



Pedro Penduko, Filipino Comic Superhero: comparative studies between comic and screen adaptation

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Article's information	ABSTRAK
History:	Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk membandingkan komik Filipina dari adaptasi filmnya. Secara khusus, ini mengeksplorasi bentuk dan konten dalam Pedro Penduko (1954) dan adaptasi film, Pedro Penduko, Episode II: The Return of the Comeback (2000) menggunakan Pendekatan Formalistik dalam kritik sastra. Studi tersebut menyoroti elemen-elemen seperti karakter, simbol, dan tema. Singkatnya, karakter dalam komik tersebut mencontohkan identitas orang Filipina. Namun, versi filmnya memberikan kelegaan komik. Melihat simbol-simbolnya, komik tersebut menggunakan jimat yang umum digunakan dalam budaya Filipina. Film, di sisi lain, menampilkan sarana promosi yang ajaib. Tema dalam komik berkisah tentang isu-isu penting seperti identitas dan budaya, sedangkan film menyangkut kepentingan diri sendiri. Diketahui bahwa bentuk komik berkontribusi pada rasa seni Filipina yang luar biasa. Namun, adaptasi filmnya kurang memiliki kualitas yang sama. Tuntutan akan keluaran visual yang signifikan datang dari penonton yang berharap untuk melihat seni visual yang tidak hanya merupakan karya seni yang menguntungkan tetapi juga relevan secara sosial dan mengarah pada promosi nasionalisme.
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Komik	This study intended to compare Filipino <i>komiks</i> from its film adaptation. In particular, it explores the form and content in <i>Pedro Penduko</i> (1954) and the film adaptation, <i>Pedro Penduko, Episode II: The Return of the Comeback</i> (2000) using the Formalistic Approach in literary criticism. The study highlights the elements such as characters, symbols, and themes. In brief, the characters in the <i>komiks</i> exemplify Filipino identity. However, the film version provides comic relief. Looking at symbols, the <i>komiks</i> used an amulet common to Filipino culture. The film, on the other hand, showcases a magical promotional vehicle. The theme in the <i>komiks</i> is concerned with issues as noteworthy as identity and culture, while the film spectacles self-interest. It was discovered that the <i>komiks</i> form contributes to a great sense of Filipino art. However, its film adaptation lacks the same qualities. The demand for significant visual outputs come from an audience who hope to see visual arts that are not just profitable works of art but are socially relevant and geared towards the promotion of nationalism.
Komersial	
Film	
Formalisme	
Seni Visual	
Key word:	
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Introduction

People have told stories with pictures for thousands of years. Think of cave drawings as an example. Cave drawings use pictures to tell a story. In today's pop culture, this sequential art associated with text (Tatalovic, 2009) simply defines as comics. Another definition about comic is a picture book that tells about many stories, which have texts to describe the roles meant to do (Rauf & Hidayat, 2016). Comics is a rudimentary type of film. However, the current rise of comics movie adaptations is used as a commercialized production of visual media which makes the traditional comic book rarely appreciated by the mainstream public. This paper problematizes the emasculation effect whereby film adaptations only cater to high aspects of characterizations for commercial reasons and refuse to acknowledge serious themes present in the original art form.

Congruently, comics are regarded as marketing stereotypes. Film creators and other media tend to follow the commercial trend which shows their unwillingness to handle complex characterizations (Meier, 2015). Hardly a comic book character appears today without this aim in mind, and the trend is effectively pulling down the readership. Mainstream audiences, seeing only the bastardized movie version of a comics character, have their preconceptions confirmed, thus inhibiting their desire to consider picking up the original work (Chung, 1998).

In the international scene, the most acclaimed animated series *Avatar: The Last Airbender* was made into a live-action film. The series did not come from comics but is considered a cross between anime and cartoon from the imaginations of DiMartino and Knoietzko for Nickelodeon. In Ebert's (2010) review of the film, *The Last Airbender*, he described it as an agonizing experience. The reasons for the bad rating include but are limited to the atrocious special effects, the miscalculation of having a whitewashed cast, and the incomprehensible plot. These show an unrecognizable interpretation of the original narrative that resulted in a fiasco.

In the Philippines, various narratives revolve around a central character, the superhero, who undertakes several adventures in pursuit of a mission or a task. At the late 1990s until the present, television has taken advantage of the enduring popularity of the superhero komiks to entice the public, including the younger generation, to watch the numerous teleserye (television series) on primetime television. The likes of Darna, Dyesebel, Captain Barbell, Lastikman, Panday, Pedro Penduko, Bakekang, Kampanerang Kuba, Palos, and Totoy Bato, among others, are alive and well, kicking, flying, fighting villains, and saving victims trapped in lifethreatening situations (Reyes, 2009). One of these superhero is Captain Barbell. It first appeared in *Pinoy Komiks Magasin* in 1963. Unfortunately, the movie version in 2003 as it appeared to be was used as a political campaign as the main character was played by an actor turned politician. Another marketing strategy unfolded when the komiks transformed into a Television series in 2006. According to Beatty (2002), the storyline of the TV series was evidently imported copying from a foreign TV series, Smallville which premiered in 2001. Clearly, this mirrored the complex series of transformations that Philippine society has undergone (Reyes, 1997).

(Javier, 2017) said similar things that the Filipino films of the 2000s do not have the same luxury of history to build upon. They were all introducing new characters. Even the films with characters that had appeared before, Captain Barbell, Lastikman, and Super Inday and the Golden Bibe, were all reboots. As a result, all of these movies provide origin stories for their characters.

