

Creative Strategies for Developing a Romantic–Comedy Television Series Centered on the Girls Love Genre

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Abstract

The Girls' Love (GL) genre has experienced significant growth in the Thai television industry, becoming a prominent cultural export and rapidly expanding market segment. However, limited academic research has examined the storytelling and creative strategies that distinguish successful GL productions, particularly within the romantic comedy subgenre. This study aimed to identify the key storytelling elements and analyse the creative strategies for developing romantic comedy GL television series in Thailand. A mixed method approach was employed through focus group interviews with industry professionals and target audiences, including screenplay writers, directors, producers and audience totally 117 participants. Data were analysed using thematic analysis, involving systematic coding and identification of recurring patterns, as well as online questionnaires. The findings showed that character relationships played a crucial role in shaping emotional engagement and viewers' intention to continue watching the series. In addition, the integration of narrative clarity, humor quality, production feasibility helped maintain audience interest. Most participants expressed positive attitudes toward the pilot and demonstrated strong interest in watching the full series. The findings suggest that character-driven storytelling combined with creative humor can effectively enhance audience engagement in contemporary series production.

Keywords: creative strategy, TV series, romantic comedy, girl love

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Introduction

The Thai television series industry has continued to expand alongside the transition into the digital era, particularly during the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, which significantly accelerated global audiences' shift toward streaming platforms. This shift was reflected in Netflix gaining more than 16 million new subscribers during the first quarter of 2020. Such changes have encouraged content creators to adapt their storytelling approaches and production strategies to align with contemporary audience consumption behaviors in the digital age (Eder et al., 2010; Kallas, 2014). At the same time, changing social values have also influenced contemporary forms of humor. The concept of the Superiority Theory of comedy has gradually become less compatible with modern societies that place greater importance on equality and respect for individual dignity. Consequently, audiences increasingly favor creative forms of humor that entertain without diminishing or mocking others.

Within this context, romantic comedy has remained one of the most popular genres among audiences because of its accessible tone, emotional engagement, and entertaining narrative structure. Previous studies have shown that Thai audiences particularly favor comedic content (Lotz, 2018). In addition, the success of *My Ambulance* (2019) demonstrated how multi-platform distribution strategies can effectively broaden audience reach and strengthen audience engagement (LINE TV, 2019). Despite the sustained popularity of romantic comedy, there remains limited research focusing on the development of relationships between ghosts and humans within the context of Thai television series narratives.

Therefore, this creative research project aims to examine creative strategies for producing a romantic comedy television series centered on the friendship between ghosts and humans. The study also seeks to develop an original pilot episode and a production bible as creative outputs that may contribute to future developments in Thai television series production and storytelling.

Objective

1. To examine the key storytelling elements in romantic comedy GL television series in Thailand
2. To examine the creative strategies for developing romantic comedy GL television series in Thailand

Concept and Theory

Concept of Original Series Writing

Definition and Background

A television series refers to a narrative form composed of multiple episodes, featuring recurring main characters and settings that continue throughout the storyline. While individual episodes may contain self-contained subplots, the primary narrative typically remains open-ended to connect to subsequent episodes (Grace, 2014). This definition is consistent with Brembilla and De Pascalis (2018), who describe a series as a serialized form of storytelling in which narratives evolve through the same set of characters and a shared story world within an overarching macro-narrative structure.

Scriptwriting Process for Series Production

Pitching: The process begins with pitching, which involves presenting the core concept and storyline of the project. Typically, agencies or studios are responsible for preparing a pitch document—ranging from 5 to 20 pages—to present to content development teams of platforms (Grace, 2014).

Series Bible Development: Once a platform agrees to develop the project, a series bible is created collaboratively between the agency, studio, and writers. This document typically includes key elements such as genre, concept, target audience, setting, character profiles, overall story overview, episodic breakdown, mood and tone, and franchise potential.

Treatment Development: This stage involves developing a detailed narrative outline for each episode across the entire season. Writers expand the storyline by specifying scene sequences and describing key actions and events from beginning to end within each episode.

Screenplay Writing: At this stage, the outline is developed into a complete script for the pilot episode. The script includes scene descriptions and dialogue, following standard screenplay format.

Full Season Writing and Revision: Once the pilot script is approved (greenlit), the writing process proceeds to full-season development. This stage involves continuous collaboration among the creative team, including revisions and refinements, until a final draft is achieved. A key role in this process is the showrunner, who oversees the entire production, including script development, budget management, casting, and post-production editing (Douglas, 2018; Landau, 2014).

Concept of Romantic Comedy

Romantic comedy, also known as comedy of manners, is a subgenre of comedy characterized by narratives that center on romantic relationships unfolding under various obstacles before reaching a resolution that typically concludes with a happy ending. Throughout the narrative, humor is consistently incorporated to enhance audience engagement. The content often reflects realistic situations and is closely connected to everyday life, featuring characters that mirror the personalities and behaviors of individuals in contemporary society (Grindon, 2011). In terms of narrative structure, Billy Mernit (2020) explains that romantic comedy follows specific structural conventions designed to develop character relationships. One key element is the concept of the “Cute Meet,” which refers to the initial encounter between the protagonists. This moment not only serves to create memorability or humor but also reveals differences in personality, worldview, or emotional vulnerabilities between the characters. These differences establish the foundation of relational conflict, which subsequently drives the central narrative throughout the story.

