Fostering Unity among Malaysians: A Case Study on the Local Film Industry

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Abstract

This case study attempts to identify the elements of unity that can be found in Malaysian local films. Films in a way, are said to play a vital role in uniting people by showing exemplary of solidarity and equality that can be imitate by the viewers to create unity among them. This is because people tend to imitate what they see and hear from a film especially the youngsters. Malaysian films such as Sepet, Gubra, Talentime and Estet are some of the local films that can be categorized a 1Malaysia model films as they bring all races in Malaysia under one roof. As such, unity can be found by finding common ground among people of different beliefs and background. A focus of unifying elements creates harmony and brings people together instead of dividing them whether it is by race, culture, political beliefs or other differences. This study also attempts to analyse the factors that might be a contributing factor towards initiating unity among societies in Malaysia. Findings indicate that there is a lack of films that stress on unity even though the film industry in Malaysia has reached a better position in terms of the number of audience. One significant finding is that there is too much of horror films that bring no benefits to viewers. In the case of producers, they are only looking for profits only. Therefore unity elements for the sake of social responsibility are put aside. The findings also show that the most important element in a film is the level of entertainment itself and not the level of unity or good values. To producers, most important is for the audience to watch the films and have fun. To producers also, it is not wrong to make a film that have a unity theme but the problem is when the film is not entertaining enough and does not make money.

Keywords: Fostering Unity, Malaysian, Local Film Industry.

Introduction

The first film made in the United States was in the 1890s by the motion picture company founded by Thomas Alva Edison, the great inventor, was of vaudeville and circus acts. (Jack C.Ellis, 1990).

In Malaysia, film history started in 1933 with the appearing of its first film in Malay Language, *Laila Majnun*. It was later followed by five to six films until the invasion of Japanese in Tanah Melayu. In 1959, the late film actor-cum-producer, Tan Sri P.Ramlee stars in *Pendekar Bujang Lapok*, a film that brings Malay, Chinese and Indian actors together under one roof. This film is a symbol of unity that should have in every Malaysian film in order to generate unity towards the audience.

29 years after that, Mohd Hamdan Adnan (1988:155) asserted that the Malaysian films are experiencing an identity crisis. This is because the films produced are basically dominated by Malays whereas the country is a multi-ethnic nation. He sees what is needed now on Malay films are to depict the reality of life in Malaysia. At the same time, he stressed that Chinese and Indian movies produced in Malaysia should also portray Malaysia as a nation of many races.

Hamdan (ibid: 155) also concurred that the Malaysian government, in its effort to revive and promote the Malaysian film industry, is beginning to see film as the means to foster national unity and identity. However, for Malaysian films to become a force in uniting the people and building national identity, they must first become acceptable to all Malaysians as a reflection of themselves, and be of a professional standard.

For many commercial film-makers, film is an expressive art; their movies are imprinted with their own experience and point of views. According to Graeme Turner (2002:1) to many producers, film is a commercial commodity most likely to return a profit if the audience finds it entertaining while to the cinema audience, who line up for the latest block-buster, film is an entertainment and social event.

Currently, there are quite a number of films made in Malaysia in a year. According to the National Film Development Corporation Malaysia, in short, FINAS (2010) in its official website, last year only Malaysia has produced 29 local films and only one film that is *Estet*is considered as a film that promotes unity and the1 Malaysian concept. It was later followed by the film *Geng(Upin & Ipin),Talentime, Setem, Pappadom* and *Muallaf*. These local film were produced by Malaysian film producers MamatKhalid and the late Yasmin Ahmad. They tried to insert the elements of unity inside those films by taking Malay, Chinese and Indian actors to act in them. As such, *Sepet, Gubra*and *Talentime* are exemplary model for other filmmakers to produce films that would help make the 1 Malaysia concept not only a rhetoric, but a definite reality in the future. Films that address unity element could educate the Malaysian society to live under one roof as one nation.

Just as the print media, the motion picture is an equally efficient medium in presenting documentary accounts events, instructional and educational contents, news coverage of current happenings, etc. Thus, it should have the same rights as the other media. Its ability in presenting a wide spectrum of subjects to be perceived as true as one would see through the naked eye makes it an even superior medium of mass communication. The diversity of ideas it portrays cannot reach the public if the finished product cannot get to the market place for public appraisal. For these reasons, too, its positive worth should be weighed against its negative effects. Film is a form as well as a channel of expression which deserves the freedom under the protection of society. (MeorZailanSulaiman,1988).
Film is also said to have great influence to society as it is one of the communication medium. People tend to imitate what they see and hear from a film especially the youngsters. Film which brings the unity element as its theme could educate and motivate the viewers to follow and adapt in real life. These kinds of films are made with the hope to nurture the people to accept and adapt to each other differences without considering their races, religions, political sentiment and ethnicity. Film could educate people and nurture them to do good and otherwise, as a significant communication medium.

