



**UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA**

***COMMUNICATION FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO THE SUCCESS OF FILM  
PRODUCTION IN INDEPENDENT AND MAINSTREAM FILM INDUSTRY IN  
MALAYSIA***

**VIMALA PERUMAL**

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**COMMUNICATION FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO THE SUCCESS OF  
FILM PRODUCTION IN INDEPENDENT AND MAINSTREAM  
FILM INDUSTRY IN MALAYSIA**

**By**

**VIMALA PERUMAL**

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia, in  
Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

**June 2016**

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## DEDICATION

To my mother, Lim Chiew Yet,  
the most important woman in my life.

To my father, Perumal Rajoo,  
whose unfailing encouragement and passion for education has taught me the value  
of acquiring knowledge in order to do or achieve anything of worth in life.

To my brothers, Manivannan and Rameni,  
for believing in me more than I did in myself at times—  
you were always privy to the brighter side of things.

To my daughter and son, Dashena and Sharwin,  
for inspiring me in every second in my life,  
reminding me to move forward with hope every day.

To my husband, Denes Kumar,  
for encouraging and keeping me on track and devoting his life to this.

To my supervisors, Dr. Hamisah Hasan,  
Associate Professor Dr. Jusang Bolong, and Dr. Mohammad Nizam Osman:  
without you, my graduate experience would not have been as rich and rewarding  
as it has been.

To all the beautiful souls who have stood by me, in humble gratitude.

Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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**VIMALA PERUMAL**

**June 2016**

**Chair: Hamisah Zaharah bt Hasan, PhD**

**Faculty: Modern Languages and Communication**

Films are the joint creation of a huge number of individuals, each contributing with creative ideas, unique talents, and technical expertise to the project. Significantly, filmmaking is a collaborative process that derives from a good team effort achieved through effective communication. It is an undeniable fact that films are part of social institutions. In today's globalized and competitive environment, the strong focus on the successful independent and mainstream film is based on the assumption that there are strong relationships among the filmmakers/crewmembers. The Malaysian film industry presents a unique environment to study the crewmembers' behavior. Everything that is noticed on the screen is the finished product that results from decisions made by filmmakers during the production process, all of which will have involved some kind of interaction.

Based on this strong relationship among the crewmembers, this study has been designed to assess and propose the appropriate communication factors among successful filmmakers/crewmembers in the successful independent and mainstream film industry environment. There are six possible predictors proposed in this study to identify the communication factors such as commitment, sharing ideas or experiences, trust, cohesiveness, collaboration and friendly relationship among crewmembers in the film industry atmosphere from the perspective of three communication theories: social exchange theory (SET), social penetration theory (SPT), and social constructive theory (SCT). This study is conducted with crewmembers that have worked on an international award-winning film production. The study is inclined toward a total of thirty-one successful films that were produced between 2000 and 2013. The survey involved 239 crewmembers from 24 independent film productions and 64 crewmembers from seven mainstream film productions. Data have been analyzed using SPSS for descriptive analysis and significant differences analysis.

Based on the study, it was found that there is a significant relationship between the proposed predictors and successful films. There are four factors that contribute to the success of an independent film production, which are commitment, trust, collaboration and friendly relationship as compared to mainstream film production, which are trust and collaboration among the crewmembers. The findings indicate that every crewmember working in the independent film industry is more committed to the ideas and vision of the film production. Thus, the findings on factors affecting the crewmembers' communication are vital to ensure the continuous growth of quality films in the industry. This will help Malaysian film production companies to prepare more effective strategies to understand crewmembers' needs. In addition, academic institutions may also use this as a guideline for nurturing new talent among the young by instilling the importance of human communication and raising awareness that technical aspects in filmmaking alone are not sufficient to produce a good and quality film. This will make the process easier, especially in bridging the gap between theory and practice. Furthermore, the industry can utilize the results to provide a more productive environment for filmmaking, particularly in Malaysia, which is followed by most successful film production studios.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk Ijazah Doktor Falsafah

**FAKTOR KOMUNIKASI YANG MENYUMBANG KEPADA KEJAYAAN  
PENGELUARAN FILEM BEBAS DAN ARUS PERDANA DI DALAM  
INDUSTRI FILEM MALAYSIA**

