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## SEEING THE WORLD THROUGH A CAMERA LENS

*Introducing the 'Expert-Amateur' photographer*

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## Abstract

Through different blogs, social medias and apps people are sharing pictures like never before. Sales in expensive DSLR cameras have increased, and companies in the photo industry are providing customers with lessons to help them in their quest to become better photographers. From being just an object symbol of tourism it has evolved into becoming a lifestyle for many photography enthusiasts. This translates in a growing number of amateur photographers spending copious amounts of time and money on perfecting their skills and pursuing their passion.

Although this trend has been a growing consumer practice for more than a decade, few researchers have focused on this field. The existing studies have mainly focused on either serious amateurs that are part of photo clubs or have reduced the field of photography into two groups: professionals and the rest. The analysis of the consumers interested in photography is more complex and cannot be limited to two groups. Hence, there is an existing research gap that this paper aims to fill.

By combining insights gained through in-depth interviews from both amateurs and professionals with relevant theories from the field of consumer behaviour and sociology, we wish to better understand these consumers. This leads us to introduce the concept of 'expert-amateur' as a new way to define these highly engaged consumers and their practices. They are characterized by sharing similarities with both professionals ('experts') and everyday users ('amateurs'). Doing so we wish to shed some light on this developing consumer practice.

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Source: According to Bourdieu, 1984; cited in Corrigan, 1997 p.27

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## List of Abbreviation

CIPA	=	Camera and Imaging Products Association
DIY	=	Do It Yourself
DSLR	=	Digital Single Lens Camera
e.g.	=	For example
etc.	=	And so on
SVT	=	Sveriges Television (= Sweden's Television)
vs	=	Versus

## 1. INTRODUCTION

*“Today, everybody is a photographer, on Facebook only over 300 million pictures are posted each day. (...) Johan and I are two middle age amateurs that like many others, bought a camera that was a bit too expensive and began to routinely take pictures.”*

(SVT, 2014)

This quote is extracted from a new Swedish TV-program called “Everybody is a photographer” (SVT, 2014) where two actors explore different aspects of photography (self-portrait, analogue vs digital, etc.). As the program highlights, the interest for photography has increased immensely over the past few years. Blogs, social medias and apps have made it possible for people to share pictures like never before. At the same time, sales in expensive DSLR cameras have increased, and companies and museum are providing customers with lessons to help them in their quest to become better photographers. This translates in a growing number of amateur photographers spending a lot of time and money on perfecting their skills and pursuing their passion.

### 1.1. The Growing Trend of Photography as a Consumer Practice

Johan and Henrik, the stars of the Swedish TV-show, are not the only ones having bought, what they refer to a camera that was “a bit too expensive and advanced for them” (SVT, 2014). In recent years even though most consumers already have some sort of camera on their smartphone, the sales of expensive DSLR cameras and accessories have shown to increase in the past decade (see Figure 1). If we have a look at the number of interchangeable lens cameras (DSLR) exported from Japan the trend is clearly towards a big expansion from 0,8 million units in 2003 to more than 17 million in 2013 (CIPA, 2014).

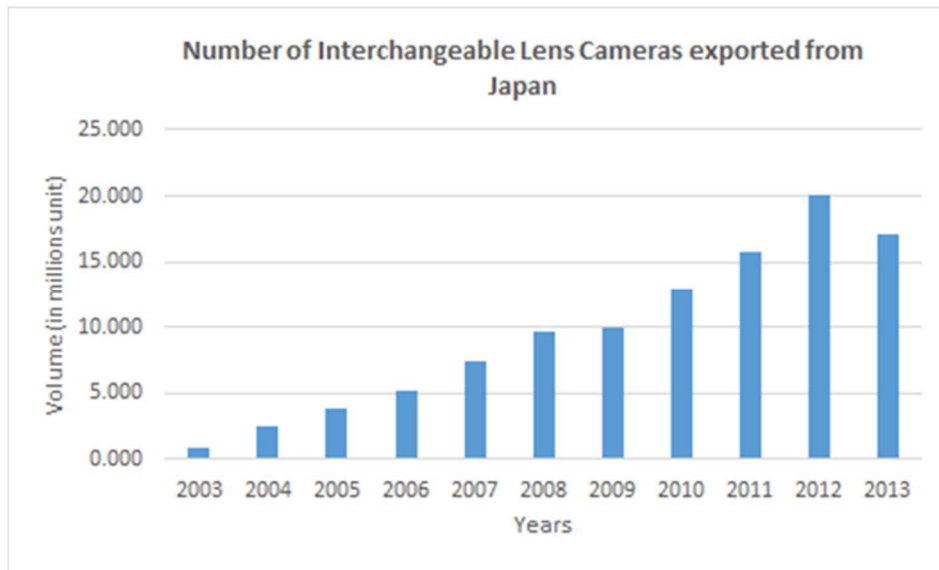


Figure 1: Number of SLR lenses exported from Japan.

Source: According to CIPA, 2003 - 2013.

The increasing interest in photography is also symbolized by the success of smartphones, apps and social media platforms focusing on pictures. The trend can also be seen in the development and success of photo exhibitions and photography classes. One example of this trend is the success of the 'Fotografiska' (The Swedish Museum of Photography) in Stockholm. Since its opening in 2010, the museum has been a success with over 440.000 visitors in 2012 among which more than 13% of them were members (Hollingby, 2014). The membership card the museum provides gives interested photo enthusiast's free entrance all year, invitations to selected exhibition previews and member evenings. The museum not only exhibit famous photographers but also offers photography classes ranging from basic to advanced classes provided by professional photographers (Fotografiska, 2014). The development of this trend has also led to new forms of businesses deriving from it. These business ideas are usually more recent and represent a still undeveloped aspect. One example could be the creation of online platforms for amateurs to sell their work and therefore blurring the line between amateurs and professionals. A very good example is the Swedish company "Most Photos" that offers the opportunity for amateur photographers to sell their pictures on a common platform. The website has more than 51.000 contributors, having uploaded more than 6,8 million pictures (Mostphotos, 2014).

## 1.2. What are the Natives up to?

Those different trends all points towards the idea that photography, as a consumption activity, is changing. Smartphones have better integrated cameras, sales of expensive DSLR is increasing,

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people are taking photo classes, going to photo exhibitions, sharing their pictures online, watching TV-programs on photography and some of them even go as far as selling their pictures. So the main question is: why? What are the underlying motivations that are driving all those amateurs to spend time and money on this activity? What characterizes them and what sets them apart from the rest?

The first step in understanding this development is to clearly define what we understand under the notion of 'amateur photographer'. Looking at existing publications in the academic field, photography as a consumption activity has not received a lot of attention. It has however been the centre of research from more sociological publications.

From a consumer behaviour perspective, Urry and Larsen (2011) analyse photography as a strong element to the development of mass tourism, going as far as presenting the camera as the symbol of it. This however depicts a relatively low-involved photographer that has no real technical or aesthetic knowledge and mostly uses his camera for special occasions such as traveling. On the other hand Bourdieu (1965) has a more sociological approach focusing on analysing photography clubs in the 60's. Here the individuals observed are very much high-involved photographers that have a good technical understanding and have developed an aesthetic gaze.

Those two approaches however create a very broad spectrum as Harrison underlines: "There is a difference between the camera-club enthusiast, or the skilled amateur who develops their own photographs on the one hand, and the person who buys the throwaway camera on holiday so that they have a few photographic mementos of an occasion on the other" (2004, p.25). The amateur photographer that we want to better understand is a new form of amateur located somewhere in Harrison's spectrum.

The "serious amateur photographer" presented by Cox, Clough and Marlow (2008) is probably the closest to this engaged amateur photographer that we are interested in analysing. For the three authors this serious amateur photographer is located between Porter's (1990, p.46) concept of the "snapshotter", somebody who takes a few photos a year on special occasions and professional photographers: "Like the professionals, they have a strong psychic investment in the activity, a career in developing their skill and a shared knowledge base, and identify strongly with others engaged in the practice (Stebbins, 1992, cited in Gelber, 2013) but they lack the formalized training and paid employment of a professional and a degree of external recognition" (Cox, Clough & Marlow, 2008 p.1). It is this definition that will be taken into account in this paper. However when referring to this concept, the term 'amateur photographer' will be preferred over 'serious amateur photographer'.



Although offering a very good starting point, none of the publications cited above have gone into understanding what characterizes and motivates these amateur photographers.

### 1.3. Research gap

In order to best answer the previous questions and to fill the research gap, a combination of primary data (qualitative interviews) and secondary sources, mainly academic literature will be used. As seen earlier, the literature in the field of photography and consumer behaviour is very limited, forcing us to expand further. Here two main fields will be explored: the field of consumer behaviour in general and to some extent the field of sociology. This will be done in the literature review. Having this broader approach should provide us with different trails to follow that could help towards understanding what the driving forces behind the development of those earlier defined amateur photographers.

It is interesting to highlight that even though amateur photography has not been analysed as a consumer movement, it is not the case of similar 'extreme consumer cultures' such as the foodie culture. A lot of parallels can be drawn between the increasing interest in photography and the slightly older interest in food. The first one is that both movements have the same starting point: 'postmodernism' and the 'aestheticization of daily life'. These two concepts will be further presented in the next part of this paper, the literature review.

Barr and Levy (1984) are the first to have introduced and defined the 'foodie' term: "a foodie is a person who is very very very interested in food. Foodies are the ones talking about food in any gathering [...]. They don't think they are being trivial – Foodies consider food to be an art, on a level with painting or drama" (Barr and Levy 1984, p6). Comparing food to art is referring to one of the central ideas of aestheticization, the "assumption that art can be anywhere or anything" (Featherstone, 2007, p.65). Cova and Svanfeldt elaborates on Featherstone's ideas by saying that "The postmodern being is free in all choices to turn each day into a work of art, and is inspired and nourished by the massive offer of art made available by reproduction and the media" (1992, p.297)

It is also interesting to highlight that at the start a difference was made between 'gourmet' and 'foodie' where gourmet were perceived as being "older, upper-class gentleman" as opposed to foodies that were seen as "children of the consumer boom" (Watson et al., 2008, p.290). But as the authors underlines, referring to more recent publications, this distinction has quickly disappeared and nowadays anyone can be defined as a foodie supporting the idea of 'collapse' of differences and boundaries between high art (gourmet) and popular culture (foodie).

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A similar evolution can be observed in the development of ‘amateur photographers’ that are, much like the foodies, ‘children of the consumer boom’. Looking from a more popular approach, the aestheticization of food can be seen in the success of food related TV-programs (Masterchef, Top Chef for e.g.) magazines and blogs. In a similar way, the same movement is starting to develop within the field of photography.

Finally, much like in the food community, the photography trend also translates in the appearance of classes and real communities (offline and online) of amateurs regrouped around their common passion. These communities have evolved a lot since Bourdieu’s (1965) analyse of photo clubs in Europe in the 60’s. Many communities and discussions have now shifted online to specialized blogs, forums or communities created by camera manufacturers such as the French Nikon community “myN’Club” regrouping more than 45,000 members (MyN’Club, 2014).

This development of photography fits well with the overall trend that was previously perceived as low-engaging action, into a real lifestyle trend through the post-modern vision of ‘aestheticization of the daily life’. By focusing on a very strong trend, but yet not over-exploited, such as photography we are hoping to better understand the driving forces behind these new enthusiasts.

### 1.4. Research Questions

The common perception is that there exists two categories of photographers: professionals and amateurs. The first one has photography as its daily work and way of making a living. The second is closer to Urry’s tourist definition (2011) and theoretically regroups all non-professional photographers.

As we will see in the literature review, amateur photographers have previously been seen as being all the same. However some researchers have come up with a third potential category by analysing those having a higher involvement such as members of a photography club (Bourdieu, 1965; Schwartz, 1986). Since those studies, the field of photography has gone through ground breaking changes in terms of technological developments (digital camera, apps, social media for e.g.). In addition to these technical changes, the social aspect has also evolved with for instance the notion of ‘aestheticization of everyday life’ or the concept of ‘craft consumer’ that will be presented later on.

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Taking those changes into account, we want to provide an updated definition of Bourdieu's 'serious amateurs', those that are in-between amateur and professional photographers. Our aim is therefore to try and find relevant insights regarding the following questions:

- What are the main differences between amateur and professional photographers?
- How does the amateurs/professionals perceive themselves?
- What are their motives (internal and external)?

The focus is therefore on understanding what characterizes the consumers that are part of this growing trend.

### 1.5. Purpose

The choice of the photography field offers the advantage of being both a quite broad area making it relevant and easier to find credible sources and consumers to observe. It also offers the advantage of not being a field that has been too analysed in the terms of consumer behaviour compared to for example another often cited practice - the foodie trend.

The main purpose of this thesis is therefore to investigate the increasing trend of amateur photography as a consumption practice and try to establish what characterizes these individuals from the rest.

## 2. THEORY

*In this chapter a presentation of relevant theories for our research will be provided. First a short historical background will be given followed by a deeper explanation of the concept of 'aestheticization of daily life'. We then move on to theories revolving around status and the object in focus, the camera. Finally, we will examine the community around photography, seeing how this field is very much of interest for our study.*

### 2.1. Historical Framework

Looking at photography from a historical perspective, the turning point was in the late nineteenth century marking a great increase in the access to photographic technologies. Dry-plate negative technology and easier to use cameras enabled more people to develop an interest in photography, it was no longer a hobby reserved only for the wealthy elite (Edwards, 2012). Thus this is not by any means a new hobby or consumer culture; the interest for photography is more than a century old. Already in 1902 a variety of publications existed for people that shared an interest for photography, such as 'Amateur photographer', 'Photographic answers' or 'Photographic quarterly' for example (Edwards, 2012 p.5). However, it is important to bear in mind that photography at this time, was still not a hobby available for the everyday working-class people.

