

Spillover Effects of Foreign Television Broadcasts and Community Nationalism in Indonesia-Malaysia-Singapore Borderlands

Azwar¹, Ayu Wardani², Chairunnisa Zempi³, Uly Sophia⁴, Ajeng Sagita Cahyani⁵

¹Lecturer Study Program Communication Science, Faculty of Social and Political Science, UPN Veteran Jakarta, Indonesia. <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1520-5028>

²Lecturer Study Program Communication Science, Faculty of Social and Political Science, UPN Veteran Jakarta, Indonesia. <https://orcid.org/0009-0004-4380-7258>

³Lecturer Study Program Communication Science, Faculty of Social and Political Science,, UPN Veteran Jakarta, Indonesia. <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5004-4173>

⁴Lecturer Study Program Film Television and Media Studies, Faculty of Social and Political Science, Universitas Maritim Raja Ali Haji (UMRAH), Indonesia

⁵Student Study Program Communication Science, Faculty of Social and Political Science, FISIP, UPN Veteran Jakarta, Indonesia.

Correspondence: Azwar, Lecturer Study Program Communication Science, Faculty of Social and Political Science, UPN Veteran Jakarta, Indonesia. <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1520-5028>

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Abstract

This research examines how television broadcasts in the public space of border areas impact the nationalism of Indonesian. The area that is the object of this research is the Riau Islands, which directly borders Malaysia and Singapore. The issues in this research are analyzed using the Public Sphere Theory described by Jurgen Habermas as part of the critical theories of the Frankfurt School. The research employs a qualitative approach with a case study design. The results of this study illustrate that the spillover of foreign television broadcasts can be received by border communities, which have positive and negative impacts on Indonesian communities at the border. Positively, people within the border have alternatives to information since Indonesian television broadcasts in the border are still constrained by broadcasting infrastructure. On the other hand, because the media is able to change people's perceptions, spillover is suspected to be one of the causes of the declining sense of nationalism within border communities. This research also found that community nationalism is not related to foreign television broadcasts (Malaysia and Singapore) consumed by the Riau Islands community. Cultural similarities make people feel more comfortable with broadcasts from these neighboring countries.

Keywords: border areas, cultural infiltration, nationalism, spillover, television

1. Introduction

One of the consequences of Indonesia being a large country is that many areas of Indonesia are connected to neighboring countries. There are 10 regions in Indonesia that border with other countries, including Singapore, Malaysia, the Philippines, Australia, Papua New Guinea, Vietnam, India, Thailand, the Republic of Palau, and Timor Leste. Problems in border areas, in addition to welfare issues, development inequality, crime (Boriboonrat, 2013), low access to education, culture and communications factors (Medeiros, 2020) are also related to issues of national resilience and the erosion of a sense of nationalism with people in border areas. Issues related to national resilience and nationalism is influenced by many factors. Apart from the high level of social activity with the global community, these issues are also influenced by the media (Alwi & Sugono, 2000).

Unequal access to media is one of the causes of social problems related to efforts to equalize the rights of citizens. Unequal media access in border areas is a major contributor to creating unequal social structures (Rianto et al., 2012). Therefore, equal access to media for the public (including remote, outermost, and disadvantaged communities) is a necessity. Efforts to equalize media access extend beyond the domestic media industry, encompassing the broader impact of foreign media content on society. In this regard, Indonesia tends to be weak, and even further weakened, in responding to foreign media

content. This issue can be observed from two fundamental aspects: the structural aspect and the cultural aspect (Rahayu et al., 2015).

This study will discuss the cultural aspects related to the infiltration of foreign broadcasts in border regions. Based on Law Number 43 of 2008 on State Territory, the Border Area refers to parts of the national territory located along Indonesia's boundaries with other countries. In the case of land borders, the Border Area is situated in the subdistricts. This definition is similar to Article 1, Paragraph 2 of the Presidential Regulation on the National Border Management Agency. In this context, Batam City is included.

