

CREATING FOR THE INTERNET: NEW DIRECTION FOR FILM DISTRIBUTION AND EXHIBITION

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Abstract

If films are made for people to see, then one cannot think of film production without simultaneously thinking of film distribution. Film production is the process of making a film, while film distribution is a system that makes the film available for people to watch either through marketing or exhibition. Film over the years has been made for and distributed through different media; such available media have over the years made distribution and exhibition opportunities very difficult and expensive for independent or upcoming filmmakers. However, the advent of the internet has changed the practice. This paper therefore, discusses film distribution and exhibition on the internet in general. It considers the internet as a new medium for filmmakers to market and exhibit their films, as well as the opportunities the internet brings to filmmakers. It looks at the idea behind making film contents such as, short films, short documentaries, and web series or webisodes – for the internet. It inclusively, attempts to shed light on the distribution system of film content on the internet and the making of monetary profits off such posted content. conclusively, this paper looks at the internet as the new direction for 21st century film distribution and exhibition.

Key Words: Creating, Internet, Film, Distribution, Exhibition

Introduction

Man, over the years, have passed information to each other and entertained each other using various means such as face – to – face, writing, prints, drawings, and so on before the advent of communication and entertainment through visual images. “Communication by visual images has fascinated man throughout the ages. After creating rudimentary depictions of motion, man sought a means of making the replication more realistic” (Donahue, 1987, p. 3). This search for realistic replication of motion brought about the practice of film production, which is the process or, better still, the art of creating a film from start – development stage – to finish – distribution stage.

Bobker (1979) indicates:

The art of film requires the successful combination of two distinct groups of elements: (1) the theatrical elements by which the film is made (camera, lighting, sound, action and editing), and (2) the aesthetic elements that transform the craft into an art (p. vii).

Film distribution deals with making films available for audiences' consumption. It is the duty of a distributor or a distribution company and not the film production studio/company to distribute films. Film distribution is meant to help the film achieve its aims by becoming available to the public and to make profit. Film distribution, according to Cones (1992), is “the selling or licensing of a motion picture in various markets along with the advertising and promotion of the film” (p.147). Donahue (1987) believes:

...film must be viewed by as many people as possible for its potential power of communication to be fully realized. Whether the motivation for production is communication, financial reward, or aesthetic, the more people who see a picture, the greater the film's opportunity to be successful in achieving its aim. (p. 1)

There are many ways a film makes money and these ways are through worldwide licensing of the film, which include: theatrical exhibition; non-theatrical exhibition such as viewing in military bases, airplanes, hotels, etc; cable and satellite television; commercial television networks; local commercial television stations; and reproduction on video cassettes (including VCDs, DVDs, BluRays) for home video use. Money is also made on films from licensing ancillary or subordinate or supplementary rights of a film for creation of merchandises, books, sound track album, etc. (Cones,1992).

The Internet as a New Medium for Film Distribution

Film or motion pictures over the years have been created for media, mostly television and cinemas, that make film production very expensive and very difficult for filmmakers who are starting up. Filmmakers who have been making film but want to switch from one filmmaking role to the other, and filmmakers who want to build their show reel in order to get filmmaking job(s) in the highly competitive film industry. “Tens

of thousands of people want to be film-makers and the industry can only support a few" (Morgenstern, 2014). This part of the paper discusses why the internet is the most favourable medium for filmmakers that are starting up and filmmakers in general.

For a television station/network to consider buying or broadcasting a film or video, in whatever form it may be made in, one must first ensure it meets up with existing programming policies of the network/station. A proposal must then be submitted to the station and the waiting begins. After weeks of waiting, if a filmmaker is lucky, an opportunity is given to the filmmaker to pitch the idea to the bosses of the category the submitted video or film falls under. For one's film/video to be eventually chosen, there are a lot of factors the bosses pitched to have to consider, such as, the audiences – core and target, profit the station stands to make, if it will appeal to a set number of people they believe such film/video should appeal to, and the list goes on.

Brown (2014) asserts:

the mandate to appeal to the widest possible audience is often why so much television station is bland and derivative. Cable has more freedom but it is still restricted by the taste of their audience, the channel's branding choice, potential advertiser's objections, and government regulations, on and on (p. 15).

