

Manga Saves Our Kids: The Effect of Manga Characters' Ethics and Enthusiasm on Their Attractiveness

Proud Arunrangsiwed^{a,*}, Kamolrat Chaisuriya^b, Sitthichai Khemachantri^b, Vayuphatra Kulratanakul^b,
Panprae Bunyapukkna^b, Krisana Cheachainart^b, Nititorn Ounpipat^b

^aAnimation and Multimedia Program, Faculty of Management Science, Suan Suandha Rajabhat University, Bangkok, Thailand

^bFilms and Digital Media Program, Faculty of Management Science, Suan Suandha Rajabhat University, Bangkok, Thailand

Received 21 March 2018; Accepted 30 April 2018

Abstract

Since media bring about numerous impacts in their audiences, the characteristic of media and fictional characters should be explored. The current study focused into Manga or Japanese comics characters, because fans from worldwide have experienced Manga-comic exposure. The objective of this study is to examine the effect of fictional characters' ethics and enthusiasm on their attractiveness. One-hundred and fifty fictional characters were selected from 9 famous Manga comics and Anime animated films. Content analysis was conducted by 3 coders who rated the level of characters' ethics, enthusiasm, and attractiveness. Univariate regression was used to identify the influence of characters' ethics and enthusiasm on their attractiveness. However, it revealed no effect of both predictors on characters' attractiveness. This could be concluded that the character designers in Manga industry did not design the appearance of character based on their positive value. This finding suggests that Manga fans could be saved from media myth regarding attractiveness-and-goodness stereotype.

© 2018 Published by ITMSOC Working Group.

Keywords: Manga, Attractiveness, Stereotype, Myth, Enthusiasm.

1. Introduction

NEGATIVE impact of media in adolescents that has been broadly explored should be strongly considered an important issue for the educational practitioners. Regarding to the real world context, a stereotype in media is one of the major factors bringing about a false belief such as female objectification, gender-relation, racism, and sexism. Although stereotype could be positively applied in the wordless comics for an awareness of uncertainty in culture differences, it is also the suspect of causing the negative social impact when people consume the media

containing both racial and gender identities [1–3]. Appearance-related stereotype affects not only the people's perceptions, but also the radical/gender discrimination in society. For example, gay men might be negatively treated by others, since media tend to portray them as villains [4].

Having been attracted to a large number of fans around the world, the characteristics of Manga were used as the current topic due to a lack of research in the field of study [5]. Few studies relative to Manga and Anime include the horror belief in Manga stories (e.g., Tokyo Ghoul, Bleach, and Death Note) [6] and the application of Manga-style characters in the user-friendly communication program [7]. In the area of fandom, Bouissou *et al.* [5] revealed that Manga is favorable for relaxation to all readers and is easy to identify the main characters. Some fan scholars discussed intrapersonal communication, such as the reason that male fans preferred watching media with female action heroes (ass-kicking

*Corresponding author.

Email address: proud.ar@ssru.ac.th; parunran@nyit.edu (Proud Arunrangsiwed)

women) including an Anime film, *Gunslinger Girl* [8], and the ambiguity of how fans preferred the Anime film that blamed fans' behaviors [9].

Other than these studies, most comic scholars intended to explore the work of DC Comics and Marvel Comics [10–12]. One of the major problems in comic fandom is that male fans perform as gate-keepers to prevent female fans to join the culture [13]. Contrastingly for female-based fandom, like fan fiction community [14], fans are often encouraged by other fans to improve their work [15]. Manga, as the fan object consumed by both female and male fans, could be considered as a utopia for the society with gender equality. Like, some subgenre of Manga is created by female and its majority of audiences are also female [5]. The current study aimed to test if the appearance-related stereotype existed in Manga and Anime, which would help suggest fans, parents, and educators of how to use this type of media. The objective of the present study is to test the influence of attractiveness and enthusiasm of Manga-style cartoon characters on their attractiveness.

