

## Film and student viewers: An awareness campaign for Filipino historical films

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### ***Abstract***

Movies had been a form of entertainment ever since it was established as form of media arts. There are several reasons why people watch movies, it could be a form or escape, for self-development for pure entertainment. There are different kinds or movie or film- genres, this includes actions, adventures, suspense, supernatural, magical, fictional and futuristic as well as romance and thriller, and rarely produce historical film. Thus, this study was conducted that aimed to determine the level of awareness of Northwestern University students on the Filipino historical films. Specifically, for the following objectives: (1) To determine the level of awareness of students towards the existence of Filipino historical films; (2) To know the level of perception of students on the relevance of Filipino historical films; (3) determine the genres the students are interested and (4) to developed to promote Filipino historical films. A quantitative-qualitative methodology was employed to determine the level of awareness and perception of the Northwestern University students on Filipino Historical Films. Data was gathered through a guided survey questionnaire. Based on the results, the respondents were aware on the existence of Filipino Historical Films, however to make them fully aware of it and for them to become more interested to it, the researchers conducted a film viewing activity featuring Filipino Historical film as campaign and desired output of the study.

***Keywords:*** film, historical film, awareness campaign, film-genre, Filipino film

## **Film and student viewers: An awareness campaign for Filipino historical films**

### **1. Introduction**

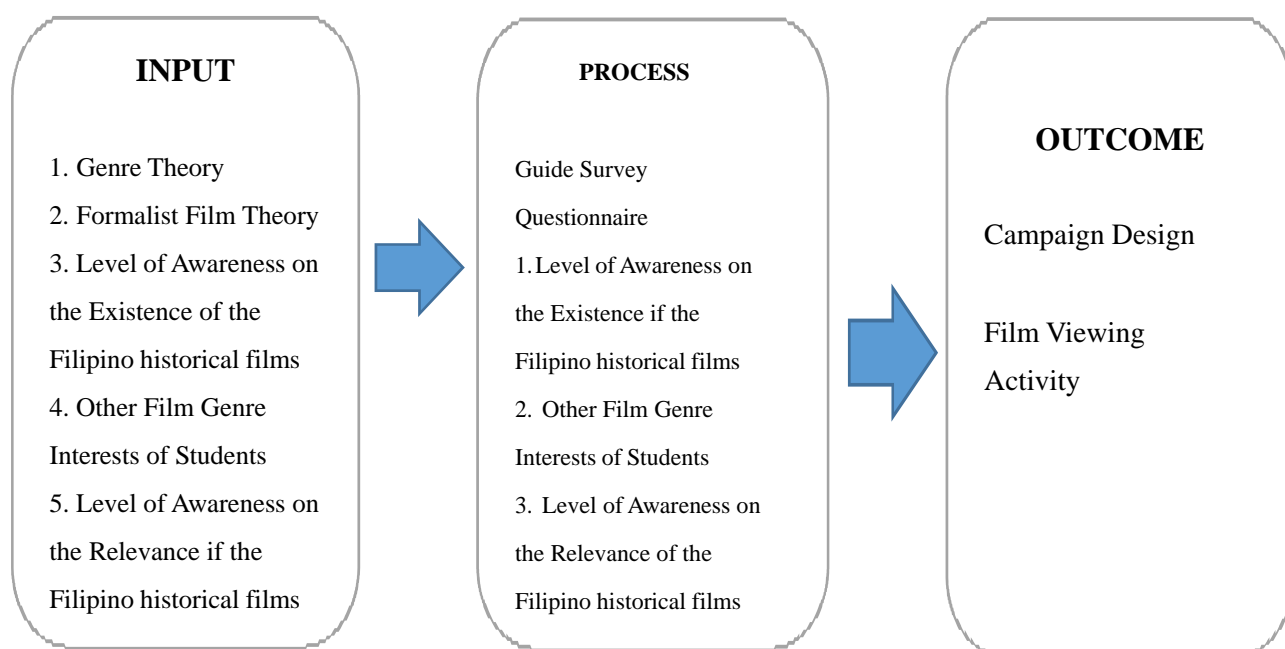
Film had been a form of entertainment ever since it was established as form of media arts. According to Tesser et al. (1998) that there are reasons why people watch movies, 1st this could be a self-escape, 2nd for self-development and 3rd for pure entertainment value. The are different choices a movie watcher prefers since there are a lot or kinds of movie genres available. The power of film through the latest innovations on technology continuously discloses the production of numerous movies of different genres. Immeasurable imaginations with mixture of science and fiction require large budgets for high-tech machineries, equipment and facilities for visually almost unbelievable scenes of actions and adventures, suspense and supernatural, magical, fictional and futuristic creations. Movie goers are fascinated with movies like these both created by local and international producers. Moreover, romantic love stories and also allure and gives thrill to movie goers in any ages. These movies are very natural and realistic, and almost all can relate to it, it has the power to charm every viewer (Aenet.org, 2012). Since most viewers appreciate the given genre, historical films are risky to film producers and film makers. Knowing that history is boring and uninteresting especially to young people who prefer adventure most of the time. Lumbera, *Re-viewing Filipino Cinema* (2011) and Borromeo (2015) accounted that there were different historical films that were produced in the country. To wit: director, Albert Yearsley produced historical films that focused on Dr. Jose P. Rizal's life, and Edward M. Gross produced the first feature-length film in the Philippines entitled *La Vida de Jose Rizal* in the same year. In 1919, the first original Filipino historical feature film made by a Filipino is the *Ang Dalagang Bukid* (The Country Maiden), directed by Jose Nepomuceno. It was accounted that there were films that focused on Dr. Jose Rizal, as well as Bonifacio featuring Philippine Revolution. Just recently, *Heneral Luna*, a 2015 historical, action film, starred by John Arcilla and directed by Jerrold Tarog was a multi-awarded film that brought in Php 240 million gross at the box office and became the highest grossing historical Filipino film of all time despite a 50% discount offered on student viewers (Ortigas & Rocha, 2015)

