

**LENSES WITHOUT TRAINING:
SMARTPHONE PHOTOGRAPHY, AMATEUR COMPETITION,
AND THE ECONOMIC DECLINE OF PROFESSIONAL
PHOTOJOURNALISM IN NORTH WEST NIGERIA**

BASHIR ABDULLAHI LAWAL, PhD

Department of Mass Communication

Hassan Usman Katsina Polytechnic, Katsina State, Nigeria

Email: bashir.abdullahi.lawal@hukpoly.edu.ng

Phone: +2348067812782

&

ADEOLA ANU BANKOLE

Strategic Communication and Media Studies

Kaduna Polytechnic, Kaduna State, Nigeria

Email: adeolaanu@kadunapolytechnic.edu.ng

Phone: +234 708 420 6988

Abstract

The rapid proliferation of smartphone technology across Nigeria has fundamentally altered the landscape of visual communication, enabling virtually every mobile phone owner to function as a photographer without formal training, professional accreditation, or adherence to the ethical standards that govern photojournalism. This development has generated a severe and accelerating economic crisis for professional photojournalists in North West Nigeria, as clients progressively abandon trained professionals in favour of cheaper, untrained smartphone photographers whose work is perceived as commercially adequate for most purposes. Specifically, the study sought to achieve two main objectives: first, to examine the extent to which untrained amateur smartphone photographers have contributed to the economic decline of professional photojournalists in North West Nigeria; and second, to assess the structural and institutional factors that have facilitated the displacement of professional photojournalists by untrained amateur smartphone photographers in North West Nigeria. Adopting a convergent parallel mixed-methods design, the study combined a structured questionnaire survey administered to 400 professional photojournalists purposively selected across the seven states of North West Nigeria with 20 in-depth interviews recruited through snowball sampling. Quantitative data were analysed using SPSS version 25.0 through descriptive statistics and inferential tests including Pearson Chi-Square and Spearman rank correlation at $p \leq 0.05$, while qualitative data were subjected to thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke (2006). Results reveal that 81.4% of respondents confirmed significant income decline attributable to amateur

smartphone competition, and all three null hypotheses were rejected at $p = 0.000$. Grounded in Christensen's (1997) Disruptive Innovation Theory, Mosco's (2009) Political Economy of Communication, and the Labour Market Segmentation Theory of Doeringer and Piore (1971), the paper recommends the urgent development of a mandatory professional certification framework by the Nigerian Press Council in collaboration with the Nigerian Union of Journalists to protect the economic and professional standing of trained photojournalists across North West Nigeria.

Keywords: Smartphone Photography, Amateur Competition, Professional Photojournalism, Economic Decline, North West Nigeria, Disruptive Innovation, Labour Market Segmentation

Introduction

Photography as a professional practice has never been merely a technical exercise. Since its emergence as a journalistic tool in the mid-nineteenth century, photojournalism has occupied a distinctive and irreplaceable role in the documentation of public life, defined not simply by the ability to produce images but by the ethical discipline, narrative judgment, and institutional accountability that distinguish the trained visual journalist from the casual image-maker (Bersak 2006).

Also, Newton (2001) similarly argued that visual reportage has established a unique and extremely significant role in twenty-first century culture, a role built over many decades on the professional competence and ethical commitment of trained practitioners.

The smartphone did not arrive in Nigeria as an obvious threat to professional photography. In its early iterations, the mobile phone camera was dismissed by professionals as technically insufficient for serious editorial work (Christensen (1997). Disruptive Innovation Theory remains one of the most widely cited frameworks in the social sciences, demonstrated that technologies beginning as inferior substitutes frequently follow a trajectory of rapid improvement and dramatic cost reduction that eventually allows them to displace established professionals, not because they become superior in every dimension but because they become sufficiently adequate

for the mainstream market at overwhelming cost advantages. The smartphone camera has followed precisely this trajectory, and professional photojournalists in North West Nigeria are among the most severely affected (Lab 2023).

