

Revival of the Epic Film & The Malaysian Audience

Wan Aida Wan Yahaya

The turn of the new century has seen a massive turn in the film industry. Films are evolving with various up to date technology, and old films are being given a new breathe due to the surge in digital effects. Films such as STAR WARS and BATMAN have returned with a vengeance as a result of all this technology. However, not only are old films brought back to life, but the global film industry has witnessed the return of the epic film. In Hollywood with epic films such as TROY and KING ARTHUR, in Thailand with the presentation of SURIYOTHAI (2001), in Indonesia with TJOET NJA DHIEN (1988) and without leaving out our own PUTERI GUNUNG LEDANG (2004), after a 16 year absence of the Malaysian epic genre. With the above in mind, the purpose of this study is to identify the possibility and the potential of future Malay epics being produced and well received by the Malaysian audience.

Introduction

At the beginning of the new millennium, Hollywood decided to attempt a new venture into the film world. With it, they brought about films such as *The Matrix Trilogy* (2000-2003), *The Lord of the Rings Trilogy* (2001-2004), and the *Harry Potter* series to life. Meaning which these films focused on the grandeur of production and the length of time that it took for the entire project. In which, though all the above films stated are fictional they were projects as grand and spectacular as an epic. Whereby, they ultimately dealt with the survival of mankind and the honour of goodwill. In turn, this brought about the return of the epic genre on a mega scale in Hollywood with *Gladiator* (2000), followed by *Master and Commander* (2001), the sudden entry of Asian cinema in the Hollywood limelight through *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (2002), *Hero* (2003) and *House of Flying Daggers* (2004). It was as if a dam had suddenly burst and an avalanche of epic films started to fill the

international film arena – *Troy* (2004), *Alexander* (2004), *King Arthur* (2004), and *Kingdom of Heaven* (2005) came within months of one another. To which effect, Malaysia was not to be left behind and we came with our own revival of the epic with *Puteri Gunung Ledang* (2004). What could have triggered such a sudden return of the epic film? Was it due to the September 11, attacks that we decided we needed to look back on our roots and past and reflect on various points of history? Could that have caused the need for the glory of the olden days?

Background of Study

The epic film reflects the history, growth and development of a nation. From the era of the Greek and Roman Empire to the birth of independent nations and governments. Each country has its own history or past in which they would like to recollect, reinvent or reinterpret in order to understand the glory days of a time once passed. We are no less as proud with the birth of the nation with the arrival of Parameswara to Malacca and the beginning of the Malay Sultanate of Malacca. Those are histories traced, and not yet the myths and legends told. Though the epic film has been a consistent player within the Hollywood world, the local industry may have felt the absence of its presence for some time. The history of the Malaysian film industry evolved with the presence of epic films such as (*FINAS*, 1999), to name a few:

Hang Tuah (1956)

Mahsuri (1958)

Musang Berjanggut (1959)

Hang Jebat (1961)

Puteri Gunung Ledang (1961)

Badang (1962)

Dang Anum (1962)

Raja Bersiong (1968)

Bukit Kepong (1982)

Sumpahan Mahsuri (1989)

Being which the last Malaysian epic produced before *Puteri Gunung Ledang* (2004) was *Sumpahan Mahsuri* in 1989. However, the purpose of this study is not to question the budget nor the achievements of a certain film. But more with regards to the epic genre and its ability to revive the attention of the Malaysian audience, and the consideration

that with its revival it will be accepted by the Malaysian, as well as, the international audience.

Due to the nature of an epic film, many producers fear the fact that it will not be able to cover production costs and so forth. Thus, the fall in absence of the Malaysian epic for more than ten years. Some may consider that we have had epic films such as *Embun* (2002) and *Paloh* (2003) respectively, and fictional epics such as *Lang Buana* (2003). But these films will be referred to later in comprehending the definition of an epic and how it is viewed by various producers and filmmakers alike.

Objectives of Study

The objectives of this study are to:

1. identify the socio-demographic profile of the Malaysian audience, and its influence on the Malay epic film;
2. identify elements that influence or motivate the Malaysian audience to watch an epic, or any future epics produced;
3. reflect the potential of future Malay epics and its revival within the Malaysian, as well as, the international scene.

Definition of the Epic Film

Up and foremost it must be stated and noted that the precise definition for an epic film may differ with regards to various contexts and forms. Therefore, to indicate whether one definition is true or false as compared to another is unjust and requires consideration. For example, Neale (2000) believes that the term epic was conjured up in the 1950s and 1960s and defines the film epic as being,

... used to identify, and to sell, two overlapping contemporary trends: films with historical, especially ancient-world settings; and large-scale films of all kinds which used new technologies, high production values and special modes of distribution and exhibition to differentiate themselves both from routine productions and from alternative forms of contemporary entertainment, especially television.

On the other hand, Panuti Sudjiman (1984) in *Kamus Istilah Sastra*, defines epics as a long tale of a hero that is usually based on history.

They are stories that derive from verbal, as well as, written and documented tales. For example, the presence of the main character that is pure and has exceptional qualities, who then faces conflicts and is a judge who not only saves, but punishes. Throughout the tale there is a repetition in exposition, digression and the evidence of an exaggerated style. With relation to this, the flow of *Puteri Gunung Ledang* follows and moves along the same path of this definition.

