

**Shooting Film in 2024**  
The Contemporary Use of Analog Photography & Consumers' Motivations

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### ABSTRACT

As of April 2024, more than 42 million photos are listed under the hashtag #FilmPhotography on Instagram, showing a growing interest in the practice of film photography throughout the years. Looking at this trend, one could argue that it formed as a counter-reaction to the fast-paced nature of digital photography, offering counterbalance to the instant gratification of the digital media itself. With that, there is a limited amount of academic literature devoted to the analysis of consumers' motivations for using the medium of film for their photography, and how it is integrated to one's creative process. In line with the increasing interest in analog photography as a phenomenon, this study examines the utilization of the photographic medium in contemporary times and the consumer's motivation for adopting film photography in 2024. Ten film photographers based in the Netherlands are being interviewed in this research, providing the data necessary to analyze their motivation on using film for their body of work and how they incorporate film medium to their craft. These ten film photographers will be divided into two groups: five people who represent personal photographers, and another five people who are doing photography professionally. Several keywords appeared explaining reasons why the interviewee aims to explore analog photography. This research narrows it down to several points: process and experience, film photography aesthetics, nostalgia, and the contrast between film and digital photography. Several aspects were found when examining film photographers' commitment to the practice, by exploring their average spending on buying film stocks, comparing film prices, exploring alternatives with digital cameras, and other personal reasons. Numerous research participants belong in amateur or personal photographer groups, acknowledge the visual appeal of film is suitable for street photography, documentary photography, and portrait photography. While the professional photographers endeavor film photography for work and assignments on fashion, portraits, documentary and photojournalism. This instance showcases how film aesthetics have not only emerged as a trend for casual shooters, but also favorable to some extent for commercial work and other related professional fields. Further study needs to incorporate larger sample sizes, as it would result in more diverse and precise results when it comes to perceptions of the contemporary usage of film photography and consumers' motivations.

**KEYWORDS:** *Film Photography, Analog Photography, Consumer Motivation, Nostalgia, Film Aesthetic*

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Background

Biro (2012, p. 366) states that the era of analog in photography, as in other fields, is over. While they argue that specialized technologies may continue to use analog processes, most newly created images will be captured, transmitted, and viewed digitally. With the adoption of digital technology in photography, the implementation has increased the interest and usage of photography through the years (Van House, 2011, p. 125). During the shift from analog to digital, the new way of taking pictures that stored electronically, digital photography allows users to view the results instantly through computer processing, resulting in more efficient process in contrast to analog process (Riley & Whitesides, 1999, p. 162). In times where major camera manufacturers are competing to produce more complex and powerful new camera systems and equipment, film photography has experienced a resurgence in popularity in recent years (Bakx, 2023). However, as of April 2024, more than 42 million photos are listed under the hashtag #FilmPhotography on Instagram, showing a growing interest in the practice of film photography throughout the years. Recently, the analog resurgence movement continued to flourish when Pentax launched the Pentax Film Camera Project, teasing film enthusiasts about a possible launch of new film cameras. And on the 17<sup>th</sup> of June 2024, the company finally released Pentax 17, a half-frame film camera with modern-day built. In the same spirit, MiNT, a Hong Kong-based camera manufacturer announced a re-imagined Rollei 35 film camera that incorporates lidar-based autofocus and an option for automatic exposure settings, integrating an up-to-date technology inside the facade of a renowned film camera produced in the 1960s (Di Benedetto, 2024, para. 1-2).

However, before the rumors and speculation circled Pentax and Rollei 35AF, and eventually their launch of the product this year, the photography market today is dominated by digital camera products. The main camera producers have discontinued the production of film cameras (exempt from Leica, which still produces film cameras, namely the Leica M6, MP, and MA). With limited options, this led consumers to buy used and old gear as their film photography tools, and eventually spiked up the price of vintage cameras. As Inge (2021, para. 3) states, there were decades of used film camera gears that can be purchased for bargain, until photographers returned to analog photography, these used camera gears needed to fulfil high demand without being able to increase in supply. Another thing out of many, film photography adds other expenses unlike digital cameras, in essence, this includes the costs of film and development. When considering that each frame would cost certain amounts, one would find themselves slowing down to give an opportunity to compose the perfect shot. Unlike the instant results of digital or instant film, many could also be intrigued by the process of not knowing the results until the film gets developed. In addition, some individuals think that films offer better aesthetics compared to digital

photography (ASU, 2021, para. 11). Lomography states that although contemporary software and applications have tried to copy the qualities of film photography, the analogue aesthetic is still hard to replicate. This includes richer colors, dramatic saturation, and distinct character from the film grain (Lomography, 2015, para. 4).

From film manufacturing perspective, in 2012, Kodak was forced to declare bankruptcy and later emerged as a smaller Eastman Kodak that focuses on chemical and imaging as a business, and film (for photography) sales under Kodak Alaris as part of the bankruptcy settlement (Tristan, 2024, para 12-14). Munir (2012, pp. 1-3) notes the demise of Kodak as results of its top management's stubborn strategy, as they ignored the changing consumer's photography behavior as a result of digital photography's disruptiveness. Film photography has reemerged as a smaller industry unlike the way it used to be, and major film producers are still producing film stocks. Although constant price increases have been happening in recent years in parallel with the inclining production costs due to changes in the manufacturing process and new environmental regulations (Ruscitti, 2023, para. 1–11), ultimately presenting a financial challenge to consumers.

## 1.2 Problem Statement

Researching the usage of film photography in digitally dominated world remains relevant to discuss as it delves into the persistence of the medium throughout the years. Looking at it as a phenomenon of analog resurgence trend, among other areas such as videography or music, would offer insight into the contemporary culture and artistic trends. The re-appropriation of analog photography or often called analog renaissance (see Cruz & Janin, 2017, p. 1), reflects societal movements that signifies fascination of authenticity of slower photography processes (see Mendelson & Creech, 2016, pp. 3-4). Looking at this trend, one could argue that it formed as a counter-reaction to the fast-paced nature of digital photography, offering counterbalance to the instant gratification of the digital media itself. Other than that, this research dives into the forgotten aesthetic qualities of film, that were once overshadowed by digital images, and sees how it is being reappreciated in modern times by film enthusiasts.

Looking at this aesthetic revival in academic scope will help to understand the current situation and the diversity of visual media landscape and the emerging trends in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Moreover, the phenomenon of analog renaissance has had an impact on the creative industry, by (re)introducing its film aesthetics, influencing the way creatives innovates and experiment with their visual storytelling by implementing the hybrid practice of digital and analog media.

From the perspective of media archeology, acknowledging this phenomenon provides insight into how the visual media evolves, informing how past technologies could influence the present and future

photography practice. With that, part of the study intends to understand the differences in visual communication styles between the analog practice of film photography and standardized digital photography, and how photographer utilize the film medium as of today. Thus, this area of discussion touches upon how the use of film photography permits a particular kind of artistic expression that differs from digital photography.

### 1.3 Research Gap

The work of Cruz and Janin (2017, pp. 1-13) briefly discusses the increasing popularity of film looking through the evident of film and camera equipment sales, while also touching upon the role of social media in the phenomenon. Looking at Minniti (2020, pp. 98-99) in studying the re-appropriation of film photography medium for instance, highlights the authenticity of analog photography as a response to digital photography “perfectionism”. The author serves Lomography and Polaroids as examples to how analog medium persists in digitally dominated era. In the same sense, Margadona (2023, pp. 6-8) explores the analog renaissance by defining the new meaning, methodology, aesthetic, and the role of millennials in the rediscovery of film photography. Biro (2012, pp. 353-354) emphasizes the skepticism surrounding the capacity of digital photography in representing reality and asserts the perceived authenticity of analog technique by examining the work of Andreas Gursky, Bernd, and Hilla Becher as a reference for their research.

While Iskandar et al (2020, pp. 468-476) explores the motives and factors to use analog cameras in comparison to digital and phone cameras, their results show little discussion on film qualities and shooting experience. With that, there is a limited amount of academic literature devoted to the analysis of consumers’ motivations for using the medium of film for their photography, and how it is integrated to one’s creative process. In that sense, this research aims to fill the gap between the perceived aesthetics and usage of film and the consumer's motivation.

### 1.4 Research Purpose

Not long ago, a film documentary titled “Grain: Analog Renaissance” (Best Documentary, 2024) was published, highlighting the perceptions of different film photographers around the globe and their interest in film photography. The documentary investigates perceived aesthetics, usage, and practicality of film and how it is being integrated to different workflow from each different film photographers. In line with the increasing interest in analog photography as a phenomenon, this study examines the utilization of the photographic medium in contemporary times and the consumer's motivation for adopting film photography in 2024. Research into consumers’ motivations for using film for photography remains

academically relevant as learning the consumer's motivations will help guide the industry's stakeholder to understand the role of its traditional practice and its role in the evolving digital landscape. Furthermore, this study contributes to the discussion of technological changes, by spotlighting the coexistence of digital and traditional photography in modern times.

### 1.5 Research Question

In constructing this study, a research question is formulated to understand the phenomenon of analog photography's resurgence, by looking specifically at how it is currently used in the digital age of photography. Therefore, the research question of the study is "in what ways is analog photography contemporarily used?". Furthermore, to examine the consumer's motivation for using film photography products, a sub-research question surrounds the topic of "what motivates and demotivates personal and professional photographers to continue using and purchasing film stocks in 2024?".



## 2. Theoretical Framework

### 2.1 Photographer's Motivation: Personal or Professional?

Many areas of discussions surround the topic of photography over the years, from the pages of Benjamin (1972, pp. 5-26) reviewing the complex origins and early development of photography, to understanding theory and practical applications of different photographic genres (see Bates, 2009). This broad theme also includes the dialogue of distinguishing both personal and professional aspect of photographers, each with its own set of motivations and implications. In the following text, the space of photography will be explored by examining the contrasting reasons and motivations for personal and professional photography.

#### 2.1.1 Personal Photography

According to Bourdieu (1991, pp. 14–15), there are motives behind taking, preserving, and looking at pictures. Five different contexts are given as motives, this includes: self-realization, social status, escapism or distraction, communication and the expression of feelings, and protection from time. Van House (2011, pp. 130–133), in their paper about personal photography and the practice of digital photographic technologies with the relation to film photography, identifies four social uses of personal photography: memory, self-representation, expressiveness, and relationships. Cox (2012, p. 63) mentions that the scope of amateur photography includes the mastering of advance camera functions, such as comprehending focal lengths and light metering, and it involves developing an eye for capturing photos that align with the standards of the amateur community, effectively articulating the reasons behind a photo's meaning within a specific aesthetic framework. Furthermore, in explaining the information on social practice with personal photography, Cox (2012, pp. 64-66) divides four forms of practice-based account in the personal photography space: information seeking on acquiring knowledge about technique; information management on managing photography files; information literacy on understanding intellectual property rights; and only creating an aesthetically pleasing image within a specific code without intention on information creation.

Griffin (2019, p. 184) sees that the term "amateur" has come to be associated most generally with casual snapshot shooters, or "button pushers", and these photographers are the ones who make up the greatest market for cameras, film stock, and photofinishing. Furthermore, they note there is a significant difference between casual or family photographers and more serious amateurs, where "real amateurs" are dedicated individuals who follow industry professional norms. Although to some extent, they only do this more for the respect of their amateur peers and personal satisfaction of practicing their craft, rather than

for career gain (Robert Stebbins, 1979, as cited in Griffin, 2019, p. 185). Pink (2011, p. 95) suggests that amateur photographers can be seen as someone who are influenced by everyday habits, customs, and technology advancements, and also from personal experiences and interactions with their surroundings. With that, Van Dijck (2008, as cited in Pink, 2011, p. 95) thinks that photography has persistently served as a medium of communication and exchanges of experiences. By saying that, the author argues that the usage of (digital) photography has led to a transition from focusing only on family-oriented usage, to more individualized use. This transition involves shift in the perception of image making, moving from what was seen as just an instrument for conserving memories, to recognizing the form as a method of communication.

### 2.1.2 Professional Photography

The distinct difference between personal or amateur photographers and professional photographers, according to Manovich (2017, p. 51), is that amateur photography refers to the activities of persons who devote a significant amount of time to learning, participating, and entering competitions on personal levels. Professional photography is photography in which photographers are compensated monetarily and exposed to photography genres including fashion, celebrity, food, advertising, editorials, portraits, weddings, and so on. Langford (2011, p. 397) argues that to be a professional photographer, other than mastering the visual and technical aspects of photography, one must also be reliable and have good financial and organizational skills. A professional photographer would know how to produce results at an economical speed, factoring in all expenses such as rent, depreciation, and other direct costs. Furthermore, Boltanski and Chamboredon (1990, p. 151) also thinks that photographers at the professional level need to be highly skilled in formulas and techniques. They learned specific and intermittent skills, separate from the theoretical principles that underpin them, and try to put into practice rather than being abstractly learned in an experimental setting and assimilated through imaginary applications. In addition, becoming a professional photographer means that one will be exposed to some markets such as commercial and industrial, fashion, portraits and weddings, press and documentary, editorial and advertising, art, and technical and scientific photography (Langford, 2011, pp. 398–404).