Indeed, it is a tedious undertaking to capture that elusive "komiks" imagination. Given the commercial aspect of most Filipino komiks, film and television series creators must feature komiks stories with audience accessibility in mind while incorporating themes that are socially relevant (Flores, 2005). Hopefully, the concepts and assumptions about komiks-to-film adaptation would help conceptualize the Filipino film adaptation theory (Arriola, 2018).

The resurgence in popularity of komiks time and again is notably due to its mainstream adaptations. The only concern is as to how the content is depicted as it must reflect traditional and popular Filipino culture. The researcher applied Formalist Criticism (Gillespie, 2010) in the comparative analysis of *Pedro Penduko* by Francisco Coching (1945) and *Pedro Penduko, Episode II: The Return of the Comeback film* (2000) to look at issues in content depiction and reveal differences between the komiks and the film in terms of characters, symbols, and themes.

Method

The researcher employed a qualitative-descriptive method in this study. The selected komiks, *Pedro Penduko* (Liwaway Magazine) by Francisco Coching Jr. and its film adaptation, *Pedro Penduko: The Return of the Comeback* (2000) by Erik Matti were scrutinized using a Formalistic approach in literary criticism. Formalism can be thought of as an approach to literary criticism that focuses on how narratives are made compelling, and hence powerful (Morrell, 2010). The formalist critic views work as a timeless aesthetic object (Rahayu, 2019). The elements such as characters, symbols, and themes were explored further for comparison. Also, social issues featured in the works were included to further emphasize the significance of creating high-quality adaptations.

The researcher began by gathering the primary sources, the serialized novel in komiks form, and then selected which film adaptation to compare it with. Then, the researcher read and watched both media in order to examine the form and content. After that, the researcher identified the research problem based on interest and relevance. Then the researcher chose an approach to apply in the study. Lastly, the researcher gathered a sufficient amount of data from reliable sources to improve the analysis and show it by way of tabular data presentation.

Results and Discussion

Characters

In *Pedro Penduko Komiks* (1954), Pedro Penduko is a simple, carefree country boy who can always be counted on to lend a hand to his neighbors. In the movie, Pedro Penduko starring Janno Gibbs, leaves the province to be a movie star. However, he meets a tribe leader of a distant land threatened by imminent destruction. The

single similarity of the characters regardless of medium is their deep sympathy for the plight of the powerless. They are both heroes of the people.

The differences in the ways the main characters interact with the various components of their world are dependent on their motivations. In the original *komiks*, Pedro Penduko finds courage in the faith of their people. Coching drew the heroic everyman: the folk hero who rose up from obscurity in the province or tribe to save the day for everyone. While in *Pedro Penduko, The Return of the Comeback* (2000), Pedro is tricked into doing the job in hilarious ways.

Tabel 1. Form and Content

Pedro Penduko	Characters	
	Similarities	Differences
Komiks	Hero	Filipino identity
Film	Hero	Comic relief

*comparison between komiks and film

Symbols

In the world of comics, the character's gears say as much about him or her as the text. In the *komiks*, the amulet is used to defeat Pedro's enemies, while in the film, Pedro's magic truck is used for travel purposes. The only similarity between the two symbols is both are used to help Pedro defeat evil.

In the original source or *komiks* version, the amulet is an ancient necklace is discovered in one of Pedro's trips as a treasure hunter. The ancient necklace turns out to be the amulet that will give him extraordinary powers. However, the film uses the LBC vehicle as a promotional device that works as a dimensional travel delivery.

Tabel 2. Form and Content

Pedro Penduko	Symbols	
	Similarities	Differences
Komiks	Works to defeat evil	Cultural amulet
Film	Works to defeat evil	Promotional vehicle (LBC truck)

*comparison between komiks and film

Themes

The relevance of stories depends on how themes are heavily portrayed and how they are received. Themes help to further investigate the issues for understanding literature in today's global society. The central idea of the story is the recurring subject matter the reader encounters. In *Pedro Penduko komiks* and film adaptation, the themes revolve around good versus evil. The thesis statement for the *komiks* is "Without compassion, there can be no justice." On the other hand, the film's thesis statement is "A real hero risks his/her own life (career) to help others." It is evident that the film's theme lacks depth.

In *Pedro Penduko*, Francisco Coching brings to popular consciousness the issues concerning identity. He also discussed the concept of the hero which resonates through Pedro Penduko. Pedro Penduko is a synthesized image and story informing Philippine folk and popular imagination of culture. In the film, it is clear that Pedro always wanted to fulfill an ambition (to become a movie actor). Even the most ordinary men have dreams. This reflects individual desire. Yet, circumstances (duty to protect the helpless) hinder him from achieving his goal.

Tabel 3. Form and Content

Pedro Penduko	Themes	
	Similarities	Differences
Komiks	Good vs. Evil	Identity and culture
Film	Good vs. Evil	Self-interest

*comparison between komiks and film

Conclusions

After a thorough analysis of the *komiks* and its film adaptation, the researcher came up with the following conclusions:

The form and content of the *komiks* were not completely similar to the film adaptation. Moreover, the latter retold stories that feature lousy characters, vague symbols, and mediocre themes. As a result, the adaptation lacks depth. Therefore, the original lost its value in the adaptation. Moreover, the relevant issues portrayed in the *komiks* were also not incorporated in the film adaptation. The issues presented in the mainstream media were light

topics that do not equate to bigger, more important issues such as a sense of nationhood and preservation of culture. Hence, the transformation of the narrative lacks the quality of content necessary to bridge the message across media.

The researcher concludes the importance of creating entertainment that merges modern sensibilities with Filipino culture and heritage. What the visual audience need is a distinctly rich content with the potential to appeal both to consumers of pop culture and those who fancy themselves as sophisticated and academic.

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