

Media Literacy and Youth Audience: A Study of The Effects of The Mystical-Themed Program on Television*

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Abstract – Belief in mystical or supernatural things can not be separated from human life. In Indonesia there are several groups of people who believe in these things and there are a lot of television programs and movie plots that based on mystical or supernatural activities. This paper will describe about mystical-themed programs on the television because the shows have received a lot of criticism, however until now is still running. One program which has been criticized has a high rating and share is “Masih Dunia Lain” at Trans7. This research is aiming at knowing how the youth audience response to the mystical-themed programs on television, especially about the effects on their behavior, and also how the role of media literacy towards them. This research is using a descriptive qualitative approach, with in depth interview to collect the data. This research has concluded that most informants, thought that “Masih Dunia Lain” is a program which has a goal to entertain and provide information related to mystical world to the audiences. The program itself also has direct and indirect effects on the audience and the informants comments are related to their culture and customs. The program has also had another effects which is a sense of fear after the audiences watched the program. But they realized that such existing program is not a pure reflection of reality, instead it was being tempered with additional things such as an application of scenario and visual/audio effects to make the program even scarier. They also considered the importance of media know how

or the media literacy for the audience especially for the youth audience, therefore it will not influenced by the bad things caused by the media.

Keyword - *Mystical, media literacy, youth audience*

I. INTRODUCTION

Today the growth of Indonesia broadcasting industry has resulted in a very tight competition among television stations. Having hundreds of privates, local and community televisions, a correct strategy and creativity is a must for all television managers so that their station can succeed in terms of quality and popularity among advertisers. In his book, Denis McQuail (2005) stated that today's media institution is run on highly competitive environment. It happens seamlessly with the growth of information industry sector and today's communication sector. Eventhough it is used as a profit oriented business, a television station should remain idealistic and have a sense of social responsibility to present an informative, qualified and educating programs.

As its developed media has grown to an industry which has placed profit as a main priority. Entertainment function on a media today assessed by many people sticks out more than the education and information function. On that context, people surely required to have a skill on understanding and criticizing media in a smart way so that they can optimized the benefit, function and position of media in a positive context to educate the people (Fadhil et al, 2011).

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Among the variety of program types, one that always contains controversy is the one that has a mystical nuance. It has received so many critics because it is considered to not having any benefits, nevertheless the program is still aired. Not so long ago, KPID (Komisi Penyiaran Indonesia Daerah) of Semarang held a study on mystical shows on television and concluded that broadcasting institute tends to focus on business aspect and look away from quality aspect. The shows didn't present any information, education, even entertainment function. Instead it only moves towards duping the public. Moreover on mystical shows, there has always been an unsure of visual dramatization as well as the present of eery audio visual effect. Therefore, mystical shows should be aired above 22.00WIB (<http://www.suaramerdeka.com/v1/index.php/read/news/2012/03/25/113480/Pakar-Dukung-KPID-Tindak-Tayangan-Mistik>).

On 2010 yearly report book of KPI (Komisi Penyiaran Indonesia), mystical and religious programs are a huge trends at the time. Those programs are aired on several different stations, there are : Trans 7 ("Scary Job", "Keluarga Hantu", "Plesetan Misteri", "Masih Dunia Lain", "Dua Dunia") and ANTV ("Ekspedisi Merah", "Mohon Ampun Aku" dan "Menembus Batas"). The result of KPI study on mystical shows on television (June – November 2009) stated that the kind of mystic contained is a fiction, mostly displayed as a visual, the motive is on purpose, mostly non-verbal scary effect and the locations are the woods and a cemetery. At the same time, if looking at it from P3PSS (Pedoman Perilaku Penyiaran dan Standar Program Siaran) point of view, almost every single mystical show has violated the rules. Besides that violation, it also tends to mislead the public towards aqidah impairment. Especially for the viewers and public in general (Syahputra, 2010).

Article written by researcher from Media Literacy Circle stated that there's a number of violation on these mystical shows, they are: *Firstly*, they don't give up explicit details regarding supernatural content of the show. *Secondly*, they don't provide us with factual and empirical data related to the content. *Thirdly*, they do not give any explanation regarding the differences of views on the society related to supernatural powers. *Fourthly*, confirming mystics and supernatural as a common thing on daily social life. *Fifthly*, displays mystics and supernatural by manipulating image, sound,

even audiovisual which all have pretensions towards content dramatization (Nurullah, 2011).