There is also a definition by the *Kamus Dewan* (2002) that explains that epics are considered as long poems of tales of a legendary warrior or hero. And at times these epics are also considered as a literary text or film that portray the actions of the legendary hero that turns a story or film into an epic. This can be seen with the presence of the tales and adventures of Hang Tuah and his four friends who were known as the finest warriors of their time. Another definition that may be related to that of the *Kamus Dewan* would be that of Ab Rahman Ab Rashid (2001) who defines epics as a poem or long prose of tales of legendary beings who are the pinnacles of a given race.

However, Dirks's (2004) description of epics in his article entitled *Film Genres Introduction*, epics or historical films are believed to be those that include costume dramas, historical dramas, war films, medieval romps, or 'period pictures' that often cover a large expanse of time set against a vast, panoramic backdrop. He also believes that epics often share elements of the adventure genre. Whereby taking a historical or imagined event, mythic, legendary, or heroic figure, and adding an extravagant setting and lavish costumes. This is further accompanied by grandeur and spectacle, dramatic scope, high production values, and a sweeping musical score.

Therefore, for the purpose of this study, the epic film is defined as a tale based on mythic and legendary hero(s), set within a backdrop of grandeur and splendor, with the concept of big sets and big budgets. It is noted that the recreation of the epic in this context is not the representation of history or truth.

Literature Review / Past Research

There have been various studies on the audience conducted by various marketing as well as film industries in their desire to identify the preferences of the audience. However, each study discovered that it had its own objectives and points of view in identifying with the film-

going audience. The various research range from elements of the Active Audience Theory, to the Receptive Audience Theory, the Response Theory and various others. This study will look into the various research conducted and thus mold its own structure in accordance to the purpose and objectives of the study.

As presented by Hanes (2000) in his article entitled the *Advantages and Limitations of a Focus on Audience in Media Studies*, texts (in this case – the film) needs an audience to realize their full potential and true meaning. This is due to the fact that each individual film has its own perceived and structured message intended for the general audience. Therefore, a film needs to be able to communicate with its audience. Without an audience, there would be no purpose for a specific film or media. With regards to this Rokeach and Cantor (in Hanes, 2000) believes that the audience are “unstructured groups... with ... no social organization... merely an aggregate of demographic characteristics.” With which different media will attract different kinds of audiences, as well as, different genres. Therefore, based on Hanes findings, he believes that there is no effective way of measuring the audience, their preferences or their responses towards a certain film. Furthermore, he believes that the current practice of measuring audience response is inadequate and insufficient. They do not measure how and why the audience differ in their viewing, nor do they consider the actual meanings the audiences are constructing. Surveys conducted in the form of questionnaires are limited by the questions that they ask and audiences will be trying to answer what they think the researcher is trying to find. Therefore, there is no exact or easy way to study or compile accurate details of the particular aspects of the audience.

The unpredictability of audience taste is itself no myth. ‘nobody knows what makes a hit or when it will happen.’ since audiences make hits ‘not by revealing preferences they already have, but by discovering what they like’.

(Stokes, M. and Maltby, R. (eds.), in Papadopoulos, 1999)

The preference of the modern day cinema audience is unpredictable and films that producers and distributors predict will be a sure hit usually miss their mark. Even those that receive positive reviews from film critiques may not do well at the box office. In Hollywood, box-office results reflect the preferences of the mass audience that, in turn, affect the films that are produced by the studios and the future of the Hollywood film industry. As such is the unpredictability of the Malaysian audience

and their response towards local films such as *Sepet* (2005), *Pontianak Harum Sundal Malam* (2004) and *Gangster* (2005) that became overnight success stories in the fact that new and different genres were able to attract the local audience, despite previous movie-going habits, attitudes and opinions. Stempel (as quoted in Papadopoulos, 1999) reflects that – “the audience may not always be right, but they are the audiences.” Thus, audience opinions, tastes and movie-going habits change over time and a film that was a box-office success once may not necessarily be one with the turn of the year, and that the nature of the film audience changes due to evolving social elements.

Another audience study discovered in Baker (2002) provides an argument that empirical data is not evidence that can ‘speak for itself’, but is formed and built on particular theoretical perspectives. Baker puts forth the Active Audience Paradigm in the need to analyze the audience and the numerous ways in which audiences have been studied with the assumption that they are passive in absorbing information. However, from a cultural studies point of view, the audience is conceived of as an active and knowledgeable entity that produces meaning to the viewed films. But, according to Baker – meanings are bounded by the way the film is structured and by the domestic and cultural context of the viewing. Whereby, audiences need to be understood in the contexts in which they watch the film or television in terms of meaning construction and the routines of their daily life. This is due to the fact that the audience is able to distinguish between fiction and reality. However, the Active Audience Paradigm has been opposed by McAnany and La Pastina (1994) in their claim that similar findings are apparent across a number of studies and is rarely contradicted by other studies. Whereby, they suggest the following; audiences are active and derive a variety of meanings from telenovelas, audiences make application to their lives, audiences recognize the fictional nature of the genre and the functioning of its rules and that the contextual variables of family, class, gender and neighbourhood qualify audiences’ reaction.

Thus, based on the past researches reviewed, for the purpose of this study empirical research will be the main source of reference. As according to Jenkins (1999) the difference between audience research and other film theory is not whether or not we discuss spectatorship, but how we access and talk about audience responses. This is due to the fact that audience research is closely related to issues of promotion, exhibition and consumption.

