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Everyone is a photographer these days.

I have been getting a lot of complaints recently about how the digital world has turned everyone into a photographer.

There are those who believe that only those who actually understand what they are doing should be taking photographs, that otherwise we end up devaluing photography as in an inflationary process in which everything loses its value.

Although I don't agree with that premise, I understand where such a sentiment comes from. As more and more photographers see an erosion of their work environment by the encroachment of people that also take pictures, thus taking away opportunities for earning a living, it is understandable that such a defensive attitude happens.

I was recently in Hong Kong; at the time when the meetings of the WTO (World Trade Organization) were held. As everyone probably read in their local papers across the globe, the protests were very intense outside those meeting halls. The local paper had advertisements that were in keeping with a world trend of gathering images in ways that were unheard of not too long ago.



Be a citizen journalist!

With all eyes on Wan Chai, chances abound for capturing newsworthy images on your mobile phone or video camera, and **scmp.com** would like to highlight the best on our Citizen Post website. Just e-mail us photos or clips (up to 10MB) at **citizenpost@scmp.com**. For details and to see your pictures, go to **citizenpost.scmp.com**. We and our readers look forward to seeing your work.

The advertisement read: Be a Citizen Journalist. As you probably recall, **the most important, and of course, the first images of the terrorist bombing that took place in London, in 2005, were made with cell phone cameras, both in their video and still image formats. The same happened with the first images we got from the Tsunami in Asia.** In Iraq today, the news agencies do not bring in any Western photographers anymore. Instead, they train local people who not only have the benefit of speaking the language but also have the necessary credentials for being present in those places where a photographer needs to be at and to which a Westerner most probably would not have access to.

The citizen journalist is in keeping with the notion that these days almost anyone, or shall we say everyone, is recording everything that happens all the time.

Ever since photography became so easy that a five year old can take pictures (and with the advent of digital technology picture taking has become an increasingly simple operation) a lot of pictures which would have required a professional, now can be done by just about anyone. Even wedding pictures are no longer the exclusive realms of a professional.



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Yes, we are seeing a very deep transformation of who takes pictures and what for. The emergence of a vast number of people taking pictures today that are not particularly interesting or good save to the person who is taking them and their friends or relatives, brings to forefront the need to reconsider the very notion of what makes a professional photographer. No longer is it just someone who is capable of actually making a picture, like it has been in the past, but new criteria is in now in order depending on the final usage of the image.



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I actually enjoy the proliferation of people taking pictures, no matter that they are not very good; as I find that it has an equivalent in singing. How many people who love to sing in the shower or in a karaoke, are actually very good at singing? They are simply enjoying the pleasure of singing the same way as their counterparts enjoy taking pictures. I find that to be a very encouraging sign about the universality of capturing an image.

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