However, during the twentieth century, companies like Eastman Kodak and Polaroid Corporation had a huge impact on the development of easy-to-use cameras for everyday people. In the beginning of 1980, 94 percent of U.S. households were in possession of a still camera (Chalfen, 1987). The digital revolution had its impact on the world of photography as well, and in the late 1990s digital cameras were common among consumers (Kodak, 2014). The digital camera facilitated the way people took and developed photos enabling people to take as many pictures as they wished, look at them right away and decide which ones to save and which ones to toss. Going to a photo store and have somebody develop the photos for you was no longer required; the digital pictures could be saved on a computer and consumers could easily print them out themselves. The next big step came in the mid-2000s, when digital cameras became integrated in most cell phones. Today the camera in most smartphones is as good as many of the simpler digital cameras available on the market.

### 2.2. Postmodernism and Aestheticization of Daily Life

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The definition of postmodernism given by Featherstone (2007) and Harvey (1989) present postmodernism from a historical perspective as a movement that springs from modernism. The concept of postmodernism is complex and regroups broad fields such as architecture, philosophy, politics and consumption. Postmodernism presents a more pluralist and chaotic world. Harvey (1989, p.49) refers to the creation of numerous “world” that intersect, leading to changes in the balance of power between groups and classes.

Featherstone (2007) defines the notion of “aestheticization of everyday life” into four elements: “the effacement of the boundary between art and everyday life, the collapse of the distinction between high art and mass/popular culture, a general stylistic promiscuity and playful mixing of codes” (2007, p.64).

The concept of ‘postmodernity’ and ‘aestheticization of daily life’ are closely linked together. In order to better understand this connection, we will start by looking at what defines the idea of ‘aestheticization of daily life’. This can be done by separating the notion in two, the concept of ‘aestheticization’ on one side and ‘daily life’ on the other.

The emergence of the concept of postmodernity can be dated back to the late 1960’s, beginning of the 1970’s (Harvey, 1989) and as we have seen it is far from being limited to just the field of consumer behaviour (film, architecture, philosophy or music for e.g.). Although the definitions vary across the different fields, all have in common the central role of culture and more specifically of an aesthetic approach. One of the main concepts is what Harvey’s presents as the “rapprochement” that is a coming together of “high culture” and “the people” (Harvey, 1989, p.59) creating a “cultural mass” (Bell, 1978, p.20) leading to the idea of ‘aestheticization’.

The second part, the notion of ‘daily life’ has a double meaning as it refers to the idea of day-to-day life - that is the idea that it becomes part of individuals life without him or her really noticing it - but also a timely aspect as it refers to an immediate feeling. This timely feeling and its link to postmodernity requires to focus on the theories of Jameson (1984). The author explains that postmodern cultures has created a transformation of reality into images and most importantly a fragmentation of time into a “series of perpetual presents” (Featherstone, 2007, p.5). It is this notion of ‘perpetual presents’ that is linked to the idea of ‘aestheticization’ in the *daily* life.

As seen above, the concept of ‘aestheticization’ of daily life derives directly from the postmodern movement and can simply be defined as: “The postmodern being is free in all choices to turn each

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day into a work of art" (Cova and Svanfeldt, 1992, p.297). Featherstone has a similar vision insisting on "the effacement of the boundary between art and everyday life" (2007, p.64).

### 2.3. Distinction

*"It is standard ethnographic practice to assume that all material possessions carry social meanings and to concentrate a main part of cultural analysis upon their use as communicators"*

(Douglas and Isherwood, 1979; cited in Corrigan 1997, p.18)

According to the authors the use of goods have two main functions; firstly they are needed in order to create visible and stable categories of culture and secondly they make and maintain social relationships. Both of these functions are very applicable to the consumer culture of amateur photography (Douglas and Isherwood, 1979; cited in Corrigan 1997, p.18). The camera is the tool for these individuals to show who they are and distinguish themselves from others. At the same time their camera and more generally their passion is what brings these amateurs together and create a feeling of belongingness.

#### Display of wealth

The marketplace for cameras has increased immensely over the past few years, and as Johan and Henrik (the two actors from the Introduction chapter) many others have bought a camera that probably is a bit too advanced and expensive for them. According to Veblen (1975) this would be a perfect example of showing ones pecuniary strength through "conspicuous consumption", where one shows off their wealth through the use of commodities.

These "serious amateurs" spend a great amount of time on their hobby. This can also be a way of showing what Veblen (1975) refers to as "leisure consumption". Analysing the behaviour of members of the high class from the beginning of the 20th century the author highlights how it would be frowned upon for people of higher classes to practice any form of labour activities. Their time was most preferable spent on learning dead languages and eating pastries for example. All this was done to show that they had the luxury to not participate in any sort of productive labour activities (Veblen, 1975).

Even though Veblen's theory about pecuniary strength is over 100 years old this feels very applicable in today's society. Far from everybody have the luxury to spend such a great amount of time on a

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hobby; therefore these “serious amateurs” display a form of Veblen’s “leisure consumption” in today’s society (Veblen, 1975; cited in Corrigan, 1997 p.23).

### Photography as a distinction tool

Bourdieu is well known for his research on the link between social class and consumption practices, as well as his distinction between two types of capital: economic and cultural. The key concept in Bourdieu’s “cultural capital” is education, although money and time is highly significant as well. Thus, the level of cultural capital one receives is dependent on time spent on education as well as how elite the institutions attended are considered (Bourdieu, 1984; cited in Corrigan, 1997 p.27).

Thus, cultural capital is defined by formal education and social background. Bourdieu continues by categorizing these two different kinds of capital, material wealth (economic capital) and the cultural assets (cultural capital), by creating four different social groups:

Possibilities:	High	Low
High	(1) Economic/Cultural	(2) Economic/Cultural
Low	(3) Economic/Cultural	(4) Economic/Cultural

Table 1: The four social groups according to Bourdieu

Source: According to Bourdieu, 1984; cited in Corrigan, 1997 p.27

Being brought up in a “social milieu” of the cultural elites, with well-educated parents and attending privileged schools allows these individuals to have another way of thinking, feeling and acting. Bourdieu refers to this as “habitus” (1984, p.170). These individuals fit the description of either group number (1) or (3) of the table 1, people with a high cultural capital. This implies that having high cultural capital does not have to be linked to having a high economic capital. Examples of ‘high’ cultural capital can for instance be knowledge on how to use a complex technical camera and having a general understanding of the ‘codes’ that go within the world of photography.

### The aesthetic gaze

According to Bourdieu (1984) individuals with low cultural capital, group number (2) and (4) on the Table 1, tends to appreciate the ‘easy’ pictures of sunsets and puppies and have difficulties in seeing the beauty in for instance a photo of a garbage can, that someone with a higher cultural capital would be able to better understand and appreciate. This is what Bourdieu refers to as “Kantian aesthetic”. He claims that “Education grants one aestheticizing capabilities, so that one learns to

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take a contemplative, evaluative distance from things” (Bourdieu, 1984 p.39). Or as Miller puts it “The overt display of wealth and consumption by Veblen’s leisure class is challenged by a more subtle, detached and inconspicuous form to be appreciated only by those sufficiently cultivated or civilized. It is an aesthetic clearly expressed in the cool, detached and “difficult” forms of modern art” (Miller, 1987; cited in Corrigan 1997, p.29).

Moreover, Miller makes the distinction between ‘Kantian aesthetic’ and ‘Anti-Kantian aesthetic’. According to the author those in possession of a higher cultural capital are more likely to nurture a Kantian approach to objects in life whilst, those with low cultural capital are more probable to foster an anti-Kantian approach. Miller continues by claiming that individuals having a Kantian aesthetic approach, tend to prefer ‘elite culture’ whilst individuals having an anti-Kantian approach are more attracted to ‘popular culture’. Additionally he argues that people with high cultural capital (i.e. Kantian aesthetic), are subtler in their display of wealth and consumption, as he puts it: “inconspicuous form of display readable only by those sufficiently cultivated or civilized” (Miller, 1987; cited in Corrigan 1997, p.29). Obtaining an ‘aesthetic gaze’ is thus a matter of cultivation, class and understanding.

Corrigan claims however that we currently are moving towards a more ‘hands on’ postmodern anti-Kantian aesthetic. He takes the example of a museum where before, one could find signs saying ‘Do Not Touch’ next to each painting whereas today many museums have changed their approach to a more anti-Kantian sensual approach (1997, p.179). Featherstone further claims that people are in fact going to museums to touch, see and experience rather than been given a lecture in high culture. Bearing in mind how according to him, postmodernism is all about experiencing the world (1991, p.100).

### 2.4. Focus on the Camera

In trying to understand why some amateur photographers are ready to spend a lot of time and money on their passion different approaches exist, from analysing their behaviour, their aspirations but also looking at their relationship with the main object that is the camera.

As Urry underlines, when talking about the development of tourism and photography, the camera has become the symbol of mass tourism (Urry, 1990; cited in Corrigan, 1997). As any behaviours’ that has shifted from an elite practice to an element part of mass-consumption there is a clear willingness from the ‘higher class’ to differentiate themselves. McCracken (1988; cited in Corrigan, 1997) talks about developing ‘invisible ink’ as a way for people that belong to a certain group to



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recognize and acknowledge among themselves. Having the right camera, using the right lenses could be one way of showing this 'ink'.

Photography could also be seen as a way for these 'serious-amateurs' to define themselves through their photos and everything that revolves around it. This vision is supported by Campbell (1983) who presents the spring of consumer society through the development and search for 'self-development'. One of the ways of doing so can be through finding pleasure in an artistic activity. Photography as a form of leisure could be seen as a way to differentiate and maintain social distinction. By spending a lot of time and money on cameras, equipment's, photo-classes or even photo-travels these amateurs create what Veblen (1975; cited in Corrigan, 1997) presents as previously mentioned "conspicuous consumption" and "conspicuous leisure". Both ideas highlights that a person has enough wealth to be able to use his time and money in an unproductive way that is on other things than just working and the strict necessary.

Another interesting approach is analysing the meaning and attachment to an object, in this case the camera. Objects can have a very strong symbolic value and this has been analysed in-depth in academic research. The camera can for example be seen as what Kopytoff (1986) describes as a "decommodized" object. This means that after the camera is purchased at a fix monetary value (commodification) it can evolve and loose its monetary value for the photographer. As Corrigan underlines: "Commodities may be commodities on the market, but once purchased they enter into quite different realms" (Corrigan, 1997, p.33). In this case the 'lost' of value is due to the fact that the photographer do not see his camera as just another object but attach emotions and memories to it making it hard for him to set a price tag on it even less sell it (decommodification).

This refers to what McCracken (1988) defines as the "displaced meaning" of objects. The object, here the camera, represents a bridge to meanings that cannot be achieved easily by its owner. The camera is a symbol of what the individual wants to reach, what he or she would like to become.

Extending the analysis, the symbolic value of the camera can also be external as opposed to the concepts of 'decommodification' and 'displaced meaning' that are highlighting a very personal relationship to the object. For Douglas and Isherwood (1979; cited in Corrigan, 1997) as mentioned in the previous chapter, an object such as an expensive DSLR camera can be used to differentiate and maintain social distinction.

### 2.5. Photography as a Community

Another interesting approach to photography as a postmodern activity is the development of a 'community'. The notion of community could refer to the 'physical' meeting between photography

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enthusiasts in the setting of a photography club for example but also the more abstract idea of belonging to a community of photographers.

The notion of community can be defined around three pillars: the conscious of kind, the shared rituals and traditions and a sense of moral responsibility (Muniz and O'Guinn, 2001, p.413). The 'conscious of kind' is the feeling of connection members have toward each other but also a sense of difference toward other, external people not belonging to the community. The second pillar, 'shared rituals and traditions' can be anything from marriage to something that is "purely verbal rituals, vocalized, unrecorded" (Douglas and Isherwood, 1996, p.43). Finally the last pillar refers to an obligation sense of duty towards the rest of the community. This aspect is for example very present in photography clubs according to Schwartz where all "activities are tightly governed by informal rules" (Schwartz 1987, cited in Cox, Clough and Marlow, 2008, p.1).

Photography clubs have already been the focus of research from Bourdieu (1965) and Schwartz (1986). In his book "Photography - A middle-brow Art" (1965) Bourdieu defines the purpose of a photography club as "provides a means of moving from a naïve practice to a scholarly practice within a group which supplies formulas and tips in order to intensify photographic activity" (p.104). It is interesting to notice that already at that time, in the 60's, he made a difference between three groups: professional photographers, highly engaged photographers (members of clubs for e.g.) and the rest, the average users. He differentiates the members of clubs from the rest by the fact that they "have in common a rate of practice which is higher than that of the set of population which takes photographs" (p.104). He however splits the members into two groups: those who are more interested in the art perspective and those who are more focusing on the technical aspect. Those who see photography from a more 'artistic' point a view are dedicated to maintain the cultural aspect and do not want to get lost in the technicality of it. In comparison to those who do see the benefits the technical aspect can provide: "the member of 'aesthetic' camera clubs are afraid of being reduced to mere technology [...] while the other camera clubs seek to use technology to find a new justification for their activity as photographers." (Bourdieu, 1965, p.105). The importance of the aesthetic aspect is also something that Schwartz (1986) underlines as a result from her ethnographic research in camera club. She however insist more on the elite aspect of those clubs: "While the photographic industry has worked to convince the public that photography is an easily accessible medium, art photographers' activities, in contrast, are characterized by their exclusivity, linking them with less accessible media such as painting and sculpture. Fine art codes are viewed as symbolic mechanisms of social differentiation" (Schwartz, 1986, p.165). This idea refers back to the vision of social distinction seen earlier in this part.