Unity can be found by finding common ground among people of different beliefs and backgrounds. A focus of unifying elements creates harmony and brings people together instead of dividing people, whether it is by religion, race, culture, political beliefs or other differences. Film can be a platform or medium of unity by uniting people in various background, races or religion by motivating the viewers to foster the unity elements in daily basis.

Problem Statement

Films that contain high unity values could motivate Malaysians to mould their life to be peaceful and positive. These kinds of films could be an exemplary model to demonstrate good behaviour and positive values in everyday life. These exemplary values could generate trusts, unify people and demolish prejudice, hatred and built tolerance among people of different races, political sentiment and ethnicity.

In this context, the unity that is found is results of finding common grounds among people of different beliefs and backgrounds. A focus of unifying elements creates harmony and brings people together instead of dividing people, whether it be by religion, race, culture, political beliefs or other differences. Film can be a platform or medium of unity by uniting people in various background, races or religion by motivating the viewers to foster the unity elements in daily basis.

Therefore, film shapes history as much as it records or reflects it. To recall film history, then is to recall our history, as well as moments of particular brilliance and technological innovation. (Amy Villarejo, 2007, p.23)
Many governments in trying to make their development messages and messages instilling love for the country more effective have begun to use jingles and songs. In Malaysia some of these jingles and songs have become very popular. In many cases it even utilise the video dips techniques with fast and varied actions or scenery to attract a large following. These film lets are screened regularly in between or in the middle of programmes like commercial ads. Thus, these film lets have become a permanent feature just like commercial ads.

Certain countries have also use traditional characters or folklore heroes to convey development messages through films. Furthermore, there are countries that have used these characters in cartoon films to disseminate development messages. For example, in Malaysia the national film board have produced a number of film lets using the traditional folklore heroes, Sang Kancil (the mousedeer) in cartoon forms to inculcate certain positive attitudes among Malaysians that would be appropriate for development As cartoons greatly attract children, these films are especially meant for them. Thus, these cartoon films have a simple straight forward message and very entertaining, especially to children and maybe even to youths and some adults. (Mohd Hamdan Hj. Adnan, 1991, pp.68, 69 & 70)

Mohd. Hamdan Hj. Adnan in an earlier research in 1988, found that film-makers with production costs exceeding one million Malaysian ringgit will face great difficulty in recovering their investment, let alone become millionaires. This is due to the fact that film audiences in Malaysia are declining. The fall is the result of a perception that Malaysian films are catering to the needs of the Malays rather than for Malaysians. Further, the local movies have a tendency to pander to the interests of the younger groups between the ages of 15 to 35 who comprise the majority of the regular moviegoers. Hence, it is not surprising that youth-oriented themes revolving around stereotype characters and youthful love affairs portraying the disco culture, tight jeans, and aimlessness are now highly favoured.

Malay films become Malaysian films because the other two major races in Malaysia, the Chinese and the Indians were more attracted to films produced in their countries of origin. Also, it was cheaper to import and distribute films instead of producing them. (Mohd. Hamdan Hj. Adnan, 1988, p.155)Local Malaysian films such as *Sepet, Gubra, Talentime* and *Estet*are said to be some of the local films that can be said a 1 Malaysia model films as they bring all races in Malaysia under one roof in their films. These films depict the reality life of Malaysian people who live in harmony and tolerance despite each other differences.

Usually at the very beginning, these films shows the conflicts of the main races in Malaysia which are Malay, Chinese and Indians in accepting each other differences. But still at the end of the day, these ethnic groups managed to start living together in tolerance and unity. But the question is how far these kinds of films are reaching their goals in terms of uniting its viewers? How far this film could motivate and educate the audience to accept and adapt each other differences and live as one nation, Malaysia.

Literature Review

Research at the Malaysian Production Policy Division (2009) reveals that the film industry in Malaysia began in Singapore. In 1933, the first commercial film produced in Singapore made use of *Bangsawan* (opera) personalities.*Bangsawan* was then the popular traditional form of entertainment. The *Bangsawan* players readily adapted themselves to film-making, and movies quickly became a new entertainment medium among the masses. The first Malay film to be produced was *Laila Majnun* (1938) a tragic love story in the vein of *Romeo and Juliet*. A number of business people associated with personalities of the aristocrats which in the Malay language known as the *Bangsawan* were responsible for the production of this movie. An Indian national, B.S. Rajhans, was the director of the film. According to some veteran actors, around 1937, a Western film company sent their film unit to Singapore to produce a Malay movie entitled *Dooloo*. This film, directed by an American, also made use of the *Bangsawan* personalities.