Oleh

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Filem adalah ciptaan kolektif bagi sebilangan besar individu dimana setiap individu menyumbang secara kreatif, bakat yang unik dan kepakaran teknikal untuk projek tersebut. Lebih penting lagi, pembikinan filem adalah satu proses kerjasama dan salah satu usaha secara berkumpulan. Justeru itu, tidak dapat dinafikan bahawa filem adalah sebahagian daripada institusi sosial. Dalam era globalisasi dan arus perkembangan yang kompetitif pada hari ini, fokus utama yang ditekankan dalam filem bebas dan arus perdana yang berjaya adalah faktor hubungan komunikasi yang kuat di antara pembikin filem atau ahli krew itu sendiri. Industri filem Malaysia mewujudkan situasi yang unik dimana kajian dapat dijalankan terhadap tingkah-laku pembikin filem/ahli krew. Apa yang ditonton di skrin adalah hasil produk daripada keputusan yang diambil oleh pembikin filem di dalam proses penghasilannya, iaitu yang melibatkan komunikasi dikalangan mereka.

Berdasarkan komunikasi yang baik di kalangan pembikin filem/ahli krew, kajian ini dilakukan bagi menilai dan mencadangkan faktor komunikasi yang sesuai di kalangan pembikin filem yang telah berjaya dalam industri filem bebas dan arus perdana. Terdapat enam pemboleh ubah bebas yang dicadangkan dalam kajian ini, melibatkan komunikasi antara pembikin filem/ahli krew dalam industri filem iaitu komitmen, berkongsi idea atau pengalaman, kepercayaan, perpaduan, kerjasama dan hubungan persahabatan sesama krew. Perspektif tiga teori komunikasi yang dicadangkan ialah Teori pertukaran sosial (SET), Teori penembusan sosial (SPT) dan Teori konstruktif sosial (SCT). Kajian ini dijalankan ke atas ahli krew yang telah bekerja dalam produksi filem yang pernah meraih anugerah di peringkat antarabangsa. Fokus kajian ini terhadap 31 filem yang telah meraih kejayaan di peringkat antarabangsa diantara tahun penghasilan 2000 hingga 2013. Kajian ini disertai oleh 239 ahli krew daripada 24 penerbit filem bebas dan 64 ahli krew dari 7

penerbit filem arus perdana. Data yang diperolehi akan dianalisis dengan menggunakan SPSS. Data tersebut digunakan untuk analisis deskriptif dan analisis perbezaan yang signifikan.

Berdasarkan kajian, terdapat hubungan yang signifikan antara pemboleh ubah bebas yang dicadangkan terhadap kejayaan filem-filem tersebut. Terdapat empat faktor yang menyumbang kepada kejayaan sesebuah produksi filem bebas, iaitu komitmen, kepercayaan, kerjasama dan hubungan persahabatan berbanding dengan pengeluaran filem arus perdana, iaitu kepercayaan dan kerjasama di kalangan ahli krew. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa setiap krew yang bekerja dalam industri filem bebas adalah lebih komited kepada idea dan visi pengeluaran sesebuah filem. Oleh itu, kesedaran tentang faktor yang mempengaruhi komunikasi ahli krew adalah penting untuk memastikan perkembangan yang berterusan untuk penghasilan filem-filem yang berkualiti dalam industri perfileman di Malaysia. Ini akan membantu syarikat-syarikat pengeluaran filem Malaysia mempunyai strategi yang lebih berkesan untuk memahami keperluan ahli krew. Di samping itu, institusi akademik juga boleh menggunakan kajian ini sebagai panduan dalam memupuk bakat baru sejak dari awal lagi dengan menerapkan kepentingan interaksi manusia dan memberikan kesedaran bahawa aspek teknikal dalam pembikinan filem sahaja tidak mencukupi untuk menghasilkan filem yang baik dan berkualiti. Ini akan membantu dalam merapatkan jurang antara teori dan praktikal. Lebih-lebih lagi, industri perfileman boleh menggunakan hasil kajian ini untuk menyediakan ruang lingkup yang lebih selesa untuk pembikinan filem, terutamanya di Malaysia, seperti mana yang diamalkan oleh kebanyakan syarikat produksi filem yang berjaya.



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not question, only believed. He will always be my greatest source of support. He will always be the most important, most influential person that has ever come into my life, now and forever. He, too, will likely never understand the impact he has had on this journey, and more importantly, the impact he has had on my life.

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I certify that a Thesis Examination Committee has met on 10<sup>th</sup> June 2016 to conduct the final examination of Vimala Perumal on her thesis entitled "Communication Factors Contributing to the Success of Film Production in Independent and Mainstream Film Industry in Malaysia" in accordance with the Universities and University Colleges Act 1971 and the Constitution of the Universiti Putra Malaysia [P.U.(A) 106] 15 March 1998. The Committee recommends that the student be awarded the Doctor of Philosophy.