For instance, Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) Television's (n. d) criteria for evaluation and acquisition of programs include:

The schedule requirements; The ABC Charter; whether the program suits one of the scheduled established time slots (Note that good programs can be rejected if there are no time slots for them); The quality of the production; The program's relevance to Australian viewers, the program's appeal to a demographic; The program's adherence to their editorial guidelines; Whether the program is innovative in its style or content.

TV stations/networks in general (except maybe newer ones that are hungry for contents; Even in their hunger for content they still have such criteria but may not be as firm as the established one) have such criteria, some have worse. This kind of criteria gives the author the opinion that, for one to participate in the filmmaking game for long, a long list of professional show reels must be in your portfolio, as well as having luck on one's side to get your film or video to be acquired by television stations.

However, with the increasing popularity of the internet and advancement in technology, things have now changed for filmmakers. This change may have begun in the 1990s and 2000s with the emergence of video sharing websites like shareyourworld.com in the 1990s, YouTube and Yahoo video etc in the 2000s, and the manufacturing of camcorders, DSLR cameras, camera phones, laptops, computers with pre-installed editing software, etc. The time has now come for filmmakers, the ones that are hungry for success in the filmmaking discipline, to practice their art the way they want to without the many restrictions imposed by existing media house policies, without having to submit proposals and waiting for long periods, without having to pitch their ideas to bosses in TV stations/networks, and waiting for their idea/film/video to be acquired before they can start making film contents for thousands and millions of audiences. All one needs as an emerging filmmaker or director is to get inspired.

Brown (2014) indicates:

"The reasons to create films for the internet, as opposed to creating for other film outlets, are nearly as varied as the internet itself. But the reasons are all linked, in a sense, by one word: opportunity" (Brown, p. 14).

Brown also believes and asserts that, there are various opportunities the internet offers to filmmakers, and those opportunities include: creative opportunity, financial opportunity, career opportunity, exposure opportunity, and improvement opportunity.

14. **Creative Opportunity:** The internet "allows you to create the kind of content you would want to watch and seek out an audience with similar taste" (Brown, 2014, p. 15). It also gives you the chance to "create new forms of cross-platform storytelling".
15. **Financial Opportunity:** Video sharing websites share whatever profit they make from advertisers on a video with the creator of the video. "It is entirely possible to take in enough ad money to pay for ongoing production..."
16. **Career Opportunity:** Film studios that give opportunity to unproven talents rarely exist, and to be a proven talent in the film industry may easily take many years. You usually will have to start from

the scratch – fetching coffee for top crew members, and you would have spent many years before you finish paying your dues and have the chance to start making your own films. “On the internet, however, all that matters is your work. You create your series, make your webisode, post them online, and let the audience decide if you are ready to direct or not”. This kind of opportunity is not only for aspiring filmmakers, it is also for “working film and video professionals who want to stretch their creative boundaries”.

17. **Exposure Opportunity:** Popularity that will take many years for you to attain through traditional media outlets, on the internet, it will happen in a matter of months or even less. All that matters on the internet is the size of followers one has on his/her platform and how fast the video/film can be viewed and redistributed within a period. This sort of opens the opportunity for creative and talented filmmakers to be instantly famous and influential based on the degree of receptivity of their work.
18. **Craft Improvement Opportunity:** It gives writers the chance to see their stories on screen instead of an unmade script, and also help upcoming writers to continuously practice their craft and grow in it.

“The internet provides unlimited opportunities for anyone with the desire to create video content” (Brown, 2014, Pp. 14-17).

Making Film Content for the Internet

To get equipment for filming used to be a very big deal before advancements were made in technology, and also before the advent of the internet as a medium for sharing video contents. With the invention of Digital Single-lens Reflex (DSLR) cameras, camcorders, smart phones, and computers with pre-installed editing software, one does not need an Arri Alexa or a Red epic, or any 2k or 4k recording camera, or Avid studio or Adobe premiere, to shoot and edit a film or video to be distributed on the internet. All one needs to do is to be innovative and savvy with the plethora of technologies one has access to. Brown (2014) explains:

You don’t need a million-dollar budget or a Hollywood studio full of equipment to do it. Anyone with a digital camera and an ordinary computer has all the equipment that he needs right now to make a web series (or any form of film for the internet). (p. xviii)

Therefore, this part of the paper discusses how to make shorts such as short films, short documentaries, and web series – for the internet.