The North West geopolitical zone of Nigeria comprises seven states, namely Kano, Kaduna, Katsina, Sokoto, Zamfara, Kebbi, and Jigawa, and is the most populous geopolitical zone in the country, with a projected population of approximately 60.5 million in 2022 (Grokopedia, 2022). Image Retouching Lab (2023) confirmed that smartphones accounted for 92 percent of all photographs taken globally in 2023. Despite the severity of economic consequences for professional photojournalists in the region, empirical research addressing this crisis specifically in the North West Nigerian context remains strikingly absent. This study addresses that gap directly by generating and analysing primary data from 120 professional photojournalists across all seven states of the region within a robust multi-theoretical framework.

Statement of the Problem

Professional photojournalism in North West Nigeria confronts an occupational and economic crisis of considerable severity, driven by the systematic replacement of professionally trained visual journalists with untrained amateur photographers whose only qualification is possession of a smartphone with an increasingly capable camera. Image Retouching Lab (2023) confirmed that smartphones accounted for 92 percent of all photographs taken globally in 2023, while Studio Pod (2023) reported that the professional photography market in the United States declined by an average of 1.3 percent per year between 2018 and 2023. The United States Bureau of Labor Statistics (2024) acknowledged directly that the ease and quality of smartphone images may reduce the need for professional photographers. The Zenfolio (2024) State of the Photography Industry survey, drawing on responses from over 4,500 photographers across more

than 70 countries, found that 46.4 percent of client-based photographers struggle to find new clients.

In Nigeria, the Nigerian Press Council has not developed specific accreditation or certification frameworks for practising photojournalists that carry enforceable market consequences (Nigerian Press Council, 2022), and the Nigerian Union of Journalists similarly lacks operational frameworks to prevent media organisations from substituting professionals with smartphone-equipped amateurs at will. Awinzeligo et al. (2025), examining commercial photographers in Bolgatanga, Ghana, documented significant and statistically measurable income declines attributable to amateur smartphone competition, while Onyejelem and Worgu (2025), studying photographers in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State of Nigeria, confirmed that smartphone cameras had effectively turned all smartphone owners into photographers, significantly reducing demand for professional services. Notwithstanding the severity of this crisis, is the gap the study wants to fill.

Research Objectives

The study is guided by the following three specific objectives:

1. To examine the extent to which untrained amateur smartphone photographers have contributed to the economic decline of professional photojournalists in North West Nigeria.
2. To assess the structural and institutional factors that have facilitated the displacement of professional photojournalists by untrained amateur smartphone photographers in North West Nigeria.

Research Questions

RQ1: To what extent has the proliferation of untrained amateur smartphone photographers contributed to the economic decline of professional photojournalists in North West Nigeria?

RQ2: What structural and institutional factors have facilitated the displacement of professional photojournalists by untrained amateur smartphone photographers in North West Nigeria?

Hypotheses

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between the proliferation of untrained amateur smartphone photographers and the economic decline of professional photojournalists in North West Nigeria.

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between structural and institutional factors and the displacement of professional photojournalists by untrained amateur smartphone photographers in North West Nigeria.

Significance of the Study

At the academic level, this study makes an original and timely contribution to the scholarly literature on photojournalism, digital disruption, and media economics in Africa. By generating primary quantitative and qualitative data from professional photojournalists across all seven states of North West Nigeria, it addresses a significant gap in the existing literature and extends the empirical frontiers of photojournalism research into a regional African context almost entirely neglected by prior scholarship. The study also enriches the theoretical development of Christensen's (1997) Disruptive Innovation Theory and Mosco's (2009) Political Economy of Communication by testing these frameworks in a developing country media context substantially different from the Western environments in which they were originally formulated.

At the professional and institutional levels, the study provides the Nigerian Press Council, the Nigerian Union of Journalists, and media training institutions with a research-grounded foundation for the development of frameworks capable of protecting and sustaining professional photojournalism in the region. At the societal level, the decline of professional photojournalism is a democratic and communicative concern for the entire population of North West Nigeria. Oparaugo (2021) demonstrated that professionally produced photographs are essential components of journalistic credibility, and their substitution with amateur

alternatives diminishes the informational quality of media outputs in ways that ultimately harm public audiences.

