic growth. However, this growth also poses challenges, such as competition and market oversaturation, requiring photographers to differentiate themselves and adapt to a dynamic market. In conclusion, the artistic and socio-economic value of digital photography in Nigeria is undeniable. It not only fuels artistic expression and cultural preservation but also contributes significantly to economic empowerment. As Nigeria's digital photography industry continues to grow, nurturing and supporting it will be essential to sustain its transformative power and benefit both artists and the nation. The future holds promise, as digital photography continues to shape the artistic and economic landscapes of Nigeria.

Photography, an art form and a means of capturing moments in time, has undergone a profound transformation with the advent of digital technology. Nigeria, a country known for its vibrant

cultural diversity and burgeoning digital landscape, has been witness to this revolution, making it an intriguing backdrop for the exploration of the interplay between the artistic and socio-economic aspects of digital photography. The word photography means writing with light, light is essential to making photography and one must understand how to use it in order to make one picture to be as interesting as possible (Emeji2023)

Photography is the art, application, and practice of creating images by recording light, either electronically by means of an image sensor, or chemically by means of a light-sensitive material such as photographic film. It is employed in many fields of science, manufacturing (e.g., photolithography), and business, as well as its more direct uses of art , film and video production, recreational purposes, hobby, and mass communication.

Typically, a lens is used to focus the light reflected or emitted from objects into a real image on the light-sensitive surface inside a camera during a timed exposure. With an electronic image sensor, produces an electrical charge at each pixel, which is an invisible latent image, which is later chemically “developed” into a visible image, either negative or positive, depending on the purpose of the photographic material and the method of processing. A negative image on a paper base, known as a print, either by using an enlarger or by contact printing.

In the contemporary age of digital photography, artists and photographers in Nigeria have harnessed the power of pixels and lenses to push the boundaries of creativity. They have embraced the expressive versatility offered by digital photography, experimenting with styles, colours, and techniques that were previously unattainable with traditional film-based photography. As James Nachtwey, a renowned photojournalist, aptly put it, "Photography is a language more universal than words," digital photography has become the medium through which Nigerian photographers communicate their unique narratives to the world.

Furthermore, Nigeria's cultural tapestry is being documented and preserved through the lens of digital photography. The work of photographers like J.D. 'Okhai Ojeikere, who meticulously documented Nigeria's diverse hairstyles, exemplifies how digital photography plays a vital role in conserving and promoting the rich cultural heritage of the nation. As Roland Barthes, a semiotician and cultural theorist, noted, "A photograph is a fragment of time which will never return," emphasizing the irreplaceable role of digital photography in capturing and preserving moments of cultural significance.

In an increasingly interconnected world, digital photography has also facilitated the global reach of Nigerian photographers. Through digital platforms and social media, photographers have gained international recognition, transcending geographic boundaries and contributing to cross-cultural exchanges. Just as Susan Sontag, an influential essayist and critic, observed, "To take a photograph is to participate in another person's (or thing's) mortality, vulnerability, mutability," Nigerian photographers are participating in the global discourse, sharing their unique perspectives and engaging with audiences worldwide.

This paper sets out to explore not only the artistic evolution brought about by digital photography but also the socio-economic implications of the burgeoning digital photography industry in Nigeria. To achieve this, the paper will delve into both challenges and opportunities, seeking to understand how digital photography can be harnessed to maximize its potential while addressing the hurdles that photographers face in this digital era. Through scholarly research, reports, and interviews with practitioners, this paper aims to provide a holistic understanding of the intricate relationship between digital photography, art, and economics in the context of Nigeria, with the ultimate goal of fostering continued growth and development in this dynamic field.

