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**COURTSHIP IN PIXELS: EXAMINING ROMANTIC EXPRESSIONS IN DIGITAL
PHOTOGRAPHY THROUGH A MIXED-METHOD APPROACH**

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31 July 2024

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This paper prepared by **JOSHUA C. MANINGO** with the title: **“COURTSHIP IN PIXELS: EXAMINING ROMANTIC EXPRESSIONS IN DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY THROUGH A MIXED-METHOD APPROACH”** is hereby accepted by the Faculty of Information and Communication Studies, U.P. Open University, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Course.

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Biographical Sketch

Joshua C. Maningo (he/him) also goes by the nickname “Uwa” is a 22-year-old man from Taguig City. He is the second among six siblings in his family and the eldest son. His hobbies include making digital and traditional artworks, playing video games, watching anime, traveling, and photography. However, his hobbies are sometimes also his profession involves being a Children’s book illustrator, photographer, freelance artist, and event host.

Uwa is also a scholar of the US Embassy English Access Microscholarship Program during 8th grade and became inclined to Arts in his late junior high school years which led him to pursue the Arts and Design Track during senior high school at Polytechnic University of the Philippines (PUP) and graduated with Highest Honors, ranking 7 among 1,882 PUPSHS 2020 graduates. He is an advocate for inclusive education and arts and is very close to children and animals. As an advocate for change, he is currently a Sangguniang Kabataan (SK) Councilor handling the committee of Culture and Arts, Active Citizenship, and also the Budget Monitoring Officer. Alongside his role as SK, Uwa is also active in different organizations. For instance, he was also an officer of a national organization, the Supreme Student Council Society of the Philippines (SSCSP), and was the book illustrator/author of the Book: *Avante, Dante! Explorando Sueño*. He is also a member of the UP Photography Society and was part of the UPOU USC Volcorps. In the future, Joshua aims to be able to inspire more youth, travel more places, and bring his family to the peak of success through the arts.

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Definition of Terms

Contemporary/ Modern Courtship: Contemporary practices involved in pursuing romantic relationships are often influenced by digital technology and social media.

Court: The verb used to describe the action of pursuing someone to develop a romance.

Courtship Process: This refers to the series of behaviors and interactions through which individuals seek to initiate and develop romantic relationships.

Digital Photography: In this study, digital photography is the practice that uses electronic devices to capture, manipulate, and share visual images.

Digital Photographs: The visual outputs of digital photography.

Harana: This is an example of a Filipino traditional practice known as serenading. This is often used as an example in the study so that participants can easily recognize what traditional courtship is.

Kilig (Romantic Excitement): A Filipino term referring to the exhilarating feeling of romantic excitement or butterflies in the stomach.

Suitor: The person who courts or pursues someone to develop a romantic relationship.

The Pursued: The person being pursued romantically.

Traditional Courtship: For this study, traditional courtship refers to the Filipino practice of pursuing someone to develop romantic relationships.

Abstract

This exploratory research sought to address gaps in understanding the role of digital photography in modern courtship. The study was motivated by the evolving landscape of romantic expression in the digital era and aimed to investigate how digital photography influences romantic interactions. This research employed a mixed-method approach which encompassed quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews. The analysis of observed romantic photographs revealed the prevalent use of techniques such as selfies, candid shots, and symbolic elements to convey romantic emotions. Findings indicated that 75.4% of participants used digital photography for romantic expression during the courtship process, leveraging platforms like Facebook and Instagram for "flexing" relationships and preserving memories. It was reported that emotional engagement with these photos was significant, evoking feelings of "kilig" and nostalgia among viewers. Digital photography's role in the courtship process was emphasized as an enhancement to modern courtship dynamics, blending traditional sentiment with contemporary visual storytelling on social media.

Keywords: Digital photography, courtship, social media, *kilig*, romantic expression, Facebook, Instagram, emotional engagement

INTRODUCTION

Rationale

Courtship is a fundamental aspect of human relationships. It is a process by which individuals form a romantic relationship that may also lead to marriage (Courtship Definition & Meaning | Britannica Dictionary, n.d.). Despite its significance, there was a lack of knowledge regarding the utilization of digital photography during the courtship process. Moreover, modern courtships were increasingly influenced by technology and urbanization (Atong et al., 2022), illustrating further the essence of understanding how these factors would affect romantic expressions.

Rouse (2017) defined digital photography as producing, publishing, and utilizing digital photographs on computers and the Internet. As modern courtships progress, the relevance of digital photography is becoming more apparent in this phase. It plays a significant role in contemporary communication. For instance, Torres (2023) stated that digital technology has significantly shifted the courtship practices of Filipino youth. Even though digital media has been the platform for different types of intimacies (Barnwell et al., 2021; Lobinger et al., 2021; Torres, 2023), digital photography has not yet been directly constituted as a medium for courtship.

Lobinger et al. (2021) introduced the concept of "visual intimacy" in mediated relationships. This concept focused on practices such as visual self-disclosure, ritual photo sharing, and synchronous gaze, all of which show how visual content can foster intimacy. However, it did not delve deeply into the themes romantic

photographs have that are relevant to courtship. This presents a significant gap in understanding how courtship participants employ digital photography to convey romantic feelings and intentions and the techniques attributed to such intentions.

Addressing this gap is essential as it can provide deeper insights into the evolving nature of courtship in the digital age. By exploring how romantic sentiments are translated through digital photography, this study aimed to understand visual intimacy and its implications for modern courtship. The findings of this study inform the development of more meaningful digital communication practices and enhance our appreciation of the role of technology, particularly digital photography, in shaping human relationships.

Executive Summary

Modern courtship encompasses digital media, which includes digital photography. Digital photography has been used for various purposes, such as capturing moments, scenes, portraits, and more. However, it is rarely associated as a medium of courtship, even though visual content such as photographs is documented and recognized as capable of evoking intimacy. Traditional courtship practices in the Philippines, like handwritten letters and *harana* or serenading, have mediums that express romance, such as pen and guitar. Digital photography has a digital camera, which encompasses even smartphones. Following this logic, digital cameras can be compared to a pen and guitar; similarly, Digital photography can be compared to traditional courtship.

Composition is one of the common attributes of digital photography from traditional courtship. The techniques and visual elements of digital photography may have been utilized for certain expressions. The narrative and themes of romantic photographs should indicate the feasibility of their usage in a courtship process.

Moreover, social media is the platform used to share digital photographs with the intended audience or target individual. As Facebook and Instagram are recognized media-sharing platforms, they too, contribute as means for visual storytelling. Digital photography aligns with the specified social media platforms as they illustrate an attribute of immediacy. An attribute capable of offering authentic representations of relationships and emotional expressions, yet also susceptible to manipulated portrayals and standards.

This research aimed to explore how digital photography shapes romantic expressions in modern courtship. It examined how individuals utilize photography in romantic contexts on platforms like Facebook and Instagram. The study also delved into the opportunities digital photography presents in romantic pursuits as well as the themes that arise from romantic expressions in digital photography. Through analyzing actual digital photographs alongside textual analysis and interviews, this research aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of how digital photography influences romantic interactions and perceptions in contemporary courtship practices.

Research Problem

The study explored the feasibility of digital photography as a courtship medium and understood its role in social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram in a romantic context. Furthermore, the study aimed to answer the following questions:

1. How do digital photographers employ specific techniques and/or visual elements to convey romantic feelings in their creations?
2. To what extent do viewers emotionally engage with romantic-themed digital photography, and how does this engagement compare with traditional courtship?
3. How do individuals perceive the role of digital photography, especially on social media platforms, particularly Facebook and/ or Instagram, in expressing romantic feelings and intentions during the courtship process, and how do these platforms shape trends and preferences related to visual expressions of courtship online?

Objectives of the Study

This study sought to answer the research problem by using different approaches. Specifically, it aimed to:

1. Observe and analyze photographs submitted by participants to identify how digital photographers employ specific techniques and visual elements to convey romantic feelings.
2. Conduct surveys and interviews to assess how viewers emotionally engage with romantic-themed digital photography compared to traditional courtship expressions.
3. Explore how individuals perceive the role of digital photography on platforms like Facebook and Instagram in expressing romantic feelings and learn how these platforms influence trends in visual courtship expressions online.

Significance of the Study

This study holds significant value for a diverse range of stakeholders, including digital photographers, suitors, the pursued, couples, educators, government bodies, social media influencers, and future researchers. By examining the influence of digital photography on modern courtship, the findings offer unique insights and practical implications for each of these groups.

Digital photographers. The study provides a deeper understanding of the techniques and visual elements that convey romantic feelings. Acquiring this knowledge can improve their romantic theme awareness in their photography pursuits and empower them to produce more impactful and emotionally captivating romantic photographs.

Suitors. The insights gained from this research can help suitors better understand how to use digital photography to express their romantic feelings and intentions. By learning about effective photographic techniques and the emotional impact of images, suitors can more effectively communicate their affections and strengthen their courtship efforts.

The pursued. The individuals being pursued can benefit from this study by gaining insights into the significance and interpretation of romantic digital photographs. Understanding the emotional and symbolic meanings behind these images can enhance their appreciation of the gestures and efforts made by suitors.

Couples. This study emphasizes the significance of digital photography in preserving and enhancing romantic relationships for couples. Through comprehending the emotional attachment evoked by romantic images, couples may

use digital photography to document and commemorate significant milestones in their relationship, thus enhancing their emotional bond.

Educators. Educators can use the findings from this study to inform curriculum development in fields such as visual arts, media studies, and communication. The research provides valuable insights into the intersection of digital media and romantic expression, which can be incorporated into educational programs to enhance students' understanding of contemporary courtship practices.

Government. Government bodies can benefit from this study by better understanding the cultural and social dynamics associated with digital photography and courtship. This knowledge can inform policy development related to digital media, privacy, and the regulation of social media platforms, ensuring that these policies consider the impact on romantic relationships and personal expression.

Social media influencers. Social media influencers can take advantage of this study's findings to create more engaging and relatable content. Influencers can tailor their content in a manner that resonates with their audience and foster deeper emotional connections by understanding the trends and preferences related to visual expressions of courtship.

Future researchers. This study lays the groundwork for future research on the influence of digital photography on the courtship process. The identified gaps and findings provide a basis for further exploration, encouraging researchers to build on this study to deepen the understanding of digital media's role in modern courtship.

Scope and Limitations of the Study

This research focused on exploring digital photography as a medium of courtship, specifically within the Philippines. It examined how digital photographers—professional, amateur, or casual—use techniques and visual elements to convey romantic feelings. The study also assessed the extent of viewers' emotional engagement with romantic-themed digital photography. It investigated the role of digital photography on social media platforms, such as Facebook and Instagram, in shaping trends and preferences related to visual expressions of courtship. The study targeted individuals aged 18-30, including singles, those in courtship, and those in relationships.

Nevertheless, it is essential to acknowledge certain limitations. The study's findings and conclusions may have limited generalizability due to the specific context and sample size used. The research is conducted within a particular timeframe and with a selected set of respondents and may not fully represent the diversity of the population. Secondly, the interpretation and analysis of qualitative content are subjective by nature, potentially affecting the consistency and objectivity of findings.

Moreover, the study's focus on the Philippines introduces cultural specificity, limiting the applicability of findings to other cultural contexts. The research primarily highlights the positive aspects of digital photography in courtship, potentially overlooking negative aspects or unintended consequences associated with this practice.

Nonetheless, this study provides valuable insights into the intersection of digital photography and courtship practices within the Philippines, paving the way for further exploration and understanding in this evolving field.

II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter served as a review of relevant literature and related research that informs and contextualizes the present study. It provided the necessary background for understanding the research.

Chapter 2 is structured into three main sections: (1) Techniques and Visual Elements in Romantic Digital Photography, (2) Emotional Engagement in Digital Photography vs. Traditional Forms of Courtship, and (3) Role of Digital Photography in Modern Courtship.

1. Techniques and Visual Elements in Romantic Digital Photography

Wisconsinart (2022) introduced the concepts of using symbolism and photo editing techniques to evoke emotional responses. These concepts provided a foundation for understanding that specific visual elements and techniques in romantic photography (like symbolic elements and photo editing) can enhance emotional engagement. This supported the current study's focus on examining how digital photographers employ these techniques to convey romantic feelings effectively.

Wisconsinart (2022) discussed different aspects of romantic photography from an aesthetic point of view. It stated that symbolism and photo editing techniques are utilized to evoke emotional responses in viewers. For instance, heart-shaped elements and Bokeh effects are used. There was also a focus on symbolic elements

like wedding rings, nature scenes, and specific settings like candlelit dinners, which are stated as effective ways to establish romantic feelings.

Wisconsinart (2022) also articulated the importance of composition, lighting, and attention to detail when taking pictures of families and couples. For couples, capturing authentic moments and activities they do together is essential for portraying their bond effectively. It was also expressed that paying close attention to details like clothes and background settings can make these pictures a lot more emotionally impactful (Wisconsinart, 2022).

Additionally, “Tips for Romantic Couple Photoshoots” (n.d.) stated that the focus on unscripted and candid photos shows how important it is to capture the natural interactions of couples, especially when they forget about the camera and are more engaged at the moment. This approach was stated to produce the most compelling photographs as it preserves the authenticity of the moment. Exploring natural settings instead of using staged backdrops was also stated to improve the natural feel of the photoshoot. “Tips for Romantic Couple Photoshoots” (n.d.) said that photographers can capture genuine connections from couples by letting them interact freely in places that inspire them, like city streets, parks, or beaches.

2. Emotional Engagement in Digital Photography vs. Traditional Forms of Courtship

Philippine traditional practices of courtship, like singing and speaking poetry, rely on face-to-face interactions to build these connections. As digital technology has grown, courtship has changed to include things like online dating, social media, and

digital photography, which make it easier to connect emotionally through quick messaging and visual media. This comparison shows how face-to-face interactions have changed into interactions mediated by technology. It also shows how romantic interest in modern relationships is changing.

Impact of digital technology on emotional engagement. It is important to consider the changes that digitization has made to study how people feel when they look at romantic digital photographs and how they compare to more traditional ways of courtship. Marketing, communication, and customer interaction have all changed because of new digital technologies, which brings up important questions about their effects (Nambisan, 2017). Digital media platforms have changed marketing in the last 15 years by giving businesses new ways to connect with and engage with customers, as well as by letting people express themselves, get help making decisions, and learn about the market (Lamberton & Stephen, 2016). These changes have a big effect on how people bond and get emotionally involved in marketing and social media.

Also, the fact that digital photography was used in healthcare shows how visual media can have an emotional effect and engage people. Mathura et al. (2022) show that digital photography in healthcare, like photovoice, has the potential to influence emotions and engage viewers. It allows healthcare workers to express their experiences and challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic visually. These compelling visual narratives help viewers understand and empathize with the healthcare workers.

Transformation of traditional Filipino courtship practices. Filipino courtship, called "*panliligaw*," has unique customs that were shaped by both native and colonial influences (Regala et al., 2021). Some traditional practices of courtship are "harana," which means serenading, "*Balak*," which means spoken poetry, and "*paninilbihan*," which means servitude, where the suitor performs tasks for the family of the person being courted (Andrino, 2022). These practices are deeply rooted in Filipino culture as they show how important it is for the family to approve of the lover and for the suitor to be formally introduced to the family of the person being courted.

These traditional practices have changed significantly since modern technology came along. Traditional courtship practices are still appreciated, but modern adaptations have emerged. For instance, suitors can now send recorded songs through their phones instead of singing to the pursued face-to-face (Andrino, 2022). Similarly, the practice of "balak" has changed over time, with partners now using text messages or videos to express their feelings instead of elaborate spoken poetry (Andrino, 2022). The concept of "paninilbihan" has also changed over time. Nowadays, suitors might bring gifts or cook for the family instead of performing manual labor (Andrino, 2022).

Challenges and dynamics of modern courtship. The shift to digital and online dating has also introduced new challenges and dynamics. Texting, online dating, and other forms of virtual communication have become prevalent, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic when traditional courtship in person wasn't possible (Regala et al., 2021). This modern approach to courtship has made it easier for people to connect across long distances, but it has also raised concerns about

cheating and the emotional effects of virtual relationships, like "*ghosting*" (Regala et al., 2021).

Despite these changes, the essence of love and commitment remains the same, whether through traditional or modern means. Sternberg's Triangular Theory of Love states that the initial stages of courtship are liking and infatuation (Feuerman, 2024), which can be expressed in both traditional and digital methods.

While existing literature acknowledges the changes from traditional to digital forms of romantic expression, there is limited research on the specific influence of digital photographs on emotional engagement and relationship perceptions. For instance, while Andrino (2022) emphasizes the transformation of traditional Filipino courtship practices into modern or digital formats, there is insufficient focus on the visual strategies that couples use to convey romantic expressions through photographs. Similarly, Regala et al. (2021) also discuss the rise of virtual communication during the COVID-19 pandemic but do not thoroughly explore the specific techniques and emotional resonances of digital photography in courtship. This gap shows the need for more comprehensive studies that examine the visual and emotional facets of modern courtship, mainly as presented through photos, to understand their influence on modern romantic relationships better.

