

Photography in media and advertising – new trends

KEY WORDS

photography, microstock, internet, new trends, stock agency

ABSTRACT

Nowadays there is nothing unusual in having recourse to stock photo agencies and microstock photo agencies, especially in the media and advertising industry. Microstock photography is a recent phenomenon, having strong connections with the development of Internet and new technologies. This phenomenon might be seen as an interesting market niche because the content is primarily directed at smaller companies, online organizations/ internet companies, start-ups, and even individual web users. On the other hand it creates a chance for skilled amateur photographers using better equipment to sell their products. That is why the agencies are based on the crowdsourcing business model.

You do not have to be an expert in advertising or a keen observer of the advertising market: it is enough to go out or peruse the press or the Internet. You will soon notice what they all have in common: a smiling blonde girl with a regular face. Emma Wang Hansen, an architecture student at the university in Aarhus, Denmark, became a global advertising phenomenon. Her face advertised almost everything and everywhere (from European countries, through Israel, to South Korea). She can be found on corporate websites, educational and recruitment portals. Her pictures illustrate both printed and online articles. It is no wonder then that she was called the “Face of Polish Advertising”, while Internet users try to outdo one another looking for her pictures in the media and in the streets and posting them to Facebook¹. It is not difficult at all, since an average city dweller is likely to encounter Emma at least once a day².

¹ *Twarz Polskiej Reklamy* [Face of Polish Advertising], Facebook fanpage, <https://www.facebook.com/twarz.polskiej.reklamy> [accessed: 20 Jan 2014].

² O. Święcicka, *Historia Twarzy Polskiej Reklamy. Może jeszcze o tym nie wiesz, ale widzisz ją wszędzie* [History of the Face of Polish Advertising: You may not know it yet but you see her everywhere], NaTemat.pl, 21.09.2012, <http://natemat.pl/32321,historia-twarzy-polskiej-reklamy-moze-jeszcze-o-tym-nie-wiesz-alewidujesz-ja-wszedzie> [dostęp: 20.01.2014].

However, Emma's delicate beauty, which allows her pictures to be used in various contexts, did not warrant such a success. It was the author of Emma's pictures, Danish photographer and millionaire, Yuri Arcurs, who played a huge role in it.

In 2010, he entered the list of the most influential photographers of the decade of the "PDN" photography magazine³. If we consider that Arcurs is just a very gifted amateur who was distinguished among professionals, the honour is much greater. He sells over 10 million licenses for pictures per year, earning over 3 million dollars. His own agency, PeopleImages.com (Fig. 1) launched in May 2012, and quickly joined the group of the largest bases of commercial pictures online⁴.

In his activities, Arcurs is a successful businessman: he owns Yuri Arcurs Photography ApS (Aarhus, Denmark) and Yuri Arcurs Productions (Cape Town, South Africa), employing about 100 people.

A search engine was created specially for the site to enable searching by key words in the constantly growing base of pictures (about 5 thousand new submissions per month). Additionally, in December 2007 Arcurs launched his own blog, with over 3 thousand regular readers, where he publishes instructional videos, advice for photographers, and news from the industry. Arcurs is also active on Twitter, where he is followed by more than 8 thousand users; he also has more than 32 thousand fans on Facebook. Everyone wants to know who the man who created his own photographic empire from the scratch is. So Yuri Arcurs delivers: he shows people around his studio, lets them see how he works and even what he eats.

A small select group has even the opportunity to learn under the master's own guidance. His most recent initiative is a three-year school for young adepts of photography, located at the South African branch. It opened its doors in January 2012 with a preliminary selection during a two-week boot camp⁵.

³ *Survey results. The most influential photographers of the decade?*, "PDN Online", 19.01.2010, http://www.pdnonline.com/pdn/AccessControl2.html?RequestedURL=/pdn/Archived-Article-467.shtml?articletitle=FEATURESPDN%20ONLINE_Survey%20Results_%20The%2030%20Most%20Influen%20Photographers%20of%20The%20Decade_56.xml [accessed: 20 Jan 2014].

⁴ Y. Arcurs, *www.peopleimages.com has launched – this is how it happened*, <http://arcurs.com/2012/06/www-peopleimages-com-has-launched-a-post-about-how-it-got-there/>, 7.06.2012 [accessed: 19 Jan 2014].