## 2.6. The Craft Consumer

The social science literature on consumption has according to Campbell (2005) for a long period of time been influenced by two dominant images of consumers; the first one is the 'rational consumer', someone who is very active in his or her buying decisions, analytic and calculating. These consumers carefully allocates their resources to obtain maximum utility of the purchase of services and goods. The second type of consumer is the complete opposite and these individuals are, as Campbell puts it "exploited subject of market forces, someone who, as a consequence, is largely 'constrained' to consume in the way that they do" (2005, p.24). The first type of consumer has been referred by Don Slater as the 'hero' whilst the second type has been called the 'dupe' (Slater, 1997; cited in Campbell 2005).

In recent decades however, a new type of consumer has aroused, much due to the influence of postmodern philosophy. This third type of consumer is neither presented as 'a rational hero' nor as a 'dupe' that is exploited by the market but rather as someone who is a "self-conscious manipulator of the symbolic meanings that are attached to products, someone who selects goods with the specific intention of using them to create or maintain a given impression, identity or lifestyle" (Featherstone, 1991).

This relatively new group of consumers can be referred to as 'craft consumers'. Campbell gives the following explanation: "The term 'craft' is used to refer to consumption activity in which the 'product' concerned is essentially both 'made and designed by the same person' and to which the consumer typically brings skill, knowledge, judgement and passion while being motivated by a desire for self-expression" (Campbell, 2005 p.23). Examples of activities that fit the explanation for 'craft consumption', are according to Campbell for example gardening, cooking or interior decorating (2005, p.23).

The consumption field of amateur photography can be seen as part of this postmodern 'craft consumption' seeing how this specific practice matches most of the requirements for 'craft consumption'. For instance the fact that it requires "skills, knowledge, judgement and passion" as well as the fact that the object, in this case the pictures, are produced by the consumers. Not to forget that these 'serious amateurs' often have a strong desire for self-expression.

Campbell further claims that a craft consumer is "someone who transforms 'commodities' into personalized (or, one might say, 'humanized') objects. And it is because such consumption is usually

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characterized by a marked element of skill and mastery, while also allowing for creativity and self-expression, that it is justified in being described as 'craft consumption'" (2005, p.28).

Campbell (2005, p.2) also highlights a very interesting fact in the development of 'craft consumption': the introduction of the 'power tool'. Watson and Shove explains in their article that this machine has allowed for all DIY<sup>1</sup> enthusiast to take their hobbies such as decorating or cooking to a whole new level (2008, p. 73). The parallel for amateur photographers would be to now have better access to more affordable equipment, allowing them to also take their hobby to the next level. A further aspect that McCracken brings to the table is that of personalization (1986, p.79). For these amateur photographers it can be buying extra accessories to their cameras making them more personal or creating a personal style when taking photos.

Finally the author claims that these 'craft consumers' all have in common their likelihood to be people with both wealth and cultural capital. He continues by saying that it is mainly the middle-class who have taken on craft consumption so passionately. The reason for this is mostly due to the fact that these activities requires as previously mentioned skills and knowledge. Seeing how it is a consumption activity where having monetary possessions is essential. Campbell provides yet another suggestion to why it is this specific group of people that have become very engaged in craft consumption. The author claims that it is due to the fact that these middle-class consumers are experiencing decreasing opportunities for independent creative and expressive activity in their current occupational roles, leading them to retreat a privatized world of self-expression. It could also be seen as a distinction tool, as Campbell puts it "The growth of craft consumption is merely evidence of how the middle and upper middle classes have succeeded in adapting a postmodern consumer society so that they can continue to give expression to their traditional sense of cultural superiority" (Campbell, 2005, p.38).

### **Work-Life balance and the appearance of hobbies**

The difference between practicing craft consumption and merely engaging in a 'hobby' is undoubtedly not an easy one to make. If a hobby is referred to as an activity that is pursued in one's leisure time for amusement or recreation, then this would clearly also be true for craft consumption (Campbell, 2005, p. 40). The term 'hobby' emerged in the late nineteenth century as a well-structured, productive and educational use of time. The industrial revolution in the nineteenth century created a distinction between the workplace and home; before these were often one and the same (Vries, 1994). Gelber claims that "Hobbies have been a way to confirm the verities of work and the free market inside the home so long as remunerative employment has remained elsewhere"

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<sup>1</sup> DIY = Do It Yourself

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(Gelber, 2013 p. 4). Hobbies were seen as a way to keep people busy with 'good' activities that led to personal betterment (Haring, 2007, p.1). As Gelber puts it "Hobbies provided a respite from the normal demands of work, but as a particular form of *productive* leisure they expressed the deeper meaning of work ethic and the free market" (Gelber, 2013 p. 2).

It is however important to bear in mind that in the late nineteenth century, when hobbies arose, far from everybody could afford the luxury of engaging in a hobby. Most hobbies are time consuming and costly and are therefore according to Gelber (2013, p.5) a matter of class belonging. He makes the distinction between 'crafting' and 'collecting', two hobbies that have been very popular among consumers for a long period of time. These activities are very similar in one sense; they are both hobbies and considered as leisure activities. However, collecting have over the years been more common among middle-class, white-collar workers seeing how money can buy high-priced collectibles and fancy tools, whereas crafting has been more popular among blue-collar workers (Gelber, 2013, p.5).

Hobbies have not only been a matter of class belonging, according to him, hobbies can be a way for individuals with unpleasant jobs to find 'legitimacy of work ethic' since many hobbies share the same characteristics in what may be fulfilled in a thriving career. The sociologist Robert Stebbins claim that "hobbies develop specialized skills, reward perseverance, integrate participants into specialized subculture and provide them with benchmarks by which they can measure their achievements" (Stebbins, 1992, cited in Gelber, 2013, p.11).

### 3. METHODOLOGY

*The aim with this part of the paper is to argue for methodological reasoning and approach. Initially, philosophical standpoint along with arguments for the chosen research strategy and method will be provided. Followed by a presentation of data collection, i.e how the interviews were designed, conducted and how participants were selected. Finally, a number of limitations arising from the research will be put forward.*

#### 3.1. Research Philosophy

We have tried, throughout the thinking path of this paper, to keep a critical mind-set every step of the way. Making the most relevant choice, or not making a choice, needs to be justified and leads to a better answer to the research questions. This can be done by having a constant critical look at the choices made as they need to go toward providing “reliability, replication and validity” (Bryman and Bell, 2011, p.41-42).

To help us structure the construction of our research process, the approach of Easterby-Smith et al. (2012) was chosen. The three authors present the research process philosophy through the metaphor of the four rings of tree trunk (2012, p.18) which are: *Ontology* (philosophical assumptions about the nature of reality); *Epistemology* (a general set of assumptions about the ways of inquiring into the nature of the world); *Methodology* (a combination of techniques used to inquire into a specific situation) and finally *Methods and techniques* (individual techniques for data collection, analysis, etc.).

This four level approach was used to structure the development of the methodology part of this paper. Ontology and epistemology work hand in hand and will help to define the general key philosophical approach of our research.

As already seen in the introduction, this paper focuses on the field of consumer behaviour and aims to analyse a quite recent social phenomena. This already leads to a clear nominalism and social constructionist approach (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012, p.25). The focus is on understanding what characterizes this phenomenon by asking photographers (amateur and professionals) to reflect on their own approach to photography. This approach is very much in line with a social constructionist vision that builds on human interest being the main driver for the research.

But it is also important not to put too much weight on the method as it risks killing the cognitive process. This would lead to missing, or not focusing enough on the essential part of this paper the analysis or as the famous French theorist and philosopher Roland Barthes puts it: “the researcher

repeatedly asserts that his text will be methodological but the text never comes" (Barthes, 1977: 200-201). In our approach, methodology is the base on which to build our research and should just be seen as a tool towards finding new and relevant insights within this field of research.

### 3.2. Research Strategy

The aim of this paper is to investigate the increasing trend in amateur photography as a consumption practice in a postmodern society. This has quickly led to choosing a qualitative approach to create the methodological foundation of our paper.

Notion such as 'trend' or 'consumption practice' refers to phenomenon's that are hardly quantifiable and have a clear qualitative line. As seen in the introduction, the phenomena of amateur photography is a relative recent concept and refers to a not yet well explored academically area. Qualitative research allows us to analyse and explore all the different aspects that this practice contains in a way that quantitative research cannot (Easterby-Smith et al, 2012, p.386-387). Choosing qualitative interviews offers the possibility to collect information that "captures the meaning and interpretation of phenomenon in relation to the interviewee's worldview" (Kvale, 1996 cited in Easterby-Smith et al., 2012, p.132).

Time constraint was also a decisive factor. The time given for this research did not allow for the creation of a solid quantitative database and its analysis.

Our starting point for constructing this paper was to go through the current trends and key figures of amateur photographs (number of DSLR sold, classes offered, etc.) as well as a first approach to existing theoretical contributions. This helped established our general research questions and construct a semi-structured in-depth interview questionnaire. We made the choice to build our questionnaire on a restricted amount of theoretical contributions coming from our previous knowledge of consumer culture and preliminary research in this area. This was done in order to try to avoid any biases that could limit or shape our questioning of the practice and therefore limit our findings. This refers to the "hermeneutic philosophy" (Thompson et al. 1994, p.433) - that will be explained later on - where preconception (in our case previous knowledge and brief literature review) provide a starting frame of reference rather than a distorting biases.

Building on the responses from the participants we then used an iterative approach, which is going back and forth between a more developed theory part and the data provided by the respondents (Bryman and Bell 2007, p.14).

### 3.3. Research Method

## Methodology

For this research a hermeneutic phenomenology stance has been chosen seeing how the main focus of this paper is on the consumer meanings of a specific phenomenon.

Laverty (2003) defines the method as following: “Hermeneutic phenomenology is concerned with the life world or human experience as it is lived. The focus is toward illuminating details and seemingly trivial aspects within experience that may be taken for granted in our lives, with a goal of creating meaning and achieving a sense of understanding (Wilson & Hutchinson, 1991 cited in Laverty, 2003, p. 7)”.

The Hermeneutic phenomenology arose out of German philosophy by Martin Heidegger who was highly influenced by Edmund Husserl and his tradition of phenomenology (Laverty, 2003, p.7). These traditions share some comparable components, for instance they both tried to reveal the life world or human experience as it is lived, moreover both “Husserl and Heidegger were convinced that the world that scientists believed as the world, based on Cartesian dualism, is simply one life world among many worlds”( Laverty, 2003, p.11). The Hermeneutic phenomenology feels applicable for us seeing how our purpose is to try and understand the life world of these “amateur-photographers” as well as understanding the underlying motives that drives them.

Another key principle when taking a hermeneutic approach is to be open to changes as the research progresses evolves, in order not to lose essential insights into the consumer meanings (Laverty, 2003, p.23). As a result, we performed our interviews with an open mind and allowed for our respondents to freely elaborate on each topic. Following this approach also allowed us to make changes after the interpretation of our data and collect even more data and theories throughout the process. According to Bryman and Bell (2012, p.406) one of the advantages when conducting a qualitative method is the prospect of flexibility it allows for.

### 3.4. Data Collection

As previously mentioned in the research strategy chapter, we decided on using a qualitative method with focus on interviews. In-depth interviews are according to Burgess (1982, cited in Easterby-Smith et al., 2012, p.131) “The opportunity for the researcher to probe deeply to uncover new clues, open up new dimensions of a problem and to secure vivid, accurate inclusive accounts that are based on personal experience”. In-depth interviews are therefore a good approach for us to use, seeing how the aim of this paper is to gain knowledge of the respondents’ opinions and beliefs regarding our chosen research.

Performing a qualitative in-depth interview differs in many ways from conducting a quantitative one. A qualitative in-depth interview is according to Bryman and Bell (2011, p. 466) much less structured



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then a quantitative, seeing how the goal of performing a quantitative interview is to investigate specific research questions, and the interview is conducted accordingly. Whereas when performing an in-depth interview, the interest lies in analysing the interviewee's perspectives.

Bryman and Bell (2011) further suggest that face-to-face interaction is the fullest condition of participation in someone else's mind; we therefore chose to collect most of our data through face-to-face interviews. However, due to the fact that some of our participants are located outside of Sweden, it would have been too expensive and time-consuming to perform the interviews in person. Therefore, some interviews were conducted through Skype or email. Seeing how the aim with our interviews is to describe and comprehend this consumer experiences as they are lived, an 'existential-phenomenological' view according to the definition given by Thompson et al. (1989) has been taken. According to the authors, conducting existential-phenomenological interviews entails viewing the participant as an 'acting', 'feeling' and 'living' individual, in addition to a "thinking" individual.

When performing qualitative interviews different approaches can be taken. We decided to perform a semi-structured interview according to the definition given by Easterby-Smith et al. (2012, p.128). A semi-structured interview allows for the interviewer to ask follow up questions and questions are rather generally formulated, in comparison to an unstructured interview, where the interviewer often is limited to a list of topics that should be covered. Thompson et al. (1989) claims that some researchers are in opposition to structuring of the interview, seeing how it is the meaning of the consumer that should be retrieved.

However, bearing in mind that we do not have much experience within this field, we felt that in order to maintain the quality of the research some structure was needed. Performing a semi-structured interview therefore allowed us to have some sort of structure in our questioning whilst having the freedom to add, change or remove questions as the interview progressed.

