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Bernardo Versus Lustre: A Morena Showdown

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To my parents, I thank you but most of all congratulations because you have just produced your first graduate. You are now done from supporting your daughter's education.

DEDICATION

This thesis is not dedicated to
any person in particular

ABSTRACT

Pulanco, Miriam Therese P. (n.d.). *Bernardo Versus Lustre: A Morena Showdown*, Unpublished Undergraduate Thesis, University of the Philippines College of Mass Communication.

This work seeks to investigate whether an artist's preconceived image can dictate his or her future within the entertainment industry or what has been called the *showbiz* industry. The subject of this study is the unspoken rivalry between two of the most sought after stars of this generation, namely Nadine Lustre and Kathryn Bernardo and how despite their *morena* complexion, both have thrived in an industry dominantly populated by fair beauties. A big factor that may affect this thesis is that the audience concerned are millennials. With this in mind, the dynamics of the image of both actresses' in consideration to their audience is different if situated in a more conservative age.

A timeline of the careers of both actresses will be examined then compared from each other afterwards. Factors such as the characters they portray in their movies and *teleseryes*, relationship with their screen partner, gross income and ratings of their movies and *teleseryes* and their interviews and statements will also be examined.

This thesis will be guided by Gilles Deleuze's idea of *dividuality*.

Keywords: colorism, tropes, audience reception, *dividuality*

ABSTRAKT

Pulanco, Miriam Therese P. (n.d.). *Bernardo Versus Lustre: A Morena Showdown*, Unpublished Undergraduate Thesis, University of the Philippines College of Mass Communication.

Ang tesis na ito ay naglalayon na suriin kung ang *preconceived image* ng isang artista ay makakapagdikta sa kung ano ang magiging takbo ng karera nito sa loob ng industriya. Ang pag-aaral na ito ay tungkol sa patagong pagtutunggali ng dalawa sa mga pinakasikat na babaeng artista ng henerasyon ngayon na si Nadine Lustre at Kathryn Bernardo, na sa kabila ng kanilang kutis morena ay nakapasok sa industriya kung saan mas pinapahalagahan ang kutis na maputi. Ang tesis na ito ay inilalagay sa panahon na ang malaking bahagdan ng mga tagapanood ay mga *millennials*. Ibig sabihin lamang nito ay iba ang magiging dinamika ng imahe ng dalawang artista kung isasaalang-alang rin ang pagtanggap ng kanilang mga tagapanood at inilagay sa mas konserbatibong panahon.

Susuriin ang karera ng dalawang artista at ipaghahambing sa isa't isa. Titignan rin ang mga karakter na kanilang ginagampanan sa kanilang mga pelikula at teleserye, relasyon kasama ng kanilang screen partner, tagumpay ng kanilang mga pelikula at mga teleserye at ang kaniang mga interview at pananaw sa buhay.

Ang pag-aaral na ito ay gagabayan ng ideya ng *dividuality* ni Gilles Deleuze.

Keywords: colorism, tropes, audience reception, *dividuality*

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. The *Showbiz* Industry

The Philippine *showbiz* industry has always had connections with American companies (Radio Online Now, 2011). Just the fact that the roots of our first broadcasting companies are American foreshadows the dynamics within the industry. In addition to that, we were colonized by Americans which caused the Philippine society to adapt a colonial mentality. Philippine society favored people who fit the mold of foreigners and this transcends to the stars who were being discovered back then. Even our modern day commercials contain messages that tell audience that white is more beautiful. In an interview of one of the subjects, Nadine Lustre, she admits of being insecure of her skin color. She admits of wanting to be mestiza just because people with fair skin get more projects than her (ABS-CBN Entertainment, 2018). This is the mentality that affects not only the industry but Philippine society as a whole.

So much can be criticized of the industry. First the unfair chances being given to people based on how much foreign they look, next the branding of a star which they need to uphold however different it is from who they are off-camera. This is where dividuality plays out. To explain it briefly, dividuality is the idea that a person can be different when situated in different systems.

The artists we see on our television screens are all human. Yes, some conform and become puppets of the industry but some try to remain genuine and true to who they are

as people. There are artists that take up sexy roles but in real life are really conservative. It really is just a challenge for an artist to not lose sight of who they are and to know how to compartmentalize their star persona from their regular human persona.