2. Attractiveness-Ethics Stereotype

It stems from the fact that children and adolescents are more likely to be influenced from media because of lack of real-world experiences, this myth regarding the link between attractiveness and ethics in cartoon characters is the important issue to be concerned. For general animated film, attractiveness is associated with tall, thin, young, and employed characters, while unattractiveness is related to fat, old, stupid, angry, and physical disabled characters [16]. Similarly in the media for girls, like Disney animated films, characters' attractiveness is positively linked to their ethics, and most children prefer the attractive characters better than the unattractive ones [17]. If these children believed that unattractive people are not favorable in their real life, this is going to cause the problem in school context that unattractive students would be left alone [18]. This myth was, in fact, occurred before televisions have been existed. Bourke [19] discussed that witch drawings portrayed in old print media was the way the society shaped the image of old women as wicked and cruel, even in fact, these women cannot easily hurt anyone. Comic book drawing has been continuously developed all the time, in which, Avery-Natale [20] found that current superhero and superheroine characters have much more muscles than their original design. This researcher was anxious if this body building style would bring about fans' un-satisfaction in their own body.

3. Gender Stereotype

Gender stereotype was often found not only in animated films for young people, but it appears on advertising, films, video games, and even in print media for public relation purpose. If we walked into an art school, the image of an art teacher tended

to be male and the students were female. However, if there were an art teacher and science teacher in one picture, people could guess that the art teacher was female and the science teacher was male. This example is how media producers create the work based on the existing stereotype, and media audience views it, believes it, and used it as the way of thinking and expectation. Popa and Gavrilu [21] found that in advertising, men were often in the subjective role who used car and business-related item, but women were more likely to be in objective roles who used home supplies, or do nothing but sexual appeal. This myth can result in girls' misunderstanding about self that they have to be sexual objective, beautiful, helpless, and victimized by villainous men [22]. Female fictional character in Disney animated films were often aware of male villains' physical touch, but they performed differently with the attractive hero characters who could easily have physical contact to them. This also misleads young girls to rely on attractive men [23]. Moreover, Garofalo [24] was afraid that young girls would link between female power and their negative behaviors, such as Ursula, Cinderella's stepmother, and the witch in *Snow White* movie. Based on these mentioned papers, gender stereotype could cause a lot of problems in girls. Contrastingly in emo subculture studies, gender stereotype perceived by the society caused an alienation in emo boys who were looked down since their emotional expression behavior was similar to girls' [25]. Moreover, racial stereotype was also considered as problematic content in media. In the comic, *Chew*, the comic book writer portrayed Chinese people as those who ate dirty and weird food.

All of these past studies help develop a hypothesis that in Manga, there could be the link between attractiveness and ethics as same as in Western media. Enthusiasm was added into the model to see if it could help describe the variances in characters' attractiveness, too. Enthusiasm was found as a value of Captain America who needed to remove corruption from US government [26]. It is a positive trait, which the Manga artists might design the characters with this trait as attractive ones.

4. Methods

4.1. Cases

The current study uses 150 Manga-style characters as the cases for content analysis. These characters were from 9 selected Manga comics or animated movies. Nine comics and movies selected were based on their reputation by search engine for surveying the online fan sites and personal experience for filtering/selecting the Manga. Four researchers of this study were familiar with this kind of animation and comics. They are experienced of exposure to these selected Manga comics in book stores, shopping mall, cloth stores, coloring books, posters, and toy-figure shops. These selected 9 titles and their summarized setting are as following:

4.1.1. *One Piece*

Before the death of the former pirate king Gol D. Roger, Roger also announced that all treasures were hidden in a place, called “One Piece”. Later in the age of pirate boom, a boy, named Monkey D. Luffy, began to travel and search for One Piece in order to be the king of all pirates.

4.1.2. *Naruto*

A long time ago, a nine-tailed devil attacked the Konoha village. The folk leader from Hokage village was self-sacrificed by engaging the nine-tailed devil into a baby, namely Uzumaki Naruto. Having been grown up later, Naruto tried to do everything for the village in order to get an acceptance.

