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VIDEO PRODUCTION DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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Abstract:

The spread of the COVID-19 has affected numerous industries throughout the globe, and these industries must adapt to these changes in order to sustain themselves. One of the industries that is affected greatly from this pandemic is the video production industry as it limits communications and mobility to produce a video due to the COVID-19 safety guidelines which causes some production works to be delayed or cancelled due to multiple restrictions that comes with this event. In order to overcome these limitations several methods can be done. This research is done to discuss on how video production is possible to be produce in times of COVID-19 pandemic despite the restrictions. This topic will discuss regarding the standard video production process which are pre-production, production, and post-production and how it is adapted during the pandemic with the limitations present. The video production that will be the focus of this research is the production of a documentary titled "My Reasons: For Coming to Malaysia" which was produced during the pandemic. It will discuss on how the idea came about, the planning, the talent recruitment, and the production. This research hopefully will be able to explain on how the video production industries can overcome the hindrances that was caused by this unfortunate event through adapting and creating new solutions by utilizing other alternatives that allows the flow of production to run smoothly.

Keywords:

COVID-19; Documentary; Limitation; Production; Video

Introduction

Video production during COVID-19 has been greatly impacted by the pandemic. In-person shoots have been made difficult due to social distancing and quarantine measures. As a result, many production companies have had to adapt by implementing virtual production techniques and finding creative solutions to continue producing content while keeping their teams safe.

One technique that has gained popularity is the use of green screen technology and virtual sets. This allows for actors to perform in front of a green screen from the safety of their own homes, and for the background to be added in post-production. This method has been used for everything from talk shows to commercials. Another trend has been the rise of animation and motion graphics, as these can be created entirely digitally and do not require in-person gatherings. Many companies have also turned to using pre-existing footage and repurposing it for new content. Remote collaboration tools have become essential for video production during COVID-19. Applications like Zoom, Google Meet, and Slack have allowed team members to communicate and work on projects together remotely. Overall, the COVID-19 pandemic has presented challenges for video production, but it has also led to the adoption of new technologies and innovative solutions (COVID-19 and the Media Industry, n.d; 10 Tips for Producing Video During COVID-19, 2020).

The start of the COVID-19 outbreak in Malaysia begins with the report of the first confirmed case of COVID-19 on 4th February 2020 (Bernama, 2020). The first major outbreak happened in March 2020 has cause the country to go into a lockdown with the announcement of the Movement Control Order (MCO) on 16th March 2020 (Barker, 2020). This announcement brought several guidelines such as social distancing, wearing mask, no gatherings were allowed and several industries were not allowed to operate (Bunyan, 2020). Since then, several guidelines were created and amend as the situation changes.

Official report from Word Health Organization on 23rd April 2020 stated that Malaysia has a total of 5532 confirmed cases and 93 deaths. 3452 cases have recovered and 43 cases are in intensive care units (ICUs), with 25 still needing ventilatory support. The states with the highest number of total reported cases are Selangor (1357) Kuala Lumpur (1037), Johor (648) and Sarawak (455). The Ministry of Health issued a COVID-19 advisory in the month of Ramadan encouraging the public to continue compliance with the MCO and refrain from visiting distant family members and friends. This includes avoiding trips across states and districts and attending mass gatherings. All mass gatherings were prohibited for the next six months to a year. Ramadan food bazaars will not be allowed as long as the MCO is in place (World Health Organization, 2020).

Despite that, a lot of industries were affected by this change and one of it is the video production industry. The restrictions and unpredictable changes in the situation throughout this pandemic prevent video production to be done normally. There are many video content creators who shared experience during COVID-19 outbreak. For example, Studer (2021) decided that producing videos as quickly and cost-efficiently as possible was the priority for him. Storyhunter (2020) has reported that there was a 30%-40% decrease in the number of completed video projects in the second quarter of 2020. Black Box Productions (2021), on the other hand, has told that the video director gives instructions to the cameraman through a video call during the filming session. This can prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus. Meanwhile,

Coyle (n.d) has stated that they use smartphone seriously to make marketing videos for clients because it is easier and saves time.