Emotional dynamics in contemporary courtship. Torres (2023) stated that Filipino youth increasingly rely on digital platforms like social media and online dating apps. This shift reflected a broader global trend where the convenience and immediacy of digital media have transformed how people start and maintain romantic relationships, challenging traditional standards and norms (Torres, 2023).

Lippman et al.'s (2014) research on the links between romantic screen media genres and romantic beliefs deepens the understanding of how traditional narratives influence emotional engagement during courtship. The study shows that watching reality TV shows and movies about marriage, as well as sitcoms, is linked to different romantic views. Reality TV shows about marriage increase beliefs in idealization and love at first sight, while watching sitcoms weakens romantic idealism (Lippman et al., 2014). This shows how digital media, especially visual content, affects romantic behaviors and perceptions.

Emotional strategies in digital contexts. Blackie & McLean (2021) discussed how to understand the emotional effects of both traditional and modern courtship practices by examining emotional growth, empathy, and compassion in romantic partnerships. Blackie & McLean's (2021) framework about how repeated narrative engagement affects empathy, humility, and compassion can help us understand how storytelling and reflective processes in digital photography might affect how people feel during modern courtship. This framework says that using narrative forms, like digital photos that show feelings and experiences in a relationship, may help individuals grow emotionally and understand each other better in romantic relationships. It shows how digital photography can help build empathy and kindness by letting people show what they're feeling and experiencing visually, which can improve their emotional connections while courting.

The research by Lippman et al. (2014) aligned with what Straker & Wrigley (2016) said about how to make emotional connections in the digital age and perceptions in producing emotional strategies for digital channel engagements. Emotional engagement in the digital age and the design of emotional strategies for

digital channel engagements are also helpful for making emotional connections in digital settings (Straker & Wrigley, 2016; Straker & Wrigley, 2016). Straker & Wrigley (2016) examine how emotional engagement is different in digital photography compared to traditional courtship. Their findings show how important it is to use emotional ties in digital settings. According to what they found, knowing and using emotional strategies can make digital interactions and relationships significantly better. This perspective was essential for exploring how digital photography, as a modern medium, makes courtship more emotional than traditional practices. Individuals may be able to improve the emotional effect and connection in romantic expressions by adding emotional resonance to digital photos. This was in line with a larger trend toward more emotionally aware digital interactions (Straker & Wrigley, 2016).

3. Role of Digital Photography in Modern Courtship

This section further elaborated on the significance of digital photography as a courtship medium by exploring the related literature on digital media.

Emotional impact of digital images. Valentini et al. (2018) found that digital visual interaction, especially on Instagram, affects both purchase intentions and emotional responses. Researchers have looked into how digital image-based features affect people's emotions, showing how important originality and storytelling are in evoking emotional responses (Murtarelli et al., 2021). Their findings suggested that certain types of digital photographs, like the ones with engaging and unique features, can effectively show how someone feels during a modern courtship.

Visual intimacy and relationship dynamics. Lobinger et al. (2021) conducted a comprehensive study on how taking photographs as a couple influences the two people involved. They focus on how this action can be seen as a sign of commitment and belonging in a relationship. These practices are more than just documentation; they also bring people closer together physically and emotionally.

In their study of the term "Visual Intimacy," Lobinger et al. (2021) expand more depth on how capturing photographs as a couple can foster physical and emotional closeness. In their study on visual intimacy in relationships, Lobinger et al. (2021) stress several important points. For instance, taking pictures together requires cooperation and mutual participation, which makes the relationship stronger as partners work together. When posing for photographs, physical closeness is necessitated, which makes the couple feel more intimate and affectionate.

Furthermore, Lobinger et al. (2021) also stated that taking pictures makes people feel positive and brings back good memories, which builds emotional intimacy and strengthens the bond between partners. Their study also indicated that photographs are symbolic representations of relationships as they capture happy, loving, and bonding moments that can be relived and cherished. Photographs also keep memories of shared experiences, which also strengthens the emotional bond and shared history between partners. Sharing pictures, whether they're public or private, also shows commitment and pride in a relationship. This shows that the relationship is valued, and capturing and sharing photographs regularly can turn into a habit that strengthens the relationship by reminding partners of their connection.

Digital photography in familial contexts. Complementing the study of Lobinger et al. (2021), Barnwell et al. (2021) discussed how prevalent digital photography is utilized to document romantic moments, mainly in the context of family. Barnwell et al. (2021) expand on the knowledge of utilizing digital photography to capture special times within families. It aligns with the conversation about digital intimacy by emphasizing the importance of visual practices, like photography, in portraying and preserving romantic experiences within families.

Emotional expressiveness in digital humans. The study of emotional expression in digital humans has also shown how important it is to develop closeness with individuals. This is because digital representations of emotions can have a large effect on closeness and support in relationships (Loveys et al., 2021).

Adolescent perceptions of digital media. Ouytsel et al. (2019) revealed that adolescents perceive digital media in romantic relationships as a contributing factor to emotions such as envy, anger, and monitoring their romantic partner's behavior. This illustrates that digital photographs shared on social media platforms can influence how individuals in romantic relationships respond and behave.

Digital intimacies on social media. Using positive tropes and strategic visual and social affordances, Barnwell et al. (2021) illustrate how Instagram users create digital intimacy by recording and sharing a wide range of family moments, redefining traditional family album practices, and negotiating normative ideals of family life. These findings contribute to the study of how digital photography affects ties with family and romantic partners. Miguel (2016) expands on this by examining how social media users, particularly on platforms like Facebook and Badoo, navigate

digital intimacies primarily through textual exchanges and carefully curated photographs.

Conceptual Framework

The literature review in the study "Courtship in Pixels: Examining Romantic Expressions in Digital Photography through a Mixed-Media Approach" clearly conceptualizes the variables and makes the relationships among them explicit.

Explicit Relationships and Conceptual Framework

1. Techniques and Visual Elements in Romantic Digital Photography

- **Independent Variable:** Techniques and visual elements (e.g., symbolism, composition, lighting, candid photos, use of props, and editing techniques).
- **Dependent Variable:** Emotional engagement and perception of romantic feelings.

The literature review shows that the use of specific techniques and visual elements in digital photography directly influences emotional engagement and viewers' perception of romantic feelings.

Relationship: Techniques and Visual Elements → Emotional Engagement and Perception of Romantic Feelings

2. Emotional Engagement in Digital Photography vs. Traditional Forms of Courtship

- **Independent Variable:** Type of courtship practice (digital photography, traditional practices like serenading and spoken poetry).
- **Dependent Variable:** Level of emotional engagement.

This section's review explains how traditional face-to-face interactions build emotional bonds and how digital photography offers a new medium for expressing emotions through visual storytelling and instant sharing.

Relationship: Type of Courtship Practice → Level of Emotional Engagement

3. Role of Digital Photography in Modern Courtship

- **Independent Variable:** Use of digital photography and social media platforms (e.g., Instagram, Facebook).
- **Dependent Variable:** Perception of courtship and relationship dynamics.

The literature review in this section discusses how digital photography influences perceptions of romantic expressions when shared on social media and relationship dynamics.

Relationship: Use of Digital Photography and Social Media → Perception of Courtship and Relationship Dynamics

III. METHODOLOGY

Overview

To explore the role of digital photography as a medium for romantic expression in the context of courtship, this study used a mixed-method approach that encompasses both quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews. The study used an explanatory sequential design to find out how digital photographers use visual techniques, how viewers emotionally engage with romantic digital images, and how social media platforms influence contemporary courtship practices. The mixed-method approach was also employed as actual photographs were observed, which assisted in examining how digital photography is a medium of romantic expression.

Research Design

An Explanatory Sequential Design was used for this study. In this type of design, quantitative data from surveys are used to inform the qualitative data from in-depth interviews. The design made it possible to investigate further the results of the initial survey by using qualitative insights to find out what role digital photography plays in modern courtship. This research design is essential for the study as it identifies broad concepts through quantitative data and then provides deeper insights and context through qualitative interviews. This approach allows the researcher to explore the underlying reasons and motivations behind the initial findings. It is particularly suited for exploratory research as it allows for the discovery and thorough investigation of emerging themes.

Scope and Limitations of the Study

The study explored digital photography as a means of romantic expression in courtship. The study focuses on how photographers use visual techniques, how viewers emotionally relate to romantic photographs, and the influence of social media on contemporary courtship.

The research specifically targeted individuals aged 18-30 who are active on social media and familiar with digital photography and courtship trends within the Philippines. This focus ensured relevance to the study's objectives but also introduced limitations.

The age range might exclude insights from other demographics, and the geographic focus on the Philippines may not generalize to other cultural or geographic contexts. Additionally, the study's reliance on participants who are engaged with social media and digital photography may have limited the diversity of perspectives. Although the sample size of 57 survey responses and 10 qualitative interviews was sufficient, it may still not fully capture the broad spectrum of experiences within the targeted demographic.

Respondents of the Study

The quantitative phase of the study targeted respondents aged 18-30 who were familiar with digital photography and social media platforms, especially Facebook and Instagram. The study also included digital photographers (professional, amateurs, and casual), viewers of romantic digital photography, individuals engaged in courtship and those in relationships, courtship process, and even singles who are versed with courtship trends. Initially, the study aimed to gather

50 respondents but collected 57 survey responses within the timeframe of February 23-28, 2024. In the qualitative phase, the respondents were selected based on the analysis of quantitative results. The participants who agreed to participate in the qualitative interview were the initial criteria followed by the assessment of their responses from the survey making sure that different relationship statuses were represented for further exploration of the discovered themes in relation to research objectives.

Sampling Method

The researcher used the Explanatory Sequential Design for this exploratory study, which combines quantitative and qualitative methods to gain a comprehensive understanding of the research problem. Two sampling techniques were employed for the different phases of the study.

For the quantitative phase, **convenience sampling** was used to collect data from readily available participants. This approach was effective in reaching a large number of respondents within a short timeframe. The "Courtship in Pixels: Digital Photo Contest" was integrated into this phase to boost engagement. The contest encouraged participants to submit romantic photographs and disseminate the call for participants online, which helped attract a diverse group of respondents and increased the volume of relevant data.

Purposive sampling was used for the qualitative phase. This sampling involved selecting participants based on their insightful or representative responses from the survey. This method ensured that the interviews provided a deep understanding of the themes identified in the quantitative phase by focusing on individuals who had valuable insights or experiences.

Data Gathering Procedures

A. Quantitative Phase

Survey Design and Administration

Aspect	Details
Survey Development	
Objective	To gather quantitative data on preferences, engagement levels, and perceptions related to romantic digital photography.
Content	Structured questions were designed to explore techniques, visual elements used in romantic digital photography, emotional engagement, and perceptions of digital photography on social media platforms in courtship. Additionally, it also includes the submission of romantic-themed photographs.
Distribution	
Platform	Google Forms
Schedule	The survey was officially posted on

	February 23, 2024, until February 28, 2024. The contest method and the date chosen were for Valentine's relevance to encourage participant engagement.
Promotion	Utilized "Courtship in Pixels: Digital Photo Contest" on Facebook, promoted on social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, Instagram), and university networks.

Table 1: Quantitative Survey Design and Administration

The Contest Mechanic for Promotion

The contest titled "*Courtship in Pixels: Digital Photo Contest*" was launched on February 23, 2024, to organically promote engagement in the study of modern courtship through digital photography. Participants were encouraged to submit romantic photos linked to survey responses until February 28, 2024. They may consent for their photos to be part of the contest entry and be posted on Facebook as a photo exhibition or they may also just opt to participate in the study whilst ensuring their submissions' confidentiality. The contest aimed to diversify survey responses and enhance engagement by offering cash incentives totaling 3,000 pesos to winners and random survey participants. Promotion was carried out on Facebook, Instagram, and university networks to effectively reach the target

demographic aged 18-30 as they are the most prominent consumers of social media (Wong, 2023), a demographic familiar with digital platforms, photography, and courtship trends, fostering a comprehensive understanding of digital courtship practices.

Participant Selection and Criteria

Criteria	Details
Target Respondents	Initially aimed at 50 respondents; gathered 57 survey responses before closure.
Age Range	18-30 years old, demographic familiar with digital platforms, photography, and courtship trends.
Categories	Included digital photographers (professional, amateurs, and casual), viewers of romantic digital photography, individuals engaged in courtship, and those in relationships.

Table 2: Participant Selection and Criteria

Data Collection

Criteria	Details
Survey Administration	Participants accessed via the provided Google Forms link integrated with Facebook posts with the call for survey respondents and contest participants; required responses to all survey questions.
Incentives	The contest format encouraged diverse responses; cash incentives totaling 3,000 pesos for contest winners and random respondents.
Contest Integration	Participants are more inclined to submit romantic photos linked to survey responses. The posters are made in Canva.

Table 3: Quantitative Data Collection

Data Analysis

Quantitative Techniques	Details
Descriptive Analysis	The descriptive analysis categorized responses from 57 participants to explore how they used digital photography to express romantic feelings during courtship, highlighting trends and insights in modern relationship dynamics.
Observational Analysis	This is the process wherein the researcher assesses the techniques, visual elements, and themes of submitted Romantic Photographs through Google Forms and identifies common themes

Table 4: Quantitative Data Analysis

Timeline

Activity	Date
Release of Survey link along with Contest Poster and Mechanics	February 23, 2024
Survey and Contest Entry Period	February 23-28, 2024
Engagement Period	February 29, 2024
Announcement of Winners	March 2, 2024
Data Analysis and Selection for Qualitative Interview Participants	March 3- April 8, 2024

Table 5: Quantitative Phase Timeline

B. Qualitative Phase

Aspect	Details
Participants Selection and Criteria	
Criteria	Selected based on relationship status (single, in courtship, in a relationship) and photography involvement (casual, professional, viewers). Active on social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram.
Sample Size and Composition	Out of 57 survey respondents, 29 consented to be interviewed; the final selection of 10 participants for in-depth interviews ensured representation across different perspectives.

Table 6: Qualitative Participants Selection and Criteria

Methodological Approach

Aspect	Details
In-depth Interviews	
Procedure	Conducted remotely via Zoom
Duration	Each interview session ranged from 20 to 60 minutes
Interview Guide	Structured around open-ended questions probing into photography practices, emotional engagement, and social media dynamics in digital courtship.

Table 7: Qualitative Methodological Approach

Questions are tailored to explore:

- **Photography Practices:** Techniques used, motivations behind photographic choices, and experiences in capturing or being captured in romantic settings.
- **Emotional Engagement:** How participants perceive and interpret romantic digital imagery, including emotional responses and meanings attributed to these visuals.
- **Social Media Dynamics:** Insights into how social media platforms influence the expression and reception of

romantic imagery, including considerations of audience and privacy.

Qualitative Data Analysis

Aspect	Details
Qualitative Content Analysis	
Nature of Analysis	Adopted qualitative content analysis to identify themes, patterns, and meanings within interview transcripts.
Coding Process	Used deductive and inductive approaches; initially guided by research questions and open to emergent themes.
Thematic Analysis	the process of identifying and describing common patterns or themes in a set of photos.

Table 8: Qualitative Data Analysis

Timeline

Activity	Dates
Qualitative Interviews	April 9-14, 2024
Data Transcription	April 15 - May 30, 2024
Interpretation	May 30 - June 25, 2024

Table 9: Qualitative Phase Timeline

C. Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Data Findings

Aspect	Details
Triangulation	Combined qualitative insights, and photograph observations with quantitative survey results in relevance to the research questions to validate and enrich the overall understanding of digital photography's role in courtship.
Completion Date	July 6, 2024

Table 10: Triangulation of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

Research Instrument

For the quantitative phase, a structured survey was administered via Google Forms, integrating a call for survey respondents, submission of romantic photographs, and contest participants. Facebook platform is the social media account of the researcher that has a guaranteed wide reach; the reason it was used as the main platform to call for respondents, and was also shared on Instagram. Canva was used to design the posters for the survey and romantic digital photography contest, as well as for the interview presentations. For the qualitative phase, the interviews are facilitated in the Zoom platform.

Ethical Consideration

Participants were informed about the study's objectives and provided consent along with a clear statement of terms and conditions at the beginning of the survey forms. Furthermore, the researcher also completed the **TCPS 2: Course on Research Ethics** to ensure that the researcher is equipped with knowledge and compliant with the ethical considerations for the data of the participants.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Overview

This chapter presents the results, interpretations, and discussions from a mixed-method study exploring how digital photography conveys romantic feelings in modern courtship. Employing an explanatory sequential design, the study integrated quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews to understand the techniques digital photographers use, how viewers engage with romantic imagery, and the impact of social media on courtship practices.

Phase One: Quantitative Phase

The quantitative phase involved distributing structured surveys through Google Forms from February 23 to February 28, 2024. The target demographic was individuals aged 18 to 30 who were familiar with photography, digital platforms, and courtship trends. The Google form surveys were promoted through the "Courtship in Pixels: Digital Photo Contest" on Facebook, and are shared through Instagram and university networks. The survey garnered a total of 57 responses, exceeding the initial goal of 50. The margin of error was $\pm 12.98\%$, providing a solid dataset for analysis of this exploratory study.

The survey aimed to gather information on the techniques and visual elements used in romantic digital photography, viewers' emotional engagement with these images, and the role of digital photography on social media in modern

courtship. This quantitative data provided a foundational understanding of preferences, engagement levels, and perceptions of romantic digital photography.

