

# The Superficial Representations of Chinese Indonesians in Teenagers' Media in the Reform Era

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## Abstract

*Chinese Indonesians form one of the minority ethnic groups in Indonesia. They represent about 2-3 percent of the total population. Indonesian citizens of ethnic Chinese descent have been caught in a strangely ambiguous: they have enjoyed enormous economic power while at the same time being threatened with politico-cultural effacement. This paper is focused on the way Chinese Indonesians are represented by the Indonesian teenagers' media, especially after the Indonesian Reform. DetEksi, a well-known based on poll Indonesian teenagers' media, is chosen as the case study. This study found that the issue of ethnicity, or more specifically the issue of Chinese Indonesians, to be the least covered topics in DetEksi. During 2005 and 2007, DetEksi had conducted 1,095 polls, but only 3 polls deal with the issue of Chinese Indonesians. Arguably this is because the issue of ethnicity is not marketable or in demand by DetEksi's young readers and sponsors. This paper aims to investigate why the issue of ethnicity was so unpopular among contemporary Indonesian teenagers and unprofitable for market sponsorship.*

**Key words:** ethnicity, young reader, contemporary, sponsorship.

Chinese Indonesians form one of the minority ethnic groups in Indonesia. They represent about 2-3 percent of the total population (Mackie, 2005: 97). Especially before the Reform, Chinese Indonesians are economically dominant, but culturally and politically marginal in the Indonesian society. Heryanto (1998: 97) refers this as "the paradox of the Chinese dominance of the economy, and their pariah status in the cultural and political spheres." Parallel to this, Sen (2006: 171) argues that: "Through much of postcolonial history and particularly during the so-called 'New Order' (under General Soeharto), Indonesian citizens of ethnic Chinese descent have been caught in a strangely ambiguous: they have enjoyed enormous economic power while at the same time being threatened with politico-cultural effacement."

Before the Reform era, the Indonesian government, both in Soekarno and Soeharto eras, had succeeded in symbolically annihilating the expressions of Chinese identity in the mainstream Indonesian media. This is in contrast to the fact that Chinese Indonesians had major roles in the development of Indonesian media since the colonial times until today.

## Discrimination against Chinese Indonesians before the Reform Era

In understanding Chinese Indonesians, Sen (2006: 182-183) describes that there are two categories of the Chinese-Indonesian, namely *totok* and *peranakan*. Generally, *totok* refers to the Chinese migrants born in China, who tend to have noticeable cultural and racial distinctiveness, whereas *peranakan* refers to Chinese born in Indonesia after the migration of their parents or ancestors. However, many essays in *Perspectives on the*

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*Chinese Indonesians* by Godley and Liloyd (Sen, 2006: 183) refer to the problems in categorizing these groups especially with regard to the context of contemporary politics.

Concerning the history of the Indonesian media industry, it is crucial to pay attention to the role of Chinese-Indonesian capitalists, who pioneer the development of *peranakan*-Chinese press and Chinese-language press since the colonial time of Indonesia. During the colonization of Indonesia, the *peranakan*-Chinese press, which was written in Malay, was ranked the third after the Dutch press and the Eurasian press, and followed by the Chinese-language press, targeted at *totok*-Chinese Indonesians who were unable to read Malay (Pandiangan, 2003 : 402-403).

Sudibyo (2001: 5 and 34) argues that since its establishment in Indonesia, the Chinese press had kept its distance from politics, involvement being regarded as portentous and divisive; Chinese press content was cultural rather than political. In contrast, Pandiangan (2003: 413) claims that such an understanding of the Indonesian-Chinese press is misguided. Pandiangan's study of the Indonesian -Chinese press shows that since its early establishment in Indonesia, the Chinese press has not been concerned merely with cultural interest, but also with economic and political aspects of life, especially in relation to the interests of all Chinese citizens in Indonesia.

The *peranakan*-Chinese press in Indonesia emerged at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Suryadinata, 1988: 76), experiencing its glory days during the Dutch colonial period when the colonial government gave freedom to newspapers on the condition that they did not transgress the colonial interests (Pandiangan, 2003: 403). Moreover, according to this Pandiangan (2003: 403-408), each publication of the early *peranakan*-Chinese press in Indonesia had particular political strands, such as Socialism, Communism, anti-Communism, Indonesian nationalism, Chinese nationalism, and even supported Dutch colonialism or Japanese occupation, but they took a moderate line.

