



# The Necessity and Importance of Photography in the Academic Discourse of Fashion Design

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**Abstract:** *Photography has majorly been used for documentation and communication of various fashion apparels. Both, fashion industry and photography have evolved together. In contemporary times it's very difficult to imagine the fashion industry and photography in isolation. Despite Photography being a crucial part of the fashion industry, till date it is not included in the academic discourse of fashion design. NEP 2020 gives us scope to introspect our courses of fashion designing and include skills of photography in the academic discourse of fashion design and enrich its syllabus. The research paper will highlight the importance and relationship of photography with regards to fashion designing by conducting a survey of teachers and students involved in the respective field. It will also highlight the importance of multidisciplinary approach and skill-based education in relationship with photography and fashion design in the light National Education Policy 2020.*

**Key Words:** *Fashion Design, Textile, Photography, NEP 2020, Syllabus, Career.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION:

Both Photography and Fashion Design are old forms of arts. They both contemplate each other in their own capacity and are inseparable. Photographs of fashionable dress, in existence since the invention of photography in 1839, are not fashion photography. The intention of the fashion photographer to convey fashion or a "fashionable" lifestyle is common and a distinguishing feature in the vast diversity of style, approach, and content. We are not sure when people started designing their outfits to make themselves look distinctive or unique. But we know for sure that, by the end of the twentieth century [1] both photography and fashion designing have developed a strong bonding. In spite of this, academic curriculum of fashion design does not have a subject of photography. Photography acts as a communication link for Fashion that helps it to reach out to the world in various ways. It plays a major role in spreading fashion, analysing trends, styling, displaying brand identity, portfolio and catalogue development etc. Hence learning photography will help students to understand how visuals are constructed and fashion is depicted through photography. Alongside, it will also enhance their skills of Fashion designing hence developing other career options too. Academics over the period of time have become very rigid and strict for their discipline specific subjects. A major makeover in this attitude and the scope of particular subjects is highly required. Now there is a golden opportunity available to introduce the change because of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 that aims to bring a big change in the education system. The policy believes in a more holistic and multidisciplinary educational approach that would help develop all capacities of human beings -intellectual, aesthetic, social, physical, emotional, and moral in an integrated manner.

## BRIEF BACKGROUND OF NEP 2020:

Education Policy 2020 emphasize on the development of the creative potential of each individual. It is based on the principle that education must develop cognitive and foundational capacities of literacy and numeracy. Along with this, it also emphasizes the need to develop 'higher-order' cognitive capacities, such as critical thinking, problem solving, social, ethical, emotional capacities and dispositions[2].

Some of the fundamental principles that guide the education system at large are mentioned below:

1) Recognizing, identifying, and fostering the unique capabilities of each student, by sensitizing teachers as well as parents to promote each student's holistic development in both academic and non-academic spheres.



- 2) Flexibility, at learners' end, so that they have the ability to choose their learning trajectories and programs, that would facilitate in choosing their own paths in life according to their talents and interests.
- 3) No hard separations between arts and sciences, between curricular and extra-curricular activities, between vocational and academic streams, etc. in order to eliminate harmful hierarchies between different areas of learning;
- 4) Multidisciplinary and a holistic education across the sciences, social sciences, arts, humanities, and sports for a multidisciplinary world in order to ensure the unity and integrity of all knowledge;
- 5) Emphasis on conceptual understanding rather than rote learning and learning-for-exams, creativity and critical thinking to encourage logical decision-making and innovation.

The syllabus and curricular of any institute should be prepared considering all the above-mentioned concepts. Photography is a subject of crucial importance for Fashion Designing, yet it's not included in the syllabus. Few institutes arrange the guest lectures of photography or provide an additional short-term course of Photography. These kinds of temporary arrangements don't do justice to the subject. Now with the provisions given in NEP we can easily integrate skill-based Photography subjects in the syllabus of fashion designing. The syllabus for Textile and Fashion Design courses can be modified creating a room for more creative courses to be added. Photography is one of these most deserving topics.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW:**

The history of relationship between Fashion and Photography cannot be traced, but in a research article by Nancy-Hall Duncan, it has been traced that Fashion and Photography always had a common and important link [3]. A brief overview about the beginning of the use of photography for advertising and fashion after World War I and II was established.

Colin Renfrew & Elinor Renfrew [4] in the book titled "Developing Connections" established the connection between use of photography and fashion. When film cameras were replaced by Digital Cameras the new era of digital images started to influence the relationship of photography with fashion. The book also set guidelines for aspiring fashion designers for developing their collections.

