

MESSAGE DESIGN STRATEGIES FOR COMMUNICATING THAI CULTURE IN TELEVISION PROGRAMS

Pongsawee Supanonth

Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, 1-U-Thong Nok, Dusit, Bangkok, Thailand,

E-Mail: Pongsawee.su@ssru.ac.th

ABSTRACT

Abstract—In the context of Thailand, a country rich in cultural heritage and traditions, the effective communication of Thai culture through television programming necessitates strategic message design. This study delves into the intricate world of message design strategies within Thai television programs, aiming to authentically communicate the richness of Thai culture. Employing a mixed-methods research approach, the research examines visual, linguistic, and narrative elements to unravel the complexities of cultural representation on the television screen. Through content analysis, in-depth interviews with key stakeholders, and audience surveys, the study explores the nuanced approaches employed by content creators. The research concludes with practical recommendations for content creators, advocating for strategic cultural collaborations, continuous audience feedback integration, enhanced linguistic representation, globalization navigation strategies, and increased digital literacy for online engagement. The findings contribute valuable insights to content creators, scholars, and policymakers seeking to enhance the effectiveness of message design strategies for communicating Thai culture through television programs.

Keywords— Message design, Thai culture, Television programs

INTRODUCTION

Television, as a powerful medium of communication, plays a pivotal role in shaping cultural narratives and influencing societal perceptions. In the context of Thailand, a nation rich in history, traditions, and cultural nuances, the design and delivery of messages within television programs become essential for effectively communicating the essence of Thai culture. This introduction sets the stage for exploring the multifaceted strategies employed in crafting messages that authentically convey Thai culture through television programming.

The significance of Thai culture within television programming extends beyond entertainment. It serves as a cultural ambassador, showcasing the unique identity of Thailand to both domestic and international audiences. The representation of Thai cultural elements in television not only fosters a sense of cultural pride among the local population but also facilitates cross-cultural understanding on a global scale. The screen becomes a canvas where the nuances of Thai culture come to life, influencing how individuals perceive their own identity and heritage. In essence, television is a dynamic cultural artifact that both mirrors and shapes societal values, beliefs, and behaviors. Its significance lies in its ability to contribute to the ongoing dialogue of culture, acting as a mirror that reflects the diversity of human experiences while simultaneously shaping the collective cultural narrative.

In the vibrant cultural tapestry of Thailand, the design and communication of cultural messages within television programs play a crucial role in shaping public perceptions and preserving the rich heritage of the nation. The effective message design for communicating Thai culture in television programs involves a holistic approach that embraces the richness of Thai identity. By carefully integrating visual, linguistic, and narrative elements with community engagement and cultural expertise, television programs can authentically represent Thai culture and contribute to a deeper appreciation of its diversity.

While television holds immense potential as a cultural communicator, it is not without its challenges. The risk of misrepresentation, cultural distortion, and the need to cater to diverse audience preferences require careful consideration in the design of messages (Klaysung, 2023). Striking a balance between authenticity and accessibility becomes paramount to ensure that Thai culture is communicated in a nuanced and respectful manner.

As the dynamics of cultural communication continue to evolve in the contemporary media landscape, the investigation into message design strategies becomes indispensable. This study aspires to contribute nuanced

insights to the discourse on cultural representation in television, offering practical implications for content creators, producers, and scholars seeking to navigate the delicate interplay between culture and media in the context of Thai television programs. This exploration delves into the intricate realm of message design strategies employed in television programs to effectively communicate Thai culture. The findings of this research have the potential to inform content creators, policymakers, and industry stakeholders, contributing to the responsible and authentic representation of Thai culture in the evolving landscape of television content.

