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TELEVISION AS A SYMBOLIC CULTURE: A MEDIA ETHNOGRAPHY STUDY OF THE BORDER COMMUNITIES OF INDONESIA – TIMOR LESTE

*Abstract. Television is part of the daily life of the border society of Indonesia and Timor Leste. Like a ritual, they interact with television every day. This article aims to analyse the meaning construction of television given by the border communities of the villages of Napan and Bobometo. This study** used ethnography media, primarily micro ethnography. The results show the position held by television is equivalent to other valuable materials. These border communities interpret both technology and television text according to their socio-cultural context. The audiences in Indonesia generally regard television as a symbol of convenience and way to escape from problems at home. Meanwhile, for those in Bobometo in Timor Leste television is more a tool for strengthening social relations and a symbol of economic success.*

Keywords: *television, meaning, border society, media ethnography*

328

Introduction

Communities living in the border areas of Indonesia (Napan Village, North Central Timor District, East Nusa Tenggara Province) and the Bobometo Village in Timor Leste (Oecusse District) consume television in a very unique way. Although they are Timor Lestean, the people in Bobometo watch Indonesian television. In contrast, the Napan community, in addition to watching television from Indonesia, also often watches television broadcasts from Timor Leste.

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Television plays a very strategic role in this border society. Preliminary study results revealed the presence of television in these two villages, creating a new dependence on it. Watching television is like a ritual. This is in line with Gripsrud (2002: 4) who states that many people use television at least as part of a ritual in commencing their daily routine.

In the perspective of media and cultural studies, this reality can be viewed as a unifying process. The position of television can no longer be separated from the routine of the daily life of society. Media is becoming an integral part of the community. Therefore, this article aims to analyse the meaning construction of the audience in Napan Village in Indonesia and in Bobometo Village in Timor Leste regarding both content and technological aspects of the presence of television.

To help explain this phenomenon, this research employs social action media theory. According to Littlejohn and Foss (2009: 887), in the context of the theory of social action media, individuals tend to place it within the “action” framework or simply the pattern of individual interaction; therefore, social analysis is ultimately always associated with individual action. The theory of social action media emphasises that media users have their own values, ideas and interests with the result that media content is interpreted in the context of the social and cultural values of its audience. Further, the interpretation of media by its audience is influenced by the audience’s peers rather than by the media itself (Littlejohn and Foss, 2014: 419).

Media Culture and Daily Lives of the Audience

The term media culture was first used by Kellner to refer to a state of being with the media. The mass media has replaced previously well-preserved habits such as the tradition of reading books or the culture of oral communication. Humans temporarily inhabit a world in which the media so dominates people’s leisure time (Kellner, 2010: 47). The media culture refers to the conditions in which the media forms an integral part of society in their day-to-day lives. Media in the context of media culture has been integrated into the daily routine of audiences.

According to Hepp (2013: 2), “Media cultures are cultures of mediatisation: that is, cultures that are ‘moulded’ by the media”. Moreover, Hepp (2013: 5) added the culture of media is sourced from communications technology and its formation process in various ways by the media.

A culture of media is related to culture where the media and daily experience of audiences meet and unite due to use of mass media itself. Meanwhile, Kellner (2010: 2) argues that media culture is a culture generated by the mass media and cultural industries such that a new society has emerged, one that is governed by the principles of media and technology.

The media culture, according to Kellner, cannot be separated from the life of society where society and culture are controlled by the media. The existence of the media dominates the day-to-day lives of audiences (Tolić, 2011: 91).

Media culture plays a role in the daily life of the public as both a topic of conversation and a structured activity (Alasuutari, 1999: 6). The media culture entails representation and symbols which are disseminated through the mass media such as film, television, radio, advertising, and print media (Arvidsson, 2006: 11).

In essence, media culture closely relates to the increasing presence (omnipresence) of the mass media in which it plays a role in constructing reality. It is therefore important to consider aspects of improving communication resilience, especially with regard to mass media as a technology (Hepp, 2013: 29).

