

Elements of Maldivian Folklore Character Design

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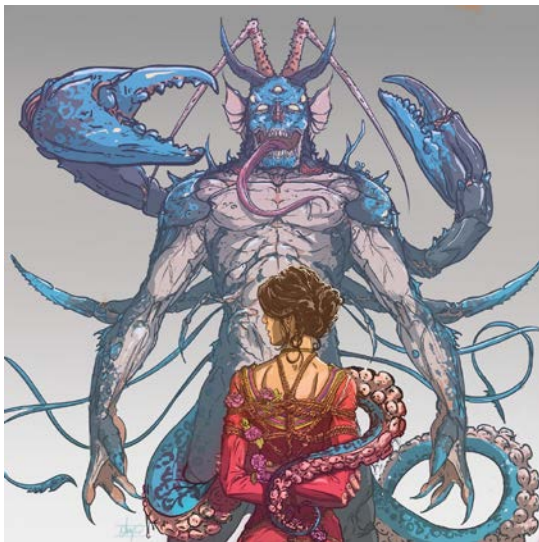


Figure 1. Maldivian folklore character Ranna (Ameen Abdhulla, 2012)

This article will revolve around the conceptualization of a Maldivian folklore character design. The use of character design in raising awareness towards Maldivian culture is justified. The methodology which is used to create a Maldivian character is explained using the elements of character design learned and these are intended for future use of animated folk tales. Animation can help to not only preserve a dying element such as Maldivian folk culture and reconnect locals to their cultural roots, but also appeal to a global audience that has not yet seen such an intimate side of the Maldives, which is currently only recognized through tourism. A questionnaire and survey were put forward to locals and experts respectively in order to

gather information that would help towards this. Secondary sources were also evaluated to better understand character design and the main elements that must exist within a character. The findings reflect the opinion and perspective of Maldivian locals which are pivotal to the overall success of this future character. From these findings, the author was able to establish the main elements required for a successful and authentic Maldivian folklore character design.

Keywords Character Design, Animation, Culture, Folklore, The Maldives

Introduction

Technological advancements have allowed for creative digital mediums such as animation to help educate viewers on the cultural diversity that exists worldwide, specifically visual folklore storytelling. To date, information about the rich Maldivian culture is scarce due to the Maldives being only associated as the 'land of paradise', and recognized mainly for its tourism, not culture. A solution was needed to preserve folk tales especially due to the disinterest amongst the younger local generation as they have access to globalized content. The author believes that a fresh visualization of the many fading traditional stories can be created to not only extend the limited perception that the outside world has of Maldives, but to also help reconnect the locals to their traditional roots. The ability of animation to captivate and intrigue audiences is heavily dependent on the creation of compelling characters within the narrative.

Therefore, this visualization could only be possible through clear understanding and usage of certain elements through the subject of character design. An appropriate adaptation of these elements is pivotal to guarantee successful, authentic and believable characters. As such, this article will present the identified elements within the context of Maldivian folklore.



Figure 2. Maldivian family illustration (Shafee Shafeeq, 2019) typeface.

Problem Statement

In Latin terminology, animation is known as “animare”, which means soul, coinciding with the idea that animation can be used to give life to dying cultures. Hence, animation raises the opportunity to bring cultural awareness to the Maldives. Animated folklore stories consisting of Maldivian characters can help tourists gain a deeper understanding about many aspects of Maldivian culture that has been pushed back into the shadows. It has been found that many of the tourists visit the Maldives not only for how it is advertised as they are also curious to learn more about the traditions, culture, food and folklore (Ivkok, Stamenkovik, 2008).

The deprivation of Maldivian culture is clear as it is being advertised for its environmental features. “The true colors of the rich and unique Maldivian history and culture have also been filtered out of the industry. In fact, it can be said that the Maldivian tourism industry has failed to present to the tourists, our heritage” (Sajid, 2011). This therefore opens up the opportunity for folklore character designs to be developed for potential use in future animations that could bring much needed awareness to a culture that is only minimally known to outsiders. According to Xavier Romero-Frias, Maldivian folk tales are “largely unknown to the outside world” (Frias, 2012). Authentic representation of these stories can be birthed through the use of animation and character design. Not only that, but due to the dominance of Western media and easy access to global content, the local younger population of Maldives have become detached from their traditional narratives, and an urgent solution is needed for the survival of a tradition that was once a staple movement of Maldivian culture. These stories can indeed be reworked to adapt into the digital era and recapture local interest, along with the attention of the world.



Figure 3: Maldivian folklore celebration (Wikiwand, n.d)

Methodology

A total of two primary research methods was implemented. The first was a quantitative method using an online questionnaire whereas the second method was a qualitative method in the form of an online interview. A questionnaire was chosen due to its nature of allowing information to be gathered from a particular target demographic. In this case, the demographic was those who are connected to Maldivian culture and heritage which comprises all Maldivian locals. No age range was limited as it was important that all their voices were heard in order to understand their feedback regarding the topic in question. Thus, this method had to be executed online to reach as many Maldivians as possible to broaden the scale of research and ensure better accuracy. This was accomplished through Google Forms as this platform allows for the ease of navigating its user interface and has the ability to gather an accurate compilation of data efficiently. The structure of this survey was made up of 11 questions, keeping it short to motivate the respondent to finish answering. It contained mostly close ended questions in the form of multiple choices, but two open ended questions were introduced near the end of the survey. These questions were carefully articulated to avoid biases that could make the answers inaccurate in nature. The questions were also created in a way that would flow from one to the other to create a smooth flow. Question 5 onwards were specifically targeted towards folklore and sought to understand local perspectives on the topic. (Refer to Appendix 1)

