The appeal of violent content in entertainment media to Malaysian audiences: An inquiry into the influence of meaning-making

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Abstract

A focus on “meaning-making” entertainment may provide a framework for understanding audience viewing experience. This study is designed to contribute to the study of violence in the media along with finding out any hidden meaning behind the viewing attraction to violent content. A total of 233 randomly sampled participants from Malaysia was assigned to rate one of the eight film trailers that varied in levels of gore and meaningfulness but are equally suspenseful according to the pretest conducted by Bartsch and Mares (2014). The results suggested that meaningful contents somehow featured portrayals of gore and violence. These portrayals would either generate feelings of acceptance or aversion that were signified. Violent content was not inherently enjoyable, but instead was accompanied by other features that did increase enjoyment, and in this case, it was eudaimonia. Our data also suggested that some other factor was driving enjoyment of the films that often accompanied the violent content – meaningful feature.

Keywords: audience viewing behaviour, entertainment media, eudaimonia responses, meaning-making, trailers, violence