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Vlogging in Korea: From Film Student to YouTuber

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VLOGGING IN KOREA:
FROM FILM STUDENT TO YOUTUBER

A Capstone Project Presented in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree Bachelor of Arts

with Honors College Graduate Distinction at

Western Kentucky University

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*****

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I dedicate this thesis to my parents, Kahli Abercrombie, and Patrick and Terri Edwards. I thank you all for supporting me in my travels abroad and for allowing me this opportunity to explore within my area of study. I also dedicate this work to my loving husband, Hitsa Pham thank you for your patience during this stressful time.
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ABSTRACT

Video blogging, or vlogging, has become its own genre on YouTube in almost a “reality show” type atmosphere. This project aims to examine that world of video blogging from a personal level, not only as a film student, but also from the perspective of an aspiring businesswoman. The goals of this project are to take on the role of a vlogger, along with all its struggles, while exposing myself to a new culture in hopes of appealing to a certain demographic. It appears as though we have gone from a world relying on telegrams and postcards to becoming a society built on developing our social media presence and expanding our worldviews beyond our own backyards. Sites such as YouTube make it easy for someone on one hemisphere to connect to someone on another. Younger generations seem to cling to these sites as a way to not only stay connected, but in a way, live vicariously through the people they follow and the channels to which they subscribe. What were once the written words of bloggers who would share their experiences and concerns with their readers, has turned into video blogging those events in real time. Viewers want to feel closer to the ones to whom they subscribe to and desire to build more emotional connections with a relatable community of people.

Keywords: film, marketing, South Korea, study abroad, vlogging, YouTube
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INTRODUCTION AND PROJECT OVERVIEW

As a film student, I find it crucial to obtain new skills and ways of telling a story. I have had some previous experience with filming through weekly lab shoots and various opportunities to expand my knowledge of the film industry by partaking in local film festivals. Because of this I have a reasonably clear understanding of what to consider when editing and shooting a scene. Before this project, I hadn’t really had any chance to expand on my studies through personal research and development. I wanted to incorporate my knowledge into my own interests while still going through the same motions as I would in any film class, including hands-on experience with editing, directing, and cinematography. After receiving word that I would be able to spend a semester in Seoul, South Korea, I decided that this study abroad opportunity would be ideal in adapting my videography skills. However, this proved to be a challenge when I actually put my ideas into practice. With the lack of a syllabus and classmates this project demanded that I take on all the obstacles and behind-the-scenes requirements in order to produce my material. The ultimate question was, how do I take my skills as a film student and evolve them to benefit me in the world of vlogging, and how can those independently developed skills benefit me as a business woman and filmmaker?

Before going to Korea, I didn’t really feel that I had anything to share or any worthwhile experiences to record. I also hadn’t video blogged anything in my life before this project. My understanding of vlogging was basic. The reason I chose this platform (despite my limited grasp on how to vlog) is grounded in my own personal experience with watching other people vlog their travels. This inspired me to choose to vlog rather than using any other medium to provide visual representation that not only appealed to
my target audience, but that would enable me to build onto my knowledge of filmmaking. With vlogging I am recording my personal accounts of life in Korea through video instead of words. I can show rather than tell and I show life in the moment rather than life reflected on. Vlogging would also allow me to take full control of my own project and how my experiences were told. I wanted the videos to be purely myself and be what I chose them to be. The rawness of vlogging attracted me because of how unscripted and genuine they appear to be. The idea of vlogging resonated with my film side, but the concept of it really drew me in for the simple fact that people just don’t prefer to read anymore. Cisco, a company that deals with networking for the Internet, estimated that by 2020, 80% of their consumer traffic would come from video. On top of that, “91% of buyers prefer interactive visual content over traditional (text-based and static) media” (McCoy, 2017).

