

In the continuation of the assignment from the previous module, I managed to learn a thing or two that I know for a fact that I will value forever. In the module previously, I learn how to strategize, plan, predict the potential problems and outcome as well as how to overcome the said problems and, well, keeping the utmost calm while doing all that at once. It was an eye-opening experience, I did not expect that filmmaking would take that much time to plan and calls for such thorough detail that will then either make you thank yourself because you paid attention to the nitty gritty details or you will end up crying because you did not plan well enough. I learnt it the hard way. I had a breakdown in front of my supervisor, Brett.

Yes, I had a breakdown in front of Brett. He had to actually watch me ugly cry for a good 10 minutes. Then when I managed to suck it all up, he kept his cool and helped me to calm down. I then explained the things that has been bothering me and that is, my lack of progress. I was stuck. I was lost. While all my friends go out and film their project, I sat in my room crying trying to figure out what I should do. With Brett supervision & help, I managed to pull myself together and start again. From there I started planning for my project again. My friends, especially Shahreen were very helpful and understanding, they helped me figure out the direction of my project. There were major changes in my project but I managed to put the pieces together. My journey in completing my final year project was definitely bittersweet and I know I will be proud of it.

The aim of my project is to bring forward the story of Malaysian students studying abroad to share their insights with the student that are planning to come to the UK. My main target audience were of course students and are planning to come to the UK but since I made the angle a little bit more general, the project can be enjoyed by bigger audiences. I wanted it to be more relatable and have no limitation, this way, I hope I can penetrate an even bigger engagement. In making it more feasible, I decided to publicize my project through YouTube as the medium.



Image 1: My wonderful friends as crews, they were super helpful and considerate

From the observation that I have made, YouTube is the perfect platform due to a couple of reasons; the first being that it is quick and accessible from all over the world so I can share my project even though I am thousands of miles away from my target audience. All I have to do is provide the link and they can watch it right away. The second reason is that, “*the medium is the message*” as coined by Marshall McLuhan in his book, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (1964). The phrase means that the nature of a medium, the channel through which a message is transmitted, plays a bigger role than the meaning or content of the message itself.

According to McLuhan, a “*message*” is, “*the change of scale or pace or pattern*” that a new invention or innovation “*introduced into human affairs.*” He uses the term ‘message’ to signify content and character. The content of the medium is a message that can be effectively grasped. And the character of the medium is another message which can be easily overlooked. McLuhan says “*Indeed, it is only too typical that the 'content' of any medium blinds us to the character of the medium*” (McLuhan, 1964). Hence why I think that YouTube is the best platform for me to convey my messages, due to the nature that it is fool proof, accessible globally and not to mention, fast.

The Uses and Gratification theory (UGT) as developed by Bulmer and Katz suggests that media users play an active role in choosing and using the media. The theory seeks to understand **why people seek out the media that they do** and **what they use it for** (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1973). According to Bulmer and Katz, there are several needs and

gratifications that people satisfy through the media. They are categorized into these five categories, namely cognitive needs, affective needs, personal integrative needs, social integrative needs and tension free needs. In the cognitive needs, it is mentioned that people choose media outlets that provide them with knowledge and understanding of their surroundings.

The assumptions in the theory include; the audience is active, and their need for the media is goal oriented. Secondly, the initiative in linking need gratification to a specific medium choice rests with the audience member. Lastly, the media outlet they choose is dependent on the type of knowledge that they are seeking. For instance: If an individual is interested gaining more knowledge about the current happenings/events around the world, they may choose to tune in to the news media. This is to imply that my project is reachable for the people that has similar interest. It was until I did my research that I found that there were not enough exposure made for the students that are studying abroad, not enough real life experience and stories that can help us with the preparation to study abroad.



Image 2: Interview with Jett for the second episode of AFAF

From my experience in deciding to study in the UK, I often find that people tend to over glorify the idea of studying abroad without stressing on the hardship of adapting in a country with different cultural norms, different weather and to add to that, being away from family and people that they are familiar with. I aspire to put the focus on those factors and provide if not extensive, maybe just a gist of the reality of studying abroad.