### 3.5. Participant Selection Criteria

For this paper our intention was to find individuals that share a genuine interest for photography, both professional and amateurs. Easterby-Smith et al. (2012, p.229) refers to "snowball sampling", where the researchers first contact people they consider relevant for the study and then use these individuals to make contacts with others, as a good method to find relevant participants. This particular method works well when the interest lies in finding respondents within a specific area of interest or networks with confidential membership. For this research we wanted to interview professional photographers as well as amateurs. This turned out to be more difficult to find. Luckily,

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one of our “serious amateurs” knew a professional photographer and agreed to give us his contact information.

In order to receive rich and diverse descriptions, we interviewed individuals with different background (nationalities, sex, age and profession). We were intrigued to find out what the similarities and dissimilarities would turn out to be amongst them.

According to McCracken (1988) when performing in-depth interviews one should not use more than eight respondents, seeing how the focus should lie on quality not quantity. Taken this into consideration, as well as our time restriction we decided to limit our research to seven participants, four amateurs and two professional (see Table 2 below).

Name	Age	Sex	Nationalities	City	Profession
Tom	22 years	M	Dutch	Lund (SWE)	Student
Marc	57 years	M	French	London (UK)	Unemployed
Anna	24 years	W	Swedish	Göteborg (SWE)	Student
Maja	22 years	W	French	Paris (FR)	Student
George	70 years	M	English	London (UK)	Professional Photographer
John	65 years	M	English	London (UK)	Professional Photographer
Claire	47 years	W	Swedish	Stockholm (SWE)	Director of “Fotografiska Academy”

**Table 2:** Presentation of all respondents

Source: Authors own work

### 3.6. Designing and Conducting the Interview

According to Bryman and Bell (2011, p.474) it is absolutely imperative to find a quiet, neutral and unthreatening environment to conduct the interview. We therefore made sure to carry out our interviews in appropriate places such as private rooms in the library or cafés where the participants would feel relaxed to share their thoughts. Skype interviews were conducted at time when respondents were at home allowing to have image and sound as well as a relaxed and familiar setting for them. We always made sure to arrive at the selected location prior to the interview to

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make sure that the requirements listed above would be fulfilled. All interviews were conducted in between 45 minutes to one hour. Most of the interviews were performed by two interviewers and one respondent, this according to Bechhofer, Elliott and McCrone (1984, cited in Bryman and Bell, 2011, p. 474) enables for one person to be more in charge of the questions and focusing on the respondent whilst the other one can concentrate on taking careful notes and observing. The authors continue by claiming that the use of multiple interviewers also tends to create a more informal atmosphere, similar to a discussion.

When contacting our selected participants we decided to use the term 'discussion' instead of an 'interview'. According to Easterby-Smith et al. (2012, p.138) an interview implies a formal structured interrogation, which is under the control of the interviewer whilst a 'discussion' gives a more relaxed and unthreatening feeling that hopefully enables for a more genuine exchange. The participants were also informed that their anonymity will be kept. Before the interview we contacted the participant and asked him or her to bring two of his or her favourite's photos to the interview. We then decided to start off each interview by getting the respondent to talk about the pictures, in order to create an icebreaker and generate a relaxed and comfortable atmosphere. In the initial stage of the interview we also added some biographical questions (general background questions) to receive some information regarding the individual's life (McCracken 1988).

Seeing how we decided on a semi-structured approach (Easterby-Smith et al. 2012, p.128) we had in beforehand prepared a list of questions and specific topics we wished to discuss.

To help us create a flow when performing our interviews we decided to use some of the recommended questions given by Kvale (1996 cited in Bryman and Bell, 2011, p. 474). The author suggests nine types of questions, we did not however use all of them, the ones we did use were questions such as; follow-up, probing, specifying, indirect, structuring and lastly interpreting. Laddering, according to the definition given by Easterby-Smith et al. (2012, p.129) was also used in order to receive more information from certain questions.

Seeing how this was the first time either of us performed this kind of interview we carefully read through the advice given by Roulston, DeMarrais and Lewis (2003 cited in Bryman and Bell, 2011, p. 474). The authors present a number of challenges that we tried to bear in mind while conducting our first interview, for instance intrusion of own bias, maintaining focus, unexpected behaviour and dealing with sensitive issues.

One of our main challenges was to avoid being bias when performing the interviews. We therefore decided to write our theory chapter after the interviews in order to be able to listen to our participants with an open mind. In order to avoid imposing our own reference frame, we tried to

keep our questions as open as possible, and used what (Easterby-Smith et al. 2012, p.130) refer to as 'probes' to improve or clarify the interviewers response.

Bryman and Bell (2011, p.476) suggests that after the interview, the interviewers should analyse how the interview actually went. We therefore always made sure to sit down after each interview to go over our feelings and thoughts regarding the interviews. All of the interviews were also recorded on tape and transcribed, this was done by recommendation from McCracken (1988) to prove that the interviews were conducted as we claimed they were.

### 3.7. Data Analysis

Once all interviews from both amateurs and professional were collected, the analysis of the data could start. This was done following Thompson and al. (1989) recommendation that the analysis of the interviews should be done in two stages. First the answers of the different respondent needs to be analysed individually before moving to finding common patterns, or "global themes" (Kvale, 1983 cited by Thompson and al., 1989, p.141). Fournier (1998) has a similar approach where she structures the analysis by dividing it into two parts. Following her recommendations, we will in the first section introduce our seven participants by providing the reader with a relatively brief background of these persons and their thoughts. In the second part we will then perform a 'cross-case' analysis, meaning that we will compare what our participants have said and try and find what makes them the same and what sets them apart from each other.

It is however very important that establishing global themes should not be used as a mean to obtain "some type of convergent validation" (Thompson and al., 1989, p.141). For both steps the analyses was done by both authors in order to increase the pertinence of the potential findings.

Throughout the analysis of the respondents answers the 'hermeneutic perspective' was put into practice, that aims to: "highlight this often 'unspoken' background of socially shared meanings by which a person interprets his/her experiences and to show how these cultural viewpoints are adapted to the person's unique life situations" (Thompson et al. 1994: 432). The hermeneutic perspective highlights the need to analyse the phrasing and wording used by the respondents in order to best understand their cultural aspect. It is also important to focus on the metaphors and stories told by the respondents as they are also powerful means of expressing cultural views.

The method is therefore very relevant in the case of qualitative research but also for this paper area of research that is consumer culture.

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On top of primary sources, that is in-depth interviews and questionnaires presented above, secondary sources, mostly in the form of academic publications was used. Secondary data is according to Bryman and Bell (2011, p.312) using data that has been collected by others, whilst primary data consists of data that has been collected by the researcher during the work process. Two main types of secondary literature was used: academic publications and business related articles or publications. Business publications were mainly used in the introduction in order to help identify and define this consumer trend. Reference academic publications (books and articles) were used to structure the methodology part and provide a clear framework. Consumer culture literature, sociological publications linked to photography and other related academic publications were used for the literature review. All used publications and articles are cited in the reference list.

### 3.8. Challenges

It is important to already here underline some potential limitations for the chosen methodology. As previously mentioned time limitation played an important role in the choices made in the methodology part. Having to produce this paper in less than three months means that some research options cannot be implemented. A longer research time would have allowed us to maybe include more respondents but most importantly to meet with each of them more than for just one interview getting a more reliable image and feedback from these individuals. The additional interview done with the director of Fotografiska was done by providing a written questionnaire. This was done due to time constraints from the respondent side as well as the need to gather relevant data to best answer the questions.

Another limitation, concerns the choice of respondents. As highlighted earlier, our respondents come from different countries, therefore not all the interviews were conducted in English. Three of the interviews were conducted in either French or Swedish in order to obtain the clearest answer from the respondents in their mother-tongue. We then both worked alternatively on translating them in English and compared the differences in order to reduce the misunderstanding of the interviewer's opinion. It is however relevant to underline that some minor aspects of the responses might have been lost or miss-translated in the translation.

### Trustworthiness

Another important aspect to bear in mind when conducting any form of interview is the trustworthiness. When performing a quantitative research it is a matter of 'validity', which Easterby-Smith et al refer to as "the extent to which measures and research findings provide accurate representation of the things they are supposed to be describing" (2008, p.347)

## Methodology

However, when performing a qualitative research it is according to Shenton (2003) rather a question of 'credibility' which deals with the problem of how congruent the findings are with reality. This is one of the main challenges when performing any kind of interview, knowing if the respondents are being entirely honest. Individuals that are being interviewed tend to "select answers between complex truths, rather than providing the 'whole truth', simply because it would take too long to give all the nuances" (Easterby-Smith et al, 2008, p.138). It is therefore vital for the interviewer to keep this in mind when performing the interview to make sure not to be misinformed. In order to obtain a high level of honesty all participants should be given the opportunity to refuse to participate in the study. This will according to Shenton "involve only those who are genuinely willing to take part and prepared to offer data freely" (2003, p.66).

To maintain our reliability as researchers all of our interviews have been recorded and transcribed. Having good audio recordings is according to Easterby-Smith et al (2008, p. 139) imperative in order to be able to re-listen to the material not to miss out on any information given as well as being able to create accurate transcripts.

### Transferability

When performing any kind of research one important aspect is that of generalization. In quantitative methods the concern often lies in showing that the outcomes of the work can be applied to a wider population (Easterby-Smith et al, 2008 p, 70). However it is far more difficult to demonstrate that the findings and conclusions are valid to other situations and populations when performing a qualitative method. As Shenton puts it: "the results of a qualitative study must be understood within the context of the particular characteristics of the organisation or organisations and, perhaps, geographical area in which the fieldwork was carried out. In order to assess the extent to which findings may be true of people in other settings, similar projects employing the same methods but conducted in different environments could well be of great value" (2003, p.70) Then again, some authors even claim that generalization is unachievable, according to Guba and Lincoln "Generalizations are impossible since phenomena are neither time- nor context-free" (1982, p. 238). However, the findings this study will provide might not only share some clarity on our specific field of research. Merriam, cited in Shenton "is concerned with the extent to which the findings of one study can be applied to other situations" (2003, p. 69). For this paper most theories that have been selected have been those from sociologists such as Bourdieu, Featherstone and Veblen. This type of high-involved consumption activities that we are examining can be seen in many different fields such as food, running or coffee for example. Our findings may therefore be applicable to other consumption fields.

## 4. ANALYSIS

*In this chapter we will analyse the meanings and motives that drives these amateur-photographers in their consumer practice. In order to do so we will analyse and categorize the context and background of the conducted in-depth interviews among amateur and professional photographers. This will provide us with different perspectives that, combined with theories seen earlier will allow us to come up with key themes.*

### 4.1. Participants and their Relationship with Photography

In the first part of this chapter, following Fournier's (1998) recommendation, a presentation of our seven selected participants will be provided. Four of them are amateur photographers, two are well-experienced professional photographers and one of them is the head of the main photography museum in Scandinavia. The aim is to provide the reader with a sum-up from the conducted interviews as well as brief background on the different participants.

#### 4.1.1. Amateur Photographers

##### Tom – The amateur wanting to turn professional

Tom is a 22-year-old student from Rotterdam, Netherlands currently enrolled in a Master programme in marketing at the University of Lund in Sweden. After receiving his bachelor in the Netherlands he spent 5 months in South Africa travelling around. Travelling, meeting new people and experiencing new cultures is something he is very fond of. When he is not deep in his books studying he enjoys hanging out with friends, go surfing, practicing yoga and is also very interested in health and wellbeing. When asking him about his interest for photography he tells us that it started relatively late, and that it was his twin brother that made him interested.

*“My brother has been taking pictures for as long as I can remember, and that was kind of his thing. Whenever we would go on vacations or have special gatherings with the family he was always the one taking the pictures. However, when I moved to South Africa I bought my first camera and I started taking more pictures and I realized that it was actually a pretty great hobby and a good way to capture memories.”*

## Analysis

Tom tells us how he started taking more and more pictures seeing how he received a lot of positive response mostly from his friends. He usually likes posting most of his pictures on Facebook and that is where he received a lot of nice comments and 'likes'. Tom tells us that growing up, he was always the sporty guy and his twin brother was much more artistic, and photography was his thing. However, when he did receive a lot of praise for his pictures he realized that maybe he did have a talent for taking pictures and decided to invest in a better camera and spend more time on his hobby.

*"But I am not going to lie, getting positive feedback is important, at least for me. I think that everybody wants to have something that they are good at, and in all honesty doesn't everybody love to be admired?"*

When asking Tom how he would perceive himself as a photographer, he says that since he does spend a lot of time on his pictures and has been doing this for quite a while now he says that he is definitely not an expert, and he is still is not as good as his twin brother but that he is better, and has more knowledge than the 'everyday user'. That is also the reason, he believes, that he usually does receive a great amount of 'likes' on Facebook and Instagram, since most of his friends post pictures of parties, travels and so on whereas his pictures are often more of the artistic kind. For Tom, having an 'artistic perspective' is the most important aspect when taking photos. However, when showing some of the pictures he brought to the interview it becomes clear that the technical aspect is quite important as well.

*"I really like this picture, seeing how it is a good example of the 'rule of thirds', however it would have been even better if one of the birds would have been in the other corner. But I like it and the lightning is very nice as well. For me, a good picture is universal, meaning that it has the possibility to reach out to many people. Also pictures that have the ability to bring out emotions through recognition."*

Even though Tom claims that the artistic aspect is the most important one, he does say that in order to take 'good' pictures one must have some knowledge regarding the technical aspect.