Data Collection and Analysis

For the purpose of this study a demographic/motivational survey was designed with quota sampling being the foremost in data collection. A number of one thousand respondents were gathered from around the Klang Valley in response to the epic film *Puteri Gunung Ledang* (2004), upon its release. It would like to be noted that the scope of study has been limited to a single epic film and the fact that location research was only performed at five cinema venues within the Klang Valley. This is inclusive to the fact that this study is a portion of a wider study into the epic genre and its appeal to the local audience, whereby, only demographic and motivational factors have been extracted for discussion.

Sosio-Demographic Factors

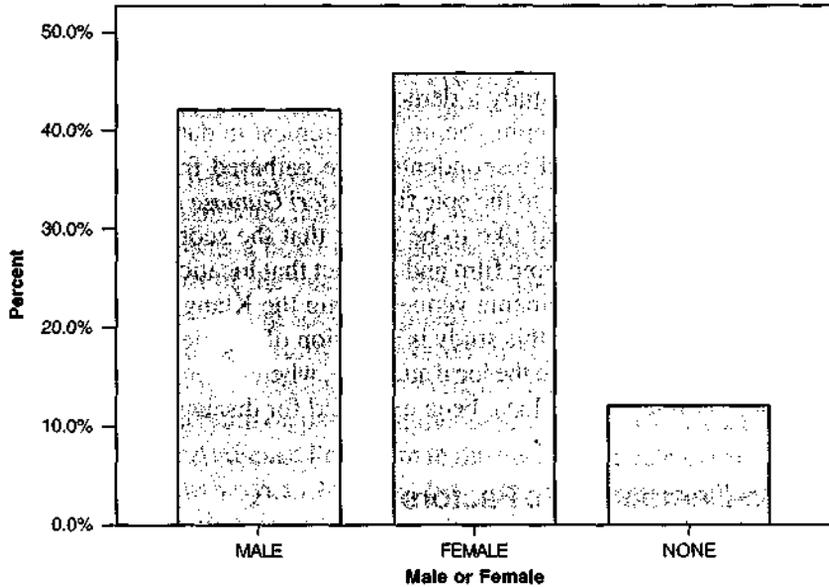
Gender

Gender plays an important role in identifying the Malaysian film audience. It has been said that certain movies are catered for certain target audiences and with specific purposes. The fact that an epic film may not be totally gender driven has to be considered, but with regards to the epic film the question of gender may be reflected. In which, gender relates to the ability of the audience to respond positively, or negatively to the film viewed.

The statistical data is as follows:

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|--------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | MALE | 421 | 42.1 | 42.1 | 42.1 |
| | FEMALE | 458 | 45.8 | 45.8 | 87.9 |
| | NONE | 121 | 12.1 | 12.1 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 1000 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

45.8% of the respondents are declared of female gender, whereby 42.1% is of male. The undeclared amount of 12.1% is due to choice of preference.



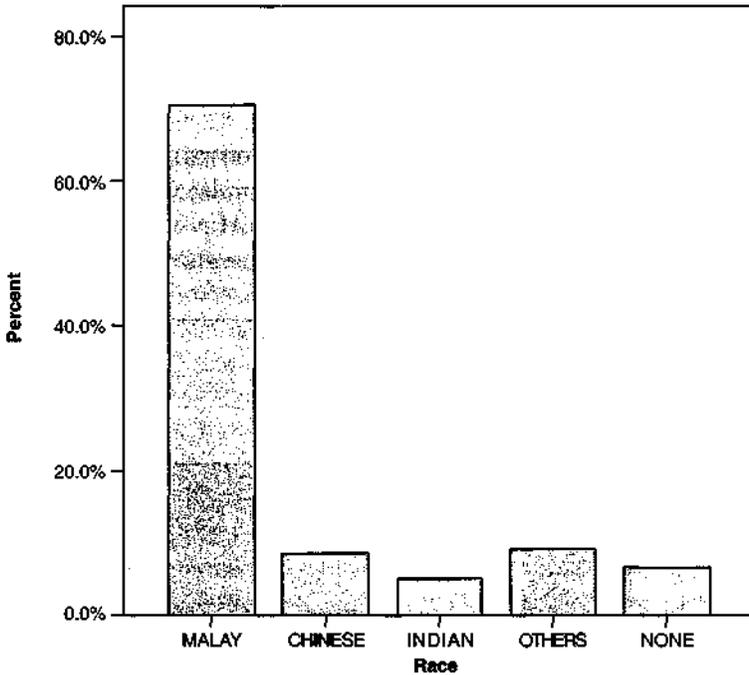
Therefore, in terms of gender with regards to the Malaysian filmgoer, the female population exceeds the male by a margin of only 3.7%. The appeal may have been more feminine in nature due to the protagonist being female. There is no fine line to draw a conclusion that the majority of Malaysian filmgoers are purely female.

Race

Due to the multi-racial element present in the country, consideration has to be given as to the race of the filmgoers themselves in order to cater to their social and cultural background and appeal.

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|---------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | MALAY | 706 | 70.6 | 70.6 | 70.6 |
| | CHINESE | 86 | 8.6 | 8.6 | 79.2 |
| | INDIAN | 50 | 5.0 | 5.0 | 84.2 |
| | OTHERS | 91 | 9.1 | 9.1 | 93.3 |
| | NONE | 67 | 6.7 | 6.7 | 100.0 |
| Total | | 1000 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

As shown the Malay audience dominates the film industry by 70.6%, followed by Other races at 9.1%. The Chinese stand at 8.6% when it comes to the Malay epic, the Indians at 5%, and those undeclared at 6.7%.