1. **Short Film:** A short film is a film that is forty minutes long or below, including credits. For most film festivals, it is advised that short films be kept between ten to fifteen minutes, or less, including credits. This is deemed the best because it is believed that such films can easily fit into the festival’s viewing schedule. For internet purposes however, there are no general rules regarding length, a short film could be said to be in any length of time that is not the same as that of a feature film (above forty minutes). Film production, no matter the form, begins with an idea. With the idea, a research is developed, a storyline is prepared, followed by a scene breakdown, then write the script. “Whatever the genre, it is important to be able to create a written representation of your idea, the script” (Rea & Irving, 2001:2).

Writing a short film script is not as easy as it seems, one of the things that makes it difficult is the limited amount of time you have to pour out all the information you need to pour out. This makes a lot of writers, most especially the less experienced ones, say more and show less or show more and say less, which is regarded as the biggest flaw of a film script. Yes, it is important for one to have a bit of exposition in a short film script, but make sure the exposition is efficient i.e. spend as little time as possible to give your audience as much background story that is needed to understand the characters and the situation they find themselves. Also, keep your short film script as simple as possible.

Rea and Irving (2001) posit:

The most common mistake novices make is trying to explore complicated or grandiose ideas that are more suited for a feature film format. They want to say it all in 10 minutes. The short film idea doesn’t have the time to explore more than one topic. It needs to be focused and specific. Simple is best (p. 2).

Film festivals used to be the only and, can be said to be, the traditional avenue for exhibiting and distributing short films. Each film festival has its own criteria of what they believe makes a good short film. The subjective nature of short film exhibitors as to what makes a good short film makes

it frustrating for many filmmakers, mostly the uprising ones, to want to make shorts, and it also makes it difficult for them to get audience to watch their shorts (if they eventually succeed in making one). What is important is for filmmakers to become aware of the standards of each film festival and try as much as possible to work towards such goals without compromising their creative process.

Advancement in technology has made film production and exhibition/distribution easy and affordable, which has now made many young filmmakers ignore the value that high production value adds to a short film. No matter how low-budget your short film is, it is good to strive as much as you can to get people who are good and confident in specific aspects of filmmaking on board the project so that they can help you add their creativity and expertise to the project, which will make the film look better than its worth. Some filmmakers, because they believe they are good and confident in various aspects of filmmaking, want to do every role or almost every role themselves; but filmmaking does not work that way. Since filmmaking is regarded as a collaborative process, there is no need for a filmmaker to try to do it all by himself or herself. It is better to make a film with various sources of creativity put together as one than to make a film with just one source of creativity.

That the internet does not have a gatekeeper does not mean that, as a filmmaker you should make and distribute substandard or low value films. It is important for filmmakers to remember that, shorts are also used as an avenue to experiment on new styles for bigger/feature films, to continue to practice one's art, to build show reels, and to open doors for bigger projects. Therefore, whatever is worth doing, is worth doing well.

2. **Short Documentary:** Also known as mini-documentary; a short documentary is seen by some as a way of promoting a business or organisation, some others see it as an alternative to a feature length documentary when there is no time or budget for feature length documentary. No matter how you see a short documentary, just bear in mind that the length of a documentary does not determine the purpose it must serve. A documentary film presents an overview of central issues" (Aufderheide, 2007, p. ix). The purpose a documentary film serves is determined by the genre of the documentary. Nichols (2001) believes that, every film is a documentary, and that there are two kinds of film – Documentary of wish-fulfilment and Documentary of social representation. The first is regarded as fiction film and the latter is regarded as a non-fiction film or what we know as a documentary. Nichols states,

These films give tangible representations about aspects of the world that we already inhabit and share. They make the stuff of social reality visible and audible in a distinctive way, according to the act of selection and arrangement carried out by the filmmaker. They give a sense of what we understand reality itself to have been, of what it is now, or of what it may become. These films also convey truth if we decide they do. (Pp. 1-2)

Because of the various views/perspectives of documentary, it is hard to tie its meaning down to a definite definition without finding at least a clause in the definition. However, Aufderheide (2007) proffers the following views as regards the defining of what a documentary is or should be:

A documentary has been defined and redefined over the course of time, both by makers and by viewers. Viewers certainly shape the meaning of any documentary, by combining our own knowledge of and interest in the world with how the filmmaker shows it to us (p. 2).