When asking Tom if he believes that there is a big difference in taking pictures with his 'real' camera or his smartphone, he says that to him it is basically the same thing. For him it is more about creating a setting, the surroundings: "So I do take a lot of pictures with my smartphone" he admits.



## Analysis

*"I really like Instagram for instance, in fact I find it very inspirational. It is a 'social' app, therefore I do follow my friends and I like their 'non artistic' pictures of drinking their morning coffee or updates of how many reps they can do at the gym. It is funny really, everyone uses it for different reasons, some to get a message across and some to receive laughs and some I guess solely to show off. For me, I mostly follow people that inspire me through their pictures, people that make an effort to create beautiful photos. For instance I follow National geographic their photos are absolutely amazing."*

Whenever he posts pictures on Instagram he tells us that he tries and make an effort to create 'good' pictures. For instance, he really enjoys taking pictures of food. He usually tries to find nice plates and present it in an attractive way, even if he is just cooking for himself. Seeing how he is very interested in 'healthy eating' the food he eats consists mostly of vegetables and fruits, which creates "beautiful colourful pictures". He says that he too would not be very inspire by somebody posting a picture of a Big Mac, for him it is all about colours and taking the time to make it look appealing.

When asking Tom about his camera he says that he really likes the camera he has right now: "It's good enough for my current needs". He bought it about three years ago for 450 Euros. However, he would like to buy another one but still keep his current one.

*"Cameras and especially all the accessories are very expensive, and right now I do not have the money for it. However, one thing my brother told me is to go and look for camera accessories in second hand stores. Sometimes you can find real bargains! Every time I pass such a store I always have to go in and have a look."*

His twin brother has managed to turn his interest for photography into a living, and he recently started a wedding photography business in the Netherlands. Currently he is working solely in the Netherlands, but is planning to launch the website in English and try and find international customers as well.

*"My brother asked me to join him in his wedding photography business, which would be lot of fun, working with my brother. I never thought that my future would be in photography but you never know where life will take you. And being able to make a living out of my hobby would be like a dream come true"*

## Analysis

He continues by saying that even though he does not have an education within photography, he does not think that one really receives a 'degree' within this field.

*"My brother for instance is not an educated photographer, he is just very passionate, interested and eager to constantly learn more and now he has a thriving business, this year I think he has like thirty weddings. So I think that business wise the way to get customers is through word-of-mouth and having a good website with a great portfolio. That's your 'degree' in a way and it shows what you are capable of".*

### Anna – The true hobbyist

Anna is a 24-year-old female born and raised in Gothenburg, Sweden. After graduating high school in 2008 she spent a few years working at a supermarket trying to figure out what to do in life. After two years she decided that her future was at least not working at the supermarket and she started studying to become a nurse. However after a year she realized that the medical field was not the place for her either and she is currently studying to become a certified psychologist. When she is not buried in her Freudian literature she enjoys cooking, travelling, shopping and long lunches with friends. When asking her about her interest in photography she tells us that it goes way back.

*"I remember when I was a kid I loved going to my grandparents and looking through their old photo albums. Pictures have always fascinated me. When I was young I enjoyed just looking at them. However as I got older I started to look at the pictures in a different way and I started analysing the photos, thinking of how it could be improved and how if I would have taken the picture, I would have done it differently."*

Anna got her first camera as a birthday present when she was 15 years old and it was really not an advanced camera, just a small compact camera, nevertheless "I used it a lot" she says. It was, as a matter of fact, with this camera that she took the pictures that ended up in her first exhibition.

*"I saw an advertisement online for an exhibition for young up and coming photographers. I took my chance, and sent in some pictures and got it. After that exhibition I decided to buy my first 'real' camera. And I guess that it's after that I really took my hobby to the next level."*

## Analysis

When asking Anna what she believes characterizes a good photographer she says that according to her:

*“A good photographer is somebody who can create a ‘big picture’, if that makes any sense. A person that together with a good technique, creativity, knowledge, openness can put all of that together and create a whole. I see some that are great with the technical parts and another is really creative and artistic however for me the best ones are those who can combine the two she says.*

Anna believes that great photographers always see life through a camera lens – even without their camera. They are always looking and seeing things they would like to take pictures of. They are always curious. That, she really thinks is important to never stop being curious. Anna also believes that a good photographer realizes that s/he is never done learning and that they have the will and desire to do and be better.

Looking back at the pictures she took for her first exhibition she clearly sees how much she improved and that is a great motivation factor. Anna has so far had 4 exhibitions, the biggest one was in 2011 for up and coming photographers called ‘Art Photo Collection’. It was in Gothenburg, Sweden and she was one of the four selected amateurs.

When she was younger she also used to sign up for different photo contests, and won ‘The Best Summer picture’ in Goteborgs posten<sup>2</sup> one year. For the most part she takes pictures of her friends and family gatherings. However, last year her cousin asked her to be her wedding photographer, and that felt like “a great compliment and a big challenge, a scary one” Anna says! Because a wedding is one day that you want to be perfect and that you can’t just redo the next day.

*“Even though it was a lot of fun and I really wanted to do it was a bit challenging... I of course had some ideas in advance – and so did they. They wanted to take pictures outside next to a fence and well that was all great, it was a really nice fence, what wasn’t as nice was the garbage can and the dead rabbit lying next to it!”*

When asking her how she was able to handle that situation she says that it’s really important to listen to what people want. In this case it was their day and their photos. If she would have taken the

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<sup>2</sup> Goteborg posten: Swedish local newspaper

## Analysis

pictures for herself and for an exhibition she would have been direct and wanted it to be as she wanted it: "I left my artistic self at home and just became somebody who took their picture".

When asking Anna about her camera she tells us that her first SLR that she bought broke just after 3 years – and right before she was going on a trip so she had to buy a new one. But the second one that she bought that's the one she has today:

*"It's a Canon Eos 1000D, and I love it its great! But I still think its too good for me I still don't have a clue of how some of the functions work. I think I need to find the manual that came with it and learn some more."*

When asking her how much money she has spent on her camera she tells us that she bought her camera six years ago for 6,000 SEK<sup>3</sup>. That was just the camera over the years she has bought a variety of different objectives, tripods and bags: "Wow I haven't really thought about it but if you combine it all it's quite a lot of money" she says.

Anna's camera is very important for her, without it she could not pursue her hobby. And she really likes her camera; she has had it for six years now and it's still working perfectly.

*"It's funny how you get used to your own camera, a while back me and a friend were out taking some photos and we decided to switch cameras just for fun and it felt completely wrong. Her camera was just as good as mine, even better if I recall right but the feeling was all wrong. I guess you get attached to it over the years".*

When asking if she would be willing to sell it she does not know for sure. She is currently looking at other cameras but if she would get another one she would still like to keep the one she has right now.

### Marc - The artist

Marc is 57 years former executive in the finance sector in London. French-Haitian, he is married and has two children that are both studying abroad. The whole family has lived in the south of London for the past 20 years. Marc however grew up in New York where he started studying medicine. In parallel to those studies he followed different art classes before dropping his medical studies to switch to business studies and getting his degree in finance.

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<sup>3</sup> 6,000 SEK ≈ 663€ (21/05/2014)

## Analysis

His interest in photography started at an early age, he bought his first camera with the money he saved by having a part-time job when he was in high school. At his parent place he used a room in the cellar to create his own black-room. And this is when he first started to "experiment" as he puts it, learning to develop photo by himself moving from black and white photos to colours and then working on picture enlargement. He then step-by-step bought the material needed: "I was a very serious amateur at that time!" he says laughing. It is this motivation that is key for Marc to improve and become a better photographer.

*"It was a simple camera but it's not the camera that is determining, it's the passion that you have with the available material"*

This passion was fuelled by reading numerous books on photography and in more recent year's tutorials online video.

What Marc prefers to photograph is the nature. The vast majority of the pictures he takes are of plants, landscapes or animals. For him it is like being a hunter, without the gun. He described to us how, during a trip in Florida, he spent one and a half hour waiting for an eagle to try and take his dream shot:

*"The eagle was perched on a tree on the other side of the river and I was waiting with my camera, my lens and tripod for one, one and a half hour. After one and a half hour he decided to take off and flew to the river, plunged his body into the water to come out with a huge fish. I took all the picture from the beginning to the end but I was just a bit too far with my lens. If I had 50mm more on my lens it would have been a dream picture, a perfect picture, the kind that can go to National Geographic!"*

For Marc photography is an art. During the interview he often mentions artistic rules as a guide for him for taking pictures. This comes from his early interest in art in general and painting in particular. The technical aspect is of course important but he only describes it as a mean to take a good picture not the main driver.

*"I have always loved to draw and have done so since a very young age. I consider photography as painting, like a canvas, I have the same approach."*

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However he keeps most of his taken pictures for himself and only shows them to friends and family because they keep asking him but he admits that this is a bit selfish:

*“Most of the picture I take nobody sees them apart from 2 or 3 but only because I have to show them [family] and make them happy.”*

The only times he actually enjoys showing and talking about the pictures he has taken is when it is with other active amateur or professional photographer. This was especially the case in the different art and photography club he was a member. He explains that at work he was one of the co-founder of their photo-club. This helped him to improve his skills but also share his passion through tutorial or talks given by professional photographers:

*“This club was a good opportunity to show my pictures but we also had tutorials with each week a new theme: nature, still life or the speed for example. This helps to broaden your mind on what is possible to be done in photography.”*

He however differentiates himself from the other members of that club that he sees as more focusing on the technical aspect:

*“There are 2 type of photographers, some are there for the artistic side, for others it is the technical aspect of the camera. This was, for example, the case in my photography club. They want to collect cameras and accessories. They feel forced to have the latest trend.”*

Even though he is critical to this idea of always having the latest trend he still attaches a sentimental value to some of his camera, comparing it to a collection car. But there is not so much value for the more recent camera and he can see himself selling his in order to buy a new, better performing one.

## Maja - The traveller

Maja is a 23 year old student currently doing a master degree in business. She grew up and still lives in Paris but has travelled a lot during the last years for her study, for work or for her own pleasure. She started taking pictures around the age of 14 with a basic digital camera wanting to follow in the footsteps of her older brother that was very into photography. At first she just started taking

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portraits of friends and teddy bears in her room. She used her lamp to put all the focus on the face and make the background very dark.

*“Those pictures, I showed them to some of my high-school friends and one of them said “You have to take part in a contest, your pictures are awesome!”. So then I took part in a photo contest at the local Fnac<sup>4</sup> store on the theme “Who are you?”. I took a self-portrait in the same style [strong light on the subject, very dark background] and won the first prize. It was a Nikon D-300 with a flash and a lens and I was 16 years old at that time. I still use this camera.”*

Looking back she admits that her brother played an important role in her growing interest in photography. She used to watch him in the black room he created in his bathroom. He also helped her to understand the technical affinity of photography such as lens opening, shutter speed or the role of the ISOs. She then applied those key principles herself and continued learning by looking for videos online.

*“Actually it is by practicing that you discover your own style, this is how you learn to manage all those aspect [technical aspect]”*

And this technical aspect is very important for her even more than the artistic aspect. Without it she believes that you can't really take a nice picture. She however admits that the artistic aspect is also important as it brings a personal touch. That personal touch is what defines artist photograph for Maja and it is very much an ambivalent feeling.

*“It's really something personal, it's everything or nothing. What makes an artist is his personal touch, which comes behind the technical aspect. But you need the technique to be able to make this side come out.”*

When it comes to her own touch and interest in photography she is still focusing on the faces, on the expressions when she takes pictures. She however prefers to do that when travelling to highlight a different culture, something other than what can be found around her.

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<sup>4</sup> Fnac: French entertainment retail chain selling cultural and electronic products

## Analysis

*“Taking pictures of people around me doesn’t interest me, what I’m looking for are different culture and travelling. What I want to do is to pass through a picture what I felt and in a second time aspects of different culture that can be found in the world.”*

For her there is not the same emotion and nothing artistic about taking pictures of people at a party for example. The pictures she takes during her travels are shared on different platforms but all have their own purpose. She uses her personal blog to share it with some friends but also “to put it on my CV, to show that I do something from my passion”. Facebook is more used to “narrate my life” and her Instagram account contains a mix of picture taken with her phone and picture taken during her travels. Maja is also writing regular articles about photography on a blog. Together with a friend she writes every second week an article about a photographer or an exhibition she likes. Here again she puts forward the fact that it gives sense to her passion and use it on her CV.

When talking about her camera she talks about it with passion calling it “her baby”. She explains that she is very careful with it and only let friend she trust use it. But this doesn’t stop her from being realistic when it comes to its financial value:

*“But I could imagine myself selling it [her camera] as well as my objectives to buy a new one. Those are valuable objects that are quite expensive.”*

### 4.1.2. Professional photographers

#### John - Time and practice are key

John is a 65 year old professional photographer and film maker born and raised in London where he is currently living with his wife. He has four grown up kids one of which is working as a cameraman. During his free time he very much enjoys playing golf with friends.

John’s interest for photography started at university, even though he was majoring in English and sociology. At university he came in contact with the student in charge of the school paper who taught him how to use a dark room, and that is how it all started. After he graduated he knew that it was within the field of photography he wanted to perceive a career – he therefore decided to move back to London.

Trying to find a job as a photographer in London, with a very limited portfolio was not easy and he applied for a lot of jobs and got turned down nearly every time. Finally he received a job offer from the BBC, however his mentor at the time advised him not to take the job seeing how he believed



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that the only way to truly become a great photographer is to spend a few years working as an assistant. So John decided to take his advice, and turned down the job at the BBC with a high salary and a company car to become an assistant for an advertising photographer.