Tanjung Pinang City is one of the regions directly bordering Indonesia's neighboring countries, Singapore and Malaysia. As a border area of Indonesia, this region is very dynamic because it is a meeting point for people from various ethnic groups and nations. Being a border region has both positive and negative impacts, especially for Indonesia in general. The positive impact includes the opportunity for the region to become an international city, which drives improvements with the local economy. However, a negative consequence of this border region is the blurring of national identity and culture, driven by the increasing integration of the local community with people from other countries.

The issue is arguably linked to the phenomenon of foreign television broadcasts in border areas. Foreign television broadcasts are mostly received freely in border regions. Areas bordering foreign countries, such as the Riau Islands, tend to receive more broadcasts (spillover broadcast) from abroad than from domestic sources. This affordability indicates an unequal competition between foreign broadcasts, particularly from neighboring countries, and local broadcasts in the border regions.

From the perspective of media consumption in border areas, in some cases, people in border regions consume more foreign media. This consumption is due to the large number of broadcasts from neighboring countries that reach Indonesian territory in the border areas. Laboto (as cited in Pant, 2019) views the spillover effect as an important phenomenon in the logic of transnational broadcast distribution, which means that people in border regions can easily receive television programs from neighboring countries due to accidental reception of foreign television signals. Meanwhile, the broadcasting situation in Indonesia's border areas remains weak due to the limited broadcasting infrastructure and facilities.

Based on data of television broadcasts consumed by the people of Tanjung Pinang City, there are 30 television stations available for the public. Twelve of them are national broadcasts, four are local broadcasts, and fourteen are foreign broadcasts. The fourteen foreign broadcasts are from neighboring countries, Singapore and Malaysia (Arifuddin, 2015). With this quantitative data, it is clear that the spillover of foreign broadcasts impacts the nationalism of people in the border areas.

2. Spillover Effect

The spillover effect is a situation caused by an action within a specific scope, which then spreads to a broader scope while still maintaining interdependence. The presence of this spillover effect can trigger significant changes in a larger system (Behn et al., 2025). According to Roring et al. (2023), the spillover effect is a consequence arising from the interdependence between regions, where the condition is influenced by other regions that possess resource potential and administrative proximity. The consequences of the spillover effect are often unpredictable and difficult to address within a certain scope. One area affected by this effect is broadcasting. In the broadcasting world, spillover refers to a condition where foreign broadcast signals are directly captured through satellites without undergoing strict filtering processes, often due to excessive capacity on receiving devices (Ma'ruf, 2018).

Television and radio broadcasts are frequently used as media by people in border areas. These broadcasts play a central role in disseminating information, entertainment, life values, and culture from one country to another. Therefore, it is common for people in border regions to receive content from various sources, including neighboring countries, due to media exposure. According to Rakhmat (as cited in Pangaribuan, 2015), media exposure can be measured by how often individuals are exposed to media, such as watching television, watching movies, reading magazines or newspapers, and listening to the radio. This exposure can create a dynamic social space in terms of cultural identity, nationalism, political attitudes, content consumption patterns, and social interactions. As a result, broadcast spillover can interfere with the dissemination of information from the Indonesian government to its citizens (Humaizi, 2018).

Considering these conditions, stronger regulations are needed to ensure the content entering the societal environment. Strong and systematic state regulations are crucial in addressing the spillover effect, especially in border areas. In addition, the provision of high-quality, diverse, and relevant local content for the border communities must be improved to protect the local media landscape as a form of broadcasting democratization. Broadcasting democratization is reflected in the diversity of content and ownership, where content diversity can only be achieved if there is variation in media ownership (Rachmatie et al., 2020). Therefore, diverse media ownership will help create a more inclusive media domain, enriching the perspectives of border communities along with strong regulations from the relevant authorities.