Budianto (2002: 2-3) describes how, in this era of globalisation, the culture of media is needed by the community. Thus, culture is becoming an arena of desire, human interest or society to meet their needs, and this underpins the way the media culture then merges with the community. Although almost impossible, everyday human beings can be detached from the presence of media culture. Today's life is heavily influenced by factors such as objects produced by certain factory production (television, radio, computers etc.), television shows, radio broadcasts, newspapers and magazines. The mass media technology released by the industrial community then creates a separate culture for the people who receive it. When these objects are first seen, when their presence may even be considered strange, they then learn how to use it for later enjoyment. This situation triggers the building of conditions in which the mass media is positioned as a vehicle for presenting pleasure, information and certain messages for a cultured society.

The media culture has now become a dominant socialising force, with images and media celebrities replacing families, schools, values and thoughts. Therefore, the media culture produces various identification models, along with a fundamental image of style, dress and new behaviour (Kellner, 2010: 22).

Objects of the mediated culture include text (media content), technology, and media audiences (Bignell, 2000: 5). As presented by McQuail (2000: 304), text or media content in this setting not only includes the physical text of the message itself, but observable voice and image messages. In essence, text or media content relates to any sign that holds meaning. This view is similar to that of Real (1996: 20) who states that media texts in the context of a media culture include various forms of images, sounds and words that could be television programmes, movies, music videos or online chats that are meaningful to the people who access them.

In a media culture perspective, the media dominates the activities and/or daily lives of users or audiences whereby the media 'organises' the habits of audiences according to media principles. This is seen in the habitual ways people spend time with the media (for example, watching television or listening to the radio). Kellner (2010: 3) states that a media culture can be identified as people spend so much time listening to the radio, watching television, looking at movies, reading magazines and newspapers. The forms of this mediatised culture then make the audience identify themselves with various ideologies, views, and social and political representations.

Methodology

The method of this research is media ethnography. As a research method, media ethnography according to Ang (in Hartmann, 2006: 255), works as follows:

What ethnographic work entails is a form of 'methodological situationalism', underscoring the thoroughly situated, always context-bound ways in which people encounter, use, interpret, enjoy, think and talk about television and other media in everyday life.

In line with Ang, another description of media ethnography as a methodology is given by Murphy (2011: 385) who states that media ethnography is divided into two categories; namely, media ethnography with its focus on the audience, and media ethnography for media production. Media ethnography in relation to the audience (audience ethnography) focuses on media receptions (media meaning) and media usage.

Based on Murphy's two categories, the media ethnography method in this research is categorised as audience ethnography. Audience ethnography questions the use of media in everyday life and the meaning of the media itself.

Data for this research were collected using the in-depth interview technique, focus group discussion, and participant observation. Informants in this study were television users aged above 18 years.

Informants in this study were 30 people, namely 15 from Indonesia and 15 from Timor Leste. The informants were selected randomly. There were several reasons for choosing the informants. First, they live on the border of the two countries. Second, these informants often trade in border areas. Another reason is these different citizens interact very intensively.

Data analysis followed the six steps according to Creswell (2013: 276-283). First of all, the field data were prepared for the analysis. In this stage, all data were recorded and an interview transcript prepared. Second, all the

data were read. In this step, the researcher wrote down general comments by the informants to gauge the depth of information that was already available. The third step was a more detailed analysis entailing coding. The coding was based on the research topic. The fourth was to create a theme based on the results of a categorisation according to the research objectives. The fifth was to present the report in qualitative description or narrative form. The sixth was to interpret the available data.

Findings

Meaning Construction of Television by the People of Napan

Silverstone (in Evans, 2011: 4) asserts that talking about television is not only limited to content but includes the technology as well. Evans mentions that television is a double articulation model. Television is not simply a media or window to the world but also a physical object that has a cultural value. Therefore, the discussion of the meaning of television in this article includes both content and technology (physical aspect). The following are the meaning constructions attributed by the people of Napan, Indonesia concerning television.