*“In retrospect, I am really happy with my decision. Starting out, as an assistant was a great learning process.”*

He continues by saying that he was a pretty good amateur but he quickly realized that there was a big difference between his level and the level of the professionals. Looking at my prints and their prints he saw a huge difference but he did not understand how they did it. However after a while he realized that it was all about training and learning the language of photography. After his years as an assistant John started doing advertising jobs, mostly cars. However he was never really happy working within advertising, seeing how this was back in the 70's when most advertising jobs were done by agencies and if you did not work specifically for an agency it was very difficult getting jobs. John fortunately found another area that interested him more; he started helping companies to produce slide shows for whenever they would have big presentations. It was a fantastic and exciting new area to work in and he stayed there for about 10 years. After working with still film for over 10 years he decided to change field into moving pictures. John ended up doing a variety of documentaries and advertising filming. That is currently his main occupation today, however he does have some customers from his days as a car photographer who he still helps out with some still prints every now and then.

When asking John what aspect is the most important for him the technical or the aesthetic he has a very clear opinion on the subject.

*“Do I think that professional photography is art? – Now I don't. There is a very big difference between those who take pictures for exhibition as to those who are working. I actually meet somebody the other day and he asked what I do for a living and I said that I am a photographer, when I asked him what he was doing he said that he is an art photographer – so there is obviously a distinction”*

According to John one big difference between professional photographers and amateurs is the language. For him, most amateurs find it difficult to understand what professional photographers are talking about. A second important aspect is of course having access to the best equipment such as lenses for example or the lighting for example.

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*“80-90% of the lightning we use as professionals is ‘fake’ light and those are very advanced to use and very expensive.”*

Finally the technical background and time are also very important in making the distinction between professional and amateur photographer. According to John, young professionals today do not have the same technical background as his generation used to have. However he believes that the main difference between a professional and an amateur is time.

*“The amount of time I spent shooting cannot be compared to a hobby photographer, simply because they do not have the possibility to put in as much time as we as professionals do!”*

### George - Photography is an obsession

George is a 70 year old professional photographer from London with more than 40 years of experience. He lives in the south west part of London where he has his own studio in his house. Throughout his career George has been active in many different fields starting with fashion photography before specializing in still life photography, that is product photography. In recent year he has focused pretty exclusively on jewellery photography.

His interest in photography started when he purchased his first camera with money his parents had put onto a saving account. At boarding school he had the chance to have access to a dark room but had to learn by himself as none from the 400 student or staff members knew how to develop pictures.

After this he started his career by being the assistant to three photographers and working in London and New York. He admits that he was very lucky to find such a position as usually hundreds of applicants strive to get similar positions. Thanks to his brother he managed to get his first assistant position

*“When you are talking about a specialist career, and photography is very much one, it is difficult to find somebody that is going to give you advice. But my brother was in advertising and he knew various people in the art department of agencies. Through them he rang a photographer and I went and saw this guy and got the job.”*

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When comparing himself to other professional photographers he states that “more than 85%” have a similar starting point to their career, being first an assistant before starting their own business. For him it is nearly impossible to become a professional photographer from having solely an amateur background and work.

For him the main difference between professional and amateur photograph is not so much the aesthetic view of things but more a question of economical investment, access to the right ‘infrastructure’ and the right people.

He however admits that the economical aspect is less and less relevant as cameras are getting better and cheaper, the high cost of buying and developing film disappeared and expensive electronic flash lighting are less needed. The main barrier, access to the right infrastructure and people however remain the same: renting a photo studio, accessories, publishing company are some of the examples he gives. In his eyes that means that all amateur photographer are similar as they do not have access to all this, he calls this the “lack of opportunity”.

*“They are all pretty much the same for me because of lack of opportunity.”*

He however highlights another interesting aspect that is in his opinion very important to understand what characterize a professional as opposed to an amateur: the engagement in the work.

*“It is a very interesting field: why do people become an artist, writer or photographer? One aspect that seems to predominate is that they have an obsession, they cannot do anything else. Most of professional photographers have this very strong obsession. It can be defined as somewhere between passion and obsession but the line between those two is fine.”*

But he admits that in recent years he has been impressed by the growing interest in photography that for him is mainly due to the access to cheaper and better equipment.

*“I have been amazed at the expansion of the interest the public at large has in photography. This is because they now have access to equipment that produce first class pictures from a technical point of view. “*

### 4.1.3. Museum of Photography in Stockholm (Sweden)

**Claire - Head of Fotografiska Academy**

## Analysis

Claire is a 47-year-old female living in Stockholm presently working as 'Head of Fotografiska Academy' and 'Director of Stockholm Photography week' at the Swedish museum of photography (Fotografiska). She has a Ph.D. in Social Anthropology from Stockholm University and has been working at her current position since the museum opened in 2010.

Claire believes that the increased interest in photography, that has been seen in the last few years, has to do with the fact that it has become cheaper and easier for 'anybody' to get hold of better equipment. The technical and digital evolution has changed a lot she says. Not only are people taking more pictures but they are becoming more and more interested in the photography field as a whole. This translates for example in a constant growing number of visitors as well as an overall success for the museum since it opened four years ago. When asking her about the 'typical visitor' at the museum she says

*"I would have to say that the most typical visitor is people from Stockholm that comes to our museum with loved ones (friends and family) to discover new photographic exhibitions and eat and drink well or tourists who are in Stockholm. However, it is difficult to talk about a typical visitor, the closest we come is individuals that are culturally interested".*

Loyal visitors also have the possibility to buy a membership card to the museum, which provides them with free entrance, preview to new exhibitions and some other discounts. The most common 'member' is currently photographic interested females in their thirties, however all kinds of customers are interested in the loyalty card and presently the museum has over 12,000 members, and the number is increasing each year.

Besides different exhibitions and performances, the museum also provides photography classes, for beginners as well as professionals. The museum is currently offering three types of classes, 'Basic', 'Advanced' and 'Masters of photography workshops'.

*"The 'Basic' class is really for everybody, people of all ages who have photos as a hobby and want to take the next step to be able to take better pictures.*

*The 'Advanced' class is for people who have been taking pictures for a long time and now realize that there are ready to take the next step in their personal development, technically as creatively.*

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*Lastly the 'Masters of photography workshops' are for those enthusiasts who either have photography as their great interest or photograph professionally. They want to take the opportunity to learn and be inspired by the world's best photographers."*

When asking Claire more about what the "Masters of photography course" offers compared to for instance the 'Advanced' course, seeing how the 'Master' course is offered at almost double the prize, she says that teacher for the 'Masters of Photography' class are world leading photographer who are often exhibit at many of the world's most prestigious museums, art canter and galleries. Claire tells us that the museum decided to offer these 'photo classes' seeing how the Swedish museum of photography (Fotografiska) is a place for photography in all forms and expressions.

*"Our ambition is also to teach, which is an important part of our role as a centre for the field of photography"*

Lastly Claire mentions that another impact that has been very important in the increasing trend of photography is the 'sharing factor'.

*"Photography is much more accessible now through the technological progress and it is also through Internet that more people are sharing their photos with family and friends to a great extent".*

### 4.2. Themes

In the following part of this chapter, we will apply a 'cross-case' analysis of our respondents answers combined with our selected theoretical framework (Fournier, 1998). The aim is to go a step further in the analysis by comparing the similarities and differences of the respondent's point of view. In order to provide a better structure those insights were regrouped around five key themes: the social and economic aspects, sharing their work, technical vs. artistic, the camera and same - but different.

#### Social and Economic Aspects

Marc, our French artist is the only one out of our participants that has had any real experience from taking part in a real physical photo club. He was actually one of the co-founders of the photo-club at his previous job. For him, the photo club is a place where he can interact with other more serious amateurs and share their common passion for photography. A part from being a great place for

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learning and sharing these clubs and communities are also a very social place for these highly engaged photographers. Bourdieu differentiates the members of clubs from the rest by the fact that they “have in common a rate of practice which is higher than that of the set of population which takes photographs.” (1984, p.104).

Today, it is no longer only a matter of ‘physical clubs’, in the classical Bourdieu vision, a variety of online clubs also exist. Tom has had some occurrences with these clubs and communities.

*“I have been to quite a lot of forums online; most of them have been Dutch, for instance ‘Neder pics’ and ‘Bird pix’<sup>5</sup>. These forums are for free but you need to create a membership. There are a lot of really cool high-level clubs online, for instance one that is called ‘500px’. For that one you have to pay quite a lot, I just used it for a while because they had a free trial, but I would not pay for it, not right now.”*

*Tom, 22, Dutch*

According to Tom the main difference between for instance ‘Bird pix’ and ‘500px’ is that the second one is more artistic while the other one focuses more on technical aspects. However what these forums have in common is that they provide a platform for all kinds of photo enthusiast to interact and to share photos, thoughts and tips. Anna however feels very strongly that this ‘club’ environment just is not for her. She says that in her mind people that join photo clubs are usually “old and bold”. Maybe when she gets older she could imagine herself joining one, right now she is just not interested. This is also the case for online forums or more generally sharing her hobby with other photo enthusiasts. Anna says that for her, taking photos is “her” thing. She does not want somebody to comment on her work or have inputs. She however use online forums when she stumbles upon technical difficulties that she can’t fix herself or if she is in need for inspiration but she does not want to share it with others “I guess when I think about it is kind of personal “she says. Anna says that it might sound like a very lonely hobby but actually she tells us that it is the complete opposite. Most of the pictures she takes are portraits, either for her own purpose or for helping friends with pictures for their CV for example. Anna says that she enjoys taking portraits because she believes that people are “beautiful and fascinating”.

*“They intrigue me, how we all look so different but are all the same in one way. But as I said before I like pictures and especially portraits to be as natural as possible, and that really captures the person and the moment they are in. that’s why I take photos to capture*

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<sup>5</sup> Online photo communities

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*moments. I mean otherwise you could just paint or do something else I think that's the beauty in photography to capture moments and save them forever".*

*Anna, 24, Swedish*

Anna continues by saying that whenever she is taking pictures she is almost always with somebody else. Thus, she claims that it is in fact a very social activity and a great way to meet up with friends. Maja has a similar experience as she also likes to take portrait of people during her travels. However she likes to share those through her personal blog. She also, together with a friend, writes articles about photographers or exhibitions she likes in another blog.

Photography clubs (online or offline), forums but also photography classes all offer unique places for photography enthusiasts to share and exchange their common passion. However, those clubs and classes not available for everybody seeing how they often are very costly. Tom mentioned some different online clubs and forums, most of which members had to pay to become a member. The cost for a membership in the "500px" community varies between 165 and 500 SEK<sup>6</sup> a year (500px, 2014). The Same thing goes for most of the physical clubs mentioned by Marc. Claire, the Director of "Fotografiska Academy" told us about the different memberships and courses they provide at the museum. A common denominator for all these classes are that they are very costly. For instance to take part in the 'Master of Photography Workshops' one would be prepared to pay over 10,000 SEK<sup>7</sup> (Fotografiska, 2014). Membership to the museum also represent an investment between 495 and 1,245 SEK<sup>8</sup> a year (Fotografiska, 2014). This creates a distinction between photography amateur as those clubs and classes are reserved to those selected few that can afford it, that have a "high economic capital" according to Bourdieu (1984; cited in Corrigan, 1997 p.27).

However, to have an interest in photography does not automatically means investing a lot of money. Tom for instance previously mentioned that he is very good at finding cheap lenses and accessories in second hand stores and George, the English professional told us that he actually makes his own accessories. This can very much be referred to Campbell's (2005) definition of "craft consumption" seeing how the term 'craft' is as previously mentioned used to refer to consumption activity in which the 'product' concerned is essentially both "made and designed by the same person" and to which the consumer typically brings "skill, knowledge, judgement and passion while being motivated by a desire for self-expression" (Campbell, 2005 p.23). Campbell further claims that a craft consumer is "someone who transforms 'commodities' into personalized objects, which is a common factor

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<sup>6</sup> 165 SEK ≈ 18€ / 500 SEK ≈ 55€ (21/05/2014)

<sup>7</sup> 10,000 SEK ≈ 1,105€ (21/05/2014)

<sup>8</sup> 495 SEK ≈ 55€ / 1,245 SEK ≈ 138€ (21/05/2014)

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amongst our participants. They all have a very special relationship with their camera and have bought (or made) a great amount of accessories to make it even better and more personalized.

Campbell also claims that 'craft consumption' is a way for the upper and middle classes to succeed in adapting a postmodern consumer society so that they can continue to give expression to their traditional sense of cultural superiority (Campbell, 2005, p.38). Marc for instance claims that he does not like sharing his pictures with just anybody, he prefers analysing his pictures with other more serious amateurs or professionals that are at his level.

On the other hand according to Gelber (2013), hobbies have not only been a matter of class belonging, it can be a way for people with unpleasant jobs to find "legitimacy of work ethic" since many hobbies share the same characteristics in what may be fulfilled in an thriving career. The sociologist Robert Stebbins also claims that hobbies for instance develop "specialized skills, reward perseverance, and provide them with benchmarks by which they can measure their achievements" (Stebbins, 1992, cited in Gelber, 2013, p.11). This is very much the case of Anna, who over the years has entered a lot of contests with her pictures and has had some exhibitions. For her it is very important to evaluate her progress and she says that she can tell a tremendous difference from the pictures she took for her first exhibition compared to the latest one.