3. Television Broadcast in The Border Areas

Television is an electronic mass medium that broadcasts various forms of information and entertainment as moving images accompanied by sound to viewers who enjoy these broadcasts. In the communication process, television serves as a mass medium with its own advantages, such as its immediate nature, wide reach without distance limitations, and strong appeal (Arifuddin, 2015). As a result, the public has made television a routine part of their daily lives, deeply integrated into their activities (Andung et al., 2018). According to Hodkinson (as cited in Matin, 2021), media is viewed as an industry, not solely determined by technology, and this perspective broadens the public's viewpoint on content and media audiences. Therefore, television plays a significant role in shaping public opinion and influencing behavior, especially in border areas where the audience consumes media content.

Previous studies (Huang et al., 2015; Nasr & Rieger, 2023) have shown differences in opinion formation between people living in border areas and those in core or urban areas. Public opinion in border regions tends to be heavily influenced by mainstream media, such as television, making residents more likely to accept and trust the information presented by these sources. In contrast, urban populations have greater access to technology, allowing them to obtain information from diverse sources, which leads to a more varied perspective on issues (Bidzilya et al., 2024).

Television broadcasts in border areas can promote new values, but they can also create challenges in preserving local traditions and cultural identity, which are often eroded by the forces of globalization in modern times. Therefore, public broadcasting becomes an important issue of concern in Indonesia's border regions (Briandana, 2019). In Tanjung Pinang city and Batam, Riau Islands, which border Malaysia and Singapore, residents tend to prefer watching television broadcasts from these countries rather than local broadcasts for certain types of entertainment. This preference occurs because local television programs are often dominated by soap operas, which are considered incompatible with Malay culture and lack educational value (Setiawan et al., 2021).

This condition further emphasizes the importance of paying greater attention to local television broadcasts to maintain a balance between globalization and the preservation of national identity in Indonesia's border regions, which are particularly vulnerable to foreign cultural influences and media information. To ensure the continuity of local television broadcasts in these border areas, strong regulation is required, and the government along with its institutions must ensure that television stations prioritize public interest (Morissan, 2019). The broadcasting issues in border regions are also an important focus for the Indonesian Broadcasting Commission (KPI). KPI emphasized that one of the goals of migrating from analog to digital television broadcasting (Analog Switch Off, ASO) is to eliminate areas lacking broadcasting service or 'blank spots' in Indonesia (Indonesian Broadcasting Commission, 2024). Therefore, the decision made by KPI represents an effort to address these challenges. In addition to eliminating areas with no broadcast coverage, this transformation can also improve broadcast quality and expand access to information and entertainment for all Indonesian citizens, especially those in border areas.

4. Television Broadcasting and the Instillation of National Values

Television broadcasting as part of mass media, serves various functions, such as entertainment, persuasion, information dissemination, and surveillance. Additionally, television broadcasts are closely linked to efforts aimed at instilling national values, which is one of its normative functions. Television plays a significant role as a persuasive tool in promoting values to its audience. This information is supported by the findings of several studies (Dessie et al., 2023; Dhiman, 2023; Flew, 2023). These researchers agree that media, along with the cultural products it produces, plays a key role in shaping national character. The creative industry and other cultural products are regulated in Australia (Dhiman, 2023). Dhiman (2023), in his critical review, explored the role of mass media in fostering positive outcomes for national development. Dessie et al. (2023) examined the implications of private television broadcasts in Ethiopia on the development of national identity. These studies essentially agree that media plays an important role in building national identity.

5. Indonesia's Front-Line Areas

Since the establishment of Indonesia, Tanjung Pinang has been a border area, directly neighboring Malaysia and Singapore. This positions Tanjung Pinang as a strategic border region due to its direct proximity to other countries. The city holds significant economic and cultural potential if managed properly.

Ideally, Tanjung Pinang city should serve as a cultural ambassador, introducing Indonesian culture to other countries. Furthermore, this outer city has great potential to strengthen Indonesia's culture in the eyes of foreign communities. However, the potential to introduce and strengthen this culture has not been fully realized. The cultural diplomacy expected to enhance Indonesia's position in the world has not been effectively performed by Tanjung Pinang, which directly borders a foreign country (Singapore).

