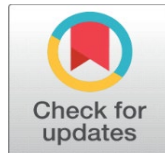
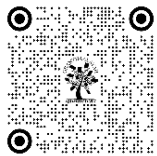


ARCHITECTURAL PHOTOGRAPHY & THE ESSENCE OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Mihir Srivastava ¹  , Shaila Naaz ²  

¹ 2nd Year, Architecture Student, K. R. Mangalam University, Gurugram, Panjab, India

² Assistant Professor, School of Architecture and Design, K. R. Mangalam University, Gurugram, Panjab, India



Corresponding Author

Mihir Srivastava,
mihirsrivastav6996@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Architectural photography isn't just about taking pictures of buildings; it's an art that attempts to capture the real spirit of those structures. This study aims to examine the importance of architectural photography and its role in visualisation of buildings. Architectural photography helps turn 3-dimensional buildings into 2-dimensional pictures that reflect the architects' mindset as well as have the power to evoke strong emotions in individuals. Photographers use their cameras to play with light, shadows, shapes, and space to reveal the hidden stories within the buildings. Architectural photos do more than just capture what a building looks like; they help individuals to connect with and understand the cultural, social, and historical context of these structures. The objectives of this study were to identify the importance of architectural photography, to gauge individuals' opinions on architectural photography, to develop a comprehensive view of architectural photography in the Indian context, and to explore the relationship between photography and architecture. This exploration also looks at how architecture and photography work together: emphasizing the reciprocal relationship between the two. To study the same, the authors collected data from different people through a questionnaire, which was analysed using descriptive methods such as the pie chart. The researchers also presented some of their photographs in order to elaborate on their understanding of the role of photography in architecture. The limitations of the current study were noted to be a scarcity of relevant cultural literature on the topic, lack of professional architectural photographers and individual differences in perception of photography.

Keywords: Architectural Photography, Photography, Visualisation, Perspective, and Perception



1. INTRODUCTION

Photography, as an art form, dates back to the 1800s and since then continues to undergo significant transformations in its structure, technology, intent, and expression. To grasp the essence of photography, it's essential to deconstruct the term itself. In Greek, 'photo' signifies 'light,' and 'graphy' means 'drawing.' Thus, photography literally translates to 'drawing with light' (DeGuzman, 2022). In simple terms, photography involves capturing light to craft an image – a process accomplished through a camera, whether film or digital, for various purposes, such as creating art, documenting events, and producing commercial work.

Architectural photography is a type of photography that concentrates on taking pictures of buildings and structures, wherein both the interiors and exteriors of buildings, bridges, structures, and cityscapes are captured in an aesthetically

pleasing sense (Shupe, 2019). Unlike some other types of photography, architectural photography is less fast-paced because it requires careful consideration of a scene or environment, and therefore, it is of utmost importance to prioritize image quality over fast or continuous shooting modes in cameras for architectural photography. Moreover, proficiency in editing tools is also important for the purpose of understanding how to frame a building within a shot and apply principles of composition.

Architectural photography involves capturing the visual and aesthetic aspects of buildings and structures, and includes showcasing the design, form, and details of architectural elements, both inside and outside. The primary objective is to convey the architect's vision, highlight unique features, and evoke a sense of space, scale, and atmosphere. Effectively capturing the essence of architecture requires meticulous attention to composition, lighting, and perspective. Photographers skilfully frame buildings, manipulate light to enhance features, and present them in a visually compelling and thought-provoking manner. In essence, architectural photography becomes a storytelling medium, communicating the beauty and significance of architectural creations through visual elements.

This genre serves various purposes, including documentation, artistic expression, and promotional activities. It serves as a visual record of significant structures, contributing to the cultural and historical narrative. Moreover, it allows architects, designers, and builders to exhibit their work, fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation of architecture among the general audience.