4.1.3. *Attack on Titan*

Over 100 years, human kinds had lived inside the 50-metre-tall wall complex, since the large creatures, called Titan, were in the world outside. Titans tried to kill human every time, they met them. Later, the outer wall was destroyed by a 60-metre-tall Titan. People had to move to the next layer of wall complex. Hence, a group of people had to begin to fight the Titans to save the innocence ones.

4.1.4. *Fairy Tail*

There was a world that everyone used magic for all purposes of living. They traveled and fought by using magic. Guild was established and consisted those magic experts who could be hired by others. Fairy Tail is the story of the adventure of two magic experts from Guild, Natsu and Lucy.

4.1.5. *One Punch Man*

Saitama was a skinhead man who fought to protect the world from villain including criminals, devils, and aliens. His notable ability was to beat the enemy with one punch.

4.1.6. *Beelzebub*

Oga Tatsumi, a ruffian, walked to the river after he had problem with other gangsters. He found a body in the river and there was a baby appeared in that body. The Maid told him to keep this baby since this baby is the descendant of the devil king. After that Tatsumi became its stepfather.

4.1.7. *Dragon Ball*

Goku, a boy with a monkey tail, met a girl, named, Bulma. She traveled to search for Dragon Balls, since if she collected all 7 of them, she would be able to meet the Dragon god and ask for anything that she wanted. Both and their companions began their adventure with the same purpose.

4.1.8. *Gintama*

In the age of Samurai depression, Sakata Gintoki, the ex-samurai, and his friends, Shimura Shinpachi and Kagura, had to search for jobs to earn income. At the same time, there was the invasion of aliens from other planet.

4.1.9. *Reborn*

Sawada Tsunayoshi was a male student who had low class performance and low sport skills. He met a baby who was reborn. This baby became his teacher who taught him to be the leader of mafia gang, called Vongola Family, which is the most powerful mafia group in Europe.

4.2. *Instrument*

There were 3 scales written and used in the current study. Each scale was used to measure the value of each variable, characters’ ethics, enthusiasm, and attractiveness. All of them were 4-point Likert type scale (1 = disagree; 2 = somewhat disagree; 3 = somewhat agree; and 4 = agree).

4.2.1. *Media Characters’ Ethics scale (MCEt)*

consisted 6 items. The highest possible score was 24, and the lowest possible score was 6. The large value measured by this scale referred to a high level of character’s ethics. The items are as following:

- a) S/he helps other people.
- b) Her/his makes a decision based on rightfulness.
- c) S/he has royalty toward his/her companions.
- d) S/he takes advantage from minority. (Reversed item)
- e) S/he carefully considers before making a decision.
- f) S/he is selfish. (Reversed item)

4.2.2. *Media Characters’ Enthusiasm scale (MCEn)*

consisted 5 items. The maximum value measured by this scale could be 20, and the smallest possible score was 5. The large value indicated a high level of character’s enthusiasm. The items are as following:

- a) S/he needs triumph over the enemy.
- b) S/he needs to be the best.
- c) S/he tries to accomplish her/his goal.
- d) S/he needs to complete any task s/he has done.
- e) S/he is uncertain. (Reversed item)

4.2.3. *Media Characters’ Attractiveness scale (MCAt)*

consisted 5 items. In fact, these was another similar scales used in previous study of Swami, Stieger, Haubner, Voracek, and Furnham [27], called The Estimating Physical Attractiveness (EPA). However, the researchers of current study chose to write their own measurement is because the mentioned scale has 20 extremely detailed items, such as asking about teeth, stomach, and nose,

while many Manga-style characters do not have such those parts of body. The highest possible score of MCAAt was 20, and the lowest was 5. The character or case with a high score was an attractive character. The items are as following:

- a) Beautiful/Handsome
- b) Cute
- c) Fit and firm
- d) Good Personality
- e) Unpleasant (reversed item)

4.3. Coding

Three of the researchers (K. Chaisuriya, S. Khemachantri, V. Kulratanakul) were the raters in data collection process. First, they helped each other listed down all characters in 9 Manga titles. After finishing cases preparation, each of them rated all 150 cases individually. For each selected character, they needed to rate the level of attractiveness, ethics, and enthusiasm. The scales used in this study were multiple-itemed, so after rating all scores in each measure, the results of each rater needed to be averaged. The intraclass correlation coefficient of these three variables, attractiveness, ethics, and enthusiasm are .368, .320, and .426, respectively.