As for the interview, three local experts who work in the field of character design and animation were selected. This method was also accomplished through means of Google Form due to the benefits mentioned above. As the topic revolves around Maldivian culture, the expertise and opinions of Maldivian local experts who have enough experience in their respective fields were needed. The three selected respondents were a 3D character artist and designer (Ahmed Afazil), the CEO of Cellmin Animation Studio in Maldives (Yamin Rasheed) and a character designer and illustrator (Shafee Shafeeq). The information provided by these individuals would hold specific value in understanding how to create a Maldivian character that is authentic as they have incorporated their roots into their own works. Expert opinions are therefore pivotal in the success of the end goal. A total of 10 questions were created after critical evaluation of their relevance to the objectives and to the topic of character design. Question 7 onwards revolved around seeking answers to folklore related questions in respect to character design. (Refer to Appendix 2)

Additionally, several secondary sources were also taken into consideration in order to first understand and locate the most important elements when it

comes to character design. In-depth studies were carried out to comprehend such a broad topic so that it can be narrowed down to its main components. Cross comparison has also been made between different authors to identify materials which were relevant and to broaden the extent of specific cultural knowledge.

Findings and Discussion

The survey that was conducted reached a total of 190 responses from Maldivian locals within a time frame of a week, where majority of the respondents were aged between 19 and 35. The findings were able to confirm the importance of folklore preservation. Most importantly, the appeal for a folklore character to be created was clearly present amongst the general public with a total of 126 respondents agreeing that they are interested to see Maldivian characters in future animations. With the help of the locals, the three most popular folklore characters were identified.

These characters are Santhi Mariyanbu (22 votes), Rannamari (22 votes) and Foolhudhigu Handi (18 votes). Santhi Mariyanbu is an evil female supernatural being, Rannamari is a notorious sea demon, and Foolhudhigu Handi is a long navel ghost. The identification of these characters provides the opportunity to create a character that is heavily remembered by the locals, thereby improving local contentment.

Many of the respondents looked forward to seeing realistic features which was true to the nature of folklore and authentic to Maldivian culture. They also stated that the characters should portray strong personalities and have a blend of aesthetic yet monstrous features to really bring out the essence of folktales.

Through critical evaluation of the 124 responses based on this question, the main proposition by the locals is to have a character that is true to how it has been described in the folklore and is a correct and authentic representation of the character. As long as these are fulfilled, the locals will be satisfied in spite of the style the researcher chooses to adopt. Local satisfaction is key to the overall success of a Maldivian folklore character.

According to the experts, in order to assure that a character is authentic and unique to Maldivian culture, extensive research must first be carried out, especially in terms of existing narratives in regard to the character in question. The narratives indicate the backstory of a character as well as gives the designer an idea of the environment and era that the story is set in. All these aspects hint at the foundational idea of the character, which can then be slowly developed carefully by adjusting to trial-and-error methods.

By utilizing the impact of costume design and symbolic props all while keeping a close observation of practicality in relation to the time period, climate and other factors, a culturally accurate Maldivian character can be created. The careful usage of the basic elements identified through secondary research (color, shape, silhouette and psychology) must also be incorporated.

These can be manipulated if necessary, to create a character that is compelling enough to ultimately catch the attention of the audience that is viewing the folklore animation. It is important to be mindful of the extent of this manipulation as it could also make the character confusing to the audience. As long as the folklore character is believable, it can be considered a successful character design.

Conclusion

The need for a Maldivian character to be created has never been so urgent, especially in a time where the younger generation is losing touch of their traditional cultural narratives. It is clear that this need for a Maldivian character is long overdue due to the lack of current appealing content in the context of Maldivian culture.

This, along with the misrepresentation of Maldives, begs for a solution. The potential of animation in raising better awareness has been proven throughout this article, along with the appeal for such a character from the locals, whereby this potential was confirmed by experienced local creators. The implementation of methodology has helped to support the hypothesis put forward. The elements and ways in which to better initiate a character from these folklore stories have been identified and the next step is to implement the knowledge gathered.

With this research, the author is closer to his quest of attracting interest from all around the world by preserving the dying traditions of Maldivian folklore storytelling through the medium of animation. The author looks forward to visualizing these folklore characters for the usage of short animations that will be created based on several folklore stories.

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Picture Credits:

Abdhulla, A. (2012). *Maldivian folklore character design* [Image]
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Appendices

Growing up, did you hear about Maldivian folklore? *

Yes

No

If yes, which folklore character do you remember the most?

Your answer _____

How important is it to preserve these traditional stories? *

1 2 3 4 5

Not important Very important

Do you think that animation has potential to globalize Maldivian culture? *

Yes

No

How interested are you to see Maldivian characters in future animations? *

1 2 3 4 5

Not Interested Very Interested

How realistic do you want these characters to be? *

1 2 3 4 5

Not realistic Very realistic

From a viewers perspective, what kind of features would you like to see in these characters?

