

The Influence of Photography, Tourism, and Media on Self-Actualization

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ABSTRACT

Humans are fundamentally social creatures who are inherently interconnected with their surrounding communities. This interconnection profoundly influences an individual's way of life. Lifestyle is intimately intertwined with societal progress and encompasses various aspects such as social hierarchy, self-image, and self-actualization, all of which contribute to the quest for personal identity. In the present era, travel has become a necessity for many individuals. Sightseeing expeditions serve not only as a means of fulfilling personal desires but have become imperative and significant, as they encompass multifaceted objectives aimed at asserting one's existence. This desire to manifest one's presence is inseparable from the contemporary advancements in technology and the abundance of information. Ever since the advent of photography, tourism has become intricately entwined with the act of documentation, serving as a tool for preserving memories of travel experiences.

Keywords: photography, tourism, lifestyle, self-actualization, media

INTRODUCTION

The evolution of the world of photography over time has followed the progress of era and technology. From the discovery of the camera obscura to the advanced digital cameras, from celluloid film to infrared negative film, it is evident that the field of photography has always kept pace with rapid technological advancements, developing into its own realm of technology. The development of photography encompasses not only hardware components such as cameras, lenses, memory cards, and other accessories, as well as software but also extends to the creative process itself.

Fundamentally, photography is a documentary medium, commonly known as documentary photography, as its recorded images originate from existing realities, whether inanimate objects or living beings. Documentary photography is considered a closely related branch of photojournalism, although some regard it as a distinct genre. Both involve the activities of gathering, editing, and presenting visual materials of events. In documentary photography, the story is conveyed through a series of photographs, referred to as photo stories in journalism.

Documentary photography can be a part of professional photojournalism and can also be associated with amateur, artistic, and academic approaches to photography. It often focuses on social issues and the tragedies of life.

Initially, documentary photography often addressed controversial issues. However, as it progressed, documentary photography also began to explore other topics, sometimes focusing on simple aspects of everyday life, such as community, family, loved ones, and culture. Photographers strive to capture and portray things they encounter in their world, often centering around human subjects and their relationships with others or their environment.

The presence of photographic works goes beyond mere documentation, evolving due to demands and changing times. Based on the subjects depicted, photographic works take on different forms and are classified into three sub-disciplines: commercial photography, photojournalism, and fine art/expression photography [1]. Each genre represents the complexity of photographic subject matter and its role within visual art.

Photos or images are the results of photographic activities [2]. These activities can be categorized based on their function and purpose: (1) Documentary photography, where photography is used to capture events considered significant by the photographer. Documentary photography prioritizes the recording of events rather than adhering to aesthetic principles in a photograph; (2) Photojournalism, often referred to as press photos or news photos. These photos typically report on ongoing events in society and are captured without manipulation to depict the actual situation; and (3) Advertising photography, which is a branch of professional photography primarily serving the needs of the advertising industry as a replacement for hand-drawn illustrations.

A similar viewpoint is expressed by Arbain Rambey [3]. Photography can be divided into two realms: the objective realm and the subjective realm. Objective photography refers to photos that fulfill the collective needs of both the photographer and the viewers. This category includes photojournalism and commercial photography (industrial/commercial photos). These types of photos typically serve the purpose of reporting ongoing events in society, capturing them without manipulation to depict the actual situation. On the other hand, subjective photography refers to artistic photography that solely aims to satisfy the photographer's aesthetic desires using the medium of photography. In fine art photography, whether the produced photo is accepted by others or not is the main concern; rather, it is about how the photographer can express their aesthetic taste through the language of photography. Fine art photos reflect or express the beauty that a photographer seeks to capture through specific forms or effects.

The development of technology in the field of photography has been embraced wholeheartedly by photography enthusiasts, including professionals, amateurs, and even the public. It is evident that the community, which used to solely consume photographic products, has now become both consumers and creators in the field of photography, actively producing images or photos.

The public used to consider photography as a difficult and expensive profession, but nowadays, photography has become an easy and affordable activity. It is undeniable that in the past, photography was limited to a few individuals who possessed the necessary skills and invested a considerable amount of time to master the camera. Additionally, the complicated process and relatively high costs also restricted the practice of

photography. Therefore, not everyone had the opportunity to pursue a career as a photographer.