Pandiangan (2003: 409-410) comments that besides the *peranakan*-Chinese press there was a demand for Chinese-language press in the 1920s due to the growth of the *totok*-Chinese community in Indonesia. During the Dutch colonization period, there were seven publications, most of which were highly political, and took a much more "hard-line anti-Japanese stance" than did the *peranakan*-Chinese press. Furthermore, Pandiangan (2003: 408) testifies that: "The existence and expansion of the early Chinese press was not simply the development of business interest. It was imbued with idealism and political affiliation, with its attendant risks, and as such reflected the development of the resourceful *peranakan* Chinese society at the time."

This formulation is supported by Ida (2006: 2) who makes the point that "business and politics are two terms that cannot be separated when understanding the political culture of the media."

The heyday of *peranakan*-Chinese press and Chinese-language press in Indonesia came to an end during the Japanese military occupation (1942-1945). Most of the *peranakan*-Chinese press had been shut down except those which were pro-Japanese. Meanwhile, all Chinese-language newspapers had been banned without exception because they were anti-Japanese (Pandiangan, 2003: 406-410).

During the Indonesian independence period (1945-1965), the fate of the Chinese press was largely determined by its loyalty to the political viewpoint of those in power. During the time of the government of Soekarno, which held pluralist policies, ten *peranakan*-Chinese newspapers were circulating (Pandiangan, 2003 : 409-413). In addition to *peranakan*-Chinese newspapers, nine Chinese-language newspapers were being printed. However, these newspapers were closed down twice under the leadership of Soekarno: firstly, they were all banned in April 1958, when the government was taking the view that these newspapers were pro-Taipei supporting the 1958 rebellion in Indonesia; and secondly, they were banned again in 1960 because of anti-Chinese disturbances in a number of large cities in Indonesia.

Besides that, the Soekarno era also witnessed discriminations against Chinese Indonesians in the cultural sphere, such as the symbolic annihilation of the Chinese identity. Suryadinata (2000b: 63) reveals that in 1961, Soekarno set a regulation which demanded Chinese Indonesians “change their Chinese names to Indonesian -sounding ones.”

In the era of Soeharto, the discrimination against Chinese Indonesians had been persisted. The Chinese-language newspapers also became a prime target of closure by the New Order regime for unclear reasons. At that time, the Chinese -language press was indiscriminately branded pro-PKI (*Partai Komunis Indonesia* or the Indonesian Communist Party) by right-wing political groups and the military. Consequently, almost all of these Chinese-language newspaper owners, editors and journalists were arrested and detained without due legal process (Pandiangan, 2003 : 413). Furthermore, Pandiangan (2003: 413) declares that “the New Order powerbrokers aimed to make the Chinese-language press a *tumbal* in order to entrench their power in the midst of the chaos of the cold war between the forces of capitalism and the forces of Socialism or Communism.” In Javanese tradition, a *tumbal* was animal ritually sacrificed in a ceremony, in order to prevent disease or misfortune

The symbolic annihilation of the Chinese identity also had been prolonged during the New Order. Heryanto (1998: 99) points out that in 1996, the New Order imposed an anti-Chinese thought similar to a struggle against communism, resulting in the prohibition of Chinese schools, Chinese organizations and Chinese -related media. At this time, the New Order also prohibited the using of Chinese characters and names. Names are a particular distinguishing feature which allows a particular identity to be identified (Fong, 2004: 35-46). Therefore, legalizing a regulation which prohibits the using of Chinese names could be seen as an effort to diminish Chinese identity in the Indonesian culture. In fact, the Indonesian government, had perceived Chinese Indonesians as non -indigenous and therefore excluded them from other Indonesians. As Bertrand (2004 : 45) illustrates: “The ‘non-pribumi’ were excluded from all other Indonesians because they were considered non-indigenous. Chinese- Indonesians were the only group in this category. Formal denial of citizenship rights for recently migrated Chinese was gradually replaced by legislation and practices that differentiated and excluded all Indonesians of Chinese origin, even after citizenship was granted.”

