

Preserving and Promoting Malay Folklores and Legends Using Interactive Motion Comic: The Fang King (Raja Bersiong)

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Abstract. The Malay folklore is something that our ancestor inherits to us for so long now. Nowadays, Malaysian folklore is beginning to fade from the face of our country due to the western media that's beginning to dominate the world. Youngsters nowadays prefer to watch western movies and western related stories rather than our own folklore. Not only that, youngsters nowadays is keen towards the western culture due to the innovation of modern technology such as tablets, smartphones, and other devices. There are three important objectives in this research. First is to determine the suitable Malaysian folklore to be converted into an interactive comic. Second is to give a new experience to the audience to enjoy and attract youngsters nowadays. The third is to test the effectiveness of this interactive comic to the young generation from age 13 to 15 years old. This interactive comic is for youngsters who nowadays don't know about the Malaysian folklore and to prevent it from fading from the eyes of our country. As a conclusion, this research is to help preserve and protect our Malaysian folklore from extinction by using modern technologies. **Keywords:** Malay Folklore, Digital Interactive Motion Comic, Kinect

1 Introduction

The Malay folklore is something that our ancestor inherits to us for so long now. It is a treasure that is worth more than anything in our country and it should be preserved for the sake of our ancestors and our cultural identity. Nowadays, Malaysian folklore is beginning to fade from the face of our country due to the western media that's beginning to dominate the world. Youngsters nowadays prefer to watch western movies and western related stories rather than our own folklore. Not only that, youngsters nowadays are keen towards the western culture due to the innovation of modern technology such as tablets, smartphones, and other devices. The question arises from this study is, can the use of technology increase the interest and attention of the younger generations?

There are three important objectives in this research. First is to determine the suitable Malaysian folklore to be converted into an interactive comic. Second is to give a new experience to the audience to enjoy and attract youngsters nowadays. The third is to test the effectiveness of this interactive comic to the young generation from age 13 to 15 years old. This interactive comic is for youngsters who nowadays don't know about the Malaysian folklore and to prevent it from fading from the eyes of our country. As a conclusion, this research is to help preserve and protect our Malaysian folklore from extinction by using modern technologies.

In Malaysia, one of the many treasures that our ancestor hold dear until this day is our many folklores that have been passed down through generations. Malaysia is filled with these amazing stories about local heroes and many other interesting legends that are waiting to be discovered and flourish by our people. Every legends and folklore has its own beauty and moral values for our generation to learn and most of them are daily-life related values that everyone doesn't matter what age they are, they can relate to. The Malay Folklore is a series of traditions, knowledge, and taboo that has been passed down from generation to generation, in the form of word of mouth, written or symbolic. This knowledge is related to the knowledge of Malay ethnic or other related ethnic groups in Malaysia. The understanding of a culture is important to preserve the continuity of the culture so that it won't be forgotten (Ismail Zain, 1978).

Malaysian folklore/cultural heritage is something that our past ancestor passed down from generations to generations. The stories are based on the Malay culture as well as the influence of the surroundings according to the time the stories

were written (Othman Puteh, 1984; Md Sidin Ishak, 2005; Hadijah Hamat, 2006). Though sadly our current generation is more attracted to modern films and western fairy tales that the western offered to us. For example, if we ask kids these days who are their favourite hero, their answer will probably be Iron Man, Captain America, Spiderman or even Superman. According to (Dharmamulya, 2008), there are already signs that traditional heritage is becoming more obsolete day by day. Our younger generation does not know about our own local heroes and villains such as Hang Tuah, Raja Bersiong and much more. Thus, our generation is losing interest in our local folklore bit by bit. The content in this old Malay story often includes elements of myths and creatures from other realms relating to Malay culture. There are also narrations that related to the legend in Malay history. The question is, how do exactly maintain or preserve this beautiful tradition?

2 Interactive Tell-Tale Motion Comic

Motion comic or animation comic is a branch of animation that combines fundamentals of comic books. For this project, we are creating a motion comic about the story "The Fanged King" (Raja Bersiong). This research is focused on audience around 12 to 15 years old that is interested in games and comic books. The reason for this method is to promote local folklores and local heritage to the younger audience in a fun and immersive play style. In this motion comic, it will include special effects, sound, dubbing and it will be a story with multiple endings. Motion comic contains dubbing, sound effect, motion, and can even have interactivity. The individual comic panels are animated and expanded by adding sound, voice acting, and animation to each individual panel depending on how the motion comic is drawn. The motion comic is characterized as one of the animated hybrids. Scott Bukatman (2002) points out that online comics are rigid in shape, the characters only move horizontally into a rigid background.