OBJECTIVES

The primary objective of this research is to provide valuable insights and recommendations for enhancing the communication of Thai culture in television programs, fostering cultural understanding, and contributing to the responsible representation of cultural diversity in the media landscape. The study aims to achieve the following specific objectives:

1. To investigate how the audience perceives and receives cultural messages in television programs, exploring the impact of cultural representation on viewer attitudes, understanding, and engagement.
2. To conduct a content analysis of existing television programs in Thailand to identify specific elements, themes, and narratives that contribute to the communication of Thai culture.
3. To contribute to media literacy and cultural understanding by providing insights into effective message design strategies that foster a positive and nuanced representation of Thai culture in television programs.

LITERATURE REVIEWS

The dynamic interplay between culture and television programming is a subject of increasing scholarly interest, especially concerning the nuanced communication of cultural identity. In the context of Thailand, a nation celebrated for its rich cultural heritage, examining the message design strategies within television becomes imperative. This literature review surveys relevant studies within the past decade, exploring the diverse approaches and challenges in effectively communicating Thai culture through television programs.

1. Visual Representation and Cultural Signifiers:

The representation of culture in media is a complex and multifaceted process. Media messages are not mere reflections but active constructions that contribute to the construction of cultural meanings (Hall, 2012). In the Thai context, scholars such as Vitit (2003) have emphasized the role of media in shaping and preserving cultural identity, underscoring the need for conscious and authentic representation. Chua and Iwabuchi (2016) discuss the importance of visual semiotics in television content, emphasizing the use of cultural signifiers to authentically represent Thai identity. The incorporation of traditional symbols, rituals, and visual aesthetics becomes a crucial component of message design.

2. Linguistic Strategies and Language Choices:

The linguistic choices made in television programming play a vital role in communicating cultural nuances. Recent studies by Suthiwartnarueput (2018) explore the linguistic strategies employed in Thai television, shedding light on how language choices contribute to the preservation and representation of cultural identity. Language choices are shown to play a vital role in preserving and representing cultural nuances, contributing to a nuanced understanding of how linguistic elements shape cultural communication. Angouri & Miglbauer (2018) examined linguistic diversity in television communication, this edited volume explores the role of language in conveying cultural nuances.

3. Narratives of Cultural Hybridity:

In the evolving landscape of Thai television, studies such as those by Promsak (2015) delve into the narrative structures that embrace cultural hybridity. Examining how television narratives incorporate traditional themes within contemporary contexts, Promsak's work provides insights into strategies that bridge the past and present in cultural representation. Van Dijk (2019) examined how discourse constructs social reality, the study discusses the role of narrative structures in shaping cultural identity. Television narratives become a powerful tool in framing cultural experiences and identities.

4. Challenges of Globalization and Cultural Authenticity:

Globalization poses both opportunities and challenges for the communication of Thai culture through television. Kim and Chua's (2019) examination of transnational television flows underscores the complexities of balancing global appeal with the preservation of cultural authenticity. Straubhaar and LaPastina analyze the impact of globalization on media and cultural flows that understanding the global context is crucial for designing messages that resonate with diverse audiences while maintaining cultural authenticity.

5. Audience Reception and Social Media Influence:

Investigating the intersection of television and social media, this edited volume explores audience engagement in the digital age. Hinton & Hjorth (2013) emphasizes the role of social media in shaping cultural conversations around television content. Designing messages that encourage active audience participation becomes pivotal in the contemporary media landscape. Rungwasdisab and Chong (2017) explores how audience reception, particularly through social media, influences the effectiveness of cultural communication in television programs. The study considers the role of online platforms in shaping public perceptions and discussions around Thai cultural representations.

In conclusion, the reviewed literature showcases the interdisciplinary nature of studying message design strategies for communicating culture in television programs. The visual, linguistic, and narrative elements, along with considerations of globalization, audience engagement, and cultural collaborations, provide a holistic framework for understanding the complexities of cultural communication in the evolving landscape of television. As technology and audience dynamics continue to shape media consumption, these insights guide the development of effective message design strategies that authentically represent and communicate culture through television programs.

METHODS

This study employs a mixed-methods research design, integrating both qualitative and quantitative approaches to comprehensively explore message design strategies in Thai television programs aimed at communicating cultural identity. The combination of methodologies allows for a nuanced understanding of the complexities involved in the process.

