

History of Photography Industry in Abuja Up to 2024

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Abstract: The thrust of this study hinged on the history of the photographic industry in Abuja from 1992 to 2024; the study examined the evolution of the industry up to the present state. By doing so, it provides a historical documentation of Abuja's photography industry, narrowing the scholarly gap accentuated in the academia despite its cultural, economic, and technological importance in Nigeria's creative sector. The use of historical methodology has been employed with emphasis on qualitative approach of data analysis comprising of oral interviews conducted with photographers essentially, written documents containing information about the industry, as well as secondary data comprising of journal articles, books, among others. The study found that before the year 1992, photography practice in the present Abuja was informal and primarily nomadic, supporting traditional, administrative, and identity purposes in adjacent towns. However, the period covering 1992 to 1999, when Abuja became the Nigeria's Federal Capital Territory, businesses began to grow dramatically, due to urbanization, government presence, and increased demand for commercial and official photographs leading to a great shift in the industry. Nevertheless, the industry experienced another dimension between 2000 and 2024 with the emergence of digital technology; the rise of private studios, event photography, social media influence, and the incorporation of photography into advertising, journalism, and creative entrepreneurship became the order of the day. This significant transformation in photography industry therefore requires proper documentation, policy support, and professional training activities to preserve its heritage, raise standards, and to ensure sustainable development of the sector especially in the digital age.

Keywords: History, Photography, Industry

INTRODUCTION

The emergence of photography industry in the nineteenth century has significantly impacted the social change, conserving cultural memory, and influencing visual communication across societies. World over, the photography industry has evolved from a purely technical activity to a more creative and commercial enterprise due to technological innovation, urbanization, and globalization. In Africa for instance, the industry did not only serve the purpose of personal recall, but also for political expression, identity construction, and historical archiving. Beyond its usefulness, the industry has received little attention especially in the academia; it is this gap in understanding its cultural and economic contributions that necessitated this study [1].

In Nigeria, the origin of photography business dates as far back as colonial period spanning on the wings of urbanization and modernization. It has been recorded that early photographic practices were primarily concentrated in larger towns like Lagos, Ibadan, and Onitsha, where commercial studios and press photography thrived. However, with the establishment of Abuja as Nigeria's Federal Capital Territory in 1976 and its formal launch in the early 1990s, new social, political, and economic dynamics arose, reshaping creative sectors, including photography. The fast population growth, government institutions, and rising commercial sector created new needs for photography services, but detailed historical records of this evolution are rare.

This study, therefore, focuses on the history of the photography industry in Abuja up to 2024, evaluating its birth prior to 1992, formative years between 1992 and 1999, and transformation from 2000 to 2024. The study aims to contribute to Nigerian photographic historiography and highlight Abuja's role in the country's emerging visual culture by positioning the photography sector in the context of broader technological and socioeconomic changes [2], [3].

The concepts of industry and photography industry have been clarified in this study to avoid vague application of their meaning; therefore, contextual meanings of these concepts have been offered.

The term "industry" has traditionally been connected with the organized production and exchange of commodities or services within a certain economic sector. Traditionally, it has reflected organized labour arrangements, technological infrastructure, and market dynamics that allow for mass value generation and distribution. Parkin defines industry as "an economic activity concerned with the processing of raw materials and the manufacture of goods in factories." This traditional stance emphasizes output as an important aspect of industrial identity. However, the definition of industry has shifted drastically, notably in response to the service economy and the digital revolution, which have broadened its scope beyond manufacturing [4].

According to Porter, industry is "a group of firms producing products that are close substitutes for each other," this definition emphasised market rivalry and strategic positioning. It also stresses the significance of inter-firm rivalry and specialization as indicators of industrial structure. Similarly, Freeman and Louçã define the concept of industry as "a socio-technical system in which institutions, technologies, and economic practices interact to create and transform productive activities." According to them industry encompasses innovation systems, policy contexts, and institutional dynamics. Additionally, Castells is of the opinion that industry is a networked system entrenched in the global information economy, claiming that "industries are not isolated units but nodes in dynamic, interconnected systems of value creation." Based on the above definitions, industry is not only economic but also social and technological in nature. For the purposes of this study, "industry" is defined as a collective system of enterprises, institutions, and networks engaged in the production, distribution, and exchange of goods or services, shaped by technological, economic, and social forces within a specific sector of the economy [5], [6].

