MALD CAPSTONE

THE FLETCHER TV BLUEPRINT

SUBMITTED TO PROFESSOR MIHIR MANKAD

DHP 340 - INDEPENDENT STUDY

AHMAD RAZA

In fulfillment of the MALD Capstone requirement

APRIL 20, 2018

Executive Summary

This paper will examine the opportunity to develop a unique Fletcher-branded international affairs web series. This will include examining the current media landscape, particularly as it pertains to drivers of an increased focus on video content. It will also consider the current video resources at Fletcher, and how they pertain the the creation of a student-driven video initiative.

This paper will also highlight the process of developing the pilot episode of Fletcher TV, undertaken in the fall of 2017. This will include the positive outcomes from the process, along with lessons learned for any future endeavors in the video creation space. It will also examine a potential organizational structure for a future initiative that will help with ensuring a sustainable model that can overcome the high student turnover rate at Fletcher. Finally, it will examine questions of distribution as it pertains to the development of a future web series.

Introduction

On August 9, 2017, Facebook announced that it would be rolling out Watch, a new platform for watching videos on the social media site.[1] Facebook's move is part of a larger shift among media companies towards video content creation and sharing. While platforms such as YouTube and Snapchat have been specifically focused on videos from their inception, the recent commitment from Facebook to expand its video offerings (which began with its entrance into

---

[1] https://newsroom.fb.com/news/2017/08/introducing-watch-a-new-platform-for-shows-on-facebook/

Live videos)[2] signifies a larger shift in the social media industry towards focusing on video content and distribution.

In addition to this shift in emphasis on video distribution, these developments have also brought a greater focus on original content creation, particularly as a means to differentiate platforms in an increasingly crowded digital video space. To this end, Facebook has signed deals with Vox Media, BuzzFeed, and ATTN to create content specifically for Facebook Watch.[3] Netflix has also announced plans to spend up to $8 billion on original content by 2018.[4] Other tech companies that have announced plans to build original content include Apple[5], YouTube[6], Amazon, and Hulu.[7] Traditional media companies have also sought to enter the space, with Disney announcing its own media streaming service (as well as pulling all of its content from Netflix).[8] In a world of increasing competition for market share, one of the key drivers of platform differentiation has been original content.

The increased presence of technology companies getting involved in video distribution has important implications for the video content industry. It has led to a rapid shift in the value

---

[2] https://www.buzzfeed.com/mathonan/why-facebook-and-mark-zuckerberg-went-all-in-on-live-video?utm_term=.lfwwA3Jy1#.yfG92debG

[3] https://www.infomart.com/what-social-medias-shift-into-tv-like-content-means-for-marketers/

[4] https://www.theverge.com/2017/10/16/16486436/netflix-original-content-8-billion-dollars-anime-films

[5] https://techcrunch.com/2017/08/16/apple-said-to-be-spending-1-billion-on-original-content-in-2018/

[6] http://www.tubefilter.com/2017/10/16/youtubes-original-content-budget-netflix-sized/

[7] https://www.fiercecable.com/special-report/a-closer-look-at-billions-dollars-netflix-amazon-and-hulu-are-spending-original

[8] https://beta.techcrunch.com/2018/02/09/disneys-streaming-service-wont-have-r-rated-films/

chain, with cord cutting, or instances when viewers drop traditional cable TV services for online streaming options, with as many as 22 million customers estimated to drop traditional cable subscription for online streaming services in 2017.[9] This is coupled with newer avenues for watching videos, including smartphones and tablets. Under these circumstances, there is opportunity for new entrants to the video content creation space, and for increasingly niche markets to be served.

The rising demand for original video content has also been coupled by a decrease in costs for content production. The lower barrier for entry has allowed new firms to start creating content, as well as allowing corporations and large organizations to undertake more of their own video production in house. In February of 2018, United Airlines announced that it would shift its video content process in house, in order to bypass the long hours it took to coordinate with outside agencies.[10]

The rising demand for video content, coupled with the decreasing barriers to entry for video production, offer opportunities for new entrants in this market. This includes schools and universities, which have traditionally focused their academic output in journals or news sites. To that end, this paper will examine opportunities for The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy to produce exclusive international affairs video content.