Television as a Symbol of Convenience

According to Vivian (2014: 224), due to its large number of audiences, television has become the media form with the greatest effect on people, culture, and other types of media. In fact, television is currently the dominant mass media for entertainment and news categories. This kind of dominance was also found in the village of Napan. Television in the community there is the main and preferred entertainment media.

Therefore, possessing a television is a matter of pride for the people of Napan. Being able to buy a television is also a matter of convenience in that years ago people generally had to watch TV in their neighbours' homes, with the children of Napan going out at night to watch TV. The informants admitted they felt calmer knowing that now they and their children would no longer disturb their neighbours by watching television. As one informant put it:

I'm desperate to buy TV because the kids want to watch. So, the children do not wander around in neighbours' houses. The reason is it can disturb others. The children go out watching TV every night and no more time to study at home. I was very sad. Finally I was desperate to buy a TV. (Paulus Siki, interview, 19. 6. 2017)

This opinion was shared by other informants, as the following interview reveals:

Us Napan people wanted to buy a TV to stop the children going out at night to the neighbour's' house. After buying a TV, the children now stay and enjoy watching TV at home. (Gregorius Siki, Interview, 13. 6. 2017)

Feeling comfort or convenience at home are the primary reasons for the inhabitants of Napan wishing to buy a television. This unique phenomenon indicates that feeling secure as a family in the village of Napan is also determined by television ownership. According to the informants, not having one's own television at their home means interfering with the privacy of others (neighbours), as happened 10 years ago.

Television ownership is just as important as other basic goods in the Napan community. Therefore, in Tulloch (2002: 18) David Morley views television as a domestic medium. Morley believes television media has a close relationship with the household or family. Television is an integral part that cannot be separated from a household. Rivers et al. (2008: 37) states that such media, similar to the connection human beings have with other commodities like cars, clothing, watches and various other everyday objects that are today an integral part of human life. Television also has a complex economic meaning. Buying and using television, as with any other technology, changes a person's status in their daily life from being a commodity to an object of consumption (Morley and Silverstone, 2005: 199).

Watching Television to Release Problems

Owning a television holds a unique meaning for the people of Napan. The informants admitted that watching TV is a form of escape which allows them to forget their problems at home. According to them, watching television makes them feel less stressed while helping them to relax and distract them from their problems.

For me, the TV is not also for entertaining but also for relaxing. If there is a conflict with the children, wife and grandchildren, then I watch TV to let go of my anger. (Gregorius Siki, interview, 13. 6. 2017)

Similar opinions were held by other informants, like the following:

TV for me is a place to relax. If I fell upset because of the needs in the household are not sufficient then I choose to watch TV. I feel comforted by watching TV. (Brigitha Nulle, interview, 19. 7. 2017)

Television in the perspective of the Napan community is the sole source of entertainment. This is because village is located far from the capital of the district. Economically, most villagers rely on traditional farming. Therefore, television programmes are considered the ultimate in entertainment at home following a day working in the garden.

This phenomenon is in line with Barwise and Ehrenberg (1988: 123) who stated that television is a relaxing medium because it can distract viewers from thinking about other things. Instead, audiences are invited to focus on what the television presents. Thus, audiences in Napan feel that watching television helps to divert and their minds from their problems, bringing a soothing effect.

Helping to Run Business in Timor Leste

In addition to relying on agricultural activities, most people in the village of Napan have side activities, i.e. trading in the border areas of Timor Leste. However, this business activity is limited in quantity and small in scale. The quantity and type of goods sold in Timor Leste reflect the demand of Bobometo society for items such as fuel oil and staple goods. Many perform this activity at night because it is illegal and/or to avoid taxes and other administrative government procedures at the official border crossing of the two countries.