According to "Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia" cited in Mystical Shows Studies Report of KPI, mystic is a supernatural thing which is highly believed among people until it can't be explained through normal human sense. Mystic is actually one package product from various belief system which penetrate into various sector of social life because supernatural life is so close to subconscious state of people's mind. Mystical reality show become more realistic compared to other themes such as; love, gossip, infidelity, etc (Syahputra, 2010). Therefore, various types of mystical shows on television attract so many viewers attention. Evenmore, there's a certain group of people still put faith on mystical things. Public's attention towards mystical shows is proven by 2,2 ratings and 20,1% of shares received by one of mystical program, "[Masih] Dunia Lain" at Trans7. [Masih] Dunia Lain is reality-guts-testing program where one of the contestant will be placed on a suspected haunted place to spent a night watched by a few infra red cameras that captured every movement of the contestant in hope they'll also captured a ghost apparition while the crews of the programs supervising it from distance. This program received an awards on Asian Television Awards as Best Reality Programme on 2004. The success it gain triggers the surfacing of countless other similar programs which results in a polemic (Kriswanti, 2010).

[Masih] Dunia Lain is a new format from its national phenomenon predecessor, "Dunia Lain". That program had received a warning and ban-to-air from KPI then the television station changed the format eventhough it still looks the same. The differences is, the guts-testing session is now held 2 nights in the same spot instead of just 1 night. What the crews expect from this changes is an increase on supernatural activity at that particular spot on the second night. If the contestant can't get through the first night then a new contestant will be brought to the spot to replace that contestant. (sinopsis program "Masih Dunia Lain" <http://www.trans7.co.id/frontend/home/view/309>).

Basing on the descriptions above, the authors teams interested in conducting a research on that particular show, especially the effects it has caused after the viewers watched it. This research will see the impact of the show towards the youth and how media literacy plays a role in it. This paper will

explain why youth audiences attracted to mystical-themed show and how they respond to it. This paper will also explained the impact of the show toward the audience's behaviour. Moreover, other essential thing is the description on how media literacy play a role especially on youth audiences will also be discussed.

Method used in this research is qualitative method. Qualitative method intends to describe a phenomena as deep as it could. This research didn't prioritize the amount of population or sampling, in fact the population and samples are highly restricted. What stated that the importance of the quality, not the quantity of the data (Kriyantono, 2006:58). The data on this research is collected through in-depth interview with all the selected informants who had been carefully considered to the author's criteria. The informants are obviously a loyal audience to "Masih Dunia Lain".

II. The Importance of Media Literacy to Prevent Negative Impact on Media

Media literacy has been understood as a skill to access, analyze, evaluate and communicate messages from a certain media. From the above explanation we can say that media literacy is a skill to improve individual skill on how the audience uses media (Baran, 2003). A media literacy figure, W. James Potter said that we have to gradually improved our media literacy skill to face the effects of media. According to him, a media has a huge effect on how we understand life by shaping our mind of beliefs and hopes. But when we had media literacy skill, we can avoid those negative effects from media and extract the positive effects (Potter, 2012). The purpose of media literacy through media education is a further skill improvement for the people, which is how people see media as not only a plain text but also as context, the purpose of the messages and why it was created in the first place. To achieved that purposes, media literacy should move public or events target to not only knows media as it is but to critically see the existance of a media (Fadhil et al, 2011).

Research result from Rumah Sinema revealed that for suburban and big cities youth, the time they spent on television is almost equal to the time they spent on school and more to the time they spent with their families which is approximately 6 hours. This numbers increased dramatically when holiday session come. Among the variety of media,

television is the most consumed media and reality show, music and soap opera are the program that they watched the most. From that research data, we can say that in reality the youth is not yet prepared to undergo such a huge exposures from media, therefore education of media literacy becomes highly important (Suprati&Marganingtyas, 2011).