The Soeharto’s regime even had used the Ministry of Information as an apparatus to exert tight control over media content. The Indonesian media in general was being prohibited from reporting or representing any issues related to SARA (ethnicity, religiosity, races and interclass differences). In this case, critically reporting ethnicity issues might be seen as against SARA policy. Tesoro (2000) illustrates this point thus: “[Through the Ministry of Information, the New Order] forbade coverage of any subject that stoked sentiments of ethnicity, religion, race and belief –a justifiable policy in a nation made up of numerous ethnic and religious groups. But that rule was gradually stretched to cover anything that annoyed the government”

Besides that, the New Order controlled the Indonesian media by the system of licensing, described by Manzella (2000 : 308), “in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Soeharto regime employed a number of tools to control the press, including shutting down a newspaper by revoking its license.”

As the result of those rules and regulations towards Chinese Indonesians and the Indonesian media, Chinese Indonesian had been invisible for decades in the Indonesian media. In relation to this, Gross (1998: 89) claims that “minorities share a common media fate of relative invisibility and demeaning stereotypes.” The invisibility of Chinese Indonesians in the Indonesian media during that time can be seen in the case of the Indonesian cinema, as Sen (2006: 171-172) describes that: “Chinese immigrants had laid the foundations of Indonesian film industry in the 1930s and Chinese finance remained the backbone of the film industry throughout most of its history ...On the one hand, the

role of the ethnic Chinese in the foundation of Indonesian cinema not just as producers, financiers and distributors, but also as the creative fount of cinema as directors and cameramen is undeniable. On the other hand, Chinese Indonesians are rarely present as the subject matter of film texts even before their absence is effectively mandated by government policy under the New Order... This almost total absence of any reference to Chinese in much of the cultural and artistic work, including cinema, throughout the period of New Order (1966-98) is easily explained by the Soeharto regime's deliberate move to obliterate all public display of Chineseness".

### **The Reform and Its Impacts on the Media**

The Reform in 1998, marked by the fall of the New Order regime, has brought significant changes in the economic, political and cultural life aspects of the state. In the case of the Indonesian media industry, the impacts of the Indonesian reformation are obvious. As Tesoro (2000: 43) describes: "To see how much Indonesia has changed since the fall of its longtime President Soeharto, simply step out on to the street ... Just head as far as the nearest newsstand [news agency]. There, on display, are the dozens of loud magazines, saucy tabloids, and hard-hitting newspapers that have sprung up since riots in the capital ended the former general's 32-year rule in May 1998 ... In the twelve months following Soeharto's resignation, the government granted 718 new media licenses, a leap from the 289 issued in the 53 years since the country's independence."

Additionally, in 1999, President Abdurrahman Wahid shut down the Ministry of Information within week after he was officially elected as the fourth president of Indonesia (Mazella, 2000: 310). In the same year, the Indonesian Press Law, used by the New Order to tightly control the Indonesian media was revised by proclamation of the new Indonesian Press Law No. 40/1999. Tesoro (2000: 45) discloses the main elements of the new law: Frees the Indonesian media from the discretionary control of the Ministry of Information; Abolishes the system of licensing; Establishes fines and sanctions for those obstructing press freedom; Make the supervision of the press a matter for the press itself; and Calls for an independent code of conduct for journalists.

Furthermore, the Reform also had significant impacts on the re-emergence of the Chinese-language press in the state. Pandiangan (2003: 401-416) comments that in the post-New Order period, "dozens of Chinese-Indonesians, motivated by a diversity of interests, began to establish Chinese-media," which commonly promotes abolition of regulations that discriminate against the Chinese community. The *Jawa Post Group* (JPG) also acknowledges the positive impacts of the Indonesian Reform on the fate of Chinese media in Indonesia. In its company profile (2008: 8-9), the JPG claims that "political reformation in Indonesia brought many changes. The government's prohibitions became acceptable matters, including publishing newspapers in Gou Yu language." Therefore, since 1998 the JPG has published Chinese-language newspapers, such as *Guo Ji Ri Bao* and *Kun Tian Ri Bao*. The JPG claims that *Guo Ji Ri Bao* is currently the leading Chinese-language newspaper in Indonesia.

The Reform has brought significant changes in terms of media content and media regulation. However, the Reform does not change the pattern of media ownership in Indonesia. In fact, the ownership of the Indonesian media remains concentrated in few Chinese-Indonesian capitalists who have bureaucratic indigenous patrons (Ida, 2006: 7).