## 2.2 The Resurgence of Analogue Photography

In Benovsky (2014, p. 716), not only that digital photography has replaced tradition film practice, it also pushes the horizons of consideration on what constitutes as a photograph. When digital photography is the new norm in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Biro (2012, p. 366) expresses their skepticism towards film photographer, stating that even if the big portion of influential photographers continue to use film

than other photographers in general, these photographers will eventually transition to digital photography practice. Although what they described is true, the medium regained its popularity in the late 2010s and created a niche market with the help of instant film trends (Tomlinson, 2021, para. 6-7) alongside new and influential names in the contemporary film photography sphere (Bryan-Smith, 2024, para. 7).

In Magaudda and Minniti (2019, pp. 688–689), the research uses the notion of “retromedia” or “retrotechnologies” (Roy, 2014; Sarpong et al., 2016, as cited in Magaudda & Minniti, 2019, p. 675) as a method for investigating the comeback of usage on old analog medium in contemporary situations. The authors use three diverse examples: vinyl (which include LPs, EPs, singles, etc), instant and film photography, and arcade games, to demonstrate that retromedia are more than just nostalgic artifacts or attempts to preserve outdated technologies. Similar to this, when discussing the technological comeback, Foucart et al. (2018, pp. 20-21) argue that the second generation (photography) of digital cameras has nearly completely replaced the first generation of analogue films. The third generation was not intended for physical printing; instead, it is centered on phones and social media. They argue that the tactile or physical aspect of analog photography appears to have evolved into a helpful complement as consumers switch from digital to third-generation cameras at an increasing rate; thus, film photography has begun to resurface as a niche market. Furthermore, Minniti (2020, p. 98) suggests that in 2007–2008, Lomography and Polaroid brought the effect of re-appropriation of film photography as resistance towards digital photography dominance. The study reveals the resistance of the photographic cultures based on redefined camera and photographer roles, emphasizing the tangible nature of photography. Three dichotomies established around control against unpredictability, perfection versus imperfection, and immateriality versus materiality; serve as the cornerstone of this resistance, advocating for a tactile and authentic artistic process.

Keightley and Pickering (2014, pp.5-13) in their paper explore the shift of analog to digital photography in the scope of photo-taking, storing, viewing, and sharing. As a result of their study, the author indicates that digital technology led to more frequent photo-taking, paralleled with higher discard rates of pictures that are taken. Moreover, there is a discussion on the concern of digital image loss, resulting in a consideration to back-up digital images by duplicating various media, and even back to printing. Other than that, their research pinpoints a loss of intimacy in digital images, as well as lack of personal connection in comparison to analog photos which are considered physical (Keightley & Pickering, 2014, pp. 5–13).

In response to the analog photography resurgence, Triscari (2018, p. 78) coins out that analog photography used in a digital setting is just an alternative way to communicate with oneself and others in a photographic medium that requires much patience. In a sense, analog photography is an organic art that

devour within the current environment (Triscari, 2018, p. 78). However, one thing worth noting is that the re-appropriation of film photography comes with important steps that is crucial in digital era, as Margadona (2023, p.8) states, the “new” analog photography is a hybrid process between analog and digital. In their paper, Margadona points out that unlike the traditional practice, the new film photography exist in digital landscapes ultimately. Despite going through true analog process such as photographing, developing and enlarging, film images are going to be transformed into digital files by getting scanned in the end. As Keightley and Pickering (2014, p.8) also states, this dimension of film photography nowadays is result of amalgamation of the digital and analog practice. This statement brings us back to Biro (2012, p.366), where the author declares that even if the film photography format survives the dominance of digital media, the results are ultimately going to be viewed digitally. All in all, it can be agreed that the new analog photography, which includes the old photographic process, is integrated to the digital world by creating film photos that circulates online (Margadona, 2023, p. 8).

### 2.3 Understanding Analog Photography Aesthetic

What truly differentiates film and digital from a technical standpoint? Lee (2021, para. 4) suggests that several advantages are offered by using analog format: a lower initial cost compared to digital, manipulation technique such as pushing or pulling, and it can be stored physically and digitally. One would argue that the discussion on choosing one medium over another are arguably different from the dawn of digital photography compared to nowadays. For instance, back in 2004, Allen wrote an article about moving to digital photography for five reasons: newer and higher resolutions, instant gratification, image viewing quality on monitors or projectors, digital storage over physical storage, and easier editing processes on software instead of a darkroom (pp. 38–39). Furthermore, Allen (2004, p. 39) point out how consumer-grade and professional-grade cameras can have 6 to 9 megapixels, respectively, which is considered a low number compared to today’s standard. In another instance, in 2001, Galdino et al. compares the usage of film and digital photography in documenting surgical and non-surgical results in plastic surgery. The results lead Galdino et al. to conclude that there is a need for standardization of digital cameras after seeing varied results with different settings and digital camera manufacturers (2001, pp. 1336–1344). This type of discussion from the late 1990s to the early 2000s is relatively simple compared to the topics of choosing cameras today. Going through the evolution of digital cameras over the years, now the main topics of choosing cameras shift to different camera types, for instance, comparing DSLR (Digital Single Lens Reflex) to mirrorless cameras, where there are differences in size, weight, mirror and shutter design, electronic or optical viewfinder, and autofocus detection (Yoon &

Anderson, 2014, p. 56). Other cases often found are to compare the color science of different camera manufacturers (Morgan, 2024), autofocus capabilities (Harris, 2023), and the list goes on.

Looking at the technological advancements in cameras' electronic features and color science, one would argue: where does film photography prevail? As mentioned previously in the first chapter of the research, some would think that analog photography gives a better aesthetic to the image (ASU, 2021, para. 11). There are limitations in academic literature discussing the topic of film photography aesthetics since some would agree that the discussion itself is purely subjective and depends on personal preference. As in Strati (1999, p. 54), aesthetics and art are distinct concepts. Aesthetics specifically focuses on sensory perceptions obtained through the senses of vision, hearing, smell, touch, and taste. Aesthetic judgment refers to the evaluation of beauty and the emotional responses it elicits. When incorporating this term into choosing film over its aesthetic, one would suggest that it involves an understanding of the sensory and emotional experience that a film gives. It is characterized by the combination of visual presentation, emotional resonance, and process experience.

Visual presentations are related to appreciating the presence of film grain, color rendition, and dynamic range. The practice of utilizing faded colors, irregular light leaks, and grainy textures has gained popularity on social media platforms, providing a distinct and slightly flawed visual appeal in contrast to the more clean and real-life-like images of digital photographs (Rafif, 2023b, para. 5). Kim (2017, para. 11–17) in a way suggests that when it comes to photography, human eyes would prefer something natural, rugged, textured, and imperfect. They note that contemporary photographers often endeavor to replicate the aesthetic of traditional film because of this. Furthermore, widely used image editing applications, photo or video filters (as seen on many social media), aim to incorporate grain, randomness, and imperfections into the photographs. One case often found is the intentional addition of grain to the image by photographers in editing software such as Lightroom or Photoshop. Zakia (2007, p. 7) states that photographers occasionally incorporate graininess or other textures into a shot for various purposes, such as reducing small details to highlight areas with bigger tonal masses or creating a textured artistic impact.

Going back to Triscari (2018, pp. 74–75) where the author suggests that film has a capability to alter the result, differs from the original scene, other attributes on film such as light leaks or lo-fi effects can be seen as a selling point for younger generations as it contradicts the standard of modern photographic technology. Furthermore, Triscari points out that this popular aesthetic (often associated with the term “hipster” nowadays) has been circulating the internet platforms and become normalized. The author further states that with this phenomenon, individuals who favored the appeal of it are now gravitating towards the authentic source and therefore influence the market for analog photography. Other

than that, expanding to cinema briefly, Gauthier (2014, pp. 189–196), in their writing about the aesthetic and political choice of incorporating grain in filmmaking, proposes that choices of equipment including film stocks are essential, especially when talking about documentaries and ethnographic film. With this, the author argues that film grain (which holds aesthetic and political significance) can be looked as symbol of intimate and hands-on approach to filmmaking. By adopting the usage of film, the author thinks that filmmakers were able to develop a distinctive visual aesthetic that differs from the mainstream Hollywood practice (Gauthier, 2014, pp. 189–196).

Still on the topic of visual presentation, Tinio et al. (2011, pp. 165-167) notes that some previous studies that have been conducted on image quality in film photographs, specifically focusing on direct aesthetic criteria such as grain and sharpness, indicates that the impact of sharpness and grain varied according to whether the photographs were evaluated for clarity or overall excellence. More precisely, when assessing image quality, both sharpness and grain had a similar impact on the judgments. Nevertheless, when considering the definition, the experiments showed a stronger correlation with sharpness compared to grain (Stultz & Zweig, 1962; Higgins & Wolfe, 1955; Wolfe & Eisen, 1953, as cited in Tinio et al., 2011, p. 165). In continuation of these previous findings, Tinio et al. (2011, pp. 173–175) conducted experiments to see aesthetic judgments on degraded images (by affecting contrasts, sharpness, and adding grain). This is important to discuss considering these attributes resonate with film photos, where they are often present, unlike the result of modern digital cameras without any post-processing. Their results show that degraded images had a more negative response, indicating a preference for clearer images. However, the authors also acknowledge that historically, photography movements tend to appreciate less clear and artistic images (Rosenblum, 2008; Manovich, 1995; Zakhia, 2007, as cited in Tinio et al., 2011, p. 175). The contradiction with the results of the study is possible due to the participants' lack of expertise in photography, while experts might judge those degraded images differently (Tinio et al., 2011, pp. 173–175).

The seeking of imperfection can be seen as a phenomenon in observing the resurgence of analog photography. Imperfection is a way in which reality is represented in photography, when photographers embrace inaccuracy, it allows for a distinctive aesthetic expression that seeks to perceive reality. Imperfection gives everything a photographic actuality, highlighting a distinct dimension of images by intentionally avoiding and rejecting technological perfection (Stiegler, 2012, para. 1). The word imperfection can resonate with the vintage aesthetic that film photographers seek. It is also evident that an experimental aesthetic is being pursued, with outcomes that digital media cannot fully produce, at least straight-out-of-camera. With this, grainy photos, saturation, faded hues, and vignettes are among the desirable visual effects. One can see the objective of this approach is to highlight the tangible aspect of

the original analog image. In contrast, fidelity to fine grain, color, and contrast was sought in the days of old analog photography (Margadona, 2023, p. 7). In addition to the essence of “imperfection” and relating it to a sense of nostalgic aesthetic, Schrey (2014, p. 34) discuss that in the context of communication theory, “analog nostalgia” is focused on the noise rather than the signal. At its core, this approach functions as a method of revitalizing an object by making it unfamiliar through intended imperfections, resulting in an enhanced aesthetic appeal. Furthermore, the logic of perfection that surrounds digital media has a tendency to be countered by the reassertion of imperfection, flaws, and an aura of human mistakes (Rombes, 2009, as cited in Schrey, 2014, p. 35).

Other than that, when it comes to emotional resonance, the result of a film photograph possesses all the characteristics of an authentic image: the vibrant color tones, the unique texture developed by film grain, and the overall visual appeal that evokes the sensation of a different point in time. Due to this, film photography is inherently associated with vintage aesthetics and retro style, particularly for those who live in the digital era (Ciricillo, 2019, para. 21). Emotional resonance is connected to the word nostalgia, which is “a wistful or excessively sentimental yearning for return to or of some past period or irrecoverable condition” (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2024). Makarov (2021, paras. 6-7) points out that any photo shot on film has a natural roughness to it, with the grain being more noticeable. This gives the result an authentic texture that is often associated with nostalgia. With that, they argue that the stylistic film aesthetic continues to evoke a sense of familiarity, with the sentiment of longing for the past having transformed into a form of artistic expression. Therefore, film grain is appealing because it evokes a vintage sensation that seems ageless. Similarly, the presence of grain in a photograph can elicit feelings of nostalgia and add a sense of genuineness, thereby enhancing the emotional impact of the image (Elliott, 2023, para. 6). Although it is worth noting that nostalgia can be associated with romanticism and an idealized past, today it is understood to be a nostalgic yearning for a moment in one's life (Llyod, 2016, as cited in Boyd & Gorman-Murray, 2022, p. 80). Nostalgia is commonly understood as a favorable inclination towards the past accompanied by negative sentiments towards the present and future. This suggests a romanticized view of the past and a rejection of the present (Davis, 1979, as cited in Caoduro, 2014, p. 73).