Video Content at The Fletcher School

---

[9] http://bgr.com/2017/09/17/cable-tv-alternatives-dvr-youtube-tv-vs-fubo-2017/

[10] https://digiday.com/marketing/united-airlines-taking-video-content-creation-house/

The decreasing barriers for entry in video production and distribution provides opportunities for new actors to enter this space. This includes the Fletcher School, which has a reputation as a renowned graduate school of international affairs, but currently lacks a consistent, scheduled web series, or similar video production content, that highlights on the academic strengths of the school in a manner that is able to generate a consistent audience.

As of this writing, the Fletcher School's YouTube page is mainly focused on content pertaining to admissions, targeting potential students and applicants. This includes a series entitled 'Why Fletcher', as well as recordings of speeches from past commencement ceremonies. There is little evidence of a consistent video product that leverages Fletcher's distinguished body of faculty and students to further a conversation on international affairs, or develop Fletcher's brand equity in this space. The lack of content in the video space is unlike Fletcher's other academic material developed for the broader international affairs community, including Fletcher student journals (*The Fletcher Forum, Fletcher Security Review, PRAXIS*), *EconoFact* (published by the Murrow Center, with Fletcher professors serving as the executive editors), or Fletcher's Twitter handle, which highlights the writings, interviews, and publications of Fletcher-affiliated individuals in major online news outlets.

Another channel for public engagement at Fletcher is its Facebook page. Video is one component of the page, which also includes photos and posts highlighting various events and community members around the campus. For videos posted on the Facebook page, there are two types: live and pre-recorded. For the pre-recorded videos, there are two main categories of videos: another 'Why Fletcher' series that is mainly directed at potential applicants, along with interviews conducted by Dean Stavridis of various distinguished guests and professors. Both of

these have been published over a period of a few months, but do not follow a consistent schedule. The Fletcher public relations office is currently seeking to expand its video offerings into thought leadership on important international affairs topics, particularly through leveraging its faculty's expertise, with a series called In Focus. This is meant to broaden Fletcher's engagement with the foreign policy community, although it exclusively focuses on professors at the moment.

Another component of Fletcher's Facebook engagement is its live videos. This is a relatively new initiative, and can also be categorized into two different types of content: live streaming of entire events happening at Fletcher, which includes lectures, discussions, and debates. The second is interviews that are conducted live, and generally last about 8-12 minutes.

Another important element in Fletcher's engagement in the public discourse in through media appearances made by its faculty, chief among them Dean Stavridis. This includes appearing on national television networks, including Bloomberg, Fox, and MSNBC, while displaying the Fletcher brand. Other faculty members, including Nadim Shehadi and Sung-Yoon Lee, also make appearances to discuss issues pertaining to the Middle East and North Korea, respectively.

Of course, in addition to the aforementioned publications and channels, another key component of Fletcher's media engagement can be seen through the Murrow Center for a Digital World, which is an on campus organization that 'explores the intersection of media, cyberspace, and the state.'[11] A key part of the Murrow Center's work centers around relatively newer matters of particular relevance in international affairs, including digital and public diplomacy. Such a

---

[11] http://fletcher.tufts.edu/Murrow-Center/About

presence, and its affiliation with important media institutions such as CBS, demonstrates that Fletcher has the potential to enter and succeed in the video production space.

In the fall semester of 2017, the Murrow Center and a group of Fletcher students set out to produce a pilot episode for a new international relations web series that can bridge this critical gap in Fletcher's media engagement strategy, as well as provide a new outlet for students and faculty to further public dialogue in this important space. This paper with provide insights from the overall process of this endeavor, and lay out a blueprint for any future student-run web series that The Fletcher School seeks to undertake.

Fletcher TV: A Case Study

The idea to develop a web series came from the leadership of the Murrow Center. The idea behind developing a web series was that it would allow the Fletcher community to have a new medium for public engagement, as well as serve as a way to recruit new students who had an interest in the intersection of international affairs and media.

From the onset of developing the web series, it was made clear by the show's executive editor, Professor Edward Schumacher-Matos, that if a web series at Fletcher would succeed, it would require having a clear understanding of who the intended audience was. This included identifying who the competitors were in this space, leveraging Fletcher's unique expertise in the international affairs space, and creating a production would have a competitive advantage by focusing on a niche topic. It also meant setting a clear and consistent tone of the show, while keeping in mind the goodwill of the overall Fletcher brand.