### **The Reform: Acknowledgement of Chinese Indonesians**

The Reform has caused significant changes in the political and cultural life in Indonesia. This strongly influences the way Chinese Indonesians are treated by the Indonesian society and the government now days. Hoon (2004: 4) describes that in 1998 Habibie, the third president, reformed the Indonesian law system which ended the official use of the labels *pribumi* (native) for indigenous Indonesians and *non-pribumi* (non-

native) for Chinese Indonesians. Moreover, in 1999, Habibie set a regulation which allowed the teaching of Chinese language in Indonesia, and suspended the previous regulation which required Chinese Indonesians to obtain “certificates of citizenship.” Following this, the fourth president, Abdurrahman Wahid, also made crucial change in 2001, by removing the discriminatory regulations against Chinese Indonesians (such as the 1967 regulation on the restriction of Chinese customs), acknowledging the significant role of Chinese Indonesians in the Indonesian economy (Suryadinata, 2000b : 64). Additionally, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, who is currently in power, legalizes the new Indonesian Citizenship Law (No 12/2006), which according to Hoon (2008 : 180): “... has redefined ‘*asli* [genuine] Indonesia’ to include all citizens who never assumed foreign citizenship of their freewill. This signifies the end to the official distinction between ‘*asli*’ and ‘non-*asli*’, *pribumi* and ‘non-*pribumi*’ as all citizens are now legally equal before the law.” From then onwards, Chinese Indonesians have more chances to articulate their ethnic identity through the media or in everyday life.

Turning to *DetEksi*, the representations of Chinese Indonesians also can be found in this media nowadays. *DetEksi* is a publication based on polls, published by the *Jawa Pos Group*, as the second media giant in Indonesia. Since February 2000, the *Jawa Pos Group* had included an insert called “*DetEksi*” in its daily newspaper, the *Jawa Pos*, which has more than 400,000 readers per day (Busch, 2004 : 92). *DetEksi* is a type of precision journalism, “the application of polling method to news coverage by individual newspapers” (Crespi, 1980 : 462). The content of *DetEksi* is produced by young people, about young people and for young people. In order to produce media content which meets young people’s needs and interests, the *Jawa Pos Group* has created a system in which all personnel of *DetEksi* (from polls respondents, surveyors, photographers, graphic designers and even administration staff) are teenagers.

Focusing on the representations of Chinese identity in *DetEksi*, these representations can be seen as part of the *Jawa Pos Group*’s concern for the Chinese community and their cultures in Indonesia. The relation of the *Jawa Pos Group* to the Chinese Indonesian community can be traced back to the era of *peranakan*-Chinese newspapers. During the Indonesian independence period (1945 -1965), *Masyarakat Jawa Post*, as a daily newspaper, was established in 1949 by a Chinese -Indonesian capitalist named The Chung Sen. This publication changed its name several times : *Djawa Post*, then *Djawa Pos*, before finally becoming *Jawa Pos* of today (The Jawa Pos Company Profile, 2005: 1). Thus, from the beginning, there is significant relation between the *Jawa Pos Group* and Chinese Indonesian community.

As it was mentioned before, government regulations in the era before the Reform had made difficult for the Indonesian media to represent Chinese identity. However, the Reform, with the amendment of some regulations on Chinese Indonesians and the Indonesian media, has opened the opportunity for Chinese Indonesians to be symbolically acknowledged by the Indonesian media. The Reform even has made possible for the *Jawa Pos Group* to publish newspapers in Chinese language, such as *Guo Ji Ri Bao*, which is currently the leading Chinese-language newspaper in Indonesia (The Jawa Pos Company Profile, 2008: 8-9). Additionally, the *Jawa Pos Group* also has a television program which portrays Chinese Indonesian cultures. Equally important, the *Jawa Pos Group* also has developed Indonesia Tionghoa Culture Centre (ITC -Centre) which provides Chinese language and culture course (“ITC -Centre”, 2008).

