

People Photos, are they Good Sellers or not?

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"My portfolio has only a few people images in it. I often tell myself that I should take more people photos, and that that my sales would be even better if I did, is this true?"

Statistics

After looking at a few statistics from a user with 1000 images of people on istock, and pretty poor sales results (not just in my opinion, that of several other people too) I started thinking about the market. All of the images were quality, well lit, white background, typical of the [microstock](#) [2] movement; each image emoted some sort of subject, and the keywords were good. It all got me wondering if all this 'your photos must include people' clap trap is really true? Sure it's a well known fact that people associate better with images that feature people, there have been studies on that, they get more emotionally bonded. People can provide a scale to photos of landscapes, and used to target products at specific market segments.





Online Use, Where?

This has all started me thinking about where, as a web designer, would you use these images (the web being a large part of the microstock market).

Blogs and personal sites, they're out for a start, you'd be putting an image of someone else up there and people would then associate the image with you. (might not be a bad thing, but it's misleading)

Bricks and Mortar SME websites, well, okay so start to think of some businesses that could use photos with people in them. Hairdressers, they would want an image of someone they had actually cut the hair of, a restaurant, hmm, would a web designer insert an image of a smiling chef who has got nothing to do with the restaurant??? I kept thinking of different small enterprises trying to think of convincing ways in which people photography could be used to enhance their sites and not just decorate it, not many positive ideas here, what about....

Enterprise and Big Business, they usually have the budget to commission something, and again they would probably like to see company employees not a complete random from a microstock site.

E-companies, yes there is a market here, printing family photos, e-commerce websites (but remember these probably already have access to marketing materials from their suppliers).

Information Sites, a bit like this one, it depends on the subject. I can see a use for an image with people in it here, but somewhat limited. I then went on an thought of those domain holding pages, they always use them in an attempt to make people think they are not just a waste of online space!

People Pictures Off-line

There are plenty of places off-line for such images, flyers, billboards and magazine articles are a

good place for such images, they fit right in. But is this market as big as we are lead to believe from a microstock perspective. Looking at the front page of a typical microstock site and you will see landscapes and people photos, **but look at the sellers and you might see the images that are selling are not the ones on the front page;** that box of heart shaped chocolates or the faceless 3D rendering of business people are selling big time.

Placing an image of a recognisable person in a design immediately gives the design a gender, socio-economic grouping, race and age group which it did not have before, this is a good thing in many cases if you have to target your products for specific market segments. But there are a lot of image editors who are carefully picking images in a way that does not tie their product into just one market.

look Apple advertising for their iPod, silhouetted people who look to be having a good time, sure they look young, but not in a way that would alienate an older customer. They are 'race-less' 'world people', there is both male and female, so now you've covered most of the market for a media player on this planet. Here are some examples of people photos that don't actually have any recognisable people in them. A lot of them are a great deal more compelling (to me at least) than many of the unoriginal stock photos I see of real people.



Perhaps the most appealing images are those which feature people but do so anonymously, showing someone from the chin down or from the back, or for example someones feet sticking out from under a quilt or hanging over the end of a sofa - these all need model releases there is no getting away from that, but they allow a broader range of viewers to easily to 'place themselves in the picture'.

Conclusion

If you are making good sales with all your people photos and poor ones with all the non people photos in your portfolio I want to hear from you! I'm not saying that people photos don't sell, they clearly do sell, and sell well. Do they sell better than pictures without people? Is it just a 'design fad' to use images of silhouetted people? There is a lot of debate on this subject, but if you are currently doing quite nicely indeed with what you have, then I for one have started to doubt the holy grail of earning more from "microstock people images". Perhaps they are no better selling than other quality images that capture a concept or mood - and without all the need for models and model releases.

Tip

If you create 'unrecognisable' photos featuring people make sure you keyword them as such by including something from the following list (as appropriate):

- Unrecognisable people
- Anonymous people
- People in the distant background
- Person below the neck
- People below the waist
- People silhouetted... etc

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