⁵ *Idem, The Yuri Arcurs photography boot camp 2012 has ended!*, <http://arcurs.com/2012/02/the-yuri-arcursphotography-boot-camp-2012-has-ended/>, 3.02.2012 [accessed: 19 Jan 2014].

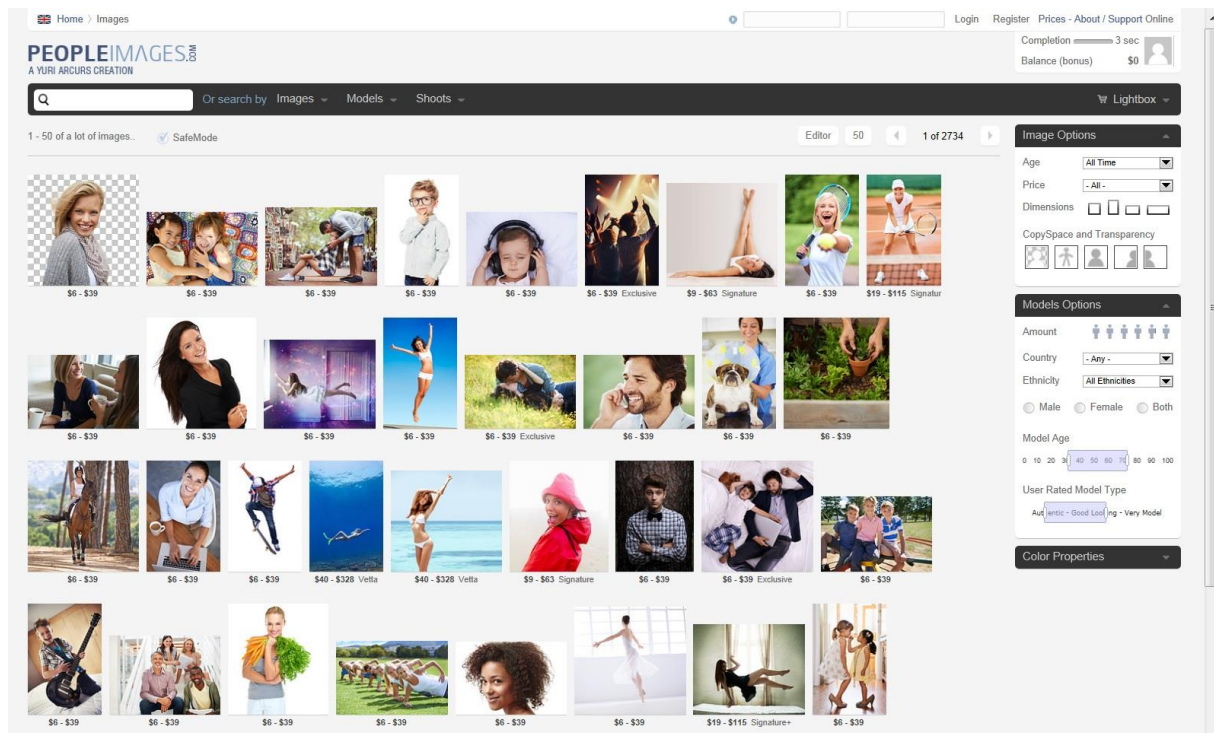


Figure 1. PeopleImages.com home page [screenshot on 10 Jan 2014]

Arcurs achieved all that in a relatively short time. He began in 2005, while still studying psychology at Aarhus University. He earned extra money by taking pictures, mostly of people he knew. These pictures gained more and more popularity after having been submitted to growing microstock agencies. After the first 6 months of playing with microstock photography, Arcurs already had about 600 pictures online, and his income allowed him to drop out of university. From a side job, photography became his way of life. It took him just two years to become a millionaire, earning much more than 3 million dollars a year, and a sort of a cult figure in the industry⁶.

The reason? It comes down to his ambition and perfectionism: Arcurs analysed the market, the best selling shots, and the current top trends. Even without formal education, he is a good technical photographer, able to react to the needs of the market with flexibility. His pictures are thus exactly what his customers expect: profiled and pleasing the eye. The photographed models are specially selected. Beauty itself is not enough, the way they look has to evoke positive emotions. He tries to take as many shots as he can during a single

⁶ Yuri Arcurs – the world's top selling stock photographer, <http://arcurs.com/who/> [accessed: 17 Jan 2014].

session, because in microstock quantity really counts. The low price of a single picture, 1–20 dollars, is encouraging as well⁷.