In contrast, the photography industry refers to all firms, individuals, and technology engaged in the creation, production, and dissemination of photographic content. It covers professional photographers, photo studios, equipment manufacturers, and post-production services. Over the last three decades, the sector has undergone tremendous development as a result of the transition from analogue to digital technology and, more recently, the incorporation of artificial intelligence. AI has transformed the photography industry by automating editing,

improving image quality, and making professional-grade photography available to amateurs. These developments have both democratized the industry and put traditional business tactics in jeopardy [7]. For instance, many photographers in Abuja's photography industry are depending on AI solutions to stay competitive in response to these changes. According to this study, the photography industry is the collection of businesses, technologies, and activities related to the production, editing, and distribution of photographic images for artistic, commercial, and personal uses.

The theoretical framework adopted for this study is the Diffusion of Innovation Theory (DOI), propounded by Everett M. Rogers. The selection of this theory is informed by the fact that the growth of the photography industry in Abuja has been closely linked to technological changes, particularly the transition from analogue to digital photography and the gradual adoption of such innovations by practitioners over time. Everett M. Rogers' important work *Diffusion of Innovations*, published in 1962, was the first systematic development of the Diffusion of Innovation Theory. Rogers' work expanded on previous sociological and communication studies that investigated how new ideas and technologies spread through social systems. The theory has since been widely applied in fields like as communication studies, sociology, economics, business, and technological development studies to explain how innovations are introduced, accepted, or rejected within communities [8]. Rogers described diffusion as the process by which an innovation is conveyed through certain channels over time among members of a social system. He claimed that technological or social breakthroughs are not accepted immediately; rather, they are embraced gradually through contact, observation, and learning within a given setting.

The core argument of the Diffusion of Innovation Theory is that innovation adoption occurs in a predictable manner within a social system. According to Rogers, individuals and organizations adopt new technology in stages such as knowledge, persuasion, choice, implementation, and confirmation. These stages describe the cognitive and behavioural processes that determine whether an innovation is accepted or rejected [9]. Additionally, the theory classifies innovation adopters into five groups: Early adopters, early majority, late majority, and laggards are all considered innovators. This categorization demonstrates how unequal and socially impacted technology advancements are in every field. How fast and extensively new ideas are embraced depends on a number of factors, including cost, accessibility, cultural perspective, technical knowledge, and infrastructure.

The Diffusion of Innovation Theory has drawn criticism despite its broad applicability. According to academics, the concept ignores structural inequalities like financial constraints, infrastructure constraints, or governmental obstacles that could prevent adoption and instead believes that innovation adoption is always positive. Critics also point out that the theory sometimes undervalues the larger institutional and socioeconomic conditions that influence technological adoption while placing a great deal of focus on human decision-making. Relatedly, the linear model proposed by Rogers has been criticised for failing to account for instances where innovations are rejected, modified, or reinterpreted within local cultural settings [10].

Because it explains the technical shift of Abuja's photographic business from unofficial analogue traditions to a digitally driven creative economy, the Diffusion of Innovation Theory is pertinent to this study. The introduction of digital cameras in the early 2000s was a major innovation that completely changed how photography was produced, distributed, and consumed in urban areas. But not every practitioner used these technologies at the same time. Some photographers were first reluctant because of financial limitations, a lack of technical knowledge, or a dedication to conventional techniques, but others swiftly embraced digital technologies and increased the scope of their offerings. Therefore, the theory offers an analytical framework for comprehending how technological advancements affected Abuja photographers' professional practices, studio establishment, training networks, and business strategies between 1992 and 2024 [11].

This paper describes early resident photographers in Abuja as innovators who experimented with new technologies and integrated new photographic techniques into local practice using the Diffusion of Innovation Theory. In the 2000s, studio owners and business photographers were among the first to adopt digital cameras and editing software. Through

apprenticeships, workshops, or peer learning networks like photographic clubs and professional associations, the early and late majority of practitioners made a slow transition to digital methodologies.