1.1. EVOLUTION OF ARCHITECTURAL PHOTOGRAPHY

Architecture has played an important role in the evolution of photography, especially during the era of slow shutter speeds, buildings were the subject of images that emerged from long exposures that allowed photographers to experiment with different techniques. Now, the photographer frequently faces a dilemma when taking pictures of the building: should they capture the scene as it is for authenticity or realism, or should they add an essence using elements like composition, perspective, or other techniques to create a captivating and beautiful photograph.

The mutual relationship between architecture and photography was evidenced by the popularization and selling of modern architecture in the 1920s, which occurred as a result of use of non-conventional perspectives, nocturne, lighting and other techniques used by an eminent and progressive group of Architectural photographers, which helped create a new trend in modern architecture. Albert Levy has been credited as the pioneer of Architectural Photography.

Subsequently, modern buildings were captured by Julius Shulman, an American mid-century modernist photographer. Julius Shulman's most famous work was a black-and-white photo taken of a glass and steel frame home built by architect Pierre Koenig in the Hollywood Hills above Laurel Canyon Boulevard as the sun was setting on May 9, 1960. It was number 22 in John Entenza's Arts & Architecture magazine's Case Study housing program (Sathyamurthy, 2011)

In the present scenario, architectural photographers have a wide variety of different styles as well as techniques to choose from that allow them to capture buildings in their best light.

On the basis of the location of photography, Nashville Film Institute (NFI) has categorized architectural photography into the following:

- 1) **Exterior Architectural Photography** focuses on capturing the outer structure of a building. Since the exteriors of a building receive abundant natural light, they are pretty easy to be photographed; however, the prevailing weather conditions influence this type of photography and may result in a dynamic photograph.
- 2) **Interior Architectural Photography** focuses on capturing the interiors of a building. This kind of photography is often challenging as there is limited availability of light within the premises of a structure, therefore, supplemental lighting is necessary to capture the interiors accurately.

1.2. MOVEMENTS RELATED TO ARCHITECTURAL PHOTOGRAPHY

Oddershede (2018) has identified 3 main movements in photographic architecture; urban photography, modern photography, and fine art photography. All these types of photography have the element of architecture in common.

Although they are not the same, Urban Photography is a movement that is related to the word 'street photography.' It aims to portray not just individuals and humanitarian sentiments but also the surroundings, cityscapes, and things. Urban photography differs from other photographic movements in that it does not aim to "catch the moment." Generally speaking, architectural photography focuses more on presenting and making observations about the world than it does on freezing the moment.

A new movement and trend were introduced at the start of the 20th century. Architecture and contemporary architects were greatly influenced by Modern Photography. To capture their creations, a lot of architects actually hired contemporary photographers. A platform and means of promotion for architecture were established by the numerous architectural publications that emerged throughout the modern movement. Early modernism was characterised by common practises such as photographers altering their images after being influenced by the pictorialism movement. To produce their own sceneries of mist, rain, and other effects, they started utilising filters, methods, and procedures.

Fine Art Photography was developed to portray the concepts of artists regarding an image. Rather than photographing what he sees, the artist manipulates the camera to create art. It is now feasible to create dynamic and motionless images with fine art photography. Fine art photographer Michael Wesely imprints his style on his images with an incredibly extended exposure technique.

One of the earliest artistic trends toward architecture was Precisionism, an American art movement. It concentrated America's industries, architecture, machinery, and landmarks mostly within the country. The first commercial photographers to capture "architecture" as buildings and industrial plants were precisionists like Charles Sheeler. Photographers and painters created the movement throughout the industrial revolution; it peaked in the 1930s and gave rise to numerous other urban movements that quickly advanced the understanding of architecture.

1.3. ARCHITECTURAL PHOTOGRAPHY IN TODAY'S WORLD

"The modern architect imitates the photographer; he builds with lights and shadows, with black and white" (Elwall, 2004).

There is a rich history between architecture and photography. The only medium available to put architecture on paper and educate the public about it were photographs. Architects and buildings have been documented and promoted through the use of cameras. The use of photography to convey architectural concepts has grown. Images and visual communication have a major role in shaping modern architecture. Architecture now heavily incorporates photography.

