

## **Golden Photo and Media**

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## **ABSTRACT**

After discovering photography in 2018 and dedicating the past year of my life to this passion I want to turn it into a career. This paper looks into the necessary research it takes to start a photography business. After carefully conducting the research, I created a business proposal appropriate to our current pandemic situation. I looked at different ways COVID-19 will affect my desired profession and the events and music industry in which I hope to work. After thoroughly familiarizing myself with these industries, I was able to discern that a career in photography is possible if I market myself, expand my clientele, have honorable prices, and continue to put my foot in the door of different opportunities. In 2021 - following COVID-19 - the music and events industry is expected to boom, thus giving me hope for a future career as an event photographer.

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

In 2018 I came back from abroad and had no idea what to do. I was lost and without any passion, direction or idea of how to find one, and so I decided to start over. Within a month of my return, I discovered Subsessions, a local arts collective that allowed me to rediscover myself through creativity, individuality, and most importantly; music. My first six months with Subsessions was incredible. I helped plan and execute a music festival, channeled my creativity, learned graphic design, and discovered an outlet that encouraged me to be my best self and to be happy.

In Fall 2018 Subsessions was throwing it's second festival and needed someone to run the media team. I stepped up despite the fact I knew nothing about cameras or organizing a media team. The event came and went, and the media team was not so successful, and so I kept trying to find a place where I could succeed. I decided to dive further into photography and took a studio photo class at Cal Poly. Through studio photography I learned a new way to express myself and utilize my brain. Just as my photo class was coming to an end, Subsessions was starting to plan its biggest music festival yet, Stoke the World. My original role for this event was curating social marketing and promotion. I was also acting as a counterpart/assistant to the person we engaged to run the media team. As the event got closer and closer, the media team leader grew less and less involved until 4am the morning of the event when he cancelled. At this point I fully took over his job in a full blown panic. I spent the drive to the festival scheduling and contacting

the 34 photographers and videographers that I recruited and by the time I reached the venue half my team had quit. I felt the pressure to capture the entire event.

Stoke the World taught me what passion feels like, and what undeniable motivation will do to you. At some point during those three days, 7,000 photos, and 3 hours of sleep I fell in love with capturing the serendipity of music festivals. I could feel it in my gut: I had finally found my "thing," the feeling I had been chasing.

Following Stoke the World, I catapulted myself into event photography. I followed every connection I had and ended up photographing four different music festivals by the end of Summer. I began marketing myself as a content manager, curator, photographer, and social media marketing specialist. Companies and festivals are reaching out to me to lead their media teams and photograph their events. I got a job offer at the end of the year to work for one of my dream companies, Dirtybird Records, doing content management, photography and content curation in the spring. At the start of 2020, I was flown to Costa Rica with a content team to photograph a week long music festival. It's now March of 2020 and I move to LA in one week to make my dreams come true, and I need a plan to make it all happen.

Everything happened so fast and I never had the opportunity to create a clear platform for my photography and media business. I want to take the time to reflect on what my creative vision is as well as my goals and dreams and create a business plan that both incorporates my artistic vision and allows for my future success.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERARY REVIEW

It is important that I define who I believe I am -- a media entrepreneur.

According to Hoag (2008) a media entrepreneurship "refers to the traditional mass communications systems and content genres as well as other technologies for mediated human speech. This includes traditional publishing, traditional electronic media, motion pictures, video gaming, recorded music, advertising, etc". Hang and van Weezel (2007, p.54), define media as "the industries that produce and sell information as well as entertainment products and services".

"Media entrepreneurship is taking the risk to exploit opportunities (creation/discovery) by innovative use of (radical/incremental/imitative) resources (ownership/control) in transform of an idea into activities to offer value (creation/delivery) in a media form (content/platform/user data) that meets the need of a specific portion of market (businesses or consumers), either in an individual effort or by creation of new venture or entrepreneurial managing of an existing organizational entity and to earn benefit (money/ attention/favorite behavior) from one of the sources that is willing to pay for (direct consumers, advertisers, data demanders or any customer of generated information of consumers)" (*Salamzadeh,2019*). By positioning myself as a media entrepreneur and a photographer, I can increase my business and my customer market. My main focus is building and expanding my photography business. To focus my business

and offerings I need to research all sides of the photography industry and the specific market I want to work in.