Similar to this, those who continued to use analog technology because of structural or financial limitations were considered industry laggards. The growth of digital photography through training sessions, exhibitions, and events like the Abuja Photo Festival illustrates the channels of communication that made it possible for innovation to permeate Abuja's photographic community [12]. Using this theoretical framework, the study demonstrates how social interaction, professional networking, economic capacity, and institutional support systems all impacted the rate of innovation adoption within the photography industry in Abuja, in addition to technological availability.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The origins of photographic activity in central Nigeria can be traced back to the broader history of photography on the African continent, when early practitioners began photographing social life in urban centres in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Itinerant photographers and studio founders travelled between cities to document formal portraits, rituals, and early colonial activity, resulting in the development of West African photography. In regions adjacent to present-day Abuja, photographers produced studio portraits and commercial images, creating a visual economy before formal industry structures emerged. These practices influenced visual culture across the interior, laying groundwork for later urban photography services in rising towns like Abuja.

Prior to the establishment of Abuja as a federal capital, the region that would become modern Abuja was a mix of rural towns, farming communities, and administrative outposts under the Federal Capital Territory plan. Oral recollections from early occupants imply that cameras were rare but valued artefacts used largely for ceremonial events and identification photography. Relatedly, Blessing Adeyemi argues that nomadic studio photographers visited market days and festivals to take photographs, frequently with portable analogue cameras and field darkrooms. The above shows that the early moments were informal and episodic, without permanent photography studios in the territory.

By the dawn of 1970s and 1980s, formal photographic services were scarce and primarily associated with government functions in adjacent Kaduna and Lagos. During this time such categories of people including students and young professionals who later settled in Abuja often brought photography equipment with them, sparking informal networks of practice. It is further revealed that many obtained technical skills through apprenticeships with visiting photographers from Jos, Kaduna, and Kano, where photographic studios had already been established. The analysis here is essential to the foundational ecology of photography in the area.

No wonder, Abuja becoming the new capital in 1976 stimulated settlement growth, although it did not instantly create a local photographic industry. By the beginning of 1980s, government initiatives such as infrastructure and housing constructions attracted photographers who captured building progress and formal ceremonies. At this time the photographers present were mostly freelancers from different Nigerian towns who travelled to cover special jobs. Long-term residents' oral recollections refer to photographers documenting ministerial inaugurations and community celebrations, suggesting an ad hoc but developing visual service culture.

However, during the closing part 1980s, three trends marked the early evolution of photography in the Abuja region. First, the increase in population brought demand for wedding photographers and studio portraiture. Additionally, the nascent government bureaucracy required identification photography for staff and civil service records. More so, rising numbers of commercial enterprises such as banks, schools, and cultural associations, contracted photographers for promotional and archival work. Due to the demands, more photographers to establish temporary studios and begin thinking in terms of sustained photographic services.

In the absence of established studio infrastructure in the early 1990s, photographers' informal cooperative networks represented a significant evolutionary step. Interviews with pioneer

photographers mention meeting at social and cultural events to share technical expertise and pooling cash to purchase developing chemicals and printers in Lagos and Kano. As a result of the above collaboration, photographers were able to survive the high cost of analogue materials and contributed to the gradual emergence of local identity among practitioners.

According to Chinedu Okeke, by 1990, several local photographers had begun offering permanent services, typically under temporary banners such as picture service or event photography. Activities like youth clubs and community centres supported modest print shows, marking a move from solely commercial portraiture to broader cultural uses of photography. These informal neighbourhood shows helped spread photos of community life and reinforced photography's status as both a documenting and displaying medium.

Prior to 1992, operating analogue photography in Abuja presented significant hurdles. Studio spaces were limited, electrical supply was intermittent, and most processing equipment had to be supplied from locations such as Lagos or Kano. A 1989 interview with one of the early resident photographers illustrates how black-and-white films had to be processed in batches to cut expenses and how photographers frequently worked late into the night to process orders. Despite these structural difficulties, these early practitioners laid the industry's groundwork.

During this time, the business in photography was influenced by social and cultural practices all over Abuja. This includes photographs of festivals, religious ceremonies, and market days were valuable family records. Reports support that these photos were distributed throughout familial networks and sometimes traded, increasing the symbolic significance of photography beyond its commercial use. Despite lack of professionalism, this social embedding of photography helped sustain demand in the study area.