To conclude, all of our participants have developed some form of social aspect around their passion of photography whether it is through interaction with their models and friends (Anna, Maja) or by being members of classic or online photography clubs (Tom, Marc). However those clubs or classes often represent a certain financial investment. This is also very much true for photography as a hobby in general. Some of the respondents have used creative approaches to reduce those costs by purchasing second hand products (Tom) or creating their own accessories to better fit their needs (George).

### Sharing their Work

One thing all of our participants have in common is the fact that they do share their pictures, even though the channels they use to display their photos differs. For Maja and Tom, in our case the younger respondents use social medias and blogs as a tool to share their pictures with the world. However this is not always the case, Anna is the same age and also part of 'the sharing generation' however she feels that sharing her pictures on social platforms means losing full control of them. Some are also very selective in who they decide to show their pictures to, for instance Marc who preferably only shares his work with others that are on the same level as he is.

Today people are sharing pictures like never before, however the approach how to share pictures have shown to differ quite a bit among our participants. For Tom and Maja the whole reason they



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decided to pursue with their interest in photography is because of the great comments they received when they started to post their pictures.

*“I guess that the pictures I post on Facebook differs quite a bit from the ones most of my friends share. I spend a great amount of time and effort on my pictures, and I suppose that they are ‘better’ than the average photos that most of my friends take. And I think that is why they have been really appreciated amongst my friends”.*

Tom, 22, Dutch

Maja had similar experiences as Tom and says that part of the reason she took her interest to the next level was since her friends saw some of her pictures and told her that she had to share them with the world.

Concerning photo apps - in this case Instagram since this is the most commonly used app for sharing photos - our participant's feelings towards it differs quite a bit. Tom, for instance is a big fan of Instagram and he believes that is an app that has a 'photo edge' to it. He always makes an effort to post pictures he believes has an artistic view.

*“Even if I am just cooking something simple for my self I try to and make an effort to find nice plates and present it in a nice way, and take a nice picture of it and post it on Instagram. I find it really inspirational looking at ‘food pictures’ that somebody has put an effort into creating, I therefore try and make the same effort to inspire others”.*

Tom, 22, Dutch

Maja is also an active user of the app but only takes picture of her daily life with her phone without spending too much time on 'setting up' the picture. Both type of picture refer to Cova and Svanfeldt vision: "The postmodern being is free in all choices to turn each day into a work of art" (1992, p.297). For many, Instagram and Facebook are two great platforms to display and transform 'everyday' activities into works of art. However there are those who have a completely different perspective on these forums, Marc and Anna being two of them. None of them uses social medias platform to share their picture.

*“I don't have Instagram. People always ask me why I don't have Instagram seeing how they know about my hobby and that I love taking pictures. But Instagram and the way I see and practice photography are two completely different things. I don't know it's just not for me. If*

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*I want to be inspired by photos I buy some magazines or look at photo blogs. Looking at a picture of what somebody had for breakfast just isn't inspiring to me. "*

*Anna, 24, Swedish*

When asking her about Facebook she says that she does not like putting her pictures on Facebook. Anna says that she is actually really sick of Facebook and that she just uses it to keep in touch with some friends but never for sharing pictures. "I want to have full control and ownership over my pictures and if I put them on Facebook somebody else owns my pictures and has full access to them" she says. For Anna it is very important to have full ownership to her pictures, and that she decides when and how she wants to share them. She therefore prefers keeping her photos to herself and only shows them to her friends and family and whenever she enters a contest or has exhibitions. Anna feels very strongly concerning this question and according to her opinion anybody can post a picture on Facebook but not all people can for instance be a part of 'up and coming young photographers'. Anna spends a great amount of time and money on her hobby and for her entering a contest or having an exhibition takes it to another level instead of just sharing them with everybody on Facebook.

Tom on the other hand really enjoys sharing his pictures on different social medias, and for him that is a way to reach out and show not only his friends and family but also other photo enthusiast what he is capable of.

*"I think that everybody wants to have something that they are good at, and in all honesty doesn't everybody love to be admired?"*

*Tom, 22, Dutch*

For Maja, Facebook is more a tool she uses to 'narrate her life' and she uses Instagram to post pictures taken with her phone and to share pictures from her travels. She (Maja) also uses her personal blog as a platform to share her pictures. Marc neither uses Facebook nor Instagram, thus he does not share his pictures through any of these social medias. He mostly shows his pictures to his family and with other more serious amateurs or professional photographers. Marc only wanting to share his work with a selected few can be referred to Bourdieu's (1984) thoughts on cultural capital. Marc prefers to share his work with other 'more serious' enthusiast, seeing that they are on the same level and can understand each other and they talk the same language.

## Technical vs. Artistic

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One of the key focus points of our interviews was on the technical and aesthetic aspect of photography. The aim was to try to understand how the different respondents view the relationship between those two aspects and how they each impact the definition of a good photographer.

It is interesting to see that although most of the respondents agree on the fact that both the technical as well as the aesthetic side are important, the importance of those two varies. Anna has a very clear view, she clearly see the artistic aspect as being the most important. She however also touches upon an aspect most of our respondent also mentioned (Tom, Marc, Maja, Georges), that is the fact that in order to develop this artistic view a technical base is needed.

*“Definitely the artistic point a view – I hate technology! At the same time I truly think that if I would improve on my technical knowledge I would be a better photographer. However, I still feel that the artistic aspect is more important, anybody can by a super expensive camera and Photoshop it but if you don’t have a good vision, a nice picture to begin with - you have nothing.”*

*Anna, 24, Swedish*

Marc opinion is not as drastic but he also clearly favours the artistic side. His artistic background clearly influences him and he refers to numbers of artistic rules. He also opposes his vision to the one he has experienced in the photo-club he had at his previous job where most of his colleagues where more driven by the technical aspect. Like the other participants he also stresses the importance of having the technical knowledge.

For John, and in a less strong manner Maja it is however the technical side that is the most important. John, like Anna defending the other perspective, clearly answers the question by saying:

“Do I think that professional photography is art? – Now I don’t.” Maja has a more tempered view of things.

*“The artistic aspect exist through the technique. That’s what is amazing, you can calculate what you want to do once you know a bit your camera.”*

*Maja, 23, French*

At first sight, reading through the interviewers answers could tend to lead toward the vision of Bourdieu (1965) or Schwartz (1986) that there are two ‘schools’: the one that sees photography

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from an artistic side and the other that views it from a technical perspective. But this would be overlooking the nuances that both sides bring in our case. Whether they describe themselves as leaning more towards one side or the other, they always underline the importance of having both aspects, the artistic and the technical side to take the best possible picture. This is confirmed by looking at the vocabulary the respondents use. Technical vocabulary such as “mechanic”, “technique” (Marc) or “calculating” (Maja) is used as well as more artistic related notion such as “composition” or “purist” (Marc) for example.

This transition from two very distinct groups to a more blurred mix of both aesthetic and technical aspect can be linked to the recent technical development of photography. As seen in the ‘Historical framework’ part of this paper the development of affordable, high-end digital cameras has allowed a broader range of consumers to purchase them. The transition to digital made some of the technical difficulties disappear by making them automatic in the camera. By taking away some of the complexities that used to characterize a camera, has allowed a merge to some extent of the aesthetic and technical vision.

### **The camera: more than just an object**

In all the interviews conducted the camera always plays a central role for the respondents. For many of them it has a very strong symbolic value and is often linked to the start of their passion and even their career for some of them. When describing how their passion for photography started nearly all link it to their first owned camera. Some of them saved money for a long time to be able to purchase it such as Marc and Georges for example.

*“When I was in high-school I had a small part time job. I worked a couple of hours at a local store and save enough to buy my first camera.”*

*Marc, 57, French*

For others their first camera is synonym to their first success and acknowledgement from others. Anna and Maja got their first camera as a present and both won their very first photo contest with it. This then led them to move to a more sophisticated DSLR camera and turn photography into a serious hobby.

This attachment to their camera (old or current one) can be seen in the way they talk about it. In their description human characteristics are transferred over to the camera, some as extreme as calling it their “baby” (Maja). Much like a baby they are very careful when letting someone else use

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it and some feel lost when trying to use someone else camera (Anna). This strong attachment to the camera can be linked to McCracken's concept of "displaced meaning" (1988) that is to present a situation where the object, in our case the camera, becomes more than a mere object and emotions, souvenirs and feelings are linked to it.

Another interesting finding is that when asked if they could imagine themselves selling their cameras the reactions are somewhat different. The two professional photographers (George and John) have a very pragmatic approach and see their camera as a work tool. On the other hand, amateur photograph usually hesitate before answering this question. They all admit that they would feel a bit sad having to sell it but would do it if it meant moving toward a better, more sophisticated camera.

*"I could imagine myself selling it [her camera] as well as my objectives to buy a new one. Those are valuable objects that are quite expensive."*

*Maja, 23, French*

Marc however would find it very difficult to do so for his first camera that he sees as a collection model, comparing it to an old Bugatti. He would sell his current camera without problem to buy a new one but he could only imagine himself selling his very first camera in case of a "very good offer". The difficulty to put a price tag, a monetary value to an object that is very close to them refer to the concept of "decommodification" presented by Kopytoff (1986).

Even if all of the respondents would find it difficult to sell their camera they are all conscious of the monetary value of their camera and equipment's. As we have seen before for some of them buying a camera was their first big expenditure (Marc, George) and it has often continued since then by purchasing new cameras or lenses for example. During all the interviews the different respondents were all capable of remembering the (often expensive) purchasing price they had for their cameras and accessories. This clearly represent a big investment for most of them.

*"Wow I haven't really thought about it but if you combine it all [cameras and accessories expenditure] it's quite a lot of money"*

*Anna, 24, Swedish*

But this does not stop them making plans toward purchasing more products for their hobby. Maja and Anna for example both mentioned their intention to purchase a new lens (Maja) and a more sophisticated camera (Anna). This consumption pattern could be linked to Veblen (1975)

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“conspicuous consumption” vision that see certain purchasing pattern as a way to show one's social status and differentiate oneself from other consumer. Here Tom could be seen as the exception as he prefers to purchase second hand lens for example but however admits that this is more due to his current limited earning (student) than a real choice.

*“Cameras and especially all the accessories are very expensive, and right now I do not have the money for it. However, one thing my brother told me is to go and look for camera accessories in second hand stores. Sometimes you can find real bargains! Every time I pass such a store I always have to go in and have a look.”*

*Tom, 23, Dutch*

The two professional photographers (George, John) bring an interesting historical perspective to this point. As they both highlight the huge investment a sophisticated camera represented a couple of decades ago was enough of a barrier to differentiate between amateurs and professionals. Nowadays the price has gone down drastically and most professionals now use high-end cameras available to a broader public for both photos (George) or even films (John).

*“What digital has done is giving access to people to very sophisticated equipment that are cheap to operate.”*

*George, 70, English*

As seen in the introduction of this paper, cameras are nowadays not the only object used to take pictures and smartphones offer a potential alternative. The different approaches the respondents have to their smartphone camera is also very interesting to analyse. The scale goes from respondents not using the camera function on their phone at all (George) to using it very regularly and posting the picture on social media platforms such as Instagram (Tom). For many it's the practical aspect of the smartphone camera they like when using it (Marc, Anna).

*“Yes, I take pictures with my iPhone because I always have it with me and there are often nice pictures to be taken on my path”*

*Marc, 57, French*

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*“I don’t always have my camera with me so yes sometimes I do take pictures with my phone. However, I mostly use my smartphone to “capture moments”, not with the intention to create a great picture.”*

*Anna, 24, Swedish*

None of them however are using social media platforms such as Facebook or Instagram to share their pictures. Maja and especially Tom on the other hand choose more carefully what picture they take and have a similar approach to it as they would have when taking a picture with their ‘real’ camera.

*“I have the same approach when taking pictures with my phone and with my camera. I try to get the right angle and if it’s a flower for example I would easily get on my knees to get a better angle.”*

*Tom, 23, Dutch*

When asked about this increasing use of smartphones John brings a more business perspective unto that question. He sees this as a clear threat to the camera industry.

*“A big problem for the retailers within photography is that people aren’t buying cameras anymore simply because they basically can receive the same quality with their smartphone”*

*John, 65, English*

## Same but Different

When asking our participants what they felt was the main difference between professional photographers and amateurs we received some interesting insights. One aspect all of our participants agreed upon is that regarding their equipment

*“I guess if you just see somebody in the street what you immediately can point out is their highly advanced and expensive equipment, then you can be pretty sure that it is a professional or an amateur who is taking his/her hobby very seriously”*

*Anna, 24, Swedish*

George, Claire and John all however agrees that the economical aspect is less and less relevant as cameras are getting better and cheaper and the high cost of buying and developing film has

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disappeared (George and John). For George all amateur photographers are similar in one aspect as they do not have access to all the advanced equipment that professionals do, he calls this the “lack of opportunity”.

However, being able to afford all the best equipment is not equal with being a great photographer. This can be understood through Bourdieu’s ‘Kantian aesthetic’ meaning that one does not necessarily need a high economic capital to obtain a high cultural capital. Having a high cultural capital is thus defined by formal education and social background (Bourdieu, 1984, p.39).

*“There are always those who buys the best gear and that has all the toys and tries to be professional, However I think that the best photographers are those that pay more attention to their instincts and feelings rather than their equipment, you can always buy a better camera but you can’t buy an artistic eye”.*

*Tom, 22, Dutch*

When asking our four amateurs (Tom, Maja, Anna and Marc) how they perceive themselves as photographers they all claim that even if they are not professionals they do spend more time on their photo interest than most ‘snap shooters’. Far from everybody have the opportunity to spend such a great amount of time on a hobby; therefore these “serious amateurs” display a form of Veblen’s “Leisure consumption” in today’s society (Veblen, 1975; cited in Corrigan, 1997 p.23).