Survey Section 1. Participants Demographics

AGE		
Answers	Frequency	Percentage
18	2	3.51%
19	5	8.77%
20	4	7.02%
21	12	21.05%
22	14	24.56%
23	12	21.05%
24	5	8.77%
26	1	1.75%
29	1	1.75%
30	1	1.75%
TOTAL	57	100%

Table 11: Age of the Respondents

Most of the survey respondents are in the age range of 21 to 23 years, with 57.66% of the participants being within this range. The age groups with the lowest representation are 26, 29, and 30, each with only one participant which accounts for 1.75% of the total.

The findings indicate that most participants, namely 54 individuals (94.74%), were identified as belonging to Generation Z, while a smaller proportion of participants, precisely three individuals (5.26%), were classified as Millennials. The majority of participants are members of Generation Z.

RELATIONSHIP STATUS		
Answers	Frequency	Percentage
Single	26	45.6%
In a relationship	23	40.4%
Married	1	1.7%
Courting Someone or Vice Versa	7	12.3%
TOTAL	57	100%

Table 12: Relationship Status of the Respondents

The survey findings indicated that 45.6% of the participants identify themselves as single. On the other hand, approximately 40.4% of the participants were in a relationship, and 1.7% of individuals were married. Meanwhile, 12.3% of

the participants identified that they were engaged in a courting process involving pursuing someone romantically or being courted by someone.

Survey Section 2. Social Media Engagement

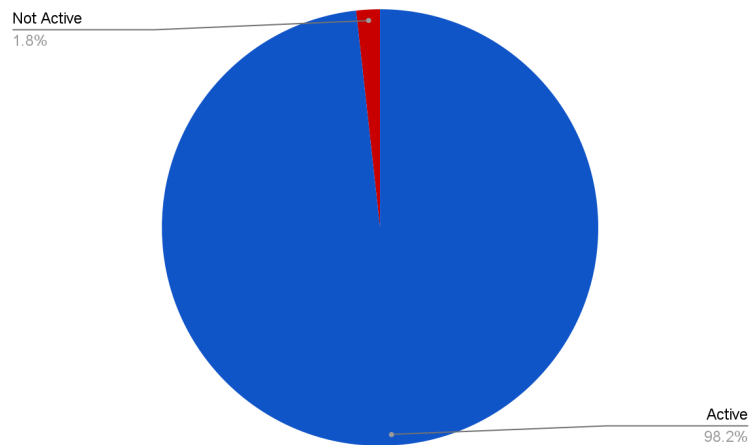


Figure 1: Pie Chart of Participants' Social Media Activity

Among the 57 participants, 56 (98.2%) are actively engaged on social media platforms, while only 1 (1.8%) is not.

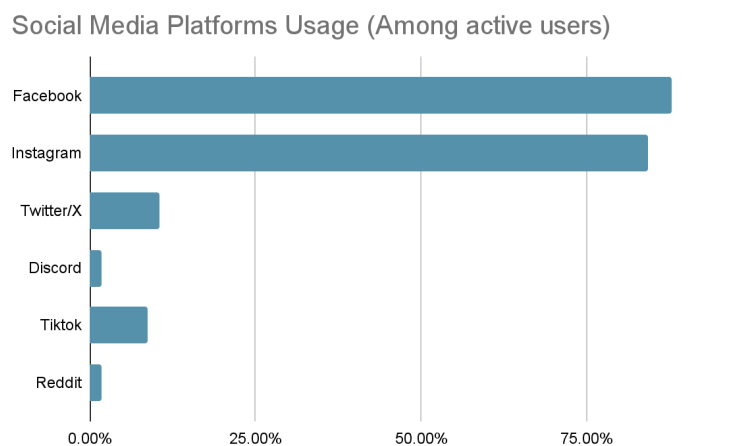


Figure 2: Bar Chart of Social Media Platforms Usage (Among active users)

Facebook and Instagram emerged as the most prominent platforms for the majority of participants, with over 80% actively using these platforms. In contrast, platforms like Twitter/X, TikTok, Discord, and Reddit are utilized much less frequently.

Survey Section 3. Romantic-Photo Observations

Out of the 57 respondents, 29 submitted romantic photographs, and 26 of these included brief descriptions. These descriptions provided insights into the experiences and emotions of the participants. The descriptions revealed different themes of how participants perceive their digital photographs.

Romantic Photos Common Themes

Theme	Entry Numbers	Frequency	Percentage
Nostalgia and Gratitude	1, 4, 11, 12, 16, 19, 21, 26	8	30.8%
Celebrations and Milestones	2, 5, 6, 9, 10, 13, 16, 18, 20, 21, 25, 26	12	46.2%
Expressions of Love and Commitment	6, 7, 8, 9, 12, 18, 24, 25	8	30.8%
Unique and Artistic Descriptions	3, 14, 15, 17, 19, 22, 23	7	26.9%
Notable Descriptions	4, 9, 17	3	11.5%

Table 13: Romantic Photos Common Themes Distribution

Of the 26 respondents who provided descriptions of their photographs, 30.8% implied that they frequently perceive their photographs as expressions of love and commitment. At the same time, it was also reported that 46.2% depict their photographs within the framework of Celebrations and Milestones. Additionally, 30.8% of respondents' descriptions conveyed a sense of nostalgia and gratitude. It can also be noted that 26.9% of the participants made unique and artistic descriptions, while 11.5% offered notable descriptions.

Nostalgia and Gratitude

Among the 26 participants who provided descriptions for their romantic photographs, 30.8% expressed a blend of nostalgia and gratitude. These descriptions often reflect on cherished memories and significant moments in their relationships. Some recount initial encounters, enduring connections, and special traditions.

For instance:

- **Participant 1** reflects on a past relationship, expressing gratitude with the sentiment, *"I am grateful that, at least once, they have met."*
- **Participant 16** highlights a meaningful experience, noting, *"Nothing beats the first beach trip with your one and only."*

Celebrations and Milestones

Among the 26 participants who provided descriptions for their romantic photographs, 46.2% emphasized moments of celebration and significant milestones in their relationships or romantic experiences. These descriptions illustrate the joy and meaning that these events bring to their romantic journeys. This theme also

highlighted how special occasions contribute to strengthening bonds and creating lasting memories.

For instance:

- **Participant 5** emphasizes the bliss of celebrating their first anniversary with a memorable picnic: *"We celebrate love with a blissful 1st-anniversary picnic, where every moment feels like a fairytale amidst nature's embrace. We share laughter, stories, and sweet nothings as we cherish the joy of being together."*
- **Participant 9** celebrates transitioning from a long-distance digital relationship to a committed partnership: *"After three years and nine months of countless digital messages and only one fleeting encounter, we took an ultimate leap into forever. Our journey from pixels to promises proves that love transcends screens. Cheers to love that defies distance and blossoms in the digital age."*
- **Participant 20** highlights the milestone of attending a wedding together: *"First time to have a plus one in a wedding!"*
- **Participant 21** celebrates multiple milestones and achievements intertwined with cherished memories: *"It's a significant photo for me. First, it is an accomplishment for my special someone. Second, the picture he was holding was taken on our first date, as well as a photo of his late mother, whom he cherished. Finally, he's holding the crochet flower I gave him for his birthday."*
- **Participant 26** highlights the celebration of their upcoming 2nd anniversary and the depth of their long-standing friendship and relationship: *"This photo is a spur-in-the-moment photoshoot concept... something like art coming to life, or in this case, photos coming to life. **** and I will be celebrating our 2nd anniversary soon but we've been best friends since high school."*

Expressions of Love and Commitment

The 30.8% of the participants provided descriptions that strongly highlighted their expressions of love and commitment that come in different forms.

For instance:

- **Participant 6's** photograph description shows expression and commitment to love through the act of officially becoming a couple: *"That was the day that I said YES to him (as a GF). First gala together."* This description also aligns with the theme of Celebrations and Milestones.
- **Participant 7** showcases their commitment and love for each other by emphasizing their dedication to spending quality time together despite busy schedules: *"Busy kami araw-araw sa work but we always make sure na may time kami sa isat-isa. Biglaang trip lang na kakain kami sa labas... di namin kinakahiya yung relasyon namin. Pinapakita at pinaparamdam namin palage yung Love and Affections na meron kami para sa isat-isa."*
- **Participant 9** describes their photo as an expression of their love and commitment by transcending from an online relationship to a committed partnership, defying physical distance: *"From virtual strangers to soulmates. After three years and nine months of countless digital messages and only one fleeting encounter, we took an ultimate leap into forever. Our journey from pixels to promises proves that love transcends screens."*
- **Participant 24** described their photo as an expression of their love and commitment through the act of gift-giving. They also recognize the effort their partner puts into the relationship and reciprocate with meaningful gestures that reinforce their bond: *"Gift-giving is, I would say, one of the ways how I*

show my affection to another person... I want her to feel her efforts are rewarded. I want her to know that her efforts are seen. I want her to feel that she deserves everything good life has to offer. Even if those ambitions of mine should come with the cost of everything I have now, I would gladly trade it for her smile. Giving gifts does not benefit only the receiving hands, but also the giver itself. The polaroid in the photograph is a memento of one of our quality times when I travel thousands of miles just to feel her embrace."

Unique and Artistic Descriptions

Under this category, 26.9% of participants offered unique and artistic descriptions of their romantic-themed digital photographs. The participants showcased their personal significance and creative perspectives.

- **Participant 3** described their photo with deep personal value, remarking, "*A priceless photo I wouldn't trade for anything.*" This reflects a strong emotional attachment and personal significance.
- **Participant 14** described their photo as "*a wonderful moment between my two cats, who usually wrestle and fight. However, they found peace in a time when they were both sedated with meds with one another,*" this particular photograph is unique as instead of humans, it described the love between two cats as perceived by their owner.
- **Participant 17** used a poetic phrase to describe their photo: "*A man falls in love through his eyes, a woman through her ears.*" This suggests a deeper, symbolic interpretation of the image, linking visual elements with emotional experiences.

- **Participant 19** shared metaphorically the significance of a photo taken during the early stages of their relationship. They noted, *"At that time, I was still courting her and then we decided to take a photo in her garden mirror,"* indicating the role of the photo in capturing a pivotal moment in their courtship.
- **Participant 23** added a cinematic and artistic dimension by saying, *"Pretending our life is a Wong Kar-Wai film,"* which reflects a stylized and romanticized view of their personal experiences, influenced by cinematic aesthetics.

Notable Descriptions

In this section, 11.5% of participants provided descriptions that emphasized the emotional depth and personal significance of their photos. The descriptions that fall under this category imply that the provided photograph descriptions conveyed complex emotions.

- **Participant 4** shared a detailed account of a significant event tied to their photo, saying, *"...this picture always reminds me of the exact date, story, and of course... the feeling. So nung July... So ayun kinumusta ko siya ganyan, small talk tas in-insist ng friend ko nun na piktyuran kami tapos nagpiktyur kami!!! After nun...after niya tumalikod e grabe tuwang-tuwa ako non tas ...sobrang kilig ko."* This description captures a mix of excitement, nervousness, and joy, tied to a specific date and interaction of a single photograph, and illustrates the photo's storytelling value.
- **Participant 9** offered a modern love story that transitioned from digital communication to a committed relationship: *"From virtual strangers to*

soulmates. After three years and nine months of countless digital messages and only one fleeting encounter, we took an ultimate leap into forever. Our journey from pixels to promises proves that love transcends screens. Cheers to love that defies distance and blossoms in the digital age." The poetic language and focus on overcoming distance emphasize the depth of their romantic experience.

- **Participant 17** provided a brief but philosophical reflection on love and attraction: *"A man falls in love through his eyes, a woman through her ears."* This brief description carries a philosophical tone and offers a notable perspective on romantic feelings.

Visual Elements and Techniques of the Submitted Romantic Photograph Entries

Category	Photo No.	Frequency	Percentage	Description
Selfies	2, 4, 26, 27	4	13.79%	self-taken photo
POV Shots	22, 28, 29	3	10.34%	shows the photographer's perspective
Travel Photographs	5, 12	2	6.90%	capture scenes and moments from trips

Creative and Directed Photographs	6, 23, 24,25	4	13.79%	Creative photoshoots and photographs that are posed and guided.
Symbolic elements, gestures, and narratives	7, 9, 13, 14, 20, 21	6	20.69%	Features gestures like forming hearts, holding flowers, or displaying symbolic objects (e.g., rings).
Artistic Editing	1, 10	2	6.90%	Includes elements of post-processing (e.g., collage, photo manipulation)
Milestone Commemoration	15, 19	2	6.90%	Photographs during essential milestones (e.g., weddings, anniversaries)
Photo Prints	3, 18	2	6.90%	Printed photographs from photobooth, Instax, etc.
Candid Shots	8, 11, 16, 17	4	13.79%	natural and unposed shots
TOTAL		29	100%	

Table 14: Frequency of Romantic Photograph's Similarities

Table 14 reveals that the romantic photographs submitted showcase a wide range of visual elements and styles.

Selfies and candid photographs, each representing 13.79% of the entries, capture spontaneous and personal moments, reflecting genuine emotions in unplanned settings. **Point-of-view (POV) photographs**, accounting for 10.34%, present the photographer's unique perspective, adding a personal touch to the romantic narrative. **Travel photographs**, making up 6.90%, depict scenes from travels of shared experiences.

In terms of artistic expression, **creative or staged images** also constitute 13.79% of the submissions, involving deliberate poses, composition, and direction. Additionally, **symbolic elements and gestures** represent 20.69%, prominently featuring heart shapes, floral motifs, and rings, elements of which are commonly associated with romance.

Artistic editing, which comprises 6.90%, includes various post-processing techniques that enhance the visual appeal and emotional impact of the photographs. **Milestone commemoration photos**, also at 6.90%, are used to document significant events, reflecting the importance of memorable moments in the courtship process. Lastly, **photoprints**, another 6.90%, photographs that capture physical copies of romantic images, emphasizing the value of tangible keepsakes.

The Photographs Observed:

1. A photo of a couple edited in two frames, with one partner kissing the other. The dominant color is purple.
 - Utilizes framing and editing to emphasize a moment of intimacy. The purple color enhances the romantic mood of the photo.
2. A selfie of a couple during a movie night in bed.
 - Captures an intimate moment in a relaxed setting. The bedroom environment adds a personal touch to the photo.
3. A picture of a couple on a dinner date, with an Instax-printed photo of them placed over a passport held by someone in a car.
 - Incorporates Instax photography to add a nostalgic and personal element to the digital photo. The setting suggests travel or a shared outing.
4. Mirror selfie of a couple in a convenience store, color graded with mint green.
 - Uses mirror reflection to create a dual perspective. Green color grading may add a thematic or emotional layer to the photo.
5. A couple hugging on the beach at dusk.
 - Takes advantage of natural lighting and setting to create a romantic atmosphere. Dusk lighting enhances the warmth and intimacy of the scene.
6. Creative photoshoot featuring a man with a crochet sunflower, surrounded by printed portraits of himself, his partner, and his family.
 - Utilizes props and multiple portraits to tell a visual story of relationships and connections. The sunflower and family photos add personal meaning to the composition.

7. Wacky pose of a couple dressed formally, with the girl holding a flower while they gaze at each other.
 - Expresses personality and playfulness through pose and attire. The flower adds a whimsical touch to the formal setting.
8. A mirror reflection shows a girl taking a photo of a guy who is unaware and engaged in other activities.
 - Captures a candid moment through the reflection. The unaware subject adds spontaneity and authenticity to the composition.
9. A couple in a green nature setting, holding a digital camera.
 - Integrates the couple into a natural environment, symbolizing harmony and connection with nature. Holding a camera suggests shared interests and activities.
10. A three-layer collage of a couple on a date featuring silhouettes looking at paintings and a mirrored photobooth shot.
 - Uses collage to layer multiple perspectives and moments. Silhouettes and mirrors add depth and symbolic meaning to the composition.
11. A couple on a lunch date, with the guy looking at his laughing girlfriend. The dominant color is orange.
 - Captures a candid moment of interaction and laughter. Orange color may evoke warmth and energy in their relationship.
12. Retro-filtered shot of a couple running on the beach.
 - The retro filter is applied for a nostalgic effect. The beach setting and action shot convey a carefree and romantic mood.
13. Wide shot of a couple walking on the beach, with a bird flying overhead. The tone is warm.

- Uses a wide angle to capture expansive scenery. Warm tones enhance the romantic and serene atmosphere of the beach scene.

14. Picture of two sleeping cats together.

- Uses animal companionship to symbolize closeness and comfort in a relationship. The cozy atmosphere adds a sense of intimacy.

15. A couple is celebrating Valentine's Day, with the girl holding flowers and a pink teddy bear and the guy holding a brown teddy bear. Red is the dominant color.

- Celebrate a special occasion with symbolic gifts and decorations. Red symbolizes love and passion, which adds emotional depth to the photo.

16. A candid shot of a guy interacting with kids, unfiltered.

- Captures genuine interaction and a caring nature. Unfiltered style enhances authenticity and natural beauty in the moment.