Before the coming of digital technologies for about 10 years later, analogue photography dominated the pre-1992 scene. The available photograph professionals exchanged ideas with each other on how to prepare darkrooms, mix chemicals, and manually retouch prints. The outcome of their learning was the common knowledge foundation among early practitioners. Thereafter, most of the photographers went on to train younger photographers in the 1990s and early 2000s, indicating the link between Abuja's pre-1992 foundations and subsequent industry growth.

This period also witnessed the formation of community photographic clubs, which began in the early 1990s. Though casual, these organizations organized meetings where members exchanged ideas about composition, lighting, and business tactics. These associations supported rising professionalism and assisted photographers in navigating the problems of a rapidly changing metropolis. They were the forerunners of more formal institutions and festivals that would emerge after 2000.

As a result, before 1992, the photography business in Abuja might be considered to have progressed from itinerant and informal practices to more structured services that met social, administrative, and commercial needs. Despite limited infrastructure and resources, pioneers established collaborative networks and communal traditions that incorporated photography into the territory's cultural life.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As previously indicated, the years 1992-1999 were revolutionary for Abuja's photographic sector. Following the transfer of federal institutions and international embassies, the population grew, opening up new markets for visual services in the government, corporate, and private sectors. As Abuja became a hub of political and cultural activity, photography demand evolved from occasional and informal practice to more consistent professional work. The transfer has played a key role in laying the groundwork for the emergence of photography as a recognisable industry rather than a collection of scattered practitioners [13].

The establishment of official picture studios was one characteristic that set this era apart. There were hardly any studios in the area before 1992, but by the middle of the 1990s, a number of permanent studios had established in business areas like Wuse, Garki, and Utako. These studios provided portrait sessions, event coverage, and developing services, filling gaps that earlier itinerant photographers had only partly addressed. According to Esther Okeke, among the first

studio owners in Wuse, studio photography became a central business by 1994, attracting both middle-class and expatriate clients.

As wedding and event photography continued to increase it became one of the most remarkable trends of this era. Similarly social life in Abuja shifted, so did photographers specializing in ceremonies, birthdays, and cultural festivals become extremely popular. According to Samuel Abubakar, by the mid-1990s, most weekends were filled with numerous engagements, and photographers frequently worked together on huge events to manage equipment and processing requirements [14]. This trend not only increased incomes for practitioners but also served to professionalise approaches to lighting, composition, and client relations.

The demand for photography by institutions like schools during their graduation ceremony also continued to rise. Same with government agencies, foreign embassies, and non-governmental organizations that regularly needed the photographic evidence for archives, reports, and promotional materials. This demand developed a niche for documentary and commercial photographers who could supply consistent services to organizations with formal contracts. John Peters Anyanwu, An early Abuja documentary photographer recalls that by 1996, he was regularly commissioned by international organizations for project documentation, signalling the industry's development beyond social portraiture.

Between the year 1992 and 1999, this sector developed education and informal training networks across the FCT. Young and intending photographers were trained with existing studio owners or learned cooperatively in photography clubs. One of the good examples is found with Aisha Suleiman, who organized local photography seminars in Garki during this period, explains how peers shared technical expertise on darkroom techniques, film handling, and customer service. These grassroots training structures strengthened the skills base of local photographers and helped develop standards of practice. In addition, Mr. Emeka Ude observes that:

In the 1990s, photography's analogue format offered both advantages and disadvantages. Even though film and processing were still commonplace, local photographers had more options thanks to advancements in equipment accessibility, particularly with regard to used cameras and imports from Lagos and Kano markets.

Despite that, the cost of chemicals and maintenance constrained rapid professionalisation. In his opinion, Emeka Ude notes that many studios diversified into allied services such as photocopying and ID card photography to supplement revenue and offset high material costs.

During this time, photographic associations also started to form, providing venues for practitioners to share resources and promote better business conditions. Since its founding in 1997, the Abuja Photographers Forum (APF) has served as a crucial platform for formal networking, cooperative exhibitions, and bulk supply negotiations. Also, Tunji Adewale notes that the APF fostered a shared identity among practitioners and helped mediate disputes over pricing and professional ethics [15].