The importance of Photography and proper posing is underlined and emphasized. For fashion designers, there is no other means to display and communicate their work without knowledge of photography [5].

British Fashion Design, the book written by Angela McRobbie, shows the statistics and data about the contribution of photography in the work of art school graduates working in the industry. Based on interviews and research conducted over a number of years, McRobbie concluded the importance photography holds with regards to their training, practice and position in the education system and the commercial sector. The author stresses on the importance of Photography in connecting various cultures and time by providing reference images.

The Locational Behaviour and Economic Success of Dutch Fashion Design Entrepreneurs [6], written by Rik Wenting, Oedzge Atzema and Koen Frenken, very importantly quotes that economics of the fashion industry is highly dependent on the photography industry. The data collection and survey of various Dutch fashion designers who are entrepreneurs, shows that photography contributed majorly in the income generation by the fashion designers.

Another important aspect in the field of photography is Copyrights. K.N. Andrews in his research article "The most fascinating kind of art: Fashion design protection as a moral right" [7] said that a photographed fashion is available to the public in various ways and it is difficult to keep a check or control the media. Thus, making it necessary for a designer to be alert and aware about copyright issues.

The use of photography for the fashion industry has to be optimum and sustainable. As explained by Rissanen T. I, in his PhD dissertation "Zero-waste fashion design: a study at the intersection of cloth, fashion design and pattern cutting" [8], designing and photography both are digitized nowadays and no physical material or models are needed for design. Designs preserved in the form of photographs could be used whenever needed. Sustainable use of designs needs proper photography. Hence it can be concluded that photography is also making fashion design more sustainable.

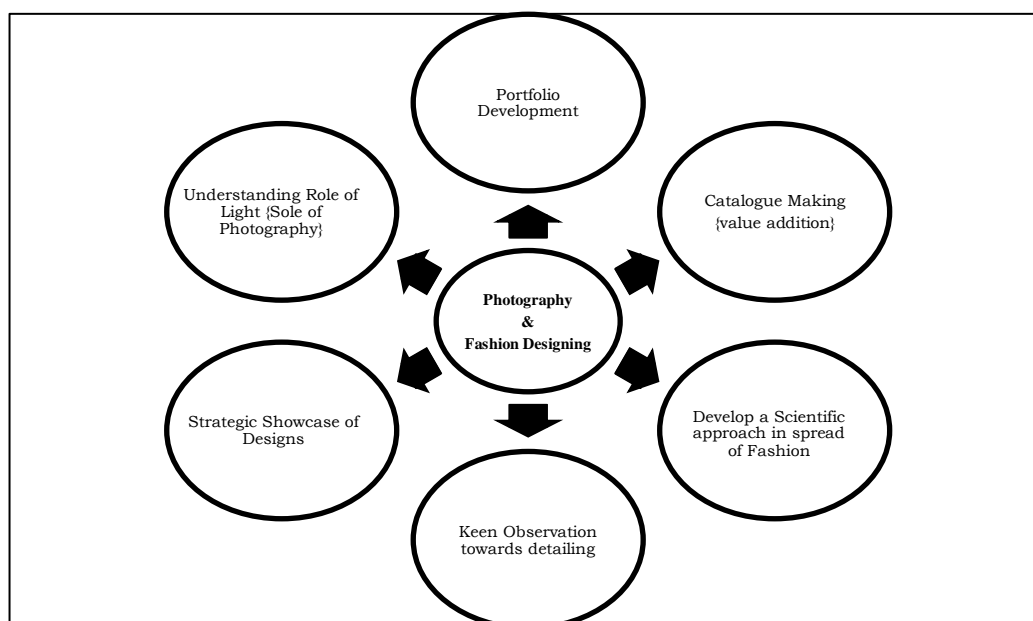
El-Demedash Doha & Wagdy Rasha in their research paper "The role of Fashion photography in the field of Fashion designing" [9], concluded that fashion photography is an important element in development of a fashion brand, building brand catalogue which further adds to company's profit. Fashion photography plays a vital role in the field of fashion

design, styling and branding and is directly related to fashion spread, trend analysis, styling and displaying brand identity.

Kristin Savage [10] In an article “The Impact of Photography on the Fashion Industry”, highlighting the importance of photography in fashion mentioned that Photography was the very first thing that offered fashion designers a way to make their creations known all over the world. The author also stated that photography is an inseparable part of the fashion industry.