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Introduction

Film is an art form that plays an important role and is a powerful tool in capturing, influencing, and shaping society. Technically, films are the joint creation of a huge number of individuals, each contributing creative ideas, unique talents, and technical expertise to the project. The most important component of this chapter is the context of the study that focuses on the filmmakers'/crewmembers' communication and the background to successful Malaysian films, which it examines. The Malaysian film industry is basically categorized into two categories: the independent and the mainstream film industry. An independent film is a film production that is produced completely by an independent film studio or a small production company; meanwhile, a mainstream film is normally backed up by a major film studio or big production company (Eliashberg et al., 2009).

Recently, a group of independent filmmakers have made their existence felt with surprising, strapping titles and have gained quick international recognition: their films are frequently in competition and win numerous prestigious awards at acclaimed film festivals around the world. Most of these independent films are made by using cheap digital technologies and are self-financed without proper filmmaking equipment and with limited budgets as compared to mainstream films (Ahmad, 2008; Khoo, 2005; Muthalib, 2005).

Therefore, it is essential to study the Malaysian independent and mainstream film industry specifically from the perspective of understanding the human communication process between these independent filmmakers/crewmembers that causes them to work so well, given all of the complications and constraints. More specifically, it is proposed to study the relationship between these filmmakers/crewmembers and their contribution towards the success of a particular film production in the context of understanding the communication process that occurs during the production of the successful film.

### 1.2 Background Study

Everything has to have a beginning. The Malaysian film scene is no different. In order to analyze the Malaysian film industry, it is very important to understand the history of the Malaysian film industry from past to present. According to Heide (2002) and Stephen (2005), no matter how differently people tend to look at it, it is quite true—to endorse what respected film critic Hamzah Husin once said—that since the instigation of the Malaysian film industry, it has always been the Chinese who have been the finance providers, the Indians who have been the idea providers, and the Malays who have been the talent providers.

The beginning of mainstream cinema in Malaysia started in the 1930s and continued to develop until the 1970s. The earliest narrative form of a cinema experience would be *Laila Majnun* (1933), directed by Indian director, B. S. Rajhans. This was an adaptation of the classic Sanskrit love tragedy that predates Romeo and Juliet by a century. Seeing the success of *Laila Majnun* along with an opportunity to break through, Shaw Brothers from Singapore got into the Malaysian film scene with their own style of movie making. Throughout the period of 1938 to 1942, which saw World War II, Shaw Brothers made eight Malay films, each and every one their personal rendition of a previously existing Chinese film. This, however, did not go down well with the locals, as it was nowhere near aligned with the current Malay norms and cultures (Hoo, 2007; Muthalib, 2005).

After the war, which portrayed mostly Japanese documentaries, a new company called Malayan Arts Production pinned its hopes on B. S. Rajhans with the very first patriotically themed movie, *Seruan Merdeka* (Freedom Call). The whole decade of 1950 to 1970—which was the golden era of Malaysian cinema—realized a common understanding that Indian directors would fare better in the Malaysian film industry as they could create material which could be better related to the Malays, as the Indian culture revolves around similar things such as the fact that wives are ‘goddesses’ at home. The evergreen P. Ramlee was also most active during this period. The following decade, however, saw a fall in the film arena with the closing of Shaw Brothers and Cathay, two of the biggest film studios around (Hoo, 2007; Muthalib, 2005; Muthalib, 2013a).

From there, in 1981, the government intervened and established the National Film Development Corporation (FINAS) with the expectation of utilizing digital technology in all areas of business, education, and entertainment. In the early 1980s, the first wave of alternative filmmakers emerged, followed by the setting up of the first film school in the late 1980s. Since then, institutes of higher learning offering film, broadcasting, multimedia, and animation multiplied in the late 1990s, and there was a great effort by the government to nurture young talent in the film industry (Muthalib, 2005; Muthalib, 2013a).

Over the years, however, brave new attempts were made in the Malaysian film arena, with mainstream films like *Spinning Gasing* (2000) and the most expensive Malaysian film ever made, *Puteri Gunung Ledang* (2004). None of these attempts was able to actually break through the thick barrier that has been influential in local cultures. This might take a turn for the better soon with the increasing number of independent film directors over the past ten years. Films like *Tokyo Magic Hour* (2005) and *The Year of Living Vicariously* (2005) by Amir Muhammad and *The Beautiful Washing Machine* (2004) by James Lee might just be the stepping-stone for young aspiring directors to showcase their talent and show the world the true uniqueness of Malaysian films (Stephen, 2005).