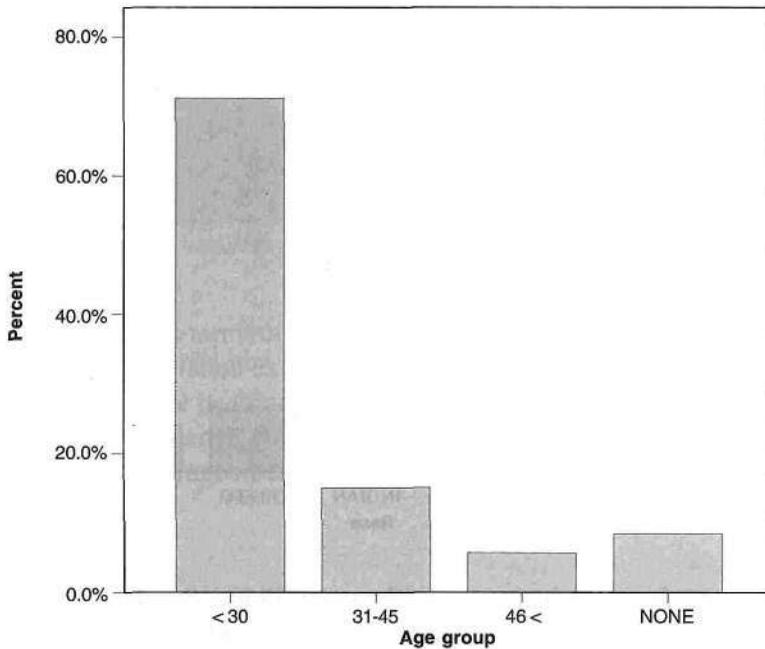
Thus, at this stage it seems as if the main filmgoers in terms of race are identified by the presence of the Malay audience. Therefore, consideration has to be given into the ability to attract the other racial communities of the country.

Age

The age group of Malaysian filmgoers is identification as to the main age group of those who frequent the local cinema.

The age group between 18-30 years dominates the relevant age of Malaysian filmgoers in relation to *Puteri Gunung Ledang* (2004) at 71.1%. This is followed by 15% of those between the ages of 31-45. Filmgoers above 46 years of age only stand at 5.6%. Whereas, those undeclared are at 8.3%

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|-------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | <30 | 711 | 71.1 | 71.1 | 71.1 |
| | 31-45 | 150 | 15.0 | 15.0 | 86.1 |
| | 46< | 56 | 5.6 | 5.6 | 91.7 |
| | NONE | 83 | 8.3 | 8.3 | 100.0 |
| Total | | 1000 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |



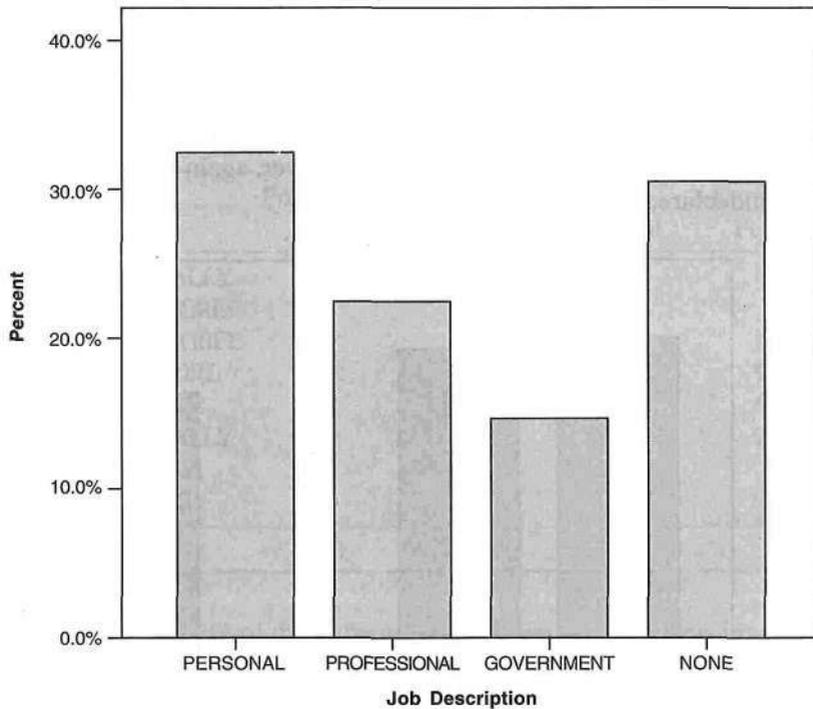
Therefore, the target age group would still range from the ages of 18-30 years in order to appeal to the mass audience. Though the film is of epic genre, this age group seems to be those who frequent and support the local cinema and film industry.

Profession

As of which, with the age group status, the professions of Malaysian filmgoers are to be pointed out.

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|--------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | PERSONAL | 324 | 32.4 | 32.4 | 32.4 |
| | PROFESSIONAL | 225 | 22.5 | 22.5 | 54.9 |
| | GOVERNMENT | 146 | 14.6 | 14.6 | 69.5 |
| | NONE | 305 | 30.5 | 30.5 | 100.0 |
| Total | | 1000 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

Of the statistics provided, 32.4% are self-employed or on their own, 22.5% are professionals and 14.6% are those who work within the government sector. However, there is a number 30.5% unaccounted for as undeclared profession.