In my planning, I envisioned myself participating in the documentary as much as possible, I want to steer the flow of the story, to raise the questions of interest, to take place of the storyteller, representative of the public and as a medium provider all at once. Bill Nichols, in his book, *Introduction to Documentary*(2002) explained the various modes of documentary, and to name a few, poetic mode, expository mode, participatory and observational mode.

Participatory mode emphasizes the interaction between filmmaker and subject. Filming takes place by means of interviews or other forms of even more direct involvement. According to Nichols, documentary filmmakers would go into the field, living among others and speak about or represent what they experience, which then they will serve as a researcher or investigative reporter. In other cases, the filmmaker's voice emerges from direct, personal involvement in the events that unfold. I managed to be the presenter, I steered the flow and I think I made a good representative for the public.

Since I had little time to improvise my project, I had to rush everything from the production process up to editing. I had to be quick and efficient in planning and executing my process. In my original plan, the proposed locations to film were Swansea and Bristol but due to financial and time constrain, I had to change the location and one of my participants cancelled before filming. To make up to that, I decided to film my friends, as they fit the criteria that I set for my project which is to film the life of Malaysian students studying abroad. Luckily, Jett, Zafirah and Izzati were willing to be my participants. Shahreen, Ayda and Fariz helped me with filming and made the whole process a lot enjoyable.



Image 3: Filming for AFAF

Through this journey, I gained a lot of new knowledge and skills. I learned how to talk in front of a camera, selling my idea to my future audiences with script memorised and I cannot stress this enough, is not an easy task. Having to convince people is not an easy thing to begin with. The respect I have for people in broadcasting and creative arts boomed right after my project. They deserve more credit and acknowledgement for their hard work.

Along the way, I picked up the skills of using Adobe software, especially Premiere Pro. Though just the basics, I am confident I will continue brushing up the skills and eventually master the software. I had a few complications while editing. I lost some footages; I lost a project in Premiere Pro so I had to redo the whole editing from square one. The incidents really taught me to be patient and to understand that quality work take time. The more time and patience you put in a work, the better the outcome will be.

Some of my weakness that I found in executing this project would be that the time constraint that I face, restricts my creative process. I had to cut short certain areas that I wanted to highlight, for instance the interview with my participants. I also had limited fund to aid my expenditure in the filmmaking process, hence why I can only film around campus and make the best of it. Other than that, I had limited time with the equipment for my filming process since I rely solely on borrowing equipment such as audio recorders and cameras from the university.



Image 4: Shahreen, my dedicated cameraman

Carrying out this project has greatly opened my mind. My thoughts are now able to be more complex because I have learned how to look through things from a different perspective. Through this priceless opportunity, I learn how to be the presenter; the person raises the questions for people to ask and the person who bring about the topic of discussion. I am the person who is responsible to mould the angle that I want my audiences to see. Another improvement is my ability to point out multiple complexities within a footage, instead of blindly film, I learn the importance of paying attention to the lighting, angles and audio settings. I feel like my filming is so much more interesting than it used to be.

My project has also taught me how powerful the angle of what the media presents and the stories that people have to tell can be. The stories that my generation have now is way different compared to our parents had. The struggles of getting education, being away from family and the pressure of fulfilling the expectations. From my project, I learned about my own friends, about students, the different stories that people have and through my project I learned how we as humans are all related. Through my project, I managed to provide the channel for them to share.

If I had the chance to do my project all over again, I would indefinitely film and actually start editing earlier. This way, I can have more time to learn and to ensure the perfect outcome., I definitely hate the green screen for my interview scene, had I start editing earlier, I would be able to maybe reshoot to a get better quality outcome. All in all, the experience of carrying out this project was a priceless one. The effort, the sweat and tears, hours and hours of time spent to reach to this level is definitely something that I value. It is after seeing the outcome I feel the satisfaction, I did not think I had that ability in me. I am proud of my progress and where I am standing now compared to where I came from. I have progressed.

Ultimately, I am confident that I have achieved a successful outcome, but to improve the process, I needed a better planning and strategizing for the execution. I hope I will get the opportunity to continue presenting my project to help the students, I was once in their position and I want them to know that they will always have someone to refer to. And if I ever get the opportunity to continue with the project **Asking for a Friend**, I would definitely pay more attention to this.



Image 5: Last day of filming for AFAF

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