Increasingly, these independent filmmakers have created history by winning many awards at various international film festivals (Ibrahim, 2009). They have made their presence felt with their extraordinary films by utilizing the digital video (DV) format. Since the first wave, which began in 1999, there has been no end to the rise of these

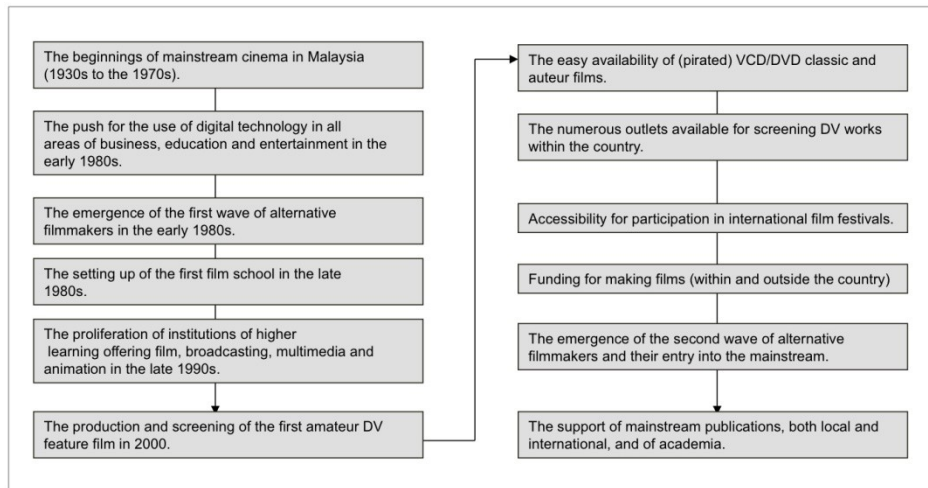
independent filmmakers (Muthalib, 2007). Independent films such as Tan Chui Mui's *Love Conquers All* (2006) and Liew Seng Tat's *Flower in the Pocket* (2007) really hit their stride with extremely strong titles and international recognition. These are the two notable independent films that have achieved the highest international award.

- a) ***Flower In The Pocket*** won the VPRO Tiger Award at the 37th International Film Festival Rotterdam 2008, New Currents and the KNN Audience Awards at the Pusan International Film Festival 2007, "Le Regard d'Or" (Golden Gaze) Award at the 22nd Fribourg International Film Festival 2008, the Jury Prize (Lotus du Jury) at the 10th Deauville Asian Film Festival 2008, and the Grand Prize City of Lisbon at the 4th Indie Lisboa (Muhammad, Tan, Lee, & Liew, 2010).
- b) ***Love Conquers All*** won the Golden Digital Award at the 31st Hong Kong International Film Festival 2007, the Oikocredit Award at the 21st Fribourg International Film Festival 2007, the Pro Tiger Award at the 36th International Film Festival Rotterdam 2007, and New Currents Award and FIPRECSI Award at the 11th Pusan International Film Festival 2006 (Muhammad et al., 2010).

Certainly, the new millennium has changed the face of filmmaking in Malaysia, which was marked as the digital technology revolution. Figure 1.1 illustrates the brief history of the Malaysian film industry from past to present.

Another important aspect of the new era of digital filmmaking is the human communication or the working culture among the filmmakers/crewmembers in the film production environment, which is the singular most important factor in its progression. Filmmakers provide a friendly and relaxed atmosphere among the crew where trust, relationships, or friendship, commitment, collaboration, and knowledge sharing play the key roles. This creates an amicable working culture and an approachable environment in which members feel at home and comfortable, hence overcoming budget and equipment shortcomings and attaining international achievements. This is in contrast with the mainstream which, due to its extensiveness and strict rules and regulations in its working structure, generates a resilient and conservative framework and thus diminishes communication in the form of friendship and exchanging ideas among the crewmembers (Hoo, 2007).