Film photographers nowadays, might undergo unique emotional experience in comparison to using digital photographic equipment. Another aspect proposed is the mindfulness that photographer needs to encounter. Mendelson and Creech (2016, p. 9) highlights David Burnett (2012) takes on the slowed process of film photography. As Burnett often used 4x5 camera, there is a lot of hard work that requires physical and mental capacities to operate the camera, the demands assert the camera into the photographic process forcing the photographer to slow down and be mindful of settings, composition, and

storytelling. When Burnett's work acknowledged by critiques, his aesthetic differences demonstrate a photographic process that differs from digital photography, and celebrated for its uniqueness (Schiesel, 2005; as cited in Mendelson & Creech, 2016, pp. 8-10). With that being said, one could argue that mindfulness is parallel with connection to the craft, as the hands-on experience and anticipation with the delayed gratification could signal deeper emotional experience and sense of intimacy opposite of digital photography (Keightley & Pickering, 2014, pp. 9-10; Cooke, 2023, para. 3-7).

This research refers process experience as the tangible and hands-on practice when using analog photography medium, as it encompasses the technical and physical steps, from photo-taking to post-processing. One would argue that the process experience includes (and not limited to) components such as: physical interaction with film and cameras, applying technical knowledge, thoughtfulness due to limited shots, and time-consuming nature of film photography. Iskandar et al. (2020, p. 476) in their research on motive and perception in using film cameras indicate results that analog camera users are distinguished by their want to experience analog cameras and their goal to earn status and characteristics such as having unique analog camera photographs and appearing to be skilled at photography. Again, incorporating (Strati, 1999, p. 54) into the context, film photographers could see the aesthetics through the physical photographic experience and process. Ciricillo (2019, paras. 4-21) points out that these experiences include limitations of frame numbers, no reviewing and deleting the pictures, intentionality, and elements of surprises post-development.

#### 2.4 Increasing Film Prices

When conducting this research, analyzing consumer's motivation on buying and using film stocks in 2024 relates to the changes of and current film prices which could hold significant effect on photographers' decision-making process. First of all, the changing dynamic of film products makes it difficult for this research to conduct head-to-head price comparison over the years. The changes in film stock products include changes in product names, film emulsions, and the discontinuation of popular film stocks. Therefore, in this section, to make it more relevant to the research, the study will only highlight products that are still available to purchase in 2024. Eckman (2021, para. 7-58) wrote an article exploring the price changes in film stocks (see Appendix E) by comparing the years 1888 to 2021 in the US market. However, keeping in mind that some film stocks mentioned by Eckman (2021) are no longer available in today's market, the research will narrow down the list into Kodak Ektachrome, Vericolor (later re-named Portra) 160, and Gold 200 (it is important to mention that Kodak Gold 200 was introduced around the year 1988). These three film stocks are still readily available for consumers to buy in 2024. It will represent slide film, color film, and consumer-grade film, respectively. The comparison is made by using



an old price catalog from Popular Photography Magazine and a photography store, namely Adorama and Master Color Lab, as a point of reference. Eckman (2021) note that the shift from 1984 to 1995 shows that, in contrast to a few decades earlier, shooting slide film was more expensive by the mid-1990s than color film. Since 2005, there was a decrease in the overall price of film. This goes hand-in-hand with the rise of digital photography, where people started to upgrade to cameras that don't require purchasing film repeatedly. Maina (2024, para 3) mention that during the early 2000s, manufacturers significantly reduced the price of film due to the fact that the fact that digital photography was experiencing a surge in popularity while film photography was struggling to survive. In order to maintain a competitive edge for a slightly longer period, prices reached their lowest point ever. Entering the 2010s, the market experienced a period of stabilization, and film photography regained appeal among the public.

Maina's (2024, para. 4–7) research on film stock prices indicates that the average Kodak film stock in 2018 sits around \$8–9 and fluctuates over the years, sitting around \$17–18 as of March 2023. As of April 2024, looking at the prices of film from Adorama as a reference, Kodak Ektachrome is listed at \$21.99, meaning there is a significant price increase on slide film of 81.8% from the prices in 2005 (adjusted to inflation). Kodak Portra 160 represents color film; the current price is listed at \$13.99 per roll, leading to a 53.7% price increase. As for one roll of Kodak Gold, it costs \$9.99, marking an 80.9% price increase for consumer-grade film stock compared to the 2005 price. Tcherbadji (2024) tracks the average film prices increase over the last five years. In their graph called "film price inflation", the author finds that when comparing prices from November 2018 to January 2024, average film prices were around \$8.50 and \$15.06 respectively. This alone marks a significant increment of 77.29%, though the comparison is not detailed enough as Tcherbadji (2024) made an average of several different film stocks from different manufacturers with different price points. These differences include different types of film such as black and white, color, and slide film from different manufacturers like Kodak, Ilford, Fujifilm, CineStill, and Lomography.

In this research, to simplify the matter on referring film prices, when discussing the topic later, the study will subject film prices to the current retail price in the Netherlands-based store such as Kamera Express, whereas in May of 2024, the average Kodak film price is at \$11.67 (€9.92), marking significant price differences due to customs and taxes.

### **3. Research Methods**

As previously mentioned in the first chapter, this research aims to analyze the current use of film photography and investigate the factors that motivates and demotivates film photographers to continue purchasing and using film stocks in 2024. In pursuing answers to the research question, this research is conducted using qualitative methods, along with the proposed sampling strategy and data analysis that will be discussed shortly. First of all, qualitative research is essential for tackling the complexity of modern social phenomena and offering complicated, historically appropriate conclusions (Flick, 2009, p. 12). Qualitative research utilizes non-numerical data presented in the form of subjective observations, verbal expressions, written statements, visual representations, symbols, and so on. This form of research is distinguished by its strengths, including its capacity to comprehend the meaning that individuals construct, its comprehensive understanding of scientific phenomena, its consideration of individual cases, its incorporation of contextual factors, its dynamic nature, and its ability to generate new ideas (Choy, 2014; Maxwell & Reibold, 2015; Johnson & Christensen, 2014, as cited in Mulisa, 2021, pages 116-117). Furthermore, descriptions and categories are employed in qualitative research methodologies to investigate human realities and experiences from the viewpoint of the subject (Palmer & Bolderston, 2006, p. 16). Moreover the research intends to take on descriptive and qualitative techniques to clarify the phenomenon under the study.

#### **3.1 Proposed Sample and Sampling Strategy**

##### **3.1.1 Sampling**

This research analyzes transcripts of interviews with photographers who use film cameras as their preferred medium for photography, serving as informants. Ten film photographers based in the Netherlands are being interviewed in this research, providing the data necessary to analyze their motivation on using film for their body of work and how they incorporate film medium to their craft. These ten film photographers will be divided into two groups: five people who represent personal photographers (or will also be referred to as amateur photographers), and another five people who are doing photography professionally. For this research, not only the data are obtained by photographers who use film exclusively as interview partners (as it will narrow down the search for interview candidates dramatically), but this research also looks for photographers who integrate the use of film as a medium into their creative workflow alongside digital photography. Furthermore, the gathered data of the interviewee will provide a better understanding of the topic of film photography trends in recent years. The research also utilize snowball sampling, as Parker et al. (2019, p. 3) suggest that the small group of

first contacts, or "seeds," who fit the research criteria are invited to join by the researchers. These participants then start a chain of referrals by suggesting other individuals who meet the requirements. Noy (2018, p. 330) describes the method as commonly used as the primary method of sampling in qualitative research across multiple disciplines in the social sciences. They further suggests that it is occasionally employed as the primary method for accessing informants or as a supplementary tool to help researchers expand their sampling clusters and reach new participants and social groups when other contact methods are no longer available. Snowball sampling works well for interviewing film photographers since the film photography community is small and close-knit. Other than that, in terms of contact, the interviewee candidates are contacted through their social media platforms or email for the interview proposal and ultimately scheduled for a face-to-face interview if consented to, or online interview if more preferred.

### 3.1.2 Semi-Structured Interview

Moser and Korstjens (2017, pp. 12–14) argue that the most popular techniques for gathering data include focus groups, semi-structured interviews, and observations. Nevertheless, one would determine that the research data will be acquired through conducting interviews with the aforementioned groups of interviewees. The research uses the semi-structured interview method to gather in-depth and individualized information from each participant, who in this study will be a film photographer. In the spirit of this, when the objective is to gain a deeper understanding of the participant's distinct perspective rather than a generalized comprehension of a phenomenon, semi-structured interviews are the preferred method of data collection (McGrath et al., 2018, as cited in Adeoye-Olatunde & Olenik, 2021, p. 1360). Additionally, Adeoye-Olatunde and Olenik (2021, p. 1360) notes that one of the main advantages of the semi-structured interview is that it allows for focused interviews while allowing the investigator the freedom to explore relevant ideas that may arise during the interview. This can further enhance our understanding of the phenomenon being assessed.

Adams (2015, p. 493) suggests that this form of interview raises awareness of the importance of the social and organizational contexts of people's experiences. A combination of closed- and open-ended questions are used in semi-structured interviews, frequently with follow-up "why" or "how" questions. The conversation can stray from the topics on the agenda and touch on completely unanticipated subjects. For many useful activities, semi-structured interviews work well, especially when several of the open-ended questions call for follow-up inquiries (Adams, 2015, p. 493). In a broader sense, research that utilizes an interview method will allow the researcher to gain a better understanding, acquire insight into the interviewee's perspective, and grasp the significance of the interviewee's experiences (Palmer & Bolderston, 2006, p. 16).

Furthermore, Noy (2018, p. 334) assert that there is a core relationship between snowball sampling and in-depth interviews, as they state that snowball sampling relies on recommendations from previous interviewees, which can be affected by the quality of the interaction that happened during the process. With that, the level of trust and experience during the interview process will have a significant impact on the probability of receiving additional referrals or recommendations. Noy also adds that to effectively conduct snowball sampling, it is very vital to build a strong connection with the interviewee to secure their willingness to provide additional contacts.

### 3.1.3 Interview Process

The interview process is conducted in a time frame of 5 weeks, and each interview lasted in a span of more than one hour, except for one interviewee who had time constraint. The interview is conducted in English, as several participants are internationals with different language and ethnical background. Before the interview, every participant signed a consent form that explains the purpose and scope of the research. Each interview is recorded with a recording device and further transformed into an interview transcript that is used as the basis of the research's data analysis. In addition, before the interview, the interviewees were requested to prepare some film photographs of their choosing, which will serve as a point of discussion and a stimulus for narration. The initial thought of this, by showing the interviewee's photograph in a visual context during the interview, it will allow this study to better understand the aesthetic, style, and subjects of the interviewee's creative process. This visual context could be useful when identifying motivations, preferences, and the overall approach of film photography.

### 3.1.4 Interviewee Description

This research managed to gather ten photographers who use film for their creative endeavors. All participants have signed a consent form stating their willingness to be interviewed and their data to be used for academic purposes. Although some of the interviewees agreed that it would not be a problem to explicitly state their names in the research, some don't, and for that reason, all the names will stay anonymous and replaced with initials for reference.

Previously in this chapter, it was mentioned that five of the photographers will represent a sample group of "personal" photographers and the other five will represent a sample group of "professional" photographers. Therefore, the lists of the interviewees and their descriptions are as follows:

1. W.V. is a 45-year-old full-time photographer and curator based in Amsterdam. The interviewee had been pursuing a photography career for more than 10 years, starting in 2013. The photographer's body of work emphasizes capturing images of people and places, describing this

line of work as “environmental portraits,” while the role of curator consists of helping other photographers craft exhibitions and books. W.V. operates as a freelancer, where previously he had worked with the International Centre of Photography in New York, and occasionally contributes photographs for National Geographic and the New York Times.