Statement of the Problem

AS digital photography evolved in Nigeria, it faced challenges related to technological access, competition and copyright issues. Access and Inclusivity: Assessing the accessibility of digital photography tools and education in Nigeria, particularly in rural areas and examining how this impacts the inclusivity of the art form and its socio-economic benefits. Economic Viability: Investigating the economic viability of digital photography as a profession in Nigeria, considering factors such as market demand, competition and income level of photographers. Cultural Representation: Exploring how digital photography in Nigeria represents and preserves the country's diverse cultures and whether certain cultures or regions are underrepresented or misrepresented in photographic narratives. Technological Infrastructure: Analyzing the role of Technological infrastructure, such as access to high-quality cameras and editing software, in shaping the equality and reach of digital photography in Nigeria. Ethical considerations: Examining the ethical considerations surrounding digital photography in Nigeria, including issues related to consent, privacy and the authenticity of digitally manipulated images, and their impact on the credibility and value of photographic art.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

This paper aims to comprehensively examine and understand the evolving dynamics of photography in Nigeria, shedding light on its significance in both artistic expression and economic growth. While the objectives of the study are:

1. Assessing the impact of digital photography on the Nigerian Economy: evaluate how digital photography contributes to economic growth, job creation and income generation in Nigeria.

2. Exploring the artistic value of digital photography in Nigeria: Investigate the aesthetic qualities, creative expressions, and cultural significance of digital photography in Nigeria's artistic landscape

3. Understanding the role of Digital photography in social Change: Examine how digital photography influences social perceptions, cultural identities and community engagement in Nigeria.

4. Identifying Challenges and Opportunities in the Digital Photography industry: identify the challenges faced by digital photographers in Nigeria, such as technological limitations, market competitions and copyright issues and explore opportunities for growth and development.

5. Analyzing Consumer Behavior and Preferences: Investigate consumer attitudes, motivations, and preferences towards digital photography in Nigeria, including factors influencing their purchasing decisions and engagement with digital images.

Theoretical Framework

The theories used in this study are:

1. **Cultural Economics Theory**: This theory examines how cultural products, including digital photography, are produced distributed and consumed in a society. It can help you understand the economic value of digital photography in Nigeria and its impacts on the broader cultural landscape.

2. **Social Exchange Theory:** this theory explores how individuals and groups exchange good, services and information in social interactions. It could be useful for understanding

the social dynamics of the digital photography industry in Nigeria, including relationships between photographers, clients and audiences.

Digital Camera

In 1975, the first digital camera was created by Eastman Kodak soon after, Cannon, Niko, Sony, Pentax, and other manufacturers began working in digital cameras too. At the end of the 20th century, newspapers and magazines shifted to digital. Around this time, manufacturers began working on mirrorless cameras, which have become popular among many photographers. Smartphones Aside from digital and mirrorless cameras, smartphones have become popular for photos. With advances in technology, phone cameras have been able to capture incredible images and since they're built into phones, many people don't see the need to carry a separate camera.





Artist: Ezi, Henry Obinna, Title: Digital Cameras. Medium: Photography Year: 2023 Source: Mega Star Photo Studio, Port Harcourt

Historical Background of Artistic and Socio-Economic Value of Digital Photography in Nigeria

The historical background of the artistic and socio-economic value of digital photography in Nigeria is a narrative that has evolved in tandem with technological advancements and the changing socio-economic landscape. While digital photography is relatively recent, its roots can be traced to the broader history of photography in Nigeria.

Artistic Value of Digital Photography

Digital photography has revolutionized artistic expression, offering photographers the freedom to experiment with a myriad of styles, colours, and techniques (Smith, 2018). Digital photography has become an invaluable tool for documenting and promoting the cultural diversity of Nigeria, preserving our rich heritage for future generations" (Ojeikere, 2006).

Digital platforms have enabled Nigerian photographers to transcend borders, connecting with global audiences and contributing to cross-cultural exchanges (Adeola, 2019). Photography is not merely a visual medium; it's a narrative art form. Digital technology has empowered photographers to tell stories through images, expanding the artistic potential of the medium (Ferguson, 2016).

Self-expression is essential and it's about expressing yourself despite the expectations from others or society. Photography is an excellent creative outlet to express yourself. While there are so-called rules, such as the rule of thirds, you can break them. Self-expression in photography could be through selfies or photos of things you like.