Moreover, this study aimed to determine the level of awareness of Northwestern University students on the Filipino historical films. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions: (1) What is the level of awareness of students towards the existence of Filipino historical films? (2) What is the level of perception of students on the relevance of Filipino historical films? (3) What other film genres are the students interested in? and (4) What campaign design can be developed to promote Filipino historical films? The study will benefit students since serves as an eye-opener for them to be familiar and appreciate Filipino historical films. This will assist the students in their academic knowledge on Philippine History and culture. Moreover, film viewing is more interesting than listening to plain lectures and discussions. For faculty members, this will be of great help for Philippine History and Film teachers in inculcating young minds about history and film critiquing without much of discussions. It is expected that the results of this study will assist teachers in the presentation of their lessons. Film viewing will serve as an instructional material for teachers and help them in their subjects related to history and film study. The result of the study will reveal the importance of multimedia presentation specifically through film viewing, critics, review and analysis. This serves as an instructional material for teachers that will uplift the quality of services of the academics of the university as a whole. Information on the awareness of the Filipino historical films could also help future researchers in gathering information. It may likewise lay the basis for similar studies in other educational institutions. And for Film makers, this will serve as a motivation for them to make more historical films that will remind not only younger generations but the Filipino people.

It was found that most studies focused more on film analysis as well as discrepancies from historians and film makers/producers on the films produced, thus prompted the researchers to conduct the study to create

awareness among the younger generation on Philippine film history.

The Genre Theory and the Formalist theory was used for the study. The Genre Theory provides the framework of the study which determined the genre preference of the respondents. It is an initial expectation which is considered as a basis whether to view such film or not. Moreover, familiarity with a genre enables readers to generate feasible predictions about events in a narrative. Drawing on their knowledge of other texts within the same genre helps readers to sort salient from non-salient narrative information in an individual text. Genre also plays a part in the construction of identity and difference, notably sexual identity and differences. On the other hand, the Formalist Film Theory assumed that the technical elements of film i.e. the lighting, scoring, sound, set design, use of color, shot composition and editing also affects in communicating the message of a film. Formalism is unique in that it embraces both ideological and auteurist branches of criticism. In both cases, the common denominator for Formalist criticism is style. Ideological focuses on how socio-economic pressures create a particular style, and auteurists on how it communicates ideas, emotions, and themes rather than, as critics of formalism point out, concentrating on the themes of a work itself (wordpress.com).