This raises a number of questions: Do the *Jawa Pos Group*’s concerns for Chinese Indonesians and their cultures derive from its origin as *peranakan*-Chinese press? Or is this because some of the *Jawa Pos Group* owners today are Chinese Indonesians? In relation to this, Azrul Ananda (the Vice Director of the *Jawa Pos Group*, the founder of *DetEksi*, and the son of an indigenous owner of the *Jawa Pos Group*), admits that the *Jawa Pos Group* focuses great concern on the Chinese community and its culture in Indonesia. This is because the *Jawa Pos Group* perceives the Chinese community in

Indonesia as profitable market audiences, since they are economically strong, even though small in number. Fortunately, this market has not been taken seriously by any other Indonesian media. Azrul Ananda forcefully claims that the *Jawa Pos Group*'s concern for the Chinese community in Indonesia has no correlation with *Jawa Pos Group* history and ownership. He describes that *Jawa Pos Group* owners as never interfered in the content of the *Jawa Pos Group* publications, since their main concern is its profitability (Personal Communication, June 5, 2008). Thus, the *Jawa Pos Group*'s economic interest seems to be the reason of its concern for the Chinese community and their culture in Indonesia.

### **Superficial Representations of Chinese Indonesians on *DetEksi***

Moreover, I examine the way *DetEksi* represents Chinese ethnic identity through its polls, as Hoon (2008: 178) claims that it is crucial to questions: "Which Chineseness is being represented?", "Is it homogenous, primordial, unchanging and eternal, or heterogeneous, hybridized, flexible and evolving?", and finally "Who will decide which Chineseness will be represented?"

During 2005 and 2007, *DetEksi* conducted three polls which repeatedly discussed the Chinese New Year or the *Imlek* Day (100 percent of the respondents were Chinese Indonesian teenagers). According to those polls, most of contemporary Chinese Indonesian teenagers used to celebrate the *Imlek* Day. For example, in a poll released on 19 February 2005, *DetEksi* shows that most of the respondents (80.5 percent) celebrate *Imlek* Day. Additionally, in a poll released on 18 February 2007, *DetEksi* indicates that these Chinese Indonesian teenagers perceive the celebration of *Imlek* Day positively; as showing respect for the Chinese tradition (46.7 percent), maintaining the Chinese tradition (31.4 percent), and thank you to God for giving prosperity (14.6 percent).

In these polls, *DetEksi* always presents Chinese Indonesian celebrities (in the *Share* space) and Chinese Indonesian professionals (in the *Bla Bla Bla* space) to give comments on the poll results. In the *Share* space, *DetEksi* presents Olga Lidya (an actress), Tifanny Hendrawan (a model) and Imey Lim (the winner of a beauty pageant contest), who support the celebration of *Imlek* Day, especially the *ang pao* tradition. *Ang pao* is usually a red envelop containing some amount of money to be given to relatives during the *imlek* day.

Meanwhile, in the *Bla Bla Bla*, *DetEksi* presents Bagong Suyanto (a Chinese Indonesian sociologist) who argues that the celebration of the *Imlek* Day is essential for Chinese immigrants to build togetherness. However, Suyanto perceives the *ang pao* tradition as starting to fade away nowadays. Alternatively, Alip Toyo (the leader of a Chinese Indonesian organization) claims that contemporary Chinese Indonesians celebrate *Imlek* Day only as ritual without understanding its philosophy. This is because Chinese traditions had disappeared during the past thirty years [during the New Order], and therefore less effort had been made to pass down Chinese traditions from generation to generation during this time.

The Chinese community has varieties of rituals for celebrating *Imlek* Day. Giving *ang pao* is the most prominent ritual, besides family gatherings, eating special Chinese foods, and going to the temple for prayer. Parallel with this, *DetEksi*'s three polls are always focused on the *ang pao* tradition. According to the *DetEksi*'s poll, conducted on 29 January 2006, most respondents (81.3 percent) maintain the *ang pao* tradition is in their family.

The way *DetEksi* focuses its content on the *ang pao* tradition tends to strengthen the stereotype of Chinese Indonesians as materialist. For example, on 9 February 2005, *DetEksi* describes how the more people are ageing the more money they get from the *ang pao* tradition. Additionally, on 29 January 2006, *DetEksi* conducted a poll about the amount of money which is expected by Chinese Indonesian teenagers from the *ang pao* tradition. Finally, in a poll released on 18 February 2007, *DetEksi* shows that almost all of

Chinese respondents (96.3 percent) believe strongly that they will get a lot of money from *ang pao* this coming year. Thus, through its three polls, *DetEksi* represents the *ang pao* tradition as being all about money, confirming the notion that Chinese Indonesians are materialistic. In relation to this, Coppel (1983: 5-19) tells that Chinese Indonesians have been labeled with various negative attributes; such as a group of people whose main concern is money, trade and business. Similarly, other writers illustrate how Chinese Indonesians have been characterized as “commercial bourgeoisie” (Anderson), a “trading minority” (Wertheim) and even “economic animals” (Hoon, 2008 : 180).