The early movies were such big hits that the Shaw Brothers, who had just begun their involvement in the entertainment world, decided to venture into film-making. Using used film equipment imported from Shanghai, the brothers set up their own studio at Ampas Road, Singapore. Employing film technicians from Shanghai and personalities from *Bangsawan* and stage dramas, the brothers produced four Malay movies (*Mutiara*, *IbuTiri*, *Bermadu* and *TigaKekasih*) in the period of 1938 to 1939. All these films were well-received. The brothers were in the process of completing another Malay film *TopengSyaitan* when the Second World War broke out. During the Second World War the Japanese exploited the film industry to produce its own propagandistic films.After the Second World War, a businessman in Singapore, Mr. Christy tried to revive the local film industry. However, because he had no cinema theatre to screen his movie, he could not continue his film-making effort. The failure of Mr Christy's film company, Malayan Art Production, paved the way for the Shaws Brothers to almost monopolize the film industry through their Malay Film Production (MFP).

The only competition faced by MFP was from Cathay-*Keris* Production. Both companies produced a film each every month. The 1950s and early 1960s was the boom era with fans imitating their favorite movie stars.

Two film companies, Cathay-*Keris* and Shaw Brothers' Malay Film Productions, emerged strongly in the post-war film industry producing more than two hundred and fifty films in merely two decades. Featuring actors and actress from varied social backgrounds, such films drew thousands every weekend to cinemas, regardless of age and class. Judging from present day standards, it can be said that a large number amongst such artists became "Idols" for the young and old then. Most prominent amongst them was Teuku Zakaria bin Teuku Nyak Puteh or more popularly known, as P. Ramlee (1929–73) who remains fresh in the minds of Malays today as an entertainer and also a "teacher" par excellence. He was a scriptwriter, comedian, dramatist, musician (composer and singer) as well as director, all manifested in a man who was concerned with the state of Malays during his time (Syed Muhd Khairudin Aljunied, 2005, p.2)

However, from mid-1960s onwards, the film industry began facing bad times. Attendances, profits and production quantities dropped while costs escalated. Inevitably in 1967, Malay Film Production folded up and was followed in 1972 by Cathay-*Keris*.In 1975, Studio *Merdeka*, set up in Kuala Lumpur by Shaw Brothers virtually collapsed. While this happened, from early 1970s, as a result of government encouragement, new film-makers have emerged. They are not from Shaw or Cathay-*Keris*, but constitute a new generation of *Bumiputra* (natives) entrepreneurs. An important factor was that production was now in full colour and wide screen, compare with the previous years' black and white conventional format. (Ministry of Information, 2009, p. 9)

Mohd.HamdanHj. Adnan, (1988, p.156) wrote that, it is a common knowledge that the Malaysian film industry in the early 1980s was stricken by the economic recession. Factors contributing to the sad situation include a disappearing cinema audience, problems in getting financial support for productions, cash flow restrictions and stiff, almost crippling competition from television and video. The problem was further compounded by lack of trained manpower and equipment, as well as getting cinemas to screen the movies.

Meanwhile, Graeme Turner (2002, p.1) findings reveal that film is an expressive art; their movies are imprinted with their own experience and points of view. Too many producers, however, and certainly to the distributors and exhibitors, film is a commercial commodity most likely to return a profit if the audience finds it entertaining. To some sectors of the cinema audience, film is the premier modern art form and the object of avid attention; to another, large, sector of the movie audience lining up for the latest block-buster, it is an entertainment and social event.

Research on film as Social Practice by Graeme Turner (2006, p.3 & 4) found that it is now accepted that film's function in a culture goes well beyond that of being simply an exhibited aesthetic object. Popular film takes place in an arena where the audience's pleasure is a dominant consideration – both for the audience and for the film's producers. Film provides the mass with pleasure in the spectacle of its representations on the screen, in the recognition of stars, styles, and genres, and in the enjoyment of the participation in the film-going event itself. Popular films have a life beyond their theatrical runs or their re-runs on television: stars, genres, key movies become part of people personal and shared culture, their identity. Thus, film is a social practice for its makers and its audience, in its narratives and meanings that people can locate evidence of the ways in which their culture makes sense of itself.