### *Looking into Festival Photography*

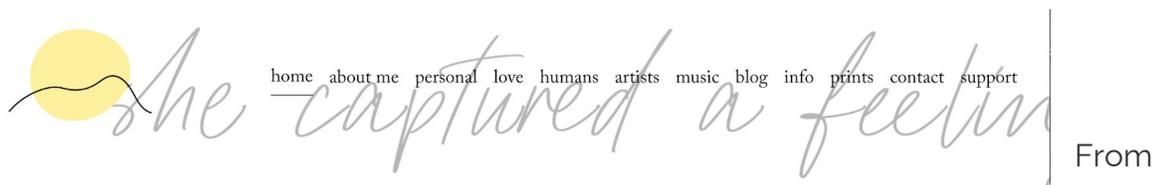
Following the discovery of media entrepreneurs, I needed to look more into the specifics of different types of photography, such as event and portrait photography. My goal is to photograph major music events and festivals such as Lucidity, Lightning in a Bottle, EDC, and many others (Watson, 2020).

Live Nation was the top grossing music event company in 2019 with \$49,000,000 in income from ticket sales. Live Nation is responsible for throwing Austin City Limits, Electronic Daisy Festival, and Lollapalooza. AEG presents was ranked second with \$14,000,000 in income (Sisario, 2015). This company is responsible for events such as, Coachella and Stagecoach. Insomniac Events and GoldenVoice are two other huge event companies that throw a variety of festivals in California. All of these events bring in some of the best festival photographers in the state. In the future I hope to work for the companies I just listed. I have already worked for much smaller event companies such as Dirtybird, Lucidity, CRSSD, and Subsessions.

In 2020 I worked on the Lucidity media team and was planning to act as Head of Photography at the event. Unfortunately the event was cancelled due to COVID-19. Prior to cancellation I learned a lot by working prep on the Lucidity media team. Working on the team taught me how small festivals operate. Part of my job with Lucidity was recruiting and hiring photographers and videographers to

shoot the event. My boss, Wesley Wolfbear, explained a lot of the specifics. Lucidity judges photographers through their instagram presence as well as through their website and portfolio. Websites need to incorporate at least thirty photos from one event in order for viewers to properly rate a photographer's work. Within the event photos there should be portraits, candid, djs, stages, and environment. After going through 70+ photography websites I was able to discover some of the most important things for a website to have and show:

1. The website should be in a horizontal layout rather than a vertical. A horizontal orientation allows viewers to see all the photographer's work and discern if they have a certain style or not.
2. The website should be broken into different sections. There should be events, portraits, creative work, and studio work, etc. This organizes your website so a potential customer can find exactly what they are looking for, or realize what they want is not available.



this example you can see the way this photographer organized her website to make it easier for the user. I will address websites more further on in this paper.

After judging websites for Lucidity, I looked into compensation. I decided to research compensation in two different ways: small festival versus freelance

photography. I started with Lucidity, a small festival with a budget of only \$159,850, according to *Daily Nexus, Santa Barbara (Riviera , 2019)* . Smaller family run festivals do not often have the funds to pay a photographer the industry standard in cash; however, they often find ways to make photographing the event well worth the artist's time. Lucidity offers their best photographer \$200 cash, three festival tickets (to keep or sell), meal passes, shower passes, and car camping. This has a total value of more than \$1,000. This photographer makes more than 3x what anyone else makes on the Lucidity media team. Most other photographers receive an email saying " In exchange for your participation and contribution of photo/video content under our Creative Commons agreement, you will receive one staff ticket, one car camping pass, one meal per shift, and staff access to showers. Larger festivals, like Envision Festival in Costa Rica or Lightning in a Bottle pay photographers upwards of \$800 for the weekend according to Envision media head James Scott. Festival and event photography is typically a great way to make a quick dollar. However, due to COVID-19 hundreds of live events were cancelled leaving event photographers to figure out a new method of doing business. According to Billboard Magazine, all future live events are cancelled till January 2021 at the earliest. According to analysts at the U.S. Investment Bank, the postponements in the music industry will lead to a 75% drop in revenue (CNBC). To make ends meet photographers are "getting creative and taking matters into their own hands by conducting FaceTime photoshoots, major magazines like Vogue have started

participating in this trend (CNN)." Although the pay isn't quite as high for Facetime photoshoots if you do enough, like Haley Busch, they can start to add up.

