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Framing the Climate Crisis Through Fiction: A Content Analysis of Three Asian Films

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Background: Climate change communication is often led by scientific methods, which may not always connect with wider audiences. Fictional cinema, however, has the potential to communicate environmental concern through visual storytelling. This study investigates how climate-related themes are portrayed in three Asian films: 2018: Everyone is a Hero (2023, India), Cloudy Mountain (2021, China), and Hanging Garden (2022, Iraq).

Objective: To examine how environmental issues, emotional tones, and character representation in these films.

Methods: Scenes highlighting climate change and environmental issues were selected from each film. These scenes were systematically coded in an Excel sheet using binary coding, which allowed quantification of the frequency of environmental issues, emotional tones, and character representations.

Results: Findings show distinct thematic emphases across the films: "2018: Everyone is a Hero" highlights flooding (71%) and fear (40%); "Cloudy Mountain" emphasises landslides (79%) and sadness (32%); while "Hanging Garden" centers on smog (58%) and shame (35%). Characters range from heroic figures to marginalised outcasts, reflecting region-specific responses to climate crises.

Conclusion: The results suggest that Asian fictional films frame the climate crisis by interweaving environmental realities with emotional storytelling and diverse character portrayals. While the current study relied on content analysis, integrating audience interviews in future research could provide deeper insights into how viewers engage with these narratives. Fictional cinema thus holds strong potential as a cultural medium for climate communication and public education.

Keywords: Climate Change, Climate Crisis, Content Analysis, Visual Storytelling