17. Candid photo of a couple smiling at each other with a warm, yellowish tone.

- Conveys mutual affection and happiness through facial expressions. A warm tone adds emotional warmth to the scene.

18. The photo contains printed photos of the couple piled up with photobooth pictures.

- Creates a visual narrative of shared memories and experiences. Photobooth prints add a playful and nostalgic element to the composition.

19. Dressed in traditional marriage attire, with red and white as dominant colors.

- Celebrates cultural traditions and rituals. Formal attire and color symbolism reflect the significance of the occasion.

20. Close-up of golden rings on a pink-violet object.

- Focuses on symbolic representation of commitment and love. Color contrast adds visual interest and elegance to the composition.

21. Couple forming a heart with their hands while eating at a chicken wings restaurant.

- Gesture symbolizes love and unity. Informal setting adds a playful and casual atmosphere to their romantic gesture.

22. POV shot of partner taking a photo of their subject in a bookstore, holding hands.

- Provides a unique perspective from the photographer's viewpoint. Focus on activity and connection highlights shared interests and moments.

23. Shot of a couple looking at each other.

- Captures intimate gaze and emotional connection. Minimalist composition emphasizes the depth and sincerity of their relationship.

24. Creative photoshoot of a couple in a picnic setting, surrounded by balloons, pizza, and snacks, with warm colors.

- Sets a joyful and relaxed atmosphere with outdoor picnic theme. Warm colors enhance the romantic and cozy ambiance of the scene.

25. Guy with his crush after an event, with guy smiling and girl posing naturally.

- Captures post-event moments with genuine expressions and relaxed posture. Natural interaction reflects excitement and connection in the photograph.

26. Selfie of a couple on a date.

- Captures an intimate and spontaneous moment between the couple. The informal setting adds a personal and immediate perspective to their date experience.

27. Selfie of a couple on a date.

- Provides a personal view of their shared experience.

28. POV shot focusing on the couple's feet, with the guy, the suitor, holding a gift.

- Offers a viewpoint from the photographer's perspective. Focus on activity emphasizes the gesture of gift-giving and shared moments.

29. POV shot of the girl eating ramen.

- Provides a personal perspective on the casual dining experience. Focus on activity highlights shared interests and everyday moments of enjoyment.

Photographs with Dominant Colors

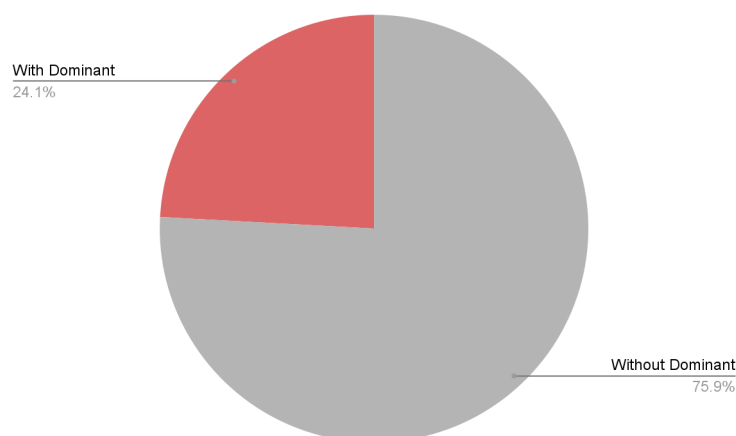


Figure 3: Pie Chart of Photographs with Dominant Colors

It can also be noted that there are dominant colors at play with 7 photographs, approximately 24.14% of 29. The colors observed are Purple, Mint Green, Orange, and Yellow.

SURVEY SECTION 4. Engagement with Digital Photography

Frequency of Engagement with Digital Photography		
Answers	Frequency	Percentage
Daily	24	42.11%
Several times a week	21	36.84%
Occasionally	10	17.54%
Rarely	2	3.51%
Never	0	0%
TOTAL	57	100%

Table 15: Respondents' Frequency Engagement with Digital Photography

Nearly half (42.11%) engage daily with digital photography, this indicates a significant and routine engagement with photography either for consumption or as a practice. A substantial portion (36.84%) engages several times a week, some (17.54%) engage occasionally, while a small minority (3.51%) rarely do. Virtually none (0%) ever engage with digital photography, which illustrates that respondents all have engagement with digital photography at some level.

These findings show how prevalent digital photography is in everyday life. It also suggests that it is an essential component of modern courtship since individuals engage with it extensively.

Self-Identification as Photographers		
Answers	Frequency	Percentage
Professional Photographer	2	3.5%
Amateur Photographer	10	17.5%
Casual Photographer	28	49.1%
Simply Enjoy Viewing Romantic Photos	17	29.8%
TOTAL	57	100%

Table 16: Respondents' Self-Identification as Photographers

Among the respondents, 3.5% consider themselves professional photographers, while 17.5% identify as amateur photographers. On the other hand, almost half of the respondents (49.1%) are casual photographers who engage with photography without professional or intense hobbyist commitment. Additionally, 29.8% of the respondents simply just enjoy viewing romantic photos without necessarily taking them.

Common Subjects of Digital Photography

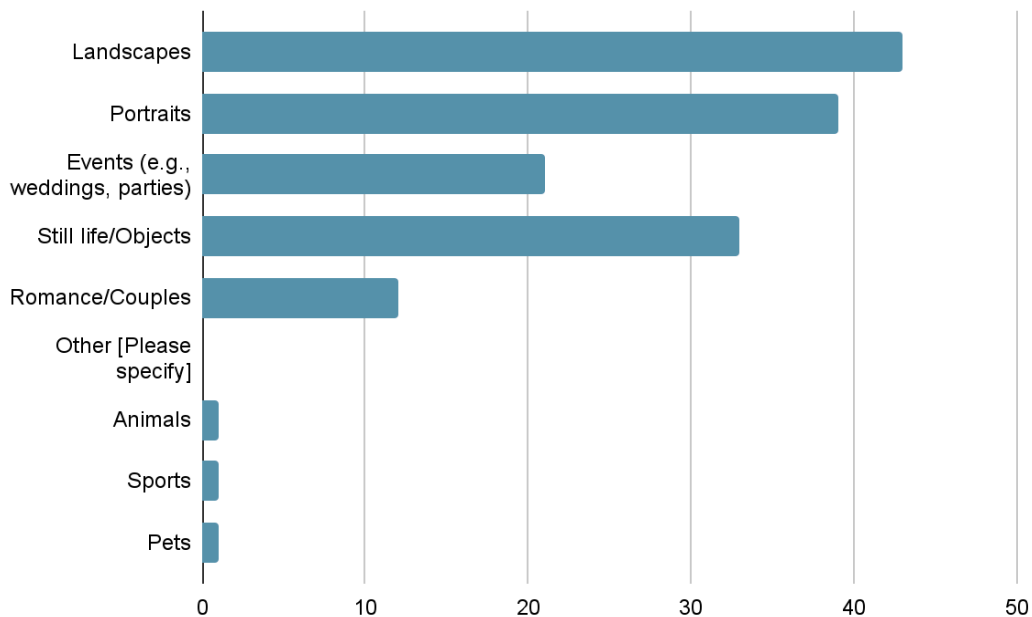


Figure 4: Common Subjects of Digital Photography

Photographic preferences among respondents vary widely: the majority favor landscapes (75.4%) and portraits (68.4%), while over half engage in still life/objects photography (57.9%). Some capture events (36.8%), with fewer focusing on romance/couples (2.1%) or other subjects like animals, sports, or pets (each 1.85%).

These preferences highlight a clear inclination towards traditional and broadly appealing genres, with romantic-themed photography being less common among the respondents. These findings suggest that while digital photography plays a role in courtship, it is a smaller segment compared to more general photographic interests.

Survey Section 5. Techniques and Visual Elements in Romantic Digital Photography

Emotional Engagement with Romantic-Themed Digital Photographs		
Answers	Frequency	Percentage
Not engaged at all	4	7%
Somewhat engaged	13	22.8%
Moderately Engaged	24	42.1%
Very Engaged	13	22.8%
Extremely Engaged	3	5.3%
TOTAL	57	100%

Table 17: Emotional Engagement Levels with Romantic-Themed Digital Photographs

In exploring emotional engagement with romantic-themed digital photographs, the data reveals that 24 respondents (42.1%) reported feeling moderately engaged, while 13 respondents (22.8%) felt very engaged. Another 13 respondents (22.8%) expressed being somewhat engaged, and 3 respondents (5.3%) indicated feeling extremely engaged. Four respondents (7%) reported no emotional engagement at all with such photographs.

Techniques and Visual Elements Prioritized in Capturing Romantic-Themed Digital Photographs

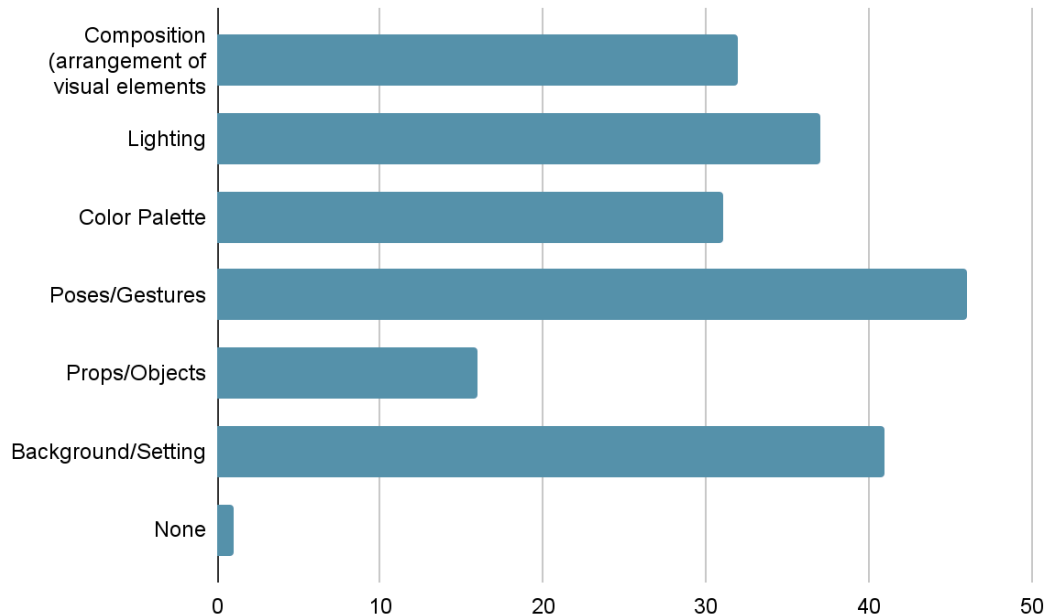


Figure 5: Prioritized Techniques and Visual Elements

When capturing romantic-themed digital photographs, respondents prioritize several key techniques and visual elements to convey romantic feelings. A significant majority, 46 respondents (80.7%), focus on poses and gestures. Lighting is considered crucial by 37 respondents (64.9%) for setting the mood and enhancing visual appeal. Additionally, 41 respondents (71.9%) prioritize background or setting to create a romantic atmosphere. Composition is chosen by 32 respondents (56.1%), while 31 respondents (54.4%) prioritize color palette. Some respondents, 16 (28.1%), use props or objects to add context or symbolism. However, a very small percentage, only 1 respondent (1.8%), does not prioritize any specific techniques.

Survey Section 6: How Digital Photography Enhances the Expression of Romantic Feelings Compared to Traditional Courtship Methods

This section provides an analysis of the survey question “*How do you think digital photography enhances the expression of romantic feelings compared to traditional methods (e.g., handwritten letters and Harana)?*”

Theme	Response Numbers	Frequency	Percentage
Visual and Immediate Communication	1, 3, 13, 23, 29, 44, 46, 47, 48, 49, 53, 57	12	21.05%
Emotional Impact and Memory Preservation	2, 9, 12, 14, 17, 18, 20, 24, 27, 29, 30, 32, 34, 37, 39, 40, 42, 43, 45, 51, 54, 55, 56	23	40.35%
Creative Expression and Enhancement	4, 5, 7, 8, 11, 15, 16, 17, 19, 22, 28, 31, 35, 41, 44, 49, 50, 52	18	31.58%
Social Sharing and Validation	6, 10, 14, 22, 25, 26, 36, 41, 52	9	15.79%
No suitable category	21, 33, 38	3	5.26%

Table 18: Section 6 Common Themes Distribution

Among the common themes found, some responses overlap with the other, which is why the frequency and percentage do not necessarily match the sample size of the study. A majority of the respondents believe that digital photography enhances the expression of romantic feelings through its emotional impact and memory preservation capabilities. Additionally, 21.05% emphasized visual and immediate communication as a significant aspect facilitated by digital photography in expressing romantic feelings. Furthermore, 31.58% of the respondents expressed that digital photography enhances the expression of romantic feelings through creative expression and enhancement. 15.79% highlighted social sharing and validation as key aspects where digital photography enhances the expression of romantic feelings. Lastly, 5.26% of respondents responded with no suitable category implying their conviction that Digital Photography can not measure up with traditional forms of courtship.

Visual and Immediate Communication

Digital photography allows for immediate visual communication, capturing and sharing intimate moments in real-time. Respondents believed that expressing romantic emotions can be more effective because the visual nature of digital photography also makes it inclusive and universally understandable. Additionally, the visual nature of digital photography is also perceived to be capable of captivating attention.

Excerpts from participant replies that specifically indicate their theme:

- *"People tend to be engaged and swayed by visual and digital objects."*
- *"providing instant visual communication, allowing couples to capture and share intimate moments in real-time."*

- *"It provides immediacy and convenience for couples to capture and share moments of love instantly,"*
- *"Digital photography enhances the expression of romantic feelings by leveraging visual senses,"*
- *"Digital photography enhances the expression of romantic feelings by capturing moments instantly,"*

Emotional Impact and Memory Preservation

Digital photography allows memories and emotions to be captured and preserved. Digital photographs also enable couples and those in the courtship in courtship process to share the same visuals. Nostalgic emotions are also often mentioned as one of the emotions that come with digital photography. For others, digital photography can also be a form of visual affirmation and reinforcer of emotional bonds. There are also mentioned comparisons that, unlike other traditional courtship practices, such as handwritten letters, digital photographs don't fade.

Excerpts from participant replies that specifically indicate their theme:

- *"para mai-treasure natin 'yung specific moment na 'yon with their most genuine reactions,"*
- *"it makes the memory more 'timeless' like a digital photo doesn't fade like handwritten letters do."*
- *"It keeps the memories you spent together even when you grow older."*
- *"It captures emotions real time and it actually means a lot when you take photos of your partner because it means that they value the memories that they made with you."*

- *"By having these romantic photographs within their possessions, they can look back and reminisce about the love that they shared with a visual output, and remember how they fell in love in the first place."*

Creative Expression and Enhancement

Respondents described digital photography as a medium that can provide opportunities for creative emotional expression through editing and manipulation which enhances emotional impact. Digital photography has also claimed to be flexible, and individuals have creative freedom in romantic expression.

Excerpts from participant replies that specifically indicate their theme:

- *"Expression of romantic feelings through digital photography, especially when post-processing is present, allows the artist to use their knowledge, time, and emotions to express many things in their own unique and insanely personal way."*
- *"Digital photography enhances the expression of the romantic feelings in ways that traditional methods cannot match."*
- *"It somehow enhances the visual of the handwritten letter since it can be a decoration."*
- *"Digital photography, as a visual expression of art, can manifest intimacy and brings great memories on how the photos are taken compared to other forms of media."*
- *"Digital photos convey emotions through poses, expressions, and compositions. The instant nature of digital photography allows for spontaneous capture of genuine moments."*

Social Sharing and Validation

Participants perceived that digital photography can be integrated with social media platforms. This attribute allows for sharing moments with a wider audience and receiving validation and appreciation which have an influence on romantic expression for some.

- *"Sharing digital photographs on social media platforms has become a popular way of expressing admiration and fondness towards the individual featured in the picture."*
- *"You can also share photographs to your friends and family for them to witness the moment even if they are not physically there at that time."*
- *"Through this not only do we feel the love our partner has for us, but we also learn the reason why we are worth loving."*
- *"In this era, digital photography is mostly for flexing in social media."*
- *"It enables instant sharing across distances, fostering real-time connection because of the social media and the platform that we use since it can get a lot of audiences unlike handwritten letters and Harana."*

Survey Section 7: Perception of Digital Photography in the Courtship Process

Participants were asked about the influence of social media platforms, particularly Instagram, on the expression of romantic feelings and intentions during the courtship process:

Perception of Social Media Influence		
Answers	Frequency	Percentage
Significantly	20	35.1%
Moderately	25	43.9%
Slightly	10	17.5%
Not at all	2	3.5%
TOTAL	57	100%

Table 19: Perception of Social Media Influence Levels

Among the 57 respondents, 35.1% perceive social media as having a significant influence on romantic expressions and intentions during the courtship process, and 43.9% believe it has a moderate influence. Only 17.5% feel it slightly influences their romantic expressions, while a mere 3.5% report no influence at all. This suggests that the majority of participants (79%) acknowledge social media's significant or moderate impact on how they express romantic feelings. This result underscores the platform's importance in contemporary romantic interactions.