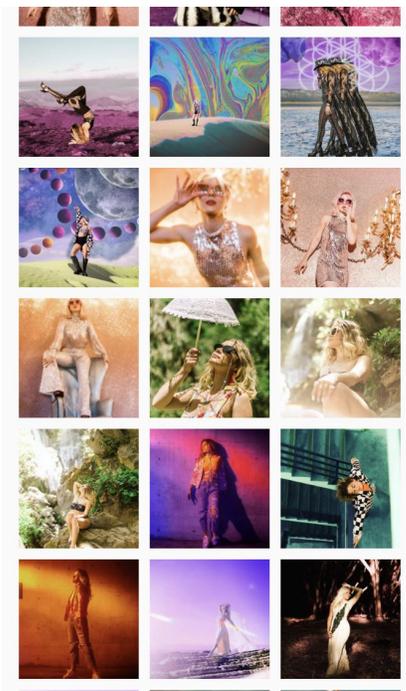
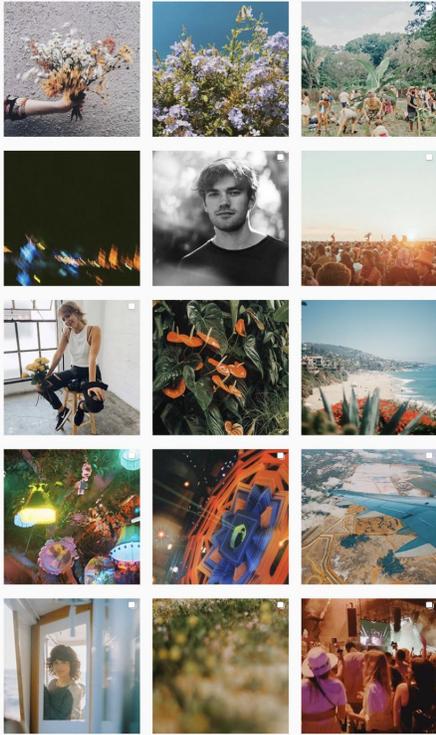
Prior to the epidemic, portrait and freelance photographers would make on average \$100 to \$250 per hour depending on skill level (IBIS WORLD, 2020). While event photography is down, portraits, family photography, and studio work are great ways to make an income. On average, family photography can run from \$150 for a short 1 location session to upwards of \$1,000 for multiple locations, wardrobe changes, and prints. Photographers can increase their profit margin by offering package bundles. For example, a \$800 package might include:

- One large print to hang on a wall
- Credit to go towards a portrait book
- Digital access to all the photos
- Multiple shoot locations

Photographers' pricing can range from \$100 to \$2000+ all depending on experience, clientele, and specific photography market. To get more experience and expand clientele it is vital to market yourself on social media with an online portfolio. As social media becomes more prevalent it is important that your social media, specifically Instagram, maintain a virtual persona that represents you, your clientele, and your brand. Your social media should be slightly different than your website to offer a different perspective of your brand. A website should be straight and to the point. The website should outline your different types of work as a photographer, clients, and ways to contact you. Your Instagram is where you have a little more free

room and voice to play around with. I decided to look into one of my favorite photographers and see how she markets herself on Instagram.

Haley Busch, a portrait, event, and lifestyle photographer, markets herself through opening up to her followers, keeping them in the loop about her feelings, energy, and day-to-day life. Throughout the Black Lives Matter movement, for example, she is keeping her followers updated about how she is working to support Black Lives Matter. She posts



photos without any grid system keeping orange, greens, and blue colors that are consistent throughout her feed and aesthetic. Some photographers use a grid system to keep their Instagram feed organized. However, I think it can make the feed look messy or unrelated. A grid layout is when the account holder posts 3 related photos in a row. Each new row on the profile is usually a completely different shoot. As you can tell from the photo above, if the grid gets off the users profile looks messy and confusing.

As a brand I want my customers to know who I am and what my art is all about. I want my followers to experience the magic of the world with me. To keep my Instagram interesting, I constantly post different types of photographic content making sure all posts follow the same aesthetic. I write personal captions so it doesn't seem like I'm hiding behind my brand on Instagram. I see a lot of brands and photographers whose Instagram profiles seem fake and insincere. My goal for my Instagram is that it will help expand my clientele by allowing followers to get to know me and directly funneling these customers to my website where they can book a session with me. Instagram allows my current customers to stay up to date with me and continuously engage in my brand and content.