Earlier, Ernst (1946, p.183) conclude that filmmaking is a difficult process and film types are not confined to entertainment and the erotic only. Even under the guise of entertainment it is continually transmitting social, political and economic ideas. Whether the film is dealing with fact or fantasy, it cannot fail to assume ethical, moral and cultural standards.

Research Objectives

i. To identify whether there are elements of unity in local films

ii. To analyse whether there are contributing factors that encourage local films towards initiating content filled up with unity elements that will be beneficial to the societies in Malaysia

iii. To determine factors that contributes to the making of a film by local producers

Research Questions

The following research questions have been developed to achieve and answer the objectives of the research:

i. How far do local films reach its goal in terms of adapting unityamong its audience?

ii. How far these films could project motivation and educate local audiences to accept and adapt each other differences and live as one nation?

iii. How far local could develop and foster unity?

iv. What sort of film do producers want to produce?

Methodology

It is decided that a qualitative approached is deemed appropriate for the study. Justification taking this approach is because the study attempts to access people's perception (here the producers), to gain insight into their attitude, behaviours, value systems, concerns, motivation and culture. Rational of undergoing a qualitative research for the study is because it will yield non-numeric information and a rich understanding of the issue generated by examining a phenomenon that is not easy translated by numbers (Berg, 2007; Lofland et.al, 2006; Guion and flowers, 2002). This is based on the feature of the qualitative research that offers a more systematic way of investigation to achieve the objectives as well as to answer the research questions in the study. Qualitative methods also provide the techniques and tools to dig deep and to go beyond the surface, thus offering data closer to reality.

This methodology provides data to enhance understanding and reveal a wide range of opinions (Kruger and Casey, 2000). According to Wimmer and Dominick (2006), the advantage of using this methodology is that it allows the researcher to collect preliminary information about a topic or phenomenon. In line with Wimmer and Dominick (ibid.) is Gill Ereaut (2011) who concurred that, qualitative research is used to gain insight into people's attitudes, behaviours, value systems, concerns, motivations, aspirations, culture or lifestyles. It is used to form business decisions, policy formation, communication and research. Focus group, in-depth interviews, content analysis and semiotics are among the many formal approaches that are used. Qualitative research also involves the analysis of any unstructured material including customer feedback forms, reports or media clips.

The technique utilized for the data collection process in the study is qualitative in-depth interview and research from secondary data. The researcher will interview chosen informants due to their involvements in the film making industry and their dedication towards film. These people are a well-known film director, Mamat Khalid, a film producer Norman KRU, a prolific veteran actor, Datuk Aziz Satar and a versatile actor, MuslyRamlee. These people are well-known public figures that have substantially contributed in Malaysian film industry. The second group is the informants chosen from the public. The interviews took place in Klang Valley.

Questions for selected respondents in the film industry are as follows:

1. What do you think about the local films in Malaysia today?

2. In your opinion what are producers' interest when making a film?

3. Since there are three main races in this country, do you think that producers of today should make films that can focus on the three groups for the purpose of unity?

4. What type of films do producers prefer to produce?

5. Is there any 1Malaysia model films produced so far as they bring all races in Malaysia under one roof?

6. As producers and actors, what sort of films do you want to produce or act?

Findings also will be gathered through researches that are gathered from the secondary data obtained from write-ups and blogs on local films in the Internet, research journals and academic writings concerning the topic. The information from these sources will be digested, analysed and evaluated in order to get the best findings for this study.

Data Analysis Method

Each interview is recorded through audio tape recorder and immediately verbatim transcript as soon as the session ended to avoid any discrepancies. From the transcribed conversations, the data will then be categorized to various useful pointers based on the initial interview questions. The identified patterns are then expounded on. All of the talk that fits under the specific pattern is identified and placed with the corresponding pattern. The next step is to combine and catalogue related patterns into sub-themes. Themes are defined as units derived from patterns such as "conversation topics, vocabulary, recurring activities, meanings, feelings, or folk sayings and proverbs" (Taylor &Bogdan, 1984). The next step is referring back to the literature, the interviewer gains information that allows her to make conclusion from the interview session. Once the themes have been collected and the literature has been studied, the researcher formulates theme statements to develop a story line. When the literature is intertwine with the findings, the story that the interviewer constructs is one that stands with value.

