

## **The influence of advertisers on television content in post-authoritarian Indonesia**

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**ABSTRACT:** *In Indonesia, the downfall of the last authoritarian ruler in May 1998 marked the beginning of the transition to democracy in the country. Before 1998, the autocratic government monitored firmly the media content for decades. With the current broadcast liberalization, Indonesian televisions can produce almost any kind of program contents. However, a question arises, who actually controls media content in the era of liberalization. How political and economic factors such as owners, advertisers, audiences, regulators, politicians and so forth influence television workers in shaping content? This empirical research intends to focus on the role of television advertisers in influencing the program content. The research question is: how do television advertisers influence television workers in shaping their content? The question needs a qualitative descriptive answer from various sources, including interviews with around 100 television workers, participant observations, documents, television reports, and other data sources. This research reveals important findings that advertiser played significant role in shaping the program content. Advertisers were allowed to shape the program content they financed. News program sometimes broadcasts news stories from advertisers as a result of engagement between advertisers and the television-marketing department.*

**Keywords:** *advertiser, television, program, content, Indonesia*

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

The fall of the last authoritarian government in Indonesia in 1998 allowed the rise of freedom followed by the process of transition to democracy in the country. For decades, the autocratic government monitored firmly the media. At the time of authoritarian era, the media that dared to ignore or underestimate government controls, they would face fatal consequences. Media permits were frequently revoked, subject to bans, and even closed down without gaining access to open trial.

For more than 50 years, two leaders, Sukarno and Suharto, who run their governments in an authoritarian manner, ruled Indonesia. Sukarno, who led the struggle for independence of Indonesia from the Netherlands, was the country's first President from 1945 to 1967. During his rule, and with the backing of the military, Sukarno disbanded political parties, arrested and imprisoned political opponents, used martial law to closed-down mass media criticism of the government's policies, and other repressive actions.

During the initial decade of independence in 1945, Indonesian media was dubbed by founding president Sukarno a 'toll of the Revolution', responsible for energizing and mobilizing public opinion (Hill 2007, p.14). Sukarno determined to rein in renegade media for a range of political reasons such as considered lending editorial support for regional movements against the central government, or offending the president or senior political or military figures. Sukarno closed down newspapers, and he was adamant that, whatever the international odium associated with the press suppression, he would not allow destructive criticism of his leadership (Hill 2007, p.30).

As part of an effort by government to mobilize the mass media in forging a strong and unified nation, the government established the state controlled television station TVRI in 1962; it was the first and the only television in Indonesia for 26 years since its inception.

With the transition of government after the coup d'état against Sukarno in 1 October 1965 and the transfer of power to Major-General Suharto on 11 March 1966, the new government called the press to safeguard national security against internal and external threats. In promoting adherence to the state ideology, the Suharto Government sought to eliminate critical papers, domesticate the vociferous press, and ensure that press workers and management were ultimately loyal to the government. By 1969, savage bans, by the regime cut the number of newspapers and magazines, and their total circulation, to less than half (Dhakidae 1991, p. 551).

During the authoritarian era, the government had created political barriers to entry in the media industry. The policy was aimed at producing domination by the government with the power to grant and to revoke media licenses. Through its power, the regime was able to limit market players to politically favorable parties. This was especially visible in the television industry, when in 1988 the government granted licenses to

the first private commercial television Rajawali Citra Televisi Indonesia (RCTI) owned by Suharto's son. Another three private commercial televisions, which follow suit in the nineties: Indosiar, Surabaya Citra Televisi (SCTV), and Televisi Pendidikan Indonesia (TPI, now MNC) were also under the control of giant enterprises owned by Suharto's circle.

The restriction imposed on media prevailed until Suharto came down from power on May 21, 1998. It was a day of great importance in the Indonesian history. The day when President Suharto –pressured by waves of demonstrations due to economic meltdown- was forced to step down after more than 30 years in power. From that day, the country started its path to democracy, which also paves the way for freedom of the press.

The downfall of President Suharto allows the media to appreciate the new circumstance of being free from the government strict control and the media flourished aggressively. Currently, Indonesia, the world's fourth-largest population, becomes the new emerging democratic country. After the shift of political power, various reforms in almost all aspects of life developed, particularly the media and press that relished the freedom the most.

