

The influx of national identity: "imagined communities" on Indonesian audience in Indonesia and Malaysia frontier

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Abstract This study aimed to analyse the abundance of Malaysian television broadcasts' impact on building Indonesian society's national identity on Sebatik Island. The residents of this island have been watching Malaysian television for a long time as the primary source of communication in their daily lives. In this context, the interaction between the community and television is manifested through interpreting images and meanings. Furthermore, it becomes the basis for the building process of the community's national identity. This was a case study with observation and focus group discussion as the method of data collection. The results showed that Malaysian television conveys the meaning and values of its nationality to the Indonesian people. This manifests a high tendency among the Sebatik residents towards Malaysia, which is considered an ideal reference of life.

Keywords: imagined communities; television audience; national identity; Indonesia-Malaysia relations

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INTRODUCTION

National identity is a multi-dimensional concept interconnected with various others such as nation, race, ethnic group, and nationalism (Rashid et al., 2017). It is promoted through a process of socialisation that involves various agents (Briandana, 2019). Mass media, especially television, can be an agent of socialisation and has a strategic position in establishing this identity (Briandana, 2019). As part of people's daily lives, television has been a means of building their identities (D. Mulyana & Yaputra, 2020). It can also be viewed as a process of meaning and interaction that takes place every day.

Nationalism creates a nation with the strength and persistence of its identity (Anderson, 2006), built and strengthened in various ways, such as cultivating a deep spirit and emotion among followers through symbols. These can be the national flag, symbol, anthem, and motto (Smith, 2000). Regarding nationalism, symbols are fundamental elements because they represent the nation and regulated by the law (Wahab, 2012).

Anderson (2006) proposed the definition of a nation (state), as a political community that is sometimes limited. Furthermore, it was stated that it could be imagined since all the residents cannot possibly know one another. However, its unity is reflected in the members' minds (F. Rofil et al., 2015a).

Nations are portrayed to be limited because even the largest countries have boundaries (Rashid et al., 2017). Outside the borders are other countries, and no nation imagines itself to include all human beings on earth. Finally, the nation is envisioned as a community since it cares for the injustices and exploits within its boundaries. Following this understanding, Anderson (2006) reported that the country is a project to be processed since it brings about development. Therefore, it can be called 'imagined communities.'

It was also stated that it is a community where people are expected to be integrated abstractly in terms of culture and self-identity. This abstract ideology is built in several ways, such as the growing transport network that plays a role in integrating citizens. In this case, print capitalism's role is vital in creating access to the same information without reference to the research: newspapers, television, and radio play essential roles in shaping representation and language. The media positively affect the reproduction and strengthening of nationalist sentiments (D. Mulyana & Yaputra, 2020).

In addition to media and technology, television also records developments to show several aspects of people's identity, such as presenting a particular cultural theme known through the experience of communicating with other individuals or media (Briandana et al., 2020).

Naturally, the differences in the type of media use are reflected in the fundamental acceptance of media products that occur in the hermeneutic process (Rofil, Md Syed, & Hamzah, 2016). This means

that an individual is generally involved in the process of interpretation that understands a media product. However, the purchase of media products does not always involve this process in some cases. Television mediates the idea of different identities and plays a role in lifestyle (Rofil, Syed, & Hamzah, 2015b), which can be arranged simply by watching it or taking other media examples. These lifestyle choices are due to free time at home, where people regularly watch television. In this context, television plays a role in the process of forming identity (Rofil, Syed, & Hamzah, 2015a). The interaction between the media and the audience takes place through images and meanings interpreted by the public.

During the interpretation process, the audience focuses on their relationship with the media. The holistic understanding of media as an object of recruitment should consider the approach and other methods used in the research.

Therefore, this study focuses on a unique situation between the media and the people in the border region of Sebatik Island, Indonesia. The Island is small and located in North Kalimantan, which belongs to Indonesia and Malaysia. Indonesians in the Island region have a cultural and identity background different from the programs in daily designs, such as Malaysian television that they regularly watch (Riza, 2014). The people have been watching Malaysian television broadcasts for a long time, and the viewing process has become an essential part of their daily lives (Long, 2011).

