

Automate to elevate

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Your customers are visual creatures: the vast majority of online shoppers want to see pictures before clicking the purchase button. Good images sell. Great images, however, sell more. This begs the question: should you take product photos on your own, or call a photographer?



The in-house vs outsource battle has been raging in the e-commerce field for some time – but we don't have a definitive winner yet. Whether your business will benefit from an in-house photography and video content studio, or is better off contracting outside professionals, depends on factors like:

- The size of your operation
- Budget
- Available expertise

If you're mulling it over, here's what to keep in mind.

Outsourcing to a professional content production studio

Many experts will tell you that this is the simplest, quickest and most economical way to meet your e-commerce photography needs. Outsourcing your product photography to a professional studio can save you time, money and hassle; if you choose well, all you will need to do is send your goods, and they will do all of the capturing and uploading.

Well-established studios will know the latest trends in e-commerce photography, as well as what to do to help maximise sales. They are also likely to have the most recent technology and equipment to help in this regard. These days, all-in-one compact photographic studio machines are the name of the game; well-equipped studios will take advantage of features like automated background removal to generate large batches of high-quality, deep-etched and ready-to-roll product shots in a matter of hours.

Setting up an in-house photography studio

In-house photography studios can be very expensive. Building a dedicated studio space, with all the requisite surfaces and

lighting, is no small investment. Neither is staffing it with a professional photographic team, or arranging storage space for the products you'll be shooting. There is also the question of equipment: do you go with old-school cool, hand-held cameras, or newer, automated machines? And – crucially – will you be able to keep the technology and software up to date?

Before sinking cash into an in-house studio, it pays to take a closer look at the expected ROI. According to Craig Bellingham, founder and CEO of Studio[K]irmack in Cape Town, this is often much lower than businesses think. “If you're a big brand, and you're taking hundreds, if not thousands, of product photographs per month, and your process is not automated, or you're not using the right technology to assist you with that requirement, you are throwing money away,” says Bellingham.

For context, Studio[K]irmack, which is affiliated with StudioK in Durban, is a high-tech production studio that helps e-commerce brands to produce best-in-class photography and digital content campaigns using automated processes.

- 150 products captured every day – one device with seven images per product without compromising the quality.
- Built-in features like automatic background removal and retouching mean you get ready-to-use packshots, 360-degree spins and videos in minutes
- Able to catalogue large numbers of products in a single day.
- Reduced per product cost. Time = Money
- Accelerated product photography production.
- High-quality and critically consistent results.

Whatever you choose to do, automation is the name of the game

It is true that in-house studios can be a viable option for medium- and large-scale enterprises, allowing them full control of the photographic process, as well as hands-on involvement by internal staff, who undoubtedly know the retail products best. However, for those businesses that opt to go the in-house route, it is recommended that they explore automated photographic solutions. For companies that already have in-house facilities, compact automated solutions are also worth considering as an add-on to take their photographic capabilities to the next level (before their competitors do).

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All-in-one e-commerce product photography technology like the popular Orbitvu range offers a lot in the way of workflow streamlining. Here's a quick idea of what you can expect:

- The entire workflow: capture, post-production, and online upload is automated to give you hundreds of photos for your business every day.
- Hardware and software integration for smooth mass visual content production.
- Templates to load photo session settings with a single click.
- Automated batch photo editing and background removal.
- Direct stills, 360° spins and video online uploads.
- No outsourcing costs. Created to keep visual content production in-house.
- Significantly reduced post-processing expenses.
- Operator-friendly photo equipment designed for easy onboarding and reduced training time.
- Space efficient. Compact yet fully equipped photography devices.

Orbitvu is suitable for products ranging in size and industry from wrist watches and perfumes to shoes, clothing, furniture, bicycles, automotive and more, and supports the use of both mannequins and live models. “Compared to competitor technology in other companies, Orbitvu allows cross-pollination of photographic requirements, minimising the number of machines you need,” says Bellingham. “Where you may have needed four machines before, you can now do it all in one – which is a huge money saver.”

Orbitvu is available in South Africa through Studio[K]irmack, an authorised agent.

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