



To Specialize or Not to Specialize with Your Photography – That is the Question

A Post By: **Karthika Gupta**

Photography is one of those careers where the industry is so broad that realistically you can select any field to focus on. Even if you define yourself as a particular type of photographer, you can further niche yourself into one of the many subcategories that are available in almost every genre.

For example, if you are a fashion photographer you can further categorize yourself as catalog, high fashion, fashion blogger and/or editorial. Portrait photographers can focus on maternity, family, newborn, high school seniors, etc.



There is such a multitude of options available that sometimes it does get a bit overwhelming. It is true that there is a market for almost any type of photography, but you have to understand that you cannot be a photographer for everyone. Not only would you get burned out, but your business messaging and branding could be confusing to potential customers.

So how do you choose what genre of photography to focus on or specialize in? Is it monetary or interest driven? Here are a few things to think about when deciding to specialize in a certain area of photography or be a jack of all trades



#1 – Interests and Skills



Be honest with yourself and figure out where your interests really lie.

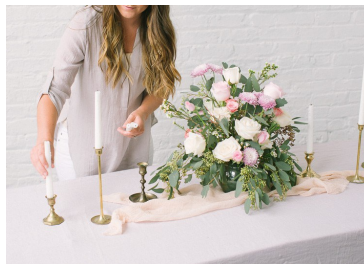
Are you as passionate about **nature and landscape photography** as you are about **newborn photography**?

What are your strengths? Do you have the magic touch to calm any sort of pet? Are you an animal whisperer? Or are you someone who can maintain their composure no matter what, so dealing with a crazy stressed out bride is a walk in the park?

Photography is as much about soft skills like communications and people interactions as it is about technical skills.

#2 – Market size and potential

This is probably not something that we creative people really want to think about but analyzing the market size for your ideal clientele is really crucial. It does not have to be specific numbers – even a quick ballpark is sufficient.



Look at housing data, high school enrollment, photography businesses in your area, and other factors to figure out the market size. Even if your market size is small, try to understand if there is enough potential to upsell.



For example, if you focus on weddings, are your clients more likely to hire you for anniversary, maternity and/or family portraits because they like, know and trust you and your work? If so, then maybe family portraiture and weddings are markets that you could potentially build.

#3 – Messaging or branding

This is an often overlooked part of a market analysis and if I am completely honest, one that even I ignore from time to time. I ignore it because I don't have the bandwidth to manage multiple websites, multiple social media accounts, and multiple channels.



More often than not, one falls off the bandwagon. If you are working and playing in two genres that have a lot of overlap then you can get away with using branding and messaging that speaks to all the areas under one umbrella cohesively. However, if your markets don't overlap then I strongly suggest you separate out the businesses so they can be their own entities.

For example, a good friend of mine is a wedding photographer and a business coach for creative entrepreneurs. She has two different websites, two social media accounts, and two different businesses. But she is talking about them across each channel because overall her brand aesthetics are the same and she can cross-pollinate content from one to the other. She has targeted her coaching clients as other photographers, artists, and creatives in the wedding industry.



Now, regardless of what I say and what you might think, this argument about specializing is not as easy as black and white. The reality is that sometimes we all go through dry spells, times where there are no paying clients, yet our bills have to be paid. It is easy enough to run a marathon weekend of family sessions and make as much or more than what you would make with one wedding.

Sometimes it feels like inquiries for all the things you don't want to do come in the door and none of the work that you really want and love. At the end of the day, all I can say is that we each do what we must to earn money, pay the bills and have some semblance of enjoyment from our work.



Conclusion



So, what's the final verdict? Should you specialize in your photography or not?

Yes, it makes good business sense to focus all your efforts and energies on your chosen genre. There are a lot of benefits to specializing, such as technical and creative expertise, name and brand recognition, etc. But when there isn't a consistent flow of clients because of external factors like market changes, client needs and/or a recession, you do what you must to stay afloat and earn a living.



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Karthika Gupta is a **lifestyle, wedding, and travel photographer** based in the Chicago area. Her images are fun, fresh and natural and her love for nature makes it way into most of her images. She also has a **Free Travel Photography Demystified E-Course** a 5-Day video series to help you improve your travel photography.

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