

Dear All

Last week I picked up the biography of Rahul Bajaj, an Indian business man and a Rajya Sabha member (upper house in Indian politics). The picture on the cover had Rahul Bajaj with his fingers below his chin staring into the camera. This is a pose I hadn't seen in a while, this was a CEO picture pose about two decades ago. Next, I had to apply for the Schengen visa and the photographer who came to click the pictures said, 'pls don't smile, the visa office will not process it.' This got me thinking on the issue of pictures and poses, here's my learnings :

1. Every new technology has a reference and the same applied to photographs. When photography came in the early 1800 , the reference was portrait pictures painted by artists. The subject had to sit for a long time in front of the artist and hence all pictures were static, no smile, and generally boring.
2. The first real good photographs appeared around 1839. The early photos needed posing time and also development time, so it was not a smooth easy process.
3. Around 1850, postures in pictures came in and the brave people went the posture route even though the photo was still in a studio. Typical postures those days were reclining in a chair, having a cigar in hand etc.
4. By 1900s action shots came in, action shots that were grounded, i.e. a boxer in a pose holing his hands up. The jump in the air and fluid action shots could not be taken in a studio with the camera technology.
5. By 1910, the camera had become portable and hence went outdoors, and suddenly pictures to capture the sprawling fields, nature, monuments etc. by 1920, the era of shameless posing began, typical pictures were leaning against railings, leaning against a wall, standing next to a window etc. by 1940 s, conscious posing began as people recognized which were the best parts of their profile and then set up pictures accordingly. Photo passports appeared around 1915.
6. By 1950s, mug shots appeared in prison, and the concept of identification started in society, at work, etc. in 1938 , ID cards were mandatory in UK and Id cards became the norm in world war 2 for easy recognition. The 1950 s also saw the growth of fashion magazines and cover photos and getting that look became important for every fashion brand. In the 1960s, we saw the fort counter revolution and no pose was big enough or brave enough as young people took pictures in their leather jackets and big belts.
7. 1970s saw the arrival of color photography in a big way and cheap cameras and cheap film rolls led to a lot of experimentations, diving in front of the cameras, arranging objects etc. This was the era when more pictures were taken and selection of the best pictures happened. Rejects of photographs can be traced to this phase in a big way. This is also the era when albums became big and the whole ' memories industry' was born.
8. Japan was the place that introduced cameras to phones and Panasonic phones were special. Nokia saw this trend in Japan and copied it quickly and made camera a default option in a phone. This simple act killed the traditional camera, the traditional photography industry and the photo album. From now on everything was digital and photography became a software exercise and not a physical and chemical exercise that it was before. Japanese school girls were taking own pictures and building a Look book. This ed to the Purikura machines in Japan which helped you take a selfie, edit parts you didn't like and printed the picture instantly. Photos also could be edited and morphed.
9. The first selfie was taken in 1839 by Robert Cornelius who went and stood in front of his own camera. Many other people did the same after that and self -timers became an option in cameras as a result. Buzz Aldrin took a selfie picture in space when he went on Gemini 12. The modern day selfie revolution started in 2002.
10. The Sony Ericsson Z1010 was the first phone to have a self-facing camera in 2003.

11. Australian Nathan Hope celebrated his 21st birthday with a selfie and he coined the expression selfie. The word was added to the Oxford dictionary in 2013 and June 21 is celebrated as selfie day. The selfie trend picked up as social media platforms took off like Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn etc. Today 40% of the pictures taken by the 18-24 group globally are selfies!!
12. Now back to the business CEO picture. Why is the CEO picture so important? Image is vital in business and you want your stakeholders to feel that the company is in good hands. The headshot is the most often used shot in CEO pictures. CEOs try to convey a sense of warmth, a sense of capability, a sense of sureness and a sense of friendliness through these headshots. This is a big industry by itself today.

Thanks to the mobile phone camera, every citizen is a journalist today and every celebrity and noteworthy person has to be on guard 24 by 7, because anyone anywhere can take your picture and post it. Celebs have handled this by using hoodies, shades even at night etc. Thanks to the mobile phone camera we are a visual news society now and an instant news cycle society.

Feedback welcome

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