Given that the overwhelming majority of the Fletcher student body is composed of millennials (ages 20-36), the leadership decided that any content produced would largely be intended to appeal to this demographic. In order to further refine the focus on the audience, it was decided to give a particular emphasis on an American millennial audience who have an interest in political content.

The decision to focus on a politically aware American millennial audience was driven by a combination of factors. Chief among them was, despite Fletcher's diverse international student body, the main language spoken was English, thus limiting the potential audience. Similarly, as a majority of the faculty and students working on the project had greater familiarity with American media culture, it was decided that it would be best to carve out a niche in a media landscape that was understood. Furthermore, given English's global reach to countries where it is not a first language, and the patterns of American media production reaching audiences beyond its own borders, the leadership figured that by focusing the content on an American millennial audience, it would also be able to draw in, by extension, a larger audience that is already familiar with similar American media productions. Having an international affairs focus would add to its potential appeal beyond solely its American audience. Having the intended audience narrowed down and specified was an important part of the production process, and helped ensure a focused view of the Fletcher TV, even as other elements of the product evolved.

Another important factor in setting a vision for the web series was to identify the main competitors in this space. This would help the team identify a tone that could differentiate Fletcher's web series from similar productions. Examples of video content producers that are

highly popular amongst an American millennial audience include AJ+[12], Buzzfeed[13], Vox, Mic.com and NowThis[14]. While there is a wide range of focus for these productions, with AJ+ and Mic relatively more focused on highlighting important issues of public interest, NowThis focused more on drawing viewership among a left-leaning audience through a clickbait style, Vox seeking to 'explain' important current issues and providing expert insight, and Buzzfeed having a mix of entertainment and news, it was clear that setting a tone and focus to cater to a specific target audience would be necessary for a Fletcher web series to gain traction.

The key factor for the Fletcher web series to differentiate itself from its competitors was to identify patterns in its competitors' production, and seek to set a format that would allow for a realization of its competitive advantage. One of the patterns that was prevalent in these productions was the usage of stock photos or footage from wire agencies, with text superimposed on it, along with stock music to set the tone of the clip. In order to create a degree of distinction with these productions, Fletcher TV's leadership decided to leverage an on campus TV studio, and have an on-camera anchor to host the show. This would allow for the quality of a traditional TV studio production, as well as provide for more human emotion coming across on the screen with the presence of an anchor (rather than relying on stock footage and music to set the tone).

Another decision made by the leadership team was to have a satirical tone for the web series. The idea behind it was partially the success of other, similar anchor-driven political satire

---

12 http://variety.com/2015/digital/news/how-al-jazeeras-aj-became-one-of-the-biggest-video-publishers-on-facebook-1201553333/

13 http://fortune.com/2015/06/03/facebook-video-traffic/

14 https://www.journalism.co.uk/news/distributed-news-how-nowthis-reached-one-billion-monthly-video-views-on-social-/s2/a612332/

shows, as well as another was to differentiate the video content with the aforementioned competitors popular among American Millennials. As this was still a pilot episode, it was unclear whether the satirical tone would only be an experiment, or if it would be a defining feature of the Fletcher TV brand.

Creating a web series with an anchor in studio combined with a satirical tone also has a great number of popular competitors from the traditional media space. This includes The Daily Show and Last Week Tonight, two major TV shows that are popular on highly rated channels, but also have an increasingly important presence on social media sites. The idea to differentiate Fletcher TV from these shows was to offer a program that was exclusively focused on stories and issues pertinent in international affairs. This would be in contrast with the other shows, which have a largely US focus, with less of a focus on stories pertaining to global affairs.

After narrowing in on an audience, deciding on the format, and setting the tone for the show, the next important step was recruiting a committed team to produce the show. For creating a pilot episode, there was a core team of eight individuals. This included current Fletcher students, along with recently graduated alumni. The team included members with a wide range of backgrounds, including journalism, video editing, and communications. One of the students was given academic credit for participation, the two alums were provided monetary compensation, while the rest of the team participated on a voluntary basis.

The process for crafting stories was to be largely reporter driven. This meant that individual reporters were responsible for writing up stories, creating scripts, and editing their videos individually (with some assistance on video editing from team members with greater

technical expertise and experience). This approach was decided on in order to best leverage the subject matter expertise of the individual reporters as they developed their respective stories.