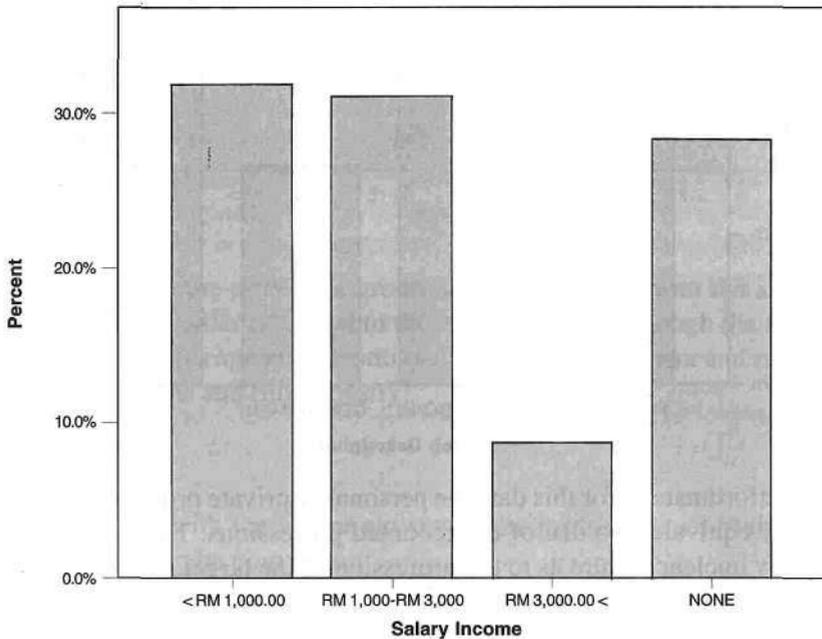
Unfortunately, for this data the personal or private profession is too closely equivalent to that of unaccounted professions. Thus, there is a slightly unclear picture as to the profession of the target audience.

Income

Knowledge of income reflects the ability for one to spend in terms of movie-going excursions. With reflections on profession gained monthly income has to be considered.

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|---------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | <RM1,000.00 | 319 | 31.9 | 31.9 | 31.9 |
| | RM1,000- RM3,000 | 311 | 31.1 | 31.1 | 63.0 |
| | RM3,000.00< | 87 | 8.7 | 8.7 | 71.7 |
| | NONE | 283 | 28.3 | 28.3 | 100.0 |
| Total | | 1000 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

It is seen that 31.9% are low-income earners of less than RM1,000.00 a month. Whereby, those with an income range of RM1,001.00 - RM3,000.00 stands at 31.1%. Those who earn more than RM3,001.00 are reflected at only 8.7%. However, again percentage for those undeclared income is at a high of 28.3%.



The above still reflects the fact that low-income earners are still those that frequent and make up a high percentage of the film-going crowd. Unfortunately, again the high percentage of undeclared salary income makes it difficult to truly reflect the general earnings of the local film-going audience.

Motivational Factors and Preferences

Following are factors related to the purpose and motivation behind the presence of the Malaysian audience behind its support for the local film industry, specifically for the epic genre.

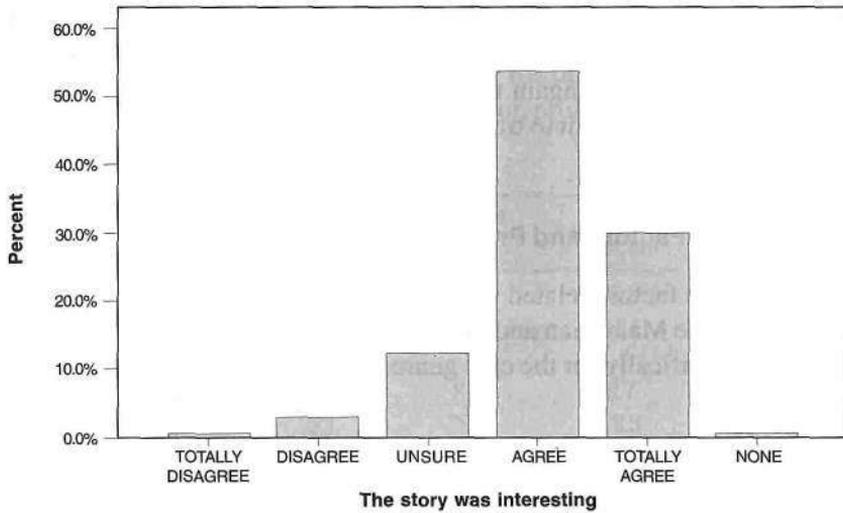
Story

The most common appeal of any type of film is its story, no matter the genre. Following reflects how much the epic story of *Puteri Gunung Ledang* (2004) appealed, or did not appeal to the Malaysian audience.

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | TOTALLY DISAGREE | 5 | .5 | .5 | .5 |
| | DISAGREE | 30 | 3.0 | 3.0 | 3.5 |
| | UNSURE | 123 | 12.3 | 12.3 | 15.8 |
| | AGREE | 537 | 53.7 | 53.7 | 69.5 |
| | TOTALLY AGREE | 300 | 30.0 | 30.0 | 99.5 |
| | NONE | 5 | .5 | .5 | 100.0 |
| | Total | | 1000 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

At least 53.7% of the audience agrees that the story was interesting and worthy of being attended. This is followed by those who totally agree at 30%, and the small few that did not think that the story was interesting enough at 3.5%. Those who were unable to make up a firm decision stand at 12.3%.