By incorporating visuals into my project I would be able to display my personal accounts and put a face and image into the minds of my audience, rather than forcing them to rely on their imagination in order to understand my experience. On top of that, I wanted to use visual communication in order to add a visual meaning to my words and provide a greater understanding between my audience and me. I wanted to be able to not just reflect on what I had experienced while in Korea, but also visually tell my story. Words are important, but images tend to make a greater impact on my generation. We were born to be technologically literate and reliant. This has made us prefer visual representations rather than text-based ones, which probably explains why YouTube currently has over 5 billion videos being viewed every day and 3.25 billion hours of YouTube videos being watched each month (Donchev, 2017). Because of this research,
personal observations, and my academic background as a film student I decided the best way to reach the masses was to use what I know. I wanted to tell a story with my camera and provide a relatable platform for my viewers. Not only that, but I wanted to be able to communicate with as many different kinds of people as I could. The ability of vlogs to communicate with others has even been noted by business leaders, as stated by CNN reporter Marc Foster-Pert: “YouTubers are in constant contact with their followers. Instant feedback and the close contact allows them to tailor output to what their fans want” (2015). I feel that video gives better insight into a person in that way, because you see who’s talking and the emotion they put behind their words. I hoped this project would also give me the opportunity to expand my knowledge as a professional. The business of film and how to self-promote myself were areas in which I wanted to increase my proficiency. Taking on this project independently, I saw an opportunity to develop new skills and elaborate on my preexisting ones.

Unfortunately, I didn’t know where to start or how others would receive my experiences. All I really knew in the beginning was that I needed a story and a camera. I have developed a new grasp on filming and storytelling through this project.

![Image](image.png)

Figure 1: [Click Image To View Video]
BUILDING MY CHANNEL

I decided in the beginning of my project that I would upload all the videos I recorded while in Seoul onto YouTube. I chose this as my platform because of its many features and advantages given the overall premise of my project. Natasha Price, writer at CREATORS.CO, argues “YouTube is becoming so popular because it's a way to express yourself. Whether it be watching content or creating content, YouTube brings you closer to people who are interested in the same things as you and gives you a creative outlet that you're interested in” (2016). I was able to create and design my own channel according to the feel I wanted to present. This was also something I noticed as a viewer on YouTube as well. I follow many different YouTubers and noticed how each was different from the other. This isn’t only in terms of content, but also in how they designed and formatted their channels.

Figure 2: (Abi Abroad, 2011)
What really inspired me from these two examples was how their personalities fit into their channels. The color choices and graphics, after watching many of their videos, reflect who they are. Abi Abroad, the YouTuber in Figure 2, has her channel centered on her accounts while traveling around many different countries. In one of Abi’s vlog she records her experience with drinking out of a glacier while visiting the Rocky Mountains.

Without even watching her channel you get this assumption that she must do something outdoorsy simply by looking at her background. Along with the name and subtext you can better grasp what kind of videos she produces. Megan Bowen, the YouTuber in Figure 3, lives in Korea and has a very animated personality in her videos. In the video below, Megan offers her personal recommendations of places to visit while in Korea.
Throughout this video she not only shows the places she suggests, but also gives background history on the different locations.

![Figure 5: Click Image To View Video](image)

The bright colors and bubble letters help give you a sense that she is fun and maybe a little silly. She as well has her name and subtext describing more about who she is and what subjects she focuses on.

I wanted that option to create my page with my own creative idea and for it to reflect my own personal likes and dislikes. One of the many advantages for choosing this platform was that I was able to use tags in order to make my videos more available to my target audience. While an uploading video is being processed, tags can be applied that allow you to add key words and phrases associated with your video. For instance, if you want to view dance videos you can type that into YouTube’s search bar and it will bring up videos that have included the word ‘dance’ as one of its tags. This helps your target audience by providing an easier way to find your videos. Building up my subscribers wasn’t my main intent, but having an active audience who could post comments and suggestions gave me an opportunity to collaborate with them. I was able to connect with people who had been to Seoul previously and they were able to give me suggestions of topics to cover or places to go. I wasn’t fully aware of this at the time, but by being able
to post these videos and see the comments from my viewers, I was learning how to network. Networking isn’t only a beneficial skill for those going into film, but in the world of business it’s necessary. There’s a saying that I have had repeated to me many times that it’s who know and not what you know that gets you farther in your career. A researcher on Networking from the University of Manchester explains that “this is where business relationships become paramount…Business is business, but people buy people” (Bham, 2012). There were people I would message through my channel who I knew I would never meet, but with whom I was able to form real connections. We shared experiences and I was able to hear truthfully what I could do to appeal to a wider audience.