The Sebatik community's dependence on Malaysian television broadcasts is due to the difficulty of accessing that of Indonesian (Yusuf, 2015). They can access Indonesian television broadcasts, but they need to use a valuable satellite dish worth between USD250 to USD340 or pay a monthly fee to receive Indonesian cable television broadcasts. However, this value is considered too high for the Sebatik community, which generally has a low income (Abdullah & Sari, 2014).

The residents are usually marginalised, and they suffer from various shortcomings in different aspects. Before this time, 62% of Malaysia's population work as food traders, labourers, maids, and farmers (Hafif, 2014). Furthermore, they suffer from a lack of infrastructure, educational facilities, and health status (Hapsari, 2014).

Meanwhile, the data obtained from the Hafif (2014) showed that 60% of them do not have access to the country's television broadcasts. One of the regions with difficulty receiving public broadcasts is on the Sebatik island border (Riza, 2014; Widiastuti, 2015). This makes its inhabitants a society with two countries of different races, and it consists of Indonesians that experience everyday life as Malaysians, especially when it comes to watching television programs. This situation continues to this day, where Malaysian television broadcasts are their primary source of communication.

Media abundance in the broadcasting industry is interpreted foreign broadcasts recording due to a loss of information relay capacity

from abroad. This may occur because of the government's weakness and broadcasting agencies and the community that have not been able to maintain and protect the frequency spectrum (Hernandez, 2019).

The media situation in the border area needs to be further investigated. In this regard, the studies by Herawati, Marti, & Ellyta (2014) and Yusuf (2015) showed that government policy does not yet support cross-border broadcasts since it is not considered as a priority. Therefore, the Indonesian government focuses on poverty, infrastructure, clean water, market development, and education.

However, media-related issues need to be treated especially when they are closely connected to the border since it is a medium that strengthens the national identity (Yusuf, 2015). It plays a crucial role in education, information, and entertainment (Agustina et al., 2020). Indonesian audiences in border areas have long had no access to local television. In line with this, Abidin (2013) reported that the public media channels both television and radio, could be used by the border community originate from neighbouring Malaysia. Boundary audiences can obtain free television channels from Malaysia by buying standard antennas and getting good broadcast quality. There are three television channels (TV1, TV2, TV3) and 18 radio channels obtained free to air from Malaysia (Yusuf, 2015).

The study focused on the Indonesia-Malaysia border area conducted over the past three years and involved various topics in different disciplines. Among the studies that have been conducted are "*Contestation of cultural claims in online media between Malaysia and Indonesia*" (D. Mulyana & Yaputra, 2020), "*Islamic Extension Communication Strategies in Indonesia-Malaysia Border Region*" (Setiawan, 2019), "*National Strength On the Construction of International Goods Terminals in Indonesia*" (Elyta & Saing, 2019), "*State Transformation and Cross-Regional Regionalism in the Indonesian Suburbs: Contesting the Center*" (Karim, 2019), "*A Study of Human Behavior and Rabies Spread in West Kalimantan, Indonesia*" (Ward et al., 2019). Accordingly, this study was conducted to fill the gaps in communication knowledge and media study to reveal the process of identity building that is unique on the border of Indonesia and Malaysia.

Based on the background, this research aimed to analyse the abundance of Malaysian television broadcasts that had implications for constructing Indonesian society's national identity on Sebatik Island.

METHODOLOGY

In accordance with the aim, this research employed the qualitative method with a case study approach. According to Yin (2013), a case study identifies contemporary phenomena in real-life contexts, especially when they are boundaries between the research and the real conditions.

The case study method can also be referred to as a longitudinal study. This is because the observation of the object covers a long and continuous period, but is formed in a cross-sectional construction. In other words, it can shorten the observation time at different stages of development by obtaining similar conclusions as to the study of longitude (Harrison et al., 2017).

This study uses two data collection techniques of Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and Observation. The primary purpose of using focus group discussion techniques is to uncover the audience's understanding of Malaysian television programs and address issues. The formation of the group is based on the villages and ethnic groups of the island.