At the backdrop of the above, the aim and objectives of the current study are:

1.4. AIM

This study aims to examine the importance of architectural photography and its role in visualisation of buildings

1.5. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the current study are:

- 1) To identify the importance of architectural photography.
- 2) To gauge individuals' opinions on architectural photography.
- 3) To develop a comprehensive view of architectural photography in the Indian context.
- 4) To explore the relationship between architecture and photography.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The researchers were fascinated to delve into the realm of architectural photography and understand its perception and importance in the Indian context. Several researchers have explored and discussed the importance of architectural photography and how it helps bridge the gap between architects and their audiences, serving as a reliable basis for architectural discourse. Christenson, M. (2017) have highlighted the important role that photography plays in architecture as it provides points of views, directions of views, and fields of views to define architecture as well as serves as a basis for architectural identity and canonicity.

Clack, H. (2014) mentioned that architectural photography provides several insights such as the importance of utilization of space, focusing on the subtle details, and displaying perspectives from within the buildings wherever necessary. Architectural Photography also helps to capture the architect's vision and provide emotion-evoking photographs to the spectators. Holding a similar vision and inspiration, the researchers aimed to develop a better and deeper understanding of architectural photography while also understanding it in the Indian context.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. PROCEDURE

The present study started with the authors contemplating on the research question of what is architectural photography and why is it important. Afterwards, they conducted a brainstorming session in order to arrive at certain objectives that might help understand architectural photography. Upon finalising the objectives, the authors conducted a thorough review of literature wherein different articles, blogs, dissertations, and magazines were explored for relevant content and themes. After developing an initial understanding of architecture and photography, the authors formulated a questionnaire which aimed to collect data from different

individuals about their perspectives towards architectural photography. The authors also chose some of their photographs in order to better understand and explain the relationship between architecture and photography. Lastly, the results from the questionnaire and the photographs were analysed in order to find inferences.

3.2. DATA COLLECTION

The data was collected through a questionnaire, formulated on the basis of the author's existing understanding and knowledge of the topic. A questionnaire is a research tool made up of a series of questions or other kinds of cues intended to collect data from a respondent. The questionnaire consisted of 9 objective-type questions whose responses indicated participants' agreement with the statements. Data was also collected by the examiner in the form of photographs of different architectural constructions.

3.3. SAMPLE

The sample for the present study consisted of architects, teachers, students, and engineers. The total number of individuals that participated in the study was 40, out of which 72.5% were students, 22.5% were architects, 2.5% were engineers, and 2.5% were teachers.

3.4. ANALYSIS

Descriptive analysis was done on the data collected through the questionnaire. Descriptive analysis aims at summarizing, organizing, and presenting data meaningfully and concisely. Without drawing any conclusions or generalizations to a wider population, it concentrates on summarizing and evaluating the key traits and aspects of a dataset. For the current study, pie charts were used in order to understand the collected data. The pie chart is a graphical representation of data in a circular form, where each segment represents fraction of the whole.

4. RESULTS

Data was collected through questionnaires from 40 participants. The 40 participants answered the questions based on their level of agreement with the question statements. A summary of the participants' responses is presented below:

Q1. Do you think architectural photography helps us understand why taking pictures of buildings is important?

Figure 1

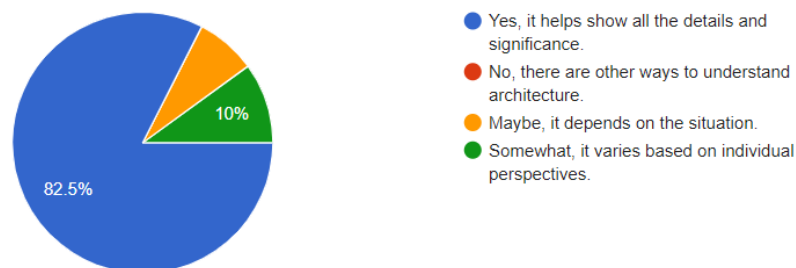


Figure 1 Responses of the Participants

82.5% of the participants reported that they do think that architectural photography helps them understand why taking pictures of buildings is important, 10% indicated that it varies based on individual perspectives, and 7.5% reported that it depends on the situation.