This research will discuss on what alternatives methods and minor changes in how the video production process works during this pandemic. The methods that will be discussed in this research will cover on the standard video production process which includes the pre-production, production, and post-production methods that is altered due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This video production that is used as a reference is a documentary title “My Reason: For Coming to Malaysia” which was produced in 2021 during this event. It will detail on how the process of producing the documentary was able to be done despite the restrictions in place to perform the job smoothly.

This research started with the pre-production process which discussed how the topic was chosen, the location, schedule, talents, and the overall planning for the documentary. The production process has been detailed regarding the process of recording the documentary and what alternatives were used when faced with geological limitations. The post-production has talked about the editing process and how the finished production came to be.

Methodology

Basically, video production in the time of COVID-19 is the same as usual, starting with pre-production, production, and finally post-production (Rabiger, 2009; Fakhrul Anuar Aziz et al., 2019). But what makes it different is that the way to get information from the respondent and video shooting session has to be done by obeying to the standard operating procedures (SOP) set by the authorities. The methodology used in this project is summarized in Figure 1 below. The detail explanation about the methodology will be discussed in the next section.

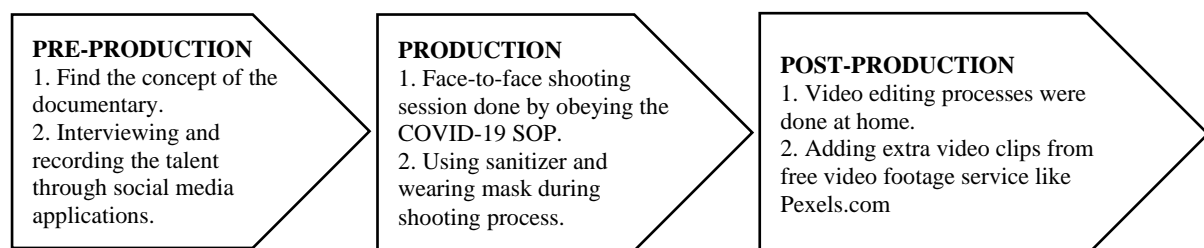


Figure 1: The Video Production Methodology During COVID-19

Pre-production

The first part of this process is coming up with the concept and idea for the documentary. The limitation is the fact that during this time, people are not allowed cross between states and districts, so the production must be limited within the radius or the district. In order to come up with a concept during this pandemic, it is important to take advantage of the surrounding area to the fullest because the geography will provide the inspiration for a content. For the documentary “My Reason: For Coming to Malaysia”, the idea came about because the surrounding area in Changlun, Kedah is known to have a lot of foreigners as it is close to a higher learning institution such as Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM) and is close to the border between Malaysia-Thailand. This fact provides the idea to explore regarding the life of foreigners coming to Malaysia. Since the people are within the permitted area of travel, this removes the aspect of geographical limitation.

The next part is finding the talents for the video production, there is not much limitation in this process other than obeying the COVID-19 guidelines. The talents were contacted through social media or other communication application such as WhatsApp and Telegram to limit face-to-face communication. Since the respondents live within the area, it makes things more convenient for the production process to run smoothly as travel can be reduced. In this documentary, three persons from different countries and background were chosen as the talent in the video and discussion were done virtually through WhatsApp.

In terms of planning the location, the location survey was done within 2 days to limit the amount of exposure and need to go outside, so it will reduce the risk of getting infected. During the visit at the shooting site, it is important to sanitize yourself and other crew members. Wearing a mask and keeping a considerate amount of distance with each other is also important. The “My Reason: For Coming to Malaysia” documentary was shoot in Taman Teja, Changlun, Kedah which was only 5 minutes away from home.

Regarding the shooting schedule, it is important to compact all the production work within a limited time frame such as 1 week. Because the shooting location is within the area, it is possible to shorten it even further as less traveling is required. For example, the referred documentary was recorded physically within the span of 2 days and 1 day was done virtually through video call.

