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Master's thesis

Academic Year 2014

**Using Documentary to Promote Local Genuine
Lifestyle to Foreigners – The Case Study of
Promoting Japanese Culture and Education to
People Living in Vietnam**

Graduate School of Media Design,
Keio University

Tran Thanh Thuy

A Master's Thesis

submitted to Graduate School of Media Design, Keio University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER of Media Design

Tran Thanh Thuy

Thesis Committee:

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Abstract of Master's Thesis of Academic Year 2014

Using Documentary to Promote Local Genuine Lifestyle to Foreigners – The Case Study of Promoting Japanese Culture and Education to People Living in Vietnam

Category: Design

Summary

The introduction of Web 2.0 and social media has brought human communication to another level. Technology advancement allows people to instantly access to the Internet, receive information from various sources and interact with each other. Influenced by that trend, the way documentary filmmakers identify their audience and promote their films has also changed. In addition, the commercialization of video equipment allows home digital video producers to create high quality contents. The challenge for amateur producers now is how to make good documentaries given all the advantages.

This paper will discuss the production of documentary by amateur filmmaker to promote local culture. The research was carried out based on the case study of promoting Japanese culture to people in Vietnam. It focuses on the familiarity factor and other key aspects for a short documentary to be successful when it is distributed on social media.

Keywords:

Documentary, Social Network, Culture Promotion, Japanese Culture, Vietnamese

Graduate School of Media Design, Keio University

Tran Thanh Thuy

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background

1.1.1 Cool Japan Strategy

Many countries in the world strategize for culture and education promotion. Japanese government is not an exception with various projects initiated in order to bring a “cool” image of Japan to the world. “Cool Japan” is a national strategy adopted by Japanese government to promote Japanese pop culture worldwide. It refers to making use of soft power instead of hard power to improve Japanese influence. The term “Cool Japan” was first initiated in 2002 by Douglas Mcgray in an article entitled “Japan's Gross National”. The journalist listed several examples of Japan soft power such as consumer electronics, architecture to fashion, food and art (Mcgray 2002).¹ Soft power, as defined by Oxford Dictionary, is “a persuasive approach to international relations, typically involving the use of economic or cultural influence” (Oxford University Press n.d.)². Soft power is powerful in the new era, as opposed to hard power which mostly involves the use of military power. With regards to Japan situation, due to historical reason, hard power is not a choice, so the focus is in soft power. Japanese government adopted the strategy “Cool Japan” in 2012 together with a funding of 500 mil USD (Hori 2013)³. They focuses on six sectors namely creative content, apparel, craft, food, tourism and housing.

¹ Mcgray, Douglas. *Japan's Gross National Cool*. May 1, 2002.

² Oxford University Press. *soft power*.
<http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/soft-power> (accessed May 23, 2014).

³ Yoshito Hori. “*Cool Japan is Hot!*” last modified October 30, 2013,
<http://e.globis.jp/article/000305.html>

Japan government has been interested in Southeast Asian countries, especially countries in Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). The economic cooperation between ASEAN countries and Japan has been prosperous and Japanese companies have been investing in ASEAN market for many purposes such as manufacturing or trading. According to Dr. Kitti Limskul, Japan has used ASEAN economies as “destination of her industrial relocations” (Limskul 2003).⁴ In addition, as part of the foreign policy objective, Japan also wants to develop a good diplomatic relationship with ASEAN, especially with the use of soft power. We can look at recent moves by Japanese government in maintaining the relationship. For example, in order to test the perception of ASEAN people towards Japan, Japan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs conducted opinion poll surveys in six ASEAN countries in February and March 2008. Japan’s image in these countries proved to be highly positive. The survey results indicated that 93 percent of respondents in Southeast Asia have a positive image towards Japan (Nakamura 2013)⁵. However, from the same surveys, Japanese government found out that ASEAN people did not consider Japan as an important partner of their countries as opposed to China. Because of this unsettling result, Japanese government is taking effort to assume leadership role. In the paper discussing about Japan’s new public diplomacy, Nakamura suggests utilizing manga and anime as the starting point to further interest in Japan. However, pop culture alone might not be sufficient to develop a fresh new image about Japan. One reason is that people might find these

⁴ Dr. Kitti Limskul. “*Japan-ASEAN Comprehensive Economic Partnership*”. The International Symposium To Commemorate the New Start of JETRO, November 26, 2003. <https://www.jetro.go.jp/en/reports/survey/epa/sympo0311/s2-2s.pdf> (accessed May 24, 2014).

⁵ Nakamura, Toshiya. "Japan’s New Public Diplomacy: Coolness in Foreign Policy Objectives." *Studies in Media and Society*. March 2013. <http://www.lang.nagoya-u.ac.jp/media/public/mediasociety/vol5/> (accessed May 25, 2014).

sub-cultures rather “infantile and frivolous, and therefore unappealing” (Lam 2007)⁶.

The year 2013 marks 40 years anniversary of ASEAN-Japan relations. The relationships between Japan and ASEAN members have been strengthening. In particular, Japanese culture, such as pop music, anime and manga, has been explosively popular in ASEAN countries. Japanese government has offered several initiatives to reinforce diplomatic relation of Japan and ASEAN. For example, in a visit to ASEAN countries in 2013, Japan’s Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said that one of the main objectives is to “carry out more active exchanges of young people responsible for the future” and to invite ASEAN youth to Japan through the ‘JENESYS 2.0 Programme’, a program offers youth participants the opportunity to visit various regions in Japan (Yoshino 2013)⁷. The goal is to promote the understanding of Japanese values and the international youth are expected to bring back what they learn in Japan and foster a mutually beneficial relationship between their countries and Japan.

1.1.2 The Trend of Vietnamese People coming to Japan

In June 2013, Japanese government decided to ease visa requirement to some Southeast Asian countries in an effort to boost tourism from those fast-growing countries. Together with the Philippines, Vietnam will be able

⁶ Lam, Peng Er. *Japan’s Quest for “Soft Power”: Attraction and Limitation*. East Asia (2007) 24:349-363.
http://corneredangel.com/amwess/papers/Japan_soft_power.pdf (accessed May 25, 2014).

⁷ Yoshino, Veena. *Government of Japan - Public Relations Office*. November 1, 2013.
http://www.gov-online.go.jp/eng/publicity/book/hlj/html/201311/201311_01_en.html (accessed May 25, 2014).

to enjoy multi-entry visa to Japan. Currently, the Japanese government is considering another bill about waving visa for Vietnamese. This news brings lots of hope and excitement to Vietnamese people, especially for those who want to visit Japan and go to Japan for business or study purpose. In fact, the number of Vietnamese students coming to Japan to study has been increasing even before the visa requirement was eased. Statistics from Japan's Ministry of Justice shows that, as of December 2013, there are 21,231 Vietnamese in Japan under student visa. The same data as of December 2012 is only 8,811, which means the number is nearly 2.5 times bigger after 1 year (Ministry of Justice - Japan 2014).⁸ Counseling Service for Vietnamese people going to Japan is booming in Vietnam. In Japan, Japanese companies also pay attention to providing various services for Vietnamese, such as real estate agency or career service catered specially for Vietnamese. However, information provision is still limited. Vietnamese people who lack the ability to access information in foreign language or the necessary channel to ask for information are often not fully aware of the challenge and opportunity when going to Japan. Some of them do not have enough survival skill to live in a foreign country, especially in a society which is much more developed than their hometown, resulting in underperformance. This phenomenon encourage the author to stimulate idea to improve the status quo.

1.2 The Hakuhodo Project

Keio Media Design, in particular Policy Project, is working towards promoting Japanese culture to the world through various activities, such as promoting Japanese music artist, promoting Japanese fashion and Japanese

⁸ Ministry of Justice - Japan. "Alien Statistics." *Japan's Ministry of Justice*. June 1, 2014.

http://www.moj.go.jp/housei/toukei/toukei_ichiran_touroku.html (accessed June 12, 2014).

local culture to overseas. Policy Project usually coordinates with companies, organizations and Japanese government to implement these initiatives. One of the projects is carried out together with Hakuhodo, a marketing agency, to do research on Southeast Asian countries. Therefore, students from ASEAN countries are welcomed to the project because they have advantage of language ability and local culture understanding. Our team, which comprises of several students from Indonesia, Vietnam and Thailand, is given the task of researching on the potential of Japanese content in respective Southeast Asian countries. As discussed above, after the wave of Japanese companies looking into ASEAN, there is a similar trend from the Japanese creative industry. The marketing agency wants to see if Japanese contents such as printed media, anime, television (TV) show and others are marketable in Southeast Asia.

1.2.1 Fieldwork in Vietnam

As part of the coordinated project between Policy Project and Hakuhodo Research Institute, I was in charge of doing research on Vietnam market and conducting fieldwork. The fieldwork took place both in Vietnam and Japan. In Vietnam, the major task was to videotape one typical day of young Vietnamese people. This type of fieldwork is called personal observation. Marketing companies find this observation study unique and very effective in understanding consumer behavior. By looking directly at how people interact with media tools, what kinds of content they consume, their daily transportation, marketing experts can tell a lot about the lifestyle of local people, and from there, see how they can introduce Japanese content. To conduct this research, I went back Vietnam and looked for potential candidates.

The qualifications to select candidate were as follows:

- Young people with age range from 15 to 27 years old.
- They have frequent access to Internet and are active in social media.

- If they have interest in Japanese content, that will be a plus.

I managed to have 3 subjects to observe: the first is a female, 20-year-old student, the second is a female, 26-year-old media office worker, and the third is a male, 26-year-old information technology (IT) personnel working for a start-up company.

From the observation, I notice the following characteristics from the subjects' daily routine and behavior. I discuss about transportation, Internet access means, favorite media tools and contents. I also touch on their favorite Japanese contents if any.

Transportation: In Vietnam, the most popular transportation mean for young adult is motorbike. The 2 office workers that I observed used motorbike to commute to work for its convenience. However, during rush hour time, it still took them about 30 to 45 minutes to get to work. The student subject used bus to commute. Bus is a cheap mean of transportation and quite safe although not as convenient as motorbike.

Internet access: All 3 of them have Internet access at home. So I would say they have easy access to the Internet. The female office worker even has a tablet to read book and surf the Internet.

Social media tool: All of them use Facebook as their main social network site. In Vietnam, Facebook has become the most widely used social network. With the fact that smartphone is becoming cheaper and cheaper, 3G subscription is available with affordable price, more and more Vietnamese people use Facebook frequently in their daily life. The 2 office workers opened Facebook when they first wake up, and before going to bed. They use Facebook to communicate with friends, to get updates on hot topics. The male subject also uses video streaming sites such as YouTube very often to look for entertainment contents. The student subject usually checks a forum cum news portal for youth which provides information on showbiz and movie

online streaming. This forum and news portal is very popular among youth of 15 to 22 years old. I will analyze more about this forum in later part.

Japanese content: The male subject can be called an “otaku” (people who are obsessive with Japanese pop culture aspects such as manga and anime) because he knows and loves many Japanese sub-cultures such as manga, anime, vocaloid (a singing voice synthesis technology & software, developed by Yamaha Corporation, which generates realistic human vocals through its “singer libraries” and “synthesis engine”) (Nippon Pop Culture Navigator 2013).⁹ He does not know Japanese but knows where to find Japanese contents. For example, during observation, he went into Niconico (a Japanese video streaming site similar to YouTube); he also checked for updates on mangareader.net for the most updated manga. The male subject likes to attend Japanese festivals in Vietnam where all the Vietnamese otakus gather, mostly to showcase Japanese-style cosplay, the convention in which people dress up and pretending to be fictional character (Rogic 2003).¹⁰ However, he still lacks general knowledge about Japanese common culture and lifestyle.

During the field work in Vietnam, I also met up with young people in Vietnam and did qualitative survey on what are their impressions on Japan. 3 groups were chosen to do qualitative survey. The first one is a group of Vietnamese otakus who already have knowledge about Japanese pop culture such as manga, music and cosplay. The second group is a group of 1st year students of Hanoi Foreign Trade University (FTU) who are around 19-20

⁹ Nippon Pop Culture Navigator. *Vocaloid*. 2013.
http://web-japan.org/pop_culture/vocaloid.html (accessed June 12, 2014).

¹⁰ Rogic, Mario. *cosplay*. January 15, 2003.
<http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=cosplay> (accessed June 12, 2014).

years old. They have frequent access to various media tools such as TV and Internet. The 3rd group is a random group, with people from different backgrounds who happened to stay in the same place. They were given the same questions, as follows:

- What is your impression about Japan?
- Do you like Japanese culture and why?
- Do you like to see any of Japanese products in Vietnam, especially entertainment content?

For the “otaku” group

They are students from 15 to 20, very knowledgeable about Japan Pop culture. Most of them have passion for cosplay and usually join all Japanese festivals in the city. What most substantial fact observed is most of them are very artistic and they love manga and cosplay because of the artistic aspect of the activities. They can design cosplay costume, do makeup and love appearing in nice cosplay costume for photography. One notable point is their willingness to spend considerable amount for a costume ordered from overseas, or for concert of their favorite artists. It seems their love for Japan pop culture is huge and unconditional. However, the community is quite small and their interest is limited to typical Japan culture only.

For the student group and mixed group

Since they are more or less have neutral interest in Japanese content, their answers relatively similar to each other. Surprisingly, in contrast to the “otaku” group, the student and mixed group are more interested in the general culture and lifestyle of Japan. For example, they know and like Japanese traditional costume, Kimono; they love Japanese food. Some of them were born in the time that Japanese comics (manga) was very popular (in mid 1990s), therefore they learnt about the culture signature through manga. They are not the so-called fan of Japanese pop culture. They do love Japanese pop culture but not to the extend that they want to explore more and buy related products. They are not the so-called fan of Japanese pop

culture. They are also not willing to spend considerable amount of money for media contents. One said that she is willing to spend about 100 JPY for a manga, and that is all.