Meanwhile, the observation method is particularly suitable for investigating the process of constructing the audience's national identity and the activity of watching television. Participatory observations are made by spending time with the subjects studied and performing tasks together (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011).

As for the implementation of this study, participant-observations were carried out for three weeks, starting from January to February 2019. The justification for this timing refers to data that is already saturated, so it is considered that the data is sufficient to answer the problem formulation in the study. According to Barker & Mathijs (2012), if the informant gives the same answer, this indicates that the research data is saturated, it means that the data has reached the saturation stage in the data collection process.

The location and subject of this study were conducted in Sebatik Island, North Kalimantan. The distance from Sebatik Island to the capital city of Jakarta is 1,673 KM, while the distance between Sebatik Island and the capital city of North Kalimantan is 131 KM. Furthermore, it is a remote island with the uniqueness of being owned by two countries, Indonesia in the South and Malaysia in the North.

The informants in this study numbered 15 people. Focus group discussion informants were selected based on different ethnic, social, and occupational backgrounds. This method is used as a study conducted by Morley (2003).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Sebatik Island consists of the Indonesian community that relies heavily on Malaysia to meet the needs of life. This dependence is due to economic factors since they interact a lot with Malaysia's socialisation agents, such as its television and society. In the context of the two societies' life in Sebatik island, cultural identity creates various similarities since these two cultures are of the same ethnicity (Hapsari, 2014). The Indonesian and Malaysian communities living in the border areas are recognised as two races with different national identities.

As a social product, the national identity has its meaning in the process of socialisation and interaction that takes place in their daily lives. Mastro, Behm-Morawitz, & Kopacz (2008) stated that society interprets all accepted things wherever they are. This includes understanding the importance and implications of every word, action, object, and media product used (Briandana & Ibrahim, 2015).

In this socialisation process, people learn essential, meaningful, and real (Haslanger & Haslanger, 2012). Therefore, it refers to how individuals learn about social expectations and how they can communicate with others. This learning process takes the form of socialisation agents, a system such as society, state, organisation, culture, ideology, and mass media (A. Mulyana et al., 2019). Within the framework of this process concerning the construction of national identity, it is showed that the Sebatik community is part of the socialisation agent. Other socialising agents are also influential in the process of building their national identity.

Due to the Indonesian government's lack of attention and focus on establishing a national identity on Sebatik Island, its organisations and education departments perform normal administrative and educational activities, not based on national ideology. These two departments play an essential role in the process of building a national identity. This can be seen from their limited level of knowledge on matters about Indonesian national ideology. Data from informants indicate that the Sebatik community's characteristics have a strong tendency for Malaysian national values: "I watch Malaysian TV since it is all available. Most of them ordered to spend their money on food, rather than buying an antenna" (Piyus Lama, personal communication, February 2019).

"Every day we indeed watch Malaysian television because we cannot access Indonesian TV. Without a doubt, TVRI (Televisi Republik Indonesia - Television of Republic Indonesia) is only shown occasionally. Sometimes, there is audio without a picture and vice versa. In contrast, Malaysian television is good and clear even when there is rain, wind, or storm, and it is raining, wind, or storm" (Andi Syarifudin, personal communication, February 2019). "Since childhood, I have watched Malaysian TV because the program is great. I love watching shows at 7-8 pm" (Chakarudin, personal communication, February 2019).

Informants influence their acceptance of values, in this case, according to Malaysian television content. "I like Malaysian dramas. The actors and the story is good. For Indonesian TV, I don't know because it has been long I watched it" (Siti Hajar, personal communication, February 2019). "Malaysian drama is good and not boring. One story has only ten episodes. Unlike Indonesia drama (Sinetron), it took a long time, and the story became weird because it was too artificial" (Maya, personal communication, February 2019).

"The portrayal of life in Malaysian TV dramas is also good as those of us that live in the village can also fit in" (Anton, personal communication, February 2019). "When we watch dramas, sometimes we cry and become angry, maybe because the story is centred on our way of life. For example. 'Sembilu Kasih' is a very good drama" (Moh Tami, personal communication, February 2019).