2. F.B. is a 27-year-old full-time freelance photographer based in Rotterdam. Her photography career started in 2019 after her graduation. The photographer’s body of work mostly consists of fashion photography and event coverage.
3. T.B., a 30-year-old photographer has been working full-time since 2015. Based in Eindhoven, the photographer established his photography business and has been venturing as a content creator on YouTube and Instagram. His line of work includes documentary photography and extends to event coverage and other types of clients work for his professional line of duty. As an influencer, the photographer’s other source of income comes from selling prints, brand deals, and social media monetization.
4. E.W. is a 39-year-old full-time photographer based in Breda. The photographer line of work surrounds commercial photography projects while also pursuing assignments in photojournalism. By doing so, the interviewee can diversify his source of income. E.W. had been a full-time professional photographer for nine years.
5. T.d.J., is a 24-year-old photographer working full-time in the Municipality of Amsterdam. Before this, he was a freelance photographer and despite this career change, the interviewee still pursues photography on the side, marking it as a part-time job for now. He takes on occasional commissioned jobs, while mostly focusing on portraits and event photography, while also doing personal projects as a hobby.
6. H.V. is a 20-year-old international student studying in Rotterdam and working part-time in a restaurant. The photographer used to do photography as his freelance part-time job for four years, starting in 2017. The interviewee described his line of work as that of a portrait and backstage photographer.
7. M.L. is a 23-year-old student based in Den Haag, studying advertising in Rotterdam. The photographer used to work in a restaurant and has been doing freelance photography as his part-time job for a year now, alongside personal projects. His work focuses on the blending of fashion, portrait, and cinematic photography.
8. P.P. is a photography student based in Rotterdam while working part-time as a waitress. The photographer described her work as related to conceptual portraiture with a blend of graphic design while focusing on women as her subject.

9. D.B., is a 19-year-old international student based in Den Haag. The photographer acknowledges that his photography work only lies within the scope of his hobby, focusing on street photography and travel photography.
10. P.B. is a retired 60-year-old based in Rotterdam. The photographer sold his business in June of 2018 and fully retired in 2021. The interviewee spends most of his time doing street photography as a hobby and occasionally takes on commissioned projects such as portraiture.

### 3.2 Description of Operationalization

As stated before, to gain an understanding and deeper insights into how the interview partners use film for their photography and what their motivation is to do so, the perception of these consumers will be addressed by answering questions provided in the semi-structured interview process. Previous academic literature had been found to be limited around this topic of discussion, making it more theory-oriented than evidence-based. Consequently, the usage of this research's proposed sampling and interview strategy are considered appropriate for this line of study in the hope of providing a fresh take on the topic. With that, the following parts will discuss the guidelines for the interview and how the data is being analyzed.

#### 3.2.1 Interview Guidelines

As previously mentioned, a semi-structured interview is suitable for this research, and therefore, in conducting this study, it is important to establish an interview guideline to ensure the smooth running of the process. Aside from the respondents' actual consent to be questioned, the most significant factor is the information contained in the interviews. To gain relevant and accurate information for the purpose of the paper, it is crucial to provide relevant and skillfully written interview guidance (Adams, 2015, p. 496). The structure of these semi-structured interviews follows a guide that outlines questions and topics for the interviewer to explore (see appendix A). Interview guides help maximize interview time by systematically and comprehensively exploring multiple respondents and focusing on the desired outcome (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006, as cited in Jamshed, 2014). Creating a thorough, semi-structured interview guide improves the reliability and credibility of qualitative research in multiple ways. Kallio et al. (2016, pp. 2959–2961) outline the necessary phases in the development process of an interview guideline. These phases include: (1) identifying the necessary conditions for utilizing semi-structured interviews; (2) gathering and utilizing existing knowledge; (3) formulating the initial semi-structured interview guide; (4) conducting a pilot test of the interview guide; and (5) presenting the finalized semi-structured interview guide. Following this list in constructing interview guidelines, this research had also done pilot testing internally (Kallio et al., 2016, pp. 2960–2961) with the supervisor, resulting in the elimination of leading

questions and any other forms of ambiguity (see Barriball & While, 1994, as cited in Kallio et al., 2016, p. 2960).

### 3.3 Processing and Analysis of Data

Qualitative data analysis techniques provide non-numerical characterizations of the information. With that, one will be able to consistently arrange the data gathered from the sample by using data analysis techniques. After the data collection is done using semi-structured interviews, thematic analysis is conducted as a form of research's data analysis technique. According to Braun et al. (2019, p.855), thematic analysis focuses on finding, examining, and interpreting "themes," or patterns of meaning within qualitative data. The method is appreciated for its adaptability to various research questions, sample sizes, techniques for gathering data, and methods for creating meaning. It can be used to analyze heterogeneous and homogeneous samples, big and small datasets, and different kinds of data (Braun et al., 2019, pp. 850-851). Referring to Guest et al. (2014, pp. 9–10), thematic analysis remains the most effective method for capturing the intricate nuances of meaning in a textual dataset. The approach goes beyond simply collecting specific words or phrases and instead concentrates on recognizing and explaining both implied and explicit topics within the themes of the data.

In the process of thematic analysis, Braun and Clarke (2006, as cited in Vaismoradi et al., 2013, p. 402) propose several steps that need to be undertaken: familiarizing with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the reports. During these steps, ATLAS.ti as a tool of choice is used to help with the coding and theme analysis. Other software is also used, such as Microsoft Excel for further viewing and Transkrip.id for automatic audio transcription. Using this methodology, the study goes over how the research findings advance understanding in the relevant field and offer suggestions for future research, practice, and instruction.

## 4. Results

### 4.1 Distinguishing Photography as a Hobby or a Profession

This section focuses on the self-presentation of the interviewees in relation to the word "photographer." As mentioned previously in Chapter 2, the scope of photography is broad, and the distinction between the terms professional and personal photographer has been discussed over the years by scholars. Though it is crucial to understand briefly the distinction between both terms, as it would help this research to map the market segmentation for purchasing film stocks, where professionals and amateurs may have different needs, motivations, and purchasing behaviors. To that extent, it is found in this research that there are some differences in incorporating film photography into the creative process of the interviewees, depending on their personal and professional circumstances, that will be discussed further down the line of this chapter.

Back to the topic interviewee's self-presentation to the term photographer, we have established what the terms "professional" (Manovich, 2017, p. 51; Langford, 2011, p. 397–404; Boltanski & Chamboredon, 1990, p. 151), "personal" (Van House, 2011, pp. 130–133), or "amateur" (Cox, 2012, pp. 63–66; Griffin, 2019, p. 184; Pink, 2011, p. 95) mean in the second chapter of this research. However, in the methodology chapter, it is found that there are some interview participants that sit in the middle of the terms "personal" and "professional" photographer. These "part-time" photographers are the ones who utilize their free time to do photography jobs, but not enough to make a full income for a living. The researcher aims to understand all interviewee perceptions and how they differentiate between professional and personal photographers.

Out of all the interviews, participants agree that one could be considered a professional if they make an income or living out of it (Manovich, 2017, p. 51). All participants from both groups show a clear understanding of how to differentiate between both terms. In understanding the term "personal" photographers used in this research, most participants refer to it as photographers who do not get paid or just do the craft for their satisfaction. When asked about how to differentiate between those two words, one of the interviewees who belongs in the professional photographer categories of this research simply mentioned that the difference lies in whether one gets paid or not. In his word:

Well, technically, are you getting paid or not? But I mean, I guess it can mean a lot of other things, you know? Well, I guess you do have to get paid. Otherwise, you can't be a professional. But you can also retain the spirit of the amateur photographer if it's not your primary source of income. (Photographer W.V., male, 45 years of age)



One of the interviewees who does photography as a hobby also acknowledges the distinction by arguing that money and income have a lot to do with differentiating both terms. In his words on describes photography as a hobby:

You do it just because you love it, of course. Like a lot of professional photographers, they [amateur photographers] have personal projects and they are not getting paid for that. They do the casting by themselves, and they do everything by themselves [...] So, I think money is an important part of defining what it is like. (Photographer H.V., male, 20 years of age)

However, when asked to describe the terms, some participants gave further explanations of what they thought the words meant. One interviewee expresses his concerns that some cases show his favorite photographer doesn't make as much of an income, compared to other professionals with lesser skills (Photographer T.B, male, 30 years of age). Although one would argue that taste in photography has always been considered a subjective field, two other professional photographers in this research also express the same thing. In that regard, one interviewee suggested that the term is also related to how well a photographer could implement their skills to the result (Photographer E.W., male, 39 years of age). These responses are familiar with the proposition that other than getting compensated for their work, professional photographers need to master their craft (Langford, 2011, p.397; Boltanski & Chamboredon, 1990, p.151). In regard to this, one interviewee suggests that though professional photographers are the ones that live from their profession, it is also important that they have the necessary skills and dedication. The photographer also thinks that there are a lot of professionals who are not good with their craft, but there is also a considerable number of good amateurs (Photographer T.d.J., male, 24 years of age).

#### 4.2 Film as a Choice of Photography Medium

During the interview process, interviewees were asked numerous questions regarding the usage of film as a choice of photography medium in their creative process. Several keywords appeared explaining reasons why the interviewee aims to explore analog photography. This research narrows it down to several points: process and experience, film photography aesthetics, nostalgia, and the contrast between film and digital photography.

#### 4.2.1 Process and Experience

One of the interviewees, W.V., (male, 45 years of age) explained how re-discovering analog photography had an impact on his journey as a photographer. After going professional for a couple of years, the interviewee shot a roll of film and described it as a calming experience. Later he described that with the limitation that a film roll gives, mindfulness and precession come into play, ultimately affecting his thought process when shooting photos, this statement is in line with Ciricillo (2019, para 2-21) on the limitation of analog photography, which could affect the thought process of shooting pictures. Similarly, most of the participants also describe the same thing when it comes to the nature of analog photography, which forces them to slow down during the moment before pressing the shutter button. Looking at Iskandar et al. (2020, p.476) findings, their research states that their participants were also found wanting to experience the analog process similarly described by photographers in this research. By doing this, one participant suggests that it will train photographers to practice their lens focusing capability, to be able to read the environment, and mastering the exposure settings. T.B. (male, 30 years of age) thinks that these sets of skills are crucial to have and would become useful even when using digital cameras. Also in this instance, one photographer also similarly suggests the same thing. As he puts it: “I think because of doing that, it really taught me to think more, to be more present, to be more consciously thinking of framing, of storytelling, of everything. Because you only have few chances” (Photographer E.W., male, 39 years of age). These statements are in line to what have been discussed previously in the second chapter, that using analog equipment requires mindfulness in composing due to its limitation.

One thing worth noting, most of the interviewees shoot with digital cameras alongside film cameras. During the interview, it is found that there is same pattern and answer when it comes to describing shooting experience. The word “slowing down” always appeared repeatedly by most photographers, suggesting that it is a common term that is relatable in the world of analog photography. One would argue that this term is used religiously in the digital age, due to the contradicting nature of digital photography process. Gibb (2021, para. 1) suggests that film photography by its very nature slows down the entire process of taking a picture; the photographer must study the subject matter and deliberate before pulling the shutter and exposing a valuable roll of film. From a technical standpoint, “slowing down” when using a film camera is often associated with manual focusing, manual film advancing and rewinding, and manual exposure settings. On the other hand, “slowing down” in a sense of pace could mean not taking pictures too often or saving up for the right moment. In relation to this, Margadona (2023, p.6) argues that the new meaning of film photography practice in the digital age surrounds the notion that slowing down of the photographic technique brings about the process, which in turn introduces the elements of anticipation, wait, and the tactile experience. If we dive into Mendelson and

Creech's (2016, pp. 3-4) work titled "Make Every Frame Count" on slow photojournalism, the authors provide insight on how a big component of slow photography is the use of film and cameras. These attributes are dependent on the practice of slow photography, because they demand greater focus and let photographers show off their skills more. With that, the authors suggest that film is used for philosophical reasons as well as aesthetic ones because of its permanence, scarcity, and finitude, which put additional pressure on photographers to consider every frame and make it meaningful. Ultimately, slow photography is a subset of a broader criticism of digital photography that questions overtly progressive ideas about technological progress (Mendelson & Creech, 2016, pp. 3-4).

With that however, in analyzing the motivation of slowing down during the shooting process of the interviewees, it is not clear from one participant to another whether it is restricted by the amount of film rolls present during the photo session or restricted by financial aspect. Although M.L. (male, 23 years of age) mentions briefly that the reason he must be thoughtful is because one frame of film could cost \$0.40 and therefore the "slowing down" process is influenced by budget. One photographer stated what he thought made a lot of film photographers enjoy analog photography. In the interviewee's word:

I think they are more interested in the process like getting the film roll, putting the film in the camera, rolling it up closing [the film back], and then taking pictures, rolling [advance the film] up again, taking it out, bring it to the lab. So, it's the whole process. (Photographer H.V., male, 20 years of age)

#### 4.2.2 The Film Photography Aesthetic

Firstly, Margadona (2023, pp. 5-6) argues that the key components of the new analogue photography aesthetic are directly related to types of cameras and film. In their study, the author would consider the practice of photo enlargement, along with photographic paper are neglected, in line with their proposed idea that film photography nowadays only inhabits the world of social media. Aesthetics plays an important role in this research, as many participants constantly mentioned the effects of the film emulsion presented in the image results. This research would like to point out that aesthetics is heavily related to personal preference and, with that, falls into a heavily subjective conversation. Beforehand, the second chapter has established that, using Strati's (1999, p. 54) definition, aesthetic judgment comes from sensory perception obtained through the experience of senses such as vision or touch. It will be very difficult for this research to standardize the example of analog aesthetic since one would argue that it is still a vague concept to begin with. For instance, using the term "analog aesthetic" does not entirely mean that a photograph must be shot on film. If some post-processing involves making the photograph

resemble film pictures, then some could argue that it has some analog aesthetic embedded in it. With that, if contended otherwise, then the subject of argumentation would shift to the authenticity of the picture and not the aesthetic.