Tanjung Pinang, as a strategic national area in the Riau Islands Province, is a maritime border region of the Republic of Indonesia. The issues raised so far tend to focus on economic matters, such as the inadequate management of natural

resources, by both the state and private sectors. Another frequently mentioned issue is the incomplete and partial handling of border regions. Often discussed are the low levels of education and welfare compared to neighboring countries, such as Singapore and Malaysia. Additionally, there is a lack of security and defense infrastructure, which weakens the monitoring of various border violations.

These are certainly strategic issues to discuss. These critical matters directly impact the communities in border regions, particularly Tanjung Pinang. Numerous studies have been conducted on these topics, but another equally important issue for border regions is the cultural battle as a national agent on the international stage (Dessie et al., 2023). This study will focus specifically on the issue of foreign cultural infiltration and the negotiation of Indonesian culture in border regions in this global era.

6. Public Sphere and Citizen Rights

Jürgen Habermas is part of the second generation of the Frankfurt School, continuing the tradition of critical theory rooted in Marxism, with an emphasis on pragmatism and the relevance of linguistic exchanges formed through discourse (do Carmo et al., 2023). His work revolves around the study of deliberative politics, the theory of communicative action, and the public sphere. The term “public sphere” is derived from the words ‘sphere’ and ‘public’ (Thomson, 1992). According to the Indonesian Dictionary (KBBI, 2025), sphere is an unlimited cavity, a place for everything that exists. Meanwhile, the public is defined as a large group of people. In simple terms, public sphere can be understood as an unrestricted area that can be used by society for common purposes. However, in this study, public sphere is more accurately understood as a social domain owned by the community, free from interests other than the interests of the community itself.

According to Habermas (Sumaryanto, 2009), public sphere is a social area that is free from censorship and domination. In principle, all citizens should have access to this space. Public sphere functions as an independent and autonomous area, separate from specific economic powers. Furthermore, Sumaryanto (2009) also mentioned that public sphere is a bridge connecting individual interests within family life to the demands of social life. Information is a crucial part of public sphere (Sumaryanto, 2009).

Yet, according to Supriadi (2017), in his work “The Relationship between Public Sphere and the Press According to Habermas,” the development of the public sphere shows a process in society’s ability to communicate collectively. The ability to communicate in Indonesia’s public sphere should encourage the strengthening of the national culture and language of a community. It should not marginalize the national language of the local people. The theory of Public Sphere was initiated by Jürgen Habermas (1989) in his work titled “The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society,” which is a translation of the German book from 1962 (Supriadi, 2017). As stated by Sumaryanto (2009), there are two concepts of public sphere according to Habermas.

Habermas proposed the idea of public sphere as a place where discourse and rational consensus take place, where public issues are discussed, which he termed the idealization of the bourgeois public sphere. The emergence of Habermas’ theory of public sphere places the interests of the public above the interests of the bourgeoisie. The public sphere plays a crucial role as a space for society to engage in free and open discussions on policies and social issues (O’Mahony, 2021). In this context, the public interest in the public sphere is the use of the national language as a medium for information in their public sphere. In border areas, the national language becomes crucial as the identity of the country and a representative of the nation. However, in reality, the national language is often secondary in the public sphere in border regions (Muller, 2019). This tendency is partly due to the widespread accommodation of foreign languages, which weakens the national language.

7. Research Method

This study adopts a constructivist paradigm. In the constructivist paradigm, knowledge needs to be constructed or processed before it can be fully understood (Schwarz et al., 2014). This study aims to analyze in depth how the thought processes or constructions of the people of Tanjung Pinang City take shape when they provide their perspectives on the presence of foreign broadcasts (broadcasts from other countries) in their region. This issue is also examined in relation to nationalism.