I received many questions about studying in Korea [see Figure 6]. Through this I was able to connect on a more personal level with these commenters by giving them my own takes on their questions.
It also gave me clues into the topics and concerns they had. This particular video was about me deciding to study abroad in Korea and concerns about being abroad, however I did receive such comments as Cherie E’s asking questions regarding my ethnicity. Even though my video was concerning studying abroad I become aware of what my viewers were seeing. In a scholarly article concerning the effects of new media on the content users and creators, the author outlines that, “we know our selves through how we imagine others view and judge us…So this crisis of self-presentation in the face of infinite possible others throws the vlogger into a sometime tortuous but often enlightening process of self-analysis” (Wesch, 2009). It wasn’t just my message they were paying mind to, but how I presented myself as well. I became more self-aware, which wasn’t necessarily a bad thing, but it called attention to the fact that when people are watching my videos they are also watching me. It was easy for me to forget that I had seen myself before and never questioned myself in that manner, so to become more aware of how my audience watched my videos made me more conscious of how my topics are probably being received. This made me more conscious of my skills in filming and editing as both of these were areas I considered when developing my content for my audience. While I
was trying to maintain a positive presence on YouTube and continue building up my viewership, I was also aware of which areas I struggled or strived in. This sense of being consciously aware of myself enabled me to really hone in on those skills and develop them more professionally.

With my content, I noticed that when I touched on topics such as dating in Korea [see Figure 7], it wasn’t just about that dating in a foreign country but about a dark-skinned minority dating in a homogenous country.

This enabled me to answer the questions that I was certain my viewers had, but also how those topics affected me as a minority. I was coming into it with a different perspective and was able to stand out amongst the other YouTubers in Korea.
MARKETING MY CHANNEL

Building my channel and choosing my platform was simple. But the most stressful and ongoing decisions I had to make revolved around how to market myself. As a film student I am my product. People will be grateful for my education, but if I don’t present myself effectively, then I probably won’t be receiving the results that I want.

Many up and coming young film students have made names for themselves through their independent film work. Websites like KickStarter and Indiegogo enable these independent workers and others to market themselves on a wider platform to garner money and attention for their projects. On KickStarter’s main website they have estimated that over 10 million people around the world have used their platform to back their projects (Strickler, 2009). On top of that, it states over $3.4 billion has been pledged to projects using their website. That’s an enormous amount of people using this one network to build revenue. This is a great marketing tool for independent film students to gain word of their projects because they realize that without the funds and support, no matter how talented you may be, your project will probably fail. This is exhibited through the fact that out of the 10 million plus projects using KickStarter to back their projects, their website also claims that only 134,033 projects have been successfully funded. This implies that although millions of projects have a platform to raise awareness, they struggle to meet their financial needs through the website. Because of this, I understand that in order to set myself apart from those who fail at doing what I want to do, I must challenge myself in ways that encourage me to grow in my videography skills. Hence, my overall motivation to take on this project.
When someone tunes in to my one of my videos the first thing he or she sees is me. I am the product. When I send in my resume to a perspective job, what employers see are my credentials and previous education. What they are really trying to measure is myself, my skill set, and whether I am worth their time. This is the same for my channel.

![Figure 8](image1)

![Figure 9](image2)

(KalynKae, 2016)

I have to be able to present myself in such a way that people care what I have to say. Learning and adapting my presentation skills was crucial in obtaining more viewers.

I wouldn’t gain the attention I needed by being plain and uninteresting. I consider this an ongoing process because of the dynamic nature of vlogging. My topics change and my viewers change. Therefore, the demands change and the expectations of my videos are lifted as I upload more and more. This will also be a struggle I face as I enter into the film business as well. Viewers are what I want for a film. Without the viewers my film isn’t really serving a purpose. Just like my vlogging videos, I want to have an impact of those who watch my material. I can’t make a film that doesn’t consider my audience first. Maintaining this channel allowed me some firsthand experiences with learning how to market myself and the effect I need to have in order to grow my business.
As I continued uploading videos I began to notice what topics my subscribers liked and which ones generated more views.

Figure 10: [Click Image To View Video]

Figure 11: [Click Image To View Video]

(KalynKae, 2016)

What I noticed was the videos covering relationships and the different party atmospheres [see Figure 11] produced more viewership than videos about my academics and opinions about the culture [see Figure 10]. My subscribers were more interested in my personal life as a foreign woman in Korea than as an exchange student in Seoul.