**Figure 1.1 Brief History of Malaysian Film Industry**  
(Source: Muthalib, 2005; Muthalib, 2013b)

### 1.3 Statement of Research Problem

The Malaysian film industry faces major challenges, especially the mainstream film industry that is quite mature in its establishment, yet unable to compete with these young independent filmmakers (Muthalib, 2005). According to McKay (2007), the mainstream film industry has been challenged over the past decade by the success of an increasingly large number of independent films that are often digital shorts and feature films produced locally and watched both by audiences on the international film festival circuit and by discerning cinema audiences at home. The Malaysian independent film industry scene really feels like a movement—a group of individuals moving toward the same goal and vision, creating a new breed of independent digital filmmakers and film content. The main objective of these independent filmmakers was not money oriented, but to create a good film that could compete globally in the film festivals (Perumal & Woods, 2007). Alony and Jones (2007) stated that the working relationship among the filmmakers in the film industry can be described as a stable relationship consisting of sets of diversely skilled people who move as a collective unit from one film production to another. However, there are some attributes that filmmakers normally have to face, such as long working hours, irregular work, poor pay, high pressure, short deadlines, and a tightly controlled budget. This may lead to poor working relationships among the filmmakers/crewmembers, which may contribute to unsuccessful products or films (Alony, Whymark, & Jones, 2007).

Currently, the creative industries in Malaysia—particularly the independent film industry—are becoming more popular. Though it has been developed in just less than a decade, the synergy among these independent filmmakers is truly remarkable. They distinguish themselves from mainstream filmmakers by the collaborative way they work, such as helping each other's films in shooting, editing, producing, and writing



(Ahmad, 2008; Cabagnet, 2009; Khoo, 2007; Muthalib, 2005; Perumal & Woods, 2007). It is important to study the social behaviors or communications of the filmmakers that has bred this new type of successful independent filmmaker. According to Ahmad (2008), the faith and dreams of the younger generation in our country are reflected in most of the new and upcoming independent film productions. Regardless of the language of the film and who is being represented, the most significant element that these new independent filmmakers are trying to present is the hope for a better future that is common to all Malaysians via storytelling, despite being ethnically different. Mostly, these young independent filmmakers work in a close-knit group, getting involved in each other's productions with a limited budget and generally self-financed or supported by grants secured from overseas. In comparison, the mainstream cinema takes advantage of government support, a big budget, technology, and facilities and is considered much more advanced and modern compared to the independent filmmakers. With far fewer resources, it should have been impossible for the independent film industry to compete and succeed.

In this scenario, the Malaysian film industry presents a unique environment to study the filmmakers'/crewmembers' behavior. Everything that visually appears on the screen in the finished movie is derived from decisions made by filmmakers during the production process, all of which involved some kind of communication between them. Films are the collaborative effort of a number of individuals, each of them contributing creative ideas, unique talents, and technical ability toward the film project (Basri, Sarji, & Yusof, 2004; Ferriani, Corrado, & Boschetti, 2005; Perumal & Woods, 2007). The backbone of a production machine is the filmmakers. Therefore, finding the right person to work behind the camera is as important as searching for the right actors to bring the story to life. Most independent film producers have done an enormous job with their limited resources in helping each other to produce internationally recognized films. With limited crewmembers in a film production, a smaller budget and limited equipment compared to mainstream film production, these independent filmmakers have still managed to produce successful films (Ahmad, 2008; Cabagnet, 2009; Perumal & Woods, 2007; Sarji, 2006). Thus, it is the people working behind the scenes that matter the most, not the best production equipment, first class cameras, or powerful editing suites. The Malaysian independent and mainstream film industries differ due to the unique ways in which they are structured and organized. If technology, equipment, and a deficient budget do not act as constraints for an independent film to be successful, then what the film industry needs is a greater understanding between the people working on the production to produce a successful film. The big difference in the successful films being produced by independent and mainstream filmmakers has tended to bypass the question of what makes the independent film industry more successful than mainstream film industry. Therefore, this study on the filmmakers'/crewmembers' communication during the production of a particular film is deemed necessary.

In addition, the success or failure of a film production depends on the filmmakers' behavior and their capacity to carry out the director's and producer's vision of the script and the film collectively. The synergy and creative input among the filmmakers is the main element in a film production (Rea & Irving, 2001). Budgets must be maintained, weather and locations are uncertain, deadlines must be adhered to, and the

coordination of crewmembers involved might foresee twists and turns. We recognize the value of films more when we understand that, in a film production, there is no cinema without compromise. It is crucial to study the communication that occurs among these filmmakers/crewmembers during the production process. Thus, this study will try to investigate the most important communication predictors for successful independent and mainstream films by analyzing the crewmembers' communication and social behavior such as commitment, sharing ideas or experiences, trust, cohesiveness, collaboration, and friendly relationships and their linkage with successful film production.