Your answer _____

Appendix 1

Fig 4: Sample of questionnaire questions (Suhail, 2020)

Do you think there is a potential to create a character that could bring awareness to Maldivian culture? *

Your answer _____

How do you design a character that is unique to their own background? *

Your answer _____

Is there potential to animate Maldivian folklore in hope to globalize Maldivian culture? *

Your answer _____

If you were to create a character based on a traditional Maldivian folklore, what are the first things you will observe or take into consideration? *

Your answer _____

Appendix 2

Fig 5: Sample of Interview questions (Suhail, 2020)

Graphic Design and Public Awareness in Lifesaving

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In the field of lifesaving where public awareness plays a major role, graphic designers are one of the underutilized assets who could potentially educate the public on the role of lifesaving. This research aims to provide designers an insight on using effective design principles to educate the public on lifesaving and brings light onto the research topic. The research investigates the importance of graphic design specifically posters in educating the Malaysian public about the role of lifesaving. A survey was conducted to collect feedback from 80 Malaysians regarding their awareness on lifesaving and effectiveness of lifesaving posters. Professionals and students from the medical and design field were interviewed to comment on 6 current lifesaving posters in terms of accuracy of information and design. This research finds that existing lifesaving posters are not following the principles of graphic design. Additionally, the contexts of posters are not accurate as there is inconsistency in information on the steps of lifesaving while some even miss out crucial information. Although graphic design in lifesaving is on the rise recently in Malaysia, the current public awareness on this topic is still low in Malaysia.

Keywords Lifesaving, graphic design, public awareness, CPR, AED

Introduction

“Graphic design plays a part in almost every area of our daily lives. But can it actually save your life?” (Roberts, et al., 2017). Tens of thousands of people die every day, often for the simple reason that the passer-by lack the information and knowledge they need to save them (WCPT, 2010). Two basic lifesaving skills, Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) and Automated External Defibrillator (AED) are publicly educated in countries such as United Kingdom and Japan as they are crucial knowledges which could increase a person's survival rate up to 50% during sudden cardiac arrests (Berdowski, 2011).

When it comes to the healthcare industry, graphic designers are one of the most untapped, underutilized assets in the industry (Sklar & Naar, 2015). As designers are known for conveying the message effectively to the intended audience using visual communications (Bear, 2019). This research studies the design principles in 6 lifesaving posters that aim to create awareness on CPR and AED. It also analyses the current Malaysian public awareness towards the said lifesaving skills through the design and context in those lifesaving posters.



Figure 1. AED machine on CPR dummy. Wallpaperflare. (2020)

Problem Statement

The survival rate of cardiovascular cases in Malaysia is less than 1% compared to 12% in Singapore and Tokyo with survival rate of 4.0% (Liew, 2018). Research from the University of Warwick revealed one-in-eight cardiac arrest patients could not be saved as rates of bystander CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation) and AED were very low (Olivia, 2016). According to a survey done on 21 Taylor's University Lakeside Campus Malaysia students, although more than 50% of students could identify and understand

the purpose of AED (52.1% and 57.1%), yet nearly 65% of students were unaware about the location of the AED in their campus (Chan, 2019). The public should know how to use an AED and the location of the nearest AED to save lives in the pre-hospital environment (Rega & Fink, 2015).



Figure 2. AED In Kyoto Japan



Figure 3. AED machine with poster In Beijing

In the 21st century, knowledge is the key element to improving health (Choices, 2013). Yet access to reliable health information remains a problem even in settings where clean water is taken for granted (PLoS Medicine Editors, 2013). Nevertheless, this problem could potentially be avoided with graphic designers being the key element to convey the information from the healthcare industry to the public (Balkac, M., & Ergun, E., 2018). Through design, lifesaving information could become more appealing, demonstrate valuable ideas, easier to understand, reduce boredom, awaken interest, accessible, more persuasive, memorable, and conveyed easily (Ocampo, 2011).

Since graphic design is inextricably linked to the effectiveness in communication of information to our society (Frascara, 1988), therefore this research aims to study the functionality of graphic design in creating awareness to the Malaysian public and the

effectiveness of graphic design in educating the Malaysian public about the role of life saving.

Methodology

For this research, both quantitative and qualitative research were engaged in to obtain the necessary data to address the research problem.

Survey

In the online survey questionnaire, data from 80 Malaysians were collected on their perspective in lifesaving posters and their awareness in lifesaving. In the survey, 6 lifesaving posters were showcased to gather the public's opinion and their understanding of the information obtained from the posters. The survey also questions the public's exposure towards lifesaving information in everyday basis and their common knowledge in lifesaving. Through this, the survey would assist the paper in understanding the background of the research problem and the effectiveness of poster design in educating the public about lifesaving. As the target audience for this research topic is the public, the targeted respondents for the survey are the Malaysian public (Quirk, Olver, Hammond, & Davies, 2009). Through questioning the public, the survey appeals as not just a more effective and direct approach but is also able to create awareness to the public on their role in lifesaving through the exposure on this topic.

Interview

The second method of research approach is email interview. The interview discusses 6 lifesaving posters on their clarity and accuracy in medical information and their overall designs with professionals from respective fields. The objective of the interview was to understand how accurate the information is in lifesaving posters and how graphic design works to educate the public on lifesaving (Gill et al., 2008).

The interviewees consist a total of 8 professionals and 8 students (4 from the medical field and 4 from the graphic design field). The medical officers are Lam Lick Yin and Teh Ly-Ann, they are first aiders from St John Ambulance Malaysia who are experienced in performing CPR and AED. Their knowledge and experience on CPR and AED would assist the paper in evaluating the accuracy of information of lifesaving posters.