Our memory of fashion is really through fashion photography and its publishing, rather than fashion itself, says Langkay I.L. [11] in an article “The possible importance of Fashion Photography”, published in online journal Photography Insights. The author also says that Photography is also important in global fashion culture and is making its own niche in public acceptance.

**Following diagram represents the benefits of learning Photography for Fashion Design student:**



**Figure 1: Benefits of learning Photography for Fashion Design student**

### **3. MAIN OBJECTIVE:**

In the light of NEP 2020 and the Review of literature mentioned above, following aims and objectives were designed for the research. Based on it the hypothesis were drawn and the questionnaire was prepared:

- To find whether the Academicians, Fashion Designers and students believe that Photography is an important subject to be included in the syllabus of Textile and Fashion Designing.
- Do they believe that including photography knowledge will enhance their learning ability in designing /understanding fashion.
- To recognize whether they face problems in their career related to Fashion designing due to lack of knowledge in Photography.
- Do they believe that photography is an important subject in the field of Fashion designing and needs to be included in courses/syllabus?

### **4. METHODOLOGY:**

This exploratory research is based on the survey conducted via online Google forms, using Convenient Sampling technique. The required data was collected from students of SNDT University (Mumbai).



For Primary data, a Questionnaire was developed using Google Forms, in the light of the aims and objectives of the research and was circulated after doing a pilot test. Secondary data collected was through Desk Research i.e., Research papers, articles.

Target Group (TG)/Sample:

1) Participants Identified were mainly from SNDT Juhu campus of Mumbai City, because it was easy/convenient for the researcher to connect with the target group.

2) The main stakeholders or the target group of our research:

a. Student of Fashion Designing (102 students)

b. Academicians (People involved with teaching/learning process in the said field).

(Note- The above-mentioned target group, directly or indirectly gets affected by the changes in the syllabus hence they were considered as a part of the sample.)

3) The Survey was conducted in the month of September 2022.

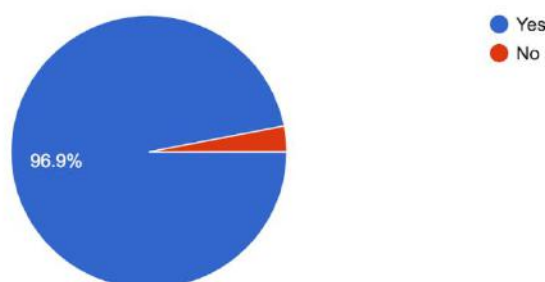
4) The said Questionnaire was circulated to 171 people (sample) and had successfully received the reply of 109 respondents.

## 5. FINDINGS OF THE SURVEY:

Following is the graphical representation of the data collected of the main questions of the survey. As the data collected is categorical data, it has been analysed by using the measures of central tendency and Chi square test.

1. Do you believe that photography is an important subject in the field of Fashion Designing?

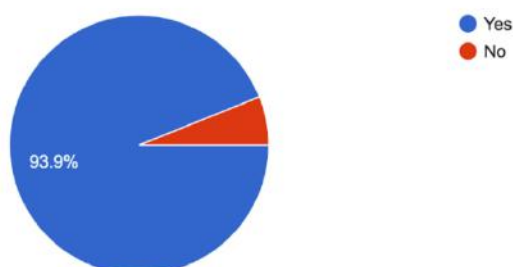
Do you believe that photography is an important subject in the field of fashion Designing.  
98 responses



A significant number of respondents believe that Photography is an important subject in the field of Fashion Design. Not only the students but the academicians believe that it's a very important subject in the field of fashion Design

2. Do you believe that Photography as a subject should be added to the syllabus designed for Fashion Designing?

Do you believe that Photography as a subject should be added to the syllabus designed for Fashion Designing.  
99 responses

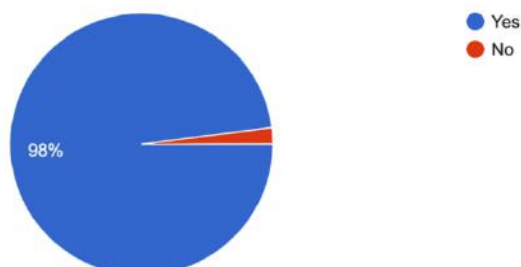


Majority of stakeholders believe that Photography should be included in the syllabus.



