

AUDIENCE RECEPTION AMONG CHILDREN AND TEENAGERS ON MALAYSIAN ANIMATED TELEVISION SERIES

MOHD AMIR MAT OMAR & MD SIDIN AHMAD ISHAK

2nd Asia Oceania
Regional IBBY
Congress,
Putrajaya,
Malaysia

May 15th, 2015



INTRODUCTION

- Malaysian animation is on the rise. The popularity of recent titles such as *Upin & Ipin*, *Boboiboy*, *Eicak's World* and *Rimba Racer* are testimonies of this rise.
- However, as much this rise is desirable, more has been expected from the creative industry. In 2012, RM7 billion of revenue was generated and RM1.9 billion was contributed to Malaysian GDP. The following year, RM6 billion was injected by the government in order to see the growth more than doubled (Zarina & Rizalman, 2013).

- The creative industry has been rather sluggish this past decade (DIKN, 2010) and the emergence of new animated series and films is a welcomed scene in the Malaysian creative industry chapter.

OBJECTIVES AND QUESTIONS

This study attempts to analyze the following:

- Why was the industry sluggish?
- What do the audience really like, dislike and want out of Malaysian animated television series?

This research attempts to provide part of the answers for the above questions through examining the audience reception among children and teenagers on Malaysian animated television series.

METHODS

- In order to obtain information on audience reception, the researcher used focus group interviews as the methodology of the study. This procedure is an approach to comprehend audience attitude and behavior (Wimmer & Dominick, 2006:128).
- Three groups of teenagers and one group of children were interviewed. These group consisted of both local and foreign informants and an all-Malaysian children's group.

ANIMATED SERIES VIEWED

- Usop Sontorian
- Upin & Ipin
- Boboiboy
- Bola Kampung
- Keluang Man
- Anak-anak Sidek

FINDINGS

- Generally, there were more negative feedback compared to the positives. A number of the informants had contradicting views as well.
- Positive feedback were rather general i.e. Malaysian animated series is 'OK', 'Interesting' and 'Very good'.
- When investigated further, it is found that informants are positive towards the fact that Malaysian culture can be shared. Although mainly targeted at local audiences, Malaysian animated television series provide a platform to share local cultural elements with the world i.e. Upin & Ipin.

FINDINGS

- Informants expressed their surprise towards Malaysian animated television series going beyond their expectations in terms of visual storytelling. However, there were informants who disagreed by mentioning that storytelling were rather poor instead i.e. boring plots, stories which are too simple.
- Audiences liked the reflection of culture in animated series such as Usop Sontorian and Upin & Ipin. The representation of village life allows for the audience to relate their own personal experience i.e. Ramadhan, school, food and games.

- 
- Child informants, especially, liked strong characters. Hence, when comparing animation such as Upin & Ipin to Boboiboy, they preferred watching Boboiboy due to the superpowers that Boboiboy has.
 - Informants did not like that they were limited in terms of choice. They believe that there should be more animation titles out there for them to watch. Hence, this is also the reason why they watch a lot more of foreign animation.

- 
- Informants also mentioned about the poor quality of Malaysian animation. These qualities include character design, drawing, animation, graphics, storytelling etc. Informants want to see improvements in these areas to be at par with foreign animation.
 - Non-Malay audiences want to see more representation of non-Malays i.e. Chinese and Indians in Malaysian animation. They feel as if the composition of race is unbalanced and would like to see a fair representation of all races.

- Informants also stated that the main characters in Malaysian animation did not demonstrate enough strength and qualities, be it with or without superpowers. Child informants find that characters from foreign animation are stronger, better looking and more beautiful compared to their Malaysian counterparts.

CONCLUSION

- Going back to why the creative industry, animated television series in particular, this is because the content produced did not meet the audience's demands.
- There are positive signs that Malaysian animation is improving, but there is still a lot of work to do. The positives, such as cultural reflections, should be maintained and improved as well.

- Visual storytelling has to improve and this does not involve the technical aspects of animation.
- More content has to be produced to cater to a variety of audiences.
- Malaysian animation should cater to a more generic audience as well to increase reach.
- Technical-wise, this is an area in which the practitioners in the industry, in general, need more training.

THANK YOU

- Q & A