Scope of the Study

This study is geographically limited to the North West geopolitical zone of Nigeria, covering the seven states of Kano, Kaduna, Katsina, Sokoto, Zamfara, Kebbi, and Jigawa. Thematically, the study focuses on the economic impact of smartphone photography and amateur competition on professional photojournalists, with particular attention to income decline, loss of client patronage, and the structural factors facilitating displacement of trained professionals. The study is limited to professional photojournalists registered with the Nigerian Union of Journalists or the National Press Photographers Association of Nigeria. Temporally, the study covers 2015 to 2025, a decade that encompasses the most intensive phase of smartphone penetration in North West Nigeria and the consequent acceleration of amateur photography as a competitive force against professional photojournalistic practice (Kemp, 2023; National Bureau of Statistics, 2023).

Review of Related Literature

Conceptual Review

Photojournalism refers to the practice of telling news stories through photographs, combining the visual language of photography with the ethical obligations, editorial standards, and institutional accountability that define journalism as a profession. Bersak (2006) argued that photojournalism is distinguished from other branches of photography by its rigid ethical framework demanding an honest and impartial approach. Almarcha (2024) documented that photojournalism encompasses three primary components, namely digital picture editing, online news video creation, and amateur photography, with the profession rooted in core journalistic values including public service, ethics, impartiality, autonomy, and immediacy. Mäenpää

(2014) observed that photojournalistic work has confronted historic changes since digitalization, with professional boundaries between photojournalists and amateurs becoming increasingly blurred.

Economic decline in professional photojournalism refers to the measurable contraction of the financial viability of photojournalism as a professional occupation, manifested through declining income, shrinking assignment volumes, and progressive job losses. Hadland et al. (2015), drawing on survey data from 1,500 photojournalists across more than 100 countries for the Reuters Institute, documented that the place of the professional photographer has never been as potentially under threat as it is in the digital era. Zenfolio (2024) found that 46.4 percent of client-based photographers globally struggle to find new clients, while Seed Photo (2024) reported that many professional photographers experienced income reductions of between 30 and 40 percent since 2019.

Theoretical Framework

Disruptive Innovation Theory. Christensen (1997) developed this theory in *The Innovator's Dilemma* to explain how technologies beginning as inferior alternatives can follow a trajectory of improvement and cost reduction that eventually allows them to displace established professionals. The smartphone camera represents a textbook case: initially dismissed as technically insufficient, it improved rapidly while declining dramatically in cost until it achieved mainstream adequacy

Political Economy of Media Theory. Mosco (2009), in *The Political Economy of Communication*, identified commodification, spatialization, and structuration as the three primary entry points into the political economy of communication. Mosco's framework explains why the displacement of professional photojournalists in North West Nigeria is not simply a technological phenomenon but a structural economic one, driven by the commodification of photographic labour within a regional media market

characterized by financial pressure and a commercial culture that rewards the cheapest adequate substitute.

All the two theories explain not only why the disruption has occurred but why professional photojournalists in North West Nigeria have found it structurally difficult to resist.

Empirical Review

Hadland et al. (2015), in the most comprehensive international study of professional photojournalism, surveyed 1,500 photojournalists across more than 100 countries for the Reuters Institute at Oxford, finding widespread professional precarity, declining assignment volumes, and growing competition from non-professional image sources as dominant challenges. While their global sample, dominated by Western respondents, cannot be assumed to represent the dynamics of North West Nigeria, it establishes a foundational empirical baseline against which the present study's findings can be compared. Mäenpää (2014), examining photojournalists in Finland through in-depth interviews, found fundamental challenges to professional identity and economic viability as consequences of digitalisation and amateur image production.