Since there are few scientific publications⁸ on the subject of microstock photography, this paper is mostly based on the information found in handbooks for photographers, blogs, and internet forums, as well as on the websites of professional magazines of picture banks.

Macrostock photography

Microstock photography is a relatively new phenomenon. Its development is intrinsically related to the Internet and technological progress, resulting in the increased availability of photographic equipment on the one hand and, on the other, of popular mobile devices. It provides an alternative for (macro) stock photography, known since late 19th century. It was then that the American company Underwood & Underwood was founded, which was a success on the market of stereoscopic photography. It operated by providing photographs for the media. It did not take long for competition to enter this growing market. One of them was H. Armstrong Roberts, who offered her customers a novel solution in the form of a printed catalogue. Instead of the full collection, it contained examples of pictures on various themes. This catalogue, published in 1920, is considered to mark the beginning of the stock photography model, and the Roberts company, still operating, as the first stock photo agency⁹.

In the beginning, the term ‘agency’ was not used. The first companies which sold rights to use the pictures from their catalogues in the early 20th century were called “picture libraries”. They were often private collections of photographers and collectors. One such a collection of 25,000 photographs, carried away from Nazi Germany in 1935 by their owner Otto Bettman, was the origin of the Corbis agency founded by Bill Gates¹⁰.

The experts distinguish several developmental stages of microstock photography. Until the 1970s, the industry did not exist, or at least was unaware of its own existence. There were numerous small agencies on the market, offering pictures of various themes and purpose, e.g. publishing, historical, scientific, educational, geographical, journalistic, and commercial. These agencies operated separately, without any shared vision of the industry’s

⁷ Ch. Mutter, *So machen Sie Ihre Urlaubsbilder zu Geld*, „Welt Online“, 24.09.2012, <http://www.welt.de/wirtschaft/webwelt/article109437368/So-machen-Sie-Ihre-Urlaubsbilder-zu-Geld.html> [accessed: 20 Jan 2014].

⁸ M. Raszowska, *Fotografia microstockowa* [Microstock photography]. Master’s thesis written under the guidance of prof. dr. hab. W. Gogołek, WDziNP, Warsaw University 2007.

⁹ J. Abbot Miller, *Pictures for rent. From stereoscope to stereotype*, in *Design. Writing. Research*, ed. E. Lupton, London 2003, p. 120–124.

¹⁰ P. Frosh, *The image factory: consumer culture, photography and the visual content industry*, Oxford 2003, p. 37.

future. They often received rejected pictures, which the original customer did not use. It was only after 1974, during the classic stock photo agency phase, that the market was consolidated, with The Image Bank and Comstock as major players. The revolution in this area was spurred by the oil crisis of 1973, which forced the agencies to cut costs and search for alternative technological and business solutions. This led to the emergence of a separate industry with its own image, vision, and mission, defined as producing pictures for advertising. It was also then that the recognizable generic stock image, which could be used in various contexts, was established. The 1990s were the beginning of the modern phase, characterized by drastic changes in the operation of the industry regarding finances, organization, and technology. Further consolidation led to a growth surge of agencies, bringing record profits and generating value on a global scale. The redefinition of the potential recipient was very important for the status of agencies. So far exclusively focused on the advertising business, they became interested in other markets, the private customer market included. It was an extremely important change: the microstock photography segment became independent from the publishers. While providing pictures for the media was the principal activity of agencies in the 1970s, in the 1990s it was replaced by consumer and corporate advertising¹¹.

The changes which occurred on the market in the last phase are best illustrated by the business model adopted by The Image Bank agency. They almost completely abandoned media as the main recipients of pictures and shifted their comprehensive focus to the advertising sector. It meant not only producing pictures but also adjusting their offer to the needs of customers, following the rules governing the advertising market, as well as analysing and anticipating the market. Quality was their goal. They also stopped gathering pictures rejected by original contractors. It was important mostly because professional photographers mostly took commissioned pictures so far. They considered stock photo agencies as less attractive customers, since placing one's own pictures in their collections was not regulated enough by the property laws. It was not until the 1978 Copyright Law in the US confirmed that photographers have the property rights over the pictures they take, and it was decided that the buyer acquiring a picture from an agency pays for a specific use of it¹². This encouraged professional photographers to enhance cooperation with stock photo agencies, which benefited both sides. On the one hand, the incomes of photographers increased significantly and, on the other, their presence improved the prestige of agencies. The conflict between the

¹¹ Ibidem, p. 34–35.