Under heavy pressures from the civil society and the market, a series of liberalization policies were taken by the post-Suharto governments. The new broadcast law was enacted in 2002 and one year later, the Indonesian Broadcasting Commission (KPI), an independent state regulatory body, was established. KPI is responsible to regulate and provide recommendations in the area of broadcasting. With the current broadcast liberalization, Indonesian televisions can produce almost any kind of program contents.

When democratization removes state censorship, and the media enjoy freedom of expression, we have to deal with the following questions: Who controls the content in the media? Who actually shapes the news and entertainment content that we see or hear? How political and economic factors influence television workers in shaping content? In particular, this research intends to investigate the role of media owners in shaping television content in post-authoritarian Indonesia.

This research will look at the forces at work within television organizations, especially the role of Indonesian television owners in shaping program content. So, the key research question: How do television owners in Indonesia influence television workers in shaping the program content?

## **II. LITERATURE REVIEW**

According to McQuail (2000), the media organization, where media content is made, is an essential link in the process of mediation by which society addresses itself. In this regard, structural features of media organization such as size, forms of ownership and media, industrial function can be seen as having direct consequences for the conduct of the particular media organization. McQuail refers conduct to all the system activities that in turn affect performance, in the sense of the type and relative amount of media content produced and offered to audiences. According to this model, we need to look not only at internal features of media organizations, but also in their relations with other organizations and with the wider society.

McQuail said, the theories, which have been formulated based on research into media organizations, have been consistent. They support the view that organizational routines, practices and goals systematically and distinctively influence content.

The questions about the degree of freedom media organization possesses in relation to the wider society, and how much freedom is possible within the organization and media-organizational routines and procedures for selecting and processing content lead to consideration of the tension. The following oppositions reflect the tension at the heart of media-making: 1) constraint versus autonomy; 2) routine production versus creativity; 3) commerce versus art and ; 4) profit versus social purpose (McQuail, 2000)

The broad range of issues, which arise, can be appreciated when one takes an overview of theoretical perspectives organized around the question of influence on media content, as posed by Shoemaker and Reese (1991) who suggest five main hypotheses: 1) Content reflects social reality (mass media as mirror of society); 2) Content is influenced by media workers' socialization and attitudes (including advice from owners); 3) Content is influenced by media-organizational routines; 4) Content is influenced by social institution and forces; 5) Content is a function of ideological positions and maintains the status quo (the hegemonic approach)

McQuail (2000) identify five main kinds of relationship, which need to be examined in order to gain some understanding of the conditions affecting media organizational activity and the mass communicator role: 1) Relationship with society; 2) Relationship with owners, clients and suppliers; 3) Relationship with pressure groups; 4) Relationship with internal organization and; 5) Relationship with audience

According to Marx and Engels (Marx, 1977; Marx and Engels, 1974), media content influence and media power relations discussed above relate to mass media as a 'means of production', which in capitalist society are in the ownership of the ruling class. According to this idea, the mass media simply disseminate the ideas and worldviews of the ruling class, and deny or defuse alternative ideas. This is very much in accord with Marx's argument that.

The class which has the means of material production at its disposal has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it. (Marx & Engels: *The German Ideology*, cited in Curran *et al.* 1982: 22).

From this perspective the mass media disseminate the dominant ideology: the values of the class, which owns and controls the media. The mass media worked to create 'false awareness' in the average workers. This prompts a compelling position whereby media content are seen as undiversified expressions of decision class values, which disregards any differing qualities inside the decision class and inside the media, and the likelihood of oppositional readings by audiences of media.

A number of different relationships within and across the boundaries of media organization must be taken into account in any theoretical account of media organizations and occupations. These relationships are often active negotiations and exchanges and sometimes conflicts, latent or actual.

Gerbner (1969) depicted communicators in mass media as working under pressure from different external 'power roles', including audience, competitors (other media in the main), clients (such as sponsors and advertisers), authorities (especially legal and political), experts, and other institutions.

According to Pringle and Starr (2005, p.102), all broadcast station content (programs) is determined by four influences: audience, broadcaster, advertiser and regulator.

*The audience*, which seeks out a station for its programs. Listeners or viewers may be exposed to other content, such as commercials and public service and promotional announcements, but their principal goals to hear or view program content that satisfies their need at a particular time. Programs that fail to attract listeners or viewers, or fail to satisfy their needs, are imperiled. So are the financial fortunes of the station.

*The broadcaster*, who is responsible for operating the station profitably for its owners. The greater the audience, the greater the likelihood that a profit can be realized. Accordingly, the broadcaster selects and schedules programs to attract as many people as possible among the targeted audience.

