Photography Ethics of Amateur Photographers

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Abstract : The technology development makes people have a lot of freedom in expressing their imagination. There are varied media that can implement it, and one of them is photography. It was Created in 1839 in France, and well-known in Indonesia in 1984. It can be considered the latest expression media in art, as what has been mentioned by Niepce and Dugurre. The tool sophistication called 'Camera' sometimes becomes a benchmark. However, the most important thing is the creativity of the users. When we act as a photographer, then we are directing the objects to pose as what we want. However, we still can find some photographers who do not use the ethics in taking pictures, for instance in documenting pictures of religious ceremonies which should be considered sacred moments. This study is aimed to highlight such phenomenon in order to enrich the information concerning this issue. The qualitative approach is based on the statements of a professional photographer, Erik Prasetya, for analizing some photography ethics of amateur photograhers. The findings showed that the three types of photographers categorized as Hunters, Pickpockets, and Heart stealers are around.

Keywords: *photography ethics, amateur photograhers, photography*

Introduction

From the beginning of its creation, camera has become something luxurious, starting from Camera Entry pro, Semi pro, to High end. The facilities which are getting sophisticated make them easier to use cameras. Some of these people learn it autodidactically, from books, on-line services, or courses.

The camera quality itself will go along with its price. Its expensive price makes it only belong to certain classes. However, people are still eager to have it. Furthermore, according to Anton Ismael on Chip Foto VIDEO 2010 Magazine,"Photography used to exist in exclusive communities. They loved pictures, academics, medical, and documentation." Sometimes these people are beguiled by the sellers' persuasion, and firstly driven to learn how to deal with photography techniques.

When someone is able to purchase a camera, mostly he will claim himself as a photographer and it can be accepted based on individual rights. These people are called amateur photographers consisting on communities and hobbyists. They love to hunt to various places with their personal

satisfaction as the main goal, love to have beautiful unique pictures, and then be praised by compliments. These give them wonderful sensation when they find hundreds of 'Likes' from their followers.

To find out the present phenomena dealing with these amateur photographers, the researcher is going to analize their attitude focusing on their photography ethics based on the experience and statements given by a professional photographer, Erik Prasetya.

Materials and Methods

This qualitative research was made to understand phenomena of the photography ethic which is considered principles reflecting the values of a society – guidelines for its members to treat each others fairly according to accepted ideals (Katzenstein: 2010), on Amateur photographer especially in Indonesia known as one of developing countries in this era. Even though Indonesia has got influences from western countries through films, musics, commerce, education, tourisn, and so on, the life values still remain. Indonesian people are famous for their hospitality. They respect each other, particularly when it deals with religion diversity.

This paper was to analize the photography ethics found in several pictures documentation about religious ceremony in Indonesia published by some print media. These pictures were taken by some amateur photographers. Sedayu (2014) defines ameteur photographers as communities that are usually supported by photography hobbyists, or those who are fond of photography for fun or merely taking picture for personal satisfaction. This phenomenon causes indifference, unwittingly or indeed even realizing it. When those photographers manage to capture a unique moment, they will have the sense of pride.

Regarding to this, in the book of *On Street Photography* written by Erik Prasetya on page 30, reveals the three types of photographers in taking pictures dealing with the ethical problem which is divided into these categories:

1. Hunters

   This type of photographers do not care if they bother others. They treat the photography objects as their prey whose feelings are not taken into account.

2. Pickpockets

   Photographing in silence, but when they get caught, they will turn away. They usually avoid eye-contacts with their objects. If the people they photograph do not like and feel unhappy with it, they will turn away and leave them.

3. Heart Stealer

They photograph with low-profile, half—secretly for getting the natural fairness. After taking pictures, they do not hide themselves and their action. In fact, they make the eye-contact properly.

These three photographer types are real. The aim of a photographer in taking pictures is getting the moments which are quick and exclusive. However, sometimes it makes them ignore the ethics for an interesting picture. Yet, it is not right. These photographers are considered do not have/ have less empathy to their photography objects, in this case human beings.

Results

Dealing with their attitude to the photography objects, Waisak moment in 2013 was a shameful disgrace. The distance of the photographers and the Banthe was too close, as the result, the sanctity of the religious ceremony was reduced. This issue invited some comments and one of them quoted in a web of Desi Suryanto/JIBI/Harian Jogja 2014, saying "Traditional ceremonies are considered a powerful magnet for photographers who hunt memorable pictures; unfortunately, a few photographers do not care with norms and decency in photographing the traditional ceremonies".

Fifure 1. Source: JIBI Photo

Figure 2. Source : Claudia Von Nasution/@odeelix

The pictures above reflect the impolite attitude to a sacred religious ceremony. When people were conducting reverent worship, they freely photographed the activities from a very close distance and even with flash. Most of the time, when they make street photography, they freely photograph the objects without having initial personal approach or the communication absence. In a photography exhibition, a visitor was angry because he found out his picture in the exhibition, meanwhile he admitted that he had not been informed or given any permission to publish it.

Good attitude is developed from the environment in which were born. It does not merely refer to photography but rather the daily attitude. Indonesian people are famous for their hospitality and friendliness. When we are facing an important moment, for instance a religious ceremony, firstly try to 'notice'. It does not mean we do not do anything, but we must figure out how to take the moment properly without disturbing the objects.

When we are worshipping and communicating with God, we need peaceful situation. Let us think 'if' we are in those prayers' condition. As what has been written down by Erik Prasetya in his book namely *On Street Photography*, an attitude that need to be imbued from the beginning is to be 'open'. It is one of characters of a professional and mature photographer who has experienced a lot of challenges and prepared varied concepts. When it is impossible to capture a moment, he will try another concept immediately.

Based on some personal observation experiences and theories, apart from taking the camera set, photographers need to think of the places and the concepts of their pictures. In addition, they have to keep a friendly eye-contact with their objects. It is normal when the objects feel bothered, disturbed and get mad, since they feel 'being stolen', hence the photographers need to communicate well with them, starting with smiling, shaking hands, or the photographers can give

them their name cards to build a good relationship with the objects. The objects will trust the photographers because they are respected. These 'simple' approaches are able to make these both parties closer and the photographers will be easier to take pictures. Such atmosphere creates the feeling of 'comfort' on them. Another sample of this simple but tricky approach is photographing human interest as the concept. A photographer can communicate first with a potter, then he buys one of his works. Eventually, both of them will get the advantages.

Conclusion

Someone's character is built from the community in which he was born and raised; it is what we call family. Even though there has not been any regulations managing and monitoring the ethics in photography, still we can use our common sense. If we want to be respected, we have to respect others first. Sometimes the photographer's working hours do not guarantee the ethical character on them, however, at least their experience or working hours will guide their 'seeing' and 'observing', and become the standard on ethic lesson.

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