¹² J. Abbot Miller, *Pictures for rent...*, op. cit., p. 128.

need for standardized pictures and the photographers reluctance towards anonymity remained unsolved.

Focusing on gaining customers mostly from the advertising market required using appropriate methods. The agencies themselves had to learn to collaborate with new customers using available marketing tools. The advertising and promotion of their own services, which led to defining and stabilizing their brands, was performed mostly with microstock photography catalogues, first introduced by The Image Bank in 1982.

The recipe for an efficient and successful agency was to observe three rules: the high quality of pictures, the best photographers, and the ability to create a professional image. The Image Bank added one more component: global orientation. The goal was to achieve the widest possible range by cooperating with foreign agencies. As a result, the agency became a representative of foreign agencies on the domestic market, including their catalogues in its offer. Depending on the type of agreement, the agency could gain even 50% of its income from the sales of pictures of its foreign partners. It was also a good way to consolidate the market through exclusive contracts, e.g., containing a clause requiring the use of a unified logo. The next step was to create daughter companies on other markets. The Image Bank managed to do it remarkably fast: it founded its Canadian branch less than a year after it started operating (1975). The chain of 10 subsidiaries and 76 franchises, built in a short time, was finally taken over in 2000 by the enormous Getty Images, founded in 1993, which pursued an aggressive acquisition policy¹³.

Microstock photography

In the 1990s, the traditional photographic agencies enjoyed a stable market position, and opening to the advertising sector ensured their growth. The attractiveness of the industry was attested to by further consolidation and numerous investments and take-overs, characteristic of Getty Images, for an instance. Picture prices ranged from several hundred even to several hundred dollars: this was the price of professionalism.

Technological progress indubitably contributed to the improved quality of sold pictures, and raised the customer expectations as well. However, it also meant that the usage of both the Internet and modern photographic equipment was growing on popularity not only among professional photographers. It was also detrimental to the whole industry. Still, it might not yet have been a disruptive technology, in the terms of Clayton Christensen¹⁴.

¹³ P. Frosh, *The Image Factory...*, op. cit., p. 40–44.

¹⁴ C.M. Christensen, *Przełomowe innowacje* [The innovator's dilemma], Warszawa 2010.

Nevertheless, it created a strong, dynamically developing competition, which openly threatened the position of traditional photo agencies. An interesting niche was noticed on the market, which took the form of smaller companies, online businesses, start-ups, and even private web users managing their websites and blogs. On the other hand, the potential of amateur photographers was recognized, as they had access to increasingly better equipment, so the new type of agency – microstock – was created using the crowdsourcing model. Crowdsourcing uses the idea of networking, which initially took the form of picture exchange platform within existing communities. Pictures taken by photography addicts at home, at work, and on holidays went to a common base and could be used by other users free of charge. This is exactly how the iStockPhoto agency operated since 2000 (Fig. 2), which introduced small fees for sharing pictures only two years later.

Quantity became the financial basis on the market: the prices for a single picture are low enough so that every customer can pay for them. This is known to contribute to an increase in the number of buyers, and so to the number of transactions. It does not mean, obviously, that all pictures go to the microstock picture banks. Aspiring photographers have to meet challenging criteria, different for each agency, before they can put their pictures on sale. It is also possible to collaborate with multiple microstock agencies. It is possible to find many posts on the industry blogs and web forums which evaluate and compare the quality of this cooperation¹⁵. In spite of the limitations introduced by agencies, the microstock community keeps growing. Selling pictures online has now become a relatively easy way to earn small amounts of money. It is a trend which may lead to situations when, like Yuri Arcurs, some people will completely abandon their professional careers so far and focus on microstock as their main source of income.