The initial meetings focused on assigning topics for stories, and having reporter submit drafts on their chosen topics. Stories were meant to be current, focused on international affairs (or relevant current affairs from an international perspective), and to have a degree of humor or sarcasm behind them. After deliberation, it was decided that the topics would be: the North Korean nuclear crisis, the rise of secessionist movements in Europe, Canada's lack of commitment to UN peacekeeping, Xi Jinping consolidation of power in China, and the #MeToo movement. All of these stories were to be read by the anchor in studio. There was an additional segment on 'First World Problems' that was meant to have a reporter out of studio, asking Fletcher students for their opinions on this 'problem'.

The initial stage of the process revealed an issue that would continue to plague the production of the pilot episode - the lack of clarity on the tone of the show. While the format was set as 'anchor on screen' and the tone was to be 'humorous', the process of writing stories revealed that reporters had very different approaches to humor. They also had a variety of approaches to satire, with some stories more subtle in their approach, and others with a more 'in your face' style. This would pose a problem when it came down to setting a consistent tone throughout a single episode of the program. This issue revealed an important element of developing a satirical program, which is coming to an understanding of the character of the show. As the process continued, the team was able to narrow down the differences in tone across stories, reflecting the need for cross-story collaboration when creating a unified tone for a show with a brand new identity.

The issue of the differing tones and approaches to satire was compounded by the organizational structure of the production, which had individual reporters as largely responsible for their own stories through the process, including writing the script, and editing the video. There was a degree of input from the leadership team in the selection of the topic. However, when it came to making edits to the script, there were little changes made, which resulted in a wide range of tone. For the purposes of the pilot, this led to certain stories being dropped due to the lack of continuity in the overall show. Furthermore, due to conflicts in scheduling, the entire production team was not able to meet at the same time to discuss their stories, or share best practices, exacerbating the difference in tone. There was also pushback from the administration on the selection of stories, particularly as the production leveraged the Fletcher brand. Issues brought up were also partly due to the overall politicized climate of how American college campuses were viewed as having a largely left-leaning bent on current topics and issues.

Despite these issues, the production team was successful in piecing together a shortened pilot episode using some of the stories: the rise of secessionist movements in Europe, and Canada's lack of commitment to UN peacekeeping. The stories on Xi Jinping's consolidation of power in China, and the #MeToo movement were saved for a later time, and the North Korea and First World Problems segments were dropped due to their relative lack of coherence, and their lack of continuity for the entire show.

After the scripts were written and fact checked, they were ready for shooting. The episode was shot in Fletcher's TV studio, which is located on campus in Ginn Library. The studio is a small room, with a camera/teleprompter, background monitor, and a stand for notes. It is primarily used by the Dean and faculty for television interviews, or special messages recorded

by the dean. The studio itself has a limited capacity, with a spot for the presenter, and one for an assistant to run the teleprompter.

On the day of shooting, the issue of scheduling arose again as certain reporters were unable to come to the studio. This meant that the individuals who had written their stories, and were the primary drivers of the vision of the story, were unable to provide any sort of guidance to the anchor when filming. Similarly, the lack of familiarity of the reporters with script writing was also made clear as it became apparent that the script was largely unnatural, almost robotic. It read more like an op-ed piece in a newspaper, rather than a TV script.

Once principal photography of the segments had concluded, the unedited clips were then given to the individual reporters to make edits on. While some team members were brought on board to help with edits, they were assigned to assist individual reporters with the technical aspects of the project, with relatively limited scope for their own creative input in the overall process.

During the editing process, the aforementioned issues highlighted regarding the lack of consistent tone, and the awkward op-ed style scripts, became even more apparent. Additionally, the nature of the studio's set up (with only two people in the room, and design setup for formal television interviews) revealed another issue - the lack of energy in the clips due to the lack of a presence of a studio audience.

A studio audience in a key component of the anchor-driven format. This is largely due to two reasons - one pertaining to the anchor, and the other for the show's audience. For the anchor, a live studio audience gives real time feedback on the deliver of their performance - primarily to their laughter (or lack of) to specific jokes. This helps the anchor's delivery by pausing after a

punchline (to allow for the audience to take in a joke and laugh), and then continuing their segment once they have the audience's attention again. This is particularly important for a comedy series - and less relevant for a more toned down television interview, which is what the Fletcher TV studio was designed for. The lack of real-time audience feedback was made evident when going through the clips of the show, as the anchor was unsure when to pause for comedic effect, and when to just continue speaking.