*The advertiser*, whose principal interest in using a radio or television is to bring a product or service to the attention of those most likely to use it. Programs that attract potential customers stand the best chance of attracting advertising revenues, especially if the number of people is large and the cost of delivering the commercial to them is competitive.

*The regulator*, or government and its agencies, whose goal is to ensure that the station is operated in a way that serves the public interest. The regulator take actions aimed at compelling or encouraging broadcasters to engage in certain programming practices to satisfy that goal.

Lewis (1969) used responses from 301 stations in the United States to determine influences in television station programming. He developed eight categories, in no particular order of priority: 1) Direct feedback from the audience, including letters, telephone calls, and conversations; 2) Regulations, or rules and standards of practice, such as commitments to the FCC, its rules and regulations, and the station's own policy statement (including advice from owners); 3) Inferential feedback, or ratings; 4) Conditional, a mix of factors, including comments about critics and opinions of friends outside the station; 5) Production staff, the opinions of station personnel with production responsibilities; 6) Personal or subjective judgment, including instinct, common sense, and knowledge of the community; 7) Financial, or factors related to the station's income and expenditures, such as sales potential, sales manager's opinion, and cost; 8) Tactical, that is, methods of program planning, the arrangement of the schedule, and viewing trends.

Commercial radio and television stations air thousands of hours of programs each year. Individual programs may be produced by the stations itself or obtained from another source. They may be designed chiefly to entertain, inform, or educate. Pringle and Starr (2005:102) write about these influences: "Much is said and written about broadcast programming. However, it would be unwise to identify any one influence for praise or condemnation. The programming we hear and see results from the interaction of all four forces." (Pringle & Starr, 2005:102).

**Advertisers' Influence.** The relationship between media and advertisers is best described as a symbiotic one. The central issue raised is about how far the media count on advertising revenue. This in turn leads to a question about the degree to which media content serves market ideology and advertisers' interests (Burton, 2005, p.18). According to Garnham (2000), we need to understand the nature of the advertising market in order to understand the media economy and what is and is not sustainable within it.

A media organization can be defined as the social, formal, usually economic entity that employs the media workers in order to produce media content (Shoemaker & Reese, 1991) Generating income is the primary goal of most media organizations. Other goals such as to produce a quality product, serve the public, and achieve professional recognition, are built into this overarching objective. The organization obviously can not afford to ignore the economic goal indefinitely despite success in achieving professional objectives. For example, many television companies in Indonesia are privately owned, the owners can operate the business as they see fit. Although only few television media in Indonesia are owned by public stockholders. However, this form of public ownership intensifies the purely economic objectives of the company. Managers of publicly

traded companies can be replaced if they fail their responsibility to the stockholders to maximize profit. The stock market cares little for public service if it means sacrificing profitability (Burton, 2005)

Most media institutions depend very much on the work of, or on revenues from, advertisers to finance their operation and reap profit. Television stations count on advertising entirely; Quality newspapers rely on advertising for about two-thirds of their revenue; magazine producers rely on advertising for 50 per cent and more of their income and the tabloid press for about one third. In turn, advertisers depend on the media for a vital means of communication with customers (Burton, 2005). In this regard, advertisers are stakeholders behind the advertising text, from media brokers doing deals over the cost, consultancies to video outfits shooting commercials, to brokers who place the commercials in certain media, to any business or organization that contracts with the advertisements.

Those who work in newsrooms frequently see economic considerations as indirect influences on editorial decisions and as constraints to their work. News workers find it hard to relate the quality and nature of their news coverage to audience demand and advertising revenue (Sigal, 1973). Would one story, for example, raise newspaper circulation or television ratings more than another does (Shoemaker & Reese, 1991).

The mass media do not rely on the audience to get revenues but to advertisers. Audiences who tune to a station to hear or view its programs do not make direct payment for the programs they receive. Advertisers, who gain access to those audiences with information on their products and services, purchase advertising time sold to them by the media. The sales department is the principal generator of revenues for the media. However, its ability to sell time is determined to a large degree by the media creative workers' in drawing audiences, especially those that advertisers want to reach. Good programming attracts audiences, which in turn attract advertisers and revenues.