1.2.2 Research on Vietnam's Media Industry

Apart from fieldwork in Japan, I also conducted research on the Internet to find out more about Vietnam's media industry and any potential opportunity for Japanese contents. A case study of the penetration of Korean pop culture in Vietnam is also discussed for comparison purpose.

In Vietnam, the very channels for young people to spread the words are usually Facebook, forum, chat application and news website. Surprisingly, there are very few platforms to share Japanese contents. I look at one typical example, a website cum forum named kitesvn.com. It shares articles about K-pop (Korean pop), J-pop (Japanese pop), C-pop (Chinese pop) and T-pop (Thai pop). I go into the forum discussion and do a quick comparison on the number of topics/ contents actively discussed in 2 sections K-pop and J-pop. The discussion on Korean contents is much more active and huge in size. For Korean showbiz news, there are 1,275 topics while Japanese showbiz news has only 3 topics. Korean drama section has 315 topics and Japanese drama section has 9 topics. The list goes on.

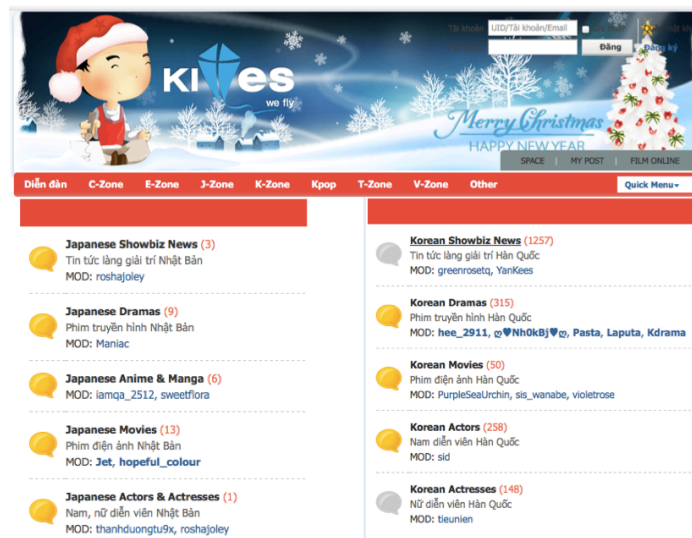


Figure 1-1: Kites Forum and number of topic discussion about Japanese and Korean contents: <http://kitesvn.com/forum.php>

Popular news platforms that youth use are Zing.vn, Kenh14.vn, ione.vnexpress.net. Kenh14.vn is a news portal that draws the attention of many Vietnamese youth. On the day I accessed the site, most of the front page's contents were about K-pop, ranging from Korean drama, K-pop music to Korean showbiz updates. Discussion on these topics is very active. So overall, the youth's impression on Korean popular culture is much stronger compared to Japanese popular culture.

From the research on entertainment content in Vietnam, it can be seen that K-pop is really dominant among young people of the age 15-22. There was a day I watched TV from morning until late afternoon. surprisingly, the channel broadcasted Korean dramas nearly the whole day, from one to another. Vietnamese TV series is not welcomed much by local people, whereas foreign drama is preferable due to better quality. Among the popular foreign dramas are Chinese drama and Korean drama. While most Chinese dramas broadcasted are about martial art, Korean dramas are usually of 2 genres: soap opera mainly for housewives who can spend lots of time watching in the morning or afternoon, and drama targeting young people, usually featuring K-pop idols.

Korea and Japan have similar culture. Both countries want to export their pop culture to Asian countries and expose their soft power to another level. However, as opposed to Korea, Japan has not been successful in Vietnam.

While the impression of Japanese culture in Vietnam remains subtle, the influence of Korean culture, especially pop culture, is every strong. According to a cultural-sociology survey done by Van Ha, there are 78% of participants said they like Korean culture, while only 22% said “no” (Van 2012)¹¹. The influence is seen most notably in youth with age from 15 to 22. This is because they are still students, being influenced by their peers and have yet to develop their own point of view. The areas which attract them the most are TV drama, fashion, game and food. According to Van Ha, Korean drama plays the most important part which leads to the influence of other area such as fashion and food.

The use of soft power to gain favorable feelings for a culture was discussed in a symposium about public diplomacy among three countries Japan, Korea, and China. Hitotsubashi University Associate Professor Kwong Yongseok confirmed that, using soft power alone, such as promoting Korean drama and K-pop music, in the target country, is not enough to change the stance of the local people sustainably: “unless the people of the country themselves have a certain appeal, the country itself will not be seen as appealing by others” (Motohiro 2014).¹² That means the role of a good diplomatic

¹¹ Van, Ha Thanh. "Reception of Vietnamese young people for Korean Culture - Some viewpoints from a cultural - sociology survey." *International Conference on Vietnam - Korea Relationship in the past, the present and the future*. Ho Chi Minh: Social Sciences and Humanities University, 2012. 1-10.

¹² Motohiro, Kondō. "The Age of Public Diplomacy: Soft Power Game in East Asia." *nippon.com*. February 14, 2014. <http://www.nippon.com/en/features/c00721/> (accessed May 25, 2014).

relationship between 2 countries is significant in promoting culture effectively.

In the same symposium, Kobe International University Professor Mao Danqing talked about his experiences editing Zhiri (Know Japan), a magazine that aims to present Japanese culture to Chinese readers. The magazine, purely a business proposition, was launched in 2011, at the height of anti-Japanese sentiment in China. Mao pointed to two reasons why his magazine Zhiri had sold well, despite its limited resources. The first reason is Chinese people have a demand to improve their knowledge about Japan. The second reason is because the magazine is created by Chinese people and so, it provides information that matches Chinese people's interest (Motohiro 2014).¹³ According to him, "it was necessary for magazine's editors to pay attention to how knowledge about Japan could benefit their readers in China".

As recognized from my fieldwork and research, although Vietnamese people do not know significantly about Japan, the situation can be considered as an opportunity. Given the enhanced diplomatic relationship between Japan and Vietnam, the demand of people going to Japan as well as people's curiosity about the country, I believe the need for content about Japan would be abundant.

1.3 Personal Inspiration: Connecting Japan and Vietnam through Documentary

I came to Japan in 2012, just one month before my enrollment at Keio Media Design school. As a foreigner, life in Japan is so much different from what I used to have. However, I quickly fell in love with Japanese culture and lifestyle as soon as I explored the surrounding environment. I realize that I fall in love with the trivial things in Japan even more than those

¹³ Ibid

significant cultural symbols such as Japanese cuisine, traditional costume kimono or otaku fashion. The things which attract me the most turn out to be local simple food such as fresh tofu, fermented vegetables, the way that supermarkets attract customer with loud recorded promotion voice, the small streets with so many shops and people passing by quickly. I also love the way Japanese people decorate their house, the way they plant flowers and take care of their pets; I love how Japan balance out as a modernized society and a traditional culture preserved for thousands of years.

I am a frequently user of social media. From what I observe on social media, Vietnamese people are so much inspired by historical and cultural stories of Japan. They keep sharing, discussing and praising it. People in Vietnam say that Vietnam and Japan have a similar values and they use Japan as a good example for Vietnamese to learn and follow. However, my fieldwork's result shows that in Vietnam, Japanese content from mainstream media is still far from enough to give people a clear picture of what is Japanese genuine lifestyle. The general youth still find Japan somewhat unfamiliar. On the other hand, since Japanese content providers are very reluctant to sell their content with affordable price, it is very hard for mainstream media company in Vietnam to obtain official Japanese content to broadcast.

Fortunately, together with the rise of Internet penetration and an increasing number of smartphone users, Vietnamese people can reach out to the world easier than before. I asked myself why not creating a new channel and a new kind of content to promote Japanese culture, in a very genuine and intimate way, so that the content is more approachable to Vietnamese youth. The observation fieldwork in Vietnam inspired me so much in this respect because captured videos truly reflected the subjects' activities in motion picture, so it is very informative, visualized and interesting. Linking the observation activity with my main goal of promoting Japanese culture, I was thinking about making video of ordinary people in their daily lives as a way to introduce the local lifestyle in a genuining way. This type of film can

tell the fact in the most truthful way. In the film, I want to feature typical lifestyle of foreigners in Japan, in particular, Vietnamese people. I believe this will make the documentary more approachable by foreigner. People tend to seek stories that have some personal relevance, because those stories help them feel about the connection with someone who is distant geographically, culturally and linguistically. Since this is an online content, I decided to make short documentary to make the message concise. That was how my idea got started.

1.4 Research Objective

My goal is to provide Vietnamese youth with a genuine image of Japanese lifestyle. For people interested in going to Japan, the content will be helpful for their preparation. For those who have not known much about Japan, I hope that my content will help them understand better about Japan and even inspire them to explore it. I believe that it is very effective to promote local culture and lifestyle if we feature ordinary people's lives, especially if featured subject is from the same country as the audience. My research objective is to create documentaries of Vietnamese people living in Japan to promote Japan education and lifestyle to people back in Vietnam. By using Vietnamese subject, people in Vietnam can feel and sense the familiarity and similarity, thus, be more interested in the stories and understand better about Japanese culture.

In fact, a similar approach has been employed by Japanese government to promote its creative industry. The initiative is called "CoFesta Ambassador". CoFesta, is short for "Japan International Contents Festival", the world largest comprehensive contents festival (CoFesta Ambassadors Administration Office 2013).¹⁴ The events are held to connect Japanese

¹⁴ CoFesta Ambassadors Administration Office. *What is CoFesta?*. 2013. <http://www.cofesta.jp/ambassador/en/> (accessed May 22, 2014).

contents industry such as games, animation, manga, character, broadcast, music and film. To promote the Japanese contents industry further to overseas, the government decided to recruit the so-called CoFesta Ambassadors who are foreigners living in Japan and are fans of Japanese contents. They are expected to acquire a profound understanding of Japanese culture and contents, report about CoFesta ceremony and interact with guests. They will be responsible to evaluate and promote the popularity of the contents to foreign companies and market, especially their home countries. The Japanese government believes that by engaging foreigners in the promotion activities, they can reach out to more potential clients. According to Akira Kotsugai, an official in charge of getting out the word on CoFesta, the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) selected students who would be good at spreading information, especially to active users of social networks such as Twitter and Facebook, to strengthen the recognition of CoFesta (Nagata 2013).¹⁵ However, CoFesta still has limitation. For example, some feedbacks from student ambassadors reveal that Japanese content distributors are still shy in promoting their products abroad. One said the CoFesta events were “too business-oriented and not geared toward consumer demand” (Nagata 2013). METI hopes, by engaging young and enthusiastic student ambassadors, the event would have a fresher and more effective approach in selling Japanese contents.

¹⁵ Nagata, Kazuaki. *METI taps foreign students as content envoys*. January 16, 2013.
<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/01/16/national/meti-taps-foreign-students-as-content-envoys/#.U5kmAtyrGDh> (accessed May 26, 2014).



Welcome International Students Living in Japan!

Figure 1-2: Home page of CoFesta Ambassador website (English version):

<http://www.cofesta.jp/ambassador/en/>

While CoFesta focuses on creative industry and promoting pop culture content made by mainstream media, this research aims at promoting local genuine culture using documentary created by ordinary people and distributed via social media. I believe this approach is more applicable and more cost effective to implement in Vietnam.

For long term, I hope my channel will be a useful source of information and reference for people when they want to know more about Japan. My ambition is to be able to connect the two countries together effectively and positively.

When I think of what Japan has given me during my 2 years here, I am motivated to pay it forwards and hope that my project will make more and more Vietnamese people to love Japan just like me.

1.5 Thesis Overview

The thesis will be structured as follow:

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Chapter 2 discusses about past researches and related projects. There are three main areas to be discussed: documentary production in the digital era, the role of social media in communication and education, and existing related projects.

How documentary production in the new era differs from the conventional way? To understand that, it is important to know what is the conventional way of making documentary and how it changes because of the arrival of the social media. Also, what are the factors that contribute to an interesting documentary? From there, this paper discusses about the value of personal stories and the role of documentary to reflect reality.

Also, the thesis looks into the concept of Web 2.0 and social media and their importance because social media will be the emerging platform to distribute documentary. Similar documentary projects posted on social network will be studied to determine any lesson learnt.

Chapter 3: Concept and Method

A new approach to make documentary will be proposed to serve the need of target audience. Concept is developed through a pre-design research which gave a primary idea of which factors to create appealing content. From there, the author suggested key elements to make successful documentaries. The documentary project will aim towards a specified group of audience who have similar interest and concern and want to get more information regarding the interest or concern. The audience are of young age and have access to Internet and social network. The design factor will be for a documentary to be distributed on social media.

Chapter 4: Experiment and Evaluation

Chapter 4 will explain the process of 3 rounds of prototype testing and the feedback received from audience. It is important to review feedbacks from each testing phase so that the knowledge can be applied to the next testing phase.

Chapter 5: Conclusion and Recommendation for Further Research

Based on the result of this thesis, chapter 5 will discuss potential topics to be done in the future.

2 Literature Review & Related Works

2.1 What is Social Media

To understand how documentary making in the new era differs from the conventional way, it is important to look at the current available platforms to distribute documentary. Aside from mainstream distribution channels such as TV broadcasters, film festival, theater, DVD distribution companies, social media also plays a huge role (The Journey Of Documentary n.d.).¹⁶ It is obvious to realize that, if the filmmaker wants to aim at young audience, understanding the concepts of social media and its related properties is very crucial to develop effective distribution plan via this channel.

The young generation, especially people born after the Millennial Generation, are very tech-savvy and highly engaged. They were born in the era of technology advancement and Internet boom. Therefore, they can gather information from a variety of sources and are quick to identify false messaging. They are the most connected group in the world with social media built around them.

Social media is defined by Kaplan and Haenlein as "a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological

¹⁶ The Journey Of Documentary. *Self Distribution*. Atalanti Dionysus. <http://www.thejourneyofdocumentary.com/guide/self-distribution/> (accessed 6 12, 2014)

foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content" (Michael Haenlein and Andreas M. Kaplan 2010)¹⁷.