This situation stems from the fact that using the resources of photo agencies based on the microstock model has now become the standard in media and advertising. The typical customers include advertising agencies, publishers, graphic designers, entrepreneurs, and private users, like bloggers. The pictures are good, cheap, and can be used in various contexts. Some of them are even being shared for free now.

Initially, the use of such a business model provoked criticism in the photographic industry, as it forced the traditional photo agencies to drastically reduce their prices. Yet another way to fight the competition was to broaden one's base with new thematic sections,

¹⁵ E.A. Taub, *When are photos like penny stocks? When they sell*, "The New York Times", 5.06.2007, http://www.nytimes.com/2007/06/05/technology/circuits/05syndicate.html?em&ex=1181188800&en=687225a44f80273c&ei=5087%0A&_r=0 [accessed: 19 Jan 2014].

better monitor the market, and promote oneself by the high quality of pictures and names of professional photographers. It quickly turned out, however, that these activities are not sufficient to stem the outflow of customers to microstock, in particular since the quality of amateur pictures greatly improved with technological progress.

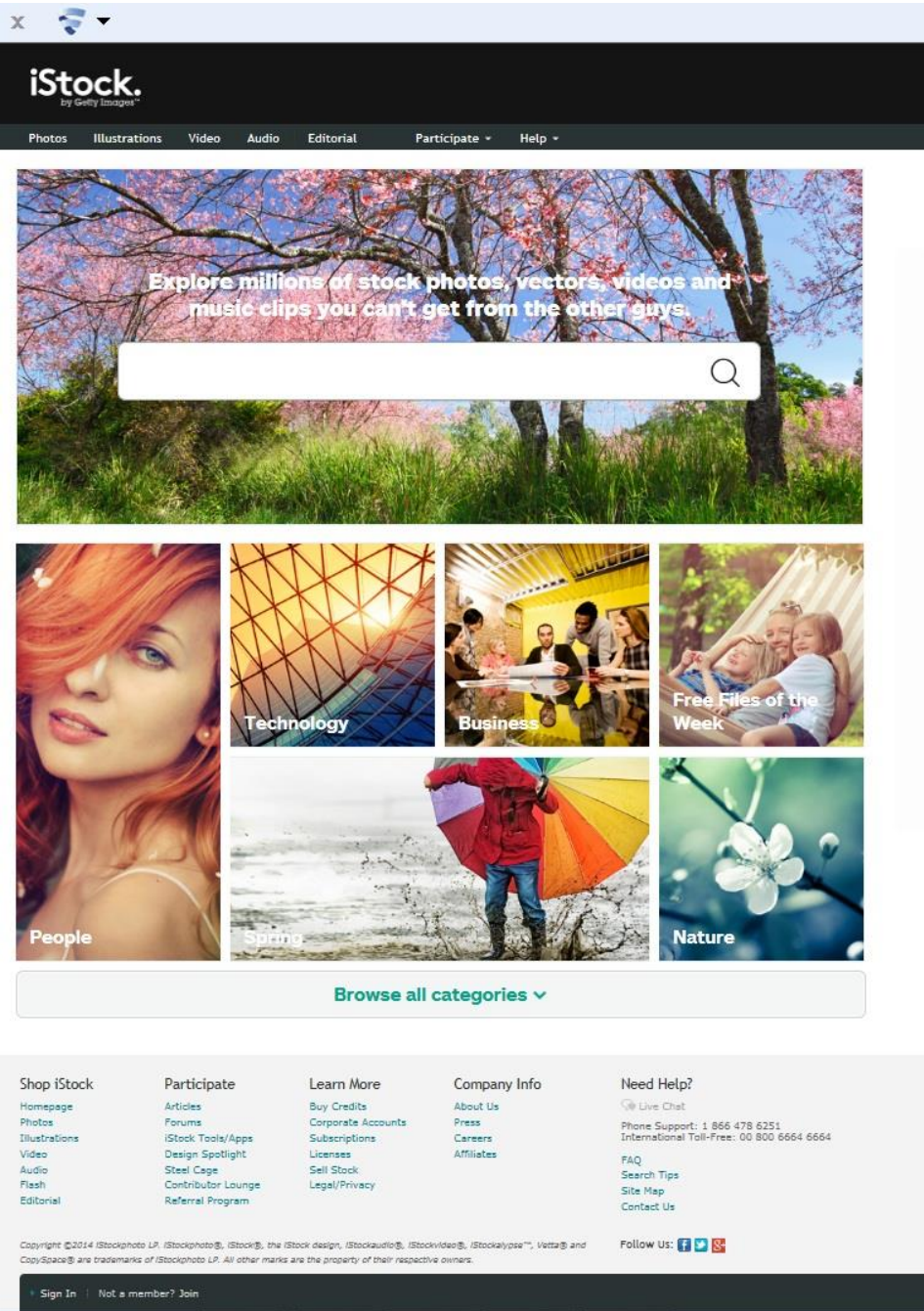


Figure 2. iStock home page [screenshot on 30 Jan 2014]

In 2006, the developing market of microstock photography drew the attention of the traditional agency Getty Images, which bought iStockPhoto for 50 million dollars. In the

period of six years the interest increased three times, up to 150 million dollars: this being the price the KRR private equity fund decided to invest in Fotolia in the mid-2012. Whereas the worth of Shutterstock was evaluated at 8,700 million dollars at the time of its debut on the stock market in New York in 2012. Fotolia and other major players do not preclude further investments, which makes the consolidation of the market possible. The current attractiveness of microstocks is also associated with the crisis of the advertising and media industry. Resigning from employing photographers full time and reducing costs by laying off photo-journalistic teams are an increasingly common practice. Today, even freelancing professionals collaborate with microstock agencies¹⁶.

The bases of the global giants, such as iStockPhoto, but also Shutterstock, Fotolia, and Dreamstime, contain millions of pictures submitted on a crowdsourcing basis. It means that the authors of photographs are the users themselves. Obviously, not all aspiring photographers have the opportunity to appear in a picture bank: the entry criteria are quite challenging, including an examination and thorough evaluation of pictures. There are no income guarantees either, so the authors always cooperate with several agencies. This way their pictures can reach a broader group of customers, and the more you have in this industry, the better.