The research employs a qualitative approach with a case study method. A case study is a type of research that explores a bounded system (case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over a certain period of time by collecting detailed and in-depth data from various sources of information. It then reports case descriptions and case-based themes (Creswell et al., 2007). This is a basic research study aimed at understanding, explaining, and developing knowledge and theory. The study was conducted in Tanjung Pinang City from March to November 2024. The research seeks to examine how the infiltration of foreign broadcasts occurs in Tanjung Pinang and how this phenomenon relates to the nationalism of border-area communities. The research objectives are based on the case study method, which describes how the phenomenon unfolds, the criticisms raised regarding this phenomenon, and the solutions derived from the study so that they can serve as lessons for the future (Yin, 1982), particularly concerning the future of broadcasting in Indonesia’s border regions.

This study involves five informants, selected purposively based on the research objectives. The informants include: The first informant is the Chairman of the Regional Indonesian Broadcasting Commission (KPID) of Riau; the second informant is a lecturer from the Film, Television, and Media Studies Program (KFTVM) at Universitas Maritim Raja Ali Haji (UMRAH) in Tanjung Pinang; and the third and fourth informants are members of the Tanjung Pinang community in the Riau Islands.

The data in this study were collected through observations, in-depth interviews, a literature review, and documentation (Neuman, 2002). Data collection in this study followed several steps: first, observation is performed. In qualitative research, observation involves the researcher visiting the field to observe the behavior and activities of individuals at the research location (Creswell et al., 2007). Second, in-depth interviews are conducted. During in-depth interviews, the researcher conducts face-to-face interviews with participants, interviews them by phone, or engages in focus group discussions consisting of six to eight participants per group. Third, literature reviews are conducted, which involves studying documents that can be used in qualitative research, including public documents (such as newspapers, papers, office reports) or personal documents like diaries, letters, and emails (Creswell et al., 2007).

The data collection techniques are as follows: 1) Documentation of the study, which involves evaluating written documents related to the phenomena being studied. 2) Direct field observation (Neuman, 2002) in Tanjung Pinang regarding the phenomenon being researched. 3) In-depth Interviews are conducted with selected informants to understand their views, experiences, and expectations regarding the phenomenon of foreign television broadcasts and nationalism among communities in border regions. Data analysis was performed using thematic analysis, which involves identifying and understanding patterns and key themes in the interview data to gain a deeper understanding. Additionally, document analysis was conducted to analyze the phenomena being studied.

The Phenomenon of Foreign Broadcasting in Border Areas

The main themes emerging from research on the phenomenon of broadcast spillover in border regions highlight several critical issues, including: (a) the infrastructure gap and limited broadcasting access in border areas, which results in communities consuming a significant amount of foreign television spillover broadcasts; (b) the influence of culture and language on the consumption of foreign television spillover broadcasts; (c) nationalism and local identity among border communities amidst the currents of globalization; (d) regulations and challenges facing local broadcasting; and (e) media economics and content competition. Each of these themes reflects the complex dynamics between broadcasting access, cultural identity, and the efforts to maintain nationalism in border regions that are rich in cross-cultural interactions.

Infrastructure Gaps and Broadcasting Access

The disparity in broadcasting infrastructure between central regions and border areas, particularly the limited access to national broadcasts in border regions such as the Riau Islands, poses a significant challenge. Unequal access to national broadcasts has led border communities to rely more heavily on broadcasts from neighboring countries, such as Malaysia and Singapore. According to one informant:

“In terms of broadcasting infrastructure, underdeveloped areas like Lingga in the Riau Islands have no access to digital broadcasts at all. Only TVRI is available, and even it relies on very outdated infrastructure. Plans to build digital broadcasting infrastructure there are just beginning.” (HM, August 10, 2024).

HM further explained that the Natuna Islands and Anambas Islands only have a TVRI digital transmitter as their sole national television broadcaster. Subsequently, there are no local or other national broadcasts available in these regions. KPID of the Riau Islands, as the institution responsible for monitoring broadcast in the area, has held several discussions with the Indonesia Ministry of Communication and Information Technology regarding this issue. KPID Riau Islands hopes for specific policies to address the needs of Indonesia’s outermost regions, as relying on private sector investments is not feasible due to the limited audience size in these areas. From a business perspective, investment in broadcasting infrastructure in Indonesia’s border regions is not profitable for private broadcasting industries. A similar sentiment was expressed by another informant, who stated:

“In the context of the Riau Islands, when we talk about sovereignty or nationalism, it is closely related to infrastructure, equitable development, and the demographic conditions of the region, which result in unequal infrastructure distribution. For the Riau Islands, it is not that the residents cannot choose national broadcasts; it is simply that no national options are available. The only broadcasts accessible are from Malaysia and Singapore.” (US, August 10, 2024).