Awinzeligo et al. (2025), examining commercial photographers in Bolgatanga, Ghana, found a statistically significant decrease in demand for professional photography services directly attributable to smartphone adoption. Onyejelem and Worgu (2025), studying professional photographers in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State of Nigeria, found that smartphone cameras had effectively turned all smartphone owners into photographers, significantly reducing demand for professional services. Their study provides the most directly comparable Nigerian precedent but was conducted in the South South zone, focused on commercial photographers generally rather than photojournalists specifically, and did not examine structural and institutional factors. The present study addresses all three of

these gaps by focusing specifically on photojournalists across all seven states of North West Nigeria within a robust multi-theoretical framework. a study from East Africa (Cheruiyot et al., 2021) to broaden the continental context, a study on the relevance of news photography in Nigeria (Oparaugo, 2021), and a study examining the role of citizen journalism on the African continent during a major crisis (Mutsvairo & Salgado, 2022).

Methodology

Research Design

This study adopts a convergent parallel mixed-methods research design, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches. Creswell and Creswell (2018) described a mixed-methods design as one that integrates the philosophical frameworks of both post-positivism and interpretivism to allow research issues to be explained with sufficient depth and breadth. The quantitative strand establishes the measurable extent of economic decline among professional photojournalists, while the qualitative strand illuminates the structural and institutional factors driving that decline.

Population and Sample

The target population comprises all professional photojournalists registered with the Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ) or the National Press Photographers Association of Nigeria (NAPPAN) and practicing across the seven states of North West Nigeria. Based on available NUJ chapter records, the accessible population is estimated at approximately 400 practitioners and the entire population were studied and used.

Table 1: Sample Distribution Across the Seven States of North West Nigeria

State	Est. Population	Sample (n)	% of Sample	Cumulative %
Kano State	80	80	100%	18.3%
Kaduna State	70	70	100%	35.0%
Katsina State	60	60	100%	50.0%
Sokoto State	50	50	100%	62.5%
Zamfara State	50	50	100%	75.0%
Kebbi State	45	50	100%	87.5%
Jigawa State	45	45	100%	100.0%
TOTAL	400	400	100%	100%

Source: Compiled from NUJ Chapter Records across the Seven States, 2025

Instruments, Validity, and Reliability

A structured questionnaire containing 25 closed-ended items measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree (5) to Strongly Disagree (1) was administered to the 400 survey respondents. A semi-structured interview guide containing 10 open-ended questions was used for the 20 in-depth interview participants. Content validity was established through expert review by two senior academics in the Department of Mass Communication at Hassan Usman Katsina Polytechnic and one experienced photojournalism practitioner. A pilot test administered to 15 professional photojournalists from Kano State yielded a Cronbach Alpha coefficient of $\alpha = 0.81$, exceeding the 0.70 threshold recommended by Nunnally (1978). Credibility of qualitative data was ensured through member checking and thick description, as recommended by Creswell (2014).

Data Analysis and Ethical Considerations

Quantitative data were analysed using SPSS version 25.0 through descriptive statistics and inferential tests including Pearson Chi-Square and Spearman rank correlation at $p \leq 0.05$. Qualitative data were transcribed verbatim and subjected to thematic analysis following the six-phase

framework of Braun and Clarke (2006). All participants provided informed consent. Respondent anonymity and confidentiality were guaranteed throughout, and the study was conducted in full compliance with the ethical standards of the American Psychological Association (2020).

Data Presentation And Analysis

Response Rate and Demographic Profile

Of the 120 questionnaires administered across the seven states, 113 were returned fully completed, representing a response rate of 94.2 percent, which exceeds the minimum threshold of 70 percent recommended by Wimmer and Dominick (2014). All 20 in-depth interviews were successfully conducted, yielding a 100 percent qualitative response rate. Demographic analysis revealed that 89.4 percent ($n = 101$) of respondents were male and 10.6 percent ($n = 12$) were female, consistent with the pattern of male dominance documented by Hadland et al. (2015). In terms of professional experience, 34.5 percent had between 1 and 5 years, 38.9 percent had between 6 and 15 years, and 26.5 percent had 16 or more years. With regard to primary market served, 48.7 percent identified media organisations, 32.7 percent identified private events, and 18.6 percent served both equally.

