THE COMPLEX PROCESS OF CULTURAL GLOBALIZATION
IN A RAPIDLY CHANGING SOCIETY:
TELEVISION DRAMA RECEPTION AMONG THE MALAYS

By
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to understand how the rapid process of cultural globalization affects the Malaysian television industry and the Malays culturally. The privatization of television and the increasing tendency to import foreign dramas as well as its impact on the audience has renewed the interest of researchers in the communication industry at the international level. This study focuses on Malaysia which represents most of the characteristics of the situation in many rapidly changing societies. In light of this, the study will attempt to provide evidence to the cultural globalization debate through the five processes of the “circuit of culture”: production, consumption, identity, representation and regulation (du Gay et al., 1997). These processes were examined for the ways they manifested in the television industry in Malaysia, how cultural globalization is influencing the process, and at the same time how cultural globalization is being produced through the processes. To collect data, two methods used for this study are content analysis and, in-depth interviews. The first, look at the values and lifestyles portrayed in local as well as foreign dramas shown on prime-time Malaysian television. The second approach will explore the Malay viewers' consumption of foreign as well as local dramas portrayed on Malaysian television detailing the changing uses of television in different types of families from different social positions. Results of the study showed that with rapid process of cultural globalization, Malaysian prime-time television dramas portrayed more Western values and lifestyles. Amongst the Malays, especially the youngsters, there were also evidences of the adoption of other Western values like individualism and consumerism. Through the circuit of culture, it was also shown that the deregulation and the convergence of telecommunications together with the privatization drive by the government brought about drastic changes to the Malaysian broadcasting scene. Together, this has brought about accusations of cultural globalization through Western television dramas that have also been increasingly accused of having negative influence on the morals of society. However, as shown by the findings of the study, television consumption and the audience perception is indeed a diverse and complex process. Research results showed that there are ambivalences whereby different families studied had surprisingly differing perceptions of the same television content. The study concluded that, any investigation into cultural globalization and the consumption of television within the family could only be understood in the overall context of family life and the circuit of culture.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is utterly impossible for me to individually thank the many and mention the specific ways in which they have contributed to my research and intellectual training. Let me only acknowledge their aid in a general word of appreciation.

My deepest and warmest gratitude to my teachers who throughout the process of my education, passed on their knowledge, and most of all, showed me the wisdom and commitment needed to be a teacher. They have made me realize that pursuing an academic career could never be possible solely based on one’s own ambition or scholarly aptitude.

To my supervisor, Prof. Dr. Che Su Mustaffa and co-supervisor, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Hisham Dzakiria, thank you for your attention to each draft, for our fruitful discussions and for sharing my vision. I am also immensely indebted to both of you because your research and scholarly writings informed my approach to this topic. My heartfelt appreciation goes to both of them. They have enlightened me on the critical importance of intellectual rigour in academic work. They have been tremendously helpful both intellectually and emotionally, during my study at Universiti Utara Malaysia.

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<td>ASEAN</td>
<td>Association of South-East Asian Nations</td>
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<td>AT&amp;T</td>
<td>American Telephone and Telegraph</td>
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<tr>
<td>CSO</td>
<td>Community Service Obligations</td>
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<td>DBS</td>
<td>Direct Broadcasting Satellite</td>
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<td>FCC</td>
<td>Federal Communications Commission</td>
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<td>FMS</td>
<td>Federated Malay States</td>
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<td>GATS</td>
<td>General Agreement on Trade in Services</td>
</tr>
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<td>GATT</td>
<td>General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade</td>
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<td>IBRD</td>
<td>International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (World Bank)</td>
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<td>IMF</td>
<td>International Monetary Fund</td>
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<td>ISA</td>
<td>Internal Security Act</td>
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<td>ISDN</td>
<td>Integrated Services Digital Networks</td>
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<td>ITU</td>
<td>International Telecommunications Union</td>
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<td>KLSE</td>
<td>Kuala Lumpur Stock Exchange</td>
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<td>LDC</td>
<td>Less Developed Countries</td>
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<td>LUT</td>
<td>Langkawi Universiti of Tomorrow</td>
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<td>MCA</td>
<td>Malaysian Chinese Association</td>
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<td>MEASAT</td>
<td>Malaysia East-Asia Satellite</td>
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<td>MIC</td>
<td>Malaysian Indian Congress</td>
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<td>MSC</td>
<td>Multimedia Super Corridor</td>
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<td>NAFTA</td>
<td>North American Free Trade Agreement</td>
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<td>NDP</td>
<td>New Development Policy</td>
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<td>NEP</td>
<td>New Economic Policy</td>
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<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development</td>
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<td>UNITEN</td>
<td>Universiti Tenaga Nasional</td>
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<td>World Trade Organization</td>
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Research

In tandem with the process taking place internationally, Malaysia embarked along the path of development through export oriented industrialisation, urbanisation, rural development, foreign trade, integration with the world market, and participation in the globalization process (Abdul Rahman Embong, 2007:58).

Although temporarily hit by the 1997-1998 Asian financial crisis, Malaysia did not go bust and can be regarded as progressing well towards achieving its goal of a developed nation status by 2020. Abdul Rahman Embong, a leading sociologist postulates that to date Malaysia is one of the most developed and industrialised nation among developing economies, one of the most industrialised among the Muslim countries and the 18th largest trading nation in the world (ibid:58).

As an active player in the globalization process, Malaysia’s economy is highly open and integrated with the world economy. Malaysia benefited tremendously from foreign trade and investment, and sophisticated technology usage. In terms of social engineering, various plans have been launched. According to Zulkarnain Awang (in Abdul Rahman, 2007:50) the Ninth Malaysia Plan (2006-2010) showed that Malaysia has indeed made significant strides in nation building, developing its economy and improving the quality of life of her people.

As a nation with a strong commitment to her Vision 2020 of becoming a caring and fully developed nation, Malaysia has embarked on programmes to meet the challenges and issues faced by her population, especially those involving the


Hartmann, Paul (1981) Radio Drama for Development. CMCR, University of Leicester.


