

**Siri Penerbitan Penyelidikan Sains Sosial No. 4**

**MALAYSIAN ADOLESCENTS AND MTV:  
A SEARCH FOR IDENTITY**

**Haryati Abdul Karim**

**Siri Penerbitan Penyelidikan Sains Sosial No. 4**

**MALAYSIAN ADOLESCENTS AND MTV :  
A SEARCH FOR IDENTITY**

**Siri Penerbitan Penyelidikan Sains Sosial No. 4**

**MALAYSIAN ADOLESCENTS AND MTV :  
A SEARCH FOR IDENTITY**

**Haryati Abdul Karim**

**Penerbit**   
Kota Kinabalu • Sabah • 2007  
<http://www.ums.edu.my/penerbit>

© Universiti Malaysia Sabah, 2007

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical including photocopy, recording, or any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from Universiti Malaysia Sabah.

ISSN 1823-1055

Layout artist: Ermalisa Abdullah  
Cover redesigned by: Baszley Bee bin Basrah Bee  
Type face for text: Times New Roman  
Text type and leading size: 11/13.3 point

Printed by:  
Percetakan CCS Sdn. Bhd.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Pages
Table of Contents	v
List of Tables	vii
Preface	ix-xi
Acknowledgement	xii
<b>CHAPTER 1 BACKGROUND OF STUDY</b>	<b>1-26</b>
Background of Study	
MTV & Glocalisation- Site For Contested Cultural Identities? Reliving The Cultural Imperialism Thesis Debates	
Malaysia's National Identity: Rethinking Malaysia's 1971 National Cultural Policy	
<b>CHAPTER 2 GLOBAL CAPITALISM, CULTURE &amp; MEDIA CONSUMPTION</b>	<b>27-41</b>
Introduction	
Polemics In Audience Research	
Media Effects: The Encoding-Decoding of Messages	
Background of MTV	
Background of Linkin Park, Avril Lavigne & Britney Spears	
Linkin Park	
Avril Lavigne	
Britney Spears	

<b>CHAPTER 3 ADOLESCENTS &amp; POPULAR CULTURE</b>	<b>43-52</b>
Methodology	
Questionnaires	
Focus Group Interview	
Construction of Identity	
Definition of Love/Relationship	
<b>CHAPTER 4 AUDIENCES' ANALYSIS</b>	<b>53-78</b>
Audiences' Analysis	
Demographic Profile	
Viewing Habits and Trend In Media Usage	
Reading of "Ideal, Identity, Image and Personality"	
Reading of "Love/Relationship"	
<b>CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION</b>	<b>79-90</b>
Discussion	
Discussion of "Love/Relationship"	
Limitation	
Conclusion	
<b>Notes</b>	<b>91</b>
<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>93-97</b>

## LIST OF TABLES

Tables		Pages
1.1	The global reach of MTV (Music Television) in Asia	7
4.1	Ethnic composition respondents from five schools in Kota Kinabalu	55
4.2	Percentage of Socioeconomics Status (SES) of respondents	56
4.3	Types of television programmes frequently watched by adolescents	57
4.4	Reasons cited for frequently watching programmes of their choice	57
4.5	Type of information needed	58

## PREFACE

Debates and discussion related to globalization have been going on as far back in the 1980's but only fairly recently did attention were given in the local context and in this case Malaysia. One of the reason for this is because the compression of time-space have only begun to be part of Malaysians' life in the mid 1990's when the new media began to make its presence felt. Another reason that can be attributed to the slow pace in the discussion of globalization is perhaps, Malaysians have yet to experience the various medium of the new communication technologies until the advent of its first satellite television which was launched in 1996. The presence of Astro All Asia Networks (Astro), the country's pioneer satellite tv, changed the scenario of the whole local television industry.