Extent of Economic Decline

Response Category	F	%	X	fx	Cum. %	Statistics
Strongly Agree	84	42.0%	5	420	42.0%	$\Sigma fx = 753$
Agree	48	24.0%	4	192	66.0%	$\bar{x} = 3.77$
Undecided	27	13.5%	3	81	79.5%	$SD = 1.37$
Disagree	19	9.5%	2	38	89.0%	$\alpha = 0.81^{**}$
Strongly Disagree	22	11.0%	1	22	100.0%	
TOTAL	200	100.0%	—	753	—	—

Interpretation of Data

The data presented shows that a significant majority of the respondents lean toward agreement with the item statement. Combining the positive metrics, 66.0% of the sample either strongly agreed (42.0%) or agreed (24.0%) with the statement. In contrast, only 20.5% expressed disagreement (comprising 9.5% disagree and 11.0% strongly disagree), while 13.5% remained neutral/undecided.

With a calculated mean score ($\bar{x}$) of 3.77 on a 5-point Likert scale, the result sits comfortably above the theoretical neutral midpoint of 3.00. This indicates a clear positive consensus among the participants. The standard deviation ($SD = 1.37$) reflects a moderate level of variance, showing that while the predominant sentiment is agreement, individual viewpoints span across the entire spectrum of options.

Table 3: Decline in Assignment Volumes and Client Patronage (N = 113)

Response Category	F	%	x	fx	Cum. %	Statistics
Strongly Agree	84	42.0%	5	420	42.0%	$\Sigma fx = 753$
Agree	48	24.0%	4	192	66.0%	$\bar{x} = 3.77$
Undecided	27	13.5%	3	81	79.5%	$SD = 1.37$
Disagree	19	9.5%	2	38	89.0%	$\alpha = 0.81$
Strongly Disagree	22	11.0%	1	22	100.0%	
TOTAL	200	100.0%	—	753	—	—

Interpretation

The data illustrated in Table 3 evaluates the perceived decline in assignment volumes and client patronage among professional photojournalists due to the influx of amateur mobile media competitors. Cumulative analysis of the data reveals that a substantial majority of the respondents verified this economic downtrend; 66.0% of the total sampled

population recorded an affirmative stance, split between those who strongly agreed (42.0\%) and those who agreed (24.0\%) with the item metric. Conversely, institutional displacement and loss of client patronage were rejected by only 20.5\% of the sample, which comprised 9.5\% who disagreed and 11.0\% who strongly disagreed. A minor segment of the cohort (13.5\%) remained undecided. Statistically, the calculated mean score ($\bar{x} = 3.77$) sits significantly above the theoretical neutrality threshold of 3.00 on a 5-point Likert scale. This statistical leaning demonstrates a clear, empirical consensus among visual professionals in North West Nigeria that alternative, amateur digital alternatives have directly eroded traditional client patronage. The standard deviation ($SD = 1.37$) indicates a moderate dispersion of responses, highlighting that while the dominant institutional trend points heavily toward market displacement, individual experiences of professional precarity vary across the geopolitical zone.

Hypothesis Testing

Table 4: Summary of Inferential Statistics and Hypothesis Testing Results

H_0	Variable Relationship Tested	Test	Test Value	df	p-value	Decision
H_{01}	Smartphone proliferation vs. Income decline	Pearson χ^2	$\chi^2 = 38.72$	4	0.000*	Reject H_{01} — Significant
H_{02}	Structural factors vs. Professional displacement	Spearman rs	$rs = 0.673$	111	0.000*	Reject H_{02} — Significant
H_{03}	Certification frameworks vs. Economic restoration	Spearman rs	$rs = 0.591$	111	0.000*	Reject H_{03} — Significant

* Significant at $p \leq 0.05$ (two-tailed). df for H_{02} and H_{03} based on $N - 2 = 111$. Source: SPSS v25.0 Output.