4.4. Analysis

Univariate regression was used to identify the influence of two predictors, characters' ethics and enthusiasm on the dependent variable, characters' attractiveness. Partial correlation would be also reported to see the amount of variances of dependent variable described by each predictor.

5. Results

The model of the present study (Fig. 1) was not statistically significant ($F = .340$; $p = .712$; $R = .068$; $R^2 = .005$). The results failed to support both hypotheses. Characters' attractiveness was not predicted by their ethics ($\beta = .038$; $t = .445$; $p = .657$) and their enthusiasm ($\beta = .066$; $t = .777$; $p = .439$). This could be interpreted that Manga characters' appearance did not depend on their positive characteristic, but might be other factors that were not discovered in the current study. As a part of the main analysis, statistic package also provided histogram, scatterplot, and normal P-P plot, which showed homoscedasticity, which is an important assumption of regression.

6. Discussions

The findings of the current study revealed a positive light regarding the effect of Manga on its fans, since regression analysis did not show any relationship between characters' attractiveness and their positive characteristic, ethics and enthusiasm. This

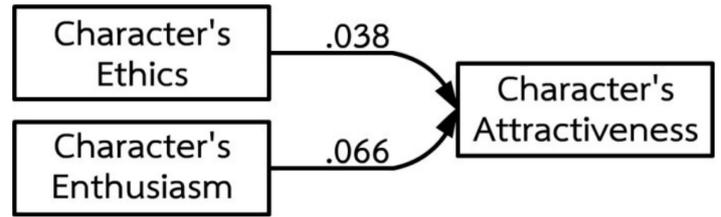


Fig. 1. Manga character's model with one dependent variable of attractiveness and two independent predictors of ethics and enthusiasm.

means Manga-style animated films and comics did not reinforce the belief about the stereotype into the audiences. An attractive character can be either hero or villain. Unlike most Disney and other western animated films, previous studies in this field found a strong link between morally-good characters and their attractiveness. Disney just started to blur this media-stereotype in 2010s, such as in *Frozen* (2013) and *Zootopia* (2016).

To break the link between characters' ethics and attractiveness is to provide children to view their friends with their own eyes. Hence, young people with an unattractive look would not be looked down or left alone in school. In other words, it is the way to establish the equality among people even they are good-looking or ordinary ones.

However, when the statistical test does not show the relationship or influences, it means that some villains are also attractive. Attractive villains could result in fans' behavior, since general people are likely to prefer an attractive one and also imitate them. Hence, media producers should determine if they should make villain attractive to break beauty-and-goodness stereotype, or if they should create an ugly villain to diminish fans' preference toward characters with misbehavior.

7. Limitation

The major limitation of the current study is that the values of intraclass correlation coefficient are low. This means the scale may not valid or the coders did not communicate or set the agreement well before starting rating the cartoon characters. Future study should consider test the validity and reliability of the scale before using it in the actual data collection. Moreover, the cases of this study were borrowed from only Manga-style animated film or comic, not other kinds of comics. This causes a problem in generalization. The results of this study can only generalize in Manga-style comics, not all animation or cartoon characters from around the world. As earlier scholars in the area of media effect were likely to investigate regarding western cartoon, not Manga-style one, the current study collected the data from the Manga-style one. This could help fill in the particular research gap, and it would be helpful if future studies could compare both major kinds of comic in the analysis, Manga and superhero.

8. Conclusion

Since stereotype usually causes misconceptions about attractiveness and gender identity especially in women and gay men, it is considered as a risk factor that bring about unjustified society in which people prejudice others by their visual appearance. The link between attractiveness and ethics of cartoon characters was previously found in Disney and other western animated-films. However, the findings of the current study did not show such the link in Manga-style cartoon characters. Both characters' ethics and enthusiasm did not have any influence on characters' attractiveness. This implies that Manga-style cartoon characters would not teach their audiences the appearance-related stereotype. This is considered as a positive light, unless those attractive villains may be imitated by fans who prefer them.