Media and advertising organizations are increasingly using local photographers for print and billboard campaigns. Unlike conventional portraiture and event coverage, commercial photography emerged as a new source of income for corporate promotions and product photos. According to Funmi Ojo, by 1998, advertisers preferred local talent who understood the Abuja market and could meet tight production schedules. These collaborations helped elevate photography's role in the city's visual culture. Technological exchange and regional mobility remained significant. Elaborating this point, Sani Abubakar opines that: "photographers from Jos, Kaduna, and other urban centres continued to visit Abuja for work, often sharing techniques and business practices". This inter-city exchange helped local photographers build broader professional networks and access new markets outside Abuja.

Another informant, Sani Abubakar's highlight how these interactions expanded the technical repertoire of Abuja practitioners while also contributing to the region's status as a growing photographic powerhouse. The sector encountered structural obstacles like unstable power supplies, limited access to new technology, and a dearth of institutional funding despite its growth. For consistent illumination and darkroom operations, studios have historically relied on generators, which raised operating expenses. Similarly, Aisha Suleiman also mentions that many photographers struggled to scale operations due to these infrastructure limits, emphasizing the

resilient innovation required to continue enterprises in the 1990s.

By the end of the decade, photography had become a more prominent aspect of Abuja's creative economy. Exhibitions, portfolio displays, and community activities began to include photography work alongside other forms of art. This notoriety helped to foster a larger awareness for photography as a cultural expression rather than just a means of documentation. Chinedu Okeke, a senior photographer, recalls the excitement surrounding joint shows in 1998, which brought practitioners together to demonstrate varied approaches and subjects. This development shows that there is a significant shift in the industry in Abuja.

In light of the foregoing, the years 1992–1999 were a period of consolidation and expansion for the photographic sector in Abuja. What began as a small set of informal activities has grown into a thriving professional sector, shaped by studio establishment, event and institutional demand, skill exchange, and organizational networks. Despite infrastructure issues, photographers used the city's growth to establish sustainable techniques that laid the groundwork for the industry's evolution in the 2000s and beyond.

In the early 2000s, the photography business in Abuja reached a new level of development as digital technology began to replace analogue processes across Nigeria's creative sectors. This transition reflected global trends toward digital capture, editing, and delivery, lowering entry barriers and enabling more practitioners to provide professional services. By early 2000s, the business in photography in Abuja moved to its apex especially in terms of development and as digital technology began to replace analogue processes across Nigeria's creative sectors. This transition reflected global trends toward digital capture, editing, and delivery, lowering entry barriers and enabling more practitioners to provide professional services. In the early 2000s, the photography business in Abuja reached a new level of development as digital technology began to replace analogue processes across Nigeria's creative sectors. This transition reflected global trends toward digital capture, editing, and delivery, lowering entry barriers and enabling more practitioners to provide professional services. Prior to this transition, many studios in Abuja, like in other Nigerian cities, relied on film processing, which was expensive and technically restrictive. Due to the coming of portable and improved digital cameras which were also affordable, particularly from the beginning of 2000, Abuja's photography landscape began to diversify rapidly, enabling practitioners to experiment with new genres and expand client bases.

Therefore, the years from 2000 to 2010, witnessed a progressive development of photography studios and freelancers providing a variety of services such as weddings, events, commercial shots, and documentary projects in Abuja. Based on the available information, factors such as Abuja's booming economy, rising middle-class demand for excellent visual content, and the growth of social media platforms that opened new markets for photos were responsible for this change. According to Adewale Ojo, digital technology reduced turnaround time for clients and increased profitability, as photographers no longer needed darkrooms or costly chemical stock.

Apart from business services, photography became one of the respected forms expressing culture among the different ethnic groups in Abuja in the mid-2000s. As a result, social issues, cultural customs, and urban life, became another important aspect where the industry gained relevance in Nigeria's capital city. During this period, informal networks of photographers who shared knowledge, skills, and resources emerged serving as a precursor to more formal organisations later in the decade. They played dual roles as service providers and visual storytellers, deepening photography's cultural relevance in Abuja societies.

During this same period from 2010 onward Abuja Photo Festival was launched and began to grow and in 2017 it became the major platform for showcasing photography as art and social commentary. The platform united together local and international photographers, offering exhibitions, workshops, and discussions that broadened appreciation for both documentary and artistic photography. Another development was the provision of mentorship opportunities and community engagement initiatives, strengthening the industry's professional and creative capacities.