3. Do you think Photography is an important element that helps in the spread of Fashion, Trends and Styling?

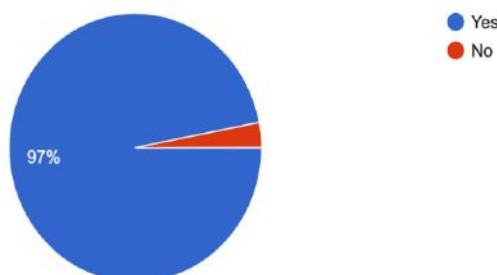
Do you think Photography is an important element that helps in spread of Fashion, Trends and Styling  
 98 responses



Photography and Fashion are very closely associated with each other. It's very difficult to imagine the existence of fashion designing without Photography. Significant number of stakeholders believe that Photography is an important element that helps in the spread of fashion, trends and styling.

4. If you intend to work in the Fashion industry, do you think the knowledge of photography will add value to your career profile?

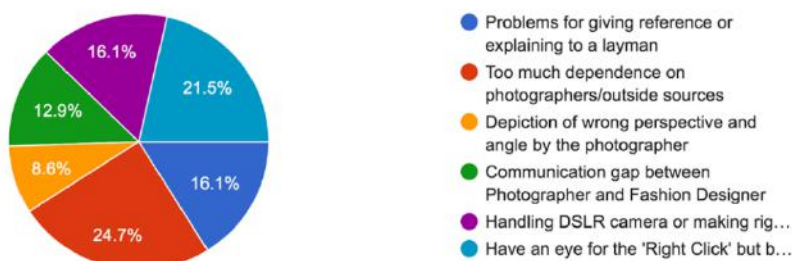
Do you think a professional Fashion Designer needs to have a basic knowledge of Fashion Photography as well  
 99 responses



Significant respondents believe that inputs of photography will add value to the in their profile.

5. What problems do you face in your profession/career related to Fashion Designing because of the lack of knowledge in Photography?

What problems do you face in your profession/career related to Fashion Designing because of the lack of knowledge in Photography  
 93 responses



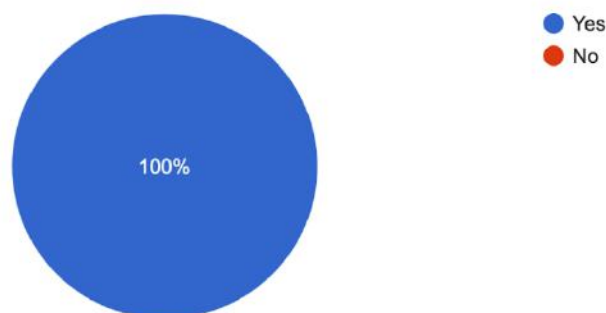


There are many problems faced by the respondents because of a lack of knowledge of Photography. Prominent problems are as follows:

- a) 24.7 believe that they have to depend on the others for photography and their work suffers
- b) 21.5 respondents believe that they have the right eye for photography but could not perform because of lack of training.
- c) 16.1 feel that Handling DSLR camera or making the right setting of the camera is difficult because of lack of training.
- d) 16.1 face a lot of problems for giving reference or explaining the facts to the layman, if they would have got the knowledge of photography, they could do it easily.
- e) 12.9 respondents face the problem of communication gap between the photographers, because they lack understanding of some basic concepts of photography.
- f) 8.6 respondents have faced the problem when photographers don't understand them and depict wrong perspectives and angles.

6. Do you think, a Fashion Stylist should know how to style a model considering all the aspects of Photography with a view to get effective shots/Images.

Do you think, a Fashion Stylist should know how to style a model considering all the highlights of Photography with a view to get effective shots  
99 responses



We can say that all the respondents strongly agree that inputs of photography subjects will help them to get effective photos/images. Ultimately fashion is represented in the form of visuals and one should be equipped to control all the aspects of the visual. Hence all the stakeholders strongly support the idea of including photography as a subject in the syllabus of Fashion design.

## 6. CONCLUSION :

Considering all the parameters of the above study and the findings derived from the above survey, it can be concluded that Photography is an important subject in the field of Fashion Designing and both the subjects go hand in hand. NEP 2020 also encourages multidisciplinary and skill-based approach in education, we should take this opportunity and develop the syllabus. Moreover, there is a strong need to make a place for this subject in the course curriculum of Fashion Designing. Photography is a skill that plays a vital role in spread of fashion, trends and styling and for students targeting a career in Fashion Designing, photography is an added value. It was observed that lack of training in Photography leads to improper handling of DSLR cameras and creates a communication gap between the photographer which results in poor outcome of the work. Hence it can be concluded that if proper and professional training of photography is given to the students of Fashion Designing it would be helpful in attaining excellent results in their career and output of their work along with saving time, energy and resources.

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