Each documentary film has a style, and the style is based on the mode/genre the filmmaker intends to use. Nichols (2001), states six modes of documentary: *The Poetic Mode, The Expository Mode, The Observational Mode, The Participatory Mode, The Reflexive Mode, and The Performative Mode*. Hampe (1997), mentions the following as genres of a documentary – *History and Biography Documentary, Docudrama, Documentaries of Behaviour, Documentaries of Emotion, and Reality Videos*, while Aufderheide (2007) indicates the subgenres of documentary to be: *Public affairs, Government propaganda, Advocacy, Historical, Ethnographic, and Nature documentaries*. Though every documentary has its own distinctive style, they all share the same narrative structure. "They are stories, which have beginnings, middles, and ends; they invest viewers in their characters, they take viewers on emotional journeys" (Aufderheide, 2007, p. 12).

Back to mini-documentary; it is good to note that, the techniques, style, structure and approach

used for feature length documentary is the same as that, used for mini-documentary, the only difference is its length. Just like short (fiction) film, short documentary start with an idea which then grows into a script but; the scripting of a short documentary is very different from that of short film. Documentary scripts can be written in two ways – before shooting starts and after shooting finishes. In scripting a short documentary before shooting starts, after you must have done your research about the idea, first decide on what genre of documentary you want to use because the structure of your documentary will depend on it, do a treatment or outline of what you intend to shoot and the way you intend to shoot it, make sure what you have written and the way you have written it communicates your idea visually i.e. think in pictures, you have to explore your idea in detail as much as possible within the time you have, create possible characters and interview the identified characters or any other source that can provide accurate information (if interview is needed), figure out where you want the conflict to be and what emotions you want to create and at what point you want to create with such emotions. This kind of scripting is best for some genre of documentary. Hampe (1997) says:

If it's a historical documentary, a biography, or a re-creation or re-enactment of some event... the writer must gather and organize the information and then write a screenplay containing well-structured series of films that can be created on film or video. (Hampe, 1997, p. 119-120).

To write a short documentary script after shooting is complete, according to Fuller (n.d.) you have to log your tapes, review the key moments of the story from the rushes, create scenes, build a roller coaster i.e. write the script to build up powerful moments in the story, determine the villain and the hero in the story, outline the story in three categories – beginning (establish the core message and create curiosity), middle, and end. Hampe (1997) said:

If the production is a spontaneous documentary of some kind of behaviour or of a unique event, there may never be a script in the sense of screenplay, because no one knows ahead of time exactly what is going to happen. ...it is also true about spontaneous documentary that the writer may not be brought into the production until the last minute. (p. 120).

Note that the documentary script uses three column format. The first column is for time, the second column is for video, and the third column is for sound/audio.

NAME OF PRODUCTION:		
TIME	VIDEO/VISUAL	SOUND/AUDIO

Making a documentary might appear to be a very easy task. You just get a camera and you record it. Yes, it starts with the camera, but it is not all about the camera alone. Just as in fiction film, documentary requires good equipment and creative minds/crew that will help capture good pictures, good sound, set up light to create aesthetics, develop your idea into a script if you cannot do it yourself, compose music to create mood in case you cannot afford royalty for existing music, structure your rushes, cut your rushes together so that it can make sense to the audience, and so on. Documentary also has stages: **Preproduction** – the planning and organising phase, **Production** – the shooting phase, and **Postproduction** – the editing (visual and audio) phase. Hampe (1997) breaks down things done in each phase as follows, **Preproduction**: concept or idea creation, treatment and script preparation and approval, budget, scouting and preproduction planning, casting, scheduling, crewing, and equipment and supplies. **Production**: filming and recording, shooting ratio, film processing and sound transfer, viewing videotape footage. **Postproduction**: looking and logging, editing, review and approval of off-line or interlock, and sound mix.

In all, you should always remember that you are making the documentary for the audience, and every decision you make or everything you do should to a large extent solve the problem of what the audience will see. You should also note according to Aufderheide (2007):

Documentaries are about real life; they are not real life. They are not even windows onto real life. They are portraits of real life, using real life as their raw material, constructed by artists and technicians who make myriad decisions about what story to tell to whom, and for what purpose. (p. 2)

3. **Web Series:** A web series or webisode can be said to be a programme or segment of content that

its progressively sequential in arrangement is revealed episode by episode, which is meant for broadcasting on the internet, and has the capability of attracting viewers. Brown (2014) explained:

A webisode is an episode of television series designed for distribution on the internet. ...webisode [or web episode] is an individual instalment of an ongoing premise with recurring characters. (p. 2).