The second benefit of having a studio audience, particularly for a comedy show, is that individuals are more likely to laugh out loud if others are also found to be laughing. This is the reason for why sitcoms film with a live studio audience - or add a laugh track in postproduction.[15] While it was possible to add a laugh track for Fletcher TV, the complications for the anchor's lack of feedback (and hence there being less opportunities to add a laugh track that would have authentically captured an audience's reaction to the punchline) would have given the overall production a less professional presentation. In lieu of adding a laugh track, the team decided to add uplifting background music to add to the energy of the show. This helped address the issue of a lack of energy, but didn't help set a more comedic tone for the show.

After hours of editing clips and condensing them into a four minute product, the pilot episode was screened at a board of advisors meeting for the Murrow Center. This board included various high level media executives, including representatives of CBS, Fox, and Netflix. This process helped our team receive valuable feedback from industry experts. While appreciating our efforts, and the direction of our product, one insight we received that would be critical for any

---

[15] https://www.nbcnews.com/health/body-odd/we-may-hate-laugh-tracks-they-work-studies-show-f1C6436923

future initiative is the difficulty of generating revenue from international affairs programming. This would need to be factored in for any future plans to expand the product, as it would mainly be sustainable through funding from the school, rather than generating the necessary revenue to become a self-sustaining entity.

Despite the various challenges highlighted above, there were many positive outcomes from the Fletcher TV project overall. Fletcher students were afforded a creative outlet to address complex issues relevant to international affairs. A group of eight students were also able to set aside time from their busy schedules to create a brand new video product that reflected the best that Fletcher has to offer, including insights from the team, their peers, as well as the faculty. It also helped bring a degree of appreciation of the difficulties that lay ahead for any future project, and how the motivation demonstrated by the cohort of Fletcher students would help address these difficulties as the project moved forward.

A Fletcher TV Blueprint

The process highlighted to develop a pilot episode for a future Fletcher TV endeavor provides practical insights into the creation of a student-produced web series. The lessons learned from the process, combined with further exploration of organizational structures of student run publications and examining other video content creator's tone and focus, can come together to serve as a blueprint for future initiatives to explore video content creation. As the process demonstrated, any initiative to create original content will require a thorough examination of resources at Fletcher that can be best leveraged for creating original, authentic content that highlights the best of the school. Similarly, the content creation process requires a

clear organizational structure to ensure continuity of tone within the content, as well as maintaining a minimum standard of the quality of the content.

The approach for the pilot episode demonstrated some of the shortcomings of attempting a comedic approach to an international affairs program without a solid vision for the tone of the show, as well as the lack of a studio audience to generate a lively atmosphere for filming. In the process of developing the pilot episode, some students and faculty members expressed concern speaking on a satirical show, given the sensitive nature of the subjects they focus on at Fletcher, such as humanitarian work, for example. For any future original content creation, given these constraints in mind, it would be best to set about having a more formal news like tone for content, rather than a satirical approach. While this may change the intended audience of the program (it may require a greater degree of political awareness for anyone tuning in to watch a segment of a news like show, rather than a satirical show), this approach will better align itself with the resources available at the Fletcher campus.

One media entity that can serve as a model for Fletcher TV moving forward would be Vox Media. Vox's approach includes a focus on 'going deeper' into issues through its 'explainers.' Essentially, rather than reporting on important issues, as traditional media entities do, Vox seeks to add value by providing expert commentary and analysis to make the trends seen in the news much more accessible to a larger audience. While Vox includes videos as one element in its portfolio of media productions, its main focus in on written pieces delving deeper into various issues on its website. Fletcher TV would be best served to adopt parts of this model, particularly the focus on adding value by providing expertise on topics in a highly accessible manner.

Another advantage of shifting the tone to a more formal/academic approach of content creation will be increased opportunities for partnerships with existing centers and student groups with sourcing material, generating relevant topics, and providing academic insight that will overall contribute to enhancing the quality of the video product. There are at least 19 research centers, chairs, and programs at Fletcher.[16] There are also multiple student-run journals, clubs, and organizations that have an academic focus. By focusing content on academic material, Fletcher TV will better position itself in a niche area, while leveraging all of the available campus resources to their maximum potential.

