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Mobile Media (MSP 4541-700)

December 9, 2020

Final Mobile Media Analysis on Two Truths, One Lie

My final project on mobile video touches upon different kinds of mobility and the

indirect advantages and disadvantages of in-person and online filming. It also talks about how

the vast differences in form informed the content of the project, how the project shows both

'interactivity-as-product' and 'interactivity-as-process' and notes some revelations that my

project taught me in the process.

I decided to create an entirely new mobile video project for my final. I followed a game

show format creating a version of 'Two Truths, One Lie'. Two sets of two participants each were

filmed, one in-person and one via Zoom. In this way, it allowed me to experiment and see the

difference between the same game played in two different styles. I chose to create a mobile

video because that is what I was most excited about and comfortable doing. I wanted to

continue to experiment with Adobe Premiere Rush while creating a portfolio for professional

work and expanding my skill set. I was also doing a lot of audio projects this semester, so I

wanted to expand my creativity using mobile video.

From the very beginning, it was clear to me that the entire project would be created

vertically created as it automatically makes the user feel more relaxed and unconsciously

permits them to watch the video even while on-the-go as most of the social media platforms

now have content tailored for on-the-go consumption, like Snapchat stories, Instagram

Reels/Stories, and so on. Because of the growing consumption of content vertically, it has now

become quite natural for people to watch content on their portable devices vertically. This form

of consumption has been, in part, informed by smartphones that come pre-programmed to

view content vertically than horizontally, thereby supporting Marsha Berry's claim that

"openings for image and sharing are now constantly embedded in the background of our

routine because of smartphones" (2017, p.131). This has also paved the way to remove some of

the implicit rules of professional filmmaking associated with being filmed horizontally. Vertical

consumption of content is also more comfortable as it fills up the entire screen and provides a

more holistic form of viewing even though the device through which the content is being

viewed is small.

My previous mobile video project was done entirely on Zoom except for a few shots. So,

for this one I wanted to film everything in-person, going for a traditional, pre-pandemic look.

But due to some timing issues, one set had to be done via Zoom which indirectly became a

blessing-in-disguise because I got to have a feel for how filming and editing essentially the same

idea back-to-back was vastly different. I took a longer time to film and edit the Zoom portion of

the project due to the app framework and other online technicalities. One of the participants

had lesser internet speed so there were lags and audio discrepancies that could not be

rectified. When it came to the Zoom filming, even though I paused and resumed recording each

set, once the Zoom recording was downloaded, I received it as one whole recording instead of

an individual recording; so, I had to sift through all of it entirely to start editing them, which

took a longer time to do than the in-person recordings. Another minor issue that came up was

Zoom automatically shifting to speaker view when the recording was completed even though I recorded it in the gallery view. What I figured out eventually was that when there are only two participants on-screen then Zoom shifts to gallery view instead of switching from one person to the other; so, there were also minor issues in post-production that were rectified to the best of my capabilities.

This process during post-production brought to light the importance of already placed rules and guidelines, explicit (options to mute/switch video off/ability to choose emojis on the reactions tab) or implicit (app detecting the voice and highlighting the speaker, pre-determined emojis on the immediate reactions tab) in the functioning of an app, in this case, Zoom. Light, Burgess, and Duguay's walkthrough method define 'governance' as "how the app provider seeks to manage and regulate user activity to sustain their operating model and fulfill their vision" (2018, p.890). It also highlights 'governance' as an important part of the walkthrough method as it could have the potential to "expand from simply managing user activity to enforcing norms and values" (p.890). In this case, when Zoom changed the display to speaker view with only two participants even though I set it to gallery view while recording, this form of implicit governance limited the way I edited the sets for the project, thereby controlling my editing skills to match the audio and video that Zoom recorded to be more cohesive and pleasing to the eye.

The main goal when creating content for audiences is to be able to connect with the audiences and make them stick around to watch it till the very end. One way that is particularly important in this case is the reactions of the participants when they were forced to taste the

unappetizing dip each time they got a question wrong. Even if the audience cannot taste what

the dip is, once they find out what the dip contains, it is easier for them to connect with what

the participant is tasting or feeling based on their previous associations with certain ingredients

in the dip. This allows for a vicarious experience connecting the audience to the participants,

becoming a form of enjoyment and excitement that comes with the participants' reactions.

My secondary goal for creating this project in the long run, apart from creating it for a

class/entertainment, was to create memories that my friends and I could look back to. It is

almost a great alternative to having 100s of pictures on our drive. This seems to be the finding

that Omar and Dequan note when they researched the primary motivation behind TikTok usage

by people in China – "Archiving appears to be the most important motivation for using TikTok in

the present study" (Omar & Dequan, 2020, p.131). Archiving allows us to look back at all the

memories we have shared and have a good laugh, making us want to look back at it more often.