This thesis attempts to tackle these two mentioned issues of our contemporary Philippine *showbiz* industry.

B. Statement of the Problem

This paper investigates how artists' image relates with the acceptance of their audiences. The subject of this study is the unspoken rivalry between two of the most sought after stars of this generation, namely Nadine Lustre and Kathryn Bernardo and how despite their *morena* complexion, both have garnered a solid fan base in the middle of an industry where people with fair skin reign and are seen as superior. These fan bases that formed have catapulted them to stardom and made each other maintain their spot in the limelight.

Research Objectives

To answer the research problem, this study will be guided by these objectives:

1. To discern the on-cam and off-cam life of the research subjects which are Kathryn Bernardo and Nadine Lustre.
2. To create a timeline of the careers of both research subjects for comparison.

3. To analyze Kathryn Bernardo and Nadine Lustre as texts, looking into their ideals, principles and beliefs in life.
4. To know the reason behind the difference of the progress of both actresses' careers; and
5. To form a link between the actions of both actresses with the reception of their audiences and their status in the industry.

C. Scope and limitations

There are different ways for a person to be able to enter the *showbiz* industry. Rules are not constant; they do not apply for all the artists that we see on our television screens. The process and journey in which Liza Soberano, Sophia Andres, Ylona Garcia and other big names are different from the one experienced by Kathryn Bernardo and Nadine Lustre. Same goes that the experience of a female artist is different from the experience of a male artist's rise to fame.

With this said, the researcher has chosen the two actresses because they are part of the same trope which the researcher has tagged as the "Filipina beauty" or "morena beauty" in an industry populated by fair-skinned and foreign-looking individuals. In addition, amidst the controversy of one copying the other and vice-versa when it comes to style, acting or projects selected, both were able to maintain their star status and were able to even push for a higher position in the hierarchy of the stars.

Philippine society is evolving and being more critical to issues arising within the *showbiz* industry. This thesis will try to examine the attitude of Philippine society towards artists by keeping their “*morena* beauty” quality as the control variable. There is also no denying that the researcher has chosen their subjects because of their resemblance to each other, meaning the difference of their image really comes from their personalities and less on how they appear physically.

D. Significance of the Study

In the Philippines, a country wherein fair-skin is glorified, it is a wonder that Bernardo and Lustre were able to penetrate and dominate the *showbiz* industry amidst their *morena* complexion. This thesis will examine what opened that opportunity for both actresses and what keeps them in their positions. Someday, if an aspiring actress comes across this thesis, it may be of help.

Along with examining their gateway to stardom, this thesis acknowledges that there are a lot of factors coming into play into both actresses’ fame and that even if both actresses are of the same trope, they are different enough from each other. Their differences are the things that dictate their position in the industry and manipulate the reception of the audience.

To add, a big part of their fans is part of the millennial generation. A millennial, based on common understanding is a person born from the 1900s until 2002. The millennial generation is said to be composed of people who are naturally more liberated

compared to their progenitors. This said, this thesis also attempts to investigate what appeals to the millennial audience. As pointed out in the previous section, Philippine society is keeping up with times. The whole world is being more accepting of liberated views and ideals and so is our country. You could observe this on the themes of the films and *teleseryes* that are being produced and are now allowed to be shown on our screens and how people react to these said films and *teleseryes*. Gone are the days that controversial themes are being treated taboo and prohibited as central topics of conversation.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Deleuze (1992), in his essay “Postscript on the Societies of Control,” has diverged from the belief that systems have only one designated purpose and that there is no convergence when it comes to the laws of each system. To explain further, in his essay he examines Foucault’s (1995) belief on *disciplinary societies* wherein they operate in organizing major sites of confinement. An individual travels to and from the said sites and becomes a person completely different from the person prior to his/her current location. Deleuze coined the term *dividuality*, which states that an individual can in fact be divided into different personas. A person may act differently when situated in different sites but how he acts in the said sites are part of the totality of who he/she actually is. This theory supports the argument that an artist is not just what the audience make of them. Artists, just like normal people have different facets and cannot be boxed in a stereotype by their audience. They may start to be seen as actors but off-camera, they have a different life and a different role they play as themselves.