My channel became my business. I ran it from the top down without looking to anyone to do it for me. One business article pertaining to the importance of video blogging discovered that “Studies have found that by 2017, 74 percent of all internet traffic will be video. And that could increase year after year. So, by starting to vlog now, your business can get ahead of the game” (Byrom, 2017). In a sense it felt as though each
time I uploaded a video, I was uploading my independent film. Everything about the videos and how my channel was run came purely from me and my own decisions. From lighting choices to editing techniques, it all sprung from my own interpretation of how I thought a channel should run. This also gave me the opportunity to build onto my existing knowledge.
EDITING DECISIONS

Luckily, before leaving for Seoul, I had taken an editing class and other introductory film production courses. Therefore, I wasn’t completely unaware of editing effects on an audience and how to incorporate them into my own work. Richard Chew, a well-known editor in the film industry, believes that “Like the cameraman, the editor is obliged to employ varying techniques at different places to serve the film” (2009). Chew further gives examples of how he uses these techniques to serve the projects he works on. For example, Chew describes that during more dramatic and emotional scenes he tends to leave much longer times in between his editing cuts. By doing so he is able to recreate intensity and the attention of his viewers. While during more action-packed moments he will use more abrupt and “visible” cuts so audiences feel the impact and the jerk of the motions. These are just a few ways that editing can get an audience involved in the film.

I am no professional editor like Chew, but I did realize the character editing adds to film and how those techniques can carry your audience. I had some previous hands on knowledge with such programs as AVID and Premier editing software. I knew from my many film labs that bad lighting meant a bad movie and purposeless editing was bad technique. However, being forced to edit my own videos without any supervision made the choices overwhelming sometimes. I was used to receiving immediate feedback on my editing skills, and to know whether a scene I set up was done properly. Not having my hand held through the process definitely gave me some independence in the sense that I was teaching myself. In some of my very first videos, I did very little editing. I would cut scenes out at appropriate times, but the fear of doing too much or not doing something right kept me from taking risks. Eventually I got to the point where I was more confident
with my editing program and decided to experiment with what I could. I began by adding pictures in places where I felt a visual example was needed. I also used these pictures to express my personality and make my videos more entertaining. Placing funny pictures at the proper time added some relief in the flow of my videos. In Figure 12, the topic definitely wasn’t about the film *Elf* (Favreau, 2003) but I personally felt that about that moment when discussing my cravings while in Korea that this picture was a great representation of that. Not only is somewhat accurate to how I felt at the moment, but it was humorous and recognizable to those who have seen the film.

Figure 12: [Click Image To View Video]

Figure 13: [Click Image To View Video]

(KalynKae, 2016)
On top of that, in certain videos in which I am speaking directly to the camera I felt that adding pictures gave the audience variation from constantly watching me. Their eyes were able to move from my one spot, and as I would watch the videos myself, it made the video feel more active rather than a lecture. Adding soft music in the back also helped relieve this tension I felt. Music not only was used to set a tone for my videos, but also added sound to spots where I would take a breath or be quiet for more than a second. The filler noise really added a relaxing element to my videos that just my voice couldn’t provide.
IMPACT OF LIGHTING

Lighting was also a big aspect that I had to consider when filming interior and exterior shots for my videos. As I mentioned before, without good lighting you’ll have a terrible video. I had to learn how to use light and to recognize what the shadows in my frame were doing to my images. Josef von Sternberg was quoted saying, “Each light furnishes its own shadow, and where a shadow is seen there must be a light. Shadow is mystery and light is clarity. Shadow conceals, light reveals. To know what to reveal and what to conceal and in what degree and how to do this is all there is to art” (Stine, 2016). The unfortunate part for me was that I wasn’t able to constantly control the lighting and shadows I would get. In film you can manipulate light and shape it to however you want it. With vlogging you can’t really prepare for how the lighting may be. I relied on natural lighting, but by doing so, I continually ran into moments where the sun had shifted or a building would eliminate my light. When I would edit, I would try to add filters that would increase the lighting and deal with the contrasts, but then I was risking my videos looking unnatural or too saturated. The problem required better planning in advance of what times of day to go out and record or forcing myself to pause while I would wait for the lighting to improve. Before producing these videos I didn’t really respect the impact lighting can have on an audience, whether I was shooting inside or out in the field. It wasn’t until I was producing my own videos and watching them over that I realized what kind of an influence lighting has on viewers, especially in interiors, where I learned to gain more control over the way light could be used. In Figure 14 there are some harsh shadows being cast onto the side of my face that weren’t exactly flattering to my skin tone, while my friend looks washed out in light and over-exposed to the point that the
intensity of the light isn’t complimenting her skin tone either. Instances like these made me become more aware of how light can either add to the ‘beautification’ of my video or make it appear way more amateur than I really am. Thankfully, the further into my project I got the better I got at lighting and I noticed how the presence or lack of light changed the quality of my videos. Figure 14 and Figure 15 look completely different in terms of video quality. The only difference between these two screenshots was the way I used natural lighting. The video in Figure 14 was done inside a tiny bedroom, which only had one small window. Figure 15 was taken from a video where I utilized the very large window facing the setting sun. These made for more direct light and eliminated a lot of the unwanted shadows. The light in Figure 15 is also way more flattering to my complexion because it adds a glow that doesn’t wash me out, but makes me pop against my background. In my opinion, the differences in lighting make Figure 15 look more professionally done than Figure 14, which is ultimately the goal when choosing the right lighting.