Acknowledgement

Three colleagues (K. Chaisuriya, S. Khemachantri, V. Kulratanakul) and I (P. Arunrangsiwed) conducted a research study together in Summer 2017. The early version of this paper was presented in The Technology Innovation Management and Engineering Science International Conference during November 2017.

The researcher also would like to thank Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University that supported the fund for this oral presentation, thank Mr. Kanitin Choochat for summarizing the setting of 9 Manga stories, and thank Ratajit Arunrangsiwed for proofreading the manuscript before the conference.

References

- Arunrangsiwed P. Solution when Parting with my Dear Flash: Identifying Causes and Uncertainty Reduction Strategies. *Executive Journal*. 2017;37(1):3–13. Available from: <https://www.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/executivejournal/article/view/91112>.
- Adler S. Silence in the graphic novel. *Journal of Pragmatics*. 2011;43(9):2278–2285.
- Arunrangsiwed P, Meenan S. Social Media for Education. *Journal of Mass Communication Technology, RMUTP*. 2016;2(1):62–71. Available from: https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Proud_Eden/publication/323377660_suxsrangrsrkhpheuxkarsuksa_Prosocial_Media_for_Education/links/5a91371caca272140562b548/suxsrangrsrkhpheuxkarsuksa-Prosocal-Media-for-Education.pdf.
- Li-Vollmer M, LaPointe ME. Gender Transgression and Villainy in Animated Film. *Popular Communication*. 2003;1(2):89–109. Available from: http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1207/S15405710PC0102_2.
- Bouissou JM, Pellitteri M, Dolle-Weinkauff B, Beldi A. Manga in Europe: A short study of market and fandom. *Manga: an anthology of global and cultural perspectives*. 2010;p. 253–266.
- Thomas JB. Horrific 'Cults' and Comic Religion. *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*. 2012;39(1):127–151. Available from: http://dl.ndl.go.jp/view/download/digidepo_10206989_po_889.pdf?contentNo=1&alternativeNo=.
- Itou J, Motojin Y, Munemori J. Development and application of Manga-style chat system aiming to communicate nonverbal expression. In: *Lecture Notes in Computer Science (including subseries Lecture Notes in Artificial Intelligence and Lecture Notes in Bioinformatics)*. vol. 8522 LNCS; 2014. p. 423–434. Available from: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-07863-2_41.
- Kittredge K. Lethal Girls Drawn for Boys: Girl Assassins in Manga/Anime and Comics/Film. *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*. 2014;39(4):506–532. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1353/chq.2014.0059>.
- Norris C. Perfect Blue and the negative representation of fans. *Journal of Japanese and Korean Cinema*. 2012;4(1):69–86. Available from: https://doi.org/10.1386/jjkc.4.1.69_1.
- Nichols M. 'I Think You and I Are Destined to Do This Forever': A Reading of the Batman/Joker Comic and Film Tradition through the Combat Myth. *The Journal of Religion and Popular Culture*. 2011;23(2):236–250. Available from: <https://utpjournals.press/doi/10.3138/jrpc.23.2.236>.
- Tipton NG. Gender trouble: Frank Miller's revision of robin in the batman: Dark knight series. *Journal of Popular Culture*. 2008;41(2):321–336. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-5931.2008.00505.x>.
- Van Den Anker M, Verhoeven P. Corporate communication : Analysing Marvel and DC. *Studies in Comics*. 2014;5(1):117–129.
- Robinson S. Fake geek girl: The gender conflict in nerd culture [Master Thesis]; 2014. Available from: https://scholarsbank.uoregon.edu/xmlui/bitstream/handle/1794/18385/Robinson_oregon_0171N_10998.pdf.
- Abigail De Kosnik. Should Fan Fiction Be Free? *Cinema Journal*. 2009;48(4):118–124.
- Arunrangsiwed P, Beck CS. Positive and Negative Lights of Fan Culture. *Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University Journal of Management Science*. 2016;3(2):40–58.
- Klein H, Shiffman KS. Messages about physical attractiveness in animated cartoons. *Body Image*. 2006;3(4):353–363.
- Bazzini D, Curtin L, Joslin S, Regan S, Martz D. Do Animated Disney Characters Portray and Promote the Beauty-Goodness Stereotype? *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*. 2010 oct;40(10):2687–2709. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1559-1816.2010.00676.x>.
- Arunrangsiwed P, Pasomsat M. The Evolution of Disney Fairy Tales: A Meta-Review of Past Studies. *Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University Journal of Management Science*. 2016;3(1):53–71.
- Bourke J. Hunting the Comic Witch: Humorous Representations of the Witch Figure in England, 1580-1620. *History in the Making*. 2012;1(1):36–46. Available from: <http://historyitm.org/index.php/hitm/article/view/51/8>.
- Avery-Natale E. an Analysis of Embodiment Among Six Superheroes in Dc Comics. *Social Thought and Research*. 2013;32(9):71–106. Available from: <http://hdl.handle.net/1808/12434>.
- Popa D, Gavrilu D. Gender Representations and Digital Media. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*. 2015;180:1199–1206. Available from: <http://linkinghub.elsevier.com/retrieve/pii/S1877042815015906>.
- Šramová B. Media Literacy and Marketing Consumerism Focused on Children. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*. 2014 aug;141:1025–1030. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2014.05.172>.
- Hubka D, Hovdestad W, Tonmyr L. Child maltreatment in Disney animated feature films: 1937-2006. *Social Science Journal*. 2009;46(3):427–441.
- Garofalo M. The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly: Teaching Critical Media Literacy with Disney. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*. 2013;106:2822–2831. Available from: <http://linkinghub.elsevier.com/retrieve/pii/S1877042813049483>.
- Strauss E. Early adolescent boys' perceptions of the Emo youth subculture [Doctoral Dissertation]; 2012. Available from: <https://dspace.nwu.ac.za/handle/10394/9209>.
- Benton B. Redemptive anti-Americanism and the death of Captain America. *Studies in Communication Sciences*. 2013;13(1):75–83. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.scoms.2013.04.003>.
- Swami V, Stieger S, Haubner T, Voracek M, Furnham A. Evaluating the physical attractiveness of oneself and one's romantic partner passed for press individual and relationship correlates of the love-is-blind bias. *Journal of Individual Differences*. 2009;30(1):1–9. Available from: <https://doi.org/10.1027/1614-0001.30.1.35>.