Q2. From your perspective, how crucial is it to recognize the significance of architectural photography?

Figure 2

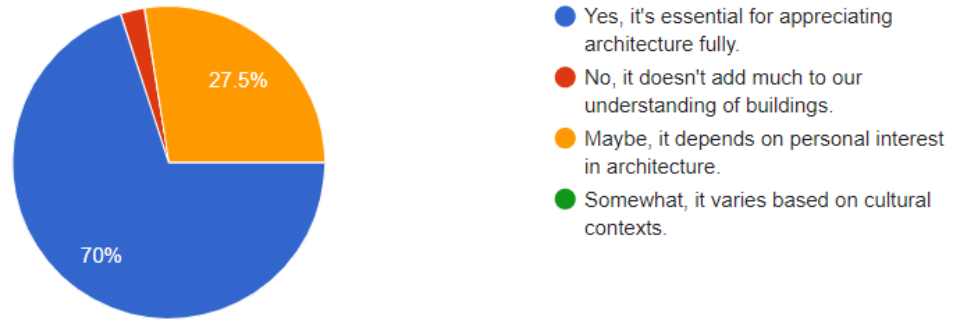


Figure 2 Responses of the Participants

70% of the participants reported that they do think that it's essential for appreciating architecture fully, 27.5% indicated that it depends on personal interest in architecture, and 2.5% reported that it doesn't add much to their understanding of buildings.

Q3. Do you believe studying architectural photography helps explore the connection between architecture and photography?

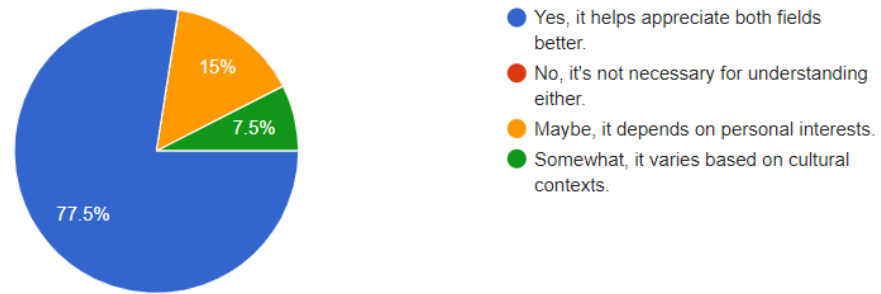
Figure 3



Figure 3 Responses of the Participants

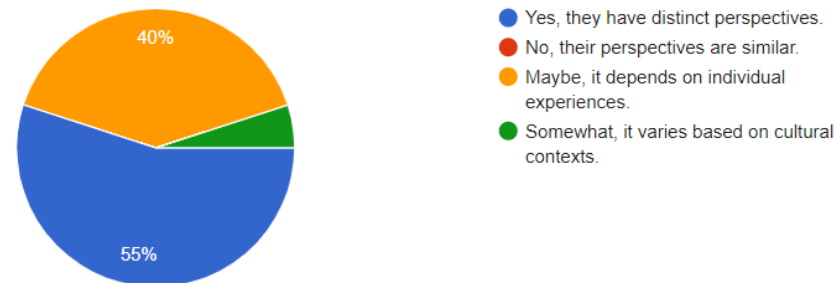
65% of the participants reported that they do think that it reveals how they influence each other, 27.5% indicated that it depends on perspective of the observer, and 7.5% reported that it varies based on individual experiences.

Q4. From your perspective, how important is it to understand how architecture and photography influence each other?