Figure 14: [Click Image To View Video] *August 24th, 2016
The lights set the mood and tone of a video and by unconsciously mis-lighting a scene, a filmmaker runs into the chance of creating the wrong effect for their audience.
FIELD PRODUCTION

Another challenging aspect of vlogging for me was learning how to shoot while outside. As inexperienced as I was at the time, I did not take into consideration all the challenges of filming out in the field would present to me. While it was also a goal of mine to maintain some control over how my videos looked this became more stressful once I decided to film on the streets of Seoul. I will examine several factors of field production in this section, and have also complied a tip sheet in the appendix below.

As mentioned before, lighting was a difficulty for me considering I used the natural light of the sun and the lights already provided to me in whatever location I was in. Lighting out in the field, however, required me to be more mindful of my surroundings. In a large and congested city such as Seoul I had to be aware of the buildings around me. Depending on the time of day in which I was filming, finding enough lighting could become a challenge. The tall buildings would block out a lot of my natural lighting if I wasn’t careful. If I happened to be filming in one spot for an extended amount of time I would have to take into consideration the setting of the sun.

Figure 16: [Click Image To View Video]
This presented other struggles for me to overcome as there were also shadows to watch out for. Once I found a good source of lighting I had to make sure there weren’t any possibilities for objects around me to cast hard shadows on my face. For example, Figures 16 and 17 were taken during the same day, but the times of day and the buildings around me made the difference in the quality of light I received. Figure 16 was done before noon and shot in between two really tall buildings. As a result, I have less light on my face and the shadows are really harsh around my nose and under my chin. On the other hand, Figure 17 was done a little past noon and I was standing in the middle of a tiny street facing the sun. Figure 17 makes me face more appealing to look at because I have even lighting with very few shadows covering the features of my face.

Another barrier for me to film around was the lack of control I had with my sound. Since I was filming overseas with the bare minimum of equipment, given my budget, there was very little I could do regarding how I captured sound. For those reasons I chose to only use the mic already provided inside the camera. While this was a budget-friendly way of going about sound it also made shooting outside even more of a hurdle to
get over. There were multiple times when I was filming that I would have to pause my discussions because a car was honking or a large group of people were walking by.

![College In Korea](image)

**Figure 18: [Click Image To View Video]**

I tried editing those obnoxious sounds out of my video whenever possible. As shown in Figure 18, at 1:21 into my video you hear the air conditioner turn off and I even pause at the sound during the video. Although I was filming inside of my dorm I still had background noises to worry about. I kept that in my vlog, despite editing a lot of the other instances out, for comedic factor. Otherwise I would’ve removed the unnecessary and unplanned for noise. Being outside surrounded by the city made sound something I struggled with constantly. By not utilizing an actual microphone this made capturing really good sound a challenge as I would sometimes have to be pretty close up on the camera in order for my voice to be the main sound on screen. In order to compensate for this I would try to correct any of those mistakes in my editing software by increasing the volume if I felt I were sounding too low. However, this presented another problem as it would also increase any other noises captured by the mic, which is something I never wanted to do. Dealing with my sound made the editing process last longer as I tried to come up with various ways to enhance the quality of my sound.
Another difficulty I had with filming out in the field was learning how to walk and film. This was troubling for me because when I wanted to walk around the city with my camera my footage would look unstable.

As shown in Figure 19, at 00:00:24 into this clip you can see an example of the challenge of moving on foot while filming. This clip was used as a transition but it was very “bouncy” because the camera would jerk with every step I took. This made having a steady shot nearly impossible to achieve. I would want to have those shots of me walking around with the camera showing my environment, but this footage would come out looking very jumpy and uneasy to watch at times. I wanted to have a lot more shots like the one above, but I also didn’t want my viewers getting motion sickness.

