

Form of a Successful Y Series

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Abstract

The research in the topic of “Form of a Successful Y Series” is a qualitative research with the objective of studying and analyzing successful television series in the Boy’s Love genre (known in Thai as “Y Series ”). The methodology involves the textual analysis of 7 key qualities of the shows studied, including Plot, Character, Themes, Setting, Iconography, Audience Appeal, and Ideology. The five Boy’s Love series selected for the study were chosen from a collection of popular Thai Boy’s Love series broadcast between 2017 and 2022. Through the analysis, the study determines that successful Y series have the following key characteristics:

1. Plot – the plot centering on the love story between two men, filled with obstacles but eventually concluding with a happy ending.
2. Character – the lead characters are opposite types of each other.
3. Themes – the popular theme is romance with obstacles initially but with a happy ending.
4. Setting – almost entirely taking place in a university setting.
5. Iconography – using symbolism to emphasize the theme of love and romance.
6. Audience appeal – appeal to the audience using intensely emotional scenes such as fighting scenes to convey the drama of the story.
7. Ideology – emphasizes same-sex relationships and highlighting the social issues regarding sexual equality and family relationships.

Additionally, data gathered through in-depth interviews using open-ended questions with creators and researchers finds that there are six factors that determine the success of a Y series. These are the quality of the source material, the quality of the plot, the casting, production value, investment, and marketing.

Keywords : Series, Y Series, Successful

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Introduction

Thailand embraces freedom of expression when it comes to gender and sexual identities. This openness has paved the way for the thriving television drama genre known as Boy's Love (referred to as "Y Series" in Thailand), narrating love stories between male protagonists. Thailand has emerged as a global hub for the production and export of Boy's Love dramas, evident in the continuous creation of related media and the increasing viewership on various streaming platforms, including WeTV, VIU, iQiYi, AIS Play, and Youtube.

The popularity of these Y Series has captured the attention of marketers who now seize the opportunity for product placements and ads within these dramas. Some platforms even invest funds in exchange for exclusive broadcasting rights, aiming to attract a larger fan base. New production companies are also entering the scene, capitalizing on the trend's success.

Y Series have a broad appeal, particularly among the audience known as "Y Girls," avid fans of these dramas. The lead actors in Y Series often exhibit strong chemistry, attractiveness, and talent, drawing a dedicated fan following that spans their entire careers. The genre continually evolves, focusing on enhancing the quality and diversity of each show's story and script while preserving the core concept of delivering uplifting narratives. These successful stories typically feature optimistic and straightforward plots with happy endings, leaving a positive impact on viewers and Y Series fans.

Beyond the show's quality, producers maintain fan engagement through post-show fanservice activities, including special events featuring "sweet moments" with fans. These activities foster a sense of connection with the audience, sparking waves of support on social media, particularly in "shipping" actors both in and out of their roles. The enthusiastic fandom support often propels the show to trend on Twitter, further boosting its viewership.

Boys' Love series has experienced significant success both domestically and internationally. The realistic and plausible portrayal of stories in these series, along with well-crafted narratives, has garnered widespread attention from viewers. The genre has shown continuous growth, receiving positive feedback and generating substantial revenue in the entertainment industry. Therefore, the researcher aims to study the patterns of successful Boys' Love series, intending to extract valuable insights for educational purposes and provide beneficial information for producers and developers in Thailand's Boys' Love series industry.

Methods

The study on "Form of a Successfully Series" employs a qualitative research approach, utilizing textual analysis as the framework for examining the patterns of successful Boy's Love Series. Textual analysis was applied to components, including plot, characters, themes, setting, iconography, audience appeal, and ideology, in the 5 selected successful Boy's Love Series that aired between 2017-2022. Additionally, in-depth interviews were conducted using purposive sampling to target producers, directors, and scholars in the field related to successful "Series Y," and 6 experts were selected for interviews. The research tool included open-ended questions covering factors affecting series popularity, distinctions from traditional romance, societal impact, production strategies, and suggestions for genre improvement.