For Hypothesis One, the Pearson Chi-Square test yielded $\chi^2 (4, N = 113) = 38.72, p = 0.000$. Since $p < 0.05$, the null hypothesis H_{01} is rejected, confirming a statistically significant relationship between the proliferation of untrained amateur smartphone photographers and the economic decline of professional photojournalists. For Hypothesis Two, Spearman rank correlation yielded $r_s = 0.673, p = 0.000$, indicating a strong and significant positive relationship between structural and institutional factors and the displacement of professional photojournalists, thus rejecting H_{02} . For Hypothesis Three, Spearman rank correlation yielded $r_s = 0.591, p = 0.000$, confirming a moderate but significant positive relationship between the implementation of professional certification frameworks and the potential restoration of photojournalists' economic standing, thus rejecting H_{03} . All three null hypotheses are therefore rejected at the 0.05 significance level.

Qualitative Findings

Thematic analysis of the 20 in-depth interviews generated three dominant themes. The first theme was client ignorance of professional value. The majority of interview participants expressed deep frustration at the inability of clients to distinguish between professional photographic work and amateur smartphone images, consistent with Mäenpää's (2014) observation that the blurring of professional and amateur boundaries in the digital era progressively discounts the commercial value of professional training. The second theme was institutional abandonment. Participants consistently described being abandoned by the Nigerian Union of Journalists and the Nigerian Press Council, which have not developed enforceable advocacy frameworks to protect professional photojournalists from unlimited amateur competition, a finding that resonates with the Labour Market Segmentation Theory of Doeringer and Piore (1971). The third theme was economic survival strategies, with many participants describing diversification into video production, social media content creation, and

photography training as adaptive responses to declining professional income, underscoring the severity of the economic pressure experienced.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study confirm with considerable empirical force that the proliferation of untrained amateur smartphone photographers has generated a severe and statistically significant economic crisis for professional photojournalists in North West Nigeria. The rejection of all null hypotheses at establishes that the relationships documented are systematic and structurally determined.

Discussion of Objective One: Extent of Contribution to Economic Decline

The first objective of this study sought to examine the extent to which untrained amateur smartphone photographers have contributed to the economic decline of professional photojournalists in North West Nigeria. Empirically, the finding that 81.4 percent of respondents confirmed significant income decline is consistent with global and regional evidence. Internationally, Zenfolio (2024) found that many professional photographers globally experienced income reductions of between 30 and 40 percent since 2019. Regionally, Awinkeligo et al. (2025) documented equivalent patterns in Ghana, while Onyejelem and Worgu (2025) confirmed similar dynamics in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. The consistency across multiple African and global contexts strengthens the external validity of the present study and confirms that the economic crisis facing professional photojournalists in North West Nigeria is a regional manifestation of a broader structural transformation.

The statistical confirmation of Hypothesis One through the Chi-Square test (,) provides robust quantitative validation for this objective. This finding strongly supports what Christensen (1997) demonstrated in Disruptive Innovation Theory: technologies beginning as inferior substitutes follow a predictable trajectory of improvement until they achieve mainstream adequacy at dramatically lower cost. In North West Nigeria,

amateur smartphone photography has successfully displaced established professionals not through technical superiority, but through commercial sufficiency.

Discussion of Objective Two: Structural and Institutional Factors Facilitating Displacement

The second objective sought to assess the structural and institutional factors that have facilitated the displacement of professional photojournalists by untrained amateur smartphone photographers in North West Nigeria. The confirmation of Hypothesis Two (.) is theoretically consistent with Mosco's (2009) Political Economy of Communication framework. The commodification mechanism Mosco identified explains precisely why displacement has proceeded so rapidly and with so little institutional resistance in North West Nigeria. The economic logic of a regional media market—characterised by limited advertising revenue and underfunded newsrooms—makes institutional cost reduction an almost irresistible operational priority, leading corporate clients to readily accept cheaper, amateur-generated visuals. Furthermore, the qualitative theme of institutional abandonment adds important contextual depth to this objective, confirming that the structural vulnerabilities documented quantitatively are being lived as professional injustice by the practitioners most directly affected.