Utilization of Digital Photography in Courtship

Participants were asked if they have ever utilized digital photography (sharing photos on social media, soft launch/hard launch, "pagpaparinig", flex, etc.) as a means of expressing romantic feelings or intentions during the courtship process

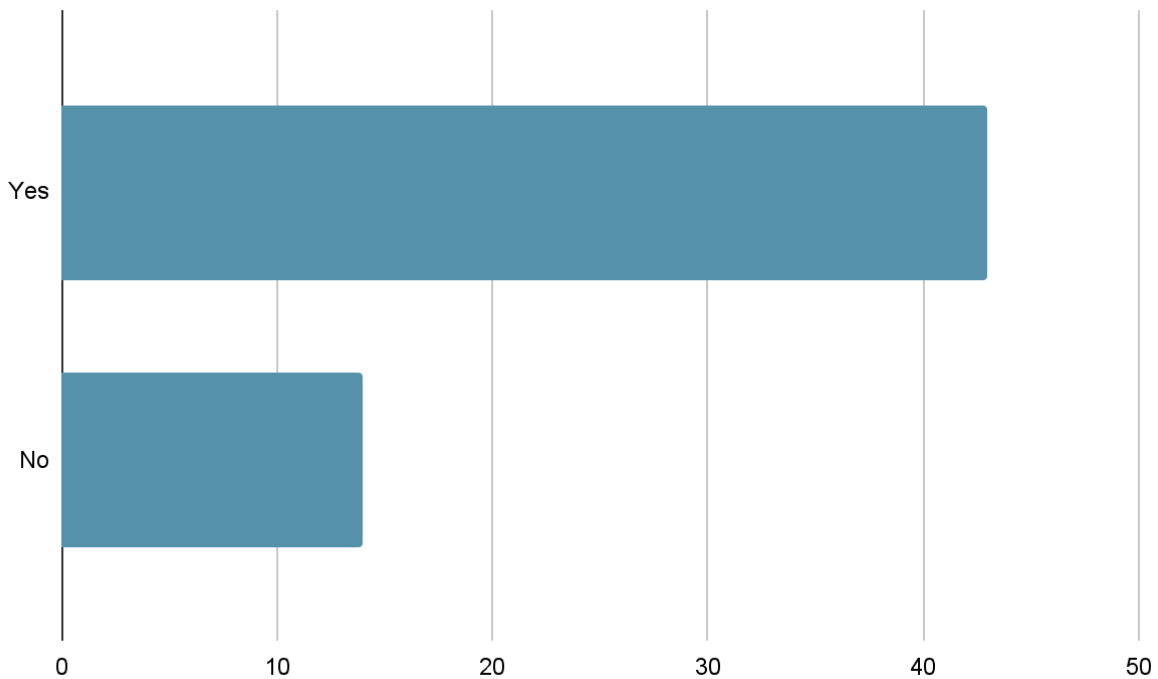


Figure 6: Utilization of Digital Photography in Courtship

A significant majority of 75.4%, 43 out of 57 respondents have utilized digital photography to express romantic feelings or intentions during courtship. While 24.6% (14 individuals) have not used digital photography in this way.

These findings indicate that digital photography is a prevalent medium for romantic expression in the courtship process among the majority of participants which reflects its significant role in modern courtship practices.

Common Themes Distribution of Participants Who Utilized Photography As a Means of Expressing Romantic Feelings or Intentions During Courtship Process

Theme	Response Numbers	Frequency	Percentage
Social Media Flexing	1, 2, 5, 7, 9, 11, 14, 15, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 31, 32, 33, 36, 37	19	44.19%
Memory Preservation and Sentimentality	3, 10, 13, 16, 17, 24, 26, 27, 30, 35, 37	11	25.58%
Giving Hints	4, 7, 12, 28, 35	5	11.63%
Emotional Impact and Connection	6, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 16, 17, 18, 25, 27, 30, 35, 37	14	32.56%
Communication and Appreciation	4, 6, 18, 19, 26, 28, 29, 34	8	18.60%

Table 20: Common Themes Distribution of Participants who utilized photography in Romantic expression during courtship process

Participants who answered “YES” were asked to briefly describe their experiences and how digital photography influenced their courtship process. Like the previous analyses, the participants' responses are labeled by numbers for anonymity. There are 37 out of 43 “Yes” respondents provided their experiences and there are common themes arising from their responses. It is also worth noting that there are responses that overlap with other themes, sharing the same context with more than one theme.

Social Media Flexing

Among the 43 participants who confirmed utilizing digital photography to express romantic feelings during courtship, 19 responses (44.19%) emphasized the practice of social media flexing. For instance, Respondent 1 expressed a fondness for “flexing” to let everyone know about their romantic involvement, while Respondent 15 enjoyed being shown off, finding it thrilling. Additionally, respondents utilized digital photography and social media for both “hard launch” (fully revealing their partner's identity) and “soft launch” (hinting at a romantic relationship without revealing the partner's identity), illustrating varying degrees of public disclosure in their relationship announcements.

- **Respondent 2** uses social media as a tool for indirect communication and seeks attention. *“...mahilig talaga ako magparinig sa facebook...dito ko naexpress yung nararamdaman at magpapansin...Ngayon na bf ko na sya, I, Sometimes flex him at social media because he deserves it.”*
- **Respondent 7** showcases happiness and pride in a relationship through photography on social media. *“I used photography to show how happy and*

proud I am to have a happy relationship...Sometimes I also use photography for 'pagpaparinig' especially on Instagram stories."

- **Respondent 20** makes relationship milestones public through social media. *"we soft launched each other...making us feel assured it influenced me by knowing I will be forever have and remember that moment."*
- **Respondent 23** affirms affection and showcases their partner on social media. *"Flexing your partner means true love because true love for me is worth showing off."*
- **Respondent 31** highlights the trend of social media flexing and its impact on authenticity. *"In my case, it made me feel like they are proud of me and made me feel special in a way...it becomes kind of a 'requirement' for couples to do a 'soft launch/hard launch' it no longer becomes wholesome and heart-warming."*
- **Respondent 36** shows pride in an LGBTQ+ relationship through social media. *"I often post stories on Instagram...It's kind of a way to show that I'm not ashamed or I'm not hiding our relationship..."*
- **Respondent 37** maintains a balance between privacy and public affirmation on social media. *"...it's typically for close friends only, and we use it as a way of accountability also. And it's a nice little way to keep track of memories too!"*

Memory Preservation and Sentimentality

Among the 43 participants who confirmed utilizing digital photography to express romantic feelings during courtship, 11 responses (25.58%) emphasized the importance of memory preservation and sentimentality. These respondents described using digital photos to capture and share special moments, document their

relationship journey, and create lasting memories that strengthen their emotional bonds.

- **Respondent 10** emphasizes the role of digital photography in preserving memories. *"Digital photography has a vital role for me...it feels so surreal if you are able to see a bunch of photos you truly love"*
- **Respondent 16** uses photos to create lasting memories of their relationship. *"I didn't know how else I could remember him if I wasn't around him all the time...I already have a memory that this is the guy I like."*
- **Respondent 26** documents their relationship through photography. *"I take photos of her all the time because I want to look back at our journey together...Photographs helped a lot with courting her."*
- **Respondent 30** uses digital photography to maintain a connection in a long-distance relationship. *"Through exchanging photos, we were able to capture special moments and create lasting memories despite the physical distance between us."*
- **Respondent 37** utilizes social media to preserve memories among close friends and family. *"...it's typically for close friends only, and we use it as a way of accountability also. And it's a nice little way to keep track of memories too!"*

Giving Hints

Five respondents (11.63%) use digital photography to subtly express romantic interest and drop hints. These respondents employ methods like taking and sharing pictures of favorite objects or scenes, incorporating photos into creative surprises, and posting suggestive photos on social media. This indirect communication, often referred to as "*pagpaparinig*," allows them to convey feelings and intentions in a

specific way. This approach sometimes leads to further interaction and deeper connections. These strategies help the respondents express emotions more effectively than words alone.

- **Respondent 4** uses photography to indirectly communicate romantic interest. *"Pagpaparinig in a way of taking pictures of her favorite flower or scenery and putting some sweet or pagpaparinig music."*
- **Respondent 7** engages in indirect romantic communication through photography on social media. *"Sometimes I also use photography for 'pagpaparinig' especially on Instagram stories."*
- **Respondent 12** incorporates photos in creative surprises for their partner, using them to drop hints. *"I love making surprises sa boyfriend ko...di mawawala yung mga pics namin together sa mga ginagawa ko."*
- **Respondent 28** uses photography to express romantic intentions subtly. *"I'm guilty of dropping hints and romantic intentions through photography. It helped me to express my feelings better than expressing it through words."*
- **Respondent 35** initiated their romantic journey with a photo hint, leading to further communication. *"I shared a photo of my friend and me to celebrate her birthday. As a mutual friend of hers, He noticed the picture, messaged me, and the rest is history."*

Emotional Impact and Connection

The theme of Emotional Impact and Connection reveals that 32.56% of respondents express how digital photography profoundly affects their romantic relationships. Respondents emphasize that photography enhances emotional bonds by capturing intimate moments and gestures that words alone cannot convey.

- **Respondent 6** describes the deepening of their relationship through shared photography experiences. *"...through the lens of his camera, he captured not just my physical form, but also the essence of our growing bond...our relationship transcended the boundaries of photographer and model."*
- **Respondent 18** highlights the role of photos in building a connection through modern dating platforms. *"...connected on Facebook Dating in 2019, exchanging photos and sharing moments of what we were doing."*
- **Respondent 30** uses digital photography to maintain emotional closeness in a long-distance relationship. *"...exchanging photos...create lasting memories despite the physical distance between us. It allowed us to feel connected and share our lives with each other."*
- **Respondent 35** captures and shares romantic milestones through photography, enhancing their connection. *"Each step in our journey was captured in photos: our first date, the moment I said 'yes'...Every image encapsulates a moment of love."*
- **Respondent 37** uses selective sharing of photos for emotional accountability and memory tracking. *"...post (and this is already rare), it's typically for close friends only, and we use it as a way of accountability also. And it's a nice little way to keep track of memories too!"*

Communication and Appreciation

This theme comprises 18.6% of responses that highlights how digital photography serves as a powerful tool for expressing and strengthening romantic bonds. Respondents used digital photography to communicate feelings indirectly or

to initiate conversations. Collaborating on photoshoot sessions or exchanging edited photos was seen as a way to deepen intimacy and understanding between partners.

- **Respondent 18** values communication and appreciation through digital means. *"Yes, because we are now in the era of modern technology...We connected on Facebook Dating in 2019, exchanging photos and sharing moments of what we were doing."*
- **Respondent 26** documents relationship moments through photography as a form of appreciation. *"I take photos of her all the time because I want to look back at our journey together...Photographs helped a lot with courting her."*
- **Respondent 28** finds photography effective in expressing feelings better than words. *"I have zero experience courting or being courted, but I'm guilty of dropping hints and romantic intentions through photography."*
- **Respondent 34** uses digital means to communicate updates and appreciation in a long-distance relationship. *"I think even if we are not communicating through written messages as often, a quick photo is enough to make our minds at peace, knowing what each of us is doing."*

Common Themes Distribution of Participants Who Did Not Utilize Digital Photography in Courtship or Romantic Context

Theme	Frequency	Percentage
Preference for Privacy	5	35.71%
Concerns about Misinterpretation	2	14.29%
Absence of a Romantic Partner	3	21.43%
View Photography as a Personal Hobby	1	7.14%
No explanation	3	21.43%
TOTAL	14	100%

Table 21: Section 7 Common Themes Distribution of Participants who did not utilize photography in courtship or romantic context

Among the 14 (24.6%) respondents who indicated that they do not use digital photography for expressing romantic feelings, 11 provided insights into their reasons, revealing several common themes. However, three (21.43%) respondents did not elaborate on their stance. Making the 14 respondents as the 100% of the theme distribution analysis, Privacy emerges as a predominant concern, with 35.71% of these respondents citing a preference for keeping their romantic relationships private. This sentiment reflects a desire to avoid public displays of affection through

social media or other digital platforms. Additionally, 14.29% of respondents express reservations about using photography for fear of misinterpretation or appearing insincere.

Another notable theme is the absence of a current romantic partner, as 21.43% of respondents indicate that not having someone to share these experiences with is a barrier to using digital photography for romantic expression. Furthermore, 7.14% of respondents view photography primarily as a personal hobby rather than a tool for relationship expression. Overall, these insights illustrate a range of reasons why some individuals choose not to utilize digital photography for expressing romantic feelings, underscoring preferences for privacy, concerns about misinterpretation, and the influence of personal relationship status.

- **Respondent 1** values privacy in their relationship. *"For the both of us, we want to be private about our relationship."* This respondent prioritizes privacy over public displays of affection through digital photography.
- **Respondent 2** views photography more as a personal hobby than a tool for romantic expression. *"Digital photography is kind of a hobby for me. But if the time comes, maybe I can use photography as an excuse so that I can get his attention."* They see photography as something personal rather than relational.
- **Respondent 4** prefers to keep emotions private and avoids public display. *"I am not too expressive of my emotions generally, and even more so to the 'public eye.' That said, I have not explicitly courted anyone or have been officially courted in my entire life."* They are reserved about expressing emotions publicly, including through social media.

- **Respondent 8** prefers expressing feelings and actions in person rather than through digital media. *"I preferred saying it and doing actions in person rather than expressing my feelings through digital photography."* They prioritize face-to-face interactions for emotional expression.
- **Respondent 10** expresses a desire to use photography if they had a romantic partner. *"The main reason probably is I don't have someone to express my love with through digital photographs... But for sure if I had one, I'll use digital photographs and share them everywhere as I have a huge love for photography."* This respondent expresses enthusiasm for using photography once they have a romantic partner.

Survey Section 8: Participants' Additional Comments

Out of 57 respondents, 22 provided additional comments on digital photography in modern courtship. This revealed key themes and reinforced the already discovered themes including the expression of treasure and affection, the multifaceted role of digital photography, different perspectives on photography, its role in long-distance relationships, validation and memory preservation, modern courtship dynamics, challenges and considerations, and encouragement and reflections.

Theme	Frequency	Percentage
Expression of Treasure and Affection	3	13.6%
Multifaceted Role of Digital Photography	4	18.2%
Different Perspectives on Photography	2	9.1%
Long-Distance Relationships	2	9.1%
Validation and Memory Preservation	3	13.6%
Modern Courtship Dynamics	3	13.6%
Challenges and Considerations	2	9.1%
Encouragement and Reflections	3	13.6%
TOTAL	22	100%

Table 22: Section 8 Common Themes of Participants' Additional Comments

- **Expression of Treasure and Affection:** Respondents feel cherished when their partner captures candid moments through digital photography, whether publicly on social media or privately. *"... the thought of being captured by the person you like/love, candid or not, you will always feel giddy..."*
- **Multifaceted Role of Digital Photography:** Digital photography serves multiple purposes in modern courtship. It allows couples to creatively express their love stories, share memorable experiences, and communicate emotions visually. *"... It not only serves as a means of capturing and sharing romantic moments but also as a tool for creative expression and storytelling..."*
- **Different Perspectives on Photography:** There's a distinction between professional photography, which conveys deeper emotions through skillful composition, and casual photography, capturing authentic, spontaneous moments that reflect genuine feelings. *"... the emotions they can express in a single picture are far greater than those of common people..."*
- **Long-Distance Relationships:** Respondents recognize digital photography for bridging physical distances by enabling partners to share visual updates and feel connected. *"... It helps bridge the gap in long-distance relationships and fosters a sense of community through social media sharing."*
- **Validation and Memory Preservation:** Photographs are viewed as validations of real experiences and cherished as tangible reminders of relationship milestones. *"... Pictures in a way are a form of validation that an event was real and it allows us to contain a feeling that we can go back to and relive the moment."*
- **Modern Courtship Dynamics:** Posting photos together or sharing selfies is seen as a contemporary way of publicly affirming commitment and serious

intent in courtship. *"... In the modern courtship age, posting someone as aesthetically and creatively they can is equivalent to people's way of writing the deepest love letters they could send to their lovers in the past."*

- **Challenges and Considerations:** Some respondents caution against insincerity in using digital photography for courtship. *"... Not all the time efforts using digital photography in modern courtship are sincere and true because all of us now can access or make good digital photos."*
- **Encouragement and Reflections:** Overall, there's encouragement for embracing digital photography as a tool for expressing love and appreciation in modern relationships. *"... I would encourage anyone to normalize it because it'll serve as an official receipt of your love."*

Phase Two: Qualitative Phase

Based on the data from the quantitative phase and observations of the submitted photographs, the qualitative phase began with the selection of ten interview participants. To ensure balanced representation, participants were chosen according to their relationship status: those in courtship, those in a relationship, and singles.

The interviews were conducted via Zoom and lasted between 20 and 60 minutes. These interviews delved into participants' photography practices, emotional reactions to digital photographs, and the impact of social media on their relationships. The questions were designed to explore trends identified in the survey, providing deeper insights into specific themes. This approach offered a comprehensive understanding of how digital photography is employed in modern courtship and the role of social media in shaping romantic interactions.

Participants in a Courtship Process

Q1: How do you use digital photos to express romantic feelings during courtship?