More so, the platform was a focal point for industry development, with over 3,000 young creatives participating in workshops and exhibitions that connect them to global trends and professional practices. Through events that emphasise visual storytelling and social impact, the

festival has helped position photography as both cultural practice and viable career path in Abuja. This institutional support has been critical to fostering emerging generations of photographers and raising standards across the industry.

These digital platforms and social media have played an increasingly central role in how photographers in Abuja promote their work, connect with clients, and distribute visual content over the past years. For instance, platforms like Instagram and Facebook have become virtual portfolios where photographers can engage audiences, attract commissions, and build brands without heavy investment in physical studio space. Similarly, these social media platforms have enabled Abuja photographers to reach audiences in the diaspora and international markets, amplifying their visibility beyond Nigeria.

Using creative festivals and social media, larger photographic networks and conferences, including the Nigeria photographic Expo & Conference (NiPHEC), have helped to advance professional development throughout the country, with events held in Abuja as part of national circuits. Other opportunities like workshops, panel discussions, and networking that help practitioners improve technique, business skills, and career strategies were created. Additionally, Nigerian photographers and creative professionals from other regions of Africa and the diaspora, through some of these platforms were connected; this further integrated Abuja into continental creative ecosystems.

In as much as these advancements have been identified, the photography industry continued to encounter issues that are common to the Nigerian setting. One of these challenges is the informal training of photographers mostly in form of apprenticeships or peer-to-peer mentoring rather than certified universities due to a lack of access to excellent equipment and formal education. More so, photography is considered as a hobby rather than a profession impacting recognition and compensation for skilled visual creators. Addressing these barriers remains essential for sustaining and professionalising the industry.

The expansion of commercial options, including as corporate branding, real estate photography, and event documenting, has contributed to the economic growth of photography in Abuja. The continuous incorporation of visual content into advertising, websites, and social media, demand for professional photographers has kept increasing. This economic diversification has encouraged practitioners to specialise in niches such as lifestyle, fashion, architecture, and portrait photography, contributing to a more layered and resilient industry.

Despite the forces of market changes and technical transformation, photography industry in Abuja has demonstrated endurance and ingenuity so far. According to practitioners many photographers have expanded their services to encompass videography, drone photography, and multimedia storytelling to suit customer demand for rich visual narratives. Trainers and studio owners frequently emphasized continuous learning and adaptability as key abilities, echoing industry ideas that coupled craft quality with business acumen. With this strategy, they keep improving on their skills using various opportunities presented by Artificial Intelligence technology.

Culturally, photography in Abuja has moved beyond commercial work to serve as a forum for social discourse and the documentation of pressing issues such as migration, identity, and urban evolution. Photographers have used events like photographic walks, exhibitions, and community projects to engage people in conversations about their surroundings and stories. This change emphasizes photography's position as not merely a market service, but also a medium of cultural expression and societal effect.

Based on the foregoing, Abuja's photography industry evolved from technologically advanced commercial services to a dynamic, diversified creative environment between 2000 and 2024. Technological innovation, cultural platforms like as the Abuja Photo Festival, and integration with digital networks have expanded options for practitioners while also defining photography as an art form and an economic sector. Continued investment in education, infrastructure, and professional networks will be vital for building on this success in the next decades.

Between 1992 and 2024, one of the most notable movements in Abuja's photographic sector was the transition from analogue to digital photography. In the early 1990s, photographers

mostly used film cameras, darkroom processing, and manual print development. However, by the early 2000s, digital cameras had become more widely available, lowering costs and turnaround times while allowing photographers to experiment with new approaches and workflows. Adewale Ojo, a senior photographer, believes that "the introduction of digital cameras around 2002 revolutionised studio practice, enabling instant previews and easier editing without chemical processing." Beyond saving time, this innovation led to reduced stress and customer satisfaction.

Another notable development is the proliferation and variety of studios. Prior to 1992, there were almost no professional photography studios in Abuja; by the 2000s, studios had developed in commercial districts such as Wuse, Garki, and Utako. These studios first specialized on portrait and event photography, but gradually expanded into commercial, fashion, and corporate photography to accommodate changing market demands. According to Esther Okeke, as an early studio creator, she transitioned from wedding pictures in the 1990s to corporate branding shots in the 2010s, echoing broader client trends in the city. Her experience is therefore relevant since it verifies the thesis presented in this study.