I had never shot anything outside before this experience and through it I learned a lot. I made mistakes and through some trial and error I was able to make my videos better as I progressed. At the time I didn’t really know how to improve my videos, but since then I have learned of ways to film out in the field to come back with more professional footage.
REFLECTION

After going through this experience there are several specific aspects in my filming techniques I feel could have been improved the quality of my YouTube videos. Since taking other film classes since this project and having sat down and discussed the issues I had while vlogging with my professors, I have discovered some tips and advice to pass along to those who wish to vlog out in the field someday. In order to provide a more professional opinion regarding this matter I interviewed Professor Ron DeMarse (Jan., 2018), who teaches in the journalism and broadcasting department at my university. Together, him and I were able to discover what aspects made my videos work and what techniques I maybe could’ve utilized in my videos in order to make them more appealing.

As mentioned previously, I struggled whenever I was trying to walk and capture footage of the city simultaneously. This resulted in the “bouncy” quality of some of my videos. It seemed no matter how steady I tried to my hands and my strides as I walked the footage would always come with just as much rockiness. When I expressed my frustrations with Professor DeMarse he suggested that in order to capture clearer scenic footage while out in the field that I should consider placing the camera on a tripod. By doing so, I can completely eliminate the bounciness from my videos and came back with higher quality videos. I know from personal experience with using tripods that while they do help one achieve more solid footage you also have to take into account the evenness of the ground. For example, if I were to place my tripod and camera on uneven ground then my video would likewise look uneven to my viewers. Regardless, by utilizing a tripod in my videos, especially when going out in the field trying to capture the city, it’s more beneficial to me and my viewers if my camera doesn’t move about so much.
My professor also suggested that when trying to show viewers my surroundings I should do so by the use of wide shots. These are referred to as establishing shots because they, “tell the audience where (and sometimes when) the next scene will occur” (McGregor, 2017). The same is true for some YouTube videos, especially travel videos. By clearly and widely showing your surrounding the audience can gain some context of where you are and the environment around you. Establishing shots can be important to your audience because they can encourage viewers to feel a certain way about your message and your video.

I also wanted to address my lack of control when lighting out in the field in contrast to interior shots that allowed for much more control if you’re willing to purchase the equipment to do so. As for my exterior shots, I almost never had control on where the light was going or how it was being registered from my face to the camera’s lens. However, Professor DeMarse recommended that in order to really gain the best lighting when only making use of natural lighting that I learn to understand my light. As I mentioned before, the sun would constantly shift on me during the day which would create harsher shadows and make my facial features harder to define. By being more aware of how the sun rises and sets I can position myself in more favorable positions to gain the best lighting for my face.

Lighting in itself can get very technical and depending on what camera you’re operating with there are features that can assist you in seeing how light is working in your video. For the sake of videos like mine though, it’s better to be aware of your surroundings. Standing next to large buildings will automatically raise some concerns if the sun is coming from behind or even to the side of that building because of the shadows.
being casted. Since leaving South Korea and continuing on with my YouTube channel, I have discovered the best kind of lighting that I get for my videos is more direct light positioned a little higher than my head. For example, Figure 20 below is from a more recent video of mine.

![Figure 20: [Click Image To View Video]](image)

While I still could not always manipulate my surroundings when filming exterior shots, I did learn to position my own body in such a way that I was getting the much needed light. In Figure 20 I tried to be aware that the light was up and to my right at the time. Therefore, my head is tilted up and looking to my right so I can have more direct sunlight. Again, this is a matter of not only comprehending how lighting shifts but also understanding how light registers on your skin tone. Since I have a darker complexion I require more light than someone who is of lighter complexion. Sometimes this might take some trial and error in order to really see how your face reacts to certain intensities of light.

When it came to post production and editing my videos I constantly felt like I should’ve invested in a more expensive editing software. Again, I did not begin my vlogging channel with any kind of big budget. I wanted to keep it as practical and financially reasonable as I could. I was only utilizing the free editing software provided
to me on my Apple computer – iMovie. This allowed me to do all the basic cuts and edits I needed to do at the time, but I still wondered if I should’ve been doing more. Professor DeMarse agreed that some editing software such as Adobe Premier Pro, Final Cut Pro, and AVID allow you to do much more with your edits. That doesn’t mean they are necessary though. In my college career as a film student I have used both Premier and AVID to edit short films. On the other hand, when making something for YouTube less can sometimes be more depending on who your target audience is. For instance, I was trying to appeal to people in college and those in their 20s wanting to travel. With that in mind, I didn’t need to have all these special effects because the thing that really needed to be special about my videos were the locations I shot at. Traveling to a different country is already special, so there was no need to add all these special green screen effects and overlays to my videos. The uniqueness came from my own personal stories and from the street footage that I was able to capture.