Kaplan and Haenlein classified a scheme of seven different types of social media:

- Collaborative projects (for example: Wikipedia)
- Blogs and microblogs (for example: Twitter)
- Content communities (for example: YouTube and DailyMotion)
- Social news networking sites (for example: Digg and Leakernet)
- Social networking sites (for example: Facebook)
- Virtual game-worlds (for example: World of Warcraft)
- Virtual social worlds (for example: Second Life)

Web 2.0 can help individual, business as well as educational institution to take advantage of a free, open and easy-to-access communication tool. Web 2.0 is defined by Dictionary.com as “a second generation in the development of the World Wide Web, conceived as a combination of concepts, trends, and technologies that focus on user collaboration, sharing of user-generated content, and social networking” (web 2.0. Dictionary.com n.d.).¹⁸

One might wonder how to distinguish among social media, social networking sites and Web 2.0 and whether they all refer to the same subject. Tanya Joosten defines social media as “Web 2.0 applications that have the

¹⁷ Michael Haenlein, and Andreas M. Kaplan . "Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of Social Media." *Business Horizons*, 2010: 59-68.

¹⁸ web 2.0. Dictionary.com . *Dictionary.com Unabridged*. Random House, Inc. [http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/web 2.0](http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/web+2.0) (accessed June 10, 2014).

potential to increase interaction among individuals”, therefore very effective in build up community (Joosten 2012).¹⁹ Tanya defines social networking sites as the platform to facilitate the creation and exchange of status posts, photos, videos and “offer the user the opportunity to create a profile, connect with other users in the system, and share those networks with others”. Tanya also refers social networking sites as social media. Social networking sites are the most typical case of social media and Web 2.0.

According to Tanya, social media comprises of 3 main kinds of web-based applications: facilitate communication (Twitter, Facebook), collaboration (wiki) and sharing (Flickr, YouTube) (Joosten 2012).²⁰ While Twitter and Facebook focus on enhanced communication efficiency among users, YouTube pays more attention on content sharing efficiency and search ability.

2.2 Documentary in the new Era

There has been no concrete definition of documentary. According to Bill Nichols, it is possible to argue that there is no absolute definition of documentary film. However, people usually refer to the definition given by John Grierson: documentary is the “creative treatment of actuality” (Nichols 2010)²¹. This definition creates an ongoing tension between two aspects: “creative treatment” and “actuality”. None of the aspects has full effect in a

¹⁹ Joosten, Tanya. *Social Media for Educators: Strategies and Best Practices*. San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons, 2012.

²⁰ Ibid

²¹ Nichols, Bill. *Introduction to Documentary, Second Edition*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010.

documentary, as such, documentary film gives a balance between creativity and a reflection of fact.

People have the common impression that documentary is boring, documentary is mainly for educational purpose, documentary is not fun to watch and share. Of course, there are documentaries with high quality and those documentaries are well received by general public. But still, people usually perceive documentary as formal and official. Patricia Aufderheide, in her book, mentions that a regular documentary often means “a film that features sonorous, “voice of God” narration, an analytical argument rather than a story with characters” (Aufderheid 2007).²² However, she explains that this sort of documentary is just part of the whole concept, a “standard practice in the later 20th century”. She adds that there are few more choices to make a documentary. The choices are made by a set of decisions on the following elements, i.e. sounds, images, special effect and pacing. While sound and image can be easily understood, special effect refers to effect in audio and video, as well as additional animation; pacing refers to the length of the film, how scene is edited or script. These elements in documentary film making will be varied depending on how the storyteller, as in the documentarian, wants to structure the story. In documentary film, “the jerkiness of handheld camera” were testimony to the “you-are-there immediacy” and imply urgency. Therefore, in documentary, we can assume that judgment in shooting quality would be lesser than fiction film or other kinds of movie.

So what are the elements to make a documentary great, especially for home producer who does not have the abundant funding and equipment?

²² Aufderheid, Patricia. *Documentary Film: A Very Short Introduction*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007.

Shane Burley (Burley 2011)²³ suggested that there are 10 points a home documentary producer should take into consideration:

- The story: The foremost important factor is having a compelling story to tell. It should come first before any preparation for the shooting and interview.
- Interesting character: The character should have qualities that audience can connect to themselves.
- Quality interview: The film maker should ask the character the right question which leads them to tell meaningful story.
- Striking visual: Visual is used to illustrate the story told by the character, sometimes pictures can convey a lot better than the words itself. Having striking visual will help the filmmaker express the story better and leave the impression in audience longer.
- Sound: Sound is one of the major factors that separates professional and amateur filmmakers. Good music should match the visual and the story, so as to deliver to audience a whole complete experience.
- Take-away: It is the implied lesson learnt or a message to audience which makes audience think further, relate to themselves and remember the story longer.
- Equipment: It might be difficult to get professional-level equipment, but getting appropriate equipment is always desirable.
- Is it possible: This is regarding any copyright issue or permission to do shooting in places that the filmmaker wants.

²³ Burley, Shane. *The Ten Elements for Producing Great Digital Video Documentaries*. May 18, 2011.

<http://www.brighthub.com/multimedia/video/articles/2743.aspx> (accessed June 12, 2014).

- Relevance: To avoid making a boring documentary, the topic of the film should be contemporary.
- Have fun: Last but not least, the story and the character must be inspiring to the filmmaker him or herself. The filmmaker must find the project fulfilling so that he or she is able to convey that feeling to the audience.

It is apparent that having a great story is inevitable for filmmakers. Looking into this aspect, Joe Lamber, in his book about Digital Storytelling, said that every story matters and ordinary stories can become extraordinary (Lamber 2013)²⁴. In the 20th century media culture, individual stories become prominent. However, we are still affected by mainstream media in the way we compose our stories. It is often the case that storytellers pay more attention on how to replicate the motifs seen on mainstream media, such as TV and film, and forget about their own unique experiences. Joe then introduces about telling a story from small audience, close to private as family and close to personal as diary. He calls it private media.

The use of documentary as a way to promote cultural project is discussed and supported by Brogan, C. and Z McCune (Brogan and Z McCune 2011)²⁵. For them, documentary can show things, and not just telling things. It helps

²⁴ Lamber, Joe. *Digital Storytelling: Capturing Lives, Creating Community*. New York: Routledge, 2013.

²⁵ Brogan, C. and Z McCune. "Social Media Tactics for Culture Projects: Lessons from the Heritage at Play Project." *Museums and the Web 2011: Proceedings*. March 31, 2011.
http://www.museumsandtheweb.com/mw2011/papers/social_media_tactics_for_culture_projects_less (accessed May 25, 2014).

to capture and reveal cultural processes which could be expressed better audio-visually and in written form. However, they argue that traditional documentary filmmaker seeking absolute truth about a topic and doing that through carefully editing. For them, this process “takes out all evidence of the learning curve present in all documentary projects, including mistakes, ideas, hunches, intuitions, difficult questions, human experience and discovery on the part of the filmmaker/documentarian”. Therefore, a carefully edited documentary might be less beneficial for audience if they want to truly feel the story.

Regarding promotional platform for documentary film, Brogan, C. and Z McCune (Brogan and Z McCune 2011) prefer the use of social networks. Reasons being, these platforms have low barriers to entry, they use cheap and universal technology to promote and share culture.

Facebook has been existing for 10 years. Since then, the world witness a shift in communication method. When Apple first invented the iPhone, and applications were developed to make our lives more convenient, our communication changes even further. In our daily lives now, it is not hard to realize we are so much dependent on smart gadgets. If last time, we used to acquire information from TV and printed media, now we get many more sources to look for, and mostly by taking advantage of digital technology. Social network bring the whole world closer and information is transmitted quickly from one to another simply by a “click”. Erik Qualman (Qualman 2013)²⁶ offers his view of how social media transforms our lives and suggests that “word of mouth” is taken to another level, “World of Mouth”. The scale of sharing in social network is much better than any individual telling a few

²⁶ Qualman, Erik. *Socialnomics: How Social Media Transforms the Way We Live and Do Business*. Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2013.

friends a week about the new product or service he or she enjoys. According to him, using social media, the message is in digital format, the “word” is “less likely to lose its original content”. Moreover, it is very easy and convenient to see helpful information about users’ particulars, such as age, education background, location, gender and so on.

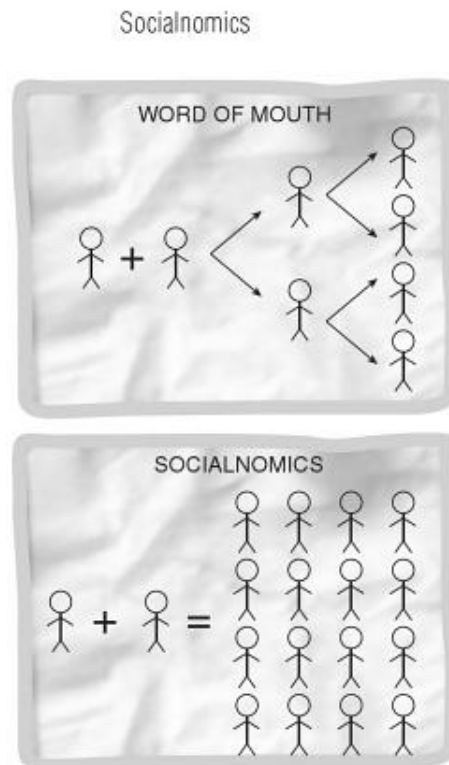


Figure 2-1: Difference between Word of Mouth and World of Mouth (from Erik Qualman’s “Socialnomics”)

<http://www.nateriggs.com/world-of-mouth-socialnomics/>

With the rise of Web 2.0 and social media, documentary has to find its way to approach audience. Conventionally, documentary is broadcasted on TV for mass audience and the audience’s choice is limited to what is available on TV. Now, however, on digital channel, the choices are abundant, audience have can have access to multiple content channels at the same time, therefore the

approach from the “seller”, in this case the documentarian who is looking for viewers, have to be more proactive. Documentarians have to define their audience, identify audience’s favorite channel, and distribute the content there. Nick Doherty, in an interview with ABC News, also mentioned that documentarians might have to go as far as “publishing the content directly” to the audience, for example through a Facebook group so that people can give feedback instantly and share if they like. He called the audience “niche”. This approach can help the documentary project “play out over a longer period of time”, as opposed to TV’s type which is about “a lot of people for not very long” (Doherty 2012).²⁷

Alexandra Zeevalkink also shared the same opinion in his article on promoting documentary online. According to him, one of the biggest advantages for filmmakers might be having the possibility to create a demand for their movie at cost efficiently and being less dependent on industry traditional strategy. In such case, documentarians can use cheap blogs, websites, Facebook and Twitter to turn their documentary into a success (Zeevalkink 2012).²⁸

²⁷ Doherty, Nick, interview by Antony Funnell. *The documentary in the digital world* ABC Radio National. September 16, 2012.

<http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/futuretense/the-documentary-in-the-digital-world/4254350>

²⁸ Zeevalkink, Alexandra. *How to successfully promote your documentary online – Twitter*. March 9, 2012.

<http://docgeeks.com/2012/03/09/how-to-successfully-promote-your-documentary-online-twitter/> (accessed June 8, 2014).

2.3 Related Projects on Social Media

2.3.1 English Contents

The very first inspiration for this research is Human of New York Facebook fanpage. The Facebook fanpage, started in November 2010, is very successful at promoting a vibrant image of New York city in a very simple way. It features stories and sharing of ordinary people in New York in the form of text and picture. It has more than 8 million fans (as of 24 July 2014) and very active interactions on the site. One thing noteworthy about the audience response is that, readers feel sympathetic and some see themselves in the featured characters.

The Facebook Fanpage also shares stories of foreigners living in the city and that helps to promote New York image to people outside of America. Readers can feel the spirit of the city by looking at its daily life image and be inspired to discover the city on their own.



Figure 2-2: Screenshot of Human of New York Facebook Fanpage

Japan, similarly, has its own unique value. Unlike the case of Human of New York Facebook page, in which text and picture are used as the delivery tool, this project challenges the use of motion picture for a more effective communication practice. Instead of sharing short story of the character, this project applies motion picture to feature the real life in a typical day of the character. This method is believed to be a very effective and truthful way to share meaningful stories.

At the very first step, wanting to learn more on related video projects on Japan, the author looked for the keyword “life in Japan” and found millions of results on YouTube. YouTube was chosen because it is a very popular platform for video posting and streaming. Looking at the most prominent searches, these contents share a similarity in characteristics. Firstly, they are done by foreign individuals who are living in Japan and want to capture their daily activities and share to other people. In terms of content, the videos are about their daily life experience. Some videos are of video blog type (in short, vlog), in which the person talks in front of the camera and share their experience and opinion. These kinds of content are very intimate and attract many viewers and comments. Some viewers express their excitement learning about these stories and the desire to come to Japan to experience the same thing. The videos’ length varies, from 3 minutes to 15 minutes. The image quality is usually not so good with jerkiness and low definition. This is understandable given the spontaneousness and amateur equipment. So overall, these contents have the originality as well as interesting stories to make them go viral on social media. They might need better quality to look professional but at the same time, that makes their videos much more real and connected to audience.