Ethical considerations in qualitative research design are usually the main issue to be discussed (Marshall &Rossman, 1999). First and foremost, the researcher has an obligation to respect the rights, needs, values and desires of the informant (s). In any research, ethics will be an issue specifically whether the researcher has conducted an ethical procedure in collecting data for the study. The codes of ethics pertaining to research activities function as guideline to alert researchers to the ethical dimensions of their work. (Merriam, 1998, p.212) The following actions have been taken to ensure the study is being conducted ethically:

a) The research objectives will be articulated verbally and in writing so that they are clearly understood by the interviewees.

b)   The interviewees will be informed of all data collection devices and activities.

c) Verbatim transcriptions and written interpretations and reports will be made available to the interviewees.

Conceptualization

Fostering unity: Musa Hitam (2007) define this exercise as weaving together national values for the citizenry to live by and devising greater missions to galvanise their camaraderie and spirit. In brief, it is an idea on national integration which is a process of bringing together discrete elements of a society into a more integrated whole, or to make out of many small and diverse societies a closer approximation of one nation (Wrigginscited in Syed Serajul Islam, 2008).

Today, fostering unity is seen under the government's latest initiative in introducing the 1Malaysia concept.The current Prime Minister, Datuk Seri NajibTun Abdul Razak had introduced the 1Malaysia concept. It is a policy that aspires to integrate the society as one functioning unit without taking into consideration their background of diverse cultures and traditions. In fact, it is a new agenda that nurtures on shared elements or solidarity among the nation's different ethnics. To reinforce cooperation, eight values were proposed – culture of excellence, perseverance, humility, acceptance, loyalty, meritocracy, education and integrity. The values are to nurture understanding and respect between the ethnic communities. Through the ideologies, nation building is developed by the government. Therefore the process of nation-building is an effort to develop the spirit of patriotism and solidarity to create a country whose people share a common identity. The major aim is to foster national unity by developing a new nation and an integrated race (Hippler, 2002, p.1).The conceptualization of fostering unity for this study is in line with the definitions elaborated above as it is an effort to fortify harmony among Malaysia's ethnic group.

Malaysians: The people who live in Malaysia comprises of three large ethnic groups that is the Malays, the Chinese and the Indian community. The plural society in the Malay Peninsula is made up of many ethnic groups, each ofwhich has its own unique culture and heritage, such as language, belief system, tradition and religion. To date, the population of Malaysia is 27,116,218(Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2008), with the Malays being the largest ethnic group (65%) (Ramlee et.al.(2009). The conceptualization of Malaysians mentioned is in line with the conceptualization used for this case study.

*Local Film Industry:*It is the film Industry in Malaysia which started since 1933 with the appearing of the first Malaysian film which is *Laila Majnun.* After that initiatives were made to produce five to six films until Japanese Occupation in Malaya.

In 1959, actor cum producer P. Ramlee initiated a film known as *Pendekar Bujang Lapok* a film that brings Malay, Chinese and Indian Actors together under one roof. This film is a symbol of unity that should be projected in every Malaysian film in order to generate unity among the people who live in this country. In 1950s and 60s, two film companies Cathay *Keris* and Shaw Brothers actively produced two hundred and fifty films and drew thousands every weekend to cinemas, regardless of age and class. In the 1980s the Malaysian film industry was stricken by the economic recession. Factors contributing to the sad situation include a disappearing cinema audience, problems in getting financial support for productions, cash flow restrictions and stiff, almost crippling competition from television and video. The problem was further compounded by lack of trained manpower and equipment, as well as getting cinemas to screen the movies. (Mohd.HamdanHj. Adnan, 1988, p.156).All the conceptualizations above is taken into account for this study.

Findings

From the secondary data that was gathered, there are only 10 local films from the year 2011 to 2012that were categorized as the highest grossing Malaysian films. The ranking is as follows:

Highest-Grossing Malaysia Film

Rank	Movie	Year	Studio	Nett-Gross (RM)
1	*KL Gangster*	2011	Skop Production	11.74 Million
2	*OmbakRindu*	2012	Astro Shaw	10.90 Million
3	*HantuBonceng*	2011	Excellent Pictures	8.53 Million
4	*Ngangkung*	2010	MIG Production	8.18 Million
5	*Kongsi*	2011	MIG Production	8.09 Million
6	*Khurafat*	2011	Skop Production	8.08 Million
7	*HantuKakLimahBalikRumah*	2010	TanyanganUnggul	7.90 Million
8	*Adnan Sempit*	2010	MIG Production	7.66 Million
9	Ah Beng: Three Wishes	2012	The Film Engine	7.55 Million
10	*NasiLemak 2.0*	2011	Prodigee	7.00 Million

Content analysis found that these films have different themes. The *KL Gangster*which is the most top box office film for 2011is concerning about gangsters' group activities around the city of Kuala Lumpur and they fight for their territory. The main aim of the story is to discourage the young generation from involving themselves in gangsterism and that the law is above all unlawful activities. *Kongsi* has a similar theme to the *KL Gangster* while*Adnan Sempit* (2010) portrays a similar theme in a way but is more to the illegal activities of moto bikers who got involved in illegal races around the city in order to get income.