The graphic designers are June Chew Wan Seen and Gareth Ho. Both are Malaysian based graphic designers who are experienced in designing posters.

Their understanding of the local culture and background as well as experience in poster design will help in analysing the design of lifesaving posters in Malaysia. Students from respective fields were also interviewed also as the first step in creating change is to let people know that a problem exists and how they can help. The medical students are Goh Jia Meng Ethan who is studying medical assistant and Lim Ming Cheng who is studying medicine. While the design students are Yang Chee Kent who is studying graphic design and Sam Mun Hoe who is studying new media in design.

The data collected understands how graphic designers and medical officers would improve the posters and construct the intended message to the public. Through this, the researcher aims to open the discussion about utilizing graphic design to convey medical messages in an attempt to bring awareness to the public.

Findings and Discussion

Design and Context in Lifesaving Posters – Proper design and accurate information are important in lifesaving posters to effectively educate the public. According to survey conducted, the two most important design principles in lifesaving posters are colour and graphic.

In terms of colour, the commonly seen colours in the six lifesaving posters are red and green. All the interviewees agreed that red is more suitable colour compared to green for lifesaving posters as it is a more visually striking colour. A study showed that increased red can convey alert or danger which emphasizes the importance of context (Elliot, 2015). The graphic designers also commented that good contrasting colours that can be easily read from a distance such as white on red and green on white are good examples to be applied in poster designs (Ladd, 2010).

While for the choice of visual graphic in lifesaving posters, it is mutually agreed by the interviewees that images are a better choice compared to illustrations. The medical professionals compared the images and illustrations used in the poster and found that the images showed more details in the CPR process compared to the illustrations. In the posters, the images had details like the position of hands-on chest, the straightening of arms, placement of AED pads on the body while the illustrations only showed objects like hands, phone, and AED machine only.

Regarding the context of lifesaving posters, the medical professionals found that there is certain

crucial information that were left out in the posters. The commonly left out information are emergency phone numbers and details of CPR procedure. Based on the Malaysia 2015 resuscitation guidelines, the three step that should be emphasised during an early recognition of cardiac arrest is to immediately telephone CPR – dial 999 via Malaysian Emergency Response System. The second step to be emphasised on in a lifesaving poster would be the quality of CPR to avoid unnecessary and further damage to the patient's body due to a bad compression in the CPR process (Abelsson & Nygårdh, 2019). The final step to be included would be the proper application of AED such as placement of PADS and activation of buttons.

Effectiveness of posters in educating the Malaysian public – Posters function the same as existing marketing materials, to capture the reader's attention, highlight the benefits affecting the reader and motivate them to take action (Ladd, 2010). According to the survey done previously, 51.2% of respondents answered "yes" and 47.5% answered "a little" that posters could help them in understanding how to work with CPR and AED. The role of the lifesaving posters is to constantly be there for the audience in times of emergencies. Posters are the primary non-electronic communication piece used to emphasize messages in a communication (International Labour Organisation (ILO), 2010). When placed strategically, posters spark interest which captures individual's curiosity and is involved in a program. Therefore, this shows that posters are an effective educational tool that could convey the relevant context anytime, anywhere to the public without relying on external support such as electricity or physical interaction.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this research has provided insight into the importance placed on graphic design posters in educating the public on their role of lifesaving. Through the findings and discussion of the research paper, it is shown that graphic design can enhance the communication of lifesaving to the public.

Malaysians are still not very aware of their role in lifesaving. According to the survey, close to half of the Malaysian participants (46.3%) never practiced lifesaving before while only 38.7% of participants only practiced it a few times. In comparison with countries like Japan and Taiwan, these two countries have a high rate of public awareness in their role of basic lifesaving. For example, a study showed that 90% out of 1073 Taiwanese knows what CPR is and 53% out of 1073 people fully understood the CPR procedure (Chen, et al., 2018) while 81.8% of Malaysians could only partially understand the

context in lifesaving posters (Chan, 2019). Japan and Taiwan's success are not just implementing CPR and AED lessons into the school curriculum structure, but also working with graphic designers to create infographic posters, signs, symbols and placing it near AED machines. These lifesaving posters not only guide the public through the CPR steps during an emergency but also provide awareness to the public regarding details such as location of AEDs or common knowledge regarding CPR.

However, the extent of the awareness is yet to be determined. With proper design guides and standardized information, lifesaving posters could potentially become the main medium to educate the Malaysian public on CPR and AED. Unfortunately, the research showed that the design and accuracy of context in current lifesaving posters are still inconsistent and messy. Nevertheless, the benefits of repetitive information dissemination cannot be disregarded. Although the implementation of lifesaving posters in Malaysia is still low, there have been new actions done in Malaysia for example the newly placed AED machines in Bandar Sunway, Selangor, Malaysia which comes with lifesaving posters (Liew, 2018). This shows that topics on lifesaving designs are slowly being brought into light to hopefully reduce the death of cardiac arrest in public. Through this research, it is hoped that the data provided can be utilised for future designers to further expand the potentials of lifesaving posters and create more lifesaving awareness to the public.