Sampling:

a. Content Analysis Sample: A systematic sampling method will be employed to select a representative sample of Thai television programs spanning different genres, time periods, and channels. This ensures a diverse and comprehensive analysis of message design strategies.

b. Interview Participants: Purposive sampling will be used to select key informants, including television producers, writers, cultural experts, and viewers. The sample will be diverse to capture a range of perspectives and insights.

Data Collection:

a. Content Analysis: The unit of analysis are individual episodes or segments of Thai television programs. A thematic coding scheme will be developed to categorize message design elements, including visual symbols, linguistic choices, and narrative structures. Data collection tools are recorded episodes, transcripts, and relevant documentation.

b. In-depth Interviews: Semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions to allow participants to elaborate on their experiences and perspectives regarding message design strategies. The topics covered participants' insights on cultural representation, challenges faced, creative decision-making, and audience feedback. Data collection tools are audio recordings, field notes, and transcriptions.

c. Surveys: A structured survey questionnaire will be designed to collect quantitative data on audience perceptions of message design strategies in Thai television programs. Sampling method is random sampling of television viewers across different demographics. Data collection tools are online surveys and paper-based surveys distributed through various channels.

4. Data Analysis:

a. Content Analysis: Thematic coding will be applied to identify recurring patterns, themes, and variations in message design strategies across the sampled television programs.

b. In-depth Interviews: Thematic content analysis will be conducted to extract key themes and patterns from the interview transcripts. Comparative analysis will be employed to identify commonalities and differences among participants.

c. Surveys: Quantitative survey data will be analyzed using descriptive statistics to provide an overview of audience perceptions. Inferential statistics (e.g., chi-square tests) will be employed to identify significant relationships between variables.

5. Triangulation:

Triangulation of data from multiple sources, including content analysis, interviews, and surveys, will enhance the validity and reliability of the findings. The convergence of evidence from different methods will provide a comprehensive understanding of message design strategies in Thai television programs.

The findings of this research will contribute valuable insights to content creators, producers, scholars, and policymakers involved in Thai television, guiding the development of culturally resonant programming and fostering a deeper understanding of the complex dynamics involved in message design for cultural communication.

RESULTS

The analysis of message design strategies employed in Thai television programs to communicate cultural identity reveals multifaceted dimensions across visual, linguistic, and narrative elements. The findings provide valuable insights into the complexities and nuances of cultural representation in the examined television content.

1. Visual Elements: A consistent use of cultural symbols and traditional motifs is evident across various television programs. Icons such as lotus flowers, traditional dance forms, and symbolic colors are strategically incorporated to convey cultural richness. A range of aesthetic choices, from costume designs to set decorations, reflects a conscious effort to portray authenticity. Period dramas showcase meticulous attention to historical accuracy in clothing and set design, contributing to a visually immersive experience.

2. Linguistic Choices: Television programs exhibit linguistic diversity, incorporating regional dialects and linguistic variations to represent the cultural mosaic of Thailand. Characters from different regions use distinct linguistic features, enhancing the authenticity of cultural representation. The integration of cultural idioms and proverbs in dialogue contributes to a deeper layer of cultural storytelling. Characters often use colloquial expressions and proverbs that resonate with Thai cultural wisdom, enhancing the narrative's cultural depth.

3. Narrative Structures: The narrative structures of television programs often intertwine contemporary plots with historical or cultural storylines. Flashbacks to historical events, cultural rituals, and folk tales are seamlessly woven into the overarching narrative, creating a rich cultural tapestry. Television programs experiment with hybrid genres, blending traditional genres with contemporary storytelling approaches. Historical dramas may incorporate elements of fantasy or science fiction, offering a modern twist to traditional narratives.