Biographies



Proud Arunrangsiewed obtained the Master degree of Interactive and Digital Media from University of Sydney, after receiving the Bachelor degree of Architectural Technology from New York Institute of Technology. She is currently a Ph.D. candidate at Bangkok University and a lecturer in Animation and Multimedia major as a part of Communication Arts program in Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University.



Vayuphatra Kulratanakul is a fourth-year student in Film and Digital Media major in Communication Arts program. Earlier, he was a student in Television Broadcasting major at Siam University.



Kamolrat Chaisuriya is a fourth-year student in Film and Digital Media major in Communication Arts program at Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University.



Panprae Bunyapukkna graduated from The University of Essex, The United Kingdom. Currently, she is a lecturer in Film and Digital Media major in Communication Arts program, the main lecturer in English class for Communication, and the chief executive manager of Suan Sunandha Palace Hotel.



Sitthichai Khemachantri is a fourth-year student in Film and Digital Media major in Communication Arts program at Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University.



Krisana Cheachainart respectively obtained the degrees: Bachelor of Art (Communication Arts) from Dhonburi Rajabhat University, Master of Communication Arts (Advertising) from Sripatum University, and Doctor of Philosophy in Communication Arts from Dhurakij Pundit University. He is currently the deputy dean of academic affairs of Faculty of Management Science, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University and is also a lecturer in Film and

Digital Media major.



Nititorn Ounpipat graduated from University of Essex, The United Kingdom. He is a lecturer and the program director of Film and Digital Media major in Communication Arts program at Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University.