Researcher Judith Glaser says, “Neuroscience is teaching us that self-expression” might be one – if not the most important ways for people to connect, negative and grow with each other”

Aside from being good for you, it helps relationships. Photography allows you to express yourself without boundaries. Photography encourages self-expression Artistic influence digital photography has a significant influence on modern and contemporary art worldwide. artists from around the globe have drawn inspiration from Nigerian art forms and digital photography helps to showcase the connections between traditional and contemporary artistic expressions Promotion of Nigerian arts: digital photography has actively promoted contemporary Nigerian artists, it serves as a platform for emerging and established artists to exhibit their work fostering a valiant and dynamic art scene in Nigeria (smith 2015).

Challenges and Opportunities

As digital photography evolved in Nigeria, it faced challenges related to technological access, competition, and copyright issues. However, it also presented opportunities for growth through government and private sector initiatives and diversification of photography services (Umar & Osagie, 2018). Access to digital photography equipment and training remains a significant challenge in Nigeria, hindering the growth of photographers, especially in rural areas (Adewale, 2019).The digital photography market in Nigeria has become highly competitive and oversaturated, making it challenging for photographers to stand out (Umar & Odigwe, 2021).A lack of formal education and mentorship programs for aspiring photographers is a notable challenge in Nigeria. This hampers the development of new talent in the industry (Okeke & Obi, 2018).

Government and private sector initiatives are emerging to support photographers in Nigeria, providing grants, training programs, and equipment loans (Osagie, 2020). Photographers in Nigeria are diversifying their services to meet the growing demand for digital imagery in areas such as fashion, events, and advertising (Ajayi & Nwachukwu, 2019).

Socio-Economic Impact

Employment and Entrepreneurship "The digital photography industry in Nigeria has witnessed substantial growth, leading to the creation of numerous job opportunities and entrepreneurship ventures for photographers" (Okonkwo, 2020). Digital platforms have expanded the market for Nigerian photographers, allowing them to reach a broader audience and explore various avenues for economic growth" (Adeleke & Abubakar, 2018).

The protection of intellectual property and copyright in digital photography is crucial for the economic well-being of photographers. Measures to safeguard their creative work in the digital era are essential" (Afolayan, 2017).



Artist: Saviour Nwachuwku Title: Pose of FAA (M.A 2023) Student with Prof. Emeji Medium: Photography Year: 2023 Source: Mega Star Studio, Port Harcourt

The socio-economic impact of digital photography in Nigeria began to emerge in the early 21st century. Digital platforms and social media provided photographers with opportunities to showcase their work, gain recognition, and explore new markets, marking a transformative phase

in the industry (Adeleke, 2010). Nigerian photographers gained international recognition in the 21st century through digital platforms and participation in global exhibitions. This era witnessed an artistic renaissance, with digital technology enabling artistic experimentation and the projection of Nigerian culture on the global stage (Onyekwelu, 2015).

Methodology

Qualitative research is especially affective in obtaining culturally specific information about the values, opinions, behaviours and social contexts of population. The researcher adopted a qualitative design. Since it involves studio activities, thus practical-oriented.

Findings

1. **Economic Contribution**: Digital photography has a significant economic impact in Nigeria, contributing to economic growth, Job creation and income generation. The industry provides employment opportunities for photographers, retouchers, printers and other related professions. It also stimulates economic activities in ancillary industries.

2. **Artistic Exploration:** Digital photography enables artists to explore diverse themes, styles and narratives, contributing to the rich cultural practices and every life providing a visual record of Nigeria society.

3. **Cultural Significance:** digital photography plays a crucial role in preserving and promoting Nigeria culture. Photographs capture moments, events and traditions that are integral to Nigerian identity serving as a visual archive for future generations.

4. **Social Impact:** Digital photography has a significant social impact in Nigeria, influencing social perceptions, cultural identities and community engagement.

Photographs can challenge stereotypes, raise awareness about social issues and foster social cohesion and inclusivity.