It is not surprising that advertisers' interest influence greatly the structure of much of the mass media industry in most capitalist countries. According to Shoemaker and Reese (1991), most media in free-market countries are finely tuned to jointly optimizing the needs of advertisers and sponsors as well as their own interests as a normal condition of operation. The 'normal' influence involves the matching of consumption patterns of targeted audience with media content to be produced. Media design, scheduling, planning, layout, often reflect advertiser interests.

According to Altschull (1984, p.254), the interests of those who finance the press have strong correlation with the content of the press. He said, "The press is the piper, and the tune the piper plays is composed by those who pay the piper." There is substantial evidence that both advertisers and audiences affect media content, both directly and indirectly.

According to Burton (2005, p.19), advertising as an activity supports the ideology of the marketplace at any price. The marketplace ideology includes promotion of product, pleasing consumers, commercial competition, company expansion, and maximizing profits. The tendency of media owners to support the dominant ideology, the security of the status quo and conservative values, is effectively guaranteed by advertising. In this market economy model, reducing production costs and increasing audience consumption control any genuine pluralism of material or of ideas. The consequence of the patterns of ownership and of the production practices of media owners, combined with the collusive relationships between media and advertising, result in the meanings of media text, the dominant discourses that produce certain kinds of meaning about how the world should be (Burton 2005, p.19). This interest in the work of institutions in manufacturing discourses within a text is part of a political economy critique of the media.

McQuail (2000) who quoted Baker (1994) said that 'advertisers, not government are the primary censors of media content in the United States today'. He cites evidence of advertisers using their market power to attempt to block particular communications that damage their interests and of advertiser pressure, which influences personnel as well as editorial decisions in the media. However, influence comes in diverse forms that are often hard to detect and not necessarily illegitimate (for instance providing information that has a promotional value, product placement, sponsoring, etc).

Jamieson and Campbell (1983, p.97) said advertisers some times are not afraid to "use their financial muscle to protest what they perceive as unfair treatment by the news segment of the mass media". Because the survival of commercial mass media depend very much on their advertising income, the bigger the advertiser, the more income it has. Large multinational advertisers and their advertising companies therefore have huge power to contain public messages they do not like.

According to Kessler (1989), one kind of advertisers who made the most attempts to control mass media content were tobacco companies although some of the controls may be self-imposed by the media themselves in an attempt to deter censure by cigarette producers. For example, Kessler (1989) reported that there was almost no editorial content about any health hazards of smoking – "the number one cancer killer of women" – in six major women's magazines published in U.S although women's health was a major topic in the magazine.



Weis and Burke (1986) said editors of U.S women's magazines frequently told the writers or contributors who wrote about health topics for the magazine to stay away from the subject of tobacco. They also said that the film industry was also affected by the power of tobacco advertisers. Advertisers often paid film producers to display smoking as an appropriate, desirable behavior among socially active adults. Tobacco companies offer to help underwrite film making costs; in return, the filmmaker agrees to portray the key characters in the film as smokers. Although tobacco commercials in some countries are no longer permitted on television, the tobacco companies spend million of dollars advertising non-tobacco products on television.

Advertisers or sponsors, who bought whole shows, or major portion of a show, regularly read a script a day or two in advance of shooting. Gitlin (1985) said at the behest of an ad agency for a gas company sponsor, CBS took out half a dozen instances of the word 'gas' referring to gas chambers in a 'Playhouse 90' drama of the Nuremberg trials. After the quiz show scandals of 1958, CBS president Frank Stanton set down an explicit rule that advertisers would no longer be permitted to read scripts in advance and intervene if they thought their corporate image at risk. Stanton said advertisers would be permitted to screen the filmed episodes, and if they wanted to beg off a particular one, the network would excuse them.

The 1980s saw an important change in television programming, the advent of advertiser-created shows. This type of program represents a new stage in the long relationship between advertising and the mass media. Janus (1984) said that advertisers develop programs so skillfully intertwined with other information that the viewers cannot be removed or avoided in order to prevent viewers from erasing or skipping over advertising messages.

### **III. RESEARCH METHODS**

Most of research methods used to examine factors affecting television contents are 'media-centric', which means taking, or recording the view from within the media. The reason for this is because only by knowing how the media operate and assess themselves can we understand how society influences the media and vice versa (McQuail, 2000).

The other reason is that data about media strategies and their money related undertakings is rare for reasons of classification information about media policies and their financial affairs is hard to come by for reasons of confidentiality (Golding & Murdock, 2000).