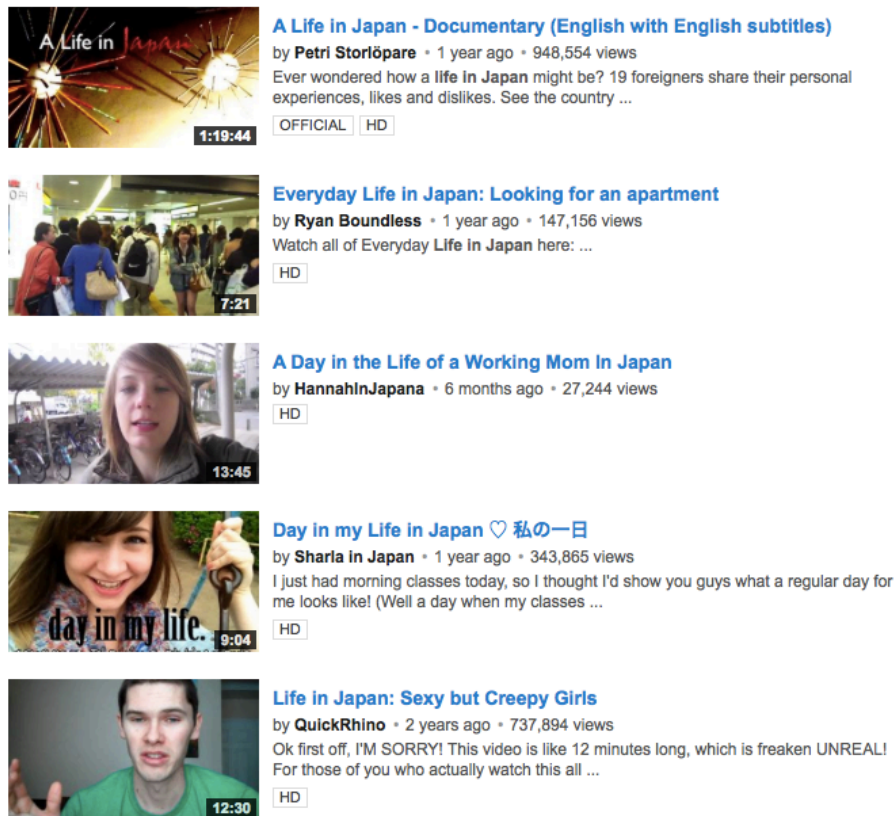


Figure 2-3: YouTube's search result page of keyword "life in Japan"

https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=life+in+japan

However, these videos are in English which makes it not very friendly for users who are not familiar with the language. As a result, Vietnamese viewers might be reluctant to watch these contents. Secondly, the stories they share, although very interesting, are not easy for Vietnamese people to relate to. For Vietnamese people who want to come to Japan to study and work, they would look for more insight about their expected path and more “serious” sharing. In another way, they look for “educational” content for reference. For those video blogs, because the characters usually do the shooting themselves or get a friend to do it, and given the randomness of the contents, it is hard to tell a comprehensive story and leave a “deep” message

for audience. It is more like personal diary by video. It would be great for the purpose of entertainment but might not serve the information providing purpose very well. Therefore, a documentary would be of better choice for educational purpose.

2.3.2 Vietnamese Contents

When using 2 keywords in Vietnamese, “Nhật Bản” (meaning “Japan” in English) and “Cuộc sống Nhật Bản” (meaning “Life in Japan” in English) to search on YouTube, there are 2 main kinds of content appear. The first is reposted content which is originally from mainstream media such as TV program. These contents are usually about Japanese well-known culture, beautiful landscape or strange characteristics, mostly feature Japanese or Western characters. There are not many contents made by Vietnamese media companies; instead, they are made by foreign media companies. The contents made by Vietnamese companies are mainly reportage about lives of Vietnamese people in Japan. Overall, both the Vietnamese and foreign contents about Japan have high view count and quite a number of comments. However, these contents are not about personal stories and do not focus on sharing relevant experience to other people.



*Figure 2-4: Nihongonomori YouTube channel page,
providing Japanese language lessons free for Vietnamese*

<https://www.youtube.com/user/freejapaneselessons3/featured>

The second kind of content is home produced video which serves 2 purposes, one is to teach Japanese to Vietnamese, and second is to share the video maker's experience in Japan. While the former one has been introduced and become more popular in the past 2 years when Vietnamese people are more interested in coming to Japan, the later is still very few and of low quality. They do not have the essence of a originality and often lack a take-away or a concrete message to audience. Moreover, most of the time, they are one-off video and not a series of videos, which makes it very hard to retain audience. Both contents are more like personal blog and do not serve the purpose of true documentaries.

To sum up, the growing trend of social network brings up new opportunity for filmmaker, not only a new platform to showcase their products but also to create new type of content to suit audience's interest. Social network helps filmmaker to connect to their audience and interact with them more

effectively. The main challenge is to determine what content is relevant and how to create great content. Several factors should be taken into consideration for filmmaker, such as having great story, relevant content to audience and take-away message. The story itself can be from ordinary people as long as it is meaningful and connected to audience.

Several related projects on social network are the inspiration for this study. For example, a Facebook fanpage named Human of New York, which shares ordinary people's stories, is really successful at getting audience's attention and promoting the dynamic image of New York city. Regarding at existing contents on social networking sites which depict Japanese culture and lifestyle, there are 3 kinds of content which have either one or both characteristics: featuring life of ordinary foreign people living in Japan and targeting Vietnamese audience. Firstly, there are video blogs made by individuals who want to share their living experience in Japan; these videos are usually in English and target international viewers who are well verse in English. The second type are contents in Vietnamese but most of them are originally made by Japanese or foreign companies, featuring Japanese significant culture and lifestyle. The third type are contents by Vietnamese individuals to share their experiences. However, contents in the third category is very limited in quantity and has low quality. Despite limitations, these contents still receive relatively high views and active discussion on social networking sites.

From the review of literature and related works, one assumption arose about the need for a new kind of content: documentary which feature the ordinary lives. Different from video blogs, there will be a series of documentaries featuring different characters and stories, from there introducing various lifestyle examples in Japan. To help audience relate to the examples better, the characters will be Vietnamese people living in

Japan. Therefore, the contents would be trustable, relevant and an useful reference for people who want to come to Japan. To make good content, interesting stories and characters will be introduced to deliver meaningful take-away messages to audience. Using social network to distribute documentaries, filmmaker and audience can interact easily, leading to more understanding of audience's need.

More details on the concept and method of execution will be discussed in the next chapter.

3 Concept & Method

3.1 Primary Concept

This thesis discusses the use of documentary film to promote educational and cultural matters and applies the concept to promote Japanese education and culture to people living in Vietnam. Through literature review, we know that Japan has been active in promoting its popular culture with the focus on existing well-known sub-cultures such as manga, anime and J-pop (Japanese pop music). However, for the case of people living in Vietnam, the ability to get access to these contents is limited because most of them are copy righted and might require certain level of understanding English or Japanese.

Japan popular culture for general public might be perceived as childish and strange. However, as revealed from fieldwork study and interviews with many young people in Vietnam, Vietnamese people still love Japan traditional culture so much and they are willing to learn more about it. Moreover, with the improved diplomatic relationship between two countries, together with the wave of Japanese companies expanding investment in Vietnam, people are more curious about Japan and the country's propositional aspect. More and more Vietnamese young people are interested in coming to Japan to study and hope to have bright future back in home country.

There are big communities for Vietnamese interested in Japan on social network, for particular, Facebook. People often discuss about Japan related topics, ask for advice on applying to Japanese schools, learning Japanese language at home. People share their opinion on how to adapt with local lifestyle and interesting stories in their daily lives. These types of post really attract much attention from mass audience. Genuine story has its value in sharing knowledge and idea. However, there is a lack of motion picture content to share. Most of the contents about Japan for Vietnamese people

specifically are pictures and text, therefore it is hard to share vivid stories about Japan culture and genuine lifestyle. It is also not so relevant to check other videos about Japan because most of them are about Japan signature beauties, food and landscape. There are contents about local lifestyle in Japan but they are not so similar to the lifestyle the people Vietnam wanting to come to Japan can expect. Therefore, there is a need for motion picture content which features Japanese local lifestyle targeting Vietnamese audience who want to come to Japan to live and study.

Since social network has become a very effective tool to enhance communication, especially for niche community, using social networking sites to distribute the content to target audience would be recommended. Given the current development in Vietnam, Facebook is the most appropriate choice. One limitation of Facebook is information retention ability is low as the content will be flown back as new posts emerge. Therefore, in this study, there is a combination of 2 social media: YouTube for content uploading and Facebook for content sharing. The contents on YouTube are searchable and easy to retrieve. But using YouTube itself would be hard to reach out to specific audience since the volume of content on the site is huge. Whereas for Facebook, since there are established communities with people of the same interest, it is more convenient and efficient to reach out to interested audience.

This study is to establish that by providing documentaries about Vietnamese people living in Japan to people in Vietnam via social network, they will be able to understand Japanese genuine lifestyle better.

3.2 Pre-design Research

A survey is conducted on social network as a primary research on audience's preference and demographics. The questions are on audience's age range, interested topic(s) about Japan and intention to go to Japan (if any).

The first question is regarding audience's age range. It shows the following insight:

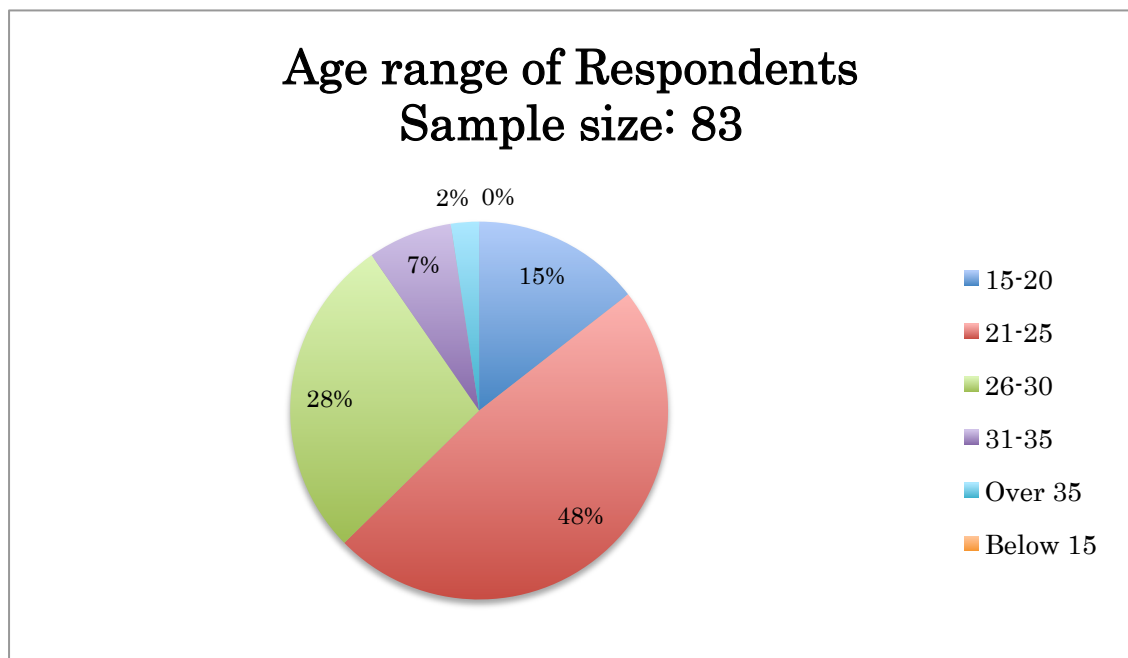


Figure 3-1: Questionnaire 1: Respondents by Age group

The chart shows that the majority of respondents are from 21 to 25 years old and 26 to 30 years old. There are 12 respondents at the age of 15 to 20. Overall, the respondents are young people from 15 to 30 years old, as expected. Based on the result, the potential audience are people from age 21 to 30 years old. This is the young population who usually have easy access to Internet, possess computer or smartphone and are frequent users of social media.

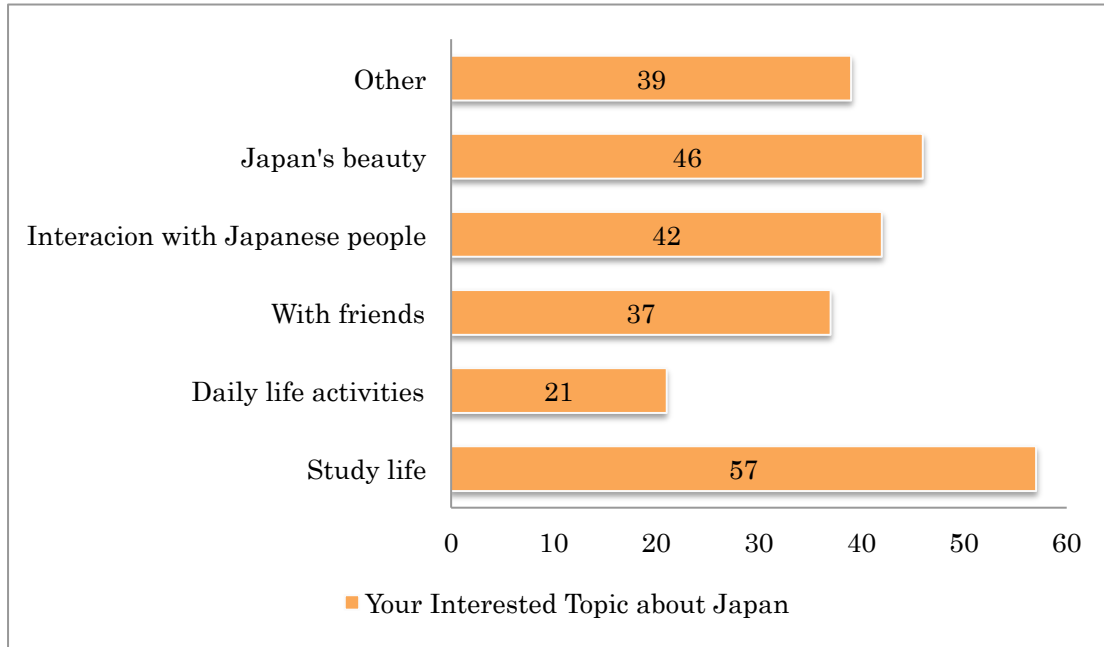


Figure 3-2: Questionnaire 1: Respondents' interested topic(s) about Japan
Sample size: 83

When asked about their interested topics about Japan (respondents could choose multiple options), most people chose “study life”, and next is Japan’s natural beauty and any interactive activities with Japanese people. This shows that people are mostly curious about Japan’s lifestyle and how the country looks like. This is understandable, especially for people who want to come to Japan to study or to work. For people who chose “Others” in their answers, some clarified the answers as “All of the above” and 2 people added “arubaito”, means “part-time job” in Japanese. So overall, people are interested to know how to adapt to Japan’s culture and shared experience from predecessors. This result suggests that documentary featuring lives of people who are studying in Japan would be effective in getting audience attention.