OmbakRindu which is the second box office film for 2012 *is* a love story and it relates a story of a village girl who was forced to get involved with a guy who saved her from the prostitution in the city. *Hantu Bonceng* and *HantuKakLimahbalikRumah* are two horror comedies that have no moral values which can educate the audience. A lot of the scenes donot make sense.It is rather films for audience to pass their time and no deductive elements whatsoever in its story line. *Khurafat* is another horror movie with some religiouselements while *Ngangkung* also a film that has no projection of good values for it relates on a story ofthree best friends whose endeavors is only to get winning numbers for lotteries. The movie is about the occult provincial practice of summoning demons to get winning lottery numbers.

Ah Beng: Three Wishes projects a story about Ah Beng despite being poor, his father still hands up all the money he has to the God Of Fortune. Later it turns out that Ah Beng has hit the jackpot and the deity is for real. Just like a genie, the deity grants him three wishes.
Nasilemak2.0 is the first film in Malaysia to portray the country's three major races in an ensemble manner. The response was mixed. This is the first Malaysian film that did not target one of the three population groups as its audience.

A survey conducted by major bloggers and entertainment tabloids claimed that most of its audience loved the style of acting, because they could relate to the characters. From the analysis made, it is found that elements and values especially in fostering unity in the above top ten high ranking films are not seen especially from the number 1till number 9 top ranking films.

For the number 10 rank, that is *NasiLemak* 2.0, no doubt the movie exposes the three main ethnic groups in Malaysia but it does not portray the real Malaysian setting. It is more about what is going on in the Malaysian politics which could mislead those who watched it. Therefore, it does not exactly a film that revealed unity aspects what more on the effort to foster it.

From the in-depth interviews conducted with well-known public figures who have substantially contributed to the Malaysian film industry, findings found thatat present the Malaysian film industry has shown a strong performance and upsurge in making income. Film collection in2011 for instance, was said to reach 100 per cent increment compared to the previous year. The total ticket collection has reached RM100 million, as stated in the mainstream newspapers. For 2012, the collection was higher whereby about 70 local films were put on screen. A well-known director, Mamat Khalid (2012) claims that the film industry in Malaysia has reached a better position in terms of the number of audience. According to him, despite no elements of unity projected in most films in Malaysia, the Malaysian local film industry has moved towards so many levels. In the previous two years, film making has reached multiplied in stats. The increments reached up to 300 to 400 per cent in total. He sees this development as a good sign because it shows that the Malaysian society is starting to watch national films. When there is an increase in filmmaking it shows that the films' competition has increase simultaneously. Therefore, it will bring Malaysian films to a new level.

Mamat Khalid also reveals that viewers in the late 50s and early 60s used films as a medium of escapism from real world. He said that the early era in the late 50s and early 60s as the Golden Era of Malay Films. The years were indeed a breakthrough in the Malay films. During the years, they have a studio system introduced by the Shaw Brothers and Cathay-*Keris*. That system managed to create many films at that particular time. However, at that time, the opportunities for entertainments were very limited. So, the films were a great escapism space for the societies back then. Hence, escapism was an essential element for the people especially after the war, it was a rough time.

According to Mamat (ibid.), the existence of Studio JalanAmpas at that time was indeed needed by the public. Compared to as this previous situation, at present there are many production houses. These production houses are not practising the studio system except for MIG. They have their own actors under their supervisions and the actors are paid monthly using the studio system. The difference situation during the era of the 50s and early 60sis that currently there are too many production houses and individuals who are ambitious to make films.

Regarding instilling the element of unity inside the local films of today, veteran actor, Datuk Aziz Satar (2012) sees that the Malaysian films are slacking in this aspect. He concurred that looking at the Malaysian film trends today, what he can say is, there is not much film that can be said a 1Malaysia film for the purpose of national integration. He agreed that before 1Malaysia concept is introduced, films especially in the era of P. Ramlee have already put forward the idea. He kind of disappointed because he sees that producers are much more interested to produce horror films in order to get higher revenue. He concurred that such films do not bring any benefits to the viewers.