The statement from US highlights that the limitations in broadcasting infrastructure leave the people of the Riau Islands with no option but to watch spillover broadcasts from Malaysia and Singapore. This sentiment is echoed by DGS, a resident of Sei Jang, Bukit Bestari, who complained, “The lack of local and national television broadcasts leads people to choose broadcasts from neighboring countries, Malaysia and Singapore” (DGS, November 12, 2024).

The inadequate infrastructure in border areas and the disparity in national and local television broadcasts have made

communities more inclined to rely on foreign television spillovers. This tendency is further facilitated by the ease with which border communities can access foreign television broadcasts (spillover) in the Riau Islands.

The Influence of Culture and Language on Broadcast Consumption

The cultural and linguistic ties to the Malay language make the people of the Riau Islands more comfortable with content from Malaysia and Singapore. The presence of foreign broadcasts aligns more closely with local cultural identities, as opposed to national broadcasts, which are often seen as overly “Java-centric.” According to informant HM:

“The quality of content, for instance, is more engaging when we watch Malaysian and Singaporean broadcasts, especially during occasions like Eid or other special events. Their programs are more enjoyable to watch. The sense of family and togetherness comes through better, while our broadcasts focus more on entertainment and humor. So, during Eid celebrations, we prefer Singaporean or Malaysian broadcasts because they emphasize familial bonds more clearly.” (HM, August 10, 2024).

Malay culture has historical roots in the Riau Islands, and both Malaysia and Singapore share a closer cultural connection with the Malay people of the Riau Islands and other Malay communities in the archipelago. This cultural closeness leads to the preference for broadcasts from Malaysia and Singapore over national television programs, which often focus on the life and culture of Java. As expressed by informant US:

“One interesting point is related to culture. Since the New Order era, we’ve been very Java-centric, with a constant focus on Javanese culture. National broadcasts always prioritize Javanese culture, particularly from Jakarta. The language used, such as ‘lu’ and ‘gue’ reflects this. The reason we prefer broadcasts from Malaysia and Singapore is because they have a closer cultural connection through the Malay language, which creates a distinct segmentation in audience preferences.” (US, August 10, 2024).

The statement by US indicates that while the people of the Riau Islands still enjoy national broadcasts, they prefer Malaysian and Singaporean broadcasts during significant moments such as Ramadan, Eid, and other important holidays, as these broadcasts are more aligned with their own cultural identity. The audience appreciates Malay films and religious Malay music, which reflect their local values.

This view is supported by informant MAR, a resident of Kampung Kolam, Kijang, Riau Islands, who stated that the people of Natuna prefer watching spillover broadcasts from Malaysia and Singapore. The preference is not only due to the limited availability of local and national broadcasts but also because the themes of Malaysian and Singaporean television better reflect their culture compared to national broadcasts.

“During Ramadan, the people of Natuna eagerly await broadcasts from Malaysia and Singapore because they feel more familiar with the cultural themes. These broadcasts reflect Malay culture, which is the local culture, in terms of language and clothing.” (MAR, November 12, 2024).

Based on these responses, cultural similarities play a significant role in making border communities feel more comfortable watching spillover broadcasts from Malaysia and Singapore. The shared cultural traits, such as language and traditions, create a stronger connection to the content, further encouraging the preference for these broadcasts over national programming.