*“I mean I do spend a lot of time on my pictures and I have participated in some contests and so on. Don’t get me wrong, I definitely do not see myself as a professional, and am still not as good as my twin brother but I would however say that I have more knowledge than the “everyday user”.*

*Tom, 22, Dutch*

For Anna her photo interest is simply a hobby. According to Campbell a ‘hobby’ is referred to as an activity that is pursued in one’s leisure time for amusement or recreation (2005, p. 40). When asking if she has any aspirations in turning professional she is very quick to answer that even if she spends a great amount of time and money and has entered contests had exhibitions and even sold many of her photos she wants to keep it a leisure activity



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*“Photography is my number one interest, my hobby. It is what I like doing on my time off and a way for me to ‘turn everything else off’. I think that turning your biggest passion into an actual living can be dangerous and take away the fun of it”*

*Anna, 24, Swedish*

Tom and Maja do however share a different view.

*“I have a blog where I share my pictures, one reason I’m doing this is to be able to put it on my CV to show that I actually do something from my passion”.*

*Maja, 23, French*

Together with a friend Maja also writes articles about a photographers or photo-exhibitions she likes. Here again she puts forward the fact that it gives sense to her passion and she uses it on her CV. Maja sees her hobby as something to be put forward for instance when looking for a job. Seeing how the term “hobby” is a well-structured, productive and educational use of time according to Vries (1994).

Although Tom is our respondent that started the most recently with photography, he is considering turning his hobby into a real profession by joining his brother in his wedding photography business. He does not think one really is implied to have a formal education in the photography field. Tom continues by saying that his brother is not an educated photographer, he is just very just very passionate, interested and eager to constantly learn more and now he has a thriving business in the Netherlands.

*“I think that business wise the way to get customers is through word-of-mouth and having a good website with a great portfolio. That’s your ‘degree’ in a way and it shows what you are capable of”.*

*Tom, 22, Dutch*

One thing all of the amateurs (Marc, Tom, Anna and Maja) have in common is how their interest in photography started. They are all self-taught, they have all had great support from friends and family and they all share a common curiosity. Tom and Maja both have brothers that are very interested in photography (even more so than they are) and they both say that they have been highly influenced by their siblings

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*“When I was 14 my older brother was really into photography, and he was very good at it and I thought ‘wow that’s so cool’ – I want to do that to! So I started out taking photos by myself in my room and I guess that’s how it all started”*

*Maja, 23, French*

They all mention how important the support from their friends and family has been, Marc for instance had at a young age access to a dark room at his house and Maja and Anna both got their first cameras from their parents.

However, according to John and George (the two professionals) taking the step from being an amateur to turning professional implies a lot of hard work and engagement. For George the main difference between professional and amateur photographers is the question of economical investment, and having access to the right ‘infrastructure’ and the right people. Both George and John started out by working as assistants before starting their own business

*“Looking at my prints and their prints I saw a huge difference but I simply could not understand how they did it. However after a while I realized that it was all about training and learning the language of photography”*

*John, 65, English*

*“I think it is nearly impossible to become a professional photographer from having solely an amateur background and work”*

*George, 70, English*

Finally the technical background and engagement in the work are two very important aspects in making the distinction between professional and amateur photographers (John and George). According to John, young professionals today do not have the same technical background as his generation used to have. Thus, they both agree that the main difference between a professional and an amateur is engagement, time and practice.

*“The amount of time I spent shooting cannot be compared to a hobby photographer, simply because they do not have the possibility to put in as much time as we as professionals do!”*

*John, 65, English*

## 5. DISCUSSION

In order to better categorize and define the characteristics of the amateur photographers seen throughout this paper we would like to introduce the concept of 'expert-amateur'.

Seeing how these photographers neither can be defined as professionals nor as everyday users, a new concept was needed to better define their position and characteristics. The 'expert-amateurs' share some of the practices of professional photographers but still are not fully part of this community. At the same time they are at a higher level of knowledge than the average photographers that takes pictures only on special occasions and do not have the same approach, the same thinking process as an 'expert-amateur' has when taking pictures.

In this part we are going to go through the different elements that characterizes their similarities and differences with both the 'amateurs' and 'experts'.

### 5.1. Expert

These individuals can be defined as 'experts' since compared to average users, they often have better equipment, but most importantly knows how to use it and have a very solid technical knowledge of the camera. The development of affordable, high-end digital cameras has allowed a broader range of consumers to purchase them while the transition to digital made some of the technical difficulties disappear by making them automatic in the camera. By taking away some of the complexities that used to characterize a camera, 'artistic' photography is no longer an activity only reserved for professionals.

The 'expert-amateur' is an 'expert' seeing how compared to amateurs, they spend a great amount of time and money on their hobby as well as an eagerness to constantly progress and learn more. This translates for instance by being member in different photo clubs (physical or virtual), as well as participating in different communities and forums. According to Gelber (2013), hobbies can be a way for people with unpleasant jobs to find "legitimacy of work ethic" since many hobbies share the same characteristics as what a fulfilled and thriving career could offer (e.g. specialized skills, reward perseverance). Furthermore, these characteristics transforms these individuals into being more than just 'amateurs'. Some of them also share a common drive: turning their hobby into a living, and thus becoming professional photographers. Finally, another aspect that links these persons towards being 'experts' is that some of them have had exhibitions, participated in photo-contest and through this being able to earn money from their passion.

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Their solid technical knowledge, their eagerness to learn and their willingness to share their work are some of the key elements that those 'expert-amateurs' share with professional photographers, making them 'experts'.

### 5.2. Amateur

Although the technical evolution with the development of cheaper, easier to use digital cameras has allowed for a reduction of the gap between amateur and professional photographers, some differences still remains.

'Expert-amateurs' as opposed to professional photographers do not have photography as their daily work although some aspire to make it so. This means that they do not have the same financial capacities to invest large sums of money on cameras and lenses but also on elements such as renting a studio or buying lighting material and other heavy equipment. It is however important to underline that some amateurs have earned money through their photos but this has often been too sporadic to be considered a real career option.

This is also directly linked with the other problematic differentiating 'expert-amateurs' from professional photographers: time. As already stated, photography is not their full-time job, it is a passion that can be defined as a hobby (Gelber, 2013). This means the 'expert- amateurs' can only spend a limited amount of time working on taking pictures and improving their skills.

Our research has also helped us highlight other, less obvious, distinctions between 'expert-amateurs' and professionals. The first is the fact that by not having photography as their profession, they do not belong to the community and therefore do not have access to the right connections. A professional photographer is very much dependant on getting contracts for specific photo-shootings or selling his work to different customers (companies, magazines, etc.). Those are obtained through solid and long lasting business relationships and trust with those customers that an 'expert-amateur' just do not have. Another point is the language. Photography just like many skill based and technical work has its own language. Mastering it is vital to be treated as an equal inside the community (Douglas and Isherwood, 1996), creating yet another barrier to be overcome.

The 'expert-amateurs' are sharing a lot of similarities and practices with professional photographers, however, a number of barriers are still keeping them outside this community. The most evident one is the fact that photography is simply not their profession, which makes it very hard for them to compete in terms of time and money devoted towards photography. Those barriers are reinforced

by the fact that 'expert-amateurs' also lack the connections inside the world of photography as well as not having the knowledge of the language and codes. All those elements highlights that, although a very active photographer, the 'expert-amateur' still is an 'amateur' having photography as a hobby.

### 5.3. Conclusion

Previous research has had a tendency to categorize photographers into two groups: professionals and the rest. With the help of qualitative research as well as different publications in the field of consumer behaviour and sociology, we have tried to demonstrate the fact that yet another group exist - that we refer to as the 'expert-amateur'. The emergence of this group is due to multiple factors:

- The digital revolution making cameras cheaper and easier to use.
- The appearance of different social platforms changing the way people share their work.
- The growing importance of post-modern values and the idea of 'aestheticization of everyday life'.
- The significance of hobbies and the emergence of 'craft-consumption'.

The 'expert-amateurs' share common characteristics with both amateur as well as professional photographers. Their commitment in terms of time, money and technical skills sets them clearly apart from the average amateur and closer to professional photographers. They are however limited by the fact that photography is still just a hobby for them making it hard to compete with professionals in terms of time and money available but also in having access to professional networks and in understanding their language.

The concept 'expert-amateur' provides a clearer framework for defining these highly engaged consumers, which previously were not very well explored.

### 5.4. Limitations and Future Research

Thanks to our participants we were able to gather deep and interesting insights concerning their consumer practices. Nevertheless, there are some limitations and discussion points that needs to be mentioned.

We chose to select participants with different backgrounds: age, education and nationalities (French, Swedish, English and Dutch). This enabled us to gain a broader picture both from a cultural as well as a demographic perspective. It may however be interesting to include a younger professional

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photographer to offer another perspective on how he/she sees his/her profession today as opposed to the more senior photographers. This research included participants from different nationalities, thus all within Europe. It could be interesting to investigate if similar themes would be found if the study was conducted in other parts of the world.

For our research we used three women and four men. We did not however feel that the gender aspect was of importance, since no major differences were found on how the women as opposed to the men perceived their hobby. Nevertheless, it could be interesting to look at this phenomenon from a gender perspective to see if there are in fact differences.

In this paper we touched upon the 'photo-clubs' Bourdieu (1965) and Schwartz (1986) analysed a few decades ago. This area would be interesting to further explore and compare how these photo enthusiast interact today - with the development of digital camera and the omnipresence of internet and social media - compared to older research.

Another interesting aspect would be to analyse the 'expert-amateurs' from a sociological perspective (class, cultural background, career, earnings) and try to establish if all 'expert-amateurs' are from a high-middle class or higher class for example. In a similar way, researchers could look into their education level and current work to see if their high engagement in photography could be a way for some to compensate an unfulfilling career choice.

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## 7. APPENDIX

*All the interviews have been recorded and transcribed by the authors. The transcriptions are available upon request.*

### 7.1. Questionnaire guideline for amateur photographer

#### **Information about the respondent**

Name:

Age:

Gender:

Profession:

Nationality:

Country/City of residence:

Thank the participant for taking part in our research project.

Let us start off by having a look at the pictures that you brought.

#### **General Questions**

- Would you like to tell us the context in which you took these pictures?
- Why do you like these pictures?
- What, according to your opinion characterizes a good picture?
- What according to your opinion characterizes a good photographer?

#### **Self-perception**

- How would you describe yourself as a photographer?

(Ask how they perceive themselves vs average user and professional)

- Do you remember how and when your interest in photography started?
- What is more important for you: the artistic aspect or the technical aspect of photography?

(If answer that both is important: push to understand why each aspect is important and which one is really key vs the other one)

#### **External-perception**

- How would others (friends, family) describe your relationship to photography?

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(Time consuming, money etc..)

-What do others say of your pictures?

- How does it make you feel?

-Do you share your photos? If yes how?

(Exhibition, only family, social media → Which one?)

-Do you use your smartphone to take pictures? If yes for what purpose?

(Instagram? Snapchat? etc.)

### **Group-perception**

-Are you part of any kind of club related to photography?

(Online/Offline, now, before?)

-How do you learn more, improve on your skills?

(online, take courses, photo magazines, exchange with other photo enthusiasts)

- Can you tell the difference between different type of photographers? How?

(the way they talk, act, take photos etc..)

- Do you consider yourself to be part of a sort of photography community?

(Why? How do they define and recognize themselves?)

### **Object (camera)**

- Could you tell me more about your camera?

(When/ where did you buy it?, How many do you have?)

- How much money have you spent on your camera and accessories?

(Details camera and then accesories. How often do you buy accessories?)

- How important is your camera for you?

- Would you be ready to sell it? If so for how much?

## 7.2. Questionnaire guideline for Professional photographer

### **Information about the respondents**

Name:

Age:

Gender:

Nationality:

Country/City of residence:

Thank the participant for taking part in our research project.

**General Questions**

- Could you present yourself shortly?  
(Place of residence, travels, hobbies, etc.)
- Could you describe an ordinary work day for you?

**About the photographer**

- What is your education background?

**View of amateur photographers**

- What is the main difference between professional and amateur photographers?
- Are all amateur photographers the same for you?
- Have you seen a change in the way amateur photographers behave throughout your career?  
(Technology impact, etc.)
- Do you see good amateur photographers as a threat to your activity?
- Do you think that the job as professional photographer will disappear?

**Equipment**

- What kind of equipment do you use? How much is it worth?
- When you buy a new camera do you sell the old one or keep it?

**View of self**

- What, according to your opinion characterizes a good picture?
- What is more important for you: the artistic aspect or the technical aspect of photography?  
(If answer that both is important: push to understand why each aspect is important and which one is really key vs the other one)
- What, according to your opinion characterizes a good photographer?

**7.3. Questionnaire guideline for 'Fotografiska'**

**Information about the respondent**

Name:

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Age:

Gender:

Nationality:

Country/City of residence:

### **General question**

- How would you describe the 'typical' visitor that comes to the photography museum?
- Have you experienced an increase in the interest the general public has in photography?

### **Membership**

- What kind of visitor (age, social group, etc.) are buying membership to the club?
- Have you seen an increase in the number of visitors buying membership?

### **Photo classes**

- Why are you offering photography lessons? Have they been popular?
- How would you describe participant in the:
  - a) Basic course
  - b) In-depth course
  - c) Master in photography workshop
- What do the 'Master in photography' class offer compare to the in-depth course?

### **General question**

- Where do you think the increase interest in photography is coming from?