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Picture Credits:

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Player Identification in Relation to Character Customisation

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In our modern era, technology is constantly developing and evolving in different ways. Throughout the years, the ever-expanding list of game genres is becoming increasingly diverse, bringing in new revolutionary elements that could significantly shape a specific category. The subject of video games usually focuses on gameplay mechanics, and most players believe this to play a vital role in creating a successful game. While that may be true, what many tend to ignore is the impact of character customisation. The influence on the inclusivity of customisable characters is an area that is often ignored in the field of video game and character design research.

As it was revealed that there was a significant correlation between the player's identity and their character's appearance, this article takes an in-depth look at the factors that influenced players in determining the portrayal of their character during character customisation. Additionally, the type of character customisation was wholly dependent on the game's genre. This will be further elaborated and discussed in the findings.

Keywords Customisation, Characters, Video games, Identification

Introduction

In most video games, the player adopts the role of the main character. Depending on the type of game and theme, the player could either be playing as a default character or a completely customisable character. One commonality that they share is that the player is the focus of the plot, emphasizing the player's importance (Duchenneaut et al., 2009). Games such as Black Desert Online which won the best massively multiplayer online role-playing game in 2018, were commended for its in-depth character customisation (Digital News Asia, 2018). The inclusion of customisable characters is becoming more prevalent than ever. The researcher has discovered the factors that influence developers and players to be drawn to this character customisation function from the research she has conducted.

Problem Statement

One of the key components that came with the rise of digital distribution was video games. The gaming industry has become one of the most popular forms of entertainment in the world. As TV revenue began to fall by 8% in 2018, it was reported gaming sector sales have been steadily increasing at an annual rate of 10.7% (Reuters, 2018), a huge testament to how far the development of games has come. It was only 35 years ago when the first Tetris game came out and was considered revolutionary for their pixelated blocks, now we are surrounded by gaming consoles with high-definition graphics and lightning-fast processors (Epstein, 2015).

Most consumers place huge importance on immersion, including character customisation in which the player can create their character. Character customisation can be found in a variety of games such as MMORPGs (massively multiplayer online games), first-person shooters, and role-playing games. Instead of having a fixed character or default created by the game's developers, the players have the freedom and ability to change their character's appearances (Ryan, Rigby, & Przybylski, 2006).

In the case of virtual worlds, the priority of such games is how people portray themselves through their avatars (Turkay, 2014). A survey was done with 871 participants that played 4 popular MMOs, the results indicated that a customisation option would influence their overall enjoyment of a game, emphasizing that it affects the player's motivation (Turkay & Adinolf, 2010a). Despite the large market for games with character customisation, there is an evident lack of research done on this topic (Yu, 2016). Questions such as: to what extent does the player's identity align with their character, what are the types of character customisation, and how much does it impact the overall gameplay experience, have been answered through this study.

Methodology

To further analysed the objectives, “To find out why players are motivated by customisable characters in games”, and “to investigate the different types of character customisation depending on the genre of the game”, the researched created a questionnaire based on questions focusing on character customisation. Additionally, a visual analysis of how character customisation differs across 6 games in 3 different genres.

For the visual analysis, the games were chosen through the researcher’s collection of games as well as recommendations from online forums. The games used for this method are widely known within the gaming community for their character customisation and each game differs in gameplay and graphics. The following games were analysed:

1. Dragon Age: Inquisition (Action Role-playing)
2. Monster Hunter: World (Action Role-playing)
3. Destiny 2 (First-Person Shooter)
4. The Outer Worlds (First-Person Shooter)
5. The Sims 4 (Life Simulation)
6. Stardew Valley (Life Simulation)

A table of customisation options was created to compare each game. There were specific elements that the researcher paid close attention to:

1. What each game genre prioritizes in their character customisation.
2. To see if there is a trend in a particular customizable aspect between two games of the same genre.
3. Which customisable parts do they lack (or have in addition) compared to the other games.
4. Customisation options.

Furthermore, a questionnaire was created using Google Form. A total of 10 questions were created, 1 of which was an open-ended question to have an in-depth understanding of people’s thoughts on the topic. The other questions included images of character customisation from various games as well as other aspects such as physical features and the participants’ preferences. The questions were all approved by the researcher’s facilitator, Dr. Hayati Saad. The participants that were all involved were aware that the survey was for the researcher’s study and was consenting, as she stated the purpose of it in the introduction of the questionnaire.

Lastly, the researcher carried out a secondary research method that involved analysing studies by other professionals in the field. By comparing the studies from the authors, she gained a better understanding of the topic.

Findings and Discussion

Through the questionnaire conducted by the researcher, she firmly concludes the key factor that influences character customisation is determined by the extent to which the player identifies with their character. Most of the respondents said that they would make a character of the same gender as themselves. However, as seen in Appendix 1 the fact that most of the respondents also answered that they only share “certain characteristics”, implies that the player may not completely see themselves as their character.

Furthermore, in Appendix 2 the researcher asked the respondents 'what would the purpose of their character be'. The respondents said that they wanted to create a character that fits the game’s narrative and a character with similar appearances as themselves. Additionally, a good-looking character was ideal. The researcher deduces that players are influenced by traits that they admire or aspire to have, thus their character would reflect these qualities. A personal connection would be formed between the player and their character, as it is their creation based on traits that they find exemplary. Keep in mind, while the physical element may not be customised, the player may still “identify” with their character based on relatable traits. With the power to customise their character and navigate the game through a character made of their creation, it creates a personal relationship between the player and their character. This heightens the player’s importance in the game, giving them more involvement in games with heavy and complex narratives where the player’s character could make decisions that heavily impacts the story.