Maintaining the stereotype of Chinese Indonesians as materialist is harmful for the integration of Chinese Indonesians and non-Chinese Indonesians. This stereotype may revive the awareness of the economic domination of Chinese Indonesian in the state. This awareness of Chinese Indonesians’ economic domination, according to Heryanto (1998 : 98), is one aspect which keeps the Chinese ethnic minority segregated from the majority of the population.

Overall, *DetEksi* portrays homogenous, primordial and superficial aspects of the Chinese Indonesian culture. Within three editions, *DetEksi* repeatedly portrays Chinese Indonesian culture as merely about *Imlek* Day and the *ang pao* tradition. Additionally, *DetEksi* always portrays female Chinese models wearing Chinese traditional red dress, surrounded by Chinese red lanterns (see Image 1, 2 and 3). *DetEksi* does not discuss in depth the cultural and political discriminations Chinese Indonesians had undergone before the Reform, which may enhance the insight of non-Chinese Indonesian teenagers. The media has shown little concern for how Chinese Indonesian teenagers today perceive themselves as part of the Indonesian society that might help Chinese Indonesian teenagers in their integration process.

The Reform has provided opportunities for Chinese Indonesians and their culture to be represented in the Indonesian media; however, the Reform has not changed the current, superficial politics of representation of Chinese identity in the Indonesian media. In relation to this, Sen (2006: 171) claims that: “the openness of current Indonesian culture and politics, while providing the necessary condition for re-imagining the Chinese Indonesians, does not ensure a radical shift in a politics of representation, deeply embedded in the textual practices of film industry and more widely in the cultural and political history of modern Indonesia.”

Regarding the homogenous, primordial and superficial representations of Chinese identity and the limited editions about ethnicity in general, the editor of *DetEksi*, Aziz Hasibuan, confirms that some of *DetEksi* personnel are Chinese Indonesian teenagers. Nevertheless, Aziz Hasibuan, admits that he and his crew have difficulty in finding interesting poll topics in relation to the issue of ethnicity. He perceives ethnicity as a narrow topic, merely about traditional dances, traditional costumes and traditional foods. He even questioned the researcher about how to make interesting news about ethnicity (personal communication, June 3, 2008). Here, Aziz Hasibuan can be perceived to be one of millions of contemporary Indonesian teenagers who were politically constructed by the New Order as uncritical and insensitive generation in terms of “SARA”.

SARA is an acronym of *Suku, Agama, Ras dan Antar-golongan* (ethnicity, religion, race and interclass). This acronym was introduced by the New Order in the 1970s, to emphasize sensitive issues which should not be discussed and debated in order to maintain law and order (Hoon, 2006, 151). Arguably, the term SARA is common among most contemporary Indonesian teenagers, since the New Order disseminated the idea of SARA through the Indonesian educational system from primary schools to universities. Additionally, Tesoro (2000: 43) outlines the New Order through the Ministry of Information as tightly controlling the Indonesian media in reporting SARA issues. During the New Order, only superficial representations of ethnicity were allowed to be discussed - such as traditional dances and costumes. As a result, Indonesian people, including

Indonesian teenagers, were politically constructed to be uncritical and insensitive to issues of SARA.



**Image 1:**  
Celebrating the *Imlek* Day by wearing Chinese traditional red dress  
Source: *DetEksi*, December 9, 2006



**Image 2:**  
Celebrating the *Imlek* Day by wearing Chinese traditional red dress  
Source: *DetEksi*, February 18, 2007





**Image 3:**

**Celebrating the *Imlek* Day by wearing Chinese traditional red dress**

Source: *DetEksi*, February 9, 2005

For the Indonesian media, covering sensitive issues, such as ethnicity, is not profitable since sensitive issues tend to be avoided by advertisers or sponsors. Parallel to this, Bogart (1995: 99) argues that “advertisers have very good business reasons to avoid environments unsuited for their messages. The emotional tone that is set by a publication or broadcast influences the public’s attentiveness to persuasion.” Thus, the state’s policy on SARA had a significant impact on the way teenagers and media perceived the ethnicity issue. Being perceived as problematic has made ethnicity become an unpopular issue among Indonesian teenagers and therefore unprofitable topic for *DetEksi*.

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