Memory preservation and sentimentality. Participants use digital photos to capture and immortalize moments spent together, which is especially important in long-distance relationships. Photos provide a visual record of memories to look back on.

- *"Photographs we took together are only used to capture the moment that we're together. So that even though we aren't together, there'll be memories we can go back to."*
- *"I use the digital photos to express my appreciation of the moments that we spend together. So in a way, it's a romantic thing to do."*
- *"You keep photos, you take photos, especially if you want to treasure the moment."*
- *"Photos can really capture memories and moments and be associated with emotions that come during those times."*
- *"For me, the most important thing is capturing the memory and the moment, which can be used romantically because you want to remember."*

Q2: What emotions do you experience when viewing romantic digital photos?

Longing and jealousy. Viewing romantic photos can evoke feelings of longing for closeness and occasional jealousy toward other couples' relationships.

- *"Some photos cause me jealousy from others as in my case, the girl I'm pursuing is far away. There are times I wish we were also together like others."*

Emotional responses and reflection. Respondents experience a range of emotions such as kilig (romantic excitement), awe, and sometimes wistfulness when viewing romantic digital photos.

- *"Mas madali ako kiligin, mas emotional saming dalawa."*
- *"Yung emotions na nexperience ko minsan kilig, yung napapa 'awwe', minsan napapa 'haysst' (buntong hininga)."*

- *"Dahil kinikilig ako, naalala ko siya, di dahil sa gusto ko gayahin yung photos."*
- *"Happiness is also felt, kilig."*

Contextual and analytical perspective. Participants often consider the contexts of the relationship portrayed in the photos. Participants believed that photographs can also reflect the commitment and the authenticity of romantic gestures.

- *"As a photographer, sometimes instead of feeling kilig, I notice things like awkward poses or uneven composition."*
- *"I often think about the story and context behind the couple in the photos, whether they are married or just dating."*
- *"When viewing romantic photos, the context of the relationship gives weight to the emotions I feel."*

Emotional connection and technical distraction. Participants believed that there is a balance between emotional connection and technical observation when viewing romantic photos. There are participants that focus more on the technical aspects rather than purely emotional responses.

- *"I feel really touched, emotional because recently the photos I've been taking are of people we know, especially weddings."*
- *"I sometimes get too focused on technical aspects instead of experiencing pure emotion when viewing photos."*
- *"In courtship, the aim is not just romance... reaching an intimacy level that's not meant for that stage will lead to hurt."*

Q3: How does using digital photography compare to traditional ways of expressing love?

Preservation of meaning and significance. Respondents highlight that traditional methods like writing letters or serenading (*harana*) hold deep historical and emotional significance that cannot be entirely replaced by digital photography.

- *"Digital photography cannot replace or erase the significance of traditional ways of expressing love."*
- *"Writing and singing enhance emotions due to their accessibility, modern courtship, however, has convenience and ease of delivery compared to traditional mediums."*
- *"In traditional methods like harana, there is more creative freedom compared to the structured composition of digital photography."*

Thoughtfulness and intentionality. There is a belief among respondents that traditional methods, such as handwritten letters and poems, convey deeper thoughtfulness and intentionality in expressing romantic feelings compared to the immediacy of digital photography.

- *"Nothing beats the old-style way, not necessarily the method, but the thought behind the action."*
- *"When using traditional methods, like writing letters, there's a process that involves delivery, which adds to the value compared to instant messaging today."*
- *"Using traditional ways, like writing by hand... I don't support instant meetups or chats."*

Fusion of traditional and digital mediums. Some participants integrate digital photography with traditional approaches to enhance the expression of love. This allows for the combination of narratives and visual elements to create meaningful gestures. Participants also believe that the emotions that can be felt from a photo depend on the moment and one's relationship with the subject.

- *"I merged the traditional style with digital photography by selecting her photos and adding messages behind each one."*
- *"Digital photography provides a nostalgic purpose in courtship, emphasizing the value of moments spent together visually."*
- *"For me, the value of a photo lies in the person and the moment captured, regardless of whether it's digital or printed."*

Adaptation to modern contexts. While acknowledging the historical significance of traditional methods, participants also appreciate the accessibility and versatility of digital photography in modern contexts, such as sharing updates and connecting with distant loved ones.

- *"In the modern age, we have more access to photography and digital media, which changes how we express love compared to traditional practices."*
- *"Digital photography allows for immediate updates and connections with family members across different countries, enhancing familial bonds."*
- *"Even with digital formats, the sentimental value of photos remains significant, whether shared online or kept in physical or digital albums."*

Q4: How does social media like Facebook and Instagram influence your romantic expressions?

Influence on expectations and self-esteem. Respondents express that social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram can shape expectations of relationships and impact self-esteem. This often shows idealized versions of romantic life.

- *"Social media creates ideas and expectations of relationships, sometimes setting false standards that can lower self-esteem."*
- *"Consuming social media affects me by learning from others' experiences, but it can also negatively portray relationships that don't value honor and dignity."*
- *"I'm cautious about media consumption to protect myself and my partner from cultivating desires that may not honor our relationship."*

Privacy and intimacy. Social media allows the tendency among respondents to maintain privacy and intimacy in their romantic relationships, particularly during the courtship phase. In this phase, they prefer not to be publicly open to social media to avoid assumptions. Respondents chose not to publicly share moments on social media during the courtship phase.

- *"Social media influenced me to be more private about our relationship during the courtship stage, prioritizing safety and protection."*
- *"I prefer not to openly display affection on social media to avoid public assumptions and maintain peace and privacy."*
- *"If we progress to engagement or marriage, I would consider using social media more openly to share and celebrate moments with close friends."*

Consumption of inspirational and educational content. Rather than purely romantic content, some participants engage with social media for motivational and educational content related to relationships, self-improvement and creative photography.

- *"I consume social media for insights and motivational content, focusing on personal growth and learning from others' relationship experiences."*
- *"I follow photography groups for professional inspiration rather than romantic content, appreciating the aesthetic and creative aspects."*
- *"Social media has positively influenced me in capturing emotions and moments creatively, especially through text and poetry."*

Reflections on public vs. private expression. Respondents reflect on the balance between public and private expressions of romance on social media, considering the audience and the permanence of digital sharing.

- *"There's beauty in waiting and not seeking instant gratification, which contrasts with the often-public nature of social media portrayals."*
- *"For me, social media serves as a tool to update close friends and celebrate meaningful moments if and when our relationship progresses."*
- *"I value keeping our relationship private but not secret, guarding our intimacy against public scrutiny, and maintaining respect."*

Participants In a Relationship

Q1: How do digital photos help you express love in your relationship?

Capturing memorable moments. Participants use digital photography to capture special occasions and significant events, preserving memories and immortalizing experiences.

- *"I take pictures on special occasions and significant events to immortalize memories, like our first date or expensive meals that we enjoyed."*
- *"Photography captures moments with my partner, creating memories that we can revisit as we grow older."*
- *"Digital photos serve as keepsakes, helping us remember moments together, even in a long-distance relationship."*

Symbolic expression of love. Participants perceive digital photos as symbolic expressions of love, especially when shared on social media or featured prominently.

- *"Seeing my partner post our photos on social media makes me feel loved and cherished, like our relationship is celebrated publicly."*
- *"It's a way for my partner to express love by featuring me or us in his social media, publicly showing pride in our relationship."*
- *"In a long-distance relationship, photos serve as visual updates that make me feel connected and closer to my partner."*

Enhancing emotional connection. Digital photography serves as a medium for emotional expression and connection that strengthens emotional bonds in relationships, serving as a medium for emotional expression and connection.

- *"In our long-distance relationship, photos help us stay emotionally connected and invested in each other."*
- *"Taking and sharing photos becomes a way for us to express our emotions and feelings when we're apart."*

Q2: Do you and your partner have a particular style for capturing romantic moments digitally?

Candid shots. Participants capture spontaneous, natural moments that reflect genuine emotions and experiences.

- *"I pose as a model for my partner, and we focus on candid shots that capture natural expressions of happiness and sadness."*
- *"I capture intimate moments like when my partner is asleep during our online calls, as well as candid shots during activities like window shopping or visiting arcades."*

".5" Smartphone shots. This style involves capturing quick, informal snapshots using a Smartphone camera, often emphasizing spontaneity and trendy style.

- *"I take '.5' Smartphone shots during our everyday moments, which feel more personal and immediate."*

Model-Photographer dynamic. In this style, one partner acts as a model while the other takes photos. This creates a collaborative and artistic approach to capturing moments.

- *“Me becoming a model for him, we get candid shots that show our genuine emotions, happiness, and sadness.”*

Scenic views. Couples capture romantic moments against beautiful backdrops or scenic locations. The environment was highlighted as part of their shared experiences or when they remember their partners upon seeing certain sceneries.

- *“We take pictures together as a couple, capturing moments where we're both present and enjoying the view.”*
- *“My partner sends scenic photos that remind him of me, expressing a romantic intention through these exchanges.”*

Selfies. Participants use selfies to document moments together and emphasize their personal connection and comfort with each other.

- *“I send selfies with my partner because it makes me feel comfortable and expresses our romantic connection.”*

Portraits. This style involves deliberate and posed photographs that aim to capture the essence of the relationship and the individuals involved.

- *“We take portraits together, capturing moments where we are both present and enjoying the view.”*

Q3: How do you perceive the impact of digital media on your relationship?

Social media as a status symbol and expression of love. Participants discuss how digital media, particularly social platforms like Facebook and Instagram, influence their relationship dynamics. Some also viewed it as only a “bonus” to their relationship. There are also sentiments of it being their means of expressing love. One notable definition that participants stated was that digital media has become a sort of “status symbol.”

- *"For me, digital media has become a sort of status symbol. Whether my partner is visible on my social media affects how others perceive our relationship status. There's internal pressure to update publicly, but I prefer keeping it private yet acknowledged."*
- *"Seeing myself featured on my partner's social media makes me proud. Even though my partner isn't into posting much, the occasional appreciation post or candid photo of us means a lot. It adds an extra 'kilig' factor knowing it's a gesture outside his usual behavior."*
- *"Digital media has a significant impact on us, especially in our long-distance relationship. It captures our first moments and significant events, providing memories we can cherish even when we're apart. Seeing ourselves on each other's social media reassures our commitment."*
- *"We value privacy, so social media isn't a big part of expressing our relationship. Posting photos is more of a bonus; our real connection is strengthened through private exchanges and moments together."*

Q4: How do you think digital images strengthen your emotional bond in your relationship?

Preservation of meaningful moments. Participants highlight how digital images preserve and enhance meaningful moments, contributing to the emotional depth of their relationships.

- *"Digital images immortalize specific moments that hold sentimental value. Whether it's a simple home-cooked meal or a unique tricycle ride, each photo captures the essence of shared experiences, acting as a visual journal of our relationship."*
- *"Having photos of significant events and places is important for us. They serve as tangible memories that we can revisit, especially during times of conflict ('tampuhan'). Digital images bridge emotional gaps and help us reconnect through shared memories."*
- *"In our relationship, digital images fill the gaps left by physical distance. They provide visual reminders of our bond and add color to our interactions. Whether shared privately or on social media, photos help us feel connected and reassured of our love."*

Emotional Expression and Connection. Participants discuss how digital images serve as a means of emotional expression and deepen their connection with their partners.

- *"For us, digital images are a way to express and strengthen our emotional connection. Sharing photos, especially during times apart, helps us feel closer and more connected. It's a way to show appreciation and create shared memories, enhancing our relationship dynamics."*

- *"Beyond aesthetics, digital images hold emotional significance. They capture moments that are meaningful to us, like a partner's gesture or a special place we visited together. Each photo reflects our emotional bond and serves as a visual testament to our relationship's journey."*

Single Participants

Q1: How do you create romantic feelings through Digital Photography?

Personalized dedication and symbolism. Participants express how they use digital photography to convey romantic feelings through personalized dedication and symbolism.

- *"I create romantic feelings through digital photography by making the person I have feelings for my subject. Whether it's portraits dedicated to them or capturing landscapes that remind me of them, each photo is imbued with my emotions and serves as a visual expression of my romantic sentiments."*
- *"For me, creating romantic feelings through digital photography involves not only proper framing and composition but also post-processing techniques. I use different editing styles, like film effects, to enhance the mood and evoke emotions. Color theory also plays a role in bringing out the 'kilig' factor in photos, making them more impactful and romantic."*

Capturing genuine moments and attraction. Participants discuss capturing genuine moments and using photography to attract attention and convey romantic interest.

- *"Capturing genuine and candid moments, especially without the subject knowing, is key to creating romantic feelings through digital photography. Whether it's a wedding photo or a spontaneous shot, authenticity in capturing moments where emotions shine through is crucial. Additionally, using social media platforms like Instagram or TikTok to post photos with the intention of catching someone's attention or conveying romantic interest adds another layer of meaning to digital photography."*

Q2: Can you share the emotional impact you aim for when capturing romantic moments?

Evoking romantic feelings and connection. Participants aim to evoke specific emotional responses by capturing romantic moments through digital photography. "Kilig" is the most common emotion that single participants aim for.

- *"When capturing romantic moments, I aim to evoke a sense of 'kilig'—that feeling of excitement and butterflies in the stomach. I want viewers to experience joy and warmth when they see my photos, and I often use color schemes like red to convey passion and intensity."*
- *"The emotional impact I aim for when capturing romantic moments is to evoke feelings of 'kilig' and the sense of belonging. Whether you're in a relationship or single by choice, everyone deserves to feel romantic emotions. I want my photos to resonate with viewers and remind them of the beauty of love and connection."*

Capturing genuine happiness and love. Participants also focus on capturing genuine happiness and love and being able to share it with consumers of digital photography.

- *"When I capture romantic moments, I aim to portray the happiness and love shared by couples. I want viewers to feel the same warmth and joy that the subjects of my photos experience. Whether it's a candid laugh during a date or a posed moment, I aim to capture genuine emotions that translate well through the camera."*

Q3: What challenges do you face in conveying romance through digital photos?

Technical and timing challenges. Participants discuss technical limitations and timing issues that hinder their ability to capture authentic romantic moments. In the technical aspect, the equipment has some factor in capturing certain moments.

- *"One of the challenges I face is with the equipment itself. If my camera is slow, I might miss capturing a fleeting moment that I wanted to freeze in time. Timing is also crucial; spontaneous moments often convey more 'kilig' and natural emotions than scripted ones."*

Expression and non-verbal communication. Participants highlight that it is also a challenge to ensure that their subjects can express themselves freely and naturally in front of the camera.

- *"As a photographer, one challenge I encounter is capturing genuine expressions from my subjects, especially during important moments like weddings. It's about finding the right point of view and ensuring that their non-verbal expressions are effectively conveyed through photos."*

Overcoming self-consciousness and perceived cheesiness. Participants address personal and interpersonal challenges, such as feeling self-conscious or worried about photos appearing cheesy.

- *"One of the challenges I face is overcoming the feeling of cringe when taking romantic photos. There's a concern that they might look forced, too close, or the poses might not be flattering. To overcome this, it's important to focus on enjoying the moment with the partner and capturing authentic expressions."*

Q4: How do you think romantic photos influence people's perceptions of courtship?

Generational perspectives on courtship. Participants discuss how romantic photos influence perceptions of courtship across different generations.

- *"In our generation, romantic photography resonates more than traditional courtship practices like 'harana' (serenade). Photos can be appreciated as*

they capture relevant activities and desires, setting expectations for what people want in relationships."

Documentation and storytelling. Participants highlight how romantic photos serve as documented expressions of courtship as it tells a narrative of the relationship journey.

- *"Romantic photos are becoming a recognized form of courtship documentation. They set expectations for effective communication of romantic feelings and are seen as a less idealized way to show the progression of a relationship before becoming official."*

Inspirational and social media influence. Participants also discuss how romantic photos inspire and influence others' perceptions of courtship through media and social platforms.

- *"Seeing romantic photos inspires people to pursue similar experiences in their own courtship. Social media plays a significant role in setting standards and expectations, where publicizing relationships can signal happiness and commitment, though preferences for privacy also exist."*

Triangulation Results

The synthesis of findings from quantitative surveys and online interviews addresses the research questions posed in the study. The triangulation highlights the significance of the mixed-method approach in exploring the research problem.

RQ 1: How do digital photographers use specific techniques and visual elements to convey romantic feelings?

The study revealed standard techniques employed by respondents in their romantic photographs. Selfies and Candid shots are prominently observed in the romantic photographs, each accounting for **13.79%** of the total (*Table 14*). Similarly, candid photographs and selfies are also mentioned in the interviews with participants in a relationship. It was the prominent technique the couples in a relationship observed they use. The same sentiments are also found in the single participants, who take candid photos to capture genuine moments.

Interview participants also noted the “.5” trend, a type of selfie that utilizes the features of smartphone units. They mentioned using portrait photography, landscape or scenery photography, and a particular style of Model-Photographer dynamic of a certain couple.

Table 14 also revealed POV shots as one of the techniques used in romantic photography along with travel Photography, Milestone celebrations, photo prints as subjects, and directed photoshoots. Additionally, symbolic elements, gestures, and narrative revealed prominent styles, accounting for the most observed among the submitted romantic photographs, with **20.69%**. Such techniques involve subjects forming heart shapes and having symbolic objects like floral motifs and rings. Single

interview participants also complemented the use of symbolic elements, as it was mentioned that they convey romantic feelings through personalized dedication and symbolism in their photographs.