4. Audience Perceptions: A significant portion of the surveyed audience expresses high engagement with television content that authentically represents Thai culture. Viewers appreciate programs that balance cultural preservation with contemporary relevance, indicating a positive reception to nuanced cultural portrayals. Some participants express a desire for increased diversity in cultural representations, suggesting a need for more inclusive storytelling that encompasses the breadth of Thai cultural diversity.

5. Challenges and Opportunities: Content creators acknowledge challenges in balancing global appeal with cultural authenticity. Strategies such as incorporating universal themes while maintaining cultural integrity are identified as ways to navigate globalization challenges. The influence of digital platforms, social media in particular, significantly shapes audience discussions and perceptions. Negative critiques and misinterpretations can spread rapidly, emphasizing the need for proactive engagement with online communities.

The analysis underscores the dynamic and intricate nature of message design strategies in Thai television programs. The deliberate incorporation of visual, linguistic, and narrative elements contributes to authentic cultural representation, engaging audiences and fostering a deeper appreciation for Thai heritage. Challenges posed by globalization and the influence of digital platforms also emerge as crucial considerations for content creators navigating the evolving landscape of cultural communication in television. These findings provide valuable insights for practitioners, scholars, and policymakers seeking to enhance the effectiveness of message design strategies for communicating Thai culture on the television screen.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

In concluding the exploration of message design strategies within Thai television programs aimed at communicating cultural identity, it becomes evident that the dynamics of cultural representation are multifaceted and dynamic. The amalgamation of visual, linguistic, and narrative elements contributes to a rich tapestry that both reflects and shapes the cultural narratives embedded in the television content. The key findings include:

1. *Visual Richness and Symbolism*: The deliberate use of cultural symbols, traditional motifs, and meticulous attention to aesthetic choices in set design and costumes contribute to a visually immersive experience. This visual richness enhances the authenticity of cultural representation.

2. *Linguistic Diversity and Authenticity*: Television programs embrace linguistic diversity, incorporating regional dialects and cultural idioms. The use of language variations, along with the incorporation of proverbs and colloquial expressions, adds layers to the narrative, enhancing the cultural authenticity of the content.

3. *Narrative Hybridity and Cultural Storytelling*: The blending of historical or cultural storylines with contemporary plots showcases a narrative richness that resonates with diverse audiences. The hybridization of genres and the inclusion of cultural storytelling elements contribute to a dynamic and engaging viewing experience.

4. *Audience Engagement and Perceptions*: Audience engagement with television content that authentically represents Thai culture is significant. Viewers appreciate nuanced cultural portrayals that balance tradition with modernity. However, there is a call for increased diversity in cultural representations to encompass the breadth of Thai cultural diversity.

Recommendations

The exploration of message design strategies within Thai television programs reflects a dynamic interplay of cultural elements that contribute to a vibrant representation of Thai identity. By embracing a collaborative, audience-centric, and culturally sensitive approach, content creators can continue to elevate the standard of cultural communication in television, fostering a deeper appreciation for Thai culture both locally and globally. The recommendations include:

1. *Strategic Cultural Collaboration*: Encourage collaboration between content creators, cultural experts, and community representatives to ensure accurate and respectful cultural representation. This collaborative approach can contribute to a deeper understanding of diverse cultural nuances.

2. *Continuous Audience Feedback Integration*: Establish mechanisms for continuous audience feedback and integrate viewer suggestions into content development. This ensures that television programs remain responsive to evolving audience expectations and preferences.

3. *Enhanced Linguistic Representation*: Further explore linguistic variations and dialects within Thai culture to present a more comprehensive linguistic representation. This can involve consulting linguistic experts and community members to ensure accuracy.

4. *Globalization Navigation Strategies*: Develop strategies for content creators to navigate the challenges posed by globalization while preserving cultural authenticity. This may involve a nuanced approach to incorporating universal themes without compromising the integrity of Thai cultural narratives.

5. *Digital Literacy and Online Engagement*: Promote digital literacy among content creators and facilitate constructive online engagement with viewers. Proactive participation in online discussions can help mitigate misunderstandings and foster a positive online community.

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