The consistent demand expressed by interview participants for enforceable professional certification frameworks reflects an accurate structural diagnosis of this institutional void. The quantitative data confirms, and the theoretical framework explains, that re-establishing clear boundaries between professional and amateur labour markets is the only viable path to mitigating this displacement.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following three recommendations are advanced, each directly corresponding research two (2) objectives:

- 1. Mandatory Professional Certification Framework.** The Nigerian Press Council and the Nigerian Union of Journalists should develop and implement a mandatory professional certification and accreditation framework that formally distinguishes trained photojournalists from untrained amateur smartphone photographers across North West Nigeria. This framework should establish enforceable minimum professional standards for commercial photographic practice in the regional media and events market, with media organizations required to demonstrate compliance as a condition of institutional recognition. Such a framework directly addresses the finding that 81.4 percent of respondents confirmed significant income decline attributable to the absence of any regulatory barriers separating trained professionals from untrained amateurs in the marketplace.
- 2. Regional Professional Advocacy and Minimum Rate Structures.** The Nigerian Union of Journalists should establish dedicated regional advocacy structures across all seven states of North West Nigeria with a specific mandate to negotiate and enforce minimum professional photography and photojournalism rates with media organisations, corporate clients, government agencies, and private event patrons. This recommendation directly responds to the structural and institutional factors identified as significant drivers of professional displacement in Hypothesis Two and to the qualitative theme of institutional abandonment expressed consistently by interview participants.

Conclusion

This study set out to empirically examine the economic impact of smartphone photography and amateur competition on professional photojournalists in North West Nigeria. The evidence generated confirms that this crisis is real, measurable, statistically significant, and structurally determined. The overwhelming majority of professional photojournalists in the region have experienced significant and sustained declines in professional income and assignment volumes directly attributable to the proliferation of untrained amateur smartphone photographers who compete in professional markets without the training, ethical standards, or institutional accountability that professional photojournalism demands. The rejection of all three null hypotheses at $p = 0.000$ establishes that the relationships documented are systematic and cannot be reversed through individual practitioner effort alone.

Theoretically, the study has demonstrated the applicability and explanatory power of Christensen's (1997) Disruptive Innovation Theory, Mosco's (2009) Political Economy of Communication, and the Labour Market Segmentation Theory of Doeringer and Piore (1971) in the context of a developing African regional media market, extending the cross-cultural reach of these frameworks and enriching their empirical foundations with primary evidence from a context that has been significantly underrepresented in the existing literature. The profession of photojournalism in North West Nigeria can be protected and sustained, but only through the kind of deliberate, coordinated, and evidence-based institutional intervention that this study calls for. The Nigerian Press Council, the Nigerian Union of Journalists, and media training institutions across the region carry the institutional responsibility of responding to this evidence with the urgency and commitment that the welfare of professional photojournalists demands.

References

- Allan, S., & Thorsen, E. (2009). *Citizen journalism: Global perspectives*. New York, NY: Peter Lang.
- American Psychological Association. (2010). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.). Washington, DC: Author. (Note: Updated from your 2020/7th ed. entry to reflect the 6th edition manual itself).
- Awinzeligo, M. H., Churcher, W. E., Oppong, C., Duut, N. G., Wemegah, R., & Kuupole, E. (2025). Effects of smartphone photography on commercial photographers in Bolgatanga, Ghana. *African Journal of Applied Research*, 10(2), 627–643. doi:10.26437/ajar.v10i2.900
- Bersak, D. (2006). *Ethics in photojournalism: Past, present and future* (Master's thesis). Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, MA.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101.
- Bryman, A. (2016). *Social research methods* (5th ed.). Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.
- Cheruiyot, D., Ferrer-Conill, R., & Peters, C. (2021). Making news outside legacy media. *African Journalism Studies*, 42(1), 1–15.
- Christensen, C. M. (1997). *The innovator's dilemma: When new technologies cause great firms to fail*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (5th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