Therefore, more than 80% of the majority of the audience believed that the story and the film were interesting.

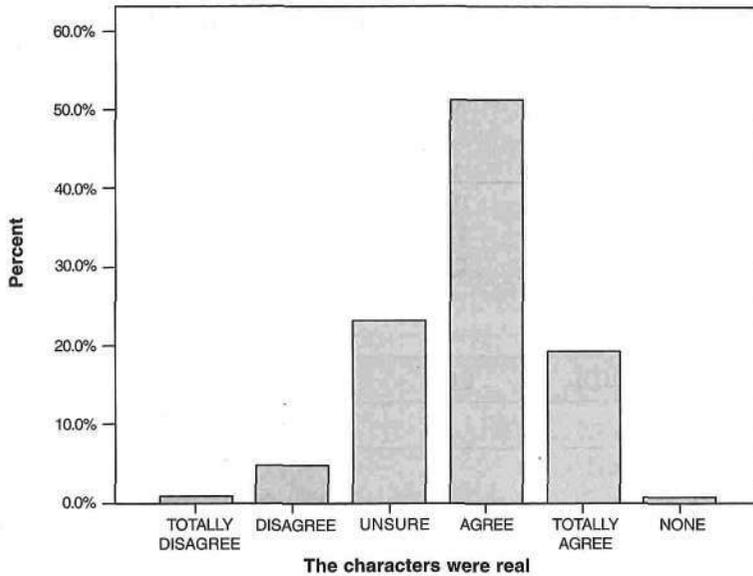


Actors / Characters

The actors and the level of believability of the characters is an essence in predicting the success of the story. Following are the results:

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | TOTALLY DISAGREE | 9 | .9 | .9 | .9 |
| | DISAGREE | 47 | 4.7 | 4.7 | 5.6 |
| | UNSURE | 231 | 23.1 | 23.1 | 28.7 |
| | AGREE | 513 | 51.3 | 51.3 | 80.0 |
| | TOTALLY AGREE | 193 | 19.3 | 19.3 | 99.3 |
| | NONE | 7 | .7 | .7 | 100.0 |
| Total | | 1000 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

51.3% of the audience believed in the identification of the actors and their characters, with 19.3% totally agreeing with them. However, 23.1% of the audience is unsure of their belief in the actors/characters, whereby 5.3% totally disagree with the portrayal.



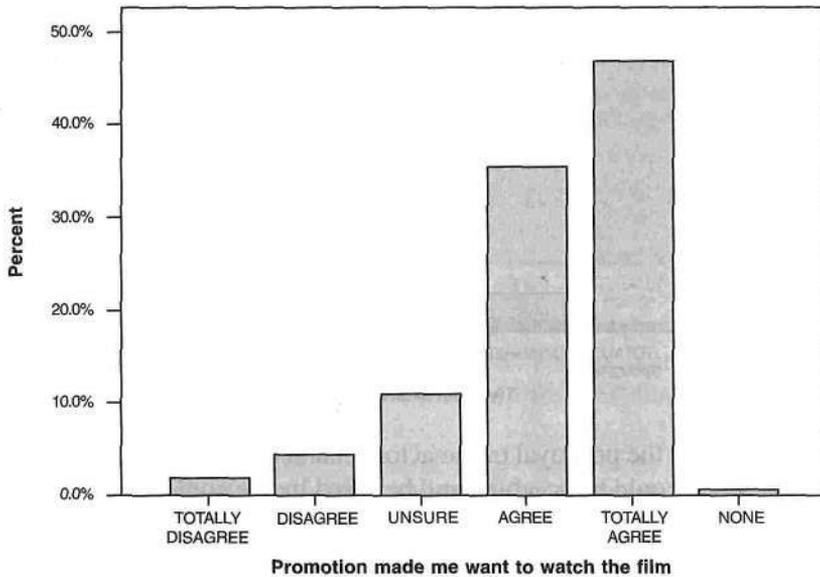
Therefore, the portrayal of the actors/characters of the epic film was at a level that could be accepted and believed by the audience as 70% of the audience could relate to the actors and characters in the film.

Promotion

Factors of promotion may be one of the most influential factors with regards to the success or failure of any given film. It is what motivates and moves the audience with the desire to attend and watch the film in question.

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | TOTALLY DISAGREE | 18 | 1.8 | 1.8 | 1.8 |
| | DISAGREE | 44 | 4.4 | 4.4 | 6.2 |
| | UNSURE | 109 | 10.9 | 10.9 | 17.1 |
| | AGREE | 354 | 35.4 | 35.4 | 52.5 |
| | TOTALLY AGREE | 469 | 46.9 | 46.9 | 99.4 |
| | NONE | 6 | .6 | .6 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 1000 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

Clearly declared here is the fact that 46.9% of the filmgoers totally agree that they were influenced by the promotion of the film. While another 35.4% agree with them. Less than 18% disagree with this conviction.



The power and the influence of promotion can easily garner the success or failure of any given genre. Thus, with relations to the epic film many Malaysians were influenced by its promotional elements whereby, 82.3% of the Malaysian audience was influenced by the promotional elements of the film.