Narrative identity, is a way an individual forms his/her identity by integrating their experiences into a story that evolves, reconstructing his/her own past and imagining his/her future (McAdams & McLean, 2013). However, this narrative identity is not solely the works of the individual himself/herself. The researcher believes that social factors play into the picture. A person may manipulate the image he projects because of societal pressure. A person knows who he/she is, what he/she feels, what he/she wants and other internal behavior that only he/she has access. However, this self-perception can be altered when external factors come into play (Bem, 1972). This, is the reason why actors

conform to the image expected from them by their audience because that image sells. The more fans they satisfy, the more projects they are given, which becomes more money to make. Fame and money are among the top reasons why the stars lose themselves and why, after being in the spotlight for quite some time, they act more distant to the people surrounding them.

III. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The researcher has come across several literature that have previously studied personal narrative. These literature give insights that is applicable to the study being tackled in this thesis. The literature collected would be able to supplement and support the arguments of this study.

On the other hand, it is acknowledged that within the *showbiz* industry there is colorism which caused the inclusion of literature on the subject just to explain what it is about. A little on tropes is included to explain the decision of grouping the two subjects together.

A. Narratives and Identity

There has been a lot of literature in the field of psychology that tackles identity and its relation to an individual's narrative. Bem (1972) tackles the self-perception of an individual. As mentioned earlier, in his study he believes that a person knows who they are but this identity may be manipulated by external factors may it be consciously or unconsciously done.

In one of McAdams'(2001) papers, he encapsulates what a life story is, "Life stories are psychosocial constructions, co-authored by the person himself or herself and the cultural context within which that person's life is embedded and given meaning" (p.101). A person's identity is also built from his own cultural context. In a different

angle, Herbert Blumer (1966) explains the thoughts of his mentor George Herbert Mead. Mead, even if he did not publish his theory on *symbolic interactionism*, is acknowledged for it. In this school of thought it is believed that a person creates meaning through oral interactions and exchange of symbols. Blumer gave a treatment on how to approach studies that plan to pursue a study using symbolic interactionism. This is kept in mind to understand the decisions the subjects chose for their career and also to acknowledge that it is also the society today that influenced their principles.

On this list, Roland Barthes's (1966) is included for his introduction of structural analysis of narratives. Barthes has provided a way on what to look at and what to look for when scrutinizing the elements of a narrative, may it be oral or written. He also pointed out that the character is the participant of their own narrative and not just the subject of it. This means that one has the hand in constructing their own narrative as to compared to believe that how one person is viewed is measly the product of his/her everyday life.

B. Colorism

Colorism is the prejudice and discrimination towards different skin colors within a particular race (Jones, 2000). Even after passing laws on discrimination, the industry still practices this kind of mind-set. In the end no one can be blamed but society itself because it is not just the industry that chooses who to be famous but the satisfaction of the audience and the need of the project.

Jeffrienne Wilder (2010) pointed out in one of his journals that during the 1960s, there came a movement that stated, “Black is beautiful.” This empowered the black community to be comfortable with their own natural being. The youth used this as a mantra to embrace their black color and natural hair. This proves that colorism can be abolished if only the people, as a society, would actively accept the natural skin color they are born with and be proud of the beauty of the *moreno* race.

C. Media Trope

If the definition of “media trope” is googled, it would be described as a commonplace or convention — an idiom — particular to the medium in question (Murray, 2009). To explain this we can look at the instances when a reporter would know right away how to handle certain news just by getting a glimpse of the little details. Meaning, there are things that could grouped together that are similar to each other. Using little things one can build an imagery of a certain subject which one can now call a trope. This thesis tackles on the “Filipina Beauty Trope.” The researcher has pieced together this trope as a woman who has *morena* complexion. Given that the Philippines is traditional when it comes to its views on women, the Filipina Beauty Trope also encapsulates what a Filipina is expected to be like, conservative and “proper.”

Now that all the concepts important to this study have been discussed we now move to the next chapter wherein the means of data gathering is dissected.

IV. RESEARCH DESIGN

A. Methodology and Methods

This study employed a qualitative approach by means of a case study. The researcher chose this methodology and method because the researcher was after an in-depth examination of the on-cam and off-cam lives of the subjects. Two individuals were the focus of this study so that their narratives that were obtained through social media, television, film and by word of mouth can be extensively scrutinized and compared with each other.