Nonetheless, if the game were to be played in a first-person perspective, character customisation would not be focused on physical appearances. The priority would be set on customising other aspects. In first-person shooters such as Destiny 2, players were able to customise their own weapon by decorating them with skins (colours). Depending on what type of weapon and design that they have, it indicates their character’s worth.

Appendix 3 showcases the variety of options from different video game genres that the researcher has analysed. It is further revealed in the researcher’s findings that customisable skills were not often acknowledged as part of the term “character customisation”. For example, games with character class systems where the player was able to have

their character specialised in a certain type of playstyle. Class systems were typically governed by type of skill tree which frames the attributes of the character's abilities, attitude, culture, and skills. A character's class could also determine the type of outfit (armour) that they should be equipped with. This is evident in role-playing games such as Dragon Age: Inquisition or Monster Hunter World. Outfits in games where combat is a core component in a gameplay was not only designed for aesthetic purposes, but they were also the character's armour. In games that include heavy exploration, in which their armour could be crafted to level up its strength and value. This gives the player the option to design an armour made from materials that they would want or acquire from the game world. Another approach to outfit customisations would be the acquiring of items that can be bought through microtransactions within the game which involves purchases via real currency. The game Destiny 2 would encourage the player to buy 'cosmetics' which are elements which alters or enhance the appearance of their characters using real money and this may dictate the worth of a character's outfit based on actual currency.

Conclusion

To summarize, the researcher has come to the following conclusions: character customisation is not only limited to adjusting a character's physical appearance but that other aspect such as character skill and character weapon are considered a part of that as well, players are motivated by customisable characters in games due to how the player identifies with them and character customisation is important in games because it creates more immersive gameplay. The findings from the researcher's questionnaire proved that players are willing to take their time to create a character as they find it to not only be an enjoyable experience but to also reflect on the character's representation which demonstrates the many possibilities of what the players can be and achieve in the game world. The results from data collected by the researcher have helped to draw these conclusions and effectively answer the objectives.

As more games are being developed in our current era, the researcher hopes and strongly urges others interested in this field to carry out further studies on character customisation in the future. She also hopes that this dissertation will be beneficial to future projects.

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Appendices

To what extent do you identify with your character?

81 responses



Appendix 1 Survey question about player identification.

Which of the following describes your thought process when creating a character?

81 responses



Appendix 2 Survey question about the character's purpose.

Appendices

METHOD 2: DATA COLLECTION TABLE

CATEGORIES

Destiny 2= D2	Eye colors=EC
Outer Worlds= OW	Adjustable facial features=AFF
Dragon Age: Inquisition= DA:I	Gender= G
Monster Hunter World= MHW	Makeup=M
Stardew Valley= SV	Beards=B
Sims 4=S4	Outfits=O
Skin tones=ST	Accessories=A
Weight/body type=W/BT	Tattoos=T
Height slider=HS	Voice=V
Hairstyles=H	Classes=C
Hair colors=HC	Race= R

✓ = Yes

X = No

*= Special Additions (check detailed analysis for further explanation)

	G	R	ST	W/BT	HS	H	HC	EC	AFF	M	B	O	A	T	V	C
S4	✓	*	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X
DA	✓	*	✓	X	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	*	*	X	*	✓	✓
D2	✓	✓	✓	X	X	✓	✓	✓	*	✓	*	*	X	*	X	✓
SV	✓	X	✓	X	X	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	X	X	X
MHW	✓		✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	*
OW	✓		✓	X	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	X	X	X

Appendix 3 Data collection table for visual analysis of various video games.

The Use of Design Elements and Principles in Movie Posters

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Figure 1. The world's first film poster, for 1895's *L'Arroseur arrosé*, by the Lumière brothers

Designers apply the use of design elements and principles (DEP) in movie posters to convey an intended message. This article touches on the four main DEP used in movie posters as well as how they are used to convey an intended message. This article discusses how DEP are used in movie posters to bring out the intended message. For the research, two methodologies were employed to curate six movie posters from three movie genres (horror, fantasy and romance). The two methodologies include visual analysis and survey by questionnaire. From the visual analysis, the researcher determined the four main DEP in movie posters which are imagery, typography, colour and overall composition. Through both methodologies, it was found that imagery is the most prominent

of the four DEP in conveying the message of a movie. The researcher discusses how the DEP used in movie posters work together to bring out the setting, mood, character, genre, and overall message of the movies. These findings expand our understanding on the use of DEP in movie posters which affect how the message of a movie is conveyed.

Keywords Graphic design, design elements, design principles, movie posters

Introduction

When people look at a movie poster, it gives them a first impression of the movie. Movie posters are intentionally designed to bring out the most important aspects of a movie through a single glance. Without further research, one might not understand how the information of a movie is brought out through the movie poster. Through this article, the researcher explains the use of design elements and principles (DEP) in movie posters to convey an intended message.

This research focuses on Western movie posters ranging from 2012 to 2017. The two methodologies that were used by the researcher to collect data used for qualitative research were visual analysis and online survey. Six movie posters from three different genres – horror, fantasy and romance, were chosen as visuals for the research. Through the visual analysis, the researcher has determined the four main DEP used in movie posters to ensure a clear direction of the research. The researcher explains how DEP that are used in movie posters bring out the intended message which include settings, characters, genre and story of the movie.