If we associate cultivation theory into this matter, then media literacy skill becomes even more important. As it is known, cultivation theory is a theory that talks about the effect of media proposed by George Gerbner (leader of The Annenberg School of Communications at The University of Pennsylvania) with his colleague as a result of long-term research. Gerbner develop this theory to see the impact of television to perception, attitude and value of a person. According to him, the more often a person watch a television (heavy viewers which is those who watched television at least 4 hours everyday) the stronger the impact that person will received (Severin & Tankard, 2007). The point is, there's a process of significance aculturation which human slowly put trusts on the description of reality as if it's equal to what is on a television. The description that is on a television represents real life situation and adjusts their hope, worries dan undsrstanding. The main method of this cultivation analysist is to arrange television dominant description of real life situation based on fiction program and news then it is compared with audiences expressions based on their daily actions (McQuail, 2005). On his research, he believes that almost everybody has a television set so everyone looked at the world on the same view. Television is a main system of story telling. Television is part of our daily life. Dramas, advertisements and other programs brought a relatively identical world to every household. Television also becomes everybodies main source to their daily social life and information (Littejohn, 2002).

But other researcher put out that audiences were not always in a passive state, letting in every message the television exposed at them. People also actively filtering the possible impact of what might happen to them. Therefore, on selective exposure theory, audiences actively chose which programs suited their beliefs or ideas (Griffin, 2009). On the other hand, because there's still a certain social groups who put trusts on supernatural things in Indonesia so mystical-themed shows still hold on as a favorite.

From that situation, audience needs to have a proper state of mind to consume a media. Therefore, according to Eko Suprati and Djati Marganingtyas (2011) cited on Potter's writings that a person who has knowledge to these 5 things - which is; understanding the content of media, media industry, media impacts, real life facts and themselves, can filter the information, work with that information and build understanding based on what they wanted.

According to Kathleen Tyner's opinion cited by Fadhal et al (2011), there are a few media literacy activities that run in certain countries, which are:

1. Media literacy runs through formal education (such as in universities). At universities level, under communication study program or journalism, media literacy developed as a process to build attendees critical thinking on analyzing the media which will cover digital literacy on its way to develop.
2. Media literacy that runs as a community based media programs.
3. Media literacy that runs as a school environment activity.

III. RESEARCH FINDING

As the authors already points out previously that this paper will discuss about how is the impact of mystical-themed programs on youth audiences and what is the role of media literacy in it. At the beginning of the interview, the informants were asked about their personal media consumption pattern especially on mass media on their daily life. All the informants said instead of the other mass media such as radio, television, magazines, newspaper and online media, they tend to watch television because it is easier to digest and can be enjoyed much better either by the audio or the visual aspect. So we can conclude that television still holds a high level of penetration compared to other media. From media consumption pattern, all the informants are a heavy viewers who watch television at least 4 hours every day. They favour a casual and easily-digested shows compared to serious shows such as news. The informants admit certain programs have an impact to their daily lives, either directly or indirectly. Sometimes, shows like "Masih Dunia Lain" can relief stress and saturation. It also give an emotional impact, moreover the show aired in the middle of the night resulting in an increase of mystical atmosphere. All the informants who live in Jakarta since they were children on the

average still have beliefs upon supernatural things even though they are used to a modern life of the big city.

Most of the informants put trusts on the content of the show eventhough they admit several of the events on the show didn't make any sense. This thing related to the cultivation theory which assume that the things on a television is an exact representation of real life situation, moreover they were people who can be categorized as heavy viewer. They also felt they get a certain amount of information regarding the mystical world from the show and believe even more to mystics.

However, some of the informants stated that the show looked engineered or tempered and existed only to serve certain purposes. The informant wasn't really agree with those mystical shows because it looked practically illusical like using camera effects and scenario. That statement describes the selective exposure theory which explained that a person can be selective to attention, perception, retention, even on selecting a program. But even though they knew that the show was tempered they still watched the show anyway. Even sometimes they admits those mystical shows they said to be tempered has a direct or indirect impact on their daily life. One of the examples of the direct impact is a short sense of fear, they feel like they were surrounded by mystical creatures which then resulting in long term effect or indirect effect such as trauma.

The description above shows that among the informants, some of them understand and realized the possibilities of engineering and tempering on those mystical programs to increase their shares and rating and to serve the station's personal interests. But the fact is most of the informants still affected either directly or indirectly on their behaviour and personal life. They stated that it was caused by their beliefs or religion which stated that mystical things do exist. Here we can make a conclusion that even though people have a high level of media literacy there's still some factors like backgrounds and beliefs or religion which in fact influence strongly compare to media literacy itself on interpreting the content of a media. Culture stands out as one of the contributing factor because a person's culture will surely sticks to him/her since their childhood.