This empirical research examines the influence of advertisers on television program content in Indonesia during the period of 1998 – 2014. The research focus is established based on the research questions: How do advertisers influence television workers in shaping content? The research question needs a qualitative descriptive answer from various sources, including interview transcripts, notes made while observing in the field, documents, media and television reports.

Television workers would be the center of attention of this research (subject of study), and answers to the above research question would depend on their opinions, comments, and responses, which will be collected through intensive interviewing. The interviews with 100 television workers and other data sources are expected to reveal a number of cases, which illustrate how advertisers influence television content directly or indirectly.

This research focus on ten largest Jakarta-based free-to-air national television stations in Indonesia whose content compositions are not exactly similar. The ten stations are: Indosiar, SCTV, RCTI, MNCV TV, Global TV, Metro TV, ANTV, TVOne, Trans TV and Trans 7.

### **IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

As explained earlier in the literature review, the relationship between media and advertisers is symbiotic. However, the central issue in the relationship rest on the degree to which the media depend on advertisers. Attracting audiences sought by advertisers and enabling advertisers to reach their target audience are major factors in program decision. This study tries to figure out how far TV program speaks to the advertisers' interest and the philosophy of the market keeping in mind the end goal to comprehend the characteristic of the advertising business sector and the media economy and what is and is not maintainable inside of it. For television, program content plays an important role in attracting advertisers to spend their promotion budget as much as possible in the form of television commercials.

Advertising expenditure in Indonesia was dominated by televisions. This type of media absorbed most of the country's advertisement spending. According to Nielsen, a media research firm, advertising expenditure in Indonesia has been in a rising trend over the last few years triggered partly by audience interest in television content. For example, in 2010, advertising expenditure posted strong growth, rising 23% to a total of Rp 59.8 trillion (US\$4.6 billion). Nielsen said the advertising expenditure denoted the most elevated increment since 2006 and was expected in huge part to the quantity of special sports events happening amid the year. Telecasts of soccer matches topped every one of the ten spots of the most watched television programs in Indonesia. For sponsors, TV kept on being the media of choice, representing more than 60% of promotion spending (Nielsen, 2011). However, competition is fierce between Indonesian commercial televisions in pursuing

advertising revenues. Television workers interviewed during this research said advertiser played significant role in determining program content. They said, apart from regular commercial breaks, televisions in Indonesia offered various methods to advertisers to broadcast their promotional messages. Many stations exchange airtime for merchandise or services in a transaction known variously as a trade, trade out, or barter. For example, advertisers may provide the station with travel, food, or furniture for its own use or as contest prizes, in return for advertising time with an equivalent cost. Merchandise or services instead of cash are accepted by many stations to settle delinquent account.

It is also common for television stations to get advertisers to help produce programs. Stations may design sponsorship programs and directly solicit businesses to provide funding for the program's production. Increasingly, advertisers are engaging consumers by providing programming that is branded with the sponsor's name. Stations may also provide time slots for advertisers to promote their cause on existing programs. Another common practice is product placement. The engagement involves using products or services as part of editorial or entertainment content in return for advertisers financial contribution.

According to Mardatillah, an executive producer at a television station Trans 7, advertisers may contribute ideas and advice to the station's production team with regard to program content they financed especially if the advertising contract was for full sponsorship. She said advertisers were allowed to determine story or topic of a program content including the performers. She said one advertiser on the station's most popular entertainment talk-show 'Empat Mata' (Four Eyes) determined a topic that need to be discussed during the show including who became the celebrity guests. "On *Empat Mata* program, he (advertiser) gave his view with regard to the topic of discussion, for example, the topic of family, and they select the guests," Mardatillah said. However, she explained, the station didn't allow advertisers to fully control program content, adding that advertisers who held full sponsorship had a chance to determine up to 80% of program content while the rest was still controlled by the station's production team.