Technological advancements have made it easier for anyone to become a photographer. With the support of advanced equipment and increasingly smart gadgets, anyone can engage in photography anytime, anywhere, and under any circumstances. Moreover, photography is no longer restricted by age, education, gender, or social status. The current development in the world of photography has transformed people's lifestyles. In the past, photography was considered a hobby and a profession, but now it has become a lifestyle. Almost every individual desire to own a camera as much as they desire to have a mobile phone [4]. Photography is closely intertwined with modern society's way of life, as it encompasses values such as social strata, image projection, and self-actualization, all of which contribute to the pursuit of new identities. The formation of this lifestyle is greatly influenced by the information presented through various mass media channels such as magazines, newspapers, television, and the Internet.

Modern society is familiar with photography as an integral part of their activities, whether it is capturing events, situations, or specific objects. It has become a normal and appreciated practice for many individuals, as evidenced by the increasing number of people owning cameras. Taking photos and capturing moments has become a part of everyday life. The rapid development of digital technology has made photography accessible to everyone. This is evident in how easily the public engages in photography, using their smartphones or digital pocket cameras to capture various moments.

The development of technology and information, particularly in the field of photography, has a significant impact on various other sectors. One of these sectors is the tourism industry. Photography plays a crucial role in tourism, benefiting both the tourism stakeholders, including the government agencies responsible for tourism, as well as the private sector. Photography is essential for tourism stakeholders in terms of publicity and promoting tourist attractions, as it is believed to effectively represent the true beauty of these destinations. Additionally, photography is closely connected to tourists or individuals engaged in travel activities. For tourists, taking photos is a must during their trips because apart from serving as souvenirs, photos also act as personal archives and a means to showcase their experiences to others. Furthermore, with the advent of social media, travel photos can be instantly shared with others to interact and showcase experiences among fellow users of these platforms.

Photography and Tourism

Tourism, in its modern sense, is a phenomenon of our time driven by the need for health and a change of environment, conscious evaluation, and the cultivation of a love for the beauty of nature. It is particularly influenced by increased interaction among nations and social classes, resulting from advancements in business, industry, trade, and transportation infrastructure [5].

In the past, traveling was a means to escape from everyday activities and routines. However, over time, tourism has become a necessity for most people to showcase their existence. This desire to showcase one's existence is inseparable from the current advancements in technology and information.

Tourism is seen as a means of enjoyment and is a concept deeply ingrained in the behavior of tourists. It involves experiencing different environments and observing the lives of others. Additionally, it serves to bring ideas to life and express oneself in the pursuit of pleasure [6]. The essence of this perspective on tourist behavior is that tourism encompasses various activities shaped by the individual's own perception.

Ever since the invention of photography technology, tourism activities have been closely associated with documentation as a means of capturing memorable travel experiences. Photos and images are the products of photography activities, and they are considered works of art that adhere to aesthetic values and principles, just like other forms of art. According to Soedjono [7], the aesthetics of photography can be evaluated from two perspectives: aesthetic ideology and aesthetic technique in the process of realization.

In the context of photography, this can be seen in how humans perceive every phenomenon in their surrounding environment, which later becomes a form of historical significance. The practice of photography also requires conceptual planning, starting from basic ideas that evolve into practical implementations supported by equipment and techniques to realize creative visions [7]. When it comes to documentation purposes, the focus is on how photographic techniques can effectively represent visual objects and serve as convincing evidence or testimony of real events.

Images or photographs convey a wealth of information, capturing the civilization that serves as the backdrop of a particular time and place. They can identify when an event took place, who was involved, and where it occurred. Other aspects of civilization, such as technology, environment, and various objects captured in the photos, hint at a specific era. For instance, tourism photography in the 1960s informs us about the advancements in transportation through images of horse-drawn carriages or trains. In the 1970s, tourism photos showcased the fashion trends of tourists, featuring Elvis Presley-inspired outfits that were popular at the time, while travel photos of teenagers in the 1980s displayed retro styles and breakdance costumes.

The activities of photography and tourism in the present day are intertwined behaviors of modern humans, serving the purpose of fulfilling personal needs and recreation, as well as showcasing one's existence in the eyes of others. Behavioral theories suggest that individuals require subjective understanding and perceptions to guide their actions [8].

The behavior of capturing moments experienced during a travel journey is accompanied by the behavior of self-documentation wherever one is, with the intention of informing the public about one's activities. Such behavior has become increasingly common over time, aided by various social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Tumblr, which have become an integral part of the modern human lifestyle.