Both Bernardo's and Lustre's development as actresses were observed by watching the movies where they have been casted for the main role. For both actresses, the researcher started to watch each of their solo debut movies with their respective current leading men. This way many birds were hit with one stone by observing not only their development in acting and the reception of audiences towards their film by looking at the ratings and movie reviews but also the dynamics they have built with their own leading men and the chemistry they have concocted after being paired for a long time. Bernardo's and Lustre's love teams have a great impact on their audiences because a big part of their success can be credited to their love teams just because their status skyrocketed after being part of a loveteam.

Interviews encountered online were viewed for this study. The names of the subjects of this research were typed on the search bar of *youtube.com* to view the top

results. Snowball sampling was employed to select the other videos that will be part of the study. This way the on-camera images of the subjects were constructed by watching all their existing official videos.

To have an idea on what their audiences think of them, ethnographic methodology was employed by reading online comments and blogs about both actresses that can be found online.

After both individuals are analyzed on their own, a comparative analysis was done to confirm the hypothesis that even after being part of the same trope within the *showbiz* industry, one can still diverge from that prejudice and build her own image to her own advantage and that Philippine society did evolve to a more liberated one.

B. Unit(s) of Analysis and Units of Observation

The researcher chose the actress to be the unit of analysis. To be more specific, two were chosen, namely Kathryn Bernardo and Nadine Lustre, to be studied for this research. Through them their aesthetic and appearance was observed to see their appeal to their audience.

Digging deeper, the researcher looked into their principles, ideals, and beliefs that were induced from their interview videos that are posted online and shown on television, and from the projects that they chose to star. Another unit is the films wherein their development as actresses was observed. It is acknowledged that an artist's acting skills is

one of the factors that may manipulate the opinion of their audiences. Through these videos their social interactions with their loveteam partners were also observed.

C. Sampling

Three sampling techniques will be utilized, purposive sampling, consecutive sampling and snowball sampling. Purposive sampling is used in selecting the subjects. They were chosen because of their *morena* complexion which is the dominant skin color in the Philippines but a minority in the *showbiz* industry. Almost all artists succumb to beauty standards imposed on us by society that they take glutathione shots to become whiter.

For the videos watched to form an understanding on the subjects, consecutive sampling was used. This is because there are a lot of existing videos of both of the subjects that it is hard to limit the timeframe or the number of videos that are watched for this research.

To have a more visual look into the unit(s) of analysis, units of observation and sampling, a table is provided on the next page.

Table 1: *Unit of Analysis, Units of Observation and Sampling*

Unit of Analysis	Units of Observation	Sampling Frame	Sampling	Sample
Actress	narrative identity	the whole life story of the subject.	purposive sampling	The life story that will be included in this research must start the moment that the subject has entered the <i>showbiz</i> industry.
	aesthetic/physical appearance	the body	purposive sampling	Everything that is exposed to the public eye with regards to both of the subjects' body is part of the sample. Even the way they dress is part of the sample.
film	acting of actress	The whole movie	Purposive sampling	Screen time of Bernardo or Lustre.
	ratings	Ratings of all shows	Purposive sampling	Ratings of selected shows
Love team	Interactions and chemistry	All interactions made public may be on-cam or off-cam	Consecutive sampling	Interactions made starting with their first project with a love team.

V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Kathryn Bernardo

The earlier to rise to fame within the *showbiz* industry between the two subjects is Kathryn Chandria Bernardo. In the year of 2003, Bernardo started to grace the television screens as the younger version of various artists in *teleseryes* and films. She also joined the ensemble cast of *Goin' Bulilit*, a children's comedy show produced by her home station, ABS-CBN. Bernardo then gained recognition for her iconic role as Mara in the 2010 remake of the hit *teleserye*, *Mara Clara*. She was praised for her acting prowess that landed her a feature film together with her co-star Mara Schnitska, also known by her screen name, Julia Montes.

The two young stars were then constantly compared and pitted against each other by the audience having been put in the spotlight at the same time. This did not hinder the friendship of the two stars off-camera. Bernardo and Montes became a tag team in almost all shows that it became a given that wherever Bernardo was, whether it be an interview, a movie or a mall show, Montes would also be present. This streak came to an end when the both were casted into an ensemble afternoon teen show, *Growing Up*. In the show, both were paired up with fellow teen actors; Montes with the same leading man she was paired up with in *Mara Clara*, while Bernardo with a new-comer then but at present long time love team and rumored real life boyfriend, Daniel Padilla.