Nationalism and Local Identity Amid Globalization

The discussion on perceptions of nationalism in border communities is often linked to openness to foreign cultures. The complexity of local identity is influenced by history, kinship, and geographical proximity to neighboring countries. According to informant HM:

“Actually, when it comes to the phenomenon of nationalism in border areas, especially in the Riau Islands, this issue has been resolved due to the shared Malay culture with Singapore and Malaysia. Moreover, the population here is heterogeneous; all ethnic groups are represented in the Riau Islands. For nationalism, I don’t think it is a major issue here, because we are already accustomed to the cultures of Singapore and Malaysia.” (HM, August 10, 2024).

HM explains that the cultural similarities between Malaysia, Singapore, and the people of the Riau Islands eliminate any issues regarding nationalism. As part of the global community, the Malay people of the Riau Islands recognize their national identity as Indonesian citizens. However, as members of the Malay community, they also share solidarity with other Malay-speaking communities. This sentiment is further emphasized by US:

“Interestingly, when we use the Malay language in the Riau Islands, which is actually the root of the Indonesian language many Indonesian netizens criticize us, as if using the Malay language is synonymous with Malaysia, making us seem un-Indonesian. In fact, when people in the Riau Islands speak Malay, the content from the Riau Islands is labeled as unpatriotic. But Malay is a part of Indonesian nationalism.” (US, August 10, 2024).

US points out that the Malay people, as supporters of Indonesia, contribute to the development of Indonesian nationalism, one of which is the contribution of the Malay language as the root of the Indonesian language. However, in the current context, communities that hold onto their unique cultural identities, such as the Malay culture, are often criticized as unpatriotic. In fact, as a nation rich in diverse cultures, valuing and respecting cultural diversity should be considered an integral part of nationalism. This sentiment is reinforced by NZD, a resident of Jalan Ganet KM 14, Tanjung Pinang, who stated:

“Most of the television broadcasts from Malaysia and Singapore use the Malay language. Malay is also the language we use daily, so it makes us feel more connected to the broadcasts from these foreign channels.” (NZD, November 12, 2024).

NZD’s statement further strengthens the idea that cultural and linguistic closeness makes the people of the Riau Islands, who are directly adjacent to Malaysia and Singapore, more comfortable with foreign television spillovers. This preference is not due to a lack of local nationalism, but rather because of the cultural and linguistic proximity to neighboring countries.

Local Broadcasting Regulations and Challenges

Digital broadcasting policies and the regulatory challenges to enhance the quantity and quality of local broadcasts, enabling them to compete with foreign broadcasts, were a focal point in this study. KPID Riau Islands has made efforts to strengthen local content and encouraged television stations to adjust their airing schedules to better meet the needs of border communities. According to informant HM:

“Local broadcasters with permits in the region are required to air 20% local content. However, network television stations usually schedule their local content between 2 and 3 a.m., when there is little to no audience. Therefore, KPID encourages local television stations in Riau Islands, like CNN, Metro TV, and others, to air local content starting at 5 a.m.” (HM, August 10, 2024).

KPID’s stance indicates that regulations prioritize the public’s interests, not just the desires of media industry managers. KPID has pushed for an increase in both the quantity and quality of local content. HM also points out that KPID’s efforts face resistance from national media, as national media prioritize their business interests and profitability.

Media Economy and Content Competition

National media face the challenge of creating content that is more relevant to local culture while also maintaining their audience in the face of competition from foreign content, which is perceived as more appealing. There is also an opportunity for local content creators to use digital platforms with a local cultural approach, such as the Malay language, which has appeal in neighboring countries. As stated by informant HM:

“Broadcast media naturally prioritize ensuring their businesses run smoothly. Media businesses can thrive if there are many viewers watching their broadcasts. This allows them to sell to sponsors to secure advertisements for their programs. Unfortunately, local communities, such as those in border regions are minorities, making them less appealing to the industry.” (HM, August 10, 2024).

Media regarding the political economy is a key factor in the marginalization of local cultures, as minority communities do not form an attractive market for the media industry. The media industry, driven by advertising revenue, naturally focuses on maintaining profitable businesses. Therefore, it is essential for the state to intervene and advocate for minority communities, particularly those in border regions, who serve as the front-line representatives of the nation.