Pricing depends on experience, specific industry, the customer or business and scale of the project. . For example, the median annual wage for camera operators in television, video, and small motion pictures was \$54,570 in May of 2018 compared to video and film editors who make on average \$10,000 more a year. Editors and cinematographers working on major motion pictures can make up to \$150,000 a year (Salaries , 2020). Most cinematographers make more than photographers because cinematographers often have multiple shoot days. On average, freelance photographers in Los Angeles make \$32,000 a year (Salary: Fashion Photographer in Los Angeles, CA 2017). Looking at annual pay doesn't necessarily help me decide on hourly and daily rates so I researched different photographers across California and their rates. Haley Busch, an up and coming photographer charges on average \$377 for a 2-hour shoot. Other photographers

charge anywhere from 150-400 for 1-2 people for a 2-hour shoot. The more experience and well known a photographer is the higher their rates are. Some photographers, such as Trippy Dana or Amanda Adams charge up to \$1000 for client work.

### **Chapter 3: Mission and Vision Statement**

COVID 19 has affected my freelance business as a photographer. In an ideal world, prior to COVID 19, my primary clientele would be working in the entertainment industry. I would photograph music festivals around the world, take artist headshots, and create promotional video and photo content for upcoming releases. On the side I would do freelance work with different fashion influencers for specific luxury fashion brands. For the next few months, I plan to work on creative concept shoots to prepare for a post COVID 19 world. Following this epidemic I want to invest my time in media entrepreneurship. I will create a foundation where artists in the entertainment industry contract with me to create marketing media content for them. Content can include headshots, short video promo videos, animated photo gifs, and social media rebranding, Marketing myself as a media entrepreneur will allow my photography business to flourish.

Mission Statement: My wish is to capture your story in a series of images by working together to create a dreamland where you are your truest and most comfortable self.

Vision Statement: To capture the feeling inside a moment.

## **CHAPTER 4 : Business Proposal**

### *Product and Service Description*

As a freelance photographer I will offer creative, festival, fashion, family and event photography to my customers. In some of my package options I will include other forms of multimedia such as, gifs, promotional videos, spotify video media, and instagram layouts.

### *Target Market*

My target market ranges from young adults working in the entertainment industry to older customers needing marketing tools for fashion companies. I attract individuals specifically working in the music event industry that want to advertise and celebrate their events. As a new photographer my target market is not set in stone so I have the ability to expand or narrow my market as time goes on.

As an event photographer I specifically attract up and coming music festivals located up and down the California Coast. I have worked to create and run media operations for Subsessions, a small San Luis Obispo music and event company. Through Subsessions I have connected with Boiz House and through them, Inquiry Records. Each company or business I work for connects me to a similar business further down the coast. My current demographic does not pay as well as other festivals. Smaller events recruit up-and-coming musicians and photographers to create their events. Beginning event photographers are not expected to be paid as much.

### *Competitive Analysis*

In San Luis Obispo there is no event industry so I do not have any competition when it comes to live music events. The small boutique fashion photography industry is hard to break into because it is saturated with long standing local photographers. If and when I am able to move to Los Angeles following COVID 19, I will have a good chance of breaking into the market. There will still be long-standing preferred photographers, but the market is so expansive in LA I will not have to worry about closely competing with other photographers.

### *Operational Strategy*

Photography has the ability to operate anywhere. Everywhere I bring my camera and photo equipment becomes a location shoot. I need to purchase studio lights to expand my photography business and operations. Having lighting will allow me to put up backdrops and take stylized and controlled shoots.

### *SWOT Analysis*

- **Strengths:** I have strong experience leading media teams and working with different photographers. I have shot several boutique festivals and 2 large festivals positioning me ahead of most "new" festival photographers. I experiment a lot with my craft which allows me to create new and unique work. I currently work for Dirtybird Records which is a big festival company. From working at Dirtybird to my previous industry work I have a solid professional network in California.

- **Weakness:** As a photographer I have no professional training and little experience in the studio. I lack studio equipment so I am unable to practice and improve. I am not as experienced with posing models and working with people I am unfamiliar with. I am moving to Washington temporarily where I have no professional photography network.
- **Opportunity:** I have ongoing relationships with up-and-coming artists in the music industry. Having these connections gives me more opportunities to branch out and attract new clientele. I am moving to a new state where I do not have many connections. I have one connection that can help me into the Seattle music scene. I offer a different and unique style within event photography which allows me to create and fill a gap in the market.
- **Threats:** The current economic state is a complete threat to the photography and the entertainment industries. During COVID-19 stay at home orders photography is considered a luxury service and will not be permitted until phase 4 of re-opening occurs. Once "Shelter in Place" is over there is no guarantee when the market will return to normal and event and festival photography will resume as normal.