Trade in the border villages is conducted in US dollars. Therefore, the people of Napan are required to know the exchange rate of Indonesian rupiah to the US dollar every day. In order to know and monitor exchange rate fluctuations, they need to watch the news and news tickers on television (Metro TV). Informants generally state they must watch Metro TV news at night and check the news ticker to be up to date regarding the currency rate of the Indonesian rupiah.

Some of us have business in Timor Leste, Bobometo Village. We always watch Metro TV at night or early in the morning. The reason is we want to know the exchange rate of the US dollar to the Indonesian rupiah. In case the dollar rises, then we should increase the price of goods when selling to Timor Leste. We must know the value of the US dollar exchange rate because the people of Timor Leste are also smart. Usually there is always news ticker mentioning the dollar exchange rate every morning. (Borensiana Nule, PRA, 30. 8. 2017)

Similar opinions were expressed by other informants running a business in Timor Leste:

I am a businessman so I need to know the updated news especially about the economy and business. I serve a money changer so I need to monitor the trends of the US dollar exchange rate against the Indonesian rupiah. So when people want to buy US dollars or want to exchange them I already know the position of the exchange rate from last night on TV. (Kanisius Uki, interview, 29. 6. 2017)

In the context of this form of television use, it appears the desire to watch television is based on the need to know the content of programmes that relate to the daily activity of their audiences (Elsaesser in Whitehouse-Hart, 2014: 39). This clearly applies to the pattern of watching news on the economy. Information on fluctuating foreign exchange rates is needed by the audience as a reference to help run their business activities every day. The existence of television in this setting is interpreted by the people of Napan as a tool that facilitates their trade with Bobometo Village in Timor Leste.

Television Content with Everyday Application

Another meaning of television's presence for the Napan community is that its content is used as a reference in everyday life. This is seen mainly in the categories of entertainment programmes, especially soap opera and film.

For the audience in Napan, watching soap operas and movies is not only regarded as entertainment but also as an example of how to behave in real life. The films most preferred by many of these border villagers are Indian films such as Anandhi, Thapki, Madhubala, and Lonceng Cinta aired on private television station, ANTV.

As a teacher, I personally always take good values from Indian films, especially Indian dances. We adopt, practise and teach to pupils at school. We always perform a show for Indonesia's Independence Day. So, we taught the children about traditional dance with a little modification with Indian movements. It included the dance accessories. The children were asked to wear a long scarf like a Sari in Indian films. (Brigitha Nulle, interview, 19. 7. 2017)

A similar opinion was expressed by a young lady called Maksima during a focus group discussion (FGD):

I did not put a mark on my forehead like an Indian. I just like Indian Actors. They are very beautiful. I imitate a little in terms of neatness in

dressing up. So, when I go to church or a party, I dress up like Indian actors in the movie. (Maksima, FGD, 10. 8. 2017)

Imitating or acting out what is seen in soap operas or Indian films well reflects the emotional connection between television content and the viewers. When watching a film or a television program, audience often become absorbed in the plot and identify him or herself with the characters portrayed. This process is called identification as a mechanism through which audience members experience reception and interpretation of the text from the inside, as if the events were happening to them (Cohen, 2001: 245).

Meaning Construction of Television for the Bobometo Community in Timor Leste

Closer Social Relations with the Neighbours

The level of television ownership in the village of Bobometo only reaches 20% of the population according to available data. Thus, most people in Bobometo are without a television. Therefore, the pattern of television consumption focuses on houses of neighbours who have a television. The owners of such televisions claim they are not inconvenienced when their neighbours come over to watch television every day and every night.