Today, engaging in tourism activities has become an opportunity to demonstrate one's existence. Previously, people were aware of the importance of visual documentation or photos while traveling. Tourists have always taken photos at specific tourist locations as evidence of their visits and as mementos. The behavior of tourists through social media reflects the phenomenal visual culture of the current social media era. Nowadays, tourists diligently upload photos during their travel visits via social media. Although initially an expression of self or a reflection of mood, functionally, it carries significant informative meaning. For example, someone present at a particular tourist location can immediately inform the public about the ambiance, beauty, scariness, comfort, excitement, discomfort, cleanliness, and messiness of the place. All of this can be

conveyed directly to the public, showcasing what is happening at the tourist site through social media, and others who see the photos can instantly comment or respond.



Figure 1. Picture of a tourist location that shows the cozzies, beauty, and comfortable places to spend the holiday.

(Source: <https://uniquecapture.com/photography> , May 25, 2023)

Photography as a Means of Self-Actualization and Lifestyle

Lifestyle, from a sociological perspective, refers to the distinctive way of life of a particular group [9]. In modern society, lifestyle helps define a person's attitudes, values, wealth, and social status [10]. In contemporary society, this term connotes individualism, self-expression, and self-awareness in terms of style. The body, clothing, manner of speech, leisure activities, food and beverage choices, homes, vehicles, and even information sources are viewed as indicators of an individual's individualistic tastes and sense of style.

Lifestyle, broadly defined, is a way of life identified by how individuals spend their time, their activities, what they consider important in their environment or interests, and their thoughts about themselves and the world around them. The lifestyle of one community will differ from another. Even within a given timeframe, an individual's and specific community's lifestyle may dynamically change. However, lifestyles do not change rapidly, and they tend to be relatively permanent within a certain period.

Essentially, lifestyle is a behavior that reflects what exists in a person's mindset, which tends to intertwine with various aspects related to emotional issues and psychologically, this behavior can be observed or measured using the AIO (Activities, Interest, and Opinion) system, as defined by Well & Tigert in Susanto: (1) how individuals spend their time in daily life, (2) what interests or what is considered important in their lives and interactions, (3) how they perceive themselves and the world around them, and (4) the general characteristics of the group can often be based on geographic regions.

The formation of lifestyle is influenced by the media information presented by various types of mass media. Essentially, human needs are organized in a hierarchy: from the lowest level of physiological needs, such as food, drink, shelter, and freedom from pain to the highest level of self-actualization needs, such as friendship, affiliation, love, social interaction, self-esteem, and recognition from others [11]. Recognition from others or acknowledgment of oneself can be achieved in various ways, one of which is by documenting daily activities through photography and publishing them through

developing media platforms. The awareness of self-representation is now commonly known as visual culture. Visual culture has undergone significant developments in response to the needs and advancements in technology.

Contemporary visual culture refers to the focus on visual events, including information, meanings, and pleasures sought through visual technology devices. Through visual technology, various tools are specifically designed for viewing or capturing representations of the world, from paintings to images through television or the internet. This occurs in everyday life and becomes a habit. It is called culture because humans can educate themselves [7]. Communication and interaction occur because others appreciate these visual outcomes through specific media.

In modern society, everyone is a performer, expected to play and control their own roles. Fashion styles, hairstyles, various attached accessories, music preferences, and activity choices are all part of the performance of identity and personal traits. Photography today is not limited to a select few or professionals only, but it has become accessible to people from all walks of life, regardless of age, gender, as everyone uses photography as a medium for self-expression.

Nowadays, technology has entered the digital era. Even instant photo technology developed by Polaroid in the 1990s has been left behind. Digital photography enables the creation of many images/photos quickly, with great convenience and cost-effectiveness. Digital photo devices are not limited to digital cameras alone. Various gadgets are equipped with built-in digital cameras. Smartphones, tablets, and audio players are practical instant photo-making tools for travelers. With the support of internet networks, it is also possible for tourists to distribute photos to be enjoyed by many people in a short time through social media platforms.



Figure 2. Picture of a tourist location that shows the cozzies, beauty, and comfortable places to spend the holiday.

(Source: <https://www.insider.com/worst> , May 25, 2023).