Results and Discussion

The results of the analysis on "Form of a Successful Y Series" yield the following discussion.

1.) Plot Impact on Successful Y Series

This study indicates that the narrative structure of Y series may not significantly differ from general series. Y series often focus on portraying the love lives of teenagers during their school years, with a predominant emphasis on sports and music. Given that the majority of Y series fans are young, series producers face the challenge of creating plots that are strong, intriguing, and captivating to maintain viewer interest. Developing unique and non-repetitive storylines is considered a significant challenge for content creators. Currently, many scriptwriters in the industry are exploring diverse plots, such as intense drama, modern action scenes, and even period dramas, to continuously offer fresh and innovative content. Crafting the plot or script of Y series requires experimenting with new roles for main characters and leading the story from the beginning with a well-structured plot that sequences events logically. The challenge lies in introducing new roles to the characters while maintaining a compelling plot that engages viewers from the beginning, through the middle, and up to the end. The creation of Y series plots should involve experimenting with new roles, avoiding stretching the storyline excessively, and ensuring alignment with narrative theories, as suggested by Kaewthep (2010), emphasizing the importance of a clear narrative standpoint controlled by the storyteller to create meaningful content that significantly influences the audience's perspective.

2.) Character Impact on Successful Y Series

This study found that the selection of actors to portray roles in Y series significantly influences their popularity among viewers. Producers and directors invest considerable time in casting actors for each series. The casting decisions for Y series often draw inspiration from the characters in the novels to make viewers feel connected to the characters. The actors play a crucial role in the creative process, starting with extensive workshops and rehearsals to dissolve behaviors and ensure that the actors embody their characters to the fullest.

Success in Y series is often associated with the selection of lead actors who not only have a good appearance but also share great on-screen chemistry. The representation of popular characters from well-loved novels in the series tends to resonate with the preferences of viewers, especially the female audience, leading to successful and well-received series. The popularity of the main actors is instrumental in creating a trend or couple that garners widespread attention. This popularity not only benefits the series in terms of viewership but also translates into marketable opportunities for the actors and producers, with lucrative financial returns.

This aligns with the perspective of Maneewattana (2018), who emphasizes that for actors to embody their roles effectively, they must think like their characters, seeing everything through the character's perspective rather than their own. This requires an understanding of how the character would behave and express themselves, incorporating the qualities of a skilled actor, thorough preparation, and problem-solving skills during the performance.

3.) Theme Impact on Successful Y Series

This study indicates that a well-developed theme plays a crucial role in the success of Y series. Sometimes, the theme doesn't need explicit narration but is conveyed to the audience through the unfolding of the storyline. Generally, Y series themes emphasize the essence of love and the relationships of the characters. The narrative often begins with friendships or conflicts among characters, navigating through various events in the plot. Ultimately, these relationships evolve, surpassing the boundaries of friendship, brotherhood, or siblinghood, culminating in the central focus on love. This love represents the primary objective of the series, aligning with the concept proposed by Vivatsinudom (2003) that the theme is the core idea that binds the various elements of a single storyline. The presentation of the theme does not always require explicit articulation, allowing viewers to engage their imagination and intellect, enhancing their overall viewing experience.

4.) Setting Impact on Successful Y Series

This study found that the setting where the characters' events unfold in Y series, plays a crucial role in enhancing the series' overall appeal. Various locations within the storyline act as crucial points for character development, requiring a sense of authenticity without appearing overly dramatized. This perspective aligns with the findings of Kitwisala (2010), who emphasized the role of setting as a narrative tool, portraying fictional events against the setting of a specific place. In the context of Y series, frequent scenes set in educational institutions are notable. This choice is significant as the majority of character relationships often develop during the formative years of adolescence.