If you want to go to Japan in the future, what would be the purpose?

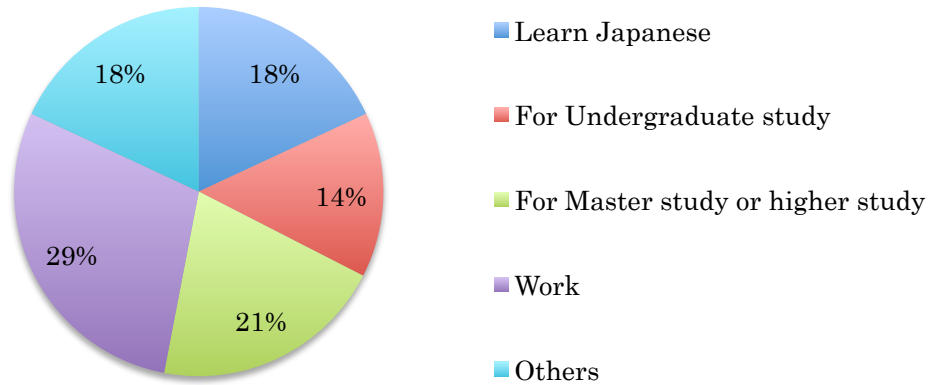


Figure 3-3: Questionnaire 1: Respondents' purpose to go to Japan

Sample size: 83

When asked “If you want to go to Japan in the future, what would be the purpose?”, 24 out of 83 (29%) respondents said they want to go to Japan to work, accounted for the majority of respondents. 21% of respondents want to study master or higher level in Japan, showing the demand for Japanese education is increasing. And also because Japanese companies are more interested in Vietnamese market and are looking for potential candidates with Japanese language skill, people recognize the opportunity and want to study in Japan to master Japanese.

Do you think by introducing the life of Vietnamese people in Japan, the film helps you understand Japanese lifestyle better

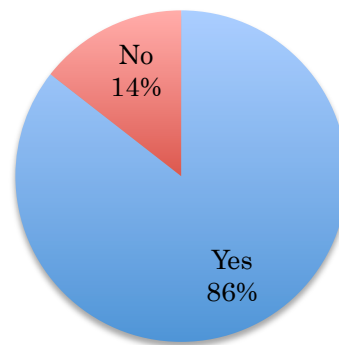


Figure 3-4: Questionnaire 1: Respondents' opinion on the use of Vietnamese character in documentary

Sample size: 83

For a primary check on the success of the concept, the next question is put as “Do you think by introducing the life of Vietnamese people in Japan, the film helps you understand Japan lifestyle better?”. 86% of respondent said yes. This finding supports the assumption that introducing lifestyle of foreigners in Japan will help people of the subject’s country feel more familiar and understand better about Japanese culture and lifestyle.

The respondents seem to be very supportive on the topic “featuring lives of young Vietnamese in Japan to promote the understanding of Japanese culture”. They said it is a interesting idea and can have many facets to depict in people’s daily lives. It can be very helpful for people who have never been to Japan to take a glance and understand briefly about the local lifestyle. The name of the project “one day in Japan” makes them feel very curious; it is a very visualized name, as in people can immediately imagine about the

kind of content the documentary delivers without looking into the documentary itself.

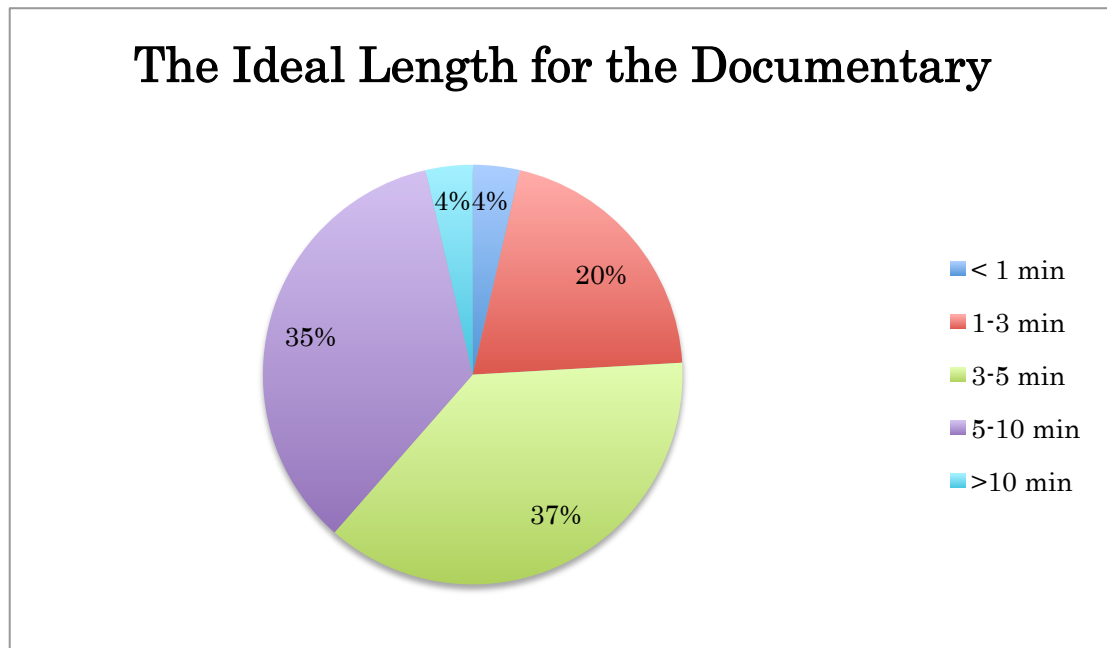


Figure 3-5: Questionnaire 1: Ideal length of documentary, according to respondents

Sample size: 83

Regarding the ideal length of the documentary, most respondents choose 3 to 5 minutes and 5-10 minutes. This matches with audience retention data mentioned in literature review.

From the findings above, a concept is established that “Short documentary to promote student life in Japan using Vietnamese character is appealing to people in Vietnam”. There are 2 main features in the prototypes: “student life” in Japan and the use of “Vietnamese character”. These features will be tested if they are really effective in getting audience’s attention to the content.

3.3 Method

The documentary is designed as follows:

Short documentary: There is not any ideal length for all kinds of video content. Michael Miller (Miller 2011)²⁹ stated in his book about online video marketing that “there’s no one-size-fits-all approach to producing effective YouTube videos”. However, retention rate seems to be low for online content, as revealed by a group of researchers at Google, videos on YouTube are mostly short form and under 10 minutes in length (James Davidson, et al. 2010)³⁰. Michael Miller recommends that, due to viewers’ short attention spans, we should keep the video “no longer than two or three minutes and the shorter, the better” (Miller 2011)³¹. In his opinion, a video reaching to its targeted audience is more important than getting millions of views from strangers. He explains that “attracting a thousand targeted customers is both more profitable and more realistic than getting viewed by a million strangers with no intention or ever purchasing anything from you”. Therefore, getting as much views as possible might not be the most

²⁹ Miller, Michael. *YouTube for Business: Online Video Marketing for Any Business*. US: Pearson Education, 2011.

³⁰ James Davidson, Benjamin Liebald, Junning Liu, Palash Nandy, and Taylor Van Vleet. *"The YouTube Video Recommendation System."* *RecSys 2010*. Barcelona: ACM, 2010. 293.

<http://stuyresearch.googlecode.com/hg-history/b17661bbfaf905a2078902f1abe6b795d4a29137/blake/resources/p293-davidson.pdf> (accessed on 8 June 2014)

³¹ Miller, Michael. *YouTube for Business: Online Video Marketing for Any Business*. US: Pearson Education, 2011.

prioritized goal for the average web marketer, but attracting the right audience should come first (Miller 2011)³².

Selecting subject:

The condition to select subject is young Vietnamese people in Japan who are currently studying or working. They should have strong connection with Japanese society and understand Japanese culture and lifestyle. It is important because their lifestyle and behavior will be reflective of the characteristic of Japanese society. Positive figures were intentionally chosen so that audience can feel motivated about Japan. Through inspiring stories, people will have a positive feeling about Japan and be encouraged to discover the country themselves. At the primary prototypes, subjects of the documentary are people studying in Japan to reflect study life in Japan as this topic would be more appealing to audience according to the survey result.

Target audience:

The documentary aims for young people in Vietnam 15-30 years old because this is the age range that is mostly in demand for study overseas. Targeted audience should have frequent access to Internet and social network because it is where the documentary is shared and distributed. They are interested in going to Japan, whether to study or to live.

Target audience will be sub-categorized into smaller groups, depending on their need. For example, their level of education, their purpose of going to Japan, from there, defining their information need.

Camera pick and why:

At first the author went with a handy video camera Canon IVIS HFR42 because it was one-person project and a handy camera would fit the purpose the best given its good image quality and handy function.

³² Ibid

However, it is hard to have high quality image with a handy camera. So for the 3rd shooting it was changed to camera Sony NEX 5N (with 18-55mm and 55-210mm lens). This camera has photo and video acquisition function and can capture high-quality footages.

Content:

According to Michael Miller, several things should be noted to have a compelling video which is worth sharing: be entertaining, be informative, be funny, short, simple, focused, clear message, soft sell over hard sell, fresh, designed for remixing (Miller 2011)³³. For this type of documentary, it is important to be informative, because the purpose is to provide people in Vietnam with the information about Japanese genuine culture. It should be short, simple, focused and deliver a clear message as well. It might not be easy to be entertaining and funny, given the film genre. However, it still has to be attractive enough for audience to finish the entire film.

This research focuses on reflecting local genuine lifestyle through the subject's own life. The camera will capture an ordinary day of the subject and in order to do that, the author has to follow subject to various places. However, it might be repetitive if all the documentaries show similar contents of subjects' one typical day. And the video would be lengthy, too. Therefore, the shooting would feature just certain aspects of the subject's life, for example, their part-time job or their activities at school. The shooting might continue for one whole day but only selected footages will be used.

Editing environment

Initially Sony Vegas was chosen to edit documentary. Sony Vegas is easy to use and does not require much RAM. However, Sony Vegas is not so

³³ Miller, Michael. *YouTube for Business: Online Video Marketing for Any Business*. US: Pearson Education, 2011.

supportive for text editing and not so user friendly for effect editing so it is kind of inconvenient.

For the third documentary, Adobe Premiere was chosen instead of Sony Vegas. Premiere is not so easy to use but not too complicated. Premiere is heavier, but runs smoothly. Text function is easy to use and transition methods are various.

Method:

The method is using documentary reflecting local genuine lifestyle and featuring foreigner as a way to promote local culture to overseas. This is the general concept but applied in the case study of promoting Japanese culture and education to people in Vietnam. The use of documentary to promote education overseas is not much discussed if not never been discussed before. The world has become flat, mobility is easier than ever before and therefore, demand of people going abroad to study is increasing. For people who want to study abroad, learning about the environment beforehand is important so that they can prepare better for their trip. Text stories or pictures are helpful but can be limited in telling a picture visually, especially in short form.

Production:

With a handy camera, the author usually goes alone with the subject for shooting. The 3rd time, after getting a direction in the suitable content and story, the author went with a cameraman who is more competent in professional video shooting and has more flexible control over the overall scene and flow.

Post production:

Each video is launched together with a questionnaire to ask about audience's particulars as well as evaluation about the video. The questionnaire is analyzed to plan for the next shooting. This process helps the content be matched with audience's need and serve the purpose of promoting culture and education better. This type of questionnaire can be

categorized as qualitative survey since the most important part is audience sharing their opinion about the documentary and their expectation.

Distribution platform:

According to TechnAsia, as of October 2012, there are 30.8 million Internet users in Vietnam, which accounts for 34% of the country total population. 95% of Vietnamese people aged of 15 to 24 have access to the internet. Interestingly, 90% of Vietnamese users watch online video. 86% of Vietnamese Internet users visit social networking sites and Facebook overtook Zing to become Vietnam's top social network. With social media penetration rate of 9%, there's massive room for growth (Millward 2012).³⁴

The rationales to use social media as the main distribution channel

- The content is casual
- Make use of the strength of Word of Mouth
- It is easy for discussion, comment and sharing
- It can reach the mass audience who share similar interest much faster and conveniently

Facebook is used for word spreading since it is the number 1 social network in Vietnam. On Facebook, there are group of users with similar interest. It would be easier to reach Vietnamese people who are interested in content about Japan. Several active Facebook groups where people share and discuss various topics related to Japan have been identified. The prototype videos were posted on Facebook together with a request asking people to fill in the questionnaires provided.

³⁴ Millward, Steven. *This is Vietnam's Web in 2012, As Facebook Overtakes Zing In the Country*. October 17, 2012.
<http://www.technasia.com/vietnam-web-social-users-2012/> (accessed May 25, 2014).

However, the videos are uploaded on YouTube so that the content is retrievable and can reach audience any time. In case people share the content, it is much easier to share via YouTube as certain Facebook groups have restricted content sharing rule.

3.4 Evaluation Method

The evaluation is conducted based on 3 prototypes, in which, after one prototype, feedbacks from audience will be collected and analyzed before planning for the next prototype. Feedbacks from audience are collected by the following means:

- Share documentary with link to questionnaire

Each time the documentary URL is posted on social network to promote and get feedback, a questionnaire will also be distributed to audience. The audience can fill in the questionnaire voluntarily and unanimously. Therefore, it can be assumed that the answers are truthful and reflect genuinely audience's opinion.

- Analyze comments on Facebook post and YouTube

It is important to look at comments on social network about the documentaries. The comments usually reflect immediate thinking of audience and show audience's first impression on the documentary. Therefore, the comments will be taken as a secondary source of feedbacks to evaluate the success of the prototypes.