During the interview and data analysis process, two points surrounding the topic of the film aesthetic constantly surfaced: film grain and color. Both fall into the category of visual presentation mentioned in the previous chapter. As McKay (2024) states, grain is a physical characteristic of film, and when photographers use it, it becomes an artistic instrument that helps them portray atmosphere and emotion. Grain may significantly alter the final photographs by adding depth, emotion, and an organic feel, though perceptions towards the attractiveness of film grain could varied from one photographer to another. According to Marquardt and Andrae (2019, p. 10), film grain varies in size, distribution and hardness. Depending on different film stocks, grain could be present distinctively or not apparent at all due to how film emulsion is made up not only with a single layer of neighboring silver particles. Talking about color film on the other hand, it is also a wide topic that is often discussed in analog photography community with different choices available on the market. At a glance, there are only two types of film stock: black and white and color film. However, within those two categories, there are libraries of options when it comes to choosing film characteristics based on different products and brands. For example, comparing black and white film from the same manufacturer, Ilford HP5 has less contrast compared to Ilford Delta 400, or Kodak Portra 400 has a lesser green tint than Fujifilm Pro 400H (Morgan, 2020).

According to F.B. (female, 27 years of age), the color that film stock offers is what made her invest in the medium. The interviewee was asked to show an analog photo of hers and describe what makes the picture interesting. F.B. presented a photo of a sunset at a beach shot on color negative film. The interviewee recalled that the photo does not resemble the reality she experienced when taking the photograph, in a way that the film stock manipulates reality (see Appendix F). Furthermore, with the heavy appearance of the film grain, she described the picture as if it looked like a painting (Photographer F.B., female, 27 years of age). The researcher acknowledged the prominent appearance of grain more than it was supposed to. This happens when film stock is underexposed, especially in the image's shadows. The reason behind this is that the light-sensitive silver crystals were not exposed to much light, causing the larger crystals to remain on the film during processing while the smaller ones washed off (Richard Photo Lab, 2018). When investigating this case, the appearance of an irregular amount of film grain by underexposing the image due to unknown reasons, whether it was purposeful or accidental, F.B. (female, 27 years of age), created an image that can be considered flawed from a technical standpoint. However, the fact that this image created an impression on the interviewee explained how imperfect, unnatural, and textured photographs could be desirable for some (see Triscari, 2018, pp. 74–75; Stiegler, 2012).

When incorporating the work of Gauthier (2014, pp. 189–196) in discussing the choice of using gear to achieve certain aesthetic value, another interviewee suggested that, on top of unique film color, when operating a manual-controlled film camera, imperfect results such as out-of-focus images and certain optical characteristics that vintage lenses have could add to the depth of film images. This added effect is in favor with T.d.J.'s (male, 24 years of age) area of interest, which is street and documentary photography. Furthermore, the photographer prefers the yellow and warm tones that Kodak film stock produces, to the point where he often finds himself editing digital images to resemble that certain character. Film grain also becomes a motivating factor for T.d.J. Similarly, H.V. (male, 20 years of age) embraced the imperfection in the film photo he showed. An image that was presented to the interview was a portrait of a woman outside on color film. At first glance, there was nothing wrong with the picture until the interviewee mentioned technical errors in the image-making process. The photo was overexposed by a few stops; however, the color of the film photo still looks presentable. H.V. (male, 20 years of age) coins the idea that one of the advantages of using film is the capability of film stock to handle overexposure that ultimately could even have a certain effect on the image (see Tcherbadji, 2024, para 2–4). Like F.B.'s (female, 27 years of age) case, exposure does affect the result of a film photo (see Appendix F). In explaining this, Roberts (1998, p. 76) mentions that the ideal amount of light for a negative or transparency with appropriate density and contrast is what is known as correct exposure. As a result, a film that is not exposed enough will produce an underexposed image, while one that is exposed too much will produce an overexposed image. However, this does not imply that every picture needs to have the right amount of exposure; a lot will rely on creative interpretation and preferred outcomes.

Some interviewees, namely P.P. (female, 19 years of age) and D.B. (male, 19 years of age), mainly talk about how grain on film makes the shooting experience with film differ from digital photography. One interviewee mentioned that grain structure is an important matter to him. With this, T.B. (male, 30 years of age) preferred grain structure to be as visible as possible in his images; hence, choosing a higher ASA film stock and pushing black and white films became essential for him. The correlation between ASA numbers and grain size can be explained by understanding that the larger the silver crystals in a film stock, the higher its ASA number. Accordingly, grain on a film photo at a faster speed will be more noticeable, whereas grain on a film photo at a slower speed will be finer (Richard Photo Lab, 2018). Other than that, in regard to pushing film, it is a process of intentionally underexposing images to some extent and compensating for the exposure balance during the development process. Also, according to Richard Photo Lab (2018), pushing film can be creatively employed to generate visual effects, consequently giving various effects on dynamic range, grain, and contrast. Moreover, the signal is amplified when the film is overexposed and then developed, which can bring out the film's natural grain

structure. Pushing also produces a higher-contrast image with deeper shadows and brighter highlights (see Appendix B).

When it comes to choices for film stocks, all traditional color and slide film on the market is daylight balance film, naming Kodak Gold 200, Fujifilm 400, or Kodak Ektachrome 100. Recent years have shown an emerging trend to use alternative film stocks other than the conventional color, slide, and black and white film produced by well-known manufacturers such as Kodak, Fujifilm, Ilford, etc. One company based in Los Angeles named CineStill introduced a modified Kodak Vision 3 cinema film around 2013. A cinema film or motion picture film stock is traditionally made for cinematography instead of photography. Cinema film also offers tungsten-balanced color film and black and white film. Although there is an extra layer on the film emulsion called Rem-jet, an easily removed jet black layer. It provides lubrication and scratch protection and acts as anti-static and anti-halation, making it useful for cinematography (Garcia, 2017, para. 1-6). However, it is not the standard to use this film stock for photography usage since regular photo labs often do not offer this type of film development process. By removing the Rem-jet layer, these motion picture (ECN-2) emulsions are safe to be processed in C-41 chemistry and standard photo lab equipment. Consequently, this gives the film some visual effect; one in particular is a prominent halation around the highlights. This halation effect often appeared as a gloomy red line or circle in the photo (see Appendix C). Over time, some smaller companies are also starting to follow the CineStill footsteps, namely Reflx Lab in China or Cira Lab in Indonesia. Other than that, traditional motion picture films have been revived and repackaged with different names, serving as cheaper alternatives to traditional color or black and white film.

Related to this, E.W. (male, 39 years of age) acknowledge the effect that films like this could have in some cases. The photographer showed one of his pictures of nuns (see Appendix D), where the halation was shown around the nuns' veil, giving a halo effect and adding story and different interpretations to the image. M.L. (male, 23 years of age) also added that using tungsten light balance film could give interesting results. When it comes to traditional motion picture film for photography, P.B. (male, 60 years of age) has been experimenting with different film stocks and suggested it as a good and cheaper alternative to C41 color film. The interviewee showed one picture shot on Kodak Vision 3 250D and explained how film emulsion could manipulate reality by shifting color. In his instance, P.B. (male, 60 years of age) showed a picture of a canal where the water was supposed to be black instead of blue, like in the photograph. The interviewee appreciates this kind of interaction between reality and how film could manipulate it without going through the image editing process.

All in all, looking through the reasoning behind choosing film as a photography medium based on its visual presentation, it is hard to ignore the fact that most of the attributes mentioned by the interviewee

(film grain, color rendition, or halation) can be considered flaws from a technical aspect based on today's photography standards. Film grain can be seen as a distraction by hindering the clarity of a picture; film could render different colors from real life; vintage lenses could show optical manipulation; and all these things were identified as problems and fixed with modern-day digital cameras and lenses. In understanding this, chasing imperfections can be seen as a trend that has been going on for a while in photography (Stiegler, 2012, para 1; Rombes, 2009, as cited in Schrey, 2014, p. 35). As Margadona (2023, p.7) proposes, the objective of this aesthetic is to highlight the tangible aspect of the original analog image. When trying to understand how film photography is favored contemporarily, it is hard to ignore the fact that it is the reverse of what occurred in the days of analog, when the pursuit of fidelity to fine grain, color, and contrast was essential. That being said, the interview results in an apparent understanding that this form of aesthetics are considered a motivation for the participants in pursuing film photography, as it gives the authentic experience and results that differs from modern-day camera technology.

#### 4.2.3 Nostalgia

Many online articles that introduce the use of film photography in the digital age often use the word “nostalgia” or “nostalgic” to describe the aesthetic of film photos (see Elliott, 2023; Rafif, 2023a; McKay, 2024), making it a common term that is often referred to by film photographers. Previously, Magaouda and Minniti (2019, pp. 688–689) suggests that film photography as part of “retromedia” responds to a sense of nostalgia. As Schrey (2014, pp. 27-28) also mentions, this widespread trend of nostalgia is based on the yearning of what is thought to be lost in the process of digitalization, consequently romanticizing and fetishes analog media in modern culture. Schrey also notes that this sense of nostalgia can be expressed through the content of media representation, and the sentiment can be subjected from its materiality and aesthetic (2014, p. 29). And with that, this study also maps nostalgia as part of the emotional resonance when it comes to the aesthetic of film photography. When asked about the correlation between using the medium and a sense of nostalgia, the answer to this question varies for each participant. T.B. (male, 30 years of age) thinks that shooting film does feel nostalgic for him, as he grew up with a film camera. Similar to this T.d.J., (male, 24 years of age) also relate this process by saying that the photo results resemble old pictures of himself or his family member, especially when it was shot on a disposable camera. While not specifically mentioning the effect of nostalgia on him, D.B. (male, 19 years of age) mentioned how some photographs he took of his family members on film, do have this effect on them instead of the photographer.

In line with the idea that nostalgia is associated with romanticism and the idealized past (Llyod, 2016, as cited in Boyd and Gorman-Murray, 2022, p. 80), one interviewee denied this premise and thinks that this idea is part of over-romanticizing the medium. In the photographer's word:

I don't really get these nostalgic feelings [...] it sounds too "hipster" for me. And I mean, if I can choose between a vinyl sound or a digital sound, I also pick vinyl because this is what I remember from my childhood [...]. (Photographer E.W., male, 39 years of age)

Suggesting what Schrey (2014, pp. 27-29) thinks of the idealized form of nostalgia when it comes to analog practice. However, the likes of P.B. (male, 60 years of age) do understand why younger generations are attracted to retro media, as he compares it with the same cases as younger people interested in having vintage cars and collecting vinyl records. On the other hand, M.L., (male, 23 years of age) that belongs to a generation where he does not experience the analog era, has a unique perspective on such matter. In discussing the topic about over-romanticizing nostalgic feelings with retro media, the interviewee argues that younger generations tend to see it as something new rather than something nostalgic. In his word:

[...] for us, it's completely new, like it's not nostalgic. I don't know about you. I wasn't shooting film growing up. Because I was too young, like especially this new generation. They don't shoot films when they're growing up. They're not around it. So, it's like a completely new thing to us. Which I just think is very exciting. (Photographer M.L., male, 23 years of age).

In response to the nostalgic feeling of experiencing film photography, one would argue that film images can bring a sense of nostalgia when compared to older photographs (see Ciricillo, 2019; Makarov 2021) and can be considered as a driving factor to favor the medium. Although in this research, six out of ten participants were born in digital era and did not experience the practice of analog photography firsthand, making the only sense of nostalgia is based on comparing older to newer photographs for them. Other than that, other interview participants might share the nostalgic feeling by remembering what it was like to shoot on a film camera back in the day. All in all, though some interviewees express the existence of nostalgia when using the photographic format, there are no apparent nor groundbreaking findings when it comes to the relation between nostalgia and consumer motivation in this research.