Theory of Comedy

Alan Reynolds Thompson (1946) proposed the “Ladder of Comedy,” a framework that categorizes humor into two primary types: farce and comedy. Farce emphasizes exaggerated situations and physical actions to produce immediate laughter, while comedy relies on the construction of situations, character inconsistencies, and intellectual satire to generate humor. This framework highlights that humor can emerge from diverse mechanisms with varying

levels of complexity. However, certain forms of humor may reflect and reproduce social inequalities, particularly those based on mocking physical appearance, gender, or ethnicity, which can diminish human dignity (Martin & Ford, 2018). In contemporary society, audiences have become increasingly aware of issues related to rights and equality, largely due to greater access to information through digital media. As a result, there is a growing tendency to question humor that is oppressive or demeaning, leading to a shift toward forms of comedy that respect diversity and uphold human dignity.

Process to Create the Work

Concept and Theory

The researchers conducted a comprehensive review of literature, concepts, theories, and related documents concerning romantic comedy series. This review focused on narrative structure, mechanisms of humor, character development, and contemporary audience behavior. In addition, in-depth interviews were conducted with industry professionals, including screenwriters and directors, to gather insights into humor construction, script development techniques, and audience trends. These findings served as a fundamental basis for the development of the creative research project.

Treatment Development

The researchers developed a treatment that outlines the core concept, narrative structure, character development, and overall tone of the series. This treatment functioned as a framework for the subsequent development of the pilot.

Pilot Development

Based on the treatment, the researchers developed a pilot with an emphasis on broad-audience comedy, positive comedic design, clear narrative structure, and engaging character dynamics. This stage aimed to evaluate the feasibility and potential of the project at the prototype level.

Screen Test Evaluation

The pilot was evaluated through a screen test involving 117 participants from the target audience. Data were collected to assess narrative clarity, quality of humor, character appeal, and production feasibility through an online questionnaire (Google Forms) and in-depth interviews. The evaluation results were used to validate the creative work and support the research conclusions presented in subsequent sections.

Production Bible

The researchers synthesized findings from all stages to develop a production bible, which includes detailed information on narrative structure, storytelling direction, character design, and overall presentation approach. This document serves as a comprehensive guideline for future development and production.

Creative Work

Figure 1

Sample Visual Sequences From the Pilot



Figure 2

Overview of the Screen Test Session



Figure 3

Sample Production Bible Development Materials



Result

This study investigates creative strategies for developing a romantic comedy series centered on the friendship between ghosts and humans. A mixed-methods research design was employed, utilizing data collection through in-depth interviews and an online questionnaire administered via Google Forms. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including percentage, mean, and standard deviation.

Qualitative Findings From In-Depth Interviews

Qualitative data were collected through in-depth interviews with participants representing the target audience to explore their opinions, feelings, and perceptions of the pilot episode. The analysis focused on narrative structure, humor, character relationships, and overall appeal. The interview data were analyzed using content analysis and synthesized into key themes to reflect audience perspectives and evaluate the potential of the prototype. The findings indicate that most participants emphasized character relationships as the central element, particularly the relationship between the main characters, Jane and Lin. This relationship plays a crucial role in fostering emotional engagement and audience attachment. As one participant noted, “I became emotionally invested in their relationship, knowing that they would eventually be separated,” highlighting the importance of emotional design in driving audience involvement.

In terms of narrative structure, many participants perceived that the integration of romantic comedy with a murder mystery significantly enhanced the level of engagement and suspense. Although some viewers were able to anticipate certain plot developments, they remained interested in the investigative process, which sustained narrative continuity. Regarding humor and tone, the majority of participants described the series as light, accessible, and enjoyable, allowing for a relaxed viewing experience without excessive tension. This combination of elements contributed to a strong intention among viewers to continue watching the full series, suggesting that the prototype has promising potential to reach its target audience. However, participants also recommended improvements in production quality, particularly in sound design, visual effects, and editing, as these aspects occasionally affected the viewing experience.

Overall, these qualitative findings provide in-depth insights into audience perceptions and serve as a foundation for interpreting the quantitative results obtained from the questionnaire in the subsequent section.

Table 1
Intention to Watch Full Series

Response	Amount	Percentage
Interested	94	80.3
Neutral	23	19.7
Not Interested	0	0
Total	117	100

The majority of respondents expressed interest in watching the full series (94 participants), with no respondents indicating disinterest, suggesting strong development potential.

Participants who reported neutral attitudes noted that, although the plot was engaging and easy to follow, it lacked a distinctive hook to sustain continued interest. Some also indicated that the genre did not align with their usual preferences or that the storyline felt predictable due to similarities with existing content.

Results and Discussion

The findings revealed that character relationships played a significant role in shaping audience emotional engagement and viewing continuity, particularly the relationship between the characters “Jane” and “Lin.” Audiences perceived their relationship as emotionally layered and capable of developing into either a deep friendship or a romantic relationship. This suggests that the emotional connection between characters is a key factor influencing audience investment. In terms of storytelling, the integration of romance, comedy, and murder mystery elements effectively increased suspense and maintained audience interest throughout the narrative. Although some viewers were able to predict certain plot developments, they remained engaged with the progression of the story and the dynamics between the characters. These findings are consistent with the conventions of romantic comedy narratives discussed by Mernit (2020).

Survey results also indicated that audiences responded positively to the pilot episode, particularly regarding its entertaining, accessible, and emotionally engaging tone. The portrayal of ghosts through a humorous and endearing perspective was especially well received, reflecting contemporary audience preferences for creative humor that avoids discriminatory or degrading representations (Sunthornpasat, 2020).

Conclusion

Overall, the study demonstrates that creative strategies for romantic comedy series Centered on the Girls Love Genre should prioritize emotionally resonant character relationships, positive comedic approaches, and distinctive narrative development. These elements significantly enhance the series’ potential to connect with contemporary audiences and support future expansion into a full-scale television series.

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