## **Chapter 5: Conclusion**

If everything works out "perfectly," photography can be a great industry to work in. My original plan to move to LA to work in the entertainment industry was the ideal way to position myself as a photographer. However COVID-19 has disrupted my plans and I will have to find a way to break into a completely different market in a matter of months.

COVID-19 has posed a huge threat to the photography and entertainment industry that will take several months - if not longer - to recover from. With shelter in place, photographers cannot conduct real photoshoots with their clients causing photographers to suffer financially. The music industry has also seen a 70% decrease in revenue and expects to continue to see decline until the end of 2020 (Statista, 2020). While COVID-19 has been destructive to the music and events industry, it is expected to see a 160% increase in revenue in 2021. By 2030, Goldman Sachs estimates the online music streaming market to capture 1.2 billion users (Meredith, 2020).

New technology is also affecting the photography industry. iPhones and other smart phones have the ability to take DSLR quality photos, making anyone a "professional photographer." Instead of influencers paying freelance photographers to take photos they can set up a tripod or ask a friend to take an "Instagram worthy"

photo. As smart phones and apps make special skills easy for everyone photographers have to identify new and creative ways to stay relevant and attract customers (Malik, 2017).

The 21st century has been a digital and technological revolution. Photography has moved rapidly from film to point-and-shoot to DSLR digital to mirrorless. If everyone wants the newest camera technology, why are such a large number of photographers going back to film? I believe part of the photography industry is headed back to the good old film days. In the past 4 years, film has seen an annual growth of 5% a year (Laurent, 2017). A new trend among film photography is all in camera effects. Instead of cool filters, editing, and photoshop, photographers are proving their skill level by creating completely in the raw. Shooting film puts photographers ahead of the market by offering their clients a unique look.

## SUPPORTING MATERIALS

### Website

<https://nataliegoldstein.format.com/>

### Copyright standards

Under the Copyright law of the United States of America I own all rights to reproduce, sell, distribute and display these photos in any way I chose. Unless, a written contract has been signed designating this work as "Work -for-hire"

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### Pricing

- **Package 1 (200):**
  - 1 re-edit
  - 30 photos+
  - 1 location
- **Package 2: (350):**
  - 2 re-edit
  - 1 layout instagram post
  - 50 photos

- 2 gifs
- 2 locations
- **Package 4 ( 550):**
  - 2 re-edit
  - 2 layout instagram post
  - 100 photos
  - 2 locations
  - 2 gifs
  - 1 15sec promo video

Family Photo Pricing

**\$325.00** (4 people +\$50 for each additional person)

- 1.5 hours
- 1 Location
- Link to your edited family photos for downloadable use

**\$525.00** (4 people +\$50 for any additional person)

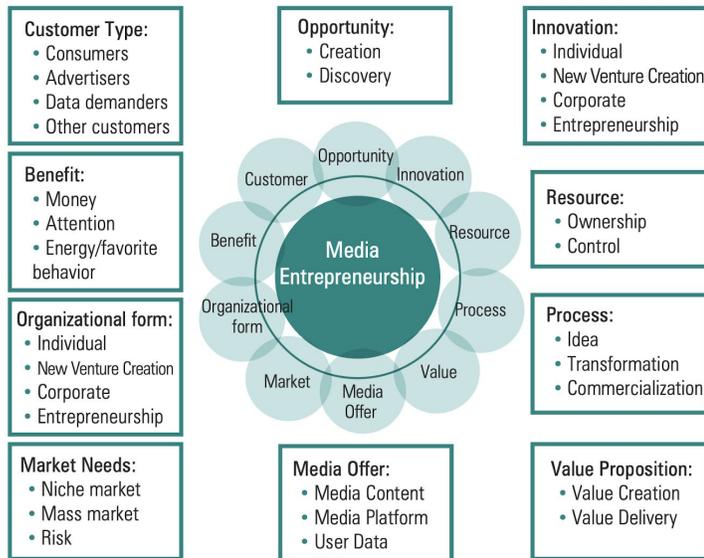
- 4 Hours
- 2 Locations
- 3 Family gifs
- Link to your edited family photos for downloadable use

**Add Ons:**

- +\$100: Personalized family photo book
- +\$25 fee (per photo): For any specific re-edits

@ARTBYGOLDIE

Figure 1. Elements of Media Entrepreneurship Definition.



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