Bernardo and Padilla were lucky to be able to capture the hearts of the audience at their first attempt of being paired together. Their screen debut together birthed one of the most sought after loveteam of this generation, KathNiel. Their chemistry was undeniably strong that ABS-CBN started to bank on their loveteam by lining up projects for the pair whether film or television. *Growing Up* hasn't even stopped airing; the pair was already filming their first primetime *teleserye* together. *Princess and I* gained attention with a pilot episode rated at 31.7%, peak episode at 40.6% and finale episode at 38.1% based on Kantar Media (Kantar Media, 2014).

The Bernardo and Padilla tandem was on a roll as projects continued to flood in. Right after *Princess and I*, production for their first solo film went on its way and was shown in theatres by the month of March. There was no rest for the two when they were then given another *teleserye* that was also aired on primetime. This could be pointed out as the peak of their careers.

KathNiel's flight was high from the beginning. It is normal to have bashers left and right when you are in a position in which you can be judged by the public eye. First it was Padilla who was thrown with issues, him being accused of being a playboy and arrogant since he was from the clan of the Padillas but Bernardo was quick to defend her partner (Garcia, 2012). This strengthened the *kilig* felt by their fans, thinking that there was a chance for their favorite love team to actually be together in real life. While Bernardo and Padilla were having their high time, something else was brewing in the background. Another loveteam was about to make their entrance.

B. Nadine Lustre

It is not known publicly that it was Nadine Lustre who first took the chance in becoming an actress before Bernardo. It was the year of 2002 when Lustre first appeared on *Storyland*, a children's oriented show produced by CNN and on 2005 she started to host *Disney Channel On Assignment*. These stints did not guarantee Lustre's ticket to fame however, this did not stop her from reaching her dreams. She pushed further and was eventually given a spot in an all-girl group *Pop Girls*. Even then, her name was not known to public. She was unfortunate then because she didn't get the break that she deserved.

Diary ng Panget (DNP) was her gateway to fame. The movie garnered attention because it is based on a top selling novel that originated from an electronic reading app, *Wattpad*. In an interview in a magazine show broadcast on ABS-CBN, Lustre confessed that she sees the movie as her second chance to be part of the *showbiz* industry ("Why Nadine considers," 2015). She was in luck to be casted with James Reid, an actor in the same position as her, looking for his chance for a break, because instantly the audience saw their chemistry. It is during this period that audiences started to notice Lustre's resemblance to Bernardo, garnering both fans and bashers alike. This did not hinder Lustre to embark on more projects claiming that the comparison only flatters her (ABS-CBN Entertainment, 2014). She said that she sees this as a good thing because through the comparison, she is gaining more attention (Showbiz Vids, 2014).

Lustre filmed two more novels turned into movies with Reid along with other projects. In the year of 2015, the pair was offered to play the main roles of the *teleserye*, *On the Wings of Love* (OTWOL). This can be argued as the project that proved the strengths of

Lustre and Reid as a loveteam and as individuals and really marked the pair on everyone's maps. It was during the airing of OTWOL that the ship name for Lustre and Reid was birthed, JaDine. The ratings of OTWOL remained high and stable but the real boom of the show was through TFC subscriptions. OTWOL caught attention because of its OFW theme (Aura E-Magazine, 2015). The show was constantly trending on *Twitter* not just here in the Philippines but worldwide. Spread of OTWOL fever was incurable and unstoppable. Merchandise were produced and JaDine became stronger in the industry. The loveteam did not go to any other way but up.

C. Bernardo Vs. Lustre

Figure 1. *Bernardo Vs. Lustre*



Bernardo and Lustre side-by-side sporting similar looks

Lustre first gained attention during the peak of Bernardo's career. The fans of Bernardo were quick to bash the new face accusing her of copying their idol and trying to

use JaDine to replace their golden love team, KathNiel. The same face shape, the same skin color and the same preppy character being portrayed was the spark of this rivalry. Looking at Lustre, you could see her resemblance with Bernardo and could understand the roots of the hate from the Bernardo supporters. Being the late-comer in the lime light, it is her who receives the backlash. At first, Lustre stood strong, not showing any trace of worry for her career to the public and keeps on repeating how flattered she was to be compared to Bernardo, hailed as the “teen queen.” It was Bernardo that appeared to have ill-thoughts about their comparison. She admits that for her, she feels a bit awkward about the issue, she does not want it but she acknowledges that there is an issue that exists (ABS-CBN Entertainment, 2015).