Some informants spoke about Malaysia's political situation and economic development, while they do not know about Indonesia's. "Regarding politics in Malaysia, I admire the figure of Anwar Ibrahim. While in Indonesia, I only hear the stories of Ahok and how he is hot-tempered. We don't get to see him for any reason" (Joko Susilo, personal communication, February 2019). "The Malaysian economy is good, not all roads are damaged. Unlike us on Sebatik Island, the government only pays attention to big cities" (Setio Budianto, personal communication, February 2019). "In Malaysia, the party is fully supported by its members, while in Indonesia, I do not know the political parties" (Muhamad Idris, personal communication, February 2019).

The interpretation of Malaysian television programs by the Sebatik Island community is a unique process that conveys the importance and content of the country's national identity. From the obtained results of observations, it can be concluded that Sebatik island's residents' Indonesian national identity is limited due to economic factors. In addition to social and cultural factors, the economy is the most dominant and essential element in interpreting national identity. This understanding is divided into national identity knowledge for the inhabitants of Sebatik Island. The inhabitants of Sebatik Island is a border community that can be identified from different angles. This community is usually marginalised due to its shortcomings of highly dependent on Malaysia to continue living in Indonesia.

The Sebatik community makes Malaysian television broadcasts as the main reference in their daily lives. One of the institutions that adopted this thinking was the television station, where they had to view the target audience as imaginative societies that can be manipulated for the authorities' benefit. As a result, with the development of media capitalism, the country has become a dominant political force. This means that most media is a space where the creative process can provide the community groups with an idea of the country in which they are located and the various elements that build and unify it.

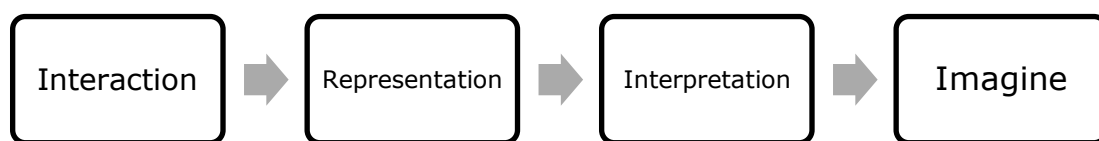
In a country, broadcasting institutions play a role in building the national identity of its people. Television is a medium that carries various important messages that contain information about the people's culture (Morley, 2003), and as a mainstream media, it can create some aspect of one's identity. For example, television shows a way of life identified by a cultural group (Mcmillin, 2016). In this context, it serves as a provider of materials for the process of building

a national identity (F. Rofil et al., 2015a). Also, through its image and meaning of content interpreted by the community, there is a process of interaction between the media and the audience. Therefore, this interpretation forms the basis for building a society's national identity (Livingstone & Markham, 2008).

In this regard, its role is shown to shape and strengthen the people's national identity in the context of the nation-state. The Sebatik community is a marginalised society that does not have access to Indonesian television broadcasts. However, there is an overflow of Malaysian television broadcasts in the border area. Therefore, it is used as the primary television channel of the Sebatik community.

Furthermore, building the national identity of the Sebatik community was recognised through this Malaysian television broadcast. Television plays a vital role in every social dimension of society. Therefore, Malaysian television can be the primary source of reference in building Sebatik island's inhabitants' national identity. In this context, a discovery that recognises the connection between television, interpretation, and the process of imagining should be obtained, as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1.The process of imagined national identity



Source: Findings from the research (2020)

Figure 1 explains the process of imagining the national identity of the Sebatik community starts with the process of representation, which is a reflection of what television displays. In this regard, it displays the national identity values of a country (Kitley, 2000). Malaysians watch the Malaysian television program. However, there is an overflow where the Indonesian community on the Sebatik border also watch it.

The second is the interpretation's process of the Malaysian television programs that they watch every day. This process has a connection with the audience, and in this interpretation, the Sebatik community enjoys and responds positively to the television program being watched. Besides, the pleasure of watching television is as an entertainment and the primary source of information for them.