- Interview for in-depth feedback

In case there is a need to get more insight of audience's feedback, interview will be conducted with several audience chosen randomly. Due to geographical distance, interviews will be conducted in the form of voice call or messaging communication.

4 Experiment & Evaluation

4.1 Prototype 1: Short clip without voice narration and survey result

The first documentary is actually from one of the first video shootings ever conducted. The author simply followed the subject on one day and captured all the interesting moments. The first subject is a 24 years old final year student living in Tokyo. At the time of shooting, she had just finished her job hunting and almost finished study. She offered to go to her university for a day as she spent some quiet time reading book and wandering around. The footages are about her taking the train to school, boarding a bus, going to supermarket and staying in school cafeteria for some readings and lastly, going to her supervisor's office to leave a note. Because there is not many activities for a day, there are limited video footage to make use of.

The documentary was edited in a “music video” format, in which no voice audio is used, only use music, and the video is to feature the events in a day. To increase the familiarity of the content to Vietnamese audience, a Vietnamese song was used with the assumption that the song, together with the use of Vietnamese character, can help audience feel more connected and engaged with the film. The song is from a young singer, about a beautiful life of a young lady. The purpose was to test if the song played an impact in the way people sense the documentary and if people felt more familiar watching the documentary with a song in Vietnamese, which is their own language.

The video is as short as 3 minutes since it is the recommended length for a short video on YouTube. This is because people easily lost attention after 1 or 2 minutes, especially for a video without entertaining content. The expectation is that a 3 minute length is reasonable for a online video and audience find it comfortable watching the content.

This first documentary was more of a testing product which showed audience the kind of content, the editing style and footage quality so that they have a sense about it and can evaluate if they like the idea or not.

Audience's response

The first documentary received very positive feedback when it was posted on Facebook. It received more than 220 likes in total for the Facebook posts and more than 1,600 views on YouTube for the first week of posting. This reaction from the audience implies that this kind of content is new and appealing to target audience. To further understand audience's opinion, a questionnaire was set up for audience to fill in voluntarily after watching the video. The questionnaire URL is given in both the Facebook posts and YouTube description. A message appears on the YouTube video after the main content finishes to remind audience to do the questionnaire.

Thanks to audience's strong support, in total there are 83 responses for the first documentary. The number of responses is huge showing that audience are really interested in the topic and want to share their views to make it better over time.

The audience were asked some basic questions regarding their demographic information as well as their feedback on the content. The questionnaire shows the following insight of audience's demography:

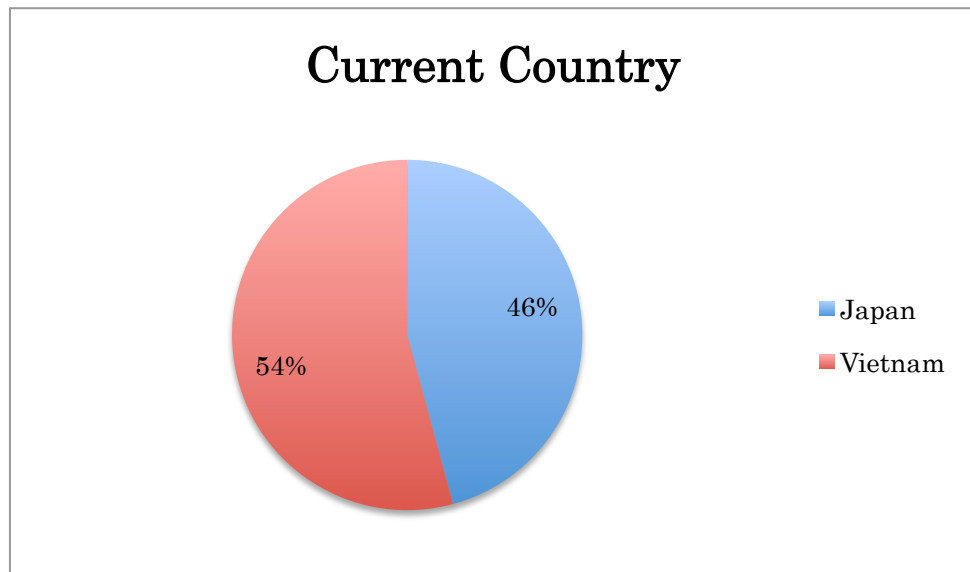


Figure 4-1: Questionnaire 1: Respondents' current country
Sample size: 83

There are slightly more respondents from Vietnam than in Japan but the difference is not so significant. This means not only people in Vietnam want to see this kind of documentary but also Vietnamese people in Japan. For respondents currently living in Vietnam, most of them are from big cities, such as Hanoi, Hochiminh, Danang and Haiphong. This can be explained as people in the city have access to the Internet more conveniently. Interestingly, there is a respondent from Cambodia. That means the interest of knowing more about Japan is not only limited to Vietnamese people in Vietnam but also Vietnamese people living in other countries. Japan has become a favorite destination for Vietnamese.

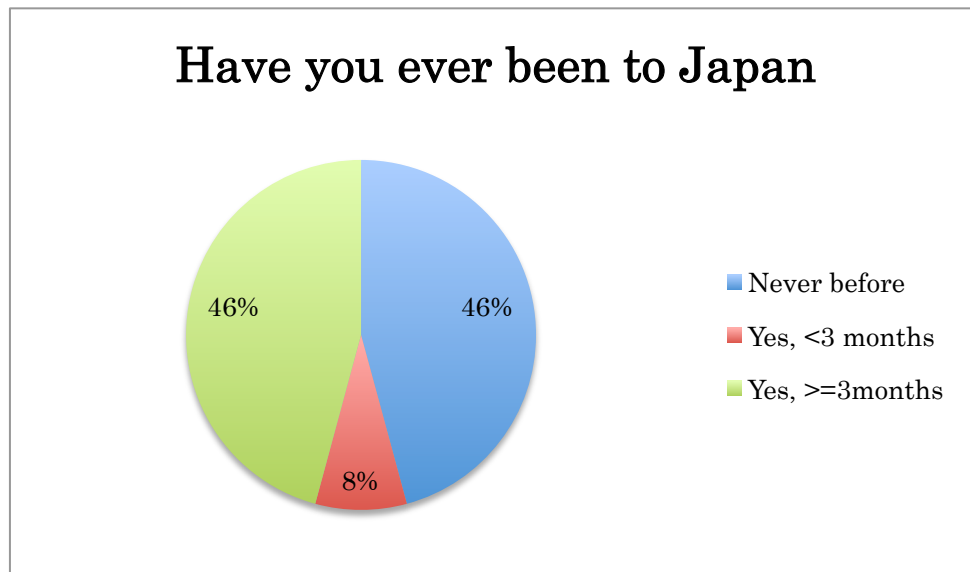


Figure 4-2: Questionnaire 1: If respondents have ever been to Japan
Sample size: 83

When asked if the respondent has been to Japan before, 46% of respondents said they have never been to Japan; while 46% said they have been to Japan in a long term of more than 3 months. There are only 8% said they have been to Japan in short term of less than 3 months. This result implies that the documentary mostly drew attention of either people interested in Japan but never been to Japan or people already have the experience living in the country.



Figure 4-3: Author's promotional posts for the 1st documentary on Facebook groups

Next part of the questionnaire was to see if the content really helps audience to understand Japanese lifestyle better. The following questions were asked to audience:

- How much the documentary helps you to understand about Japanese daily lifestyle?
- If you find the length of the video is reasonable to watch?
- How do you feel about the use of music in this documentary?

The first question showed a different result from the original expectation of the researcher. Although the video seems to be appealing to audience, most of them found the content too simple to portray typical lifestyle and culture of Japan. Some audience said that the footages are so limited in this documentary and some footages seem to be repeated. Furthermore, the content only shows a very limited part of a daily life and not the typical part. The audience defined the typical parts are study scene, cooking scene,

working part-time scene or activities with friends. Some audience even suggested to put time label for the time when each activity takes place as well as scene title to explain about the scenario such as place and kind of activities.

Especially, one audience said that some scenes should have been filmed in more focus because those are things which is very new to Vietnamese audience. For example, the moment when the character taps the metro card to get into the station seems to be very quick and Vietnamese audience might not be able to recognize it. Another scene is when the character goes into a “female only” train car and the audience thought that the scene should have been depicted more clearly. Because in Vietnam, electronic train system is still very new, people do not know much about it so story about metro system would be very appealing to people in Vietnam. This is consistent with the assumption that daily life in Japan is so much different from that of Vietnam and Vietnamese people like to discover more about Japan’s daily life.

Next, when asked if they find the video length reasonable, most of audience preferred longer video so that there would be more scenes and details to depict the character’s life. Some audience also suggested longer video so that the film can show more background scenes and surrounding activities, not just the character herself.

The author also asked audience for their preferable video length and here is the summary of their opinions:

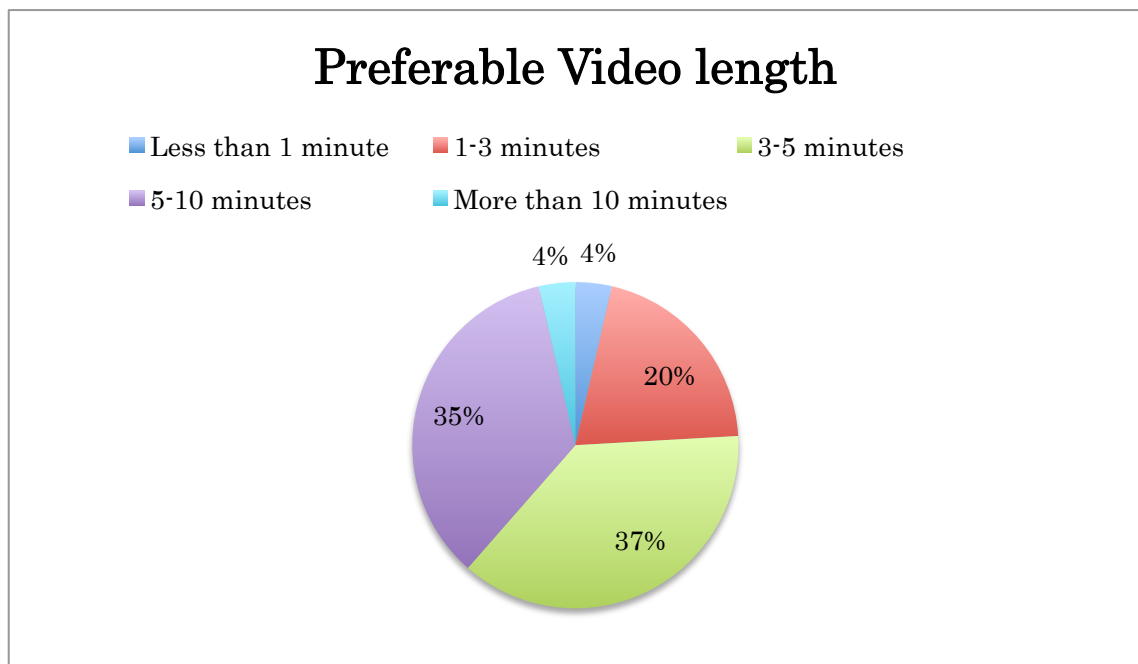


Figure 4-4: Audience's preferable video length

Sample size: 83

The chart shows that video length from 3 to 10 minutes is more favorable than shorter or longer video. This can be explained that shorter video is probably too short to really show audience a genuine picture of a local culture. A too long video, on the other than, might become too boring to follow until the end. The next prototype was to examine and narrow down effective range of video length.

The next question asking about audience's impression over the use of music in this documentary. Most of respondents said they are fine with the music. Some said the music does not matter and they are indifferent. However, an interesting feedback is that, although they did not dislike the music, some audience did not want to listen to vocal music because it distracts them from the content itself. These audience offered instrumental music and the use of different tracks to make the documentary more attention-grabbing. Few audience even suggested to use Japanese music to match the context of the documentary. For them, it is strange and unnatural to have Vietnamese vocal music for a content about Japan. This idea makes

sense given the context of the film and the expectation of audience.

In a private interview for more insightful feedback, the author asked 3 audience on their overall evaluation of the first production. The comments were the same as what the questionnaire drew. In addition, 2 audience commented on the filming skill and footage quality. One audience said that the camcorder should be held firmly with a tripod to reduce jerkiness and the audience suggested having better shooting angle to have a more professional and impressive content. This comment is very precise given the context that the first prototype was more of a trial version and the author did not pay much attention to footage quality and shooting angle. Moreover, it can be learnt that trying to depict a genuine picture of the local lifestyle is not equivalent to having rough footages and boring angles because that will bore the audience and defeat the final purpose of promoting culture and lifestyle.

Overall, receiving positive review from audience was not expected at this moment because the first documentary is a trial version with lots of room for improvement. However, the feedback for this 1st trial was really helpful and brought up valuable suggestions for the next prototype.

4.2 Prototype 2: Storytelling documentary with limited editing and survey result

Based on audience' feedback from the first prototype, there were some clues on how to design the second prototype. This time, subject is a young family with a 3 years old daughter. The dad is actually a PhD candidate studying in Japan. The documentary is about following the dad to pick up his child at the neighborhood kindergarten, and after that, the whole family met at a shopping center and had dinner together. The story focused on lifestyle of a young family with kid, about Japan's kindergarten and stories around their living environment. The filmmaker followed the subject but for the

evening only because it was not convenient for the subject to be followed the whole day.

This is a longer documentary of around 10 minutes in length and with a lot of original footages. The researcher decided to keep the maximum recommended length for a online video to test up to how long the audience feel engaged during the time span of 10 minutes.

Based on the first documentary's feedbacks from audience, this time, only instrumental music was used on the background and original voice was kept. Instead of editing the footages to make a short, trailer-type documentary like the first prototype, the film was edited based on the chronological order with long continuous scenes. For this prototype, the researcher wanted to test the storyline and made the film as original as possible.