The possession of television is perceived by the people who have a television as a way of helping one's neighbours. Some informants stated:

In my opinion, TV helps the neighbours. So they can also open their minds to the world outside. (Serafinus Kolo, interview, 12. 10. 2017)

A similar comment was made by another informant:

I feel pity for my neighbours who have no TV. So, I let them come to my house to watch TV. By doing so, it also means I help them get closer to the world outside. They do not need to go far away to watch TV. (Damaris Taebenu, interview, 25. 8. 2017)

This pattern of television viewing makes the owners of televisions alter the position where the television is placed. Almost all television owners in Bobometo put their television on the porch outside the house. It is rare to have the television inside in the living room. When asked the reason for placing it in such a position, one informant said that it was to give the neighbours the freedom to come and watch television anytime they want.

Another informant expressed it this way:

I put the TV outside so that later when the neighbours come to watch, they will be more freely. They can go straight to switch the TV on. Sometimes, we sit in chairs or on the ground together. It's funny. (Filemena Ulan, Interview, 5. 9. 2017)

A similar opinion emerged during the focus group discussion. One informant said:

Since I have had a TV, my house has become very noisy. Moreover, I put my TV set at the side of the house so that people can be free to watch. If they want to come and watch TV, either day or night, I tell them to directly turn on it. (Batista Tafi, FGD, 5. 10. 2017)

A similar statement comes from another informant:

In our sub-village here, not all the people have a TV. Even though they have electricity, TV owners are still rare. So, for those who have no TV, they search for the nearest neighbours to watch. Considering that people can be free and do not hesitate to come over to watch, I put the TV outside. (Serafinus Kolo, interview, 12. 10. 2017)

The other main reason for the audience using mass media, including television, according to Turow (2011: 17–18) is companionship (friendship or escape from solitude). In this context, many audience members use mass media as a means to overcome their sense of loneliness.

The presence of television in the daily life of the people of Bobometo has become a way to strengthen the social relations among them. Social relations here include harmonious relationships among neighbours without a television and those who have one. This is made possible by the dependence of those who do not have a television on those who do. Almost all the informants acknowledged that there is greater social closeness due to them watching television together.

Television as a Symbol of Economic Success

Television ownership in Bobometo Village remains rare. People are more likely to choose to watch television in a neighbour's house every day. The limited television ownership influences the perception and meaning of television for them. They assume that someone who possesses a television is making economic progress.

TV in my point of view helps us in getting and knowing the situation and the progress of the world around us. Hence a person who owns a TV means his/her economic position is a success. (Don Bosco, interview, 10. 11. 2017)

The lack of economic sufficiency is then the key reason for other informants who do not have a television. "I have not bought a TV yet. I just work as a handyman, not enough money to buy a TV ", said Dominggus Kollo (interview, 11/09/2017). Seeing ownership of a television as a sign of economic success is also shared by another informant, a Bobometo Villager:

Buying a TV is expensive. Most people here are poor so it is impossible to buy a TV. In addition, people who own a TV because of economic abilities also means that they are open-minded people and have started thinking forward. (Yoseph Elu, interview, 10. 9. 2017)

Source of Information to Avoid Deception by Indonesian Traders

338

According to McQuil (2012: 92), the mass media's role is to act as a window on events and experiences that broadens our view. Media is seen as enabling audiences to 'see' what is happening in the wider world or as a learning tool to gain knowledge about various events in the human life cycle. These events include economic, social, cultural, ideological, political and security aspects.

Television programmes covering economic and business news are of special interest to members of the Bobometo community involved in trade or business. For them, news of economic progress in Indonesia has an impact on the smooth running of their businesses in Bobometo, Timor Leste. They admit they always watch the economic and business news to avoid being cheated by business partners from Indonesia when business transactions occur the next day.