5. **Challenges**: Despite its benefits, the digital photography industry in Nigeria faces several challenges. These include technological limitations such as access to equipment and software, as well as market competition and copyright issues. Addressing these challenges is crucial for the industry's growth and sustainability.

Recommendations

To enhance the artistic and socio-economic value of digital photography in Nigeria, policymakers, practitioners and researchers should consider several recommendations.

- Implementing policies to support the digital photography industry, such as providing access to affordable equipment and software and protecting intellectual property rights.
- Promoting education and training programs to develop skills and talent in digital photography.
- Encouraging industry collaborations and partnerships to promote the cultural and economic significance of digital photography in Nigeria.

Conclusions

The exploration of the artistic and socio-economic value of digital photography in Nigeria reveals a landscape rich in both potential and challenges. Over the years, digital photography has emerged as a powerful medium for creative expression, cultural documentation, and economic opportunity. As Nigeria's digital photography industry continues to evolve, several key conclusions can be drawn. Digital photography has significantly expanded the artistic horizons

of Nigerian photographers, offering them newfound creative versatility. This medium has allowed artists to experiment with diverse styles, colours, and techniques, leading to the creation of compelling narratives and an enriched artistic landscape.

The digital era has enabled photographers to document and preserve Nigeria's diverse cultures and traditions. The work of photographers such as J.D. 'Okhai Ojeikere serves as a testament to the importance of digital photography in conserving and promoting the nation's rich cultural heritage. Digital platforms have provided Nigerian photographers with a global stage for their work. Through social media and international exhibitions, they have reached audiences worldwide, fostering cross-cultural exchanges and sharing Nigeria's stories with the world.

The digital photography industry in Nigeria has witnessed substantial growth, leading to the creation of job opportunities and entrepreneurial ventures. This growth has contributed to the country's economic development, with photographers actively participating in the digital economy. The challenges of technological barriers, market competition, and copyright issues have been highlighted. However, opportunities exist in the form of government and private sector initiatives, education and mentorship programs, and diversification of photography services. Photography enriches human life. Pictures speak a universal language, as language is no barrier. Whether its photojournalism or fine art photography, each type is essential. Phtotography captures meaning experiences, and you can see the world from different perspectives. It inspires, challenges, educates, and brings people together.

Recommendations

To further harness the potential of digital photography in Nigeria, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. **Access to Technology:** Address the technological divide by providing greater access to digital photography equipment and training, particularly in rural areas. Government and private sector support in this regard can facilitate equitable participation in the industry.

2. **Intellectual Property Protection:** Strengthen copyright enforcement mechanisms to safeguard the intellectual property of photographers. This will ensure that artists are fairly compensated for their work and encourage continued creative output.

3. **Education and Mentorship:** Develop formal education and mentorship programs to nurture emerging talent. Establish partnerships with educational institutions, photography associations, and experienced photographers to provide structured training and guidance.

4. **Government and Private Initiatives:** Encourage government and private sector investments in the digital photography industry. Support initiatives that provide funding, equipment loans, and training to photographers, enabling them to expand and enhance their skills and businesses.

5. **Diversification:** Promote diversification in the services offered by photographers. Encourage photographers to explore new niches such as fashion, events, and advertising, which can lead to increased economic opportunities.

6. **Global Exposure:** Foster opportunities for photographers to gain international exposure and recognition through exhibitions, collaborations, and online platforms. Support participation in global artistic events and festivals to amplify the voices of Nigerian photographers on the global stage. Digital photography in Nigeria represents not only an evolving art form but also a dynamic economic sector. As the nation moves forward, embracing digital technology and recognizing the value of creative industries, these recommendations can contribute to the

continued growth and development of digital photography, benefiting artists, the broader economy, and the cultural preservation of Nigeria.

7. **Establishment Of Studio:** A well-equipped photographic studio should be established at the fine and applied arts department to enable students who are interested in photography to have the opportunities to explore the digital space.

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