Fans and bashers alike followed the narrative to this issue. It is because of the interest of the audience that several interviews were conducted with the topic of whether Bernardo and Lustre have actually had encounters with each other in person. This ended when finally they have met backstage during ASAP, an afternoon musical-variety show (ABS-CBN Entertainment, 2015). The way Lustre handled the encounter was by talking to Bernardo as naturally as possible even complimenting her movie teaser. She voiced out that she doesn't like people feeling awkward around her so she headed on to break the ice but there has not been any news of them being friends or hanging out after that encounter. A photo of them together then went viral. When Lustre was interviewed about the photo she only commented that both of them are already in good terms with each other and she would already like to settle the fan war between KathNiel and JaDine fans. She even said that some fans are the ones trying to initiate the peace within the community (Dsweetbox,

2015). You could see while she was speaking that she genuinely wanted to end the issue of being compared to Bernardo.

Back then when Lustre was just beginning, she felt flattery but now that she's starting to create her own name, the comparison to Bernardo would only spark more issues and obstacles to the success of her own career. Who would want to be famous just because she looks like and is pegged like a person who already has her own name? Lustre knows that in the long run, if the issue is not addressed, it will only create more problems for the both of them.

Later on in an interview for a commercial, by the time that we could say that Bernardo and Lustre are of the same level in the industry, Lustre shared a cryptic message of how she was affected by being compared to other girls and how people said she would not make it just because she looked like someone else (Pond's PH, 2016). All who has knowledge of Lustre being compared to Bernardo pretty much got the message that Bernardo was the other girl Lustre was talking about. She even became emotional and cried on camera giving them a bittersweet, "... but here I am." (Lustre, 2016). On the other end, Bernardo did not release any other statement about the said rivalry.

In light of their history relative to each other, we now move on to break down the other two points of their differences. The two points going to be introduced is their image to the public and their dynamics with their respective leading men. A table can be found on the next page.

Table 2: *Bernardo Vs. Lustre Factors*

FACTOR	KATHRYN BERNARDO	NADINE LUSTRE
Image to public	Conservative	Liberated
Love team partner and (interaction)	Daniel Padilla (submissive)	James Reid (headstrong)

1. *Image to Public*

Both actresses started with rather wholesome roles; Bernardo as a replaced-from-birth girl who is being maltreated by her rival and Lustre a runaway-from-home girl looking for a place to stay. However, it took a long time for Bernardo to break away from her cutesy roles once she started *Growing Up*. While Lustre, on the other hand was able to immediately jump to more challenging roles. Maybe it was because of the age difference but this made it feel like Lustre was progressing in her career quicker than Bernardo.

First movie, Lustre has already had a kissing scene. In the *showbiz* industry, the first kiss of a precious actor means a lot because this usually makes ratings higher and ticket sales better. However, if you think about it, Lustre was practically a nobody before DNP. To be frank, nobody cared about the first on-screen kiss of Lustre so it was not a big deal when the JaDine kiss happened for the first time. This was a good move from her

managers because this left Lustre open to kissing scenes early on, which also means more prospect projects. On the other hand it took Kathryn seven movies and three *teleseryes* before she agreed to do a kissing scene. It is understood that her religion played a big role on the delay of her kissing scene but later on rumors arose that she has actually been expelled from her religion because of her stint of endorsing a different candidate for the 2016 elections besides from the candidate her religion agreed to block vote (“Expelled by Iglesia”, 2015). Come 2016, her first on-screen kiss happened in the movie, *Barcelona: A Love Untold* with her on-screen partner, Padilla.

Without a kissing scene as buzz for her films and *teleseryes*, Bernardo compensates with the way she portrays her roles. Each of her characters has a different way of crying. We cannot disregard that Bernardo really is gifted when it comes to acting in drama but still bashers are always at her tail. They call Bernardo as the “*pabebe* queen.” This may stem from the fact that Bernardo is rather conservative, even during her interviews she is not loud like other celebrities. The way she speaks and carry herself during interviews and shows is somewhat *pabebe*. At first she would still respond to questions thrown at her but since the time that rumors spread of her being together with her on-screen partner, she’d rather let Padilla answer the questions, making it look like Padilla leading the loveteam. She would also act shy whenever she talks to Padilla (Yes! Magazine, 2018) but that is normal for a girl in love.