We are busy business people. We watch TV continuously every night because want to know the price of the US dollar exchange rate and the scarcity of goods, especially fuel. If we hear every night, for example, fuel in Indonesia, especially in Kupang, has begun to running out, we are ready to increase the prices of fuel here in the village. It is also important to monitor the current US dollar exchange rate so we are not cheated by suppliers from Indonesia, Napan and Kefamenanu. (Elyas Sasi, FGD, 5. 10. 2017)

A similar opinion was stated by an inhabitant of Bobometo Village:

...I also watch news on Metro to monitor the US dollar exchange rate to the Indonesian rupiah. I am a businessman too. (Yoseph Elu, Interview, 10. 9. 2017)

Monitoring the development and fluctuation of the US dollar exchange rate against the Rupiah is the main reason for those in the Bobometo community, especially people running border business, to always watch Metro TV each night. This kind of information provides a reference for their business transactions, especially regarding oil in Indonesia. Fuel oil and other basic needs are imported from Indonesia; purchases occur both legally through customs and illegally through transactions at night.

Economic information from Indonesian television is the chief source of information for the Bobometo community in the trade of goods from Indonesia and within the village. This is what Dominick (1996: 527) calls the social impact of media as a socialisation agent. The mass media is the primary source of economic and business information.

The dependence of the public on television news for economic information is explained by Curran (1996: 126) as the success of the technology in creating an information environment. It is further stated that the information technology chosen and used by someone can in turn lead that person to personally create the information ecology.

Discussion

Media Culture in the Perspective of Media Ecology Theory

Media culture can be seen from the theory of media ecology introduced by Marshall McLuhan to understand how media form and organise a culture. He said the main media of electronic media (including television) has changed society extraordinarily. Communities have become heavily dependent on the presence of media technology and the social order of society is based on its ability to confront the technology (West and Turner, 2008: 139).

Media ecological theory helps explain the phenomenon that occurs with respect to the television culture in the border communities in both Indonesia and Timor Leste. Their daily activities incorporate television. It is becoming one of the needs of the community for both entertainment and obtaining information or knowledge. As explained, trade activities both within the village and in the border area market all rely on television news. The fluctuation of the rupiah against the dollar and the development of premium fuel availability and price premiums are monitored on television (Metro TV).

This reality corresponds to the core of media ecological theory where border societies cannot escape the influence of television technology. Television technology has become a centre for all areas of public life. The assumptions of media ecology theory are (West and Turner, 2008: 140–142), first, the media encompasses every action in society. People cannot escape the media in everyday life. Media is present in every dimension of human life so that by itself the media encompasses all of human existence. Even McLuhan calls numbers, games and money a mediation. Television media transform people through the TV programmes they watch daily. Second, the media improves the perception of the audience and organises its experience. Humans are directly influenced by the media. Media theorists believe that media improve perceptions and organise human life. McLuhan argues the media is strong enough in our view of the world. In the context of television-based culture in Bobometo society, it shows how audiences are unknowingly manipulated by television. In fact, their attitudes and experiences are directly influenced by what they watch on television. Third, media bring the whole world together. Media connect the world. McLuhan uses the term global village to describe how media bind the world into a great political, economic, social and cultural system. Humans can no longer live in isolation but will always be connected by electronic media that is instant and sustainable. Electronic media has the ability to bridge cultures that had never been able to communicate before this connection.

The Theory of Social Action Media and Media Culture

The media culture or phenomenon of the audiences' behaviour in the border areas of Indonesia and Timor Leste can also be explained by the theory of social action media. From the perspective of the theory of social action media introduced by Gerard Schoening and James Anderson, audiences create their own texts and meanings from television content in order to accomplish their diverse purposes (Littlejohn and Foss, 2009: 888). Audiences in the border region have their own references when dealing with such media. Society's interpretation of the existence of television media as both a technology and content is influenced by their environment. The social and cultural context of audiences is a major determinant of the meaning they give to television. Moreover, in the context of the theory of social action media, it is also seen that the presence of others around them contributes to the meaning of television; especially within a pattern of watching television together as a group.

In the context of media culture, television is present as an integral part of society. Television and society have undergone a process of unification. Television has become a technology that is forever present in the everyday

life cycle of society. Its presence affects the routine of community life.