Figure 5 revealed that poses and gestures are the most popular elements in romantic photographs, with **80.7%**. Lighting was followed by **64.9%** and backgrounds by **1.9%**. Composition accounts for **56.1%**, while the color palette is also considered by **54.4%** of respondents. The use of colors was also observed in *Figure 3*, revealing that **24.14%** of the romantic photographs submitted had dominant colors applied.

Similar to the findings of *Table 14*, which observes directed photoshoots and the use of props and other symbolic elements, *Figure 5* also showcases that **28.1%** use props or objects to add context or symbolism to the narrative of the photographs. However, a tiny percentage, **1.8%**, does not prioritize specific techniques.

A significant majority, **75.4%** of the respondents, have utilized digital photography to express romantic feelings or intentions in courtship or romantic context (*Figure 4*). *Table 20* revealed that it was used in different ways, such as to flex on social media with **44.19%**, to preserve memories and sentiments with **25.58%**, and to give the context of hints of affection or “pagpaparinig” through photographs with **11.63%**. Moreover, **32.56%** of the respondents evoke emotional impact and enhance connections through pictures, as there are things that words alone cannot convey. About **21.62%** of the respondents perceive digital digital photography as a powerful tool for communication and strengthening romantic bonds.

Table 13 also reveals the common themes of their romantic photographs, with celebrations and milestones being the most common theme with **46.2%**. The themes of nostalgia and gratitude were also revealed at **30.8%**, and photographs as expressions of love and commitment at **30.8%**.

In conclusion, aside from selfies, candid, and POV (Point of View) shots, poses, gestures, lighting, composition, and color palettes also enhance romantic photographs' visual and emotional impact. Props and symbolic objects also make the pictures more meaningful and expressive. The study also reveals that digital photography serves multiple purposes in romance, from showcasing relationships on social media to preserving sentimental moments and subtly hinting at affection. The common themes of celebrations, nostalgia, gratitude, and expressions of love and commitment further emphasize the emergence of digital photography as a powerful tool for expressing and strengthening romantic bonds, conveying emotions that words alone cannot capture.

RQ 2: To what extent do viewers emotionally engage with romantic-themed digital photography, and how does this engagement compare with traditional courtship?

Quantitative findings indicate that nearly half of the respondents (**42.11%**) engage with digital photography daily, with a substantial portion (**36.84%**) engaging several times a week (*Table 16*). This frequent interaction is supported by the belief of the majority (**40.35%**) that digital photography enhances the expression of romantic feelings through its emotional impact and memory preservation (*Table 18*). Similarly, *Table 20* also revealed that 32.56% of the respondents described their

photos as impacting emotion and stronger relationship connection. Emotional engagement with romantic digital photos shows that **42.1%** of respondents feel moderately engaged, **22.8%** very engaged, **22.8%** somewhat engaged, **5.3%** highly engaged, and **7%** not engaged at all (*Table 17*).

Qualitative interviews provide deeper insights into these findings. When viewing romantic digital photos, participants in the courtship process described a range of emotions, such as longing, jealousy, romantic excitement (*kilig*), awe, and wistfulness. They often consider the context and authenticity of the relationship portrayed in the photos. Traditional practices like writing letters or serenading (*harana*) are highlighted for their deep historical and emotional significance, conveying thoughtfulness and intentionality that digital photography alone cannot fully replicate. However, some respondents integrate digital photography with traditional approaches to enhance their expressions of love by printing their digital photographs and crafting them with a gift.

For those in relationships, digital images preserve and enhance meaningful moments, contributing to the emotional depth and connection with their partners. Through their photography, single participants aim to evoke specific emotional responses such as romantic feelings, genuine happiness, and love. They also discuss how romantic photos influence perceptions of courtship across different generations. They emphasize the shift from traditional to modern forms and serve as documented expressions of their relationship journeys that inspire others through social media.

In synthesis, the convergence of the quantitative data, showing **42.1%** of respondents feeling moderately engaged with romantic digital photos, is supported

by qualitative findings where participants describe a range of emotional responses, including romantic excitement and awe (*Table 17, Interviews*). The complementarity is evident as qualitative insights on the “thoughtful and intentional” nature of traditional methods and the modern integration of digital photography provide context to the quantitative belief that **40.35%** of respondents see digital photography enhancing romantic expression through emotional impact and memory preservation (*Table 18, Interviews*). Both data sets corroborate that digital photography plays a significant role in emotional engagement, but traditional methods still hold unique value. The quantitative engagement levels (**42.11%** daily, **36.84%** several times a week) align with qualitative discussions on the accessibility and versatility of digital photography in modern contexts (*Table 16, Interviews*).

RQ 3: How do individuals perceive the role of digital photography, especially on social media platforms, particularly Facebook and Instagram, in expressing romantic feelings and intentions during the courtship process, and how do these platforms shape trends and preferences related to visual expressions of courtship online?

Quantitatively, *Figure 6* shows that **75.4%** of respondents use digital photography for romantic expression during the courtship process. Additionally, *Table 19* presents that **43.9%** of participants believe social media platforms “moderately” influence these expressions. Moreover, themes such as “Social Media Flexing” and “Memory Preservation and Sentimentality” are commonly reported (*Table 20*). Being able to “flex” or be featured on one’s partner’s social media was perceived to be an expression and affirmation of love.

Table 20 also reveals that **44.19%** of the respondents use digital photography to “flex” on social media. Flex means showing off their partners on social media; this also includes “hard launch” (fully revealing their partner's identity) and “soft launch” (hinting at a romantic relationship without disclosing the partner's identity).

Qualitative insights complement these findings by providing deeper context on participants’ narratives. Participants in the courtship process reflect on how social media shapes their expectations of relationships and impacts self-esteem. Social Media can also create idealized versions of romance, expectations, and standards. They also discuss the importance of maintaining privacy and intimacy, preferring not to publicly share every romantic moment. Instead, some use social media for inspirational and educational content related to relationships.

For those in relationships, digital media is seen as a status symbol and a means of expressing love. Participants acknowledge its role in enhancing their relationship dynamics, though some view it as an additional bonus rather than a necessity.

On the other hand, Singles emphasizes how romantic photos influence perceptions of courtship across generations, documenting the journey of relationships and inspiring others through social media.

Synthesizing these findings, digital photography on social media is both a facilitator and a mediator of romantic expression. It enables individuals to visually articulate romantic feelings while navigating privacy concerns and societal expectations. The triangulated data indicates that while digital media enhances accessibility and creativity in expressing love, it also introduces challenges such as managing public perception and maintaining intimacy. This synthesis underscores

the evolving role of digital platforms in shaping modern courtship dynamics, blending traditional sentiments with contemporary digital practices.

V. SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary and Conclusions

This study aimed to explore digital photography as a medium of courtship. The objective involves investigating how digital photographers employ techniques and visual elements to convey romantic feelings and understanding perceptions of digital photography on social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram in expressing romantic intentions.

The study illustrated that romantic feelings and intentions can be expressed through digital photography, as 75.4% of respondents used digital photography for romantic expression during the courtship process. The most prominent technique observed from the romantic photographs is using symbolic elements, gestures, and narratives, with 20.69% of the provided romantic pictures. Methods such as selfies, candid shots, and creative/directed photoshoots were also observed, accounting for 13.79% separately. Other techniques include POV shots, milestone commemorations, photo prints as subjects, artistic editing, and travel photographs.

According to the study, 32.56% of respondents use digital photography to evoke emotional impact and enhance their connections with their partners. This finding highlights the importance of photographic techniques such as poses, gestures, lighting, and composition. Mastering these elements can make photographs more impactful, effectively communicating romantic intentions and feelings.

Furthermore, the study revealed that 74.4% of the respondents had used digital photography to express romantic feelings or intentions during the courtship. In contrast, 24.6% of the respondents have not used digital photography this way.

Digital photography can also serve as a platform for suitors to express public affirmation and flex on social media, which applies to those already in a committed relationship and those who are single seeking a relationship. Social Media Flexing is the most prominent theme in which digital photography was utilized to express romantic feelings or intentions during the courtship process, with 44.19%.

Interviews with participants also indicate different perceptions regarding digital photography as a medium for romantic expression. Those in the courtship process perceived photography as an integral medium for memory preservation and sentimentality. On the other hand, those in relationships emphasize emotional authenticity in photographs, which is felt through candid photographs, couple selfies, and scenic shots dedicated to them by their partners. At the same time, singles value nonverbal communication or gestures when examining the authenticity of emotional expression in romantic photography.

The study also finds that digital photography deeply enhances emotional engagement in modern courtship through visual storytelling. It shows how viewers respond emotionally, such as romantic excitement (*kilig*) or nostalgia, when engaging with romantic digital photos. While traditional practices like hand-written letters remain valued for their intimacy, digital photography complements these traditional courtship practices by documenting and enriching expressions of love across various relationship stages. For instance, Emotional impact and Memory Preservation are factors identified in the study as the most common themes of how Digital

Photography enhances the expression of romantic feelings compared to traditional courtship practices with 40.35% of the respondents. This digital photography approach reflects a broader trend of using visuals to document and cherish relationship milestones.

Further discussion in the study also found that digital photography is widely used for expressing romantic feelings. Many believe that social media “moderately” influences these romantic expressions. It is also noted that digital photography is commonly attributed to social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram, the respondents' most common social media platforms. These findings have become more apparent, with themes like "Social Media Flexing" and "Memory Preservation" commonly described as photography's role in a romantic context.

Qualitatively, digital photography in social media also shapes relationship and courtship expectations and privacy preferences. It was also perceived that digital media can be both a status symbol and a means of expressing affection, especially to those in relationships. It is also notable that digital photography becomes crucial in long-distance relationships for maintaining connection through daily snapshots and random photos that evoke shared experiences and emotions. It is a lifeline, bridging physical separation and keeping the relationship vibrant.

In conclusion, digital photography is a feasible and effective medium for expressing romantic feelings during courtship. It offers a modern alternative to traditional methods like handwritten letters and *harana*. If traditional courtship practices have pen and guitar, modern courtship has digital cameras. At the same time, digital photography also evokes emotions similar to those elicited by traditional forms of courtship, such as longing, romantic excitement (*kilig*), and genuine

happiness. Moreover, participants also reported that digital photos capture intimate moments, preserve memories, and enhance emotional connections, paralleling the depth and thoughtfulness associated with traditional practices.

Digital photography can be utilized during courtship in several ways, including capturing candid moments, symbolic gestures, and creative expressions of love. The study also found that social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram play a significant role in allowing individuals to showcase their relationships and document their romantic journeys. Social Media is innately influential, and the study revealed its influence on romantic perceptions and expectations. However, the study also emphasizes balancing public sharing with privacy and intimacy.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. From the results of this exploratory research, it is recommended that the common themes found in romantic photographs and romantic expression through digital photography be examined in a much more expansive sample size to extend the findings.
2. Other researchers can consider investigating the role of different social media platforms beyond Facebook and Instagram in the expression of romantic feelings. This could include platforms like TikTok, X(Twitter), and Pinterest to understand if and how romantic expressions vary across these digital spaces.
3. Visual communication courses should expand on the study's visual elements and techniques. These courses could incorporate modules specifically on

romantic photography, exploring how symbolic elements, gestures, and narratives can convey romantic feelings effectively.

4. Increase opportunities for individuals and couples to engage in digital photography workshops. These workshops could focus on enhancing emotional expression through photography and teaching techniques such as posing, lighting, and composition to create more relationship-developing photographs.
5. Future studies may also include longitudinal analyses to track how digital photography's role in romantic expression evolves over time. This could help understand long-term trends and the impact of digital media in courtship practices.
6. Individuals in romantic pursuits should consider the emotional impact and techniques identified in this study to enhance their romantic expressions. By being aware of these elements and implications, they can create and interpret better emotionally resonant photographs. Maintaining a balance between public sharing and privacy is also recommended to help preserve intimacy while still enjoying the benefits of sharing their romantic journey on social media.
7. Future researchers should elaborate on specific traditional courtship practices by conducting comparative studies. For instance, a comparative study between serenading or *harana*, a specific traditional courtship medium of Philippine Culture, and digital photography would provide a deeper understanding of how different mediums, the guitars and cameras, have been utilized to influence romantic expression, emotional impact, and relationship dynamics.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A:

GOOGLE FORMS-SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

Survey Questionnaire: *Courtship in Pixels* - Examining Romantic Expressions in Digital Photography through a Mixed- Media Approach

Research by Joshua C. Maningo, Bachelor of Arts in Multimedia Studies, U.P. OPEN
UNIVERSITY, Los Baños, Laguna, Philippines (AY 2023-2024)

Introduction:

Welcome to our survey and contest exploring digital photography in modern courtship! I'm Joshua Maningo, a 4th Year Bachelor of Arts in Multimedia Studies (BAMS) student from the University of the Philippines Open University (UPOU).

Your valuable input is crucial, and we assure you that your responses are confidential. To ensure relevance, please be aware that we are specifically seeking **participants aged 18-30** who are interested in both the survey and/or the contest.

Thank you for your trust and contribution!

* Indicates required question

Terms and Conditions:

- By participating in this survey, you consent to the collection and processing of your data for research purposes.

- Your personal information, including name and responses, will be kept confidential and used solely for the purpose of the study.

- The collected data will not be shared with any third parties, ensuring your privacy is protected.

- If you have any concerns or questions about data privacy, please contact us.

Email: jcmaningo@up.edu.ph
Contact Number: 09291998179

1. I acknowledge and agree to the Terms and Conditions concerning Data Privacy *

Check all that apply.

- Yes
 No

For transparency, the researcher has also completed and received certification from the [Tri-Council Policy Statement 2 \(TCPS 2\): Tutorial Course on Research Ethics](#)

Participant Information

2. Name *

3. Age *

4. Relationship Status *

Mark only one oval.

- Single
- In a relationship
- Married
- Courting Someone or Vice Versa (You're the one currently being courted)
- Other: _____

5. Are you active on social media platforms (e.g., Instagram, Facebook, etc.)? *

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No

6. If yes, select all the platforms you're active *

Check all that apply.

- Facebook
- Instagram
- Other: _____

7. Please upload your photo entry.



Files submitted:

8. Please upload a screenshot showing that you have shared the contest post.

Files submitted:

9. Will you allow your photo to be part of the exhibition for the Photo Contest? *

Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No

10. Short description or story behind your photo

Engagement with Digital Photography

Your input is highly valued, whether you capture romantic pictures yourself or simply enjoy viewing romantic photos.

11. How often do you engage with digital photography or photos in general? *

Mark only one oval.

- Daily
- Several times a week
- Occasionally
- Rarely
- Never
- Other: _____

12. Do you consider yourself: *

(Photographer's Role: Capture romantic feelings digitally. Your insights, professional or casual, on techniques and visuals are essential for our research.)

Mark only one oval.

- A professional photographer
- An amateur photographer
- Casual Photographer
- Simply enjoy viewing romantic photos
- Other: _____

13. If you take or have taken digital photographs, what types of subjects do you most commonly photograph? (Select all that apply)

Check all that apply.

- Landscapes
- Portraits
- Events (e.g., weddings, parties)
- Still life/Objects
- Romance/Couples
- Other: _____

14. When viewing romantic-themed digital photographs (e.g. photos of couples or someone flexing their partner, a dedicated photograph, etc.), how emotionally engaged do you typically feel? *



Mark only one oval.

- Not engaged at all
- Somewhat engaged
- Moderately engaged
- Very engaged
- Extremely engaged

15. When capturing romantic-themed digital photographs, what specific techniques or visual elements do you prioritize to convey romantic feelings? (Select all that apply) *

Check all that apply.

Composition (arrangement of visual elements within a photograph)

Lighting

Color palette

Poses/gestures

Props/objects

Background/setting

Other: _____

16. How do you think digital photography enhances the expression of romantic feelings compared to traditional methods (e.g., handwritten letters and Harana)? *

Perception of Digital Photography in the Courtship Process

17. How do social media platforms, particularly Instagram, influence the expression of romantic feelings and/or intentions during the courtship process? *

Mark only one oval.

Significantly

Moderately

Slightly

Not at all

18. Have you ever utilized digital photography as a means of expressing romantic feelings or intentions during the courtship process (soft launch/hard launch, "pagpaparing", flex, etc.)? *

Mark only one oval.

Yes

No

19. If yes, please briefly describe your experience and how digital photography influenced your courtship process.

20. If your answer is "no," kindly provide the reason for your response.

Additional Comments

21. Do you have any additional comments or insights you would like to share regarding the role of digital photography in modern courtship? *

22. Would you be willing to be interviewed for the study? (You'll receive an exclusive study-themed artworks as a thank-you gesture) *

Mark only one oval.

Yes

No

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. Your input is precious to our research efforts. If you have any further comments or questions, please feel free to contact us.

Email: jcmaningo@up.edu.ph
Contact Number: 09291998179
Messenger/Facebook Name: Joshua Contrata Maningo

This content is neither created nor endorsed by Google.