From the mid-1990s onward, event and social photography emerged as a dominant segment of the industry. Weddings, religious celebrations, and cultural events created steady demand for photographers who could capture large-scale gatherings. Samuel Abubakar, also observes that weekend bookings often overlapped by midday by the late 1990s, reflecting strong demand for event coverage. As Abuja's urban population increased, so did the variety and frequency of social activities that required photographic documentation.

Documentary photography and visual storytelling became popular artistic approaches during this time period. During the 2000s, particularly in the 2010s, photographers began to experiment with reportage, street photography, and narrative projects that captured social change, identity, and city life. Initiatives like the Abuja Photo Festival, established in 2017, provided platforms for these practices to flourish. The festival's exhibitions and workshops encouraged photographers to use their work for social commentary and community engagement, expanding the industry's cultural scope.

Institutional and corporate photography also gained ground over time. In the 1990s, government documentation and institutional needs were mostly handled by visiting photographers. In the 2000s, local specialists were frequently hired for government archives, NGO reports, corporate campaigns, and promotional materials. John Peters Anyanwu also points out that: "by 2010 it was common for businesses in Abuja to retain photographers on retainer for annual reports and brand campaigns, signalling the maturation of corporate photographic services." It is important to note that the photography company began to grow during this time due to rising demand, as previously mentioned.

Relatedly, a notable trend from the 2010s onward has been the integration of photography with digital platforms and social media. Platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok have become essential for marketing work, building professional portfolios, and reaching broader audiences. According to data from Nigeria's creative industries, social media has enabled photographers to present portfolios beyond traditional galleries or print media. There is little doubt that many Abuja photographers are now securing customers through internet presence and engaging audiences with visual storytelling adapted to digital consumption.

Collaborative networks and professional associations have influenced industry trends over time. In the late 1990s, informal networks allowed photographers to share knowledge and resources. In the 2000s and 2010s, more organized groups and forums, such as the Abuja Photographers Forum (APF), created opportunities for professional growth, collective bargaining, and bulk supply buying. These frameworks served to standardize procedures and promote young photographers, ushering in a change from solitary practices to community building.

Education and skill development practices have also changed, with apprenticeships and peer mentoring giving place to workshops, festivals, and online courses. The Abuja Photo Festival and other comparable events have held training sessions with international practitioners, introducing local photographers to global visual standards and artistic techniques. Additionally, the spread of online tutorials and educational platforms has widened access to technical skills; allowing younger photographers in Abuja to learn lighting, composition, and post-production at

relatively low cost.

Economic trends in Abuja's photography business have mirrored larger changes in the city's economy. The rise of commercial photography specializations, such as fashion, real estate, food photography, and branding, has increased revenue sources for practitioners. According to market surveys, photographers are increasingly focusing on specialist services that cost more rates than standard portraiture. This specialisation reflects a maturing industry where practitioners tailor services to specific commercial markets rather than general assignments.

From 1992 to 2024, there has been a contemporary trend of combining photography with multimedia and visual storytelling. Today's Abuja photographers frequently integrate still photographs with video, drone footage, and interactive presentations to suit client and audience expectations. Oral interviews with modern practitioners reveal that, in order to compete in a digital media market, many studios now provide combined photography and videography services. This integration echoes broader worldwide trends in visual media and foreshadows a future in which photography in Abuja continues to innovate across formats.

CONCLUSION

This study looked at the historical development and emerging tendencies of Abuja's photography business, from its inception before 1992 to its consolidation and expansion between 1992 and 2024. The findings show that Abuja's photographic industry has evolved from informal, itinerant, and analogue-based practices to a dynamic, digitized, and diverse creative sector impacted by urbanization, technological innovation, and rising institutional and cultural demand. Photography in Abuja has expanded beyond simple documentation to include event, commercial, documentary, creative, and multimedia activities, which are supported by professional networks, festivals, and online platforms. Despite this development, obstacles such as limited formal training institutions, little documentation of business history, infrastructural constraints, and inconsistent professional regulation persist. Based on these findings, the study suggests the need for deliberate documentation and archiving of Abuja's photographic history, the establishment of structured training and certification programs, increased government and private-sector support for creative industries, and the strengthening of professional associations to uphold ethical standards and fair practice. These measures, among others, will not only preserve the industry's historical legacy but also enhance its sustainability and global competitiveness in the digital age.

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