Yuri Arcurs also believes in this rule, so he still maintains his profiles in the most important microstock photo agencies. He differs from millions of other, more or less experienced users in that, in the largest agencies, he is the number one photographer. He knew how to use his advantage, got to microstock at the right time in its development, and learned well how it operates. Now, he simply strengthens his position.

Still, the competition on the market is vast. Nowadays, all smartphone owners consider themselves as photographers. They are made even more confident by numerous applications enabling them to post pictures online, such as the immensely popular Instagram, Facebook, and other social networks, online albums (like Picasa or Flickr), and image manipulation programs, akin to the notorious Photoshop. Thanks to the rapid evolution of technology and its increased availability, more and more people take better and better pictures. Clearly, while many of them stay in private collections, so many do enter picture banks that the bases of the major players exceed 20 million photographs. Simply having a better equipment, and thus better quality, is not enough: Nowadays, overcoming one's constantly growing competition requires much work. Some advice and articles posted on the

¹⁶ P. Sierpiński, P. Zieliński, *(Nie)cenione zdjęcia* [The (un)appreciated photos], „Press-Raport Foto” 2008, No. 5, p. 74–75.

websites of the major microstock players, which help adjusting to the specific needs of the agency, may facilitate the start in the industry¹⁷. The market also abounds in guidebooks, printed¹⁸ and online, for aspiring microstock photographers. There are sites, such as Microstock Photography¹⁹, Microstock Group²⁰, or Microstock.pl in Poland, serving as platforms for exchanging experiences and advice for the microstock community.

The pictures are sold under a standard Royalty Free license, or a non-standard Enhanced License. The Royalty Free license usually applies to high-quality pictures purchased by clicking the Download button. The rights to the picture apply to the purchaser and are limited to a set number of uses, e.g. 500 thousand. The Enhanced License gives the purchaser more rights, e.g., by removing this limitation. The majority of picture banks use one of the following payment methods: PayPal, MoneyBookers, or cheques²¹. There are many analytical tools on the market, such as MicrostockAnalysis²², with which one can check the trends and estimate the sales of one's own pictures per individual agencies. The statistics usually include the RPI level, or the income per picture sold, calculated as the total income from selling pictures through a given agency divided by the number of pictures at the time. In the case of collaborating with several agencies, the mean volume of portfolio is used to divide the sales income. Using this figure, one can also estimate the number of pictures which need to be sold to maintain the desired income level²³.