According to Philipsen (2009), film research normally emphasizes the text and not the production process. Comparatively, educational theory has always been primarily focused on the processes rather than the results of learning. In fact, it is very unfortunate that in media research there is a lack of tradition of highlighting the creators of a film and the making of it. The communication that occurs among the crewmembers during the production process is important in all aspects of filmmaking, building an understanding of the positive competitive advantage of each crewmember. Therefore, this research will focus mainly on the study of filmmaking processes with the assumption of filmmakers' communication as the success determinant in producing successful films.

Table 1.1 shows the number of independent and mainstream films being produced between 2000 and 2013. It can be clearly seen that the independent films only comprise 11.92 percent of the total number of films produced in Malaysia over the past 13 years as compared to mainstream films. However, 24 out of the 46 films received awards at international level as compared to the mainstream, wherein only seven films were identified as international award-winning films out of the 386 mainstream films produced. Economically, Malaysian cinema has been successful, but mainstream films have not reflected the vision and goals of the industry players as a whole (Muthalib, 2011). The complete list of independent and mainstream films being produced between 2000 and 2013 is attached as Appendix A, while the list of successful films is attached as Appendix B.

Based on the statistics from FINAS as illustrated in Table 1.1, though there is an almost 50.0 percent increase in the number of films being produced in 2012 and 2013 compared to previous years, the international recognition received during that period is deemed very low. The data enumerate that independent films only comprise 11.92 percent of the total number of films produced in Malaysia over the past 13 years as compared to mainstream films (Muhammad et al., 2010; Muthalib, 2005; Muthalib, 2013a; KKMM, 2006)

**Table 1.1 Independent and mainstream films produced from year 2000 until 2013**  
(Source: Muhammad et al., 2010; Muthalib, 2005; Muthalib, 2013a; KKMM, 2006)

Year	Independent Film	Mainstream Film	Successful Independent Film	Successful Mainstream Film
2000	-	7	-	1
2001	1	10	-	-
2002	-	10	-	-
2003	2	16	2	-
2004	3	22	3	2
2005	3	19	1	-
2006	6	24	2	1
2007	8	20	3	1
2008	5	26	3	1
2009	5	25	5	1
2010	2	29	2	-
2011	2	42	1	-
2012	2	70	-	-
2013	7	66	2	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>386</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>7</b>

In today's intensely competitive market, especially in the film industry, the key principle of making a successful independent film is based on the assumption that there is a good and strong relationship among the crewmembers of a film production in which they are involved. Independent filmmakers seem to benefit from the freedom of expressing their ideologies and artistic inclinations. According to Diego and Inquirer (2012), the only differences between independent and mainstream film production are the budget and access to theatrical distribution, while the working culture and communication among the filmmakers should remain the same between the independent and mainstream film industry. However, the differences between these two distinct industries has definitely highlighted a gap in terms of crewmembers' social behavior or communication while working on a particular film production that is successful. There are many theories from communication fields that support a group or project success. In the film industry, many studies have suggested and found a positive relationship, which is the main contributing factor in producing successful films. This is achieved through good **collaboration** (Ahmad, 2008; Ferriani et al., 2005; Perumal & Woods, 2007; Schrage, 1995), **cohesiveness** (Beam, 2012; Ferriani et al., 2005; Ross, 2006), **trust** (Blair, Grey, & Randle, 2001; Hosmer, 1995; Lewicki, McAllister, & Bies, 1998; Perumal & Woods, 2007), **commitment**, **friendly relationships** (Bishop, Scott, & Burroughs, 2000; Blair et al., 2001; Perumal & Woods, 2007), and

**sharing ideas or experiences** (Mills & Clark, 1982; Perumal & Woods, 2007; Taylor & Altman, 1987). All these communication factors are extensively studied under social exchange theory (SET), social penetration theory (SPT) and social construction theory (SCT).

In addition, the film sector is becoming more dependent on human communication as the success determinant in the film industry, pervading almost every facet of film work. Effective development and proper planning, which is important for production success, depends entirely on the crewmembers' knowledge and capabilities. Many filmmakers today continue to ignore that the single most important factor for achieving and maintaining competitive success is through investment in its people, and not in technology and state-of-the-art marketing. In fact, the evidence shows that the sources of competitive assets are changing from machines and technologies to how a producer manages his crewmembers.