Google Forms

APPENDIX B

THE PHOTO CONTEST AND DATA-GATHERING POSTERS

GIVE YOUR BEST SHOT! AND BE A PART OF THE STUDY!

PHOTOGRAPHY CONTEST

Courtship in Pixels: Examining Romantic Expressions in Digital Photography through a Mixed-Media Approach



Courtship in Pixels

PHOTO CONTEST

Period 23 - 28 February, 2024



How To Win?

Submit your entries through the Google Form and complete the survey. The winning photo will be selected based on engagement levels during the exhibition of photo entries on Feb 29.

Win Up To P1000!!!

Grand Prize: P1000
1st Runner-up: P800
2nd Runner-up: P600

P200 will still be awarded to 3 LUCKY respondents who completed the survey but chose not to participate in the photo exhibit.

Courtship in Pixels

PHOTO CONTEST

Period 24 - 28 February, 2024



How To Win?

Submit your entries through the Google Form and complete the survey. The winning photo will be selected based on engagement levels during the exhibition of photo entries on Feb 29.

Win Up To P1000!!!

Grand Prize: P1000
1st Runner-up: P800
2nd Runner-up: P600

P200 will still be awarded to 3 LUCKY respondents who completed the survey but chose not to participate in the photo exhibit.

APPENDIX C

FACEBOOK DATA GATHERING AND CONTEST ANNOUNCEMENT POST

Joshua Contrata Maningo
February 23 · 🌐

Courtship in Pixels: Digital Photo Contest

Ikaw ba ay may nililigawan? O baka naman ikaw ang nililigawan? May ka-talking Stage/Situationship? May ini-irog na gusto i-flex? Kumukuha ng larawan para sa soft launch o baka ni-hard launch mo na? Kung ikaw ay kumuha na ng mga larawan upang iparating ang iyong pagmamahal, inaanyayahan ka namin na maging bahagi ng pag-sasal na ito!

(Welcome din po ito sa mga Single na tiga view na lang ng kaligayahan ng iba erra)

Contest Mechanics:

1. Participants must be aged 18-30.
2. Share the post and take a screenshot.
3. Upload a romantic photo in the survey form. It could be a selfie with your partner, a portrait of your partner, or any romantic photograph dedicated to someone special.
4. Complete the survey, <https://forms.gle/sAo8Lu7VW19rdV9j8>

Period: February 23-28, 2024

The winning photos will be selected based on engagement levels during the exhibition of photo entries on FEB 29.

Exciting Prizes Await!

Grand Prize: ₱1000
1st Runner-up: ₱600
2nd Runner-up: ₱600

Additionally, ₱200 will be awarded to three LUCKY respondents who completed the survey but chose not to participate in the photo exhibit.

Note: This contest is part of the research study "Courtship in Pixels - Exploring Romantic Expressions in Digital Photography" by Joshua Maningo.

Images in the poster are from Pinterest.
@highlight

GIVE YOUR BEST SHOT! AND BE A PART OF THE STUDY!

PHOTOGRAPHY CONTEST

Courtship in Pixels: Examining Romantic Expressions in Digital Photography Through a Mixed-Media Approach

Courtship in Pixels
ONLINE
PHOTO CONTEST

Period 23 - 28 February, 2024

How To Win!

Share your post on through the Survey Form and completed the survey. The winning photos will be selected based on engagement levels during the exhibition of photos on Feb 29.

Win up to ₱1000!

1st Runner-up: ₱600
2nd Runner-up: ₱600
Grand Prize: ₱1000

Additionally, ₱200 will be awarded to three LUCKY respondents who completed the survey but chose not to participate in the photo exhibit.

MECHANICS

- Participants must be aged 18-30.
- Share the post and take a screenshot.
- Upload your romantic photo in the survey form. It could be a selfie with your partner, a portrait of your partner, or any romantic photograph dedicated to someone special.
- Complete the Google Forms Survey

Along with this Survey QR Code


See insights

15 comments 58 shares

Like Comment Copy Share

APPENDIX D

ZOOM MEETING TEMPLATE DATE

1.888.799.9696 SALES PLANS JOIN A MEETING HOST A MEETING - 

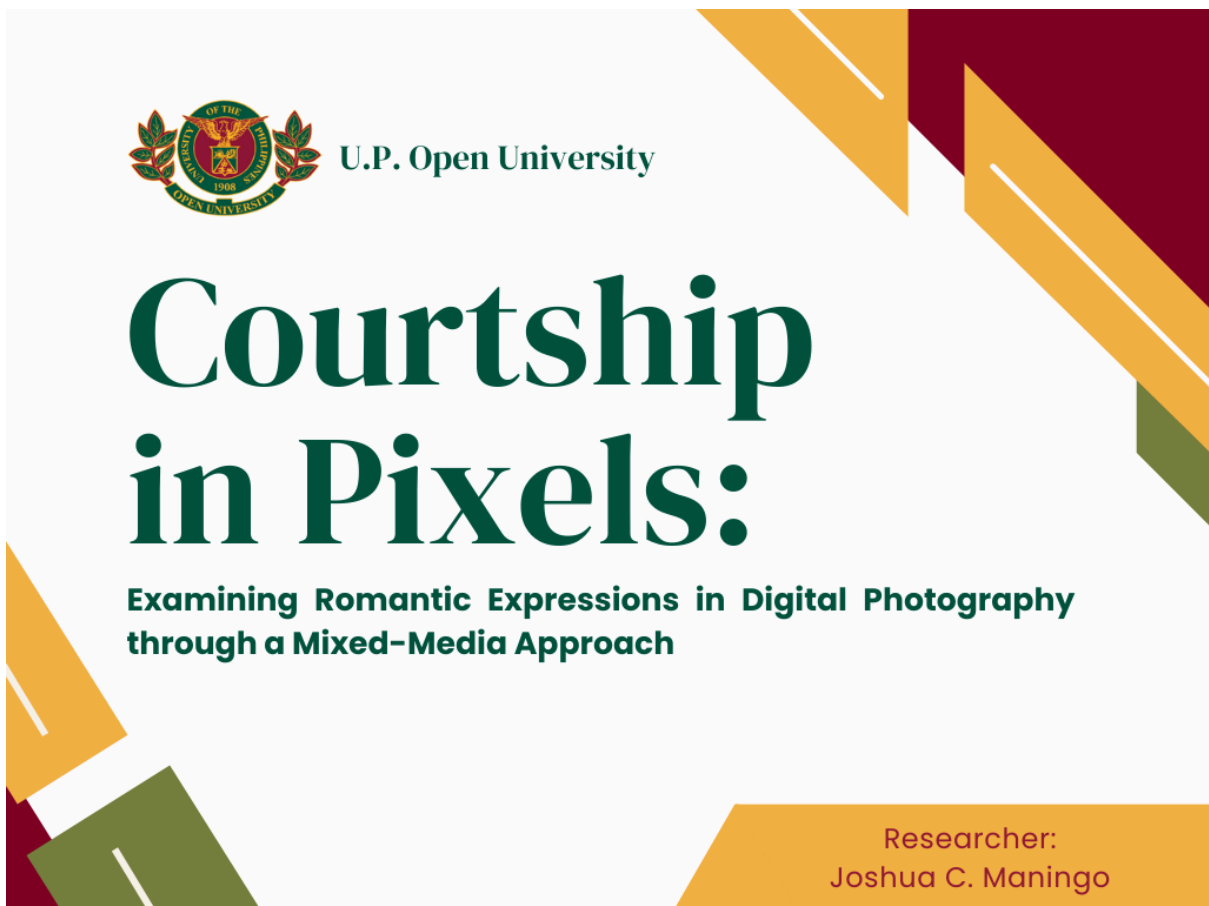
Meetings Get Training

Upcoming Previous Attachments Personal Room Meeting Templates Polls/Quizzes

Template Name	Modify Time	
(3) Interview with	Apr 11, 2024 09:04 PM	<input type="button" value="Use this Template"/> <input type="button" value="Delete"/>

APPENDIX E

POSTERS FOR INTERVIEW PROCESS: SINGLE PARTICIPANTS



Background of the Study

Courtship is a culturally rich and evolving practice that encompasses traditional rituals and modern expressions, serving as the process of wooing and pursuing romantic relationships (Torres, 2019).

In the context of our modern era, Digital Photography is the aspect that this study aims to focus on. The study seeks to understand how romantic expressions are manifested in pixels or digital images through Digital Photography.



Main Idea

Investigate how digital photography **influences and shapes** contemporary courtship practices.



Focal Point

The study focuses on the **role** of digital photography in conveying romantic expressions.



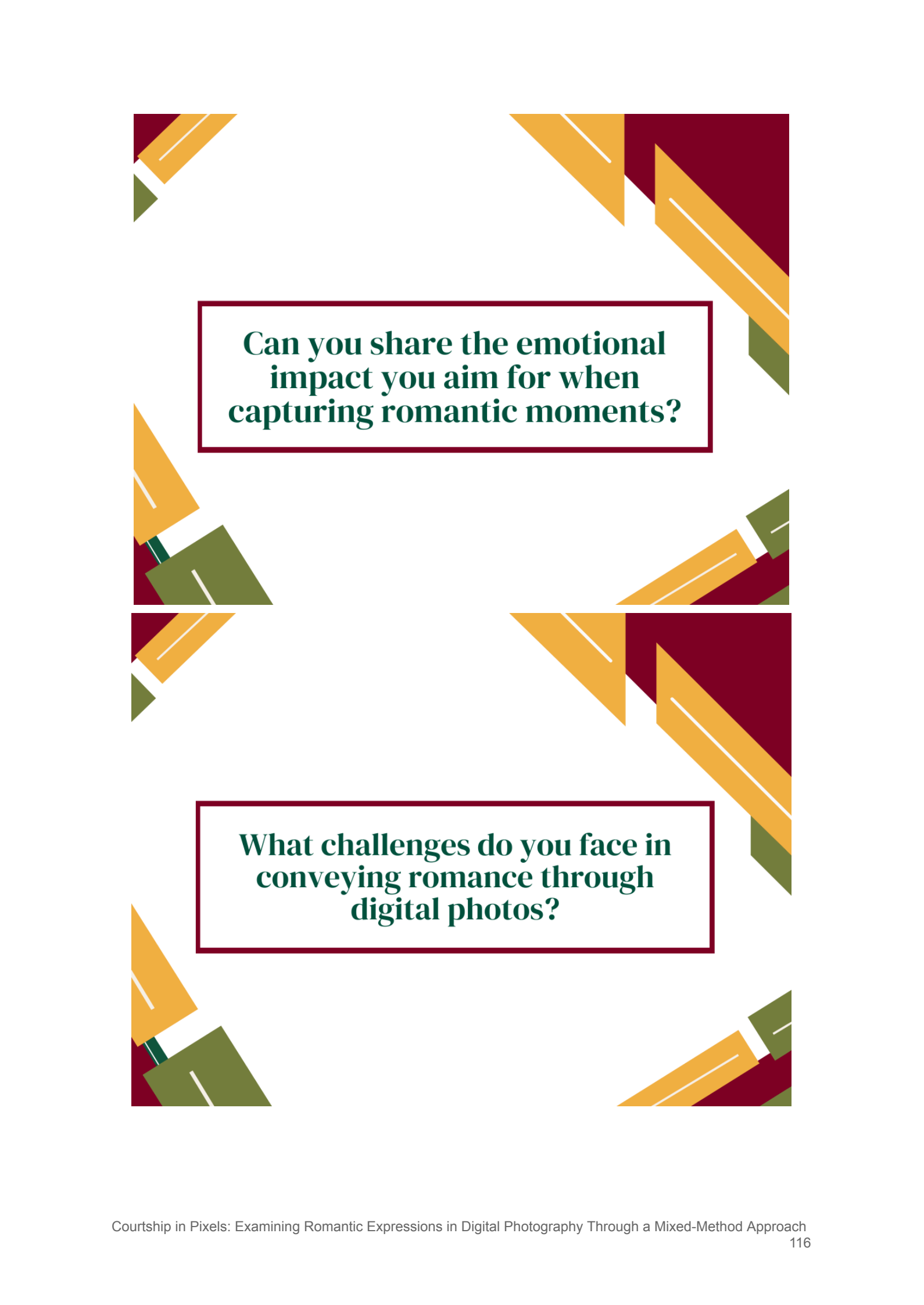
Purpose

To understand comprehensively **how digital photography functions** as a medium for expressing romantic feelings in the modern courtship landscape.



INTRODUCTION

How do you create romantic feelings through digital photography?



Can you share the emotional impact you aim for when capturing romantic moments?

What challenges do you face in conveying romance through digital photos?

How do you think romantic photos influence people's perceptions of courtship?




U.P. Open University

THANK YOU!

Researcher:
Joshua C. Maningo

APPENDIX F

POSTERS FOR INTERVIEW PROCESS: PARTICIPANTS IN A RELATIONSHIP

 U.P. Open University

Courtship in Pixels:

Examining Romantic Expressions in Digital Photography through a Mixed-Media Approach

Researcher:
Joshua C. Maningo

Background of the Study

Courtship is a culturally rich and evolving practice that encompasses traditional rituals and modern expressions, serving as the process of wooing and pursuing romantic relationships (Torres, 2019).

In the context of our modern era, Digital Photography is the aspect that this study aims to focus on. The study seeks to understand how romantic expressions are manifested in pixels or digital images through Digital Photography.

Main Idea
Investigate how digital photography **influences and shapes** contemporary courtship practices.

Focal Point
The study focuses on the **role** of digital photography in conveying romantic expressions.

Purpose
To understand comprehensively **how digital photography functions** as a medium for expressing romantic feelings in the modern courtship landscape.

01 INTRODUCTION



**How do digital photos help
you express love in your
relationship?**

**Do you and your partner have a
particular style for capturing
romantic moments digitally?**

**How do you perceive the impact
of digital media on your
relationship?**



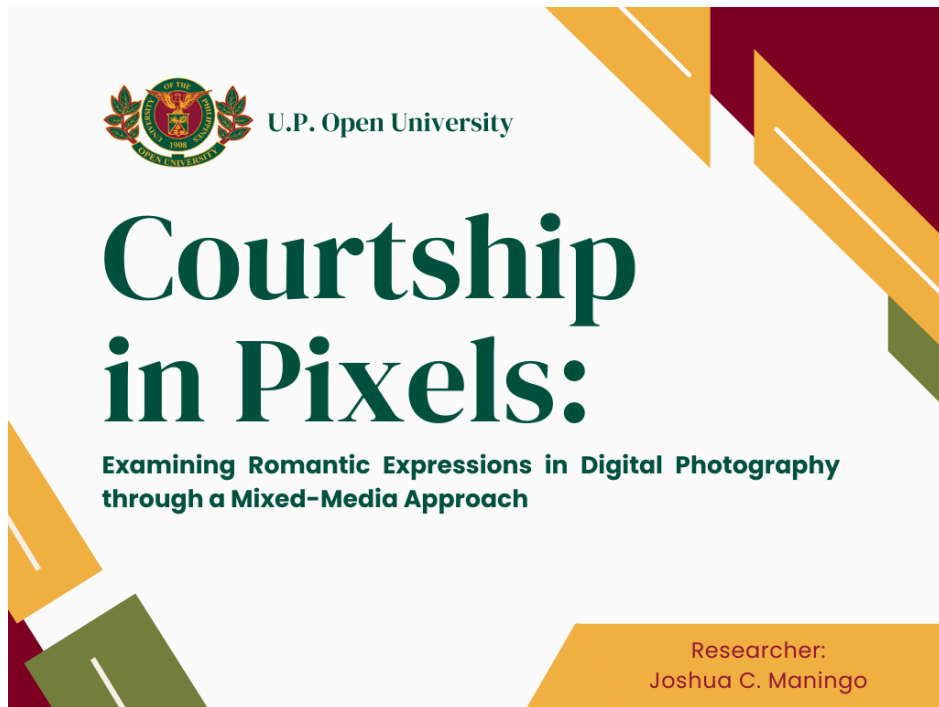
U.P. Open University

THANK YOU!

Researcher:
Joshua C. Maningo

APPENDIX G

POSTERS FOR INTERVIEW PROCESS: PARTICIPANTS IN COURTSHIP PROCESS



Background of the Study

Courtship is a culturally rich and evolving practice that encompasses traditional rituals and modern expressions, serving as the process of wooing and pursuing romantic relationships (Torres, 2019).

In the context of our modern era, Digital Photography is the aspect that this study aims to focus on. The study seeks to understand how romantic expressions are manifested in pixels or digital images through Digital Photography.



Main Idea

Investigate how digital photography **influences and shapes** contemporary courtship practices.



Focal Point

The study focuses on the **role** of digital photography in conveying romantic expressions.



Purpose

To understand comprehensively **how digital photography functions** as a medium for expressing romantic feelings in the modern courtship landscape.

01

INTRODUCTION

How do you use digital photos to express romantic feelings during courtship?



What emotions do you experience when viewing romantic digital photos?

How does using digital photography compare to traditional ways of expressing love?

**How does social media, like
Instagram, influence your
romantic expressions?**



U.P. Open University

THANK YOU!

Researcher:
Joshua C. Maningo

APPENDIX H

TCPS 2: CORE