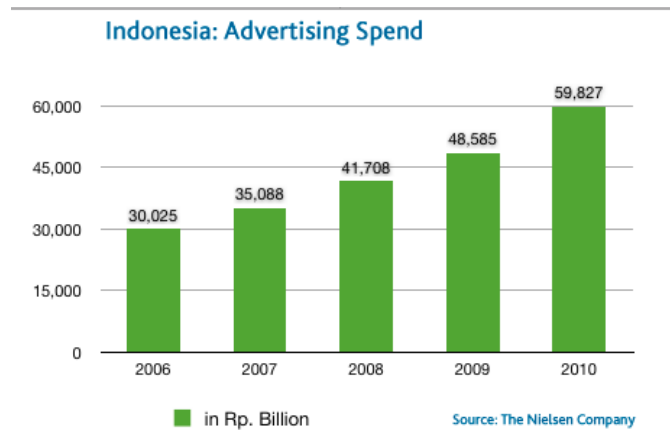
A news producer at Global TV, AdjatWiratama, said that his news program sometimes broadcast a news story from advertisers as a result of engagement between advertisers and his television marketing department (A. Wiratama, personal communication, July 8, 2013). He said advertisers contribute their idea to the text that must be written or the video that must be displayed. Wiratama said it was mandatory for him to run the sponsored stories in his news program since the sponsor paid off some amount of money on a contractual basis. Wiratama said (A. Wiratama, personal communication, July 8, 2013):

"So, the collaborative coverage (among advertiser) and the marketing team constitutes a commercial reportage which involves a barter system. The barter of a news story for the payment of any amount of money from the client concerned. We made coverage of (clients') activities and then we televise (the story) on our program."

Wiratama gave an example, when his news bulletin runs two paid news stories. The first story concerns government's serious battle through its tax collection institution to urge all Indonesian nationals to have code numbers of taxpayer (NPWP) and present their yearly tax return forms (SPT), while the second story was about the launch of the Proton Suprima car in Jakarta in June 2013 that marks the hatchback's first entry in an export market since it was first introduced in August. Wiratama said, in this type of news story, advertisers supervise the news text and video before being televised through his news program. "Proton conducted quality control on the script and video before being broadcast. They checked the news content to make sure that the story has been already in line with their demand" Wiratama said.

AdjatWiratama said politicians also designed their news story in collaboration with television stations, especially in the period before and during the election. Wiratama said he ran the politician sponsored stories in his news bulletin after the marketing team briefed him to do so. He added the politicians usually invited television reporters to cover their political campaign and they asked televisions to broadcast those campaigns as news stories. Wiratama said the political advertisers sometimes set the time when the stories must go on air. He added (A. Wiratama, personal communication, July 8, 2013):

"For example, when a politician RatuAtut run campaigns for the gubernatorial election in Banten province where he competed with another candidate Marissa Haque. RatuAtut demanded all her campaigns be covered and televised. Of course, it was not free of charge, there were certainly some amount of money came in.



The coverage was televised on determining dates as demanded by the politicians or clients. The marketing team then told the programming and production team (about the deal)”

Neil R. Tobing, an executive with PT Visi Media Asia (VIVA), a holding company owned by the Bakrie family that controls two television stations -TV One and ANTV- said advertisers played an important role in determining whether or not a free-to-air television station should run popular and important events (Grazella, 2013). Television stations had to expend a large amount of money to purchase broadcasting rights for important events, for example the World Cup and British Premier League, which usually garnered high ratings.

Tobing said Viva paid US\$61.5 million to get selective television rights for the 2014 World Cup. The telecaster secured a \$10.8 million bank assurance to be the official supporter for the occasion. Tobing clarified that sponsors helped the station to recoup the costs with respect to the buy of the television rights.

Advertisers played a key role in the free-to-air television when it broadcasts major sporting events. Advertisers helped television stations to book profit margins that enabled the stations to air such programs for free. “This is why we need sponsorships.” Tobing said. He added such occasions in different nations are not free-to-air and are broadcast through pay TV rather, considering the high expenses of gaining the rights (Grazella, 2013).

Although advertisers play a key role in shaping the content and contributing incomes for television station’s fortunes, however, their influence are not unlimited especially when advertisers’ missions go against television owners’. A television station was once reported had declined the political advertisements of a presidential candidate Megawati Sukarnoputri and her running mate, PrabowoSubianto, during the 2009 presidential election.

Sources from the campaign team of Megawati-Prabowo said a few national TV channels had declined to air some of their campaign ads, saying the advertisements were brimming with criticism against the administration. They said there was a station official who conceded that the station got telephone calls to dismiss the campaign commercials, in spite of the fact that they have been set in the business plan. The campaign team suspected there had been a conceivable way to deal with the management of TV station by delegates of a certain presidential hopeful.