Figure 4**Figure 4 Responses of the Participants**

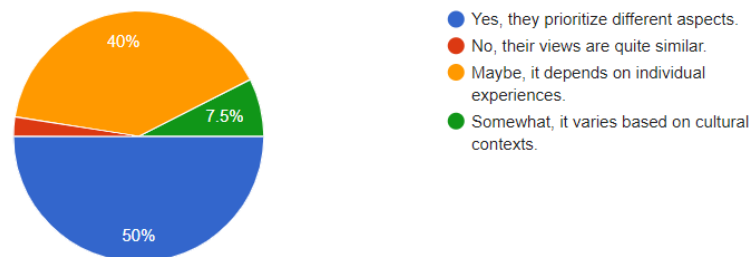
77.5% of the participants reported that they do think that it helps appreciate both fields better, 15% indicated that it depends on personal interests, and 7.5% reported that it varies based on cultural contexts.

Q5. Do you think professional architects and photographers view architectural photography differently?

Figure 5**Figure 5 Responses of the Participants**

55% of the participants reported that they do think that they have distinct perspectives, 40% indicated that it depends on individual experiences, and 5% reported that it varies based on cultural contexts.

Q6. From your perspective, how do professional architects and photographers differ in their views of architectural photography?

Figure 6**Figure 6 Responses of the Participants**

50% of the participants reported that they do think that they prioritize different aspects, 40% indicated that it depends on individual experiences, 7.5% reported that it varies based on cultural contexts, and 2.5% reported that their views are quite similar.

Q7. Do you think understanding architectural photography in the Indian context is important?

Figure 7

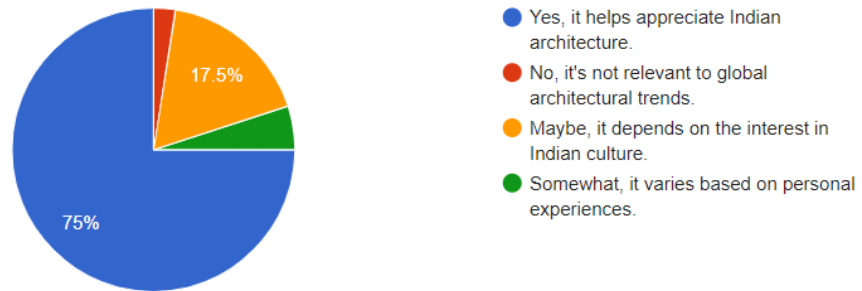


Figure 7 Responses of the Participants

75% of the participants reported that they do think that it helps appreciate Indian architecture, 17.5% indicated that it depends on the interest in Indian culture, 5% reported that it varies based on personal experiences, and 2.5% reported that it's not relevant to global architectural trends.

Q8. From your perspective, how important is it to explore architectural photography specifically in the Indian context?

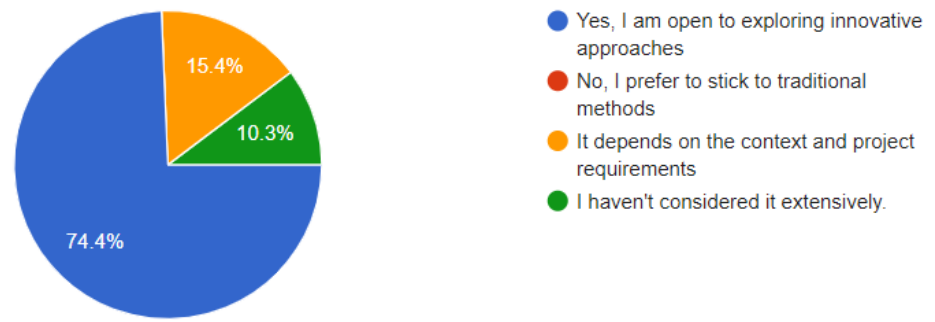
Figure 8



Figure 8 Responses of the Participants

82.5% of the participants reported that they do think that it helps understand the uniqueness of Indian architecture, 10% indicated that it depends on individual interest, 5% reported that it varies based on cultural contexts, and 2.5% reported that architecture is similar across all cultures.

Q9. Do you want to try new and creative ways to take pictures and share your thoughts with others?

Figure 9**Figure 9** Responses of the Participants

74.4% of the participants reported that they do think that they are open to explore innovative approaches, 15.4% indicated that it depends on the context and project requirements, and 10.3% reported that they haven't considered it extensively.

5. DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

The current study aimed to understand the importance of architectural photography, view it in light of the Indian context, understand different individuals' opinions about architectural photography as well as explore the relationship between photography and architecture.

In order to understand the importance of architectural photography, the examiners conducted a thorough review of literature, based on which they formulated a questionnaire that was circulated through online mediums in order to understand individuals' opinions about architectural photography. A total of 40 individuals participated in the study, of which 72.5% were students, 22.5% were architects, 2.5% were engineers, and 2.5% were teachers.

Results have indicated that majority of the participants believe that architectural photography helps to display all the details and subtleties of buildings, allows spectators and audiences to appreciate architectural phenomenon fully, and can help understand Indian culture better through Indian architecture. Furthermore, majority of the participants (55%) believed that architects and photographers definitely differ in their view of architectural photography, however some (40%) highlighted that the difference in perspectives could be due to different experiences of individuals in their view towards architectural photography. Majority of the participants also claim that it is important to understand the role of architectural photography in the relationship between architecture and photography as well as consider that the two phenomena influence each other considerably.

In order to develop a better understanding of architectural photography in the cultural context and to understand the relationship between architecture and photography, the examiners clicked pictures of different Indian architectural phenomena and attempted to understand it with reference to photography. The same has been elaborated below:

Figure 10



Figure 10 Photos Taken at Norbulingka Institute, Dharmshala
Source Photographs taken by Author

In the above photos, the role of lighting can be seen in highlighting the key aspects. In the left photo, due to more lighting, the emphasis is on the buildings whereas in the right photo, due to less lighting, the pathway is more visible

Figure 11

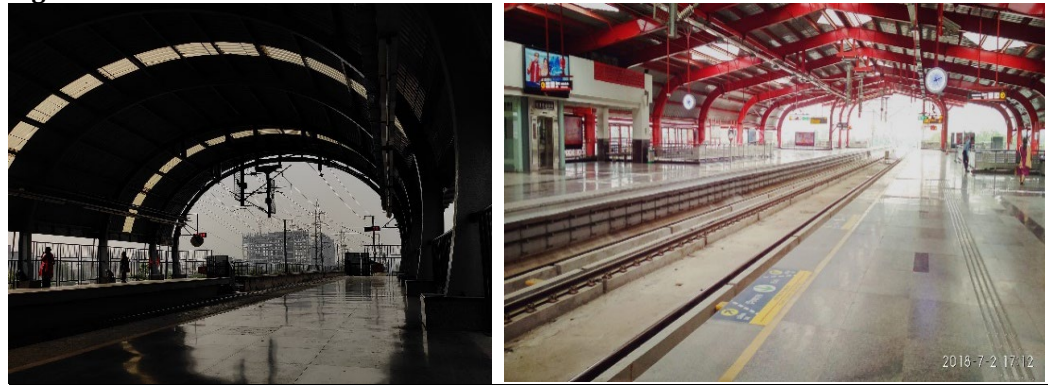


Figure 11 Right Photo Taken at Charbagh Metro Station, Lucknow and Left Photo Taken at Millenium City Centre, Gurugram
Source Photographs taken by Author

In the above photos, the role of lighting and distance can be seen in highlighting the structure of metro stations. Since the left photo has been taken closer to the end of the platform with less lighting and in a portrait mode, it does not provide a clear vision of the structure and instead focuses on the semi-circular roof. However, the right photo is taken from middle of the platform with sufficient lighting and in a landscape mode it highlights the truss structure of the roof as well as the metro tracks.

Figure 12



Figure 12 Photos taken at National Forensic Sciences University, Gandhinagar, Gujarat

Source Photographs taken by Author

In the above photos, the role of distance and angle can be seen in highlighting the structure. Since the left photo has been taken from distance at a certain angle, the interior wall as well as the roof and the floor are somewhat visible and outer building is less emphasised. However, the right photo has been taken from near the wall and therefore the interior wall is dark and the outer view is more emphasised.

