Bronwyn Loskywitz

Fall 2020

Mobile Media

Final Reflection Paper

The Fun in Dysfunctional: Vlogging in a Pandemic

Social media, whether liked or not, has become an integral part of our day to day lives. Regardless of whether individuals indulge in using social platforms, these platforms, and the content they produce greatly influence our social interactions and culture. To most, it should come as no surprise, especially given that mobile devices, the technology through which social content is often viewed, has long since become structured into our daily lives. Rich Ling heavily discusses this in his writings of mobile communications in an intimate sphere-- how mobile communication has become a structural element of society as we become reliant on having mobile phones with us and others having mobile phones on them (Ling, 2014). In lieu of the current pandemic, this reliance on mobile devices has intensified as it becomes our primary form of communication. This integration of mobile technology has been beneficial as it allows us to both be accessible to one another at any given time but also allows us to capture moments instantaneously. Especially during the current pandemic where the reliance on mobile technology as a primary form of communication. And with that, our social interaction occurs almost exclusively through social networks. Therefore, the content we consume through these social channels at this current moment can be especially impactful as it becomes a part of our daily social interactions. It is for this reason that I chose to create a mobile video representative of the current circumstances that act as a

means of hope and positive entertainment during uncertain times and also reaches a wide audience of consumers.

Following the project's goals, I chose to expand upon the mobile video I had created previously *The Masked Adventures of Bronwyn Loskywitz*. My video is a short cinematic vlog of what I chose to do on free days in the past few months, and how I find ways to have fun and enjoy myself while doing "everything and nothing." With the original project, I wanted to demonstrate how I spent my free time safely when there was seemingly nothing to do. Prior to the pandemic, I spent much of my time running around from place to place and therefore thought recording a video on how I've adapted to a more stagnant life would be intriguing.

However, in this second video, some of these goals changed and shifted. Unlike my initial creation of the video for the mobile video project, I chose to expand past the idea of having fun while doing nothing and include what a day of socializing may look like during current circumstances. I wanted to integrate a more hopeful tone and focus both on the fun one can have on their own as well as the fun of hanging out with a friend safely. My goal was to demonstrate that while life is drastically different from months ago, that doesn't necessarily have to be a bad thing. During this pandemic, it's become especially easy to focus on everything going wrong (and the news bombarding us with content that plays into these expectations doesn't help). There's this focus on all of what we're missing out on during this unprecedented time that people can sometimes forget the beautiful small things they still have and can still do. By showcasing how I have fun both when I'm by myself and with other people, my intention is that others will take away ideas and inspiration for their own masked adventures.

Overall, both projects were inspired by the short film *Detour* and the content I consume from TikToks on a regular basis, especially as these have become part of my own social interactions. My goal for my mobile video was to find a middle ground between the two, resulting in a blend of chaotically running around with quick edits, movie magic, and dance montages. I tried to create a balance between the use of cinematic aspects in mobile video but maintaining the personal connection audiences often experience from content on social platforms. My motivation to take inspiration from these social platforms, TikTok in particular, because I find it fascinating how videos on the platform are able to maintain viewer attention. Since I was creating a video five times the length of any content, you'd find on TikTok, I was curious to see how I could use TikTok video editing strategies to my advantage. Viewers are becoming more and more accustomed to quick, bite-sized content, with attention spans becoming shorter. Therefore, it can be beneficial to find ways to make them perceive the content as being shorter than it is by making it a faster pace.

Considering that I was taking such great inspiration from TikTok, it was also important for me to understand why users are drawn and motivated to use the platform at all. For this, I turned to Omar and Dequan's paper, which addressed the Uses and Gratifications for TikTok and the five motivations for our consumption of mobile content, which are the following: escapism, self-expression, social interaction, peeking, and archiving. For my first video project, I primarily focused on peeking, which as described by Omar and Dequan, "The advent of UGM has enabled exhibitionism and voyeurism and people have developed pleasure from accessing private details and peeking into the private lives of others" (Omar & Dequan, 2020). This is exactly what I gave viewers,

a peek into my everyday life. This wasn't the only motivation I focused on, as to a lesser extent I made use of the social interaction motivation, as the viewer can experience a vicarious social interaction, a parasocial interaction, through this particular video. My idea was to film in ways that made the viewer and audience feel like they were a part of the adventure, they were there hanging out along with me, and later on my friend. Now while these were the two motivations I continued to heavily focus on when creating this final mobile video, I also chose to add on a focus on self-expression. In creating this video, I understood the benefit of adding in additional aspects of my personality and interests to make the content not only more appealing to my audience but myself as well. I filmed the seemingly pointless, nonsensical conversations I have with friends and things we say and do that make me laugh. I talk through my random thoughts about mask-wearing and my odd need to hype myself up before hanging out with others. My mentality in all this was that by creating a video I thoroughly enjoyed watching, it would be content others would enjoy watching too.