The video is added with interesting stories that the family came across during the shooting time, in the form of text explanation and static picture. For example, the researcher followed the family on a local train. It happened to be a rainy day and everyone on the train carried an umbrella. To Japanese, this kind of fact is obvious and might not catch attention of audience. But due to the fact that Vietnam is a tropical country with raining season, Vietnamese counter rain very often and we usually use raincoat; for us, knowing that Japanese people use umbrella instead of raincoat is very interesting. Therefore, in the film, the scene showing many people with umbrellas was paused and text was used to explain about this small fact.

Documentary was posted on 2 Facebook groups which gather a lot of Vietnamese people who are interested in Japanese related topics. The same community groups were employed because people on these communities have already been aware of the project and could provide better opinion since they know about the previous documentary and the project's objective. The posting time was around 11pm (Japan time) and morning time. This is the time that people finish work or just before night shift, on their laptop or

mobile to check Facebook updates. Presumably, evening time is better because people are usually at home and can listen to the audio of the documentary. To attract audience's attention, the name of the documentary is kept simple, as the name of the family themselves. Again, the intention was to keep the curiosity of the audience until they open the link and start watching. By the name "one day in Japan", they could roughly visualize the kind of content they are going to see without knowing any details.

In the Facebook posts as well as under the description part of YouTube video, audience were provided with a URL to the questionnaire. Also, at the end of the film, a message appears to remind audience to fill in the survey to share their opinions about the film.



Figure 4-5: Author's promotional posts for the 2nd documentary on Facebook groups

Audience's response

On YouTube, the film gathered 800 views as a whole, which is relatively high given the promotion strategy.

There are 14 respondents for the questionnaire of the film. The number of completed questionnaires is much lower compared to the first prototype. One of the reason could be the topic of young family with kid is not relevant to most audience so they do not have the motivation to complete questionnaire. As revealed in the pre-design research, audience interested in content about Japan are mostly young people wanting to study or work in Japan. Although one of the family member (the dad) is studying PhD in Japan, the content itself might not be applicable to most audience. The other reason could be most audience had already known about the research and done the first questionnaire. Therefore, they were reluctant to fill in the second questionnaire unless there was significant change in the content and concept.

However, although there were not many questionnaire done, overall, respondents were positive about the story. They liked the scenario and the way the film provides information about life in Japan, for example, kids are educated very well since young, Japanese people use umbrella instead of raincoat. The respondents thought that the story is gentle and easy to understand. However, they also suggested to fasten the pace of scenario, create a story with focus and there were some feedbacks on improving image resolution and shooting angle.

When asked if they think the documentary helps them to understand more about Japan lifestyle, most audience said that the content is interesting and informative, it helps them to know some facts about Japan, especially about how to raise up kids in Japan. However, some added that the film did not go into more specific points such as kid education in Japan,

activities of young family with kids, and comparison with family in Vietnam. According to audience, the footages are not enough to depict vividly life in Japan. In general, it could be seen that the storyline somewhat meets audience's expectation but the quality; however, quantity of footage should be improved.

Regarding the length of the documentary, majority of respondents said that they found it "just nice", not too long nor too short. This is an unpredicted result because the film is 10-minute long and it is far longer than the recommended length of 3 minutes. This result explains that people's demand to see "Japanese's image" is high and they can keep watching a "not-so-professional" video just because it shows them the ordinary life in Japan.

However, it could also be noted that the number of respondents for this questionnaire is low, therefore there could be a bias in audience's feedback. Probably those who answered the questionnaire were in favor of the film and wanted to give some encouragement. Looking at the comments on social network, there are several audience commenting that the video is too long and slow, making them feel bored. These audience are young and single, therefore the family subject itself is not appealing to them. For these audience, it might be boring to watch a long content which is not so relevant to their daily life and follow it until the end.

In terms of audio design, overall audience found it just fine, especially with the original sound such as talking voice and noise in surrounding environment. The use of original sound creates intimacy for the film. Audience said that the music is gentle and helps to create a peaceful atmosphere for the film. However, audience thought the music used is not so impressive and varied. It is so subtle that it can only help audience focus on the content itself but not bolster audience's experience with the film. Some audience did not even remember listening to music when watching the film. The researcher thinks that music should play an important part in

enhancing audience's experience, hence the design of music should be paid attention as much as other elements of the film. The goal of the next prototype was to make audience impressed with audio design, including music.

Since the primary purpose was on the storyline, comments on shooting and editing quality were temporarily set aside. The author thought that the storyline somehow meets people's expectation and the next documentary could be developed based on the same ground. In the next film, quality and quantity of footage should be improved so that the film can depict the daily lifestyle more vividly. In terms of video length, since the documentary is for audience of different ages and backgrounds, it is advisable to shorten the video to less than 10 minutes and change the editing style so that the pace is fastened. For audio design, music and sound should be designed to make audience feel more personal and intimate about the content, and hence, engage and remember it better.

4.3 Prototype 3: Storytelling documentary with prepared scenarios & narration and survey result

After prototype 1 and 2, looking at where the respondents reside, it seems that there are many of them currently living in Japan. Based on statistic for the first 2 prototype, out of total 98 respondents, 43% of them are currently living in Japan (Figure 4-6). This data shows that there are relatively high counts of audience with the experience living in Japan watching and responding to the documentaries.

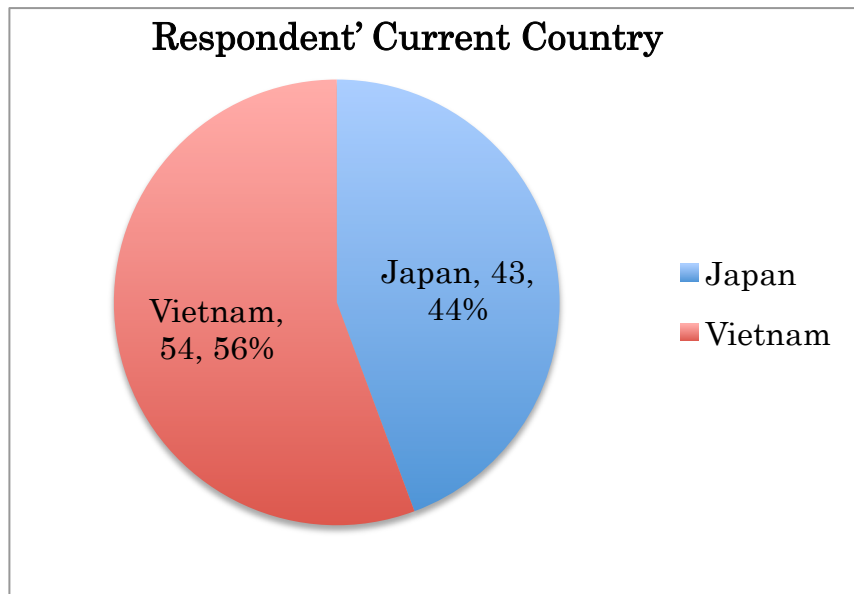


Figure 4-6: Questionnaire 1 &2: Respondents' current countries of residence

Sample size: 98

From the statistic, the author came up with an additional assumption that the documentary also attracts Vietnamese people living in Japan and would like to test out this assumption in the third documentary.

The third documentary was finished with much more preparation. Instead of following the subject without planning any scene, the scenario had been prepared beforehand. This time the subject is a 4th year student at a university in Tokyo. The story is about his one typical day at work and school. The story portrays him as a hard-working and determined person who dares to follow his dream regardless of the situation. The subject has a passion for instrumental music, in particular guitar and piano. This is a very nice fact and the team decided to capture the moments that he played guitar and piano.

For technical support, this time the researcher went with another cameraman to get better quality footage and to direct the whole shooting effectively. Sony NEX 5N, a mirrorless camera, was used. The camera

produced better image quality than the previous camcorder (Canon IVIS HFR42). The production team used zoom lens 55-210mm for close-up shot so not to disturb the surrounding environment. Apart of the main camera, the author also occasionally did shooting separately, especially for the background footages, so that those footages could be used later if needed. For camera setting, due to the nature of this project in reflecting the real life of the characters, aspects of lighting were kept as natural and original as possible, without much manipulation. For shots that the team could have more control over, we shot using a mini flexible tripod with bendable legs which help to take photo at any angle.

For the editing, Premiere was chosen instead of Sony Vegas. Premiere is not so user friendly but also not very complicated to play around. Premiere is heavier, but runs smoothly. Text function is easy to use and transition methods are various. However, creating caption with video editing software can be troublesome and not very efficient. Wanting to deliver the documentary in 2 more languages, Japanese and English, for international friends, YouTube's caption creation function was utilized and by doing that, it is easier to add more languages later if needed.

Regarding the length, based on the comments for previous documentary, the 3rd film was intentionally kept short. However, making the documentary too short is not a very good idea since audience want to see the lifestyle in Japan, and for them, nothing works better than seeing it more and more, from different angles. This argument is substantiated in the first testing documentary, when one comment said that the respondent wanted to see more of what happened in the environment surrounding the character and not just the character herself. Limiting the length of the documentary also means scarifying scenes and might have the risk of having unbalanced type of scene (character-focused scene and background scene). Therefore, finding the right balance is important and it depends on the story and the kind of footages captured. Since the number of footages is abundant, the film was kept 6-minute long. 6-minute video is a balance between a 3-minute video,

which is rather short to capture daily life meaningfully, and 10-minute video, which is rather long to keep audience engaged until the end. 6 minutes is believed to be reasonable for a documentary film on social media channel.

Based on the result of 2nd documentary, the author decided to use instrumental music again for background. 2 background music were used for the starting and ending parts to match with the story's flow. Original voice was sometimes muted it so that viewers can pay attention to the visual itself, especially for the part that the author wanted to emphasize on visual effect. For parts that the character played music instruments, the original sound was intentionally kept because of it has high quality and that was the best way to tell people about the character's passion and talent.

Audience's response

On YouTube, the film received nearly 2,300 views (as of 24 July 2014) and the view count continues to increase gradually on a daily basis.

After the film being uploaded on YouTube, the promotion posts were posted on 2 the Facebook groups for audience' review. Fortunately, the 3rd documentary received very positive feedback from audience. With a total of 37 questionnaires done, there is almost no negative comment or criticism regarding the content or quality of the documentary. For people who have never been to Japan, they said the documentary helps them to imagine somehow about what to expect in Japan. Based on the story, they learn that life in Japan is challenging but rewarding for those who try hard enough. So overall, the respondents said the documentary is inspiring and encourage them to try their best. Here is one typical example of a audience from Vietnam who finds this documentary meaningful:

"This short film is really helpful and informative for people like me, who has never been to Japan. From the documentary, I can feel as if I immerse in the life of the character."



Figure 4-7: Author's promotional posts for the 3rd documentary on Facebook groups

Surprisingly, there are more respondents who have been to Japan than those who have never been to the country. Out of 37 respondents, 62% of the respondents have been to Japan for more than 3 months, and 30% of them have never been to Japan. From the feedback received, it can be shown that, the documentary helps them bring back their own memories. Some audience said although they have been to Japan but because they came to work, their experience was different from the character's life. That is why they like the documentary and it helps them to learn new thing about Japan. These are 2 examples of audience's feedback from Japan:

"I have been through the same situation as the main character and I like the way the documentary is conducted as well as its message. I can somehow relate myself to the character."

“I have been working in Japan for 2 years. However, I did not experience the student life in Japan. I find this documentary interesting and informative. From the documentary I can feel how is the life of a student here. I hope the documentary will bring a good message and encouragement for Vietnamese people who want to come to study in Japan.”

However, audience also requested for more contents to be introduced, in which the stories and the characters cover other types of Vietnamese lives in Japan. For example, a film features life of a student comes to Japan to learn Japanese and apply for Japanese university. This example is very typical among many Vietnamese who choose Japan as their destination for university education. They have bright hope and strong desire to make their dream comes true. Personally, the author thought that this suggestion is very nice and would love to find an interesting character to shoot the next film. Again, the principle is making documentary which leaves positive impact on the viewers.

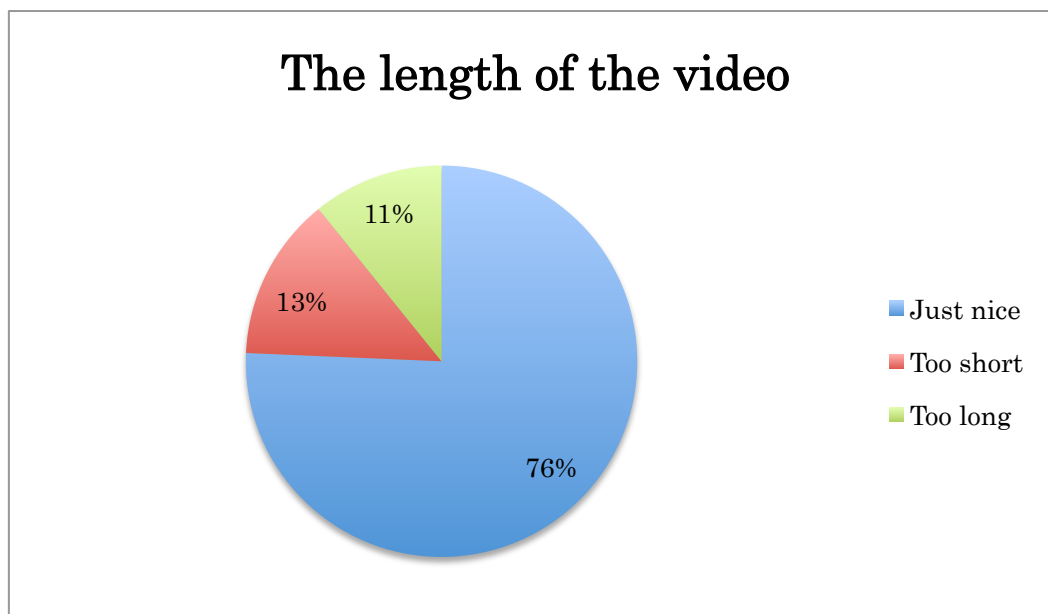


Figure 4-8: Questionnaire 3: Opinion on the length of documentary
Sample size: 37

In the 3rd documentary, given its 6 minute long, 76% of respondents said that they are comfortable with the length. Only 9 respondents, which is 24%, said that the documentary is either too short or too long. This proves the argument that the most important factor is the story itself and we need to get the balance of video length and the content right. In this particular documentary project, for the film to convey its message effectively and concisely, the length of the film should be around 3 to 5 minutes.