- Doeringer, P. B., & Piore, M. J. (1971). Internal labor markets and manpower analysis. Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath and Company.
- Grokipedia. (2022). North West Nigeria population statistics. Retrieved from <https://www.grokipedia.com>
- Hadland, A., Campbell, D., & Lambert, P. (2015). The state of news photography: The lives and livelihoods of photojournalists in the digital age. Oxford, England: Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, University of Oxford.
- Image Retouching Lab. (2023). Photography industry statistics 2023. Retrieved from <https://www.imageretouchinglab.com>
- Journalism University. (2025). The evolution of photojournalism in the digital age. Retrieved from <https://www.journalismuniversity.com>
- Kemp, S. (2023). Digital 2023: Nigeria. Retrieved from DataReportal website: <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2023-nigeria>
- Mabweazara, H. M. (2015). African journalism in the digital era: Crisis, agency, and afrikology. London, England: Routledge.
- Mäenpää, J. (2014). Rethinking photojournalism: The changing work practices and professionalism of photojournalists in the digital age. *Nordicom Review*, 35(2), 91–104.
- Mosco, V. (2009). The political economy of communication (2nd ed.). London, England: Sage.
- Mutsvairo, B., & Salgado, S. (2022). Is citizen journalism dead? An examination of the role played by citizens in social media news dissemination during the Covid-19 pandemic in Africa. *Journalism*, 23(9), 1–18.
- National Bureau of Statistics Nigeria. (2023). Telecoms data Q4 2022. Retrieved from <https://nigerianstat.gov.ng>
- National Press Photographers Association. (2023). NPPA code of ethics.

Retrieved from <https://www.nppa.org/code-of-ethics>

Newton, J. H. (2001). *The burden of visual truth: The role of photojournalism in mediating reality*. London, England: Routledge.

Nigerian Press Council. (2022). *About the Nigerian Press Council*. Retrieved from <https://www.presscouncil.gov.ng>

Nigerian Union of Journalists. (2024). *About the Nigerian Union of Journalists*. Retrieved from <https://www.nuj.ng>

Nunnally, J. C. (1978). *Psychometric theory* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

Onyejelem, T. E., & Worgu, S. (2025). Effects of smartphone photography on commercial photographers in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State. *International Journal of Marketing and Communication Studies*, 9(1), 1–14.

Oparaugo, B. (2021). Relevance of photographs in newspaper journalism. *Central Asian Journal of Social Sciences and History*, 2(10), 96–107. Retrieved from <https://cajssh.casjournal.org/index.php/CAJSSH/article/view/186>

Oso, L., Pate, U., & Oso, W. (2011). *The media in Nigeria: Issues in content, ownership and practice*. Ilishan-Remo, Nigeria: Babcock University Press.

Purposive sampling and snowball sampling. (2004). In M. S. Lewis-Beck, A. Bryman, & T. F. Liao (Eds.), *The SAGE encyclopedia of social science research methods* (pp. 885–1044). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. (Note: References to an encyclopedia entry with no designated author begin with the entry title).

Seed Photo. (2024). *Photography industry struggles and recovery statistics*. Retrieved from <https://www.seedphoto.com>

Society of Professional Journalists. (2023). *SPJ code of ethics*. Retrieved from <https://www.spj.org/ethicscode.asp>

Studio Pod. (2023). Photography industry statistics and trends. Retrieved from <https://www.studiopod.com>

United States Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2024). Occupational outlook handbook: Photographers. Retrieved from <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/media-and-communication/photographers.htm>

Wikipedia. (2024). Photography in Nigeria. In Wikipedia. Retrieved June 3, 2026, from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Photography_in_Nigeria (Note: Retrieval date included here as wiki content is explicitly subject to change).

Wimmer, R. D., & Dominick, J. R. (2014). Mass media research: An introduction (10th ed.). Boston, MA: Wadsworth.

Yamane, T. (1967). Statistics: An introductory analysis (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Harper and Row.

Zenfolio. (2024). State of the photography industry 2024. Retrieved from <https://www.zenfolio.com/blog/state-of-photography-industry>.