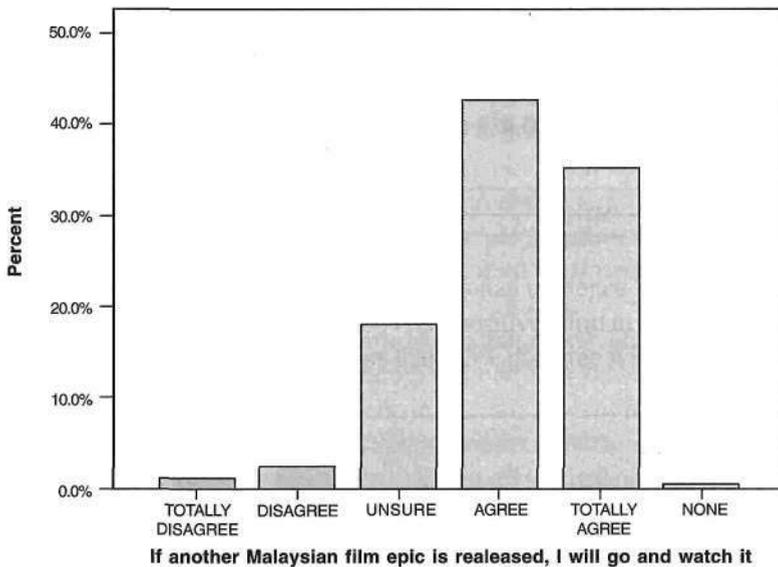
Potential

This is a personal claim into the preference of the Malaysian audience as to their willingness to support and watch a future Malaysian epic without viewing the final product.

A total of 42.7% of the Malaysian audience would agree to attending future Malaysian epics released, with an additional 35.2% who totally agree. However, 21.6% disagree with the notion of attending another epic film without prior consideration.

The fact that more than 75% of the Malaysian audience would watch any future Malaysian epic is an indicator of the support that is in store.

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | TOTALLY DISAGREE | 12 | 1.2 | 1.2 | 1.2 |
| | DISAGREE | 24 | 2.4 | 2.4 | 3.6 |
| | UNSURE | 180 | 18.0 | 18.0 | 21.6 |
| | AGREE | 427 | 42.7 | 42.7 | 64.3 |
| | TOTALLY AGREE | 352 | 35.2 | 35.2 | 99.5 |
| | NONE | 5 | .5 | .5 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 1000 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |



However, considerations have to be given to the factors that do influence the movie-going audience.

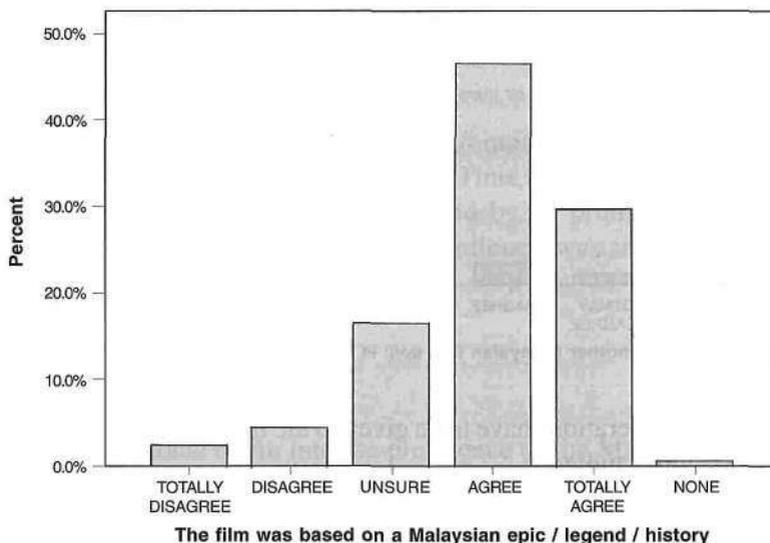
Reflection

The following data are reflections on the epic genre and the overall development of the local film industry in general. Though there may be parties who may disagree with these findings, it would like to be stated that these are the current findings in relation to this study.

The film was based on a Malaysian epic/legend/history

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | TOTALLY DISAGREE | 23 | 2.3 | 2.3 | 2.3 |
| | DISAGREE | 44 | 4.4 | 4.4 | 6.7 |
| | UNSURE | 164 | 16.4 | 16.4 | 23.1 |
| | AGREE | 465 | 46.5 | 46.5 | 69.6 |
| | TOTALLY AGREE | 298 | 29.8 | 29.8 | 99.4 |
| | NONE | 6 | .6 | .6 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 1000 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

More than 76.3% of the Malaysian filmgoers believe that the epic *Puteri Gunung Ledang* (2004) is a reflection of Malaysian history, myth and legend. However, 16.4% remain unsure, while 6.7% disagree with the whole notion.



In terms of this study, it would like to be noted that the film in question was not studied on the basis of historical truths or representations but on the audiences' beliefs of its appeal.