Another important resource that a future Fletcher TV production should leverage is Tufts University Television ('TUTV'). Establishing such a partnership would ensure that Fletcher has access to key resources for video production, including the TUTV production studio, video editors, cameramen/women, and sound crew. This would allow Fletcher TV to focus exclusively on the content side, while allowing TUTV to handle the production side. Given TUTV's focus on generating original news content, and Fletcher's wide range of resources of experts in international affairs, such a relationship would be of mutual benefit to both parties.

Another key takeaway from the pilot episode process that will be vital for any future Fletcher TV endeavor will be the question of how to manage the process of content creation. This optimal process in this regard would be to discard the reporter driven stories, and shift to a traditional movie production process. This would entail breaking down the production process into three segments - development/pre-production, principal photography, and post-production. Likewise, members of Fletcher TV would have to focus on a specific segment (with

---

[16] http://fletcher.tufts.edu/Research/Centers-Chairs-and-Programs

opportunities to rotate after a few episodes, if desired). This would be unlike the pilot process, where students were responsible for the entire process for their own story - leading to an incoherent overall tone of the show. Instead, those in pre-production would generate stories, edit for clarity, and write scripts for their specific segment. In production, on-camera talent would then add their own take on the script, enhancing clarity of tone across the stories and ensuring that they can deliver the segmenting an authentic and engaging manner. Finally, in post-production, editors would be responsible for ensuring the clips gel together to the overall vision of the web series.

In order to mitigate having a 'silo' mentality in this type of production process, with individuals focused on their own specific part of the process without concerns for the overall vision of the story, it will be key to include a 'director' type role to oversee the overall process and ensure a smooth continuity throughout. Such a person will have contact with all three stages of production, with their role including procuring scripts for a specific episode (and deferring certain stories and scripts for later episodes), giving them a certain vision that the anchor can understand and add their voice to, as well as ensuring editors have clarity for the vision of the specific episode as well. Having such a position will be critical to keeping members on task for maintaining the overall vision of the web series.

Another way to avoid having a 'silo' mentality in the production process will be to create opportunities for students to work in different segments of the process, allowing them to gain a greater understanding of the overall process, and how each part contributes to the whole. Similarly, given issues of time constraints when dealing with Master's students, it will be important that there are multiple students per position, including two directors who can switch

off to lessen their overall workload. Having multiple writers, editors, directors, and video editors will allow for an increased number of videos being produced. The ideal release schedule would be one video every two weeks, allowing a constant stream of engagement with current issues in international affairs.

In addition to the structure of the process, another key component to the success of a future Fletcher TV initiative will be the structure of the organization itself that will manage the production of video content. One approach Fletcher TV could adopt is a structure similar to The Fletcher Forum of World Affairs, which is a student run journal hosted on campus.[17]

The Fletcher Forum has an annual budget of $25,000 per year, which includes expenses for salaries and printing the physical copies of the journal. The organization is divided between a five member executive team, and six senior editors, all of whom receive a salary. The entire organization has 36 team members, with non-paid staff working as volunteers. The executive team includes five different functions: the editor-in-chief, the business director (responsible for the budget), the managing print editor, the managing digital editor, and the manager of external affairs. The senior editors are split between the print and web editions evenly, with three on each side. The Fletcher Forum also has an advisor board of Fletcher alum, and current professors.

Any future Fletcher TV endeavor would be wise to adopt aspects of the Fletcher Forum's organizational structure. This includes having a separate executive team responsible for the management of overall operations, as well as senior directors responsible for the creative side of the pieces. One key aspect of the Fletcher Forum that would assist Fletcher TV is the budget. Having a set budget would help the quality of the final product, as it can attract more talented

---

[17] http://www.fletcherforum.org/about-us/

students to fill positions that might otherwise have to find jobs, as well as ensuring a greater sense of accountability. Funds can be raised for the project through multiple channels, including contributions from the Fletcher administration, from the Murrow Center, as well as generating revenue from the distribution side through advertisements.

Key positions for any Fletcher TV initiative would include the editor-in-chief, the business manager, and the external affairs manager, along with two directors. The editor in chief would be responsible for the overall operations of the organization, the business director would be responsible for the finances, while the external affairs manager would ensure that Fletcher TV is able to maintain its key relationships with partners in content creation. Furthermore, a board of advisors that can advise the organization, similar to the Fletcher Forum, would greatly enhance the quality of the product. Potential advisors can include Fletcher professors with media background, alumni, or even members of the Murrow Center's board of advisors, which includes prominent media figures.

