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AY2023/24 Semester 2

**YouTube as a Carrier of Cultural Heritage**

**Inception Report**

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6. **Project Objectives**

This project aims to investigate the role that videos on YouTube play in preserving and transmitting Cambodian cultural heritage, particularly among youth aged 5-17. Given the growing adoption of the Internet and popularity of social media in Cambodia, YouTube presents a great opportunity for reaching the younger generation, especially when there is a proper understanding of the advantages and potential pitfalls of using the platform for this. This project aims to suggest ways to support the community of Cambodian creators who produce child-friendly cultural content on YouTube.

Apart from analysing videos and channels that highlight Cambodian cultural heritage, both on its own and in relation to videos from other countries, this study investigates how YouTube is perceived as an educational tool by educators and families, and how content creators operate within both the online and the offline worlds. Content creators consulted will ideally specialise in various aspects of cultural heritage, from historical narratives to cultural landmarks, to increase the variety of perspectives on the kind of support that would be appreciated, if any.

1. **Methodology and Workplan**

This project will be carried out in three phases: Preparation, Fieldwork and Reporting.

* 1. **Preparation**

The Preparation phase involves learning more about various aspects of Cambodian cultural heritage, watching videos related to them and picking out the strengths and weaknesses of them based on the videos themselves as well as comparisons to other successful videos on YouTube that promote culture.

* + 1. **Preliminary Research**

Research begins with a literature review about how YouTube has acted as an archive and educational tool for cultural heritage for other cultures and other age groups. At the same time, by watching YouTube videos from channels that focus on Cambodian culture, observations can be made about what sets more successful channels apart from others. The success of a channel refers to its ability to spark interest and teach viewers something about culture, and will be measured by views, likes and the response of viewers as seen in the comments. 80 videos will be scored from 1 to 3 on a few qualities (lists subject to change):

To explain differences in:

1. View count
2. How often comments mention learning
3. How often comments mention interest in the topic

I am guessing we can use:

1. Topic
2. Full representation of the topic
3. Production value
4. Popularity of creator (subscriber count)
5. Personality of creator
6. Fast pace
   * 1. **Connecting with Creators**

I will reach out to content creators via their professional emails listed in their YouTube channels. These YouTube channels will belong to 4 large categories, with minor differences in their content. I foresee very few channels responding. Hopefully, there will a mixture of presentations and processes represented by the creators that I consult. Below is a non-exhaustive list of relevant YouTube channels:

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **No.** | **Channel Name** | **Category** | **Subscribers** | **Genre & Description** |
| 1 | [Rick Kh គោប្រាក់](https://www.youtube.com/@Rickkhcambodia) | Landmarks | 282K | Vlog, visiting cultural landmarks |
| 2 | [Doctor Sem Ranata](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC07tzG2X0uC9vQTPuZd2X6w) | 802K | Commentary, presentations about history of sites |
| 3 | [OverComplicated](https://www.youtube.com/@overcomplicated) | Literature and Folktales | 111K | Animation, more humorous |
| 4 | [Airplane Tales Khmer](https://www.youtube.com/@AirplaneTalesKhmer) | 744K | Animation, more serious |
| 5 | [SDACH CHAKK](https://www.youtube.com/@sdachchakk/videos) | Religion | 91.3K | Storytelling, about Buddhist tales and traditions |
| 6 | [Rumduol TV](https://www.youtube.com/@rumduoltv) | 321K | Educational, host visits Buddhist events and landmarks and explains its practices |
| 7 | [Polin Lifestyle](https://www.youtube.com/@polinlifestyle) | Traditional Lifestyles | 995K | Cambodian version of the Internet sensation Li Ziqi |
| 8 | [Primitive Tool](https://www.youtube.com/@PrimitiveTool), [Primitive Survival Tool](https://www.youtube.com/@PrimitiveSurvivalTool/videos) | 4.22M, 6.36M | Constructing buildings in the wild |

* 1. **Fieldwork**

Fieldwork will be conducted in Cambodia between 14 and 27 May, including observations, surveys and interviews.

* + 1. **Interviews with Creators**

In the interview, I wish to find out from creators:

* 1. Their aims in setting up their channels.
     1. What motivated them?
     2. Why YouTube?
  2. Their process of video production, which consists of:
     1. The creative process, e.g. selecting topics, writing the script, and
     2. The technical process, e.g. operating the camera, animating graphics.
  3. How they are supported as creators
     1. By: Cambodian authorities, the community, the platform etc.

In addition, I wish to observe their creative process and go behind the scenes, such that I can understand the issues faced by content creators more vividly. I may also be able to identify obstacles in production that creators themselves may not even be aware of, because they are so used to their processes.

* + 1. **Interviews with Families**

The interviews will consist of two parts. Any interactions with children will be overseen by parents. Only families with children between ages 10-17 can participate in the study.

Part 1: The family will be interviewed to find out the youths’ and parents’ perceptions of the Internet and YouTube and youths’ habits surrounding its use. I will also attempt to uncover perspectives on cultural education and the child’s interest in Cambodian culture in general.

Part 2: Only the children of the family will participate in this trial, to test how effective the videos are at engaging as well as educating them. The child is first asked about a topic related to Cambodian culture, like a certain historical landmark, to gauge their knowledge and interest in the topic. They will then be shown a video about it, before discussing the same topic again. This can demonstrate the effectiveness of transmitting information through YouTube videos. The child’s interest in the topic is also important. Finally, they will be asked what they enjoyed about the video and what can be improved. 4 videos will be selected from the wide pool, each child has a random chance of viewing each video.

* 1. **Reporting Phase**

Findings of this study will be synthesised in a report that outlines recommendations for how different groups, like NGOs, corporations, or the government, can support content creators in preserving and promoting cultural heritage, even if the recommendation is non-interference.

1. **Projected Work Schedule**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Task** | **Timeline (day in May)** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** | **5** | **6** | **7** | **8** | **9** | **10** | **11** | **12** | **13** | **14** | **15** |
| Correspond with YouTubers via email |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Watch YouTube videos |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Selection of videos to show |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Researching Cambodian culture |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Visit private schools |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Task** | **Timeline (day in May)** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **16** | **17** | **18** | **19** | **20** | **21** | **22** | **23** | **24** | **25** | **26** | **27** | **28** | **29** | **30** |
| Correspond with YouTubers via email |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Watch YouTube videos |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Door-to-door visits for families |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Meeting content creator |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Interviews with families reached through school |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

1. **Desk Review Documents**

No additional materials are planned to be consulted apart from the references for the Research Proposal and the YouTube videos I plan to watch.