

# “YOU PRESS THE BUTTON...WE DO THE REST” \* HOW THE PHOTOGRAPHIC INDUSTRY EVOLVED IN RESPONSE TO POPULAR DEMAND

## Background

- This is a three-year PhD research project studying the British photographic manufacturing industry between 1839 and c.1914
- Former histories have generally focused on key individuals or events associated with the aesthetics of photography
- **This is the first study to examine the relationship between photographic manufacturing and consumer demand**
- The study examines the inter-relationship between:
  - The production of photographic equipment (cameras, optics and accessories) and sensitised materials (plates, papers and film) (▶ 1)
  - A changing retailing context (▶ 2)
  - Wider social and economic changes (▶ 3)



Griffin trade catalogue, May 1854

Advertisement for the original Kodak camera, Year Book of Photography 1889

## Aims of the study

- To provide a narrative of the business of photographic manufacturing, based on extensive reading of contemporary journals, archives and original sources
- To quantify the extent of the industry and its response to consumer demand
- To produce and make available a detailed database of photographic manufacturers and key retailers

## Research questions

- **What effect did consumer demand have on the growth and development of the photographic industry?**
- Did changes in production methods impact the industry? (▶ 1)
- How did changes in retailing and supply meet the demands of the consumer? (▶ 2)
- To what extent did changes in photographic technology affect the industry? (▶ 3)
- How did wider social and economic factors affect consumer demand? (▶ 3)



5181 - vitlogcatg catgno pphowor J F Johnson's Colodion plates, c. 1866

## ▶ 1. Production and industrial change

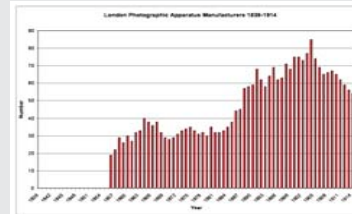


This set was hand-made in J. J. Griffin's workshops and was advertised in 1854.



The mechanisation of manufacturing was essential to meeting demand as illustrated in Rogerson's advertisement of 1870.

- The photographic industry grew from being artisan-based in 1839 to one mass-producing cameras from the later 1870s and 1880s



Compiled from London Post Office Directories

- The hand-coating of plates gave way to the mass-production of ready-to-use plates and rollfilms
- Companies adopted new methods of raising capital for expansion such as limited liability

## ▶ 2. Retailing photographic goods



Murray and Heath's shop at 69 Jermyn Street, London c.1860 acted as retail and workshop premises.



- Retailing developed from small premises where photography was part of a larger business
- From the 1860s specialised retailers and an extensive network of wholesalers distributing goods developed nationally
- Department stores and chemist shops began providing photographic retailing and processing services from the 1890s

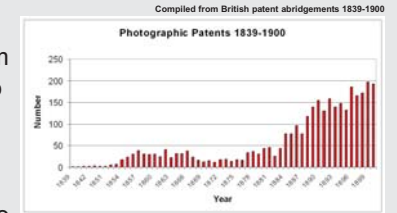


Boots Cash Chemist catalogue, c.1910

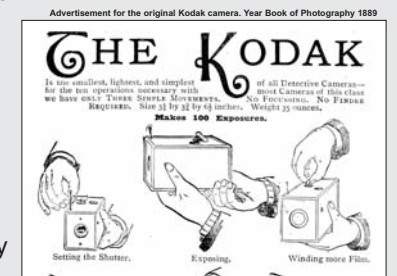
Specialised photographic retailer Jonathan Fallowfield's Central Photographic Stores, Charing Cross Road, London, c1895.

## ▶ 3. Technical, social and economic change during the period

- Photographic imaging evolved from the daguerreotype to dry-plate processes and the use of rollfilm
- Photography became ever more portable with smaller hand cameras
- The separation of picture-taking from the processing and printing of photographs was key in widening its use
- Increased leisure time with statutory holidays and a rising middle-class with increasing disposable income created a significant demand for photography from both hobbyists and domestic photographers



Compiled from British patent abridgements 1839-1900



Advertisement for the original Kodak camera, Year Book of Photography 1889

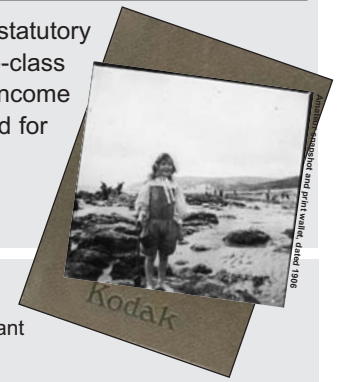
## Initial findings

- 1881-1885 is the start of significant changes in demand
- Sensitised materials are key to understanding demand
- Mass-production lowered camera and plate costs dramatically
- Changes in retailing supported widening demand

## Contact information

**Michael Pritchard • Faculty of Art and Design • DMU**

Email: Michael.Pritchard@learner.dmu.ac.uk  
 Mail: 2 Elizabeth House, Anglian Close, Watford, Herts WD24 4RA  
 Tel: 01923 468356 / 07770 963614



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