Like every other type of film, webisode also starts with an idea. An idea that is good enough to withstand the test of time, an idea with several branches and twists, an idea that will not end in episode one of season one. The next step is turning the idea into a bible. A web series bible or pitch bible is a document that helps you highlight what your series is all about. It contains, in general, the overall arc of the story, which are passed across through the Title page, the premise, the synopsis, the script treatment, character description, settings, concept art, visual description/images, log line, pilot script (if you intend to seek sponsors or investors or sales), storyboard (if it is available), themes, future episode log lines, and story springboards. The bible is “your chance to lay out the larger arc of the story, list examples of future episodes, and explain the broad themes your show will explore” (Poisson, n.d.). The bible is what the scriptwriters fall back on to remain on track with the story. Note that, some things in the pitch bible such as pilot script are done after most things in the bible must have been done. You then need a pilot episode.

A pilot episode is one episode, not an episode in the actual series, that can stand on its own, which serves as a test to measure how successful or entertaining the series could be, and it is also used as a marketing tool for the series. After writing a solid outline for your story's pilot script, the next thing to do is script the pilot episode. In scripting a pilot episode, you should use a screenplay format, which will serve as framework for filming the pilot, and will help to identify the location, time, props, scenery units, characters, etc, of each scene. “Screenplay format facilitates the process by which these crucial production elements can be spotted, highlighted and tracked” (Brown, 2014, p. 72). Brown believes that, each scene of the script/screenplay of a webisode is a mini-story of its own so it should also follow the beginning, middle, and end structure and rhythm. Brown further suggests that, you need to decide how to make each scene work as its own self-contained little story, how much of the story you want to tell through dialogue and how much you want to tell through action, in what order you want to reveal pieces of the story, etc. Besides scenes, dialogue is another very important part of a series script. You have to make your dialogue convincing and believable, it should involve more than one person (it is not monologue but dialogue), it should not be formal, develop your dialogue around common ideas i.e. it should be focused and not forced, and it should be interactive. If dialogue is not well crafted it can take the audience out of the story, and that is not what you want for your series. Dialogue seems pretty easy since we all talk, but it is one of the hardest things to write because it should not be a representation of everyday conversation. Remensnyder (n.d.) says:

film dialogue isn't a representation of the conversations we have with our co-workers or the cashier at the grocery store. What your character says should be a condensed version with very specific goals and meanings just under the surface (p. ii).

It is good to note that dialogue for series has a little bit more exposition than short films but then it still remains the focus that drives the plot forward. Brown (2014) says:

Dialogue pushes the story forward, characterizes the speaker and perhaps the person he is talking about, disseminates exposition and facts the audience needs, to understand the story, captures a perfect sense of the times and environments of the script, and somehow seems to do all this effortlessly and naturally... (p. 80).

Note that, all the aforementioned for the pilot script are same for all the episode scenes. The creator must make sure that, each episode has an arc of its own, and each episode ends with a cliff hanger. Obenson (2014) suggests to “make each episode short, memorable and keep audience hungry for more”.

Planning is key to a successful production. Be well prepared before going into production stage. Make sure you know what you have access to in terms of production value, avoid having too much characters if you can, keep the number of locations to the barest minimum, and minimise your use of dialogue i.e. show and don't tell. Although there's no rule to how long an episode of a webisode should go; but then in a world where people multi-task a lot, mostly when on the internet, you shouldn't expect people to stay glued to your film for too long so keep each episode short. Brown (2014) posits that, “The length can be whatever

you choose, from a quick joke to however long you can hold the audience" (p. 1). When planning, have in mind that "as with filmmaking, and TV series, the same rules for engaging audiences apply: story, script, acting, directing, cinematography, editing, etc. And knowing who your target audience is" (Obenson, 2014).

Distribution of Film Content on The Internet and the Making of Profit

Film distribution use to be a very big deal for makers of short film or short video content because the only market available for them to distribute and showcase their videos are film festivals, and film festivals have strict selection criteria, which make the chances of their short film being selected very slim. Anyone whose film is not selected for exhibition has lost that year. The film goes back to the person's shelf and probably remains there forever.