The Sebatik community finds it difficult to obtain an appropriate reference to Indonesia's national identity. Several factors cause the occurrence of this situation, and among them is the lack of the

government's role in cultivating the value of Indonesia's national identity in the society, and the failure to disseminate information through the media on the rights of the Sebatik community such as the provision of education programs. This is inevitable because the community does not have enough references in their own country.

In this context, the Malaysian television program has become an essential reference source in their daily lives since they watch television shows regularly and for a long time. Generally, television's primary role in Indonesia is related to education, information, and entertainment. However, regarding Sebatik Island, this role has been assumed by Malaysian television. Therefore, it has become an important indicator of shaping its national identity. The media help the public build identity through narrative, audio, and visual methods (Triwardani, 2013). This is similar to Halkoaho's opinion (2012), which stated that the media encourages the public to imagine the even distribution of how events contribute to building a nation following a global system. In this regard, Malaysian television plays an essential role in building the national identity of the Sebatik community.

The interaction between the audience and Malaysian television program shows the interactions are often linked to their daily situation. According to the findings, there is a unique identity of the Sebatik society. This unique national identity refers to the existence of mixed cultures between Indonesian and Malaysian cultures, such as using mixed language among the original ethnic languages of Indonesia (Java, Bugis and Flores) with Malaysia Language.

The third is the process of imagining, and it comes after the interpretation has taken place. In this process, the Sebatik community imagines a national identity. Besides, Anderson (2006) opined that the concept of the shadow community suggests that identity formation is influenced by the media. In this process, the audience imagines an ideal national identity reference obtained through Malaysian television broadcasts.

The media play an essential role in every social dimension of society. Therefore, its analysis will always involve the media's social process (Rashid et al., 2017). In other contexts, the state as a vital institution engages in ideology building by controlling cultural income. However, as Morley & Robins (2002) stated, its development and emergence cannot be well understood without reference to the role of communication. Therefore, the role of state-controlled media in building national identity becomes essential.

The media shape the individual's experience as part of the nation, but it is the reality construction agent (Mulyana & Yaputra, 2020; Rahim & Pawanteh, 2010). National identity is the result of social formation that explains how human beings become individuals, subjects, and society members (Halkoaho, 2012). İnaç & Ünal (2013) stated that national identity is related to location politics, such as the question of identification, use of historical, linguistic, and cultural

resources in the process of becoming an individual, which represents gender, social class, ethnic group, and nationality. In forming such a national identity, they need to consider verbal concepts and identification to determine their social identity (Briandana, 2019).

Building the national identity of the Sebatik community begins with the pressure on the conditions and limitations of public facilities. Their need for a better life compels them to interact and perform various economic activities with Malaysian society. A similar thing also happened in the context of interaction with its television broadcasts. The high cost of services and the difficulty of getting access to Indonesian television have left them with no choice but to watch Malaysia's. As a result, they participated and were completely involved in the building process of the national identity. This was primarily performed by watching Malaysian television broadcast with the perception that it can meet their needs of obtaining information, entertainment, and education and can play a conversational support role in interacting with the Malaysian community.

Malaysian television offers different values and characteristics of its national identity. In general, mass media content, especially Malaysian television broadcasts, are designed and produced with a strong national identity to disseminate national ideologies for their society (L. Rofil et al., 2016).

CONCLUSION

The author conclude that the abundance of Malaysian television broadcasts has implications for building Indonesian society's national identity on Sebatik Island. The influx of identity construction needs to be understood by examining their daily experiences. This is because an individual interprets messages received based on social experiences. In this study, what the Sebatik community possessed was part of the imagined community since it is a marginalised society that does not have access to Indonesian television broadcasts. However, there is an abundance of Malaysian television broadcasts in the Sebatik border area, and they have become the "gateway" in building a national identity on an individual basis. Furthermore, the mass media (television) that exists in the Sebatik Island community plays a role as a socialising agent and the presence of the community, the country, the organisation, the culture, and the ideology.

The role of mass media as a socialising agent is an essential factor that needs to be explored. This is because the media content on Sebatik Island brings a foreign country's national identity, Malaysia. Therefore, it becomes a more challenging problem when socialisation agents in Indonesia, such as education departments and government organisations do not play a proper role in building their national identity.

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