Figure 1. (2015) *The Martian* movie poster, [digital image].

Problem Statement

Posters are a common sight in almost every place in a city. Since the nineteenth century, posters have been a widely used tool to convey messages effectively to the public (Huppertz, 2019). In the twentieth century, printed material became cheaper to produce and disseminate (Huppertz, 2019). According to Huppertz (2019), design has also become increasingly specialized. As digital image-editing software such as Adobe Illustrator and Photoshop emerged in combination with desktop publishing programs that were used by the end of the 1990s, Huppertz (2019) states that design and printing processes were fundamentally changed. Through the years, poster designs have improved and varied as software and technology are modernized. The first movie poster, *Cinématographe Lumière* (Figure 1), was completed in 1895. After 120 years of technological improvement, it is evident that movie posters have evolved drastically.

Figure 2 shows the movie poster of *The Martian* (2015). Different types of posters are designed to serve different uses. There are propaganda posters (Figure 3), infomercial posters, cinematographic posters and many more. Hence, the function of the posters to convey a certain message is important in order for it to reach out to the target audience. For instance, movie posters are designed to communicate the various genre of movies. In movie posters, there is application of design elements and principles (DEP) such as imagery, symbols, typography, colours and so on (Poulin, 2012). These elements work together to convey an intended message to the audience. Thus, the objective of this research is to determine the DEP use in movie posters and show how they are used in movie posters to convey an intended message. The research has involved the study of posters from three movie genres including horror, fantasy and romance.



Figure 2. (1943) *Defend Your Country: enlist now in the United States Army*, [digital image].

Methodology

For this research, the two methodologies that the researcher has used to collect primary data were visual analysis and online survey. The visual analysis was done solely by the researcher while the online survey included the participation of online respondents. These two methodologies assisted the researcher in her qualitative research.

Visual Analysis

Through the visual analysis, the researcher systematically observed six movie posters, two from each of the movie genres of horror, fantasy and romance. The reason that two movie posters were curated for each genre was for the researcher to identify the similarities and differences in style. The visual of the movie posters is in Appendix 1.

Then, the researcher determined the four main DEP which are typography, imagery, colour and overall composition (Poulin, 2012). After determining these DEP, each DEP was used to further study each poster. This process consists of four parts which are observation, analysis, inference and conclusion (Visual Analysis 101).

This process allowed the researcher to analyze movie posters which are visual oriented from a more in-depth point of view.

Online Survey

Online survey is an effective way to collect large amounts of data by reaching more people through the Internet. It is also economical and free from bias (Kothari, 2004). Hence, it is important to get opinions from the audience as movie posters are meant to attract people and convey the message of the movie at the same time.

An online questionnaire attached with the six movie posters was prepared by the researcher. The online survey included both closed and open-ended questions. Aside from the three warm up questions, five questions were prepared for each of the six curated movie posters.

These questions were designed to collect data on the respondents' understanding and perspective for each poster. The researcher used Google Forms and shared it to the public, as the movie posters were catered to all groups of people.

The survey garnered 143 responses in a week. A sample of the questionnaire is in Appendix 2. Upon completion of the survey, the responses were compiled and analyzed by the researcher.

Findings and Discussion

In this section, the researcher aims to understand movie posters through the use of the four selected DEP. They include imagery, colour, typography and overall composition.

Design Elements and Principles (DEP)

Through visual analysis, it has been ascertained that the four main DEP that contribute to movie posters' design are imagery, colour, typography and overall composition. The researcher was able to identify that imagery is the most prominent design element used in the selected movie posters because the image takes up the largest area. It also catches and directs the viewer's attention (Sherin, 2013). This finding tallies with the responses from the online survey, as 41% of respondents think that imagery stands out most from the movie posters, followed by the overall composition (34%), colour (17%) and typography (7%).

Working Together in a Movie Poster

The four DEP were able to work together to bring out the setting, emotion, character, genre and brief story of each movie. The researcher has quoted several findings and answers from the visual analysis (VA) and online survey (OS) to support the findings. Some answers were edited to correct spelling or grammatical errors.

From the two methodologies, the researcher discovered that the settings of the movie can be seen from the imagery in the poster such as clothing and architecture. VA: "(The Conjuring) Isolated house in a barren forest." The emotion can be depicted by analyzing the colour and facial expressions in the movie poster. OS: "(IT) The sharp contrast in colour gives a feeling of innocent people facing a sinister entity." Through the visual hierarchy, as well as clothing and facial expression of characters, the researcher was able to determine the antagonist and protagonist of the movie. OS: "(Brave) A girl who's trying to be brave. The placement of the character makes you get the point of the story."

By comparing two movie posters from each genre, the researcher determined the similarities in the style of a genre of a movie. For horror movies, the poster will be filled with mist and dark or monotonous colours. It also isolates certain elements to evoke a feeling of unknown and fear. VA: "(IT) Two characters isolated from their surroundings, which is dark and misty." In romance movie posters, there is usually a close-up image of a couple. Details such as facial expression, attire and additional props provide hints to the viewer to understand the conflicts that will arise in the story. OS: "(The Fault

in Our Stars) A hint of potential tragedy because one person is wearing breathing tubes." Fantasy movie posters show the style of the character with their clothing and weapon, allowing viewers to have an understanding of the setting. The hint of the enemy is shown very subtly and indirectly. VA: "Smoke which resembles a dragon coming out from his tobacco pipe, revealing the enemy."