#### **1.4 Research Questions**

The discussion above provides an understanding that people are the product of their environment, and this study will incorporate the assumptions that look into the crewmembers' communication within their working environment in film production. Specifically, this study will investigate the influential communication factors that occur among crewmembers in successful film production in the Malaysian film industry. The following are the research questions arising from the background studies and researches.

Question 1: What are the communication factors that contribute to successful film production in the Malaysian independent and mainstream film industries?

Question 2: Is there a difference in the communication factors that contribute to successful film production between the independent and the mainstream film industries?

#### **1.5 Objectives of Study**

The general objective of this research is to identify the communication factors that contribute to successful film production in the independent and mainstream film industries in Malaysia.

Specific objectives are:

1. To identify the communication factors that contribute to successful film production in the independent film industry in Malaysia.
2. To identify the communication factors that contribute to successful film production in the mainstream film industry in Malaysia.
3. To compare the communication factors that contribute to successful film production in the independent and mainstream film industries in Malaysia.

## 1.6 Significance of Study

The creative industries in Malaysia are still in the developing stage. Since the research is focused on the Malaysian film industry, the findings of the research will ultimately add value to the development of the cinema landscape in Malaysia. Furthermore, filmmakers from the independent and mainstream film industries must make the necessary preparations before commencing film production to ensure that the film being produced is able to compete internationally. Based on the statistics from FINAS, though there is an almost 50.0 percent increase in the number of films being produced in 2012 and 2013 as compared to previous years, but the international recognition received during that period is deemed very low (KKMM, 2006; Muthalib, 2013). Therefore, the results derived from this study will strive to a certain degree to improve understanding of the significant factors that will probably shape the quality of production in the film industry. Besides that, research of this type is also required for the production companies or film studios, specifically for the film producers, to have a better understanding on their crewmembers' behavior that will help them in producing a successful film.

Secondly, this research adds value to the body of knowledge pertaining to crewmembers' communication in a film production. In fact, very few researches focus on the creators of a film and the making of it. Traditionally, there is very little organizational research that is related to creative industries (Blair et al., 2001; Jones & Kirsch, 2004; Starkey & Barnatt, 2000). Though literature on communication processes is wide, this research will add value to the Malaysian film industry context particularly from the perspective of understanding what makes independent filmmakers more successful and established in such a short timeframe as compared to mainstream filmmakers. Thus, this research makes a valuable contribution to communication studies focusing on the film industry. Ultimately, the comprehensive review of literature and the integration of the findings from the data collected in this study provide clarification with regard to significant contributions to producing successful films, particularly applied to the Malaysian film industry.

Finally, there is value in its practical importance. A study such as this represents a small step in the research to assess filmmakers' communication; it may have significant implications for film schools that focus on film and communication studies, as well as for film producers and practitioners in the industry. The outcomes of this research may provide academic institutions, film studios, and film production companies with a better understanding of how to manage a film production to make it work better and may impact on the filmmakers/crewmembers in producing quality films. Besides that, it also gives a solution to film producers, especially those who are most concerned about the social problems that emerge during film production. An understanding of such problems may help in achieving greater production harmony and, ultimately, greater productivity and efficiency. The research findings may provide information to guide academics, film students, filmmakers, and researchers in the efficacy of producing successful films, and may have heuristic value for future research.



## **1.7 Scope of Study**

This research focuses on successful independent and mainstream films in Malaysia. The domain of this research study will be concentrated on the communication factors among filmmakers in Malaysia that influence the success of a particular film project. The communication factors will be assessed via social exchange theory (SET), social penetration theory (SPT), and social construction theory (SCT). Amongst the many forms of exchange, there are two common forms that have attracted the most attention. One form is described as a more explicit, formal, carefully negotiated, and contractual type of association; meanwhile, the other form is described as a less formal, more tacit type of exchange based on a significant relational connection and the norm of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960). These two forms are labeled 'negotiated' and 'reciprocal' exchange by Cropanzano and Mitchell (2005), Flynn (2005) and Molm (2003). The key focus of this study is on the reciprocal exchange, since the main focus of the study is related to the social behavior or communication of the crewmembers working on a film production.

Since the study focuses only on successful films in both the independent and the mainstream film industry, it will be conducted only on films that have won at least one international award. Successful films will be selected based only on international awards recognition received and data will be gathered from this population group of independent and mainstream films. This is due to the fact that, according to Muthalib (2005), independent digitally shot films were excluded from the 18th Malaysian Film Festival, claiming to have 'Era Globalisasi' as its 2005 theme. Ironically, the globalization era only mainstream films qualified for inclusion in the national film award nominations.