All the informants agree that media literacy is the key point to face the strong current of information

which is really easy to access, especially the negative impact of television program. From several activity related to media literacy they have previously joined, they learned how to smartly consumed the media, eventhough sometimes they still can't control themselves from the impact of television.

They also stated that parents must have enough knowledge about the media. A research held by YPMA (Yayasan Pengembangan Media Anak) in 2006 pointed out that in general parents are powerless against the exposure of television and they also didn't know a good television watching pattern for their kids. They only rely on the broadcasting institution to kindly filter the content of media and hope the government can organize broadcasting institution to be more "friendly" to families. This kind of attitude widely spreads to various regions all over Indonesia with variety of social and economy levels (Guntarto, 2011). The incomprehensiveness of parents upon media become one of the problems on mediation practice done by parents themselves. Sometimes their knowledge has to be competed with their kids' knowledge about media technology development. Parents tends to unable to run from their kids' will and demands about mass media use (Fadhal et al, 2011).

From some of the already described data, the spirit to keep socializing media literacy mostly comes from media-care community, university, non-governmental institution and other institutions. Therefore, it is the time for the government actively join the matter, one of them are the one that often proposed on media literacy discussion forum which is to put media literacy on school program or school curriculum. KPI themselves their activity and also actively doing movements of media literacy. On KPI Yearly Report Book mentioned that KPI program of media literacy is a form of duty and obligation to ensure that people received a proper and true information correspond to human rights (according to UU Penyiaran Pasal 8 ayat 3 huruf a). This event pioneered since starting period of KPI (2003 – 2006) and has been running as a routine on the second period (2007 – 2010). On that same report also stated that television is KPI main focus on this event. The reason is because broadcasting issues attract mostly of the people attention is the content of television programs. Television attracts more attention than radio. What caused this are; *first*, the broadcasting ranges as far as national wide. *Second*, television does not need

the ability to be read to enjoy, the audio-visual format attract more attention rather than audio-only format of radio and it runs 24 hours a day, also the content went straight to our living room. Moreover, in tune with the result of this research that youth importantly need media literacy, the main target of KPI media literacy program is college students and high school students. Media literacy is viewed as one of the solution to deal with major problems on young audiences as an outcome of rapid changes of Indonesia's media life (Buku Laporan Tahunan KPI 2010).

IV. CONCLUSION

The point is, mystical-themed program have an impact to its audience. This show affects the audience's emotion which results in sense of fear beside the information about mystical world which the audiences get. Eventhough some of the informant said, that it was being tempered, they watch the show anyway because it serves as a stress relief. What interesting is, although the informants thought and even know that the show is being tempered, they still love the show and stated that "Masih Dunia Lain" has an impact on their daily life directly or indirectly.

The result of this research shows that a show has a different impact. The impact depends on the perception of the people watching it. Therefore, media literacy skill becomes highly important to television audience especially youth. The Yogyakarta Cinema House Community interestingly suggest to hold a creative media literacy practice for youth. Youth becomes the main important object because it was in a vulnerable transition stages and can be easily exposed by the negative impact of media. Young people are also considered still requires knowledge as much as they can get to expand their self potential and use the information smartly and wisely. This creative method done by giving the attendents plenty of room to actively join a discussion, exchange of ideas dan produce a work so the won't only experience learning through lecture like oftenly used media literacy socialization techniques. Attendents involvement will results in a different and attractive new experience (Suprati & Marganingtyas, 2011).

Other factor besides youth themselves, parents is also other main target of media literacy because there are still plenty of parents who do not have a

good knowledge about media and ways to face media exposure. Guntarto (2011) writes that media literacy programs in form of direct outreach to parents is an effort which effects can be felt instantly. On this format, an informant who understands the problems well is needed because he/she needs to convince the parents that media can become a serious problems and negative impact especially to kids.

Futhermore, due to the fact that the government role is not clearly expressed. It needs to be more coordinated into the media literacy program. The responsibility of increasing the media literacy skill needs to become our responsibility as part of the society, media industry, regulator and government (Guntarto, 2011). Finally, authors hope that media shows in Indonesia can be filled with high quality shown, so it won't harm the society. In addition the society itself, will be able to grow into a better and smarter society in consuming the media.

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