Television audiences within the border communities of Indonesia and Timor Leste can be classified as active audiences. Alasuutari (Gorton, 2009: 23) introduces the concept of “interpretive communities” in which the audience is active in the process of creating meaning and making television a polysemic medium. It is seen that people with different nationalities give meaning to television technology and cultural symbols via the same television. But these two different citizens provide different meanings in line with the social and cultural context in which they are located. The audience is a creator of meaning and therefore they will continue to strive to make the content of the television ‘meaningful’ by connecting it to their own lives and needs (Grossberg in Whitehouse-Hart, 2014: 29). For this reason, Hall (Kitzinger et al., 2004: 170) says that media texts are polysemic. Audiences with different socio-cultural backgrounds provide an understanding and interpretation of the text according to the social and cultural context in which the audience resides.

The construction of different meanings by these audiences impacts their communication actions. A variety of television content is discussed in the daily lives of the audiences. As stated in Morley and Silverstone (2002: 151), this process called interdiscursivity. Since television is an integral part of the audience’s routine, the process of watching television is also seen as part of a long conversation and social dialogue through which symbols and messages from television are shared.

The reason for talking about television programmes every day by the communities is textual pleasure. Audiences tend to share the meaning they gain from watching television and discussing it with their friends is a form of sharing pleasure (Buckingham in Tulloch, 2000: 58). Moreover, television programmes selected by the audiences are closely related to their daily activities (Elsaesser in Gorton, 2009: 39). In this context, the attraction for watching television is increased.

For audiences, the existence of television has a meaningful value in their daily lives. As explained, audiences in the village of Napan in Indonesia interpret television ownership as a symbol of convenience. In contrast, people in Bobometo Village in Timor Leste see television as a way to strengthen social relations with neighbours. In this context, Roger Silverstone in Evans (2011: 4) claims that television is a double articulation model. For Silverstone, television content is not just media or a window revealing the world but also a physical object that holds a cultural value.

As a physical object, the existence of television is considered a human need. The position of television is equated with the possession of other valuable objects such as cars, clothing, watches and other objects whose presence cannot be separated from human life and routines (Rivers et al.,

2008: 37). To that end, audiences in Bobometo Village believe television is a 'luxury' and that only economically well-established people can buy a television set. Having a television signifies economic success in society.

In Timor Leste, the pattern of television viewing is still traditional. Since television ownership remains very limited, people watch it together. This pattern of television viewing is recognised as having its own social value. Society considers it as social recreation. They can laugh together and discuss the meaning of the television text together.

The daily conversations of audiences in this border region also include television symbols. Various programmes on television that are watched are almost always re-presented in their daily routines. When they visit their neighbours, these audiences often discuss the television programming programmes they identify with their socio-cultural context.

Livingstone and Lunt (2001: 31) affirm that the discussion of television media provides space for the occurrence of social representation. Television has therefore increased its role as a primary medium for debating the myths and certain beliefs in a cultural community, and for spawning debates within a community.

Conclusion

The conclusions which may be drawn are that, first, television in the perspective of media ethnography has become an inseparable part of the daily routine of audiences under study. Television recognises a social union with audiences. The possession of television is similar to the possession of other objects such as vehicles, watches, washing machines, and other useful objects.

Second, the audiences in the border area are active communities. They interpret the technology and television text according to the socio-cultural context in which they are located. With their various educational, economic and even citizenship backgrounds, the social environment also determines the construction of the meaning they attribute to the presence of television.

Third, the citizenship identity of the border communities also influences the meaning they assign to television. Although each community consumes the same television station with relatively similar cultural symbols, there is a difference in how they construct the text. Audiences in Indonesia generally interpret television as a symbol of convenience and as a way of finding relief from problems at home. Meanwhile, the meaning of television for the people of Bobometo in Timor Leste is as a tool to strengthen social relations and a symbol of economic success. Nevertheless, people in the two neighbouring countries use television programmes similarly, particularly those covering business, economic news and foreign exchange rates.

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