Table 1 : Shooting Schedule of My Reason: For Coming to Malaysia

Day/Place	Description	Equipment
4/5/ 2021 (Taman Teja, Changlun, Kedah)	3.00 pm – Depart from home	Camera: Fujifilm T20
	3.05 pm – Arrive at Taman Teja	& Canon 50D
	3.10 pm – Do the recce at Youseff’s house	Tripod
	4.00 pm – Interview Youseff	Shotgun Mic
5/5/ 2021 (Taman Teja, Changlun, Kedah)	10.00 pm – Depart from home	Camera: Fujifilm T20
	10.05 pm – Arrive at Taman Teja	Tripod
	10.10 pm – Do the recce at Youseff’s house	Shotgun Mic
	11.00 pm – Interview Youseff	

21/5/ 2021 (Webex Video Call)	3.00 pm - Setting up meeting link 3.15 pm – Waiting for Jun Sangbae to join the video call 3.30 pm – Interview Jun Sangbae	Laptop Webcam
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Production

The production process will cover on the recording process of all the content materials for the documentary (Irving & Rea, 2006; Brindle, 2013). This will include the process of setting the shooting location, the recording process as well as the procedures taken place in order to make sure the risk of the COVID-19 virus is reduced as much as possible.

The first part is regarding setting the shooting location for the recording session, the first thing that must be done is to measure the temperature and sanitize all the crew members and talents that are involve with the production. Mask is also a mandatory throughout the production and only allowed to be removed if necessary. The production also limits physical contact as much as possible in order to prevent transmission of virus.



Figure 2: Setting Up The Shooting Location

During the recording session, the talent is the only one that is allowed to remove their mask. The recording session of the talent are packed within a limited time in order to reduce physical interaction as much as possible. The “My Reason: For Coming to Malaysia” documentary, the talents were the only one appearing within the scenes, so less physical interaction were done during the recording. Only two locations were used to record the talents and one recording session was conducted online through video call as the talent was not able to be reach physically. The application Cisco Webex Meeting was used to arrange the call and recording session.



Figure 3: Talent's Mask Was Only Removed For The Recording Session

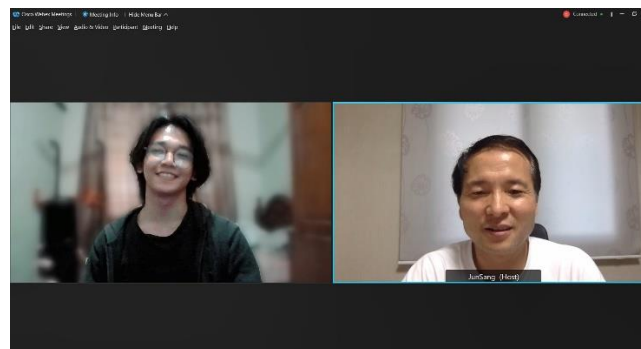


Figure 4: Cisco Webex Meeting Was Used As An Alternative For The Interview Session

Post-production

This part of the process is the only process that is able to be conducted normally as this process involves combining and editing all the footages into one complete video based on the planned storyboard. This process does not involve physical contact with other members as it is done virtually through e-mail and video call.

During this process, if it was discovered that some footages are required as a b-roll or images, those can be acquired through legal free royalty stock footages which can be used as an alternative so supplement the content. For this documentary, the website Pexels is used to provide royalty free stock footage for this documentary (Pexels, 2020). This will remove the need to go outside to physically shoot the footages.

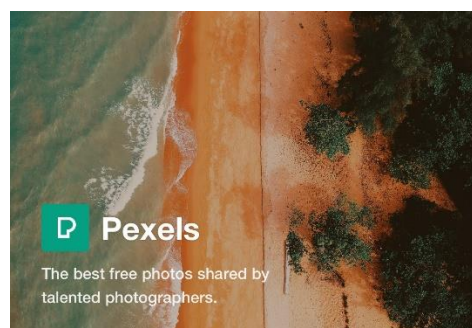


Figure 5: Pexels Is A Website That Provide Royalty Free Stock Footages

The complete video was sent for review virtually through platform such as Google Drive. The facilities provided by Google Drive can increase student motivation because it allows for more direct interaction between the teacher and the student (Antonio et al., 2020). Lastly, it has been published in the Youtube channel (Danny Mzar, 2021). Thus, those are the process involves in the post-production for this video documentary project.

Conclusion

These alternatives methods were the ones used for the pre-production, production, and post-production process for the video production documentary throughout the event of COVID-19 pandemic. Despite the multiple limitations caused by the pandemic, this shows that video production can still be done by analyzing multiple alternatives that can be taken to reduce the risk of contracting the virus for the production crew. Hopefully, the industry could continue to thrive despite the challenges faced during this event.

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