One of the most important things that I learned through doing these videos that I wished I had been more aware of was building self-confidence. This note has little to do with the actual production side and more to do with presentation. One thing that I noticed while reviewing my videos was how comfortable I started to get in front of the camera as time went on.

Figure 21: [Click Image To View Video]
Figure 21 was my very first video uploaded to my channel, while Figure 22 was four months into my South Korea trip. In the video attached to Figure 21 I noticed that my voice was shakier and I sounded a little unsure of myself. This entire video sounded almost as though I was giving a presentation to a class rather than trying to have a conversation with my viewers. For YouTube purposes you want the viewers to feel as though you are talking directly to them as a friend. It shouldn’t feel like this formal occasion in which you need notecards to get your points down. At least for my own personal preferences, I didn’t want to come off in this way. The video attached to Figure 22, however, is more relaxed. I am speaking from the heart and I am speaking to my viewers as longtime friends following me of this adventure. This video comes off as way more personable than Figure 21.

The reason I believe, and Professor DeMarse agreed, that confidence is so important is for the exact reason I mentioned above. YouTube allows for conversations between the viewers and the uploader, which is something very few other platforms really push for. YouTubers get notifications every time someone posts a comment to their video. Because of this, I feel that being able to present yourself in a more confident matter will encourage people to continue coming to your channel. Very few people are
coming to a travel channel to watch someone give a speech. Viewers want personality and realness.

Building self-confidence also enables you to produce the kind of work you want to create. I doubt anyone who creates a channel wants to be perceived as shy and unsure or feels that they lack direction for their videos. Being confident, to me, is allowing yourself to be who you really are. According to blogger Karl Gruber, “a self-confident person has a general sense of control of her own life, and can do what she wishes, plans and expects. Self-confidence means that even if things don't go your way, you still believe that eventually, somehow, some way, they will” (Gruber, 2015). When it comes to YouTube you really need to be confident in who you are. While I appreciate YouTube’s comment section it can also take ugly turns. Not everyone who watches your videos are going to like you, agree with you, or be rooting for you. Knowing who you are and presenting that on camera can save you a lot of moments of self-doubt when someone wants to question who you are. Don’t allow yourself to be subject to that kind of criticism by exposing yourself in a way that isn’t who you really are, or who you want others to view you as.
IMPACT AND CONCLUSION

One thing that I took away from vlogging was the power of influence. When I would make or edit these videos, I never really considered the extent to which they could influence my viewers’ personal decisions. Those who had either already been or desired to go to Korea were receiving my experience while in Seoul. People were viewing that side of the world from my eyes and my lens. What I presented to my viewers and how it was discussed had an impact on them. I wasn’t completely mindful of the implications that my videos would have on those who viewed them. It wasn’t until I started receiving personal messages on my channel [see Figure 23] that I become aware of my influence. I would gain a lot of messages regarding the country’s customs and how I adjusted.

Figure 23

(KalynKae, 2016)
My videos probably inspired them to go Seoul or raised more questions about their potential journeys. A film has an effect and by producing these vlogs, as small as my channel was, I still had an impact and that goes for movies as well. My viewers found me reliable and therefore were able to better identify with me and my messages. YouTube gave me and my viewers a platform to discuss our ideas and experiences without feelings of superiority. It felt more like an open forum for ideas to be exchanged without the stresses of formality. One researcher from the University of Twente in the Netherlands gathered that, “behaviors and beliefs are more contagious among those with shared social connections. Imitating others leads to social benefits, like bonding together on social groups” (Westenberg, 2016). This might explain why my opinion was sought after by some of my viewers. We were connected through a social website that allowed us to continuously have discussions without any barriers. This made me feel that what I was saying carried influence to those watching. Those not experiencing the same things as me took my word on certain topics, which then influenced how they formed their own opinions. Being aware of the messages you’re sending and recognizing that you’re making a significance impact with them is humbling. It’s a powerful feeling to be able to develop a story to send messages, while not always being sure of how the message is being received by your audience. Realizing this ability I had to share a story and for it to be perceived by others has made a difference in how I not only make films, but how I view them.