Datuk Aziz Satar (ibid.) agreed that the element of unity was already portrayed in films during the era before the late Tan Sri P. Ramlee started to get involved seriously in producing the local films. Malay films at that time would always include the three ethnic races that are the Malays, Chinese and Indians to act in the film to create indirectly unity among Malaysians. The films even have British characters in the storyline to show the openness of the local people to other races. All the three groups acted accordingly and it does not arise any conflict or wrong interpretations.

For MuslyRamlee (2012), an actor, unity is not an element at all which should be stressed in the local films of today. He explained that if there are such elements, the industry will be more alive. He continued by saying that nobody would care on instilling such values because he said when a producer makes a film, it is his money and he can do anything he wants to mould his film. Then the unity part has got to be sacrificed. He also said that it is hard to make a film that portrays unity to help the government foster among the mass.

Another point that he highlighted is that there are no Chinese actors acting in the movies that are produced today. The thinking patterns nowadays and back then also differs. During the film in early 60s and 70s, the films have just started to create a so called society after the independence.

Hence, the films during that era acts as element to enforce unity among the people in Malaysia as well as creating solidarity among races to help government to run the country smoothly.

MuslyRamlee supports the statement that unity aspect has been portrayed during the early Malaysian films. His opinion include about how the late Tan Sri P. Ramlee thinks beyond his time that is for the next 20 to 30 years. What will happen to the society in advance? He showed in his films what will happen without unity in a society. For example his film *Gerimis* which portrayed a mixed marriage issue and on the good relationship of the Malays and the Chinese. This kind of closeness and the importance of helping each other should be an example to the present society as well as to the filmmakers. They should be aware of such efforts done by P. Ramlee during his time that enable to project the unity concept in the films he made which in a way assisted the government to build Malaysia, a country that consist of Malays, Chinese and Indians.

Finding also found that a film could be a medium of influence to a society. However the current situation reveals that there are not many filmmakers in Malaysia are interested in making films that contain the unity spirit. The trend now is prone to making horror films and films with high entertainment values. In defending themselves on this matter, many producers claimed that the films that were made are based on market's demand.
Below are the informants' insights that indicate that films that are made toward profit making rather than revealing unity and the good values:

- Like I said earlier, films that consists unity element are not attracting viewers. They will only feel that it was just another propaganda films which are not portraying realism. The only films that are successful to attract other races are made by the late producer, Yasmin Ahmad but instead, it failed to attract the Malays.

- Producers nowadays are looking for profits only. All they want is profits from their films. To make a film that has unity element actually is a social responsibility for these people. But they are thinking for collections only. They should come out with a film that could bring national spirit to their audience. For instance, filmmakers are now showing films that has gangsterism elements. They portrayed the Malays as the mat rempit. They should make a film that heavy with messages to educate the youngsters. They should put profits in the second place and start thinking about the message. For example, P. Ramlee films. They are full with messages and values.

MuslyRamlee sees that producers nowadays are not sincere in making films:

- Film producers today do not have a sincere heart towards society. Films patterns of today and before are different. There is no strength that comes from the producer's mind. Producers have no idea towards making unity films. Even there is films with unity concept in the early 60s, 70s even during the 80s. Unfortunately, we don't have that now.

A film producer, Norman KRU in his media statement once had claimed that the abundance of horror films in the market is because the producers were only following the audience demands. Asked if this scenario comes from the audience's attitude who wants film with high-entertaining values which encourage producers to make commercial films that could bring profit to them, Mamat Khalid answered:

- For me, the most important element in a film is the level of entertainment itself not the level of message. We must have entertainment values to make the viewers feel entertained. The most important is for them to watch films and have fun. It is not wrong to make a film that consist multiracial society but the problem is when the story itself is not entertaining enough.And very crucial, it does not make money at all.

Datuk Aziz Satar sees this way:

- I look at this as their desire to be entertained. They do not realized and aware of the importance of advice and values. The only important thing *to them is entertainment. The producers want profits and the audience wants entertainment.*

The film *Estet,*which portrays the unity element only managed to collect RM350, 000 in terms of ticket's collection. On how to change the audience taste from commercial films to films that could generate solidarity spirit, Mamat Khalid who is also the director of *Estet*claims that he produced *Estet*as he believes in racial integration.