Microstock changed the perception of amateur photography. Taking pictures is not just a pleasure now, it is business. The client picks a certain picture and is not usually interested in its author. The price less and less of a factor. The rates are similar, though there are special bargains for a dozen or so cents apiece. So, the winning strategy is to best recognize the expectations of customers and adjusts one's pictures to them. It was successfully employed by Yuri Arcurs from the onset of his career in photography, and is still useful. Arcurs simply perfected this art. He says that the topics of pictures must not be random. He has remained at

¹⁷ E.g., iStockphoto Stock Photography Training Manuals, <http://www.istockphoto.com/help/sell-stock/training-manuals> [accessed: 21 Jan 2014].

¹⁸ See: D. Freer, *Microstock photography: how to make money from your digital images*, Burlington, Oxford 2008;

P. Saloutos, *Monetizing microstock: turn your digital photography into income*, New York 2012; M. Millian, *Stock and microstock photography*, Charleston 2011; N. Young, *(micro)stock: from passion to paycheck*, ebook Craft & Vision, 2011.

¹⁹ <http://www.microstockphotography.com/> [accessed: 22 Jan 2014].

²⁰ <http://www.microstockgroup.com/index.php> [accessed: 22 Jan 2014].

²¹ L. Torrens, "Do you want to be a microstock photographer?," *Microstock Diaries*, 11.02.2008, <http://microstock.pixelsaway.com/payout-structure-from-microstock-agencies-in-2012/> [accessed: 20 Jan 2014].

²² <http://www.microstockanalytics.com/> [accessed: 22 Jan 2014].

²³ *Payout structure from microstock agencies in 2012*, PixelsAway.com, 1.07.2012, <http://microstock.pixelsaway.com/payout-structure-from-microstock-agencies-in-2012/> [accessed: 22 Jan 2014].

the top for years not because of guesswork but systematic research. Although, he admits, it is getting more difficult.

Trends and mistakes of aspiring photographers

Increased competition and decreased margins triggered the need for a change in attitudes to microstock photography. The image of the industry started changing towards finer performance and less transformed pictures. More and more often, it is the most natural pictures, distinguished among the mass of excessively cleaned, brightened, and modified, which are bought most frequently. It is originality and the author's own style which are more and more important in microstock photography, as well as the ability to find niche subjects, regardless of the main categories found in photo banks²⁴.

The four basic categories retain their popularity in microstock: lifestyle, business, health/healthy lifestyle, and beauty & spa. In each of them, however, the customer expectations have slightly changed. Lifestyle is one of the most popular categories among photographers, so it may be very difficult for photographers taking their first steps to be noticed. As Arcurs claims, his agency currently supplements its lifestyle offer with pictures taken much earlier. The difference between the publication date and the date of the picture results from the number of submissions being greater than can be processed.

According to the photographer, a frequent mistake of mobile device users is the excessive use of additional features of their cameras and applications such as Instagram. The most frequently abused include reflected flash, using lensbaby lenses to manipulate sharpness and filters for the foreground, blitz effect, bright and contrastive colours, wind in the hair, and silhouette pictures. This type of popular pictures may be unable to stand the test of time and give way to a new fashion in 2–3 years.

The second important category, business, is still considered the most attractive by customers. Here the shift is also increasingly more visible: from the classic, standard business pictures to more unconventional ones, also ones using metaphor. At present, due to the economic crisis in particular, the objective is not to show good fun at work. Instead, a more serious approach to such issues as unemployment, stress, hard decisions and responsibility is preferred.

²⁴ S. Enache, *The evolving world of stock photography*, "About Photography" 2011, <http://photography.about.com/od/displayingphotographs/a/The-Evolving-World-Of-Stock-Photography-By-Serban-Enache-For-About-Photography.htm> [accessed: 22 Jan 2014].

Health and beauty are no longer reduced to showing stereotypical doctor's scrubs or salads as healthy food. A better solution is either a broader treatment of the subject or focusing on individual components, e.g., ingredients in a salad recipe.

The fourth category is also difficult for microstock novices due to the saturation of the market. Still, some opportunities can be found thanks to the need for sport activity pictures to replace the dominant so far pictures of cosmetic salons²⁵.