For the use of music, people liked the 2 music tracks in the film and they were particularly impressed with the music played by the character himself. From here, it can be established that the use of instrumental music is effective in delivering a good documentary. Vocal music can distract viewer from the main content; so it would be effective in case the visual and the vocal match and create a nice combination. Audience also felt more intimate this time with voice narration by the subject which makes the whole story telling experience more intuitive and surreal.

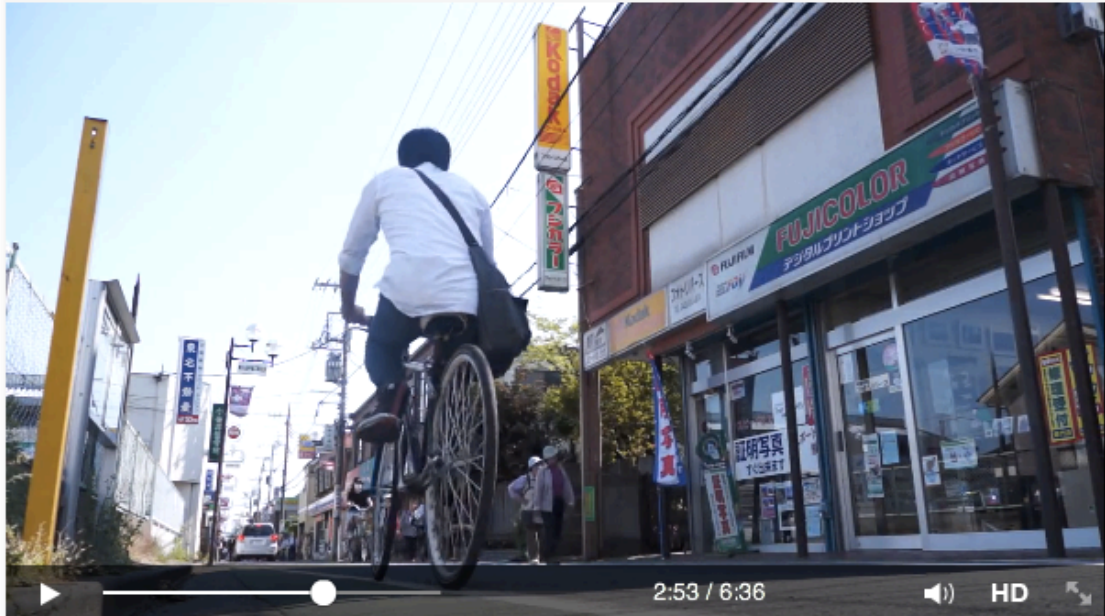
Because the 3rd documentary was well received by audience, it was selected to appear on the Vietnamese Youth and Student Association in Japan's Facebook fanpage. On Facebook fanpage, the post received in total 150 Facebook "likes" and 34 "shares" (Figure 4-9). This statistics did not take into account the number of "shares" and "likes" on other posts, such as people sharing YouTube link on their personal Facebook page and on Google+ account.

So overall, audience's response for the topic and content is positive. It shows that Vietnamese audience have strong demand for Japan-related content, especially documentary to showcase student life as Japanese education is gathering attention in Vietnam right now.

【Một ngày ở Nhật Bản】 - Bạn Mạnh Khôi

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VYSA

【Cuộc sống du học sinh】

Dear cả nhà, bạn Thủy Trần, một thành viên của VYSA (Đạo diễn chương trình VYSA's Got talent 2013) đang thực hiện series các phim tài liệu "Một ngày ở Nhật Bản".

Series phim nhằm đưa hình ảnh về các hoàn cảnh sống khác nhau của học sinh, sinh viên và cộng đồng người Việt sống tại Nhật một cách chân thực và gần gũi nhất.

... See More — with Thủy Trần and Kjo Mạnh Khôi in Tokyo, Japan.

[Like](#) · [Comment](#) · [Share](#) · [Edit](#) · May · 🌐

👤 Trần Thanh Huyền, Vananh Nguyen, Buif Xinh and 60 others like this.

💬 33 shares

ⓘ Allowed on Timeline ▾

Posted by Thủy Trần [?]

Shared with: 🌐 Public

📌 Tag This Video

📍 Edit Location

📅 Change Date

Download HD

Download SD

Edit This Video

Embed Post

Figure 4-9: Promotional post for the 3rd documentary on Facebook Fanpage

<https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?v=839787089382542>

4.4 Overall Evaluation

Since the research was conducted by using 3 prototypes, it is important to compare the effectiveness of each prototype as a whole. The author first looked at video sharing and compared the number of shares for each documentary.

Shared by	Prototype 1	Prototype 2	Prototype 3
Friend & Family		✓	✓
Unknown audience			✓
Sharing platform		Facebook	Facebook, Google +

Figure 4-10: Sharing effect of 3 prototypes

The chart above showing sharing effect of 3 prototypes (Figure 4-10). For prototype 1, there is no share on social network after promotional posts. This can be explained by the lack of proper editing and footage which makes the film less appealing to audience. For prototype 2, the film was shared by several people, consistent with audience's positive reviews. However, all the viewers who shared the film are friends and family of the subject. Their posts are more personal, such as introducing about their family members and their life in Japan. In such case, it is not possible to say the film is appealing to general public because the other audience did not share the film. The last prototype, however, has been successful in getting shares on social media. The post was shared not only by family and friends, but also unknown audience who find the content intimate and interesting. For prototype 3, friends who shared it often put comments in the shared post that they learnt something new about the character. Although they have been friends for so

long but they did not know how his life in Japan would be and by watching the film, they learnt a lot about their friends. Some find the film very personal and touching.

Prototype	Length (min)	Estimated Min. Watched	Ave. view duration (min)	Ave. percentage view
1	3.00	3,362	2:05	65%
2	10.00	4,268	5:22	52%
3	6.30	9,272	4:11	64%

Figure 4-11: Audience Retention, YouTube Analytics

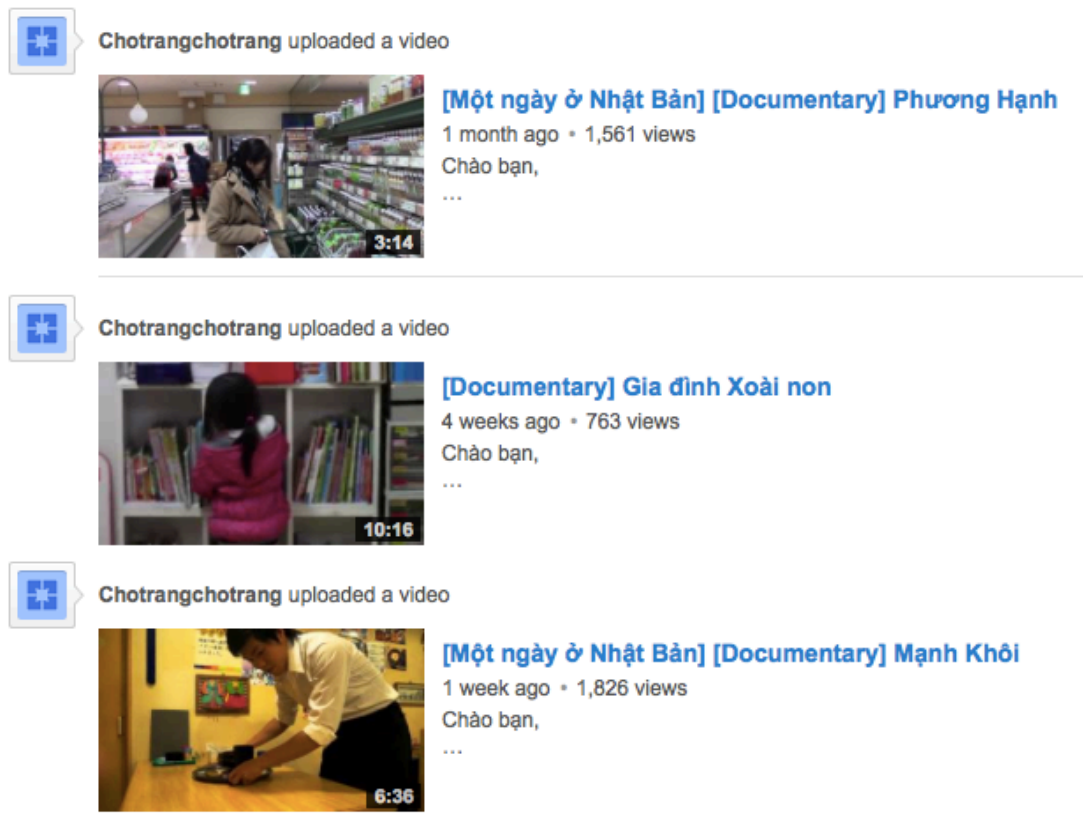
One more check on audience retention rate was conducted using YouTube analytics (Figure 4-11). Overall, all 3 documentaries have the retention rate of 50%, which is good enough and proves that this kind of content lures audience's attention. Of the 3 documentaries, the first and third documentaries get higher retention rate of 65% and 64%. The second video, since it is 10 minute long, might be too long-winded for audience and only gets retention rate of 52%. Combined with audience feedback, the author thinks that video length of 5-6 minutes is reasonable in balancing between the entertaining aspect versus proper story telling of a documentary. Therefore, prototype 3 is chosen as the one with reasonable and recommended length.

5 Conclusion and Recommendation for Further Research

It has always been the author's aspiration to share valuable information to a lot of people so that they can make use of the information and have a better life. Since the author's passion is marketing and film making, it would be wonderful if the passion and objective can be combined altogether. Documentary has been considered as not very interesting and not for young people as the topics are usually depicted in a formal way. This thesis's goal is to create a new type of documentary which connects with youth, portrays their lives, mindset, brings them valuable information and is within their reach.

The boom of network technology and its related service has changed the world. Communication method has developed into another level and instant communication has become a norm. Together with that, people receive information from more channels than ever. It is no longer the mainstream media as the major and most effective media tool. Nowadays the introduction of social media has brought the world closer and closer. People have more choices, people become more selective of what they want to watch. At the same time, they are willing to share their interested content more than ever because it is just a click away to do so.

What makes a store compelling would be the foremost and utmost question a documentarian should have in mind. A great story comprises of several factors, such as good character, insightful interview and meaningful and relevant take-away. Knowing that, a home digital video producer could do as well as a professional producer in making good quality documentaries and get audience engaged.



*Figure 5.1: The 3 documentaries posted on YouTube with number of view counts as of
 15 June 2014*

<https://www.youtube.com/user/Chotrangchotrang>

Personal stories are always interesting and fascinating in its own way. It is because audience can understand, feel and relate to their selves better. It needs not to be something superior in order to attract audience and make them love the film. Private media has come its way. If we look at various social networking sites on the internet, we can see the trend of personal video blogging has been on the rise. It would be nice to make documentary with the essence of a personal story, a combination of a formal way of storytelling and an intimate individual aspect. This new style of documentary, especially made in a series of different people sharing different experience, can be use for promoting local lifestyle of a new culture.

For the particular case of promoting Japanese culture to Vietnamese, from the research conducted, it can be shown that documentary showing daily life of Vietnamese people in Japan is appealing not only to people living in Vietnam but also to Vietnamese people in Japan. This is because they can sympathize more for having similar experience, or they can learn something new from the environment they live in. In terms of content development, it is shown that Vietnamese youth are particularly interested in knowing more about student life in Japan. The filmmaker can feature lives of various Vietnamese students in Japan as a way to promote Japanese education.

It is also important to note that, audience is becoming more and more selective in choosing media content. Therefore, the filmmakers should identify target audience when making documentary and doing promotion. They can do so by looking for communities of their audience on social media and post their documentaries on these platforms. In Vietnam, one of the popular platforms for people to interact is Facebook. People who are interested in Japanese culture use Facebook to share interesting stories about Japan and exchange idea and opinion on Japanese lifestyle. Using Facebook to promote Japan-related contents to Vietnamese audience is effective in that sense.

With regards to designing documentary for social networking sites, the length of the video matters. Short video is preferable because audience retention is low for digital content. Audience also like to listen to instrumental music rather than vocal music because vocal music seems to distract them from the main content itself. In this case, video length of 5-6 minutes is advisable because it can balance out the entertaining factor and a proper story telling. This is of course varies from case to case, depending on the kind of footage, content and story available at hand.

Voice narration and original audio is effective in telling a compelling and intimate story. This is particularly important in this case when the purpose is to promote local genuine culture through featuring daily life of ordinary

people. Voice narration and original audio bring out originality and intimacy to audience and enhance the story telling experience. In addition, the use of instrumental music is more effective than vocal music because it will not distract viewers from the main core content. However, this does not mean vocal music cannot be used in documentary film. It can be used smartly to match the content of the film and improve the information absorbing process.

Since this thesis is completed with the case study of promoting Japanese culture to Vietnamese people, similar theses can be done for other countries' pairs. The topic is similar but the execution process would be very different because each culture has different trait and needs lots of research to find the best approach.

For this same topic, additional activities can be experimented. For example, instead of making only documentary, creator can think of making a page on social media and upload pictures and text content. That means creating a comprehensive content provider for audience. Text and picture have their own advantage in conveying message and deliver information. Moreover, by having own page, audience can interact more with filmmaker. While on Facebook, the old posts are almost irretrievable, making own social media page can help to avoid that problem and make the process of collecting and analyzing audience information easier.

Additionally, audience can be the one who provide the content. Audience would be more comfortable sharing their stories intuitively and willingly. Other users would be more interested in interacting directly with the main subject of a story or a documentary. This approach could help to enhance the overall experience and make the ultimate purpose of promoting culture more fulfilling.

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