By looking at the overall layout of a movie poster, combining the setting, mood, characters, and genre, a viewer is able to get a glimpse of the story of the movie. Usually, the first thing people catch when looking at a movie poster is the genre of the movie. The overall layout gives the viewer a first impression, which is crucial to catch his attention by conveying the most important elements of the movie. Movie posters usually contain hints of events that are going to happen in the movie through the use of images.

Conclusion

The common design elements and principles (DEP) which are typography, imagery, colour and overall composition used in movie posters are able to bring out the intended message. The most prominent element is imagery, as the image takes up almost the entire area of a movie poster.

From the research, the researcher was able to understand how the DEP used in movie posters worked together to bring out an intended message. Imagery, typography and colour are linked to the overall composition of a movie poster. Additionally, the setting, mood, characters and genre bring out a brief story of a movie, which is enough to catch the viewer's attention.

However, in this digital era, where information is shared mostly through the Internet, there is a question regarding the role of movie posters in promoting a movie. Traditionally, movie posters were put outside cinemas or on billboards to attract audience. Now, social media has advanced to the point where movies are promoted through short movie trailers being shared online. These short movie trailers might have taken over the role of movie posters in promoting movies as they are more engaging and informative.

This leads to the possibility of future studies on movie posters. The researcher compiled several questions when approaching this issue. How can traditional movie posters evolve to promote a movie more efficiently? Could it become more interactive and engaging with the audience? How do designers use technology such as augmented reality and virtual reality to enhance movie posters? These few questions can lead to a new research regarding the future of movie posters.

The researcher identified several limitations of the study during the process. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the researcher was not able to get hold of physical resources such as books and journals. Therefore, she could only resort to the use of the Internet and online library which consists of e-books and e-journals. A difficulty identified during the research was that the researcher was unable to identify a clear structure for her discussion, due to the complex intertwining of subtopics.

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Appendix 1. Compilation of Movie Posters

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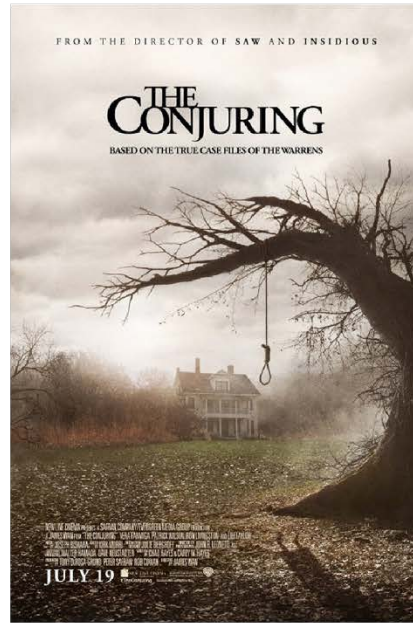
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Appendices



Appendix 1. Compilation of the six movie posters used in the visual analysis and online survey. Top (left to right): IT (2017), The Conjuring (2014), The Hobbit: The Desolation of Smaug (2012). Bottom (left to right): Brave (2012), Me Before You (2016), The Fault in Our Stars (2014).

Movie Poster Design Survey

Hi! I am a first year design student undertaking a degree in creative media from Taylor's University, Malaysia. I am conducting a research about movie poster design.

The research problem is about the use of design elements and principles in movie posters to convey an intended message. The goal of this survey is to find out whether respondents recognize the common design elements used in film posters and understand how the design elements convey a message in film posters.

This survey consists of 3 sections. It would be great if you could take a few minutes to complete this survey.

Approx. time: 5 min

*All responses are recorded anonymously.

*Required

1. Which category below includes your age? *

- 9 or below
- 10-19
- 20-29
- 30-39
- 40-49
- 50-59
- 60-69
- 70 or above

2. Are movie posters able to tell you what the movie is about? *

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

3. Do you think movie posters have a style for each genre? *

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

Appendix 2.1. Online Survey Questionnaire on Google Forms

Disclaimer: The sample online survey questionnaire below is one section from the entire questionnaire. The five questions are repetitive for each of the six movie posters.

Section 2 of 3


Movie Poster Design

In this section, three movie posters will be shown. There will be five questions each. Please take your time to answer these questions. A more detailed answer would be highly beneficial for my research! Thank you.

Please answer questions 1 to 4 according to the poster below (Fig 1).

Description (optional)

Fig 1: Brave (2012) movie poster



Appendix 2.2. Online Survey Questionnaire on Google Forms

1. Have you watched this movie? *

Yes

No

Maybe

2. What stands out from this movie poster? *

Typography - The arrangement of text, font style and appearance.

Imagery - The use of images.

Colour - Includes tint, shade, tone and hue.

Overall composition - The artistic arrangement of the parts of a picture.

Other...

3. Do you understand the meaning behind this movie poster? *

Yes

No

Maybe

4a. Do you think this movie poster's visuals give you a better understanding of the movie? *

Yes

No

Maybe

4b. Based on your answer in 4a, please describe your understanding of this movie. e.g. genre, emotion, character, story of the movie (A more detailed description is highly appreciated) *

Long-answer text

Appendix 2.3. Online Survey Questionnaire on Google Forms