#### 4.2.4 Contrasts with Digital Photography

In Mendelson and Creech (2016, p.3), with the widespread use of networked camera phones, digital photography has made everyone a photographer, enabling even those without formal training to quickly produce and share images. Many believe that the emergence of digital means that photography is becoming less deliberate (Gye, 2007; Mendelson, 2013; Vincent, 2006, as cited in Mendelson & Creech, 2016, p.3). Interviewees expressed that the nature of film photography could get unpredictable with no live preview, unlike digital cameras (Allen, 2004, pp. 38–39). Often, they would have to wait until the film got developed, and from the data that this research gathered, it could take up to days or weeks. As this research has stated previously, this anticipation is part of the process experience of analog photography, as well as the limitations with the number of photos that could be used depending on the format are heavily related to the “slowing down” process mentioned before. Reflecting briefly on that, a 35mm film camera can use 24 or 36 frames of 135 films, and in some special cases, half-frame 35mm cameras can multiply these numbers by 2 times. When looking at medium-format cameras that use 120 films, 6x4.5 format results in 16 pictures, 6x6 format results in 12 pictures, 6x7 format results in 10 pictures, and in other cases, 6x8 and 6x9 would produce 9 and 8 pictures respectively. Considering how limiting these numbers are compared to digital cameras, it is understandable that the interviewee’s reason to slow down and be more mindful of composition, lighting, and subject matter. However, if the number of shots is such a big influence on the way of photographing from a technical standpoint, wouldn’t this be considered a big disadvantage? In understanding this phenomenon, the interviewees were asked how they would compare film photography to digital photography. It was an open-ended question in hopes of finding more areas of discussion other than the limited number of shots. Although the answers differ from one to another, three common cases surfaced: color, post-production, and practicality.

Beforehand, we have acknowledged these photographers’ points of view when it comes to the color aesthetics and grain that film emulates. However, in contrast with digital photos, some interviewees describe them as “flat” compared to analog images. Taken as an example of F.B. (female, 27 years of age), she mentioned a case where the photographer tried the newest Nikon camera and found herself disliking how flat the images are. P.B. (male, 60 years of age) gave us a bit more to this by suggesting that film has more character and tends to produce warmer tones (see Triscari, 2018, pp. 74–75), whereas digital images produce neutral and flatter tones. After showing one of his images that was shot on film, the interviewee was asked if he thought a digital camera could produce similar results straight out of the camera. In the photographer’s words: “So I think this type of film is doing this [producing certain color rendition]. A digital camera is more flatter, and you cannot create think kind of atmosphere, [this] kind of moods” (Photographer P.B., male, 60 years of age). To give visual context to these statements, this

research provides two photo examples taken on both digital and film, in a same event, lighting condition, and off-camera flash (see Appendix G). The examples provided were taken with a Fujifilm digital camera and Kodak Gold 200 using a Nikon film camera— both photos are unedited. When trying to understand interview participants' statements in saying digital photo results are “flatter”, the example does show the digital image has less character compared to film, rendering more true-to-life color than the film photo which produce warmer tones, higher contrast, and apparent grain. Although, some would argue that this kind of difference can be achieved in post-processing.

The topic of post-production embeds two things: selecting images and photo editing. Digital photography allows photographers to take as many shots as needed, depending on camera batteries and SD cards capacity. While it sounds practical since everything is done electronically, some interviewees expressed that this could be a problem during the post-production phase. F.B. (female, 27 years of age), for instance, thinks photographing with digital cameras is harder in the sense that she will have to choose a favorite out of ten similar images: “so that's really hard about digital, that the selection process can take a lot longer than I want. And with film, it's just like you have one shot. So, you're more cautious of what you capture [...]” (Photographer F.B., female, 27 years of age). This brings us back to Keightley and Pickering (2014, pp. 5-13), where there is an electronic capability for frequent photo-taking, there is also a higher discard rate which will result in loss of intimacy and personal connection with the images. Same cases with M.L. (male, 23 years of age), for the photographer to pick his 20 favorite pictures out of thousands of frames was not practical. W.V. (male, 45 years of age) applies the same thought process in comparison to film, where having batches of digital images means more work to do, suggesting having to go through the selection and editing process, unlike accepting results of film scans. Although this suggestion by the interviewee contradicts Allen's (2004, pp.38-39) view back then, whereas the capability of electronic storage was seen as an advantage. In general, it still is, however, the interviewees' perception suggests that there has been a paradigm shift in such matter. E.W. (male, 39 years of age) explained how sometimes in a photoshoot job or assignment, the photographer could take up to 2.000 images and had to go through all of it, which could get overwhelming. The photographer also tried to minimize the editing process by doing most of the work on camera, relying on settings to ease the post-production process. Just like this, T.B., (male, 30 years of age) states that sitting behind his computer all day, editing images of client work had always happened with digital photos.

Practicality, on the other hand, was mentioned as an advantage of shooting with a digital camera. F.B. (female, 27 years of age) suggests that when it comes to editing digital images, a lot of freedom is given due to their digital nature. An example of this is that most digital cameras provide shooting options in RAW format. RAW files resemble digital negatives, storing all data with little alteration from the

camera's digital sensor. This means that an endless number of digital prints can be produced in the future using RAW files (Verhoeven, 2010, p. 2010). The RAW file contains all the information collected without any additional digital development, hence giving users the freedom to alter the image file accordingly in the post-production stage using any preferred photo editing software. Other than this, W.V.(male, 45 years of age) expressed the practicality of digital cameras when it comes to challenging situations, including fast movements and tricky lighting situations. T.d.J. (male, 24 years of age) thinks that shooting digital for client work could be more effective and efficient, concerning the amount of time it would take to develop the film and waiting for the turnaround time. Another interesting take on the practicality of a digital camera is the way to minimize the margins of error that happen a lot with shooting on film. With the live preview and image preview features on a digital camera, one can observe the result and instantly make an informed decision about taking the next image. This practical advantage was expressed by D.B. (male, 19 years of age), on how taking an accidentally bad image is an easy fix for digital photographers. In the case of P.P. (female, 19 years of age), a photography student, using a digital camera for a run-and-gun situation is preferable to analog, since the photographer feels more comfortable shooting film in a more controlled environment, such as a studio.

The phenomenon on how analog photography can be favored due to its limitation is something that contradicts past research (example of Allen, 2004) on the shift from analog to digital. As stated, this suggests a paradigm shift on the way photographer perceived practicality and instant gratification that needs to be studied further.

#### 4.3 Incorporating Film into Professional Work

In this section, the research focuses on how the professional photographers in this research approach the usage of film mediums in their professional line of work. Before conducting the interviews, a background check was conducted on whether the interview candidates used film in their professional workflow or not. All the professional photographers passed this criterion and were therefore asked to explain how it works for them. The findings are similar from one photographer to another. Some instances might differ in the case of whether the photographer made an income out of their personal projects or not. As an example of this, W.V. (male, 45 years of age) not only works on commissioned projects or curation but also author and sells his own photobook. Meanwhile, T.B. (male, 30 years of age) sells prints on his website. Taken into account of Langford (2011, pp. 398–404), being a professional photographer opens the opportunity to be exposed to various industries such as commercial, fashion, portraits, press and documentary, editorial and advertising, or art; some of these of these cases are found in this research's list of professional photographers.

F.B. (female, 27 years of age) always finds herself approached by a potential client, unlike most freelance photographers that need to reach out to brands from time to time. Most of the photographer's clients found her on Instagram, and after that, she relied on the power of word-of-mouth, referencing her from client to client. When it comes to incorporating film photography into her professional work, clients are usually asked to get their pictures taken with a certain aesthetic (see Gauthier, 2014; Kim, 2017), referencing film photographs on her portfolio. Often, the photographer must explain that certain looks can only be achieved using film, consequently, the interviewee always finds it hard to give a proper quotation to the clients. This is affected by the extra hour that she charged for film development and scanning, as well as the film stock fees and development.

In the case of E.W. (male, 39 years of age) and T.B. (male, 30 years of age), clients would receive another extra number on their invoice for film stocks and processing fees on top of the photography service fee. One of the interviewees pointed out that there were multiple occasions that clients asked for a "film look" (see Triscari, 2018, pp. 74–75) for their projects but were hesitant to shoot them on film. If the projects suit the need to shoot on film, the photographer finds himself asking the clients' permission for it. However, E.W. (male, 39 years of age) also suggested the importance of communicating the risks of film photography in commissioned and assigned work, such as technical, operational, and development errors. Also, he stated that as a photojournalist, there were multiple occasions when the photographer was allowed to use film medium for an assignment (see Åker (2012, pp. 327–329) in the discussion on digitalization, which challenges the concept of photographic authenticity more in journalism than in art photography). In a similar instance, for W.V. (male, 45 years of age), film and development prices become the biggest factor in the fees charged to clients. The process usually happens when clients ask for it or are open to the idea and have the budget to afford it. The interviewee stressed how much this extra cost could get, referencing his latest experience shooting a commercial project on 30 rolls of film. Alongside T.d.J. (male, 24 years of age), W.V. (male, 45 years of age) also recognized the risks it might come with, although mainly on what could happen to the film rolls after they were used, meaning technical errors could have happened during the development process (see Helenkelsall, 2019). Just like E.W. (male, 39 years of age), for assignments or photojournalism work, the photographer usually asks permission and states reasons why it would be appropriate to use film.

These statements mark evidence that film photography is still (or back) in demand due to its trend and perceived aesthetics. This part of the research highlights the fact that film attributes can be seen as a selling point nowadays (Triscari, 2018, pp. 74–75) in the scope of creative industry. From the data gathered in this research, it is only implicitly known that the photographers' clients are attracted to the

look of film, however, since this research only focuses on the photographer's side of perception towards film aesthetics, it is not clear on what client's motivation are for using film.

After asking about the incorporation of film medium into their professional workflow, follow-up questions regarding the market for film photography were asked to the participants. Most interviewees suggested that there is potential for client work using film as a medium. However, these interviewees tend to see it more as a niche market that is suitable for a few sectors, especially ones where creative freedom could be applied. Namely fashion, music, and lifestyle. In the words of M.L. (male, 23 years of age) on such matter:

It's becoming like "what is trending" for a while now [...] I think there are not that many [film] photographers compared to digital, and there will always be brands that are trying to go for a certain vibe or feeling and that will include analog. It might not be the biggest market.

#### 4.4 Film Photography Inspiration

Along the line, the interviewees were asked to share about their sources of inspiration to see if there were any correlations between how these photographers use film for their photography practice. These sources of inspiration can be anything and are not strictly related to other photographers' bodies of work. A number of well-known and established names in photography were mentioned by the participants, namely: Helmut Newton, David Bailey, Richard Avedon, Harry Gruyaert, Joel Meyerowitz, Alex Webb, Henry Cartier Benson, and Saul Leiter. But also, contemporary photographers were mentioned, including the likes of Joe Greer, Paul Baldonado, Andre D. Wagner, Jeremy Paige, and Daniel Arnold. Digging deeper into these photographers' bodies of work, one thing in common can be seen: the usage of film as their photography medium. Of course, all the names from the 20th century, such as Newton, Leiter, or Meyerowitz, used film, as there were no digital cameras back then. However, the contemporary photographers mentioned are well known to have had an influence during the analog renaissance period over the last decade. This can be seen on social media platforms with the number of followers or subscribers they have, and other media coverage.

Following up on these answers, participants were asked whether there was a correlation between these inspirations and their motivation to use film for photography. P.P. (female, 19 years of age), E.W. (male, 39 years of age), and P.B. (male, 60 years of age) point out that indeed there is a correlation between their inspiration and using film specifically. According to one of the interviewees: "I think so,

because if i look back in all the books that inspire me, there is no digital picture because all these books [...] which I own are [from] before the 2000s” (Photographer E.W., male, 39 years of age)

In one way or another, P.B. and P.P. believe that a certain aesthetic level could be achieved by using film, just like their inspirations:

It's also crazy to think about like how those three photographers can actually get like great results on films. Personally, for me it's like double- It's like twice as impressive, like someone who did [...] shoot photography on digital, you know. I think they inspired me to do so [shooting on film]. (Photographer P.B., male, 60 years of age)

T.d.J (male, 24 years of age) admitted that initially there were no correlations between them, however, inspiration changes along the way. Meanwhile, some other interviewees look up to these names without really minding what medium they used, whether it is digital or film. H.V., (male, 20 years of age) in contrast do think that his inspirations do influence him to shoot film. In his description of the matter:

Like I looked up to what lenses they use, what cameras they use and like, I want to try to match it. It is the same as when you assist someone, when you assist a photographer, you learn how they do a specific thing. So, you work within their style of work, so of course you got influence as well afterwards (Photographer H.V., male, 20 years of age)

#### 4.5 Commitment to Use Film

This research also aims to understand the motivation to use film stock in 2024. In the previous chapter, it was mentioned that price changes over the decades along with production situations regarding film production. Several aspects were found when examining film photographers’ commitment to the practice, by exploring their average spending on buying film stocks, comparing film prices, exploring alternatives with digital cameras, and other personal reasons.