This is similar to vicariously experiencing the same moment each time we look back at the

video. So, for us, the goal while watching the video is to reminisce, while for other viewers it

could be a form of entertainment, escapism, and social interaction (Omar & Dequan, 2020,

p.130) as they are able to foster a human connection remotely by getting to know the

participants' interests and lives even if the participant does not know them, especially during

the pandemic.

When deciding the content for this project, I had not taken into consideration how

different styles of filming the project would affect the entire experience. But when I was forced

to move the filming of the second half of the participants to Zoom, I had already finished the

filming of the in-person content for the project. Right off the bat, I noticed that the energies that both the contestants, Yasmeen and Jerin, were giving off online were quite different than in-person. They even mention in the video that they looked forward to an in-person experience in the future pointing to the idea that the online format was not too suitable for them. So even though the online part of the game seemed to be better than the in-person set in some areas, the in-person filming style seemed to be what the participants wanted to do more of. Even though they are shyer than Minnu and Aldrin, they took a little more time to warm up and get more excited about the whole process. Minnu and Aldrin, on the other hand, were having a lot of fun from the beginning, being very candid and free, and needed very little time to warm up for the rounds.

So that is why when I was picking the sets for the video, I wanted the rounds that were more entertaining to be included because the first few rounds were utterly silent and were not too entertaining. One of the factors was the obvious online presence that both of them were pretty fed up with because of the online Zoom classes that all students had to go through this year. Some Wi-Fi lags interrupted the flow of the game multiple times during filming. This goes back to the idea of the importance of 'governance' (Light et al., 2018, p.890) and the possibility that "the degree or features of medium interactivity might affect outcome variables of human interaction" (Stromer-Galley, 2004, p.393).

In a way, Zoom played a part in the change in behavior in the contestants, especially when we had to re-do certain parts of the content because of Wi-Fi and Zoom lags that could have been avoided if it was in-person. This is similar to the control that Facebook has over

media organizations and companies in exchange for the ability to live stream its content on Facebook (Rein & Venturini, 2018, p.3361). However, the companies must continue to create content for Facebook to be able to have those privileges (Rein & Venturini, 2018, p. 3361). Even though I am not bound by Zoom to create content for it, at least for a little while, we were able to understand the effect that it had on our content as compared to the in-person sets filmed for this project.

Indirectly, Aldrin and Minnu's rounds show the idea of 'interactivity-as-process' (the process of direct human interaction/face-to-face communication), while Yasmeen and Jerin's rounds show the idea of 'interactivity-as-product' (interactivity between people and computers or networks) (Stromer-Galley, 2004, p.391).

This also touches upon contextual mobility or the idea that "human action is inherently situated in a particular context that frames and is framed by his or her performance of the action recursively" (Kakihara & Sorenson, 2001, p.35). Their personalities, the camaraderie that the contestants share, the place or space that they were conversing in, and how the situation unfolded as they conversed with one another determined how the content came out at the very end. If none of it clicked, then no amount of editing would have made the video better.

The form/structure and creation of the video reflected spatial mobility, specifically, the mobility of space (p.34) as the ways in which I received my files for post-production were many – through Google Drive, iMessage link to iCloud, Zoom, and WhatsApp (backup files). If this project was done a decade or two ago, then I would have had to physically bring a pen drive or a hard disk and manually upload the files one by one from the video camera to the computer to

edit it. It would have taken a longer time and been a little more excruciating, with a lot of chance of error. But during this time, I just had to make sure to get all my footage from the iPhone and desktop that I shot in and align it together all done with less than two devices and compiled in one, creating virtual spatiality or "cyber community" through a "loosely connected network of computers" (p.34).

The final mobile video project showed the importance of form in subtly changing the tone of the content while engaging in different kinds of mobility, mainly spatial and contextual mobility among the different elements of the project (the participants, the devices, online spaces). A lot of it also overlapped with the concepts of 'interactivity-as-product' and 'interactivity-as-process' and the setting and tone of the place/space made it apparent to the creator that even though the online form seemed to work better for the viewers, the more traditional form of communication, in-person style of conversing, made the content more enjoyable and entertaining to edit as a creator and watch as a viewer. The paper also asserted the relevance of proper interactive interfaces that are created in the hopes for maximum efficiency and productivity, but it also reminds us that in the long run, it could make it easier or more difficult to converse. Overall, the final project was quite entertaining to create and showcase and was a little more complementary to the course readings of this semester.

References

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