While Bernardo appears to be all cutesy, Lustre diverged to a stronger persona. Bashers piled up when she posted pictures of herself enjoying a vacation in the beach wearing a bikini. Bashers pointed out how Lustre is *pa-conservative* (Siazon, 2016). She was quick to respond that she never said that she was conservative, never once did she

even act that way. In her words, “I don’t want people to think na I’m pakawala, but I’m never going to be santa-santita. I’m not a saint.” (Lustre, 2016). This was the pivotal moment for Lustre, the moment that the audience accepted that Lustre was not just another “Filipina Beauty” actress but she was in fact a woman of her own opinion and ideals. People forget that the characters that Lustre play on-camera are left there once the video stops recording. Whoever she is to the public is different to who she is when in private. She has created her own narrative self off-camera that is different from the image that the audience has constructed for her.

Another iconic line of Lustre would be, “C’mon guys, it’s 2017.” This is her reaction on the live in rumor of her and already real life boyfriend, James Reid. She let the audience mind go wild by giving a vague answer to address the controversy (ABS-CBN, 2017). Lustre did not find the need to explain herself to her audience. When reading the comments of an article about the matter, you would be able to read statements of support from different people. For a conservative country like the Philippines, this support comes off as a surprise.

2. *Love Team Partner*

We can agree that both actresses’ fame and success can be attributed to their on-screen partners and currently off-screen lovers. Even the way that audiences perceive both actresses is affected by their interactions with their partners.

During interviews it is obvious that Bernardo is more passive in their relationship not just by her answers but also the way they communicate through body language. In a KathNiel interview during the spark of the bikini pictures of Lustre, Padilla said that he would not allow Bernardo to wear a two-piece swimsuit. Many a people found this sweet commenting that Padilla was concerned of Bernardo just like how a protective boyfriend would react. Bernardo in the other end cannot hide her *kilig* and did not really comment on whether she would wear a two-piece swimsuit for herself. Since then, no picture of Bernardo wearing a two-piece swimsuit has ever circulated online, somewhat confirming her submission to Padilla on this subject.

Lustre has always been open to her swimsuit pictures. Bashers always look back on these pictures and call her *pakawala* but recently, more people come to Lustre's rescue and defend her. People have gotten over the conservative image of Lustre. She has even been selected as FHM's Sexiest woman of 2017 (ABS-CBN News, 2017). Reid, on his *Twitter* account tweeted alluding possessiveness, however in a later interview he clarified that all was a joke and that he was proud of his girlfriend. Lustre, when asked if she's ready to pose in skimpy outfits, declined the offer and said that she's not planning to take that daring path sooner. This just shows that even how liberated Lustre is, she still has her own principles that she follows and she really is a woman of her own choice. Reid by her side, is not a person to dictate what Lustre must do with her life.

Looking at both subjects, we could say that Bernardo is the *dalagang Filipina* while Lustre is the more modern woman. Bernardo however is transitioning to a more liberated image based on her posts of her relationship with Padilla in her *Instagram* and her projects like her latest one with Padilla wherein they got married while she was

drunk. This transition of Bernardo is inevitable, besides from the demand of the millennial generation to be given what they want, which is portrayal of their real-life middle class problems, because Bernardo is aging and taking up mature roles is a milestone one must take to keep up with the industry and to not be left behind by their peers. It is Bernardo's choice to be submissive in her off-camera relationship with Padilla but then being empowered appeals to the public at the present and Bernardo appears to be aware of this. Instead of trying to be dominant, which is not who she is, she amplifies their *kilig* factor by being sweet on social media and on interviews, a smart move by Bernardo.

V. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

A. Summary

The liberated mind-set of Lustre appeals more to the millennial generation. Bashers would describe Bernardo as *pabebe* by the way she portrays her characters and the way she responds to interviews. The researcher has observed through the comments sections of articles and videos online that the bashing heightens whenever Bernardo would be compared to “other actresses” which we can assume is, one way or another, Lustre. Having an image of a strong woman not conforming to societal views, Lustre strongly contrasts to Bernardo who is more hushed when it comes to breaking societal norms. Through interactions open to the public eye, we could observe that Lustre has already broken from just being a *Filipina beauty* to a more liberated and strong woman while Bernardo still pegged as *pabebe* is slowly transitioning to a more open image but at the same time still keeping her core of being conservative.

In light of the information induced from this research, it can be observed that both actresses have created their own solid fan bases. Both fandoms fight against each other because of their differences and the more because of their similarities. Lustre being the one who has been bolder between the two of them, has opened a door for liberal views to be introduced to the Philippine society through broadcast media but still a great amount of people decide to remain conservative which can be observed through the negative comments directed at Lustre. Bernardo, obviously opening her own doors to keep up with millennials just shows that the evolution of the Philippines society is acknowledged. If

you think about it, the millennials are the audience of the future so Bernardo does not have much of a choice. Both actresses have been creating wise decisions in handling their careers. The paths both actresses chose for their careers benefit not just themselves but each other. Contrast between both careers offer variety to the audience. This contrast might just be the reason why both of their careers are thriving in the *showbiz* industry.

B. Conclusion

Philippine society is arguably a conservative one; however, through the films and *teleseryes* being shown, we could see that it is indeed evolving. Just by looking at the results of this research we could infer that Philippine society is now more open to liberated views and concepts. The fact that Lustre's career is flourishing amidst all the controversy she has faced in her career shows that she is not just a strong character in the industry but that Philippine society is now willing to embrace people with modern ideals and principles such as her. Bernardo in the other hand is starting to slowly transition to more mature roles, it seems not by pressure from the audience but a personal decision along with the guidance of her station, handlers and managers.

We could see that amidst being part of the "Filipina beauty trope" the progress of both careers have been different. Even the path they choice to take off-camera as individuals has contributed to this progress and to the reception of audience when they are on-camera. It is mutual growth and success that may be keeping both actresses respect

each other and keep them from actually dwelling too much on the comparison of their careers. Afterall, *showbiz* is just that, show business.

Until the end, the comparison of Bernardo and Lustre could not be avoided because of their physical resemblance, the only thing they could do about it is to use it to their advantage and to use their fame and influence for the betterment of the Filipino audience.

VI. IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Implications

The results of this study implies that Philippine society is evolving and being more liberated based on online media however, it is to be considered that online users are mostly millennials and that there is an older audience who still rely on television. Maybe the “evolution” observed in this study does not translate when considering the audience outside the millennial generation.

Considering Bernardo and Lustre, both are individuals having different personas off-camera and on-camera, Lustre has a stronger personality in the physical world. JaDine’s latest film, *Never Not Love You*, tries to go near the persona of Lustre off-camera but this does not converge Lustre’s individual personalities together. On the other hand, Bernardo is slowly blooming and accepting the change that the millennial audience is craving. She is broadening her horizons to more controversial themes for her films and more challenging portrayals for her characters. Bernardo is even becoming more open with her relationship with Padilla.

B. Recommendations

In the future, if a researcher would want to dig deeper on this study, they could consider having Ylona Garcia as their subject, since she can be considered as a “Filipina

Beauty.” The unique thing about her when grouped with Bernardo and Lustre is that she was born and raised in Australia, making her adapt a foreign culture. This fact of Garcia being raised abroad can give different results of how audiences accept her principles. Filipino audiences may be more lenient when she acts in a manner against Filipino tradition. To add, she is younger than both of the subjects of this study which means audiences would view her in a different light entirely.

Another that can be done for the next study based on this research is an interview of selected fans of both Bernardo and Lustre. This can give specific answers to questions about their idols. The uncurated point of view of audiences on this matter would be dissected and a more in-depth analysis on their characters would be produced. Future researchers may also want to consider studying older audiences.

An intensive breakdown of each movie was not included because of time constraints. That is one thing that should have been done because watching their films gave hints of who Bernardo and Lustre are in person. If a breakdown was produced, a more detailed analysis would have been accomplished. Each of their individualities may have shined through but it had been observed that the Philippine *showbiz* industry also consider the off-camera personality of their stars when writing and producing a movie, which means characters of top personalities are not written far from who they are off-camera.

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