P.P. (female, 19 years of age), as mentioned briefly before, thinks the “physical” appearance of the grain and color on film negatives is more interesting to see and experience compared to pixels in digital images that are easier to manipulate (see Triscari, 2018, pp. 73-75). Again, this reason alone is related to the tactile experience mentioned by Ciricillo (2019, para. 4-21). As a photography student in an art school, she gained access to the campus’ classes on film photography and a darkroom, which provides equipment and chemicals for free. This alone motivated the photographer to explore the possibility of

analog photography and became her process of relaxation, relating to Bourdieu's (1991, p.14) idea that photography practice could be related to escapism and the expression of feelings. Also, due to access provided by her art school, the interviewee has access to buy cheaper film stocks at school, compared to the average market price and compared to the participant's home country (Poland). Therefore, the interviewee will only be spending around €15 per month on film stock and self-development at the academy. When asked about the subject matter, the photographer's response is:

I think artistic value [...] I tend to use it for my projects, and I just love it, so it is kind of sometimes love-hate relationship, but I can't help it [...] I will just keep doing that because It is so nice [...] Plus, there is a lot of classes here on film analog photography and about techniques and references on large, medium, or small format. (Photographer P.P., female, 19 years of age)

Other case on P.B. (male, 60 years of age), the photographer stated that compared to digital images, film gives certain qualities to the image (Rafif, 2023b) that could not be replicated with digital, straight out of camera (see Appendix G). While the interviewee occasionally uses digital camera, mainly to enjoy the image preview feature, the participant stated that he would prefer to use his film camera when it comes to the image results. Keeping in mind that this participant only been shooting film since November of 2023, asking his experience on recent price increase will not be relatable to him. However, the photographer mentioned film prices in the 1980's to 1990's. Within his recollection, one film rolls in the Netherlands then would cost around 4 to 5 Guilders or €2.88-3.60 adjusted to inflation. Though it was not clear which brand or type of film rolls the interviewee mentioned, it is not in line with Eckman's (2021) pricelist. The average spending of P.B. (male, 60 years of age) on film is around €100-200 including development costs in Rotterdam, while also doing self-development at home occasionally in the case of black and white film. In addition, regarding prices, he stated that in the course of upcoming years, he would not mind shooting more film even if the price would increase at a reasonable price. In his word: "I think I will stay shooting film for a couple of years. Even if the prices goes up after the course [of years]. [...] When a film roll is getting [to the price of] €100, I don't think so" (Photographer P.B., male, 60 years of age).

D.B. (male, 19 years of age), understand the more cost-effective position of investing in digital cameras. While contemplating switching to digital or investing in digital cameras, he admits that his commitment to using film has always been influenced by the process in a positive way. Compared to the photographer's home country, Indonesia has cheaper film prices than the Netherlands. For instance, the interviewee pointed out that a consumer-grade film stock such as Kodak Gold 200 is almost 50% cheaper

in Indonesia. Coming from a student, the interviewee spent €1000 in 2023 on buying and developing films. Seeing this cost, the interviewee admitted that he is trying to reduce this spending by shooting less film and being more intentional with every frame to reduce margins of error. For M.L. (male, 23 years of age), the elements of surprise on seeing the pictures for the first time after the rolls got developed made him relive the memory. According to him, starting film photography in 2019 made him experience price differences. For instance, a roll of professional-grade film stock, namely Kodak Portra 400, costs €16; compared to the market price now, the film stock has increased by a few euros to €18–20, depending on the stores. When asked about changing practices due to the price increase, the photographer admitted that buying a cheaper black and white film stock like Fomapan became a habit for practicing and switched to more professional-grade film stocks for more serious projects. The interviewee also spends €150 on average per month and will continue to do so even if there is another price increase.

Photographers like W.V. (male, 45 years of age) treat film photography more as an option than a must. Therefore, his motivation to keep using the medium is only subjected to personal enjoyment and process (Iskandar et al., 2020, p. 476). When asked about his average spending on film, the interviewee argues that it is a hard question to answer, knowing that the photographer has been sent sufficient amount of film rolls from manufacturers and other parties, and when it comes to development, the interviewee has a sponsorship deal with a film lab based in Spain. One thing he mentioned about changing practices due to the film price increase is that the photographer has been enjoying buying films in bulk and bulk loading them himself to save money. H.V. (male, 20 years of age), who only uses film for his photography, said that the commitment he makes to shoot films is also influenced by the overall process. He enjoys developing, scanning, and printing photos in a darkroom as a form of escape, again related to Bourdieu (1991, pp. 14–15). Furthermore, the interviewee also suggests that buying new film cameras also helps him stay motivated by exploring new things in the realm of film photography. When considering Lee's (2021) idea that film cameras have lower initial costs than digital cameras, supports H.V.'s reasoning that exploring new film cameras is more accessible for everyone. The photographer mostly shoots with a medium-format camera, making his average spending of €90 for a box of five Kodak Portra. Other than admiring the process, regarding photography gear as a source of motivation, T.d.J. (male, 24 years of age) felt committed to film photography after investing in a high-end medium-format film camera, the Pentax 67. The photographer explains that the average spending for buying and developing films is around €150 per month, and on some special occasions, like holidays, the number of film rolls could go up.

Changes in practice due to the price increase are a phenomenon that these interviewees experienced. T.d.J. (male, 24 years of age) switched to cheaper consumer-grade film such as Kodak Color Plus 200 or Ultramax 400 but realized that the number of film rolls used had gone up. Akin to this, E.W.



(male, 39 years of age) stated that a couple of years ago, used to shooting professional-grade stock such as Kodak Porta, the photographer would not even think to shoot images on lower-end consumer-grade film stock such as Kodak Gold 200. Spending thousands of euros on film stock and film development made the photographer realize that, in a way, he was wasting money. It is important to note that during the interview, the participants stressed that film is just a commodity and a choice of medium that should not be glorified. Therefore, the answer that E.W. gives when it comes to his commitment to using film is not rigid and open to digital photography. When asked about the price limit that will make him discontinue film photography, the interviewee replied:

I didn't used to care about this, the amount of shots that I made. I was never greedy about taking pictures on film or developing or whatever, until I remember in 2023, I started looking at my costs in shooting film, and I spent five, six, seven, eight, nine hundred euros every month. I used to have my fridge full [with] like hundreds of rolls [...] there were weeks [where] I shot like 10, 20, 30, or 40 rolls. Sometimes I come back from holiday with these bags full. And then I brought them to the lab, and I got the invoice of like €700-800. [...] I'm spending thousands a year on film. I'm not doing that anymore, so now I just shoot a lot of a few rolls a month for fun (Photographer E.W., male, 39 years of age).

In the case of T.B., (male, 30 years of age) as an influencer other than being a professional photographer, talking about film had become part of his career and niche. The interviewee elaborates his experience on film price increase over the years, stating that a pack of three Kodak Gold 200 was around €10 compared to current price of around €35. When it comes to developing fees in the Netherlands, the interviewee always gets 21% tax return and cutting the costs by scanning the negatives by himself, which allows the photographer to only spend €5 per film roll, instead of the average €12-14 development fees. Additionally, the interviewee states that he would try not to limit the amount of pictures he takes by thinking about the cost, meaning that he would continue to shoot on film until the prices had become extremely unreasonable. In his words: “Because the most important part is taking the photo. So, then I said to myself: no matter the price of the film [is], unless it is being ridiculous, like €50 or €60 [...]” (Photographer T.B., male, 30 years of age).

Relating to the first section of this chapter, this research found differences in buying behavior between professional and personal photographers. When taking into account the average number of film rolls each participant uses in a month, most cases indicate that the professional photographer exceeds the amateurs in the amount of film used. Concluding that they have higher buying power based on their

needs, whether it is for personal or professional usage. However, it is worth acknowledging that the professional does assign the extra cost for shooting film to the client instead of including it in their fees. In the unique cases of T.B., W.V., and sometimes E.W., there is an overlap between personal and professional work such as publishing book(s), selling prints, or monetizing contents, making the expense allocation unclear for this research. Other than that, it is important to notice the amount of commitment that these photographers have endured in experiencing film prices increase and their plan to withstand another (rumored) price increase.

#### 4.6 Restraining Factors for Using Film in 2024

Previously stated in this study, it was mentioned how price increases will become a factor in consumers' motivation to purchase and use film stocks in 2024. The likes of W.V., E.W., H.V., or P.B. explicitly stated in the interview that film prices would influence their buying decision or limit their ability to use film products. To another extent, it does make a difference in their photography practice, such as switching to cheaper film stocks, finding alternatives to conventional products, or starting to bulk-load films.

However, other factors were recognized during the interview. For instance, W.V. (male, 45 years of age) mentions that, apart from the financial aspect, technical considerations will also have to be observed to see the limitations that film stocks have during a photoshoot. In his words:

For example, what we said earlier, if there is maybe a lot of movement, but the images need to be still, that's kind of scary then because I don't know what's happening. Or if the lighting is suboptimal for film, if it's more of a dark, moody environment but you still want to have detail in the shadow, maybe it's not the best then. (Photographer W.V., male, 45 years of age)

Due to the physical aspect of film, T.d.J. (male, 24 years of age) thinks that this also could be a small constraint. The interviewee thinks that some occurrence could have happened when a photographer is out of film rolls and could potentially miss moments to photograph. In a way, suggesting that limited by number of photos do rarely happens with digital cameras. Furthermore, T.B. (male, 30 years of age) also raised an important discussion when traveling with film. The photographer expressed his concern when flying (see Wooldridge, 1993, p. 130) due to the nature of airport scans that could damage film emulsions.

## 5. Conclusion

### 5.1 Summary of Findings

This research explores in what ways does film photography is used contemporarily by personal and professional photographers, and further analyzes the motivations and demotivation for photographers to keep buying and using film stocks in 2024. The resurgence of analog photography amidst the dominance of digital media states the significance of film as a medium in the world of photography. Often adored for its aesthetic qualities, tactile process, and nostalgic connection, the photographic medium nurtures film enthusiasts and newcomers, connecting film communities worldwide. While some scholars argue that the digital landscape of photography will eventually eliminate the existence of film photography, the medium showed its comeback and persistent throughout recent years. This research shows how analog photography exists inside contemporary culture and has become part of the current artistic trend, and in relation to this, the forgotten aesthetic that was once outweighed by digital photography, is deemed favorable once again. With that, the research is conducted in the Netherlands, with data collected from interview of professional and amateur photographers based in the country. One thing worth noting, during the interview, it was discovered that one photographer works part-time as a freelancer; hence, this research refers to him as a part-time photographer. Furthermore, during the interview process, in referencing film prices, the research uses the Netherlands' market price, as prices could differ from one country to another due to local customs and taxes.

It is found that film photography is contemporarily used for several different photographic fields. Numerous research participants belong in amateur or personal photographer groups, acknowledge the visual appeal of film is suitable for street photography, documentary photography, and portrait photography. While the professional photographers endeavor film photography for work and assignments on fashion, portraits, documentary and photojournalism. Of course, each photographic field is not strictly applied to certain groups, since the practice of photography is broad and accessible to everyone. This research acknowledges the primary distinction between these groups, is that the professionals receive monetary compensation for their time and work, whereas the amateurs engage in the practice of photography only for personal satisfaction and hobby. Furthermore, in regard to professional photographers, it is crucial to highlight that not all professionals only do commercial work or anything similar, as some of the interviewee also does personal work that eventually leads to print sales, publications, or assignments by newspapers or other media. And within this scope, professional photographers are found to also incorporate film into their body of work, while it is also evident that film

prices have become a significant factor in determining their proposed fees, most interviewees expressed concern that clients are often hesitant to engage with the extra budget and extra risks. Although in some cases, clients may find the idea of incorporating film if it is suitable for the project. In regard to the research question, this is important to highlight as it shows the diversity of visual media that is accepted in the photography industry. This instance showcases how film aesthetics have not only emerged as a trend for casual shooters, but also encouraging to some extent for commercial work and other related professional fields. On that note, most of the interviewees also shoot with digital cameras, especially professional photographers, to balance the outcome and remove unwanted risks, marking a hybrid practice of digital and analog that is deemed to be normal in contemporary times.

This study intends to understand what drives film photographers to utilize the medium as a form of different visual communication style in contrast to digital photography. And this area of discussion is further subjected to the term “film aesthetic”, that is characterized by the combinations of visual presentation, emotional resonance, and process experience. In relation to the other research question, these three points are later found to have a connection to photographers’ motivation to keep using film for their photography. As the result states, when it comes to visual representation, participants frequently mentioned their keen interest in a film's color rendering and grain, with grain adding depth and emotion to the picture and color offering a range of options for expression. With that, film emulsion’s ability to manipulate reality by rendering a unique color or effect, such as halation, is also valued by the interviewee. It is also found that beyond traditional film stock options, there are more to explore when it comes to film stock alternatives (such as motion pictures) that would ultimately grant different results. With this form of visual communication style, this research understands the attributes can be considered flaws in modern-day digital photography standards, as different camera manufacturers are competing to create the perfect and color-accurate picture straight out of the camera. However, part of this analog aesthetic is identified as imperfections that are phenomenologically pursued by film photographers nowadays. Other technical considerations, such as under or overexposure, could lead to varied film photo results that could lead to desirable effects.