From this project point of view, giving interactivity to the story and letting the audience control the flow of the story will indeed gain the audience attention towards those folklores and legends. With the power of this world current technology and with the use of the mass media, this is something that can be achieved by the power of Microsoft's Kinect Motion Control. The Microsoft Kinect (once codenamed as Project Natal) is a motion sensor developed by Microsoft as a motion detector for the XBOX 360 and XBOX ONE and just newly developed for Windows PC. With the proper usage of this technology, this idea is achievable. Moreover, Kinect will give the audience more control towards the story being told. Interactive system and application are very limited in Malaysia. It is best if one of the systems is based on touch control and motion comic style to act as a platform to gain the younger audiences interest not only children but adult as well.

To give the story more depth and accessibility, the application could be made into a tell-tale game. A tell-tale game is a game that requires the user's decision making to determine the stories plotline. Interactive is something that allows a two-way communication between the user/player and the application itself. Interactive storytelling is quite a different matter. A story would require our demand in the storytelling process; they're supposed to act upon us (Sisonke Msimang, 2017). By adding this feature to the application, the audience has the freedom to control the stories plotline with consequences of their own decision. To put it simply, whatever the audiences choose to decide will give an impact on the storyline of the story. For the aesthetic side of this project, the application will be in a motion comic style of game. It is a new approach to storytelling and this style could be applied to the folklore.

The objectives of this study are to promote to children from age 12 to 15 years old the Malaysian folklore and legend. Second is to help conserve the priceless value of our countries sacred folklores and legends that have been passed down from generations to generations. And third is to introduce a new way of storytelling that is easy for the audience to understand and have full control over the story. The significance of this study is to observe if Interactive Motion Comic using Kinect Touch Control will attract current generation youngsters to learn more about the countries local heritage. By providing options to the player to choose the fate of the character's fate will provide the immersive experience to the user so that they can control the storyline of the story as if they are part of the journey. Hopefully, through this project, they will see our countries local heritage and folklore in a different perspective.

The data were analysed using Brown & Yule (1983) method. The results show that the campaign has been successful in raising awareness about the storytelling of the old Malay story. This topic depicts the whole research. It is about the Interactive Motion Comic Tell-tale Game based on the Malaysian folklore and legends. It explains further about the stories and folklore and even gives the audience full control over the story being told. Other than that, this chapter

describes the problem that this issue is currently facing and suggestion how to preserve and conserve the national treasure. In conclusion, by creating an interactive motion comic tell-tale game for the folklores, this will introduce a new way of storytelling and even gaining the audience attention to indulge themselves into the story by letting them control the flow of the story. The application will be in English due to the target audience is for children in Malaysia from age 12 to 15 years old and International audience for the future release. The focus of this project is to introduce a new way of storytelling to the audience.

2.1 The Folklores

Statement from Davis (2010) states that Ben Botkin (1938) has defined the folklore as an item created by a community in the past and it has become an identity for them and this tradition has been passed down from generation to generation. According to Mohd Taib Osman (1988), this traditional storytelling is based on Malay culture that is adapted from the surroundings according to the time the stories were told. However, this traditional storytelling is spread without properly documented. Therefore, the story's content is not the same as the original story.

Malay folklore is stories and legends that have been passed down through generations from our previous ancestors. It is a tradition, knowledge and forbidden things have been passed down from generation to generation in various forms, written or symbolic among ethnic and religious populations around the Southeast Asia region. Malay folklore mostly involves the love stories of royalty, the heroes and the girls in distress. This is because there is still a Malay sultanate in the Southeast Asia region that supplies the content of the story. While this story is choke full of additions and reductions, the noble values and wisdom are not neglected. Therefore, Miller (2013) and Roslina Abu Bakar (2013) point out the importance of maintaining the authenticity of the originality of the stories while Bronner (2012) focuses on the benefits of folklore to the public.