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He wants to answer the government's calling to make a film that could foster unity. He managed to I produce the film four years ago before the introduction of 1 Malaysia concept. When the viewer's choose not to watch the film, he said that he is not blaming the audience neither blaming himself for making *Estet.* He uttered that making films is like making a painting. Some like it and some do not. As a painter, he said he will never say that all his paintings are good. So when the viewers refused to watch *Estet* despite being a film filled with humour and love, it is not amusing enough for the audience.

For Datuk Aziz Satar,the producer, director and scriptwriter play an important role to attract viewers to watch their film. They must create a film that could attract audience to cinema to watch unity film instead of commercial films. They must think outside the box to come out with something different that could grab audience attention to their films. He suggests that producers go beyond time to produce a film like if a country does not have good leaders, the people will suffer. He gives the example of poverty and he suggests a film to focus on this subject to be done. The chaotic scenario if the three races do not care for each other can be a best seller film for the particular year.

MuslyRamlee views that Malaysia has creating and innovative producers like Mamat Khalid in the film field. To him, a producer should be sincere in his work. Mamat Khalid once sulks about his film *Estet* which failed in terms of collection. He is one example from the many producers who tried to project unity in local films.

Findings from secondary data indicate that films containing elements of unity is not well-received because these sorts of films are not attracting the other races to watch them except for the Malays. The Chinese prefer to see their Chinese movies and the Indian community are keener to watch the Bollywood movies. There are only a few numbers that would agree to watch such films made by local producers.

Mamat Khalid's insight on this matter is as follows:

- Films that have the goodwill elements are not well-received because these films are not interesting. I think only five to ten per cent of other races are interested to watch our films. And that is good enough already. However, films produced by the late Yasmin Ahmad had successfully attracted other races to watch. But then her films failed to attract the Malays.This goes to her films like *Sepet, Gubra* and *Talentime*. So when we talk about films that have unity aspects or films that have the so called integration, I personally think that it is not the choice of films to be watched by the majority.

- I suggest it is high time for producers to come up with films that highlight on racism because probably with inserting these elements then only will they treasured the unity aspects because racism is one branch of message that would accelerate the importance of unity in a society especially like our country, there are three major ethnic groups that should work together to make Malaysia a better place to live in.

Conclusion

From the interviews and from the secondary research done, it is clear that the role played by script writers or directors play an essential part in making the audience to change. It is possible for the audience to change for the better after watching a film that has good values in it and it is also possible for them to practice the values in real life. With this progression, it is the best time for Malaysian films to change in terms of its content in order to show the maturity of the film. This is because, film as an art medium that will be look upon in its content and its contribution to humanize people. There are many factors that cause unity problems in Malaysia. One of them is because there is no initiative at all especially in film making to project the unity problem. Nearly all producers only came to their mind of profit making but not to produce a film that is worth watching by all races. Every film that is produced in Malaysia is somehow or rather only caters an audience of a certain race, thus making it boring to watch by another race.

Differences in religion are another possible factor that leads to only one group to decide to see the movie. There are some people that do not respect the religion of others. As everybody should embrace the differences and stay unite. At one point, based on this case study, films do play an important role in uniting people. It was seen since the era of 50s and 60s in local films in Malaysia. At that time audiences were evident to enjoy watching those films even though there is no calling from the government to produce films that would foster unity.

As one of the major communication tool, films that depict the real situation of a Malaysian society are some of the great examples of bringing the community to Malaysian real life. As one of the social communication tool, films can be a great medium to teach people. Films could educate and motivate a person to change and accepting others despite their differences and live together in peace and harmony.

It is also an excellent social communication tool which can help create awareness towards the importance and significance of unity. The impact of such films is its audience would tend to imitate the good elements in the film. Hence, a film which has themes of unity in it would convey a very strong message to the public. Film is one of the fastest platforms for people to get information and it should not only be made for entertainment purposes only. The racism sentiment is not a new issue in the Malaysian society. This issue has been rooting in the country for ages since Malaysian have been colonized by the British. The British back then separates the ethnic groups at that time through the enforcement of the divide and rule policy in order to help it rule especially in the administration sector. Thus it leads to the gaps between different races in Malaysia until today whereby the sentiments still exist somehow. Looking back at the history, racism sentiment is hazardous to a nation as it could bring mayhem and chaos. Such great examples that Malaysian should learn from are the May 13th and Kg Medan incidents that took hundreds of innocent lives.

Nevertheless, there are some voices that suggest films that bring racism issue in its storyline can be good examples to unite the people in this country. This kind of film leads to self-consciousness among the audience and educate them to adapt each other differences without discrimination and prejudice. Film that contains racism sentiment as the subject could nurture and educate the audience that all Malaysian are the same regardless of their differences.

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