Moreover, emotional resonance habitually indicates how one would feel when using analog photography gear and a sense of nostalgia found in the term film aesthetic. The photographers suggest in some way there is an emotional connection when operating film camera that differs from digital tools. The study also reveals that not all participants could identify with the slogan of nostalgia associated with analog photography. Some interviewees who shared memories of experiencing the analog age might resonate with the term; nonetheless, some participants do not agree and to some extent denied this premise by stating that the term was too romanticized. Other than that, the younger photographers in this

research might feel a sense of nostalgia when comparing old photographs to their film images, but at the same time, one is not able to relate to nostalgic feelings as they grew up already in the digital age. Besides that, when it comes to process experience, this research reveals that film photography intentionally made these photographers to slow down during the shooting process. With this, participants' preference for conscientious composition and storytelling is paralleled with the nature of analog cameras that generally are more manual-oriented unlike digitals. This research stresses the experience of the analog process that contradicts the fast-paced personality of digital photography, where to some degree, is not always considered as an advantage by the research participants. Certain photographers argue that digital process occasionally poses challenges in the post-production phase, naming struggles such as long image selection process to excessive photo editing time. Although despite all of this, it is universally agreed in this research that most interviewees recognize the benefits of digital camera products such as unlimited shots and other modern features.

Another form of motivation is found when the interviewees were also asked about their inspiration as photographers to map out different and influential names in the photography industry. Some well-established photographer names were mentioned, both historical names and those of contemporaries. It is informed that most of the names do use film as their photographic medium, and there is an evident correlation between their inspiration and the interviewee's motivation to use and buy film stocks.

In exploring the demotivation of using film stock in 2024, all interview participants expressed their concern about film prices, particularly when comparing them to prior years, and acknowledged the price increases. Due to the different backgrounds of nationalities and previous domiciles, it is also understood that the Netherlands has relatively higher prices for films and processing fees. Photographers altered their methods as a result, beginning with shooting fewer frames than usual, loading film in bulk to reduce costs, exploring alternatives such as consumer-grade film, or transitioning to less expensive film options. Other factors outside of financial aspects were also mentioned, such as traveling with film while anticipating the dangers of airport scans that could result in damaging the film emulsion and the physical limitations that film possesses.

## 5.2 Implications

What this study contributes to the academic world is by presenting the impact of re-appropriation of film photography to the creative industry and help to understand the diversity of current visual media and communication landscape. Though numerous academic researches have been done in examining the resurgence trend and perceived aesthetic of film photography, this research serves to fill the gap between those existing academic literature, and on how the trend is contemporarily used and utilized by

photographers nowadays. Furthermore, this study has brought another discussion to the table by exhibiting challenges that this form of photographic medium is experiencing, such as prices increase, and delves into how film photographer endures and stay motivated and committed to continue their craft. Practical implication wise, another study on film photography trend can be beneficial for different stakeholders involved. It presents a market insight for manufacturers and retailers to fit their marketing strategies and offerings, while also help photographers both professional and personal to understand challenges and benefits of shooting film, ultimately guiding their purchasing behavior.

### 5.3 Limitations and Recommendations

Research limitation is admitted in this study as it is only conducted in the Netherlands, resulting in smaller reach and a less diverse sample set in terms of age, gender, nationality, and economic background. Further study needs to incorporate larger sample sizes, as it would result in more diverse and precise results when it comes to perceptions of the contemporary usage of film photography and consumers' motivations. Other than that, this research would also mention that the term “nostalgia” or “nostalgic” is commonly used to promote and describe this photographic medium, as seen in so many online articles, videos, and posts. Yet, the term does not echo much in this research. Bigger-scale research with diverse age groups needs to be conducted to see whether there is truly an effect of nostalgia in the practice of analog photography or is it merely a slogan used by businesses. In addition, future research should also be conducted to examine the perception of sustainability from a film photographer’s perspective, as it is not really a topic often discussed in the community but does get mentioned a few times during this research’s interview process.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A Interview Guideline

Interviewee name:	
Interviewer name:	
Date and Time:	

#### Introduction

Briefly explain the purpose of interview

As in April of 2024, more than 26 million Instagram users uses the hashtag #FilmIsNotDead. This indicates significant numbers of people who are still interested in using the analog medium for their creative endeavors, defying the digital dominated market for photography. However, recent data indicates prices increase for film stocks, leaving questions on why and how film photographers are keeping up with the current situation.

The primary goal of this interview is to understand interviewee's perception on in what ways does analog photography is contemporarily used, and what motivates and demotivates them to continue using and purchasing film stocks in 2024

The interview will take approximately 60-90 minutes.

#### Confidentiality

- Check that the participant has received the consent sheet
- Ask for consent to record the interview. Explain that recording will be accessed by the researcher and be stored securely.
- Confirm that any quote will be stated anonymously in the research and will not be linked to any individual. No individuals will be identified in the reporting, unless consented otherwise.

#### Verbal consent

1. Would you like to participate in this interview?

#### Discussion topics

- Section A: Context

- Section B: Identifying photography as a profession or as a hobby
- Section C: Perception on film photography
- Section D: Motivation and demotivation
- Section E: Wrap-up and closing

#### Section A: Context

1. Tell me about yourself (age, sex, location, and nationality)
  - a. If you're not a Dutch resident, how long have you been in The Netherlands?
2. What is it that you do? (Day job)
  - a. If you're a full-time photographer, how long have you been doing it for?
  - b. If you're not a full-time photographer, how long have you been doing it for (studying, full-time job, retirement)?
3. How do you got exposed to photography?

#### Section B: Identifying photography as a profession or as a hobby

1. Do you identify yourself as a photographer? If so, are you professional or a personal photographer?
  - a. How do you differentiate between a professional and personal photographer?
2. How do you describe your line of work when it comes to photography?
  - a. Is it something you exclusively do?
3. If you're a professional photographer, what is your main source of income?
  - a. How do you find work/clients with your photography?
  - b. What is the market of your line of work here in the Netherlands?
4. If you're not a professional photographer, have you ever made an income out of photography?
5. Can you tell me about your inspiration? (who or what inspire you as a photographer)

#### Section C: Perception on Film Photography

1. Tell me about Film photography as choice of medium for photographers including yourself
  - a. In general, what are your thoughts on the medium?
2. Do you shoot with film as part of your workflow?
  - a. How long have you been using film for?
  - b. Is it something that you do exclusively?



- c. If not, how do you incorporate film to your creative process?
- 3. How did you get introduced to film photography?
  - a. Can you tell me specific events, trends, or someone who influenced you to shoot film?
- 4. What made you committed to use film for your photography?
- 5. Is there a correlation between your inspiration and using film specifically?
- 6. How do you compare film photography with digital photography?
  - a. Is there a specific reason where you prefer one medium over another?
- 7. In terms of aesthetic, what makes film interesting for you?
  - a. Can you show some pictures and point out what is interesting about shooting those images on film?

#### Section D: Motivation and Demotivation

- 1. Are you aware of the cost of using film these days?
  - a. What is your thought on the prices increase?
  - b. In terms of prices, how different it is from when you were starting?
  - c. What do you think about film prices and processing fees in the Netherlands?
- 2. On average how much do you spend for buying film stocks in a month?
  - a. Is that including the processing fees?
  - b. Can you name a specific brand and product that you often use?
- 3. What keeps you motivated to still use the medium?
  - a. For professional use, is there some correlation with finding jobs and clients?
    - i. If so, does this job opportunities demand you to use film?
    - ii. Is the price of film a huge factor on your charged fees?
    - iii. Did you ever have to explain the reason why you are shooting with film on a job or assignments?
- 4. What demotivates you to use film in 2024? (film price, turnaround time, margins of errors)

#### Section D: Motivation and Demotivation

- 1. Any further comments? – are there any topics to raise that we haven't discussed?

Thank you for participating.

For further information please contact:

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Appendix B. The result of pushing film



Figure 1. A couple comforting each other. Personal photography by the author.

Appendix C. Halation effect on film

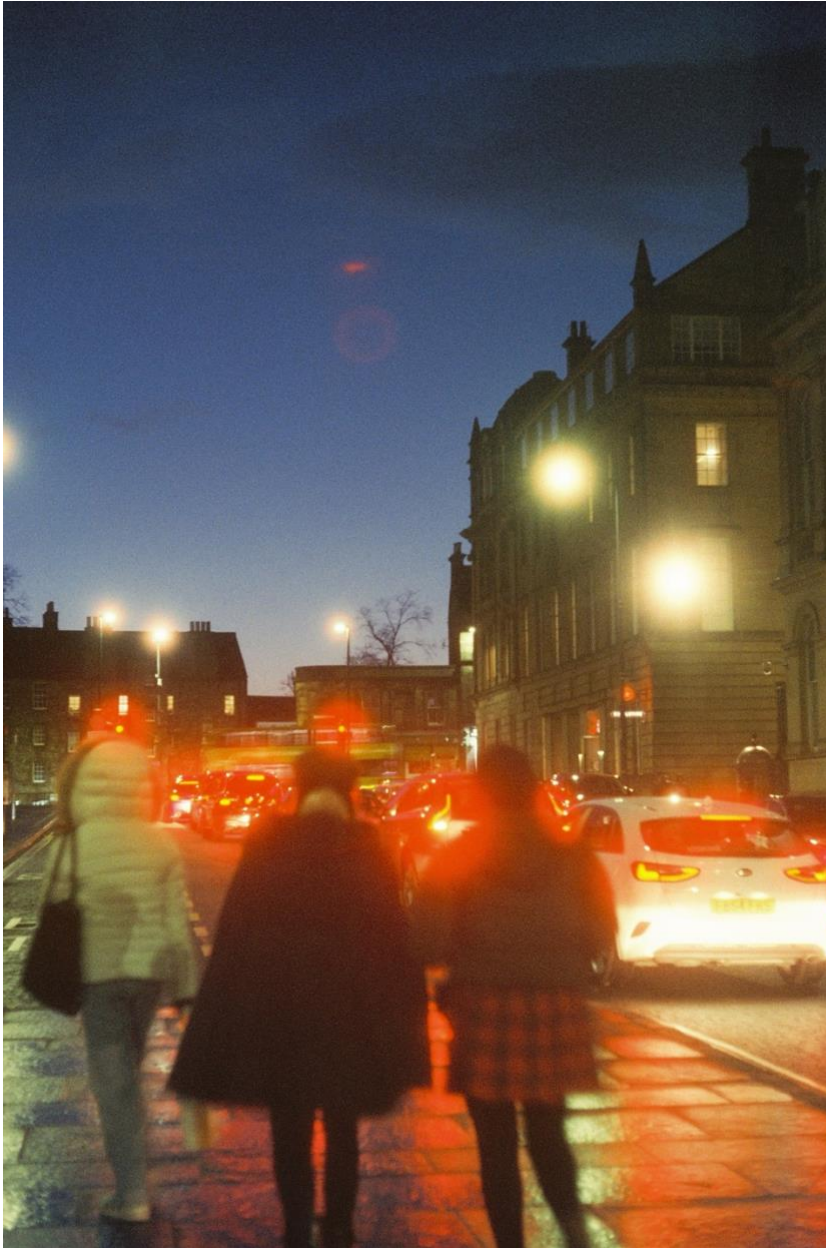


Figure 2. Streets of Edinburgh. Personal photography by the author.



Figure 3. Untitled photograph of nuns coming out of a bus. Source: Wortman, E. (2018). Retrieved from <https://www.instagram.com/p/BjPQhqwAIAy/?igsh=aDMwZ2pzdzhnZnNv>

Appendix E. Film prices over the years

Year (Source)	Film	Price (adjusted)	
1984 (Free Style Photo)	Kodak Vericolor III 160	€	8,47
	Kodak Ektachrome	€	14,02
1995 (Popular Photography Article)	Kodak Vericolor III 160	€	15,67
	Kodak Ektachrome	€	24,85
	Kodak (Royal) Gold 200	€	11,29
2005 (Adorama)	Kodak Portra 160NC	€	8,20
	Kodak Ektachrome	€	10,90
	Kodak Gold 200	€	4,97

Table 1. Film prices comparison (Eckman, 2021)

Appendix F. How film could alter results



Figure 4. South Sri Lanka. Source: Besuijen, F. (2024). Retrieved from <https://www.instagram.com/p/C7Tqpe0o4FX/>

Appendix G. Digital and film photography comparison



Figure 5. Digital and film photography comparisons. Personal photography by the author.