**Figure 1.** *Conceptual Framework*

## 2. Methodology

**Research Design** - This was a quantitative-qualitative study that determined the level of awareness and perception of the Northwestern University students on the Filipino historical films. The researchers utilized a survey questionnaire which was administered to the students in all colleges of the university. Further, this study targeted the promotion of Research and Development (R & D), a component of innovation that aims to create new information that can improve and support the development of knowledge and technology. It manifested in the conduct of a film viewing activity that served as an awareness campaign for Filipino historical films undertaken after the entire research initiative was finished. The researchers were prompted to promote Filipino historical films after finding out that the students are aware of the existence of Filipino historical films and its relevance. The researchers aimed to either maintain or improve their awareness level so that such film genre will be recognized by more students.

**Participants** - The respondents of the study were the students in all the seven colleges of Northwestern University. This includes the College of Arts and Sciences, College of Teacher Education, College of Maritime Education, College of Business Education, College of Allied Health and Sciences, College of Engineering Architecture and Technology, and College of Criminal Justice Education. The conduct of the survey took place within the 1<sup>st</sup> semester of SY 2016-2017.

**Research Instrument** - A survey questionnaire instrument was utilized in administering the data gathering formulated based on readings from various websites and books. The researchers arranged with the deans and teachers with students to conduct the data gathering during their class. The questionnaire comprised of three parts: (1) gauged the level of awareness on the existence of the Filipino historical films; (2) determined the other film genre interests of students; (3) Determined the level of awareness on the relevance of the Filipino historical films. The questionnaire was validated through Cronbach's Alpha of 0.985 which indicates excellent reliability. For the awareness campaign, the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences approved the use of the Mass Communication Laboratory in the conduct of the campaign along with the involvement of teachers and students under Philippine Literature and Philippine History classes and the entire NWU community. The number of the viewers depended on their free time and their subject schedule to see the films.

**Data Analysis** - Weighted mean was used to determine the level of awareness of the students towards the existence of Filipino historical films and level of perception of students on the relevance of Filipino historical films.

**Ethical Consideration** - During the conduct of the study the face-to-face method of data gathering was used. The researchers took permission from the college deans of the university. After which, the researchers floated their questionnaires to the respondents. Upon distribution, the respondents were informed as to the objectives of the research and the issue of his/her acceptability to the researcher's findings and actions. Moreover, along with the questionnaire was a letter assuring the confidentiality and their anonymity. In case the respondent wishes to withdraw while in the process of conducting the research, he/she is assured that he/she may do so without any obligation. The respondents were limited to accomplishing the questionnaire. They were given adequate time to provide answers to the posed questions and it was retrieved after accomplishment.

### 3. Results and Discussion

**Table 1**

*Level of Awareness on the existence of the Filipino Historical Films*

Awareness Statements	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
There are Filipino historical films produced	2.98	Aware
There are other sub-genres of historical film, not just biography	2.72	Aware
The context of historical films may or may not be accurate at all times	2.75	Aware
Historical Filipino films lack support from local viewers	2.89	Aware
Philippine cinema is slowly dying due to decreasing viewers and piracy	2.92	Aware
Filipino historical films produced are reflections of our culture	3.14	Aware
Filipino historical films are recognized internationally and have won prestigious awards	3.02	Aware
Composite Mean:	2.92	Aware

*Legend: 4(3.51 – 4.00 Highly Aware), 3 (2.51 – 3.50 Aware) 2(1.51 – 2.50, Slightly Aware) 1(1.00 – 1.50 Less Aware).*

The respondents are aware on the international recognitions and awards won by Filipino historical films. Lav Diaz's *Hele sa Hiwagang Hapis*, was reported to have won the Silver Bear Alfred Bauer Prize at the 66th Berlin International Film Festival, February 2016. (Philippine Daily Inquirer, 2016) On the other hand, the respondents rated 2.72, Aware of the other sub-genres of historical film. This result is the least responded statement from the list. They seem to be confused on the major genres over the sub-genres of historical film. The results indicate that in general, 2.92 of the respondents are Aware on the existence of Filipino historical films, the honor it brought to the Philippine cinema, and the various sub-genres that it could cater to its viewers. They are Aware of the issues it tackles, the prestigious awards and recognition it receives locally and internationally, and

the variety of genre under the historical genre.