Public Sphere, Citizen Rights, and Nationalism

According to Habermas, public sphere refers to a social area free from censorship and domination. This ideology aligns with the findings of this research, which revealed that the phenomenon of spillover broadcasts from foreign television essentially represents the desire of border communities to enjoy television content that aligns with their culture. Indonesians in the Riau Islands, located directly next to Malaysia and Singapore, feel freer from the dominance of national television broadcasts that do not resonate with their culture.

Enjoying spillover broadcasts from Malaysia and Singapore for Indonesians in border areas is, in principle, the embodiment of the public sphere concept proposed by Habermas, where individuals are free to access spaces that affirm their existence. The public sphere of border communities is an independent and autonomous area, free from external powers, even those invoking nationalism. Enjoying spillover broadcasts that feature programs reflecting cultures similar to the local people is their right.

For the people of the Riau Islands, watching spillover broadcasts from Malaysia and Singapore does not imply a lack of love for Indonesia. To them, these two regions are clearly distinct, with borders that are well-defined. One aspect concerns their right to live with their own culture, while another relates to their commitment to being part of the nation of Indonesia. Nationalism does not mean separating people from their own cultures; rather, it supports the idea that communities should

coexist alongside the diverse cultures of Indonesia.

8. Conclusion

In conclusion, the findings of this study indicate that the solution to the infiltration of foreign broadcasting spillovers in border areas lies not only in infrastructure development but also in the creation of content that is relevant and representative of the local community. Government support is essential to develop high-quality local broadcasting that promotes cultural diversity, ensuring that border communities remain connected and recognized as integral parts of Indonesia.

Broadcasting infrastructure gaps contribute to disparities in information access. Border areas, such as the Riau Archipelago, experience limited access to national broadcasts due to infrastructure deficiencies. Consequently, local communities are more inclined to rely on spillover broadcasts from neighboring countries, such as Malaysia and Singapore, which are both more accessible and culturally relevant.

Cultural affinity strengthens the tendency to consume foreign broadcasts. The cultural and linguistic closeness to the Malay language fosters a preference among border communities for foreign content, which they perceive as more representative of their identity compared to national broadcasts, which are often viewed as centered around Javanese culture. Broadcasts from neighboring countries are deemed more suitable for reflecting local values, particularly during significant moments such as Ramadhan and Eid celebrations.

This study highlights the complexity of nationalism in border areas. Despite exposure to foreign broadcasts, the nationalism of border communities remains strong. Openness to broadcasts from neighboring countries does not signify a weakened sense of patriotism but rather reflects historical, cultural, and economic ties that have long been established. However, border communities often feel underrepresented as part of the national identity due to the Javanese-centric stereotype prevalent in national broadcasts.

This study also identifies both opportunities and challenges in local broadcasting regulations. The government and the KPID have made efforts to enhance local content to engage border communities. However, the primary challenges lie in the quality and relevance of the content, as well as competition with foreign broadcasts that are perceived as higher in quality and more appealing. Strengthening policy is necessary not only to regulate the distribution of broadcasts but also to encourage the production of highly competitive local content.

The research further reveals the economic potential of content based on local culture. Border communities have the capacity to produce content rooted in Malay culture, which holds promising market potential in neighboring countries such as Malaysia and Singapore. This initiative requires government support in the form of policies that provide opportunities and assistance for local creators to develop content that can compete effectively and attract cross-border audiences.

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Authors contributions

The author contributions for this study were distributed among the team members as follows. The conceptualization of the research was jointly undertaken by A.A., A.W., and C.Z. The methodology was devised by A.A. The analysis of the data was conducted by A.A. and A.S.C., while A.A. took the lead in the investigation. The resources for the study were managed collectively by A.A and U.S. Data curation was a collaborative effort between A.A. and A.W., C.Z., U.S., and A.S.C.. A.A., were primarily responsible for the original draft preparation, and subsequent writing, review, and editing were performed by all authors.

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The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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Obtained.

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Data availability statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

Data sharing statement

No additional data are available.

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