Social media is an internet-based tool that allows people to connect with each other. Currently, there are several popular applications that have become trends among the public, playing a significant role as accommodation tools for sharing photos among users. Some of these popular applications include Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Path, Flickr, and Picasa Web Albums. In the field of tourism, applications such as Google Maps,

TripAdvisor, and Foursquare are highly regarded for helping travelers find information about a destination.



Figure 3. Picture of a tourist location from TripAdvisor.
(Source: <https://www.tripadvisor.com/> , May 25, 2023).

As a means of self-actualization, the habit of taking photos is a phenomenon of visual culture today. With the support of the most popular technology today, smartphones, which are used in everyday life, there is always an opportunity to take photos anywhere, anytime, in any situation. Taking photos has even become a necessity. For some people, the experience of being in a place to fulfill the need for pleasure is considered something to be proud of. Therefore, people who are traveling document their journeys to later show them to others. However, in this global era, everything can be quick, simultaneous, and reach a very wide audience.

Since the invention of photography in the 19th century, the culture of visual representation that captures reality has become important in the lives of people worldwide. People feel the need to be part of the image/photo to show evidence of their involvement in a significant moment. The more events captured in photography, the more photos are printed, leading people to need albums with specific themes. Nowadays, almost all social media platforms facilitate their users in posting photographs.

The times have shifted from the era of printed photos to the era of social media photos. It all started with the transition from analog photography to digital photography, the binary era where photographic images are expressed in numbers. People then set the image resolution and data size so that photos can be shared through social media. In this regard, showcasing involvement in an event no longer requires printing photos. Every moment considered interesting, with or without the individuals involved in the photo, can be uploaded to social media. If others in the network want to have it, they can download it. Technological advancements have established image resolution, ensuring that the data size to be transmitted does not overly burden the system.

Unlike in previous eras where photography required specialized skills, in the present era, everyone is a photographer. Most photography works shared on social networks are produced using gadgets that can connect to the internet. The most popular among them are smartphones, which have specific features designed for photography. Using them is straightforward: simply aim at an object, capture the photo, and upload it through a specific social media platform. Social media platforms that operate as social networks are the most popular because photos can quickly receive feedback or responses from

other users in the network. Users can comment on and interact with the published visual images or photos.

In certain cases, social media users are individuals with a keen taste for photography. This group possesses sufficient knowledge of photography, and some may even be professional photographers. The photos they produce can exhibit exceptionally high aesthetic value. This is because technically, the photos are carefully and flawlessly crafted. Some individuals meticulously consider the beauty, dramatization, and informational aspects of their photos before showcasing them to others through social media.

To fulfill the aesthetic aspect, others leverage the aesthetic effects provided by social media software itself. Several social media applications offer aesthetic effects such as special filters, enhancing the dramatic effect of the photos. These filters primarily involve color effects, lighting adjustments, and framing within selected themes or templates. Specialized photo-sharing platforms like Instagram or Path often update their systems to produce photos that appear more beautiful, dramatic, and perfect. The composition of these types of social media platforms is well-known among enthusiasts, as the image ratio is typically square-shaped.

Photography activities nowadays no longer require specialized cameras; instead, people primarily use the cameras in their smartphones to capture everyday activities. This includes popularizing the term "selfie," which refers to taking a self-portrait and uploading it to social networks. Such practices have become part of the lifestyle today. In fact, the term "selfie" has entered the dictionary and was chosen as the Oxford English Dictionary's Word of the Year in 2013.

The phenomenon of the selfie did not originate with the widespread use of smartphones. According to information from BBC, the first selfie was likely taken in the 1800s using mirrors or self-timers. During that time, selfies did not involve a single subject as they do now but rather large groups such as friends or family taking photos together. Some people employed creative ideas, such as using mirrors, to capture their best image. However, with advancing technology, selfies have evolved in unpredictable ways. The styles used have become more diverse, whether it's using mirrors like in the 1800s or flipping the camera. In the early days of social media, photos were shared with friends purely for enjoyment.

The behavior of narcissism on social media is now universally prevalent. It is not only common among ordinary people, but even elite individuals such as presidents, officials, and celebrities engage in this behavior. According to a survey by the Pew Internet & American Life Project, 54% of internet users have the habit of uploading self-portraits to Facebook, Twitter, or other social networks. Psychologist and director of the Media Psychology Research Center, Dr. Pamela Rutledge, states that the desire to take photos, post them online, and receive likes is a natural inclination for everyone. This desire is influenced by one's feelings regarding social connections. It is like when people comment on how nice someone's outfit looks. Biologically, social recognition is a fundamental need, and there are specific areas in the brain dedicated to social activities.