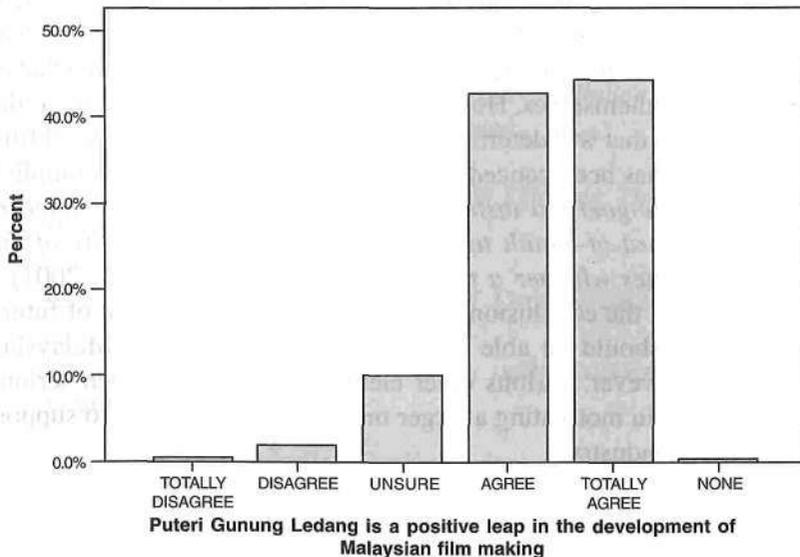
Progress

Epic films have the potential of bringing about change and development in terms of technology and expertise. Therefore, overall progression in terms of the local filmmaking industry has to be considered.

Puteri Gunung Ledang is a positive leap in the development of Malaysian filmmaking

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | TOTALLY DISAGREE | 5 | .5 | .5 | .5 |
| | DISAGREE | 20 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 2.5 |
| | UNSURE | 101 | 10.1 | 10.1 | 12.6 |
| | AGREE | 427 | 42.7 | 42.7 | 55.3 |
| | TOTALLY AGREE | 443 | 44.3 | 44.3 | 99.6 |
| | NONE | 4 | .4 | .4 | 100.0 |
| | Total | | 1000 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

In terms of progress, 87% of the Malaysian audience believes that the epic film *Puteri Gunung Ledang* (2004) is a positive effort in the development of the Malaysian film industry. Less than 13% disagree with them.



Therefore, positive elements with regards to the potential of the epic film should be given serious consideration, especially through its long-term contributions.

Conclusion

With regards to the study, it can be summed up that the Malay audience dominates the film-going industry with regards to the revival of the epic film. Identification of gender in terms of audience is at an equal par as the margin of difference is not great. However, the average age group of Malaysian filmgoers ranges from the age of 18-30 years, whom obtain an average income of less than RM1,000.00 to RM3,000.00. Unfortunately, the profession of most Malaysian filmgoers is indecisive as there is a gap by the undeclared professions.

Thus, like any audience in the world, the Malaysian audience is just as unpredictable. However, with an understanding of the current local filmmaking trend the epic film has the potential and the possibility of becoming a global reflection of Malaysian history and society. The country is rich with various cultural, historical and traditional elements that the only effort needed is in the tapping of all these resources. The survey conducted reflects a small portion of the local film-going audience, but it is these audiences whom have supported the local film industry through thick and thin. And with the presence of more Malaysian epics in the film industry, it may bring back the glory days when epics were a constant part of our lives. Though many local filmmakers and producers may fear failure of a local film epic the positive contributions may outweigh that of financial gain themselves. However, at the end of the day it is up to the powers that be that will determine the success or failure of our local film industry as it has been conceded that the most that one can accomplish is to *get movie-goers to taste the movie the first week of its release. After that, word-of-mouth takes over. Ultimately, the quality of the story determines whether a film succeeds or fails* (Burgess, 2001).

Therefore, the conclusion of this study is that the revival of future Malay epics should be able to garner the support of the Malaysian audience. However, various other elements have to be given serious consideration in motivating a larger majority of Malaysians to support the local film industry.

References

- Ab Rahman Ab Rashid, Harun Jaafar, Mohd Rosli Sahidan, & Talib Semat (2001). *Kamus sastera Melayu*. Selangor: Longman.
- Baker, C. (2002). *Cultural studies – Theory & practice*. Great Britain: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Burgess, J. (2001). *Understanding cinema audiences*. (Paper submitted for assessment in the School of EMSAH at the University of Queensland, Australia).
- Dirks, T. (2004). *Epic films* [on-line].
<http://www.filmsite.org/epicfilms.html>.
- Dirks, T. (2004). *Film genres introduction* [on-line].
<http://www.filmsite.org/genres.html>.
- Hanes, P. J. (April, 2000). *The advantages and limitations of a focus on audience in media studies* [on-line].
<http://www.aber.ac.uk/media/Students/pph9701.html>
- Howard, S. (2005). *Early modernity on film – Introduction: Historians and historical film* [on-line]. Early Modern Resources.
<http://www.earlymodernweb.org.uk/film/historyfilm.htm>
- Jenkins, H. (1999). *Reception theory and audience research: The mystery of the Vampire's Kiss* [on-line].
- Kamus Dewan*, edisi ke-3 (2002). Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa & Pustaka.
- Neale, S. (2000). *Genre and Hollywood*. Great Britain: Routledge.
- Panuti Sudjiman (ed.). (1984). *Kamus istilah sastera*. Jakarta: PT Gramedia.

Papadopoulos, G. (1999). *What audiences want*. Sense of Cinema [online]. <http://www.sensesofcinema.com/contents/01/13/audiences.html>

WAN AIDA WAN YAHAYA is attached with the Screen Programme, Faculty of Artistic and Creative Technology, UiTM, Shah Alam where she teaches Screenwriting. Her academic interests include screenwriting, film adaptation, historiography and historiophoty.