5.) Iconography Impact on Successful Y Series

Researcher has found that the use of symbols to convey gender roles and characters' emotional states significantly influences the success of Y series. In some Y series, the focus is on the theme of love without explicitly addressing the sexual aspect. These series portray that Thai society is becoming more accepting of sexual diversity, considering it normal for everyone to coexist. The inclusion of love stories between men or women in Y series is seen as an effort by producers to elevate the audience's awareness and understanding of the existence of diverse sexual orientations. This aligns with the research conducted by Somyad (2018), emphasizing the presentation of same-sex love in current Y series as a depiction of reality, showcasing society's acceptance of such relationships. The use of symbols in these series serves to immerse and make viewers aware of the existence of a diverse range of sexual orientations, aligning with the research conducted by Somyard (2018). It points out that the presentation of male-male love in the current Y series involves simulating reality in a way that society accepts same-sex love. The use of symbols aims to purchase gender roles and the emotional states of characters, highlighting that the portrayal of male-male love is not psychologically abnormal.

6.) Audience Appeal Impact on Successful Y Series

Through this study, it has been observed that the use of music as a medium for evoking emotions significantly accelerates the audience's connection with the characters and the storyline in Y series. Employing music is recognized as a crucial element that contributes to the success of Y series, captivating the audience's interest more rapidly. The strategic use of songs serves as a mainstay for some narratives or is integrated to establish connections with

other elements of the story without compromising the series' integrity. Researchers align with the notion that the success of a series depends on its ability to evoke the audience's emotions, and music is a powerful tool in achieving this. It is noted that whether a series achieves success is contingent upon its ability to resonate with the emotions of the audience, given that viewership remains the most reliable metric for evaluating success. Therefore, the production of theme songs for a series is considered a key instrument in captivating the audience's emotions. This perspective is reinforced by the findings of Saejiw and Premsrirat (2017), who highlight the significance of storytelling through theme songs, considering them a form of artistic communication that conveys the values and emotions of people during a specific period, making it a universal medium accessible to listeners everywhere.

7.) Ideology Impact on Successful Y Series

This study found that the ideology presented in the Y series consistently drives societal change in thinking. This extends to increased acceptance of diverse sexual orientations and challenges traditional family structures, including the rearing of children by same-sex parents. Observably, contemporary audiences are more open-minded and accepting of Y series, encompassing both younger and older demographics. Moreover, this trend has gained international popularity, aligning with the research perspective of Kritchanat (2022), which suggests that Y series contribute to fostering acceptance and creating a new set of ideologies. These narratives have shifted societal norms, transforming the portrayal of love from a traditional heterosexual perspective to a more inclusive and egalitarian ideology, representing a move towards an “inclusive ideology.”

Conclusion

In conclusion, the researcher has found that there are many factors that lead to a successful and popular production of a “Y Series.”

First of all, the strategic casting of lead actors, emphasizing their chemistry and interpersonal dynamics, serves as a powerful way to attract more viewers. The enjoyment derived from the on-screen relationships enhances viewer engagement and connection. Furthermore, the narrative plot's entertainment value and intrigue play a crucial role. A compelling strategy involves incorporating climax scenes into promotional trailers and teasers and the use of music to enhance audience interest and engagement with each episode. Moreover, certain production companies, such as GMM, Studio Wabisabi, and Wandee Work, enjoy a high level of trust from fans. These brands are synonymous with delivering top-quality "Y Series" productions, and fanclub members eagerly anticipate each new release from these esteemed companies.

Adapting popular Boy's Love genre novels from online and social media platforms into series stands as another key contributor to success. Utilizing social media trends and viral reaction clips emerges as an efficient approach to rapidly spreading awareness of a "Y Series. Additionally, post-series engagement strategies, including fan meetings, special events, and collaborations with brands, contribute to sustained marketing efforts, ensuring the series remains relevant in the public consciousness.

The significance of high production value emerges as a crucial factor, presenting a substantial opportunity for growth and success within the industry. Lastly, developing the content of Y series to align with shifting trends, consumer behavior, and technological advancements

emerges as a driving force behind the success of the Thai Boy's Love drama industry. This transformation positions it as a source of soft power and economic opportunity for the country.

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