**Table 2**

*Level of Awareness on the Relevance of the Filipino Historical Films*

Relevance of Historical Films	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
• It helps us understand the society	3.07	Aware
• It helps us understand changes in our time	3.06	Aware
• It provides sense of identity	2.99	Aware
• It preserves stories	3.14	Aware
• It inspires us	3.15	Aware
• It teaches warning signs such as environmental calamities	2.99	Aware
• It helps us to be better people	3.03	Aware
• It helps us reminisce important past events and people of the country	3.18	Aware
• It increases learning and interest of students to history	3.17	Aware
Composite Mean:	3.08	Aware

*Legend:* 4(3.51 – 4.00 Highly Aware), 3 (2.51 – 3.50 Aware) 2(1.51 – 2.50, Slightly Aware) 1(1.00 – 1.50 Less Aware).

Results show that 2.99 respondents are aware that such film genre teaches warning signs such as those of environmental calamities. "Documentary films best introduce me to actual situations that people faced in the past," another respondent from the College of Arts and Sciences said. Historical films let their viewers have a glimpse of calamities that happened before and allows them to compare and contrast the situations before and today. For example, the Dekada '70 by Director Chito S. Roño provides the viewers scenarios of war between the citizens of the Philippines that led to a calamity. To date, people especially those who are greatly affected of the Martial Law took it as a warning and are on the watch to government officials who follows the footprint of the man they labeled dictator. It became a memoir and a standard for choosing public officials, especially the presidential position.

**Table 3**

*Other Film Genre Interests of Students*

Genres	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
• Action (e.g. Ang Panday)	2.89	Interested
• Animated (e.g. RPG Metanoia)	2.59	Interested
• Comedy (e.g. Beauty and the Bestie)	3.29	Interested
• Drama (e.g. The Mistress)	2.60	Interested
• Horror (e.g. Shake, Rattle, & Roll)	2.81	Interested
• Musical (e.g. Les Miserables)	2.87	Interested
• Romance (e.g. A Second Chance)	3.15	Interested
• Science Fiction (e.g. Kokey)	2.58	Interested
• Thriller (e.g. Dukot)	2.72	Interested
Composite Mean:	2.83	Interested

*Legend:* 4(3.51 – 4.00 Highly interested), 3 (2.51 – 3.50 interested) 2(1.51 – 2.50, Slightly interested) 1(1.00 – 1.50 Less interested).

However, the students responded less to science fiction genre having a rate of 2.58 were interested. A respondent asserted: "I'm not into Sci-Fi because it is far from reality and advance technology is not my cup of tea." Based on the formalist film theory the technical element of the genre affects his interest towards it. The Genre theory on the other hand stands that the respondent's genre preference is based on his initial expectation which is considered as a basis whether to view such film or not. There are examples listed along with the film genre on the survey-questionnaire. Based on observation, during the distribution of the questionnaires the respondents reacted to the examples given for the genres. They either sniggered at the examples or mocked the type of selection, or comment "Diyak kayat daytoy. Boring a mabuya" (This is boring. I don't like this film.)

According to the Genre theory, there are texts in films that determine its genre, hence affecting audience's default for selecting their preferred genre. For example, when a film flashes high caliber guns and a lot of bombing scenes it is perceived as an action genre film, or when the film poster has images of stars, astronauts, and rockets, the viewers instantly considered the movie a sci-fi genre movie. The title of the movie and the actors also leave vibes about its genre. Another example is the Filipino film Beauty and the Bestie starring Vice Ganda

and Coco Martin, the title parodied from the story Beauty and the Beast plus the combination of comedian Vice and action star Coco gave the audience the idea that the film is an action-comedy genre.

#### 4. Conclusions and Recommendation

The following conclusions drawn on the results of the study: The students are aware on the existence of Filipino historical films in which majority of them agreed that Filipino historical films are reflections of our culture. The students believed that Filipino historical films help us reminisce important past events and people of the country. Comedy genre is most of the students' genre interest besides historical films. Based on the findings and conclusions, the researchers offer the following recommendations: Students may be encouraged to explore other genres besides their genre interests and not only for its genre but also its content. Faculty may encourage to use Filipino historical films as instructional material in their lessons especially Philippine history and Philippine literature classes. Faculty should use Filipino historical films during their class to promote such genre to their students; and Future researchers may use this study which will serve as foundation and basis for similar studies.

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