The Malay Folklore is often told by a professional storyteller or a *Penglipur Lara*. The task of this *Penglipur Lara* is to entertain the public with stories of full of noble values and wisdom. Usually, the stories contain comedy, and sometimes all the stories contain *syair*, *pantun*, *seloka* and much more. It is one of the essences that give Malay literature. Once upon a time, *Penglipur Lara* is known as the local entertainer that acts as the news informer, entertainment, and knowledge.

Penglipur Lara usually consists of farmers or people from the rural area. They will travel from village to village and bring stories to these places. The authenticity of the stories is still maintained but sometimes adjusted according to current needs and circumstances.



Fig. 1. Interactive Motion Comic - The Fang King.

2.2 The Fang King

For this project, we decided to use the story of The Fang King or *Raja Bersiong*. The Fang King (*Raja Bersiong*) or his real name Ong Maha Perita Deria was a king who once ruled over Kedah in Lembah Bujang. His dictatorship began during the Srivijaya Era. He was the fourth king of the Merong Mahawangsa bloodline. Based on the folklore passed down through generations, the king was someone who was very cruel and feared by the people of his country. Anyone who disobeys his orders and the rule of his country, he will imprison them or either kill them by ordering his guard and soldiers known as “Panglima Raja Bersiong”. There are many version of the Fang King’s folklore. Each of them has the same reason on how he grows his fangs, but some version of his stories has a different ending and different plotline.

Nowadays, this myths and legends like the Fanged King who has magical powers, no longer exist. The powers of oppression are no longer subject to kings but in the various forms and degrees. The moral of the story is that the ordinary people can have the courage and change the bad situation into a good one. Noble values and wisdom need to be disseminated by various parties rather than just one hero.

3 Methodology

Before conducting this study, a research had been done to 15 respondents age ranging from 12 to 15 years old to find out their knowledge on local folklore and the suitability using motion comic as a medium for this project. The data collected using this method is much clearer, pure, original and trustworthiness is much higher (Pakas Rao, 2004).

The respondents are students ranging from 12 to 15 years old from Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Batu Maung. Based on the observation, their knowledge on this topic is very low. Each student is interviewed for this session to gain their knowledge on this topic. As the writer interviewed them, it is proven only a few of them know our local folklores, especially The Fang King. They weren’t educated about the magnificent world of our local folklore and they responded that they only watch western and anime movies from the internet, television, and cinemas.

The writer asked if they know these local figures which are *Hang Tuah*, *Badang*, *Merong Mahawangsa* and The Fang King. As expected, almost everyone did not have a clue who were they and never heard of them. Three of them knew who Hang Tuah is, but only in name. As for the rest, they did not. For motion comic, some of the students know about it, which they said accidentally stumbled on YouTube. One of them said that they have seen the Watchmen Motion Comic on YouTube and the respondent was really amazed by it. As for the rest, they are all aware of comic books but they do not know about motion comic, so the writer had to show an example of a motion comic and they were amazed.

As for the second phase, the final application of the study is then presented and opens to public testing at Pelinggam Cahaya, Pusat Pengajian Seni, Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM). Within that period, the number of technique that can be used to produce this project is determined and learned. The main reason this project is presented openly in the hall is to obtain data and feedback from users that consist of people of different ages, gender, races, and religion. Based on the observation, Most of them were really excited to play the game and this is a sign that this project might be on the right track.

Though there were quite some negative reviews form the audience. One of them is to add more plotline to the story so that they have the option to choose more decisions and have more multiple endings to the story. This feedback is very helpful to improve the immersive experience of the game. Not only that, the audience suggests that the Kinect sensor should have a more accurate touch control. This is because the Kinect calibration is quite problematic to have the accurate calibration. After discovering these problems, these problems can be fixed in the future for a better experience

4 Summary

The Fang King Interactive Motion Comic is a project that has its own importance and value in order to preserve and promote our own Malay folklore which now is beginning to fade from the eyes of the country. Creating this project was very challenging because it was a new way of telling a story and the story should be based on the true history of the Fang King. During the creation of this project, there were a few weaknesses that this project had to face and mostly the problem is the calibration of the Kinect sensor. Nevertheless, the positive comments from the audience are really a good sign for continuing this project in the near future. Even though there were many challenges and obstacles, this project can be improved and may become a new way of conserving, protecting and promoting our own beautiful Malay folklores.

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