The most popular content on platforms such as YouTube and TikTok is vlogs or video content that brings audiences into the life of the creator, feeling as though they're living alongside them and we see this proven by Omar and Dequan. People want to feel close to content creators and generally may desire that parasocial bond that follows. I think this relates to what's discussed in Humphreys' article about connecting, coordinating, and cataloging. In the portion of the article on connecting, Humphreys brings up how even though one may post a message on social media for a specific someone or group because this message can often be seen by a broader audience, there is a performative aspect (Humphreys, 2012). This ideology could also be applied

to the content we create for social media rather than messages, such as this video.

Recently, there has been a development of awareness toward this performative aspect

of content creation, resulting in a desire for content that feels authentic. This is likely

why vlog-style content performs so well. With all of this in mind, it prompted me to

create not only a vlog but a vlog that felt authentic. I do edit down parts of the video to

make things tighter when necessary, such as the dance party or the clips of my friend

and I hanging out. However, overall, I keep an element of realism to the content.

Viewers witness me running late and the mild chaos that comes with, they witness me

over-explain or stumble in my words, all things I could easily choose to omit from the

final cut but purposely keep in the video. Again, I wanted viewers to feel as though they

were actually present for all that was going on and realistically, they would witness

these mishaps because I can't edit face-to-face interactions.

Additionally, it aims to comment on the mobility of video as I take my phone and

the audience with me throughout my day and utilize edits and transitions often seen in

TikTok content. This connects back to Ling's point of how mobile communication, and in

turn mobile devices, have become an integral part of everyday life. But it speaks more

to the mobility of video and one's ability to whip out their phone at a moment's notice

and start recording their day, which connects to Berry's chapter. The chapter discusses

mobile media social interactions and creative practices and goes on to dissect the

evolving practices to which he states, "I possessed a mobile phone that could take

photographs and video sequences and was with me all the time. I could take photos or

shoot video whenever the impulse arose" (Berry, 2017). While filming both the first

mobile video and this final video project, I found this ability to shoot footage at any time

particularly useful. For one, this makes it easier to film "in the moment" as you aren't

wasting time setting up equipment to shoot a short clip of you and your friend dancing in

the park. Additionally, it adds to the authenticity and personal connection of the video as

the viewer travels with me, and the content quality is obviously that of a mobile device.

Now, when creating this final video, I chose to add a new key component not

present in my first mobile video, subtitles. While this did act as an additional form of self-

expression, because of my personal love for yellow italic subtitles, it also aimed to serve

a much larger purpose. Playing into the mobility of video, it's essential for creators to

consider that your mobile content can be viewed from anywhere at any time. Especially

because users work under that exact expectation as explored in Goggin's chapter. The

reading discusses how the progression of media technology is directly related to the rise

in mobile video consumption. Therefore, users expect the mobile video content they

consume to be available across all devices they use. Now part of what's important to

make that content accessible is ensuring that it can be viewed by anyone regardless of

device and this can include options like subtitles. This is important because as Goggin

points out we still don't know "who exactly watches mobile video; in what locations,

cultural contexts, and social settings; for what reasons and purposes, and associated

with which affects and emotions; with what social functions" (Goggin,2014). Therefore,

including things such as subtitles makes it consumable to a wider audience regardless

of social setting and location because the content can then be viewed without sound.

Even disregarding social setting and location, it also makes the content more widely

accessible for those with hearing impairments, especially since most content on social

platforms like TikTok do not include closed captions unless the creators make them manually.

　　While we have no control over the current circumstances of the world around us, we do have control over the content we create during this time. The interpersonal social interactions we've been accustomed to having been replaced by mediated communication through black screens. New outlets and other media forms bombard us with breaking news that only ever seems negative and it becoming increasingly difficult to maintain a positive outlook in the face of all that's happening. This is particularly why hopeful, authentic content is especially necessary to remind ourselves that while things aren't what they could be, there are still masked adventures to be had. And this is what I hoped to accomplish with *The Masked Adventures of Bronwyn Loskywitz*.

References:

Berry, M. (2017). Chapter 7. In *Creating with mobile media* (pp. 131–151). Essay. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave MacMillian.

Goggin, Gerard. (2014). "Mobile Video: Spreading stories with mobile media" In Goggin, G., & Hjorth, L. (Eds.). (2014). *The Routledge companion to mobile media* (Pg. 147-156). New York: Routledge.

Humphreys, Lee. (2012). "Connecting, Coordinating, Cataloguing: Communicative Practices on Mobile Social Networks," *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 56(4): 494-510

Ling, Rich. (2014). "Theorizing mobile communication in the intimate sphere," In Goggin, G., & Hjorth, L. (Eds.). *The Routledge companion to mobile media* (Pg. 32-41). New York: Routledge.

Omar, Bahiyah & Dequan, Wang. (2020). Watch, share or create: The influence of personality traits and user motivation on TikTok mobile video usage. *International Journal of Interactive Mobile Technologies.* 14(4): 121-137.