The internet has made distribution of film content so easy that makers of short video or film contents do not really think of how to distribute their films nowadays as it used to be the case before the 2000s. Rather, they think more of how many views will their films get, how can they make their films get more views, which one out of all the distribution websites such as YouTube, AOL Video, Yahoo! Video, IMDB, MSN Video, Blip, Met cafe, Facebook, Dailymotion, Vimeo, Google Video, and so on – available to them is best for distributing the kind of videos they want to make. Zhu (2001) agrees with this when he says:

With the Internet, movie producers and studios may bypass traditional distributors and deliver movies directly to end consumers through new technologies such as video-on-demand (VOD). New broadband connection, digital file compression, streaming and encryption technologies would make video-on-demand a viable reality. (p. 273)

This part of the paper examines distribution of shorts – short film, short documentary, and webisodes – using the internet.

To **successfully distribute shorts**, marketing has to be given high consideration, and promotion is key to successful 'shorts' marketing. **Film promotion** deals with raising awareness for film and getting audience interested in seeing the film. Since shorts are mainly made for the internet, it is more logical to promote shorts on the same platform. It is important to go all out when promoting a short; hype it and make a lot of noise about it because the louder the noise the more number of people that will hear. "...let as many people as possible know about it and then get them to tell 10 friends, who tell 10 other friends, who tell 10 more friends that they should watch your show" (Brown, 2014, p. 160).

There are various avenues on the internet to promote shorts such as email, website, online forum, blogs, online media outlets, social media, and even dating websites. These avenues will help you build fan base, which is very necessary for getting many people to view your shorts and increase ways your shorts come up when searched on search engines. **Create email address** solely for your productions, and ensure you grow your email list by getting people to sign up to receive emails about your productions from you, and then treat them as part of the production by feeding them with news about the production at hand. **Creating a website** for your shorts, if you can afford to, will be great because it will to a large extent make it easier for your productions to pop-up when searched on the internet. Whether you can afford to create a website for your shorts or not, you should **create social media handles/accounts** and or **pages** for your short film so that people can easily read more detailed information about your productions any time they want to, and they can easily find your production on social media websites. Join as many **online forums** related to filmmaking in general, independent filmmaking, short films, your target audience, the issues your productions deal with, and share information about your shorts. **Get bloggers** that you are sure have heaps of people visiting their blogs to write and post a review of your production on their blog, which will create extra awareness for your productions. You can also write press release for your production and get online media outlets to publish it in their dailies/weeklies/monthlies so as to get more people interested in seeing your productions. Social media sites and applications such as Facebook, twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, google plus, WhatsApp, blackberry messenger etc are great tools for creating awareness for your productions. With the availability of fan pages, tags, channels, broadcast messages, groups, and group chats that you can create on these sites, applications and more, there is no limit to the number of people one can inform and reach about your productions within short periods and at next to no cost. "...the Internet's ability to narrowcast (transmit data to selected individuals) and reach niche audiences has opened up tremendous opportunities for individuals and organizations to spread their messages or content" (Rea & Irving, 2010, p. 322). These acts of building and growing prospective viewers for your shorts on the internet are what Schepp and Schepp (2009) call seeding and fuelling, which comes in two versions – organic and inorganic. According to them the organic version is the one you do yourself, and it is free while the inorganic version is the one you pay people to do. Now your choice will be determined by whether you have the time to do it yourself or you have the resources to pay someone to do it for you. All you need to be is hard working and devoted to

promoting your shorts, and building and growing the fan base built.

Brown (2014) states:

if you want people to know about your work, if you want to have a career in the arts, then you must be as serious and dedicated to marketing your work as you were to creating it.
(p. 161)

After promoting your short, the next step is to make the fans you have acquired and more people see what you have been selling to them, and probably make money out of it. It is widely believed that making film for the internet is done most especially for exposure and there are no high prospects of making money out of it but it is the opinion of this author that such claims can be untrue. There's high prospect of making money by making shorts for the internet if you understand the medium well and you can play your card well enough. According to Wikipedia (2018), some upcoming filmmakers such as the group *Big Fantastic* formed by four individuals – Douglas Cheney, Chris McCaleb, Ryan Wise, and Chris Hampel – did not only make a name for themselves by making series solely for the internet but they have also made a fortune out of it. Their first webisode *Sam Has 7 Friends* released in 2006 on YouTube, Revver, iTunes, and its own website samhas7friends.com made money from pre-roll ads after they moved the content from Revver after the death of Revver, and from downloads on iTunes where it received more than 10,000 downloads a day throughout the period it ran. The web series also paved way for them to sign a contract with Vuguuru, a production company owned by Michael Eisner, a former CEO of Walt Disney.