## **1.8 Organization of Thesis**

This research is arranged into five chapters as described below.

Chapter One begins with an introduction to the history of the Malaysian film industry, specifically the Malaysian independent and mainstream film industries. Following that, studies on successful films in the independent industry compared to the mainstream film industry are analyzed in the problem statement. The research questions and objectives and the significance of the research are also outlined. Consequently, this chapter sets the structure for the rest of the study.

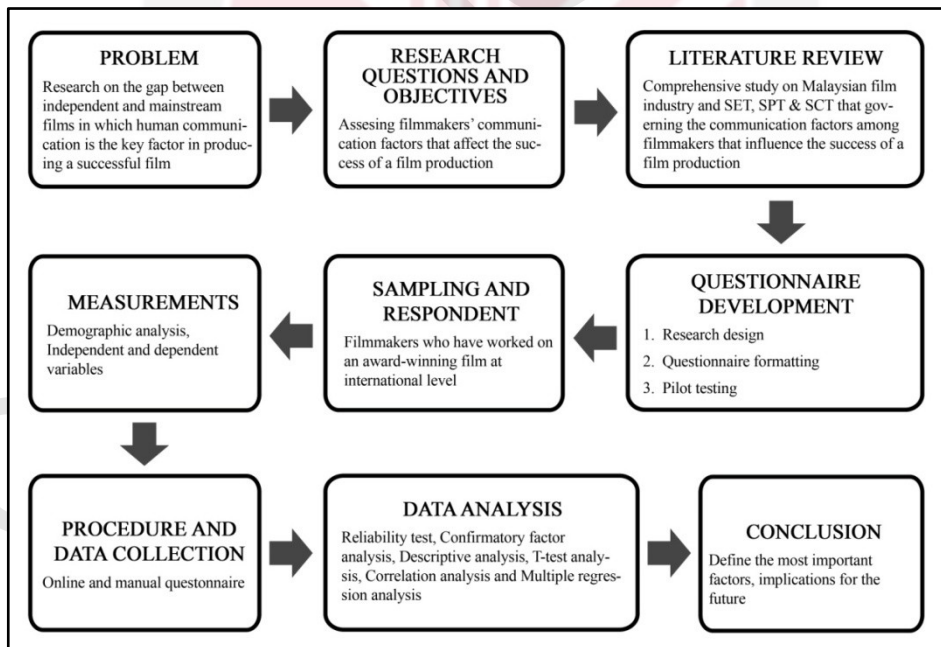
In order to obtain a better insight into the research, Chapter Two consists of a literature review that explains the theoretical background of the study. A comprehensive review and analysis are conducted based on related literature on the Malaysian independent and mainstream film industries, success measures in the film industry, and communication factors, based on social exchange theory (SET), social penetration theory (SPT), and social construction theory (SCT), and thus the research framework and hypotheses are developed.

Chapter Three presents the overall process, or the research methodology on how this study is conducted. It illustrates the research design and describes the sample respondents to be included in the study. In addition, it provides a brief explanation of the data collection method for the questionnaire development for the study and presents the appropriate statistical tools to be used for the data analysis. In order to verify that the measures developed are reasonably good, the reliability and validity are also assessed.

Chapter Four reports the findings obtained and describes the outcomes of the study, including cross-tabulation for the purpose of finding possible communication factors among the crewmembers, descriptive analysis of all the variables, t-test analysis to examine the comparison between both industries, correlation analysis to test the association between the variables, and multiple regression analysis to identify the influencing independent variables toward the dependent variable.

Chapter Five presents an assessment of the research objectives and discusses the recommendation, the limitations, and suggestions for possible future research that can be useful, along with its contribution to foster better action to produce more successful films. Last but not least, it offers a conclusion to the overall study. Figure 1.2 presents the overall research structure of this study.

Finally, the bibliography and appendices in this thesis support the main contents of the chapters and include the survey instrument, complete list of successful films, etc.



**Figure 1.2 Research Structure**

## 1.9 Summary

This chapter gives some background context for the Malaysian film industry, specifically the independent and mainstream film industries, and the reasons that it is important to understand the crewmembers' communication and social behavior. In this globalized era, filmmakers' communication while working on a film production is important in order to produce a successful film. Understanding the problems that can arise from this communication process among filmmakers is crucially important. Hence, this highlights the need for this study to investigate the possible communication factors affecting crewmembers while working on a film production. This chapter also presents the details of the study, outlining the research questions and objectives, the significance, and the scope of the study.



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