The causes of the popularity of the microstock model

The emergence of microstock photography can be considered to result naturally from the development of modern media. The change in media consumption habits caused by, among other things, increasingly modern technological solutions available to mass consumer entering the market also contributed to it. A change in the needs and expectations of their users followed. According to the Pew Research Online Project, in January 2014 as many as 90% of adult Americans had cell phones, while 58% owned smartphones and 42% owned tablets. For 62% of them the phone was used to connect to the Internet. Compared to the data from May 2000, when 53% of Americans used cell phones, or from May 2011, when 83% had a mobile phone, 35% a smartphone, and 8% a tablet, it is clear that the interest in the new technologies and mobile internet had increased dramatically²⁶. It is similar in Poland. The results of the TNS OBOP poll, published in the *jestem.mobi* report *Mobile marketing in Poland 2013/2014* indicate that in January 2014 44% of Poles had smartphones, and 64% of them used mobile Internet. Whereas in 2012 only 25% of Poles owned smartphones, of whom 41% surfed the web²⁷.

A camera is usually a fixed component of smartphones and tablets. Poles are eager to use these devices to take pictures: 83% of them do so. The capabilities of built-in cameras grow with each new smartphone or tablet model. Moreover, there are new solutions such as the Fotolia Instant application introduced by Fotolia in 2013²⁸. This application allows the users of newer iPhone models to submit pictures to the agency directly from the smartphone. Moreover, the decreasing prices of cameras boost the popularity of amateur photography even further. The data gathered by HighTable show that the number of digital photos in the world

²⁵ Y. Arcurs, *What sells in microstock anno 2012?*, <http://arcurs.com/2012/09/what-sells-in-microstock-anno-2012/>, 19.09.2012 [accessed: 23 Jan 2014].

²⁶ *Pew Research Online Project*, <http://www.pewinternet.org/data-trend/mobile/device-ownership/> [accessed: 27 Oct 2014].

²⁷ See the *jestem.mobi* report *Marketing mobilny w Polsce 2013/2014*, TNS OBOP 2014, Inphographic "Smartfonizacja Polaków 2014" [Smartphonization of Poles 2014], Warszawa 2014.

²⁸ <http://pl.fotolia.com/instant> [accessed: 22 Jan 2014].

keeps growing. Whereas in 1990 only analog pictures were taken (57 billion), out of 280 billion pictures taken in 2011 only 1.05% were analog, and in 2012 users posted online about 300 million new pictures every day²⁹.

The above data suggest that the situation on the photographic market favours the development of microstock photography. It can be supposed that this growth trend will not change in the coming years. The growing number of Internet users, mobile Internet included, and the ever greater number of posted pictures, however, may lead to a situation when the current microstock agency model no longer functions. It will be necessary then to modify it or create an entirely new approach. Perhaps the photography market may then turn towards such solutions as ImageBrief³⁰. It is a picture library based on the demand (brief) reported by a registered purchaser. This frees the buyers from browsing hundreds or thousands of pictures looking for the right shot because they receive them directly from the authors responding to the brief.

Conclusion

Picture banks using the microstock system are very popular in Poland as well. Most major agencies have had their services localized in Polish. Moreover, the users themselves post in professional forums and blogs, mostly gathering information from their counterparts in English and the authors' own experience.

Microstock is a dynamic industry, attractive for both amateur photographers and customers. Being based on crowd funding gives it unlimited capacity, and it is flexible enough to adjust the supply of pictures to the changing demand with relative ease. All photographers who use basic analytic tools have some control over their own careers and can adjust their portfolios to meet the current needs.

It is difficult to imagine the modern media, especially electronic media, as well as advertising industry, without microstock photography. It is particularly visible in the present crisis situation on the market, which enforces the reduction of costs. Simultaneously, it is an opportunity for a throng of amateurs to see their pictures appreciated and an incentive for financial gain. While a spectacular success comparable to that achieved by Yuri Arcurs has been made more difficult by extreme competition, it is still an attractive offer for many fans of photography.

²⁹ *A snapshot of the photography industry 2013*, HighTable, <http://petapixel.com/2012/06/13/a-snapshot-of-the-photography-industry/> [accessed: 30 Oct 2014].

³⁰ <http://www.imagebrief.com/> [accessed: 22 Jan 2014].