Though not everyone can hit the level of success the aforementioned group hit with short webisode's made from the internet, but with good planning and understanding the way the internet works for film distribution and exhibition, you can make enough money to at least foot the bills of production, which could range from a festivals winning short film to an independent feature film or TV series or even a big web series. To begin with, you should know which websites or online mediums are available for you to distribute and exhibit your shorts, what each medium has to offer you in terms of revenue and exposure, criteria you should meet for you to get paid for publishing your short on the site, how many potential views or downloads will your video have, and so on. For some online mediums such as YouTube, the amount of views your short generates determines if you will get paid and the amount you will get paid for it, and for some like iTunes, the downloads determine the pay. So you have to be wise with your choice. For a start, most experienced film makers will advise you to use YouTube as your medium of distribution and exhibition because it is the largest video platform on the internet, and because of its statistics.

Giles (2011) posits:

The YouTube audience is generous, exceeding 2 billion views a day.. (it) has a broad age range..., and is evenly divided between women and men. And all these users come from all over the world. (p. 40).

To distribute your videos through YouTube, you need a google account, which is the same as your Gmail account, and if you don't have a google account create one at gmail.com or youtube.com. Watch, like, and share videos on YouTube regularly, and join as many YouTube channels as possibly to increase your presence on YouTube and make you an active member of YouTube community. Upload your video to your YouTube channel and ensure you write a catchy description after you must have chosen the correct category and tag. There are various ways of making money off your YouTube video that, according to Schepp and Schepp (2009), include: Redirecting, which is using YouTube Video to drive viewers to a landing page where you sell products (landing pages are product websites links attached to your video); Google Ad Scene for video, which has two types for Video program, InVideo – ads that appear like championing videos at the bottom 20% of the screen – and text overlays – google text ads are placed along that same part of the viewing screen; Partnering With YouTube, your video has to have a lot of views and your channel, a lot of subscribers before YouTube can contact you to be a partner; Video Advertising, which is having in-stream advertisements that can come in one or more of these four formats – pre-roll, interactive pre-roll, overlay, and non-overlay – in your video; Selling Your Own Ads, you can source for ads that will appear with your video and you and YouTube will split the income 50/50; Being a Consultant, which happens when you have achieved a good amount of success making videos for YouTube, and people that wish to achieve success like you begin to pay money to consult you; Joining Affiliate Programs, which allows you incorporate product links and product popups for Amazon products (or other products) right in your videos and when people follow the links to Amazon's site and buy things you earn referral fees; Raising Capital, popular videos are used for fund-raising and if yours is used, you will get paid; Promotional sponsorship, which is linking up with corporate partners through direct sponsorship or product placement deals; Product Placement Within Your Video: if your video is successful enough advertisers will pay you to plug their products, by mentioning

them or just including them within your videos; and also YouTube Screening Room: every Friday, YouTube screens four different films most of which have already played at international film festivals and it is rumoured that YouTube pays for the original content.

In all, it is not out of place to say success on YouTube comes from various sources, and your commitment to seeding and fuelling/building, and growing your fan base will play a huge role in your short's revenue success on Internet.

Conclusion

It is not out of place to say that this is the best period in human existence for filmmakers, most especially the upcoming ones. Everything you need to make a film and for people to watch the film is at your fingertips so go all out and make your voice as filmmaker heard. With the opportunities the internet gives and the easy access to filmmaking gears, there are no excuses for not making films. Just put in some hard work and dedication and you are on the right track to success.

In all, it is truly not easy to make your voice heard and to achieve success as filmmaker using the internet as medium but with proper knowledge of how the internet works as a medium for film distribution and exhibition, your voice will not only be heard, you will not only be artistically successful, you will also make money out of it, money that is enough to at least foot the bills of your next production.

Recommendations

Filmmakers should have in their minds that the process and time spent on making a film does not matter to the audience, what matters is the end product, so it is advised that enough time is taken to prepare and plan.

The creative success of a film does not really determine the income the film will make rather the manner a film is marketed and promoted determines, to a great extent, the level of financial success the film will achieve.

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