For the first time, Malaysians have more choices in terms of selections of television programmes. Not only, were they able to watch more programmes from the U.S. but from other non-Western countries as well specifically from among the Asean countries such as Thailand, Philippines and Indonesia. In short, they have a wide selection to choose from unlike before. Therefore, their exposure to the world outside has somewhat expanded from the usual East-West (local-Western) programmes to the world all over. In other words, their worldview have gone global. Astro, has in many ways, open that door for them not only to know more of the world events but the cultures as well. No other group of audience are more excited with the presence of Astro than the youth. Over the years, the number of foreign popular entertainment and musical programmes have declined and the opportunity to taste a sample of the mass popular culture among youths have been confined to videos and VCD. Previously, public broadcasting stations – Radio Televisyen Malaysia (RTM) did show the Annual Grammy Award but towards the middle 1990's, such programme is no longer shown. The government have constantly express their plan of increasing more local programmes over foreign imports. And the result is, entertainment and musical programmes were largely local. However, there have been no specific programmes that becomes a site for nurturing popular youth culture what more in the form of Channel V or MTV. In not so many words, it is plausible to conclude that there have been no



intention to produce a local musical programme popularizing pop culture. Such, would have been deemed as contravening with the national cultural policy which have been the guideline for what type of cultures can and cannot be depicted in the media.

Nevertheless, the rapid move by transnational media corporations in expanding their business entity through cross-border ownership as well as the launch of satellite broadcasting have forced many Asian countries including Malaysia to rethink their media and cultural policy. Hence, it is not surprising, when gradually more and more Asian countries started to launch their own satellite tv. This is not a manifestation of a shift in policy on “open skies” but rather a move to further tighten the grip on the inflow of Western cultural products. By having a national satellite tv, local operators are able to decide which cable channels will be featured into its services. It will also decide what kind of cultures that will be shown to their subscribers.

The lid that had been placed over foreign musical programmes have somewhat lifted with the presence of MTV channels and its programme. It has allowed local young people to watch and enjoy music from their favourite singers and bands from the United States and Britain. This research was conducted mainly to understand the reception of local adolescents on such cultural products. Against the social condition the young adolescents grew up in, where Islamic studies and Moral Education is compulsory for all Malaysian students under the *Kurikulum Bersepadu Sekolah Menengah* (KBSM) which among others, aspires to see schools as a social institution that are able to produce well-rounded individuals – spiritually, emotionally, mentally and physically, this work had hoped to examine how adolescents interact and interpreted MTV.

This work remained exploratory. The decision to use a qualitative approach by interviewing a small number of adolescents after watching several clips of MTV artistes is largely to gain insights of what goes into the mind of local adolescents at close hand.

Another reason for this approach is to analyse foreign cultural influence and adolescents from a more objective view whereby responses, interpretations

not the objective of this research to place a moral judgement on either MTV nor adolescents who consumed their culture. Rather, it is important to regard their reception of the programme as a way to understand the identity of Malaysia's future generation.

It is hoped that this work will provide a ground for future local researchers to emulate and perhaps expand this effort into an attempt to create a body of knowledge on Malaysian adolescents and youth culture.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

All Praise be to Allah s.w.t, The Knower of All Things, for without Him, I would certainly be reduced to nothing.

This is a modest endeavour to enrich the study of media, culture and society in the Malaysian context. Effort to publish this work into a monograph would not have been a success without the strong and endless support of fellow colleagues in the Communication Programme. My sincere gratitude and appreciation goes out especially to our Programme Coordinator, Mr. Suhaimi Salleh whose invaluable criticisms and comments have given an intellectual impetus to the earlier draft of this work. Deepest thanks to the Dean of the School of Social Sciences, Associate Professor Hasan Mat Nor, who showed keen interest in this work from the beginning and have strongly encouraged it to be published.

To fellow colleagues and staffs of the School of Social Sciences, thank you for the patience, support as well as the technical advice given to ensure the quality of the publication. To the Education Ministry, who allowed this research to be carried out. My heartfelt thanks to the schools, headmasters, teachers and most of all, the students who voluntarily participated in this research. This work would not have become anything without you. To my family, whose continued support and forbearance shown during the time this monograph was in the process, there are no words to describe the gratitude I feel inside. For any weaknesses that are found in this work, I singularly and humbly accept the responsibility.

Haryati Abdul Karim  
School of Social Sciences  
Universiti Malaysia Sabah