METHODOLOGY

The relationship between photography, tourism, media, and self-actualization has become increasingly significant in today's digital era. This essay explores how these elements intertwine and influence individuals' self-actualization process. Moreover, it adopts an aesthetic approach to examine the visual aspects of this phenomenon.

The Power of Photography in Self-Actualization: (1) Photography is a means of self-expression and self-discovery; (2) The role of photography in capturing and preserving personal memories; (3) The aesthetic appreciation of photography as an art form; (4) How photography facilitates the documentation and sharing of travel experiences.

Tourism as a Catalyst for Self-Actualization: (1) The transformative nature of travel experiences; (2) The exploration of new cultures, environments, and perspectives; (3) The pursuit of personal growth and self-discovery through travel; (4) The role of tourism in broadening horizons and expanding one's worldview.

Media's Influence on Self-Actualization: (1) The impact of social media platforms on shaping self-identity; (2) The role of media in facilitating self-presentation and self-promotion; (3) The influence of media in curating and disseminating aesthetic standards; (4) The interplay between media, self-image, and the quest for self-actualization.

Aesthetic Approach to Understanding Self-Actualization: (1) The visual aesthetics of photography and its impact on self-perception; (2) The aesthetic appeal of travel destinations and their influence on self-expression; (3) The role of media aesthetics in shaping perceptions of self and others; (4) The importance of aesthetic appreciation in the self-actualization journey.

The relationship between photography, tourism, media, and self-actualization is complex and multi-faceted. This essay has highlighted the aesthetic approach to understanding this dynamic interplay. Recognizing the power of visual aesthetics in shaping self-perception and fostering personal growth can enhance individuals' self-actualization process. By appreciating the artistic and aesthetic elements within photography, tourism, and media, individuals can more meaningfully navigate their journeys of self-discovery and expression.

RESULTS

From the description above, several outcomes that can be obtained are:

Understanding the relationship between photography, tourism, media, and self-actualization: The description provides an overview of how photography, tourism, and media interact and influence an individual's process of self-actualization. This helps to understand the importance of these elements in personal development.

Recognition of the role of aesthetics in the process of self-actualization: The description highlights the aesthetic approach to understanding the relationship between photography, tourism, media, and self-actualization. It reveals the importance of visual beauty in shaping self-perception and facilitating personal growth.

Awareness of the impact of social media on identity formation: The description emphasizes the influence of social media in shaping one's identity and promoting self-

actualization. This reflects the importance of awareness of the media's role in forming self-image and relationships with others.

Recognition of the role of tourism in personal growth: The description demonstrates that tourism plays a significant role in fostering personal growth and self-exploration. Through travel and new experiences, individuals can broaden their understanding of the world and achieve higher levels of self-actualization.

By understanding these outcomes, individuals can become more aware of the influence of photography, tourism, and media in their process of self-actualization and use this knowledge for personal development.

CONCLUSION

The visual meanings conveyed through photography and social media heavily rely on the technology quality and the individuals utilizing, that technology. The act of photography and traveling has become a combined behavior package for modern humans, serving both as a means of fulfilling personal needs and showcasing one's existence in the eyes of others. Existence is a crucial aspect that should not be overlooked, as humans are inherently social creatures who are interdependent with those around them. This significantly influences an individual's lifestyle, which is closely intertwined with societal development. The formation of a lifestyle is inevitably influenced by various media sources such as magazines, newspapers, television, and the internet, as they provide informational content.

With the support of technology, particularly smartphones that are integrated into everyday life, photography activities no longer require specialized cameras. This activity can be performed anywhere, anytime, and in any situation, providing ample opportunities to capture photos that can then be uploaded to social media platforms, serving as profile pictures or status updates documenting daily activities.

In the field of tourism, the aesthetics and visual information shared on social media can have a captivating effect on others, inspiring them to emulate similar experiences. In this context, social media serves as a platform for exchanging information and recommendations among users within the network. This method of information dissemination is commonly known as electronic word-of-mouth, where information spreads electronically. The hope is that visitors or travelers become a source of information for potential tourists through photography and social media. If this occurs on a large scale and simultaneously, it can greatly assist tourism operators in their marketing efforts.

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