Distribution

A critical component of any video production process is the question of how content will be distributed. From its inception, Fletcher TV sought to be distributed on social media platforms that would lead to greater engagement with the intended millennial audience. However, a critical part of distribution on social media is to understand how each platform operates, and how to ensure that content is distributed in a manner that is native to each platform.

The platforms the production team brainstormed included Facebook, Vimeo, YouTube, Snapchat, Twitter, and Instagram. Each of these platforms seeks different forms of engagement

that, while subject to change, ultimately influence how individual content is created to cater to their unique formats and algorithms. For example, Facebook's algorithm is designed to decrease viewership of content from YouTube.[18] As such, any strategy that incorporates Facebook would have to include uploading videos specifically on Facebook - and understanding how Facebook users engage with content compared to YouTube users. While users of these two sites may overlap, the manner in which they are used are very different. For example, YouTube users are more likely to come to a site to search for a specific video using their search engine, while Facebook users are more likely to come across content while scrolling through their news feed.[19] This has implications for the production process, as scrolling through the news feed requires attracting an audience that may not intend to watch a video, as opposed to an already captured audience on YouTube.

Unfortunately, the pilot episode was ultimately deemed to not be distributed due to the various production difficulties mentioned above, and how they would complicate future efforts to develop a Fletcher-branded web series (particularly with regards to the continuity of the tone of the series). However, it's worth noting that through the process, the question of distribution platforms did not influence the production process, and this could have led to issues with user engagement on specific platforms, particularly Facebook. Another option to consider would be partnering with other Tufts entities to distribute content, by leveraging their respective brands. Potential partners include the Fletcher Forum, and TUTV. One final option would be to create a Fletcher TV website, and direct traffic there, creating a separate brand.

_____

[18] http://adage.com/article/digital/facebook-s-biggest-weapon-youtube-algorithm/294873/

[19] https://www.wirebuzz.com/youtube-facebook/

Given the partnership with TUTV, it would make sense to allow them to host Fletcher TV productions on their own branded site. Likewise, Fletcher TV should develop its own proprietary site, perhaps housed on the Murrow Center's website, to help differentiate itself. At the same time, in order to reach a broader audience, Fletcher TV should target the two biggest video platforms – YouTube and Facebook Watch, to attract new audiences and expand its reach. It could also partner with Fletcher's existing channels of distribution and public engagement, particularly its Twitter handle and Facebook page, to further highlight its work and further broaden its engagement.

Conclusion

Creating and supporting a student-run web series would help Fletcher differentiate itself from its competitors. This includes among other prestigious international affair schools, where Fletcher would have the benefits of the first mover advantage, and highlight the importance it places on the role of digital media in international affairs. Similarly, a web series would allow Fletcher to broaden its means of engagement, and further its brand equity through new, untested channels. This would have the additional affect of highlighting Fletcher's unique, interdisciplinary approach to international affairs, and further establish its credibility to a larger audience.

At the same time, the creation of a Fletcher web series would allow the school to attract applicants that have a specific interest in the intersection of digital media and international affairs. This would allow Fletcher to further build its ecosystem in this space, and serve as an enabler to further the work of important on campus center, such as The Murrow Center. It would

also further enrich the student experience for Fletcher students, as those students without previous experience with video production would have the ability to gain greater exposure to this space, and further their skills in a new space and provide a greater return from their time at the school.

As this paper highlights, the key parts of any sort of Fletcher TV production would be to focus on an audience, and build a tone that accounts for them, along with the resources available on campus. Similarly, an accompanying organizational structure, coupled with some sort of financial support from the school, would go a long way in ensuring the long term viability and success of such an endeavor. Leveraging important partnerships on campus, whether through the various research centers and student groups on Fletcher to content procurement, as well as through partnerships with groups such as TUTV on the production side, would further enhance the professional quality of the production.

This document can serve as a case study and blueprint for any future students, faculty, staff, or administrators seeking to lay the foundations to build a web series that highlights the work of The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy. It is built on the experiences and research of many students, including the author, who were afforded by this school and community the unique opportunity to gain exposure to media production, learn more about the resources available for students to create an impact in the public discourse, and truly add richness to the short time spent pursuing their graduate studies. It is our hope that this paper can serve as the catalyst to help our community truly realize the vision of creating Fletcher TV.