Figure 13



Figure 13 Left Photo taken at Wave One, Noida Sector- 18 and Right Photo taken at Norbulingka Institute, Dharmshala.

Source Photographs taken by Author

In the above photos, the role of composition, distance, and angle can be seen. The left photo is of a panoramic elevator which shows the difference of levels and the angle at which the photo was taken helps to emphasise the mechanism of the elevator. In the right photo, there is a uniformity in the structure of building and the play off different levels by using steps and types of material can be noticed.

Figure 14



Figure 14 Left Photo taken at Adalaj Step Well, Gandhinagar, Gujarat and Right Photo at Jain Temple, Gandhinagar, Gujarat.

Source Photographs taken by Author

In the above photos, perspective, composition, and leading lines play an important role in highlighting the series of arches which have a certain vanishing point. In left photo, it seems like the structure is vanishing at a certain point and the sciography gives depth to the structure. While in the right photo, the proper lighting is there and the vanishing point can be seen and it does not need sciography to show the depth.

Based on the above-mentioned analysis of the photographs, the authors arrive on the inference that the following factors are highly important and of significance in architectural photography:

- 1) **Lighting:** Lighting is the source of all photography. Except for Black and White photos, all photos are influenced by the quality, quantity, and direction of light. There are 2 types of light, hard light and soft light (McGregor, 2021). Photos taken in hard light often have a lot of dark shadows (for instance, the left photos in Figure 11 & 14). On the other hand, in photos that are taken in soft light, the shadows are more likely to blend with the light areas (for instance, the left photo in Figure 10 and the right photo in Figure 14).
- 2) **Angle:** Architectural photography often works with 2 angles: one point perspective, or the straight on view, and two-point perspective, or the diagonal view (Reid, 2019). When photographs capture either of the two, they are the most efficient at displaying the architecture. The left photo in figure 13 is an example of a picture clicked from a one-point perspective.
- 3) **Composition:** Composition is a key element in architectural photography as it helps to highlight the subtleties of architecture by composing the shot in such a way that important elements are highlighted. The most common way to compose an architectural photograph is by using a pattern of lines or their symmetry in order to gain more attention to certain features of the building. Figure 13 represents two photos that are composed in such a manner so as to bring attention to the different levels in the left photo and the head roofing (chajja) in the right photo.
- 4) **Perspective:** Perspective includes elements of distance as well as angles. It is of utmost importance that the photo of the architecture be taken after

considering the distance between themselves and the object as well as the angle at which they are shooting. Considering these things helps to gain efficiency in architectural photography (Lowdown, 2022). The role of perspective can be seen in all the figures from 10 -14.

- 5) **Leading Lines:** Leading lines are a frequently occurring element in architecture and even more frequently captured by architectural photographers (Zaccaedelli and Laing, 2021). It is a technique whereby the eyes are drawn to a specific point in the distance and is achieved by framing the photo with the help of the lines within the object area. Figure 14 contains two photos that are good examples of leading lines.

6. CONCLUSION

The present study explores the intricate relationship between architecture and photography, particularly focusing on the realm of architectural photography and its significance. It emphasizes how architectural photography is more than merely capturing buildings; it captures the essence, spirit, and stories hidden within these structures.

The authors conducted a survey in order to understand different individuals' perspectives towards architectural photography. Majority of the participants agreed that architectural photography helps in understanding the importance of visually documented architecture. Additionally, participants recognized the crucial role of architectural photography in appreciating the subtleties and details of architectural designs fully.

Moreover, the study sheds also highlights the differing perspectives of individuals towards professional architects and photographers with regards to architectural photography. While some participants believed in distinct viewpoints between the two professions, others emphasized the influence of individual experiences on these perspectives. This insight underscores the dynamic nature of perceptions within the field.

Furthermore, the study underscores the significance of understanding architectural photography within the Indian context. Through a series of photographs capturing diverse Indian architectural phenomena, the study exemplifies the role of lighting, perspective, and composition in highlighting the unique features of Indian architecture.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

None.

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