Vlogging for the first time as a film student allowed me to hone in on some of the techniques being discussed in my film classes. I feel that I benefited greatly from this project and I feel that some of those who viewed my videos also walked away with
something. Posting my vlogs on YouTube enabled me to maintain contact with my viewers through the comment sections of my vlogs. This form of communication enhanced my relationship with the audience to where there was a two way street of conversation constantly flowing. It also is more visually oriented and is less likely to bore someone as they are not only predominantly visual, but they also don’t require a lot time to get through. The average length of some of my videos was around 7 minutes per video. This is little to nothing compared to the time it takes to read information.

I do, however, recognize that while platforms for vloggers such as YouTube do have some benefits there are also some drawbacks to this form of communication. For instance, YouTube equips viewers with the ability to report videos. While this has been beneficial in stopping a lot of obscene and inappropriate content it also allows anyone with a YouTube channel to report any video. This is good for those who produce this kind of content, but again, anyone can report a video for any reason. As blogger Shailynn Krow mentions, “Users who flag videos are kept anonymous, but the user who submitted the video is still notified that their video has been flagged and is under review” (n.d.). This can become emotionally stressful to those who are abiding by YouTube’s rules and get reported because someone was being hateful. This doesn’t guarantee that your video will be removed, but it’s the fact that everyone who views a video has that much control over your content can be intimidating at times.

Another drawback to vlogging is worrying about the likability of your videos through the like and dislike options attached to each video. Based on a blog specific to marketing, “About 8 out of 10 people who are active on the internet on a regular basis
treat online reviews in the same perspective as a personal recommendation from their family or a close friend” (2015). With this in mind, YouTube becomes more of a popularity contest rather than a platform to have open and honest conversations. Having this looming fear of being disliked can keep content creators from uploading genuinely honest and thought-provoking videos. A lot of successful videos are from people who are the most entertaining rather than from those who provide the most information. Take big YouTuber Jake Paul for example. He has over 13 million subscribers as of recently.

Figure 24: [Click Image To View Video]

Some of his more recent videos include titles such as, “If This Gets 6.7 Millions Views, I’m Smashing My Lamborghini Windshield!!” (Feb., 2018), “I Taught My GF How To Play Fortnite In Her Bikini!?! (Feb., 2018), and “Underwear Yoga Challenge In The Snow!!!” (Feb., 2018). Needless to say he didn’t gain his multimillion of subscribers from uploading academic based or information heavy content.

As a viewer and content creator, I do appreciate how quickly I can gain information from watching YouTuber videos rather than having to sit for hours to get to the specific information I’m looking for. Yet, because of this availability to take in so much content as once it does make it harder to retain information as compared to reading a book. I personally don’t sit and watch a vlog every time. Sometimes I may play the
video and will be cleaning my room or getting dressed for school. My attention isn’t fully into what is happening in the video as my mind is when I am forced to sit and read a book.

Although I recognize the drawbacks of vlogging as a form of communication I still feel that it is irreplaceable in today’s society. With YouTubers such as Jake Paul being able to acquire millions of subscribers that means there are obviously viewers out there who find value in content creators. Visual content whether it be in the form of a vlog, film, or television broadcast is very popular in this day and age and is constantly happening around us every day.

I was grateful for the opportunity to take on this project. I feel that I was able to grow not only professionally, but also personally. I acquired better filmmaking skills, but I’ve also developed a deeper respect for the other departments that help make movies or films. Most people give sole credit to directors and producers, but by editing and lighting my own videos, I now have a better understanding of the significance such elements serve a film. I know that the skills and techniques that I have gained through this project, such as an editing style, understanding lighting composition, and dealing with marketing myself better, will continue to help me in all aspects of my future filmmaking career.
APPENDIX

Field Production Tip Sheet:

- Familiarize yourself with your camera’s buttons and options.
- Utilize the camera’s White Balance option when lighting scene.
- Scout the location before shooting.
- Understand how sound travels in the location. Be aware of echoes or background noise.
- Plan your coverage if possible.
- Don’t be afraid to ask for assistance with filming.
- Learn to build confidence with speaking in front of the camera.
- Be mindful of respecting the privacy of those around.
- Be careful to not show personal information (home addresses, overly-personal stories, exposing young children, etc.)
- Consider buying a tri-pod.
- Give yourself time to edit.
- Don’t be afraid to review all your footage for the best clips.
- Don’t force yourself to use every clip you’ve recorded.
- Learn to narrow down your topic.
- Experiment with different editing techniques and develop those you struggle with.
- Consider buying a backup disk to save your videos.
- Market your channel so that it is true to who you are and what you want your channel to be about.
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