Budi Darmawan, a representative of SCTV, recognized that his office had declined one of the Megawati-Prabowo campaign commercials. The station considered the potential for an infringement of the Presidential Election Law as the advertisement depicted the officeholder (Yudhoyono) saying "bankrupt" while his full declaration was cut (Pasandaran, et al., 2009). He said the advertisements can possibly incite and make superfluous feedback toward government. Since the Presidential Elections Law required all TV media to treat every single presidential competitor reasonably and that TV stations had no power to judge the substance of advertisements, Darmawan’s remarks clearly indicated that SCTV was pro the incumbent president, SusiloBambangYudhoyono, and went against Megawati-Prabowo (Pasandaran, et al., 2009)

Mohammad Hafizni, a senior news producer at Metro TV, said his television station sometimes took orders from politicians who demanded the station to make reports on events held by their political parties (M. Hafizni, personal communication, July 21, 2013). Hafizni said the order was treated as advertisements, and the politicians were considered as advertisers. He said politicians sometimes reserved air time, and the station broadcast their political events, like a meeting or congress of certain political parties, for some financial compensation in return. The air time blocking by the politicians sometime should replace the television’s regular programs.

Hafizni said regular advertisers sometimes asked the station to make news coverage on their commercial activities in order to promote their business. He said staff from marketing department sometimes approached him to convey requests from the television’s loyal advertising clients who solicited news coverage from the station on their commercial events. Hafizni said (M. Hafizni, personal communication, July 21, 2013):

“He (advertiser) requested via sales and the sales delivered the message to staff of news gathering, and the gathering people delivered the messages to us. ‘Please help, it is mandatory, because (the request) from advertisers’. So we help each other. It means we gave them news coverage, a kind of bonus. So there was a symbiosis mutualism, there was a common interest, so he (advertiser) was happy and remained loyal in putting their commercials on our television.”

ZudarlisElfira, an executive producer at Trans TV, said her television station was sometimes considered the number of advertisements in which an artistes performed before hiring them to play with her television programs (Z. Elfira, personal communication, July 13, 2013). She said the reason was the artistes had potential to attract advertisers to put their commercials in a program in which the artistes performed. Elfira said advertisers tend to put their advertisements in the television programs in which their commercial stars played. Responding to a question whether her station’s programming policy considering advertisers’ will toward television programs, Elfira said in an interview that advertisers’ will is an important thing to consider in order to gain advertisements in the program. She said (Z. Elfira, personal communication, July 13, 2013):

“Yes. For example, we make a program, then programming and marketing departments recommended to hire artists who have played in many advertisements. So, the artistes might automatically attract many advertisers or sponsors.”

Elfira said advertisers sometimes asked her for making news reports on their commercial or social activities. “An advertiser once asked me to cover his program of corporate social responsibility” she said. Elfira said her television would cover the advertisers’ events as long as they paid some amount of money to the marketing department, adding that her station never broadcast promotional news for free. She explained every program in her station is also open for built-in advertisements or product placement, an advertising technique used by advertisers to subtly promote their products through appearances in television program. She said, this advertising method is often initiated through an agreement between advertisers and the television’s marketing department. Of course, advertisers must pay to have their product featured in television programs.

Asked whether the continuity of a program is determined by rating or advertisers, Elfira said her station considers advertisers as more important than program rating. The influence of rating on program’s fate is not dominant, she said. The station usually maintains a program despite its low rating as long as the program’s advertisers still produce profits for the station. She explained in the followings (Z. Elfira, personal communication, July 13, 2013) that a high rating program was not necessarily producing a large income for the station.

“Apart from seeing rating and share, there was another aspect that needs to be grasped by a commercial or sponsor namely ‘Trust’. A program with a high trust toward its client, so the program’s existence will remain strong because of large support from the sponsor, although the program produces a low rating.”

Television workers at Metro TV, which specializes in producing news and informative programs, said advertisers play important role in giving influence to their mostly factual program content, although the advertisers’ strong will to intervene directly into content is still controllable. According to Anastasia Kristi, a producer of a talk-show program Kick Andy, advertisers used to propose that the program bears certain promotional messages designed by the advertisers (A. Kristi, personal communication, December 21, 2013). She said that her production team was very scrupulous in considering advertisers’ suggestion in putting certain promotional messages into the program content given the program’s good image. Kick Andy was selected in 2008 as the highest-quality TV talk show based on a survey conducted by several non-governmental organizations led by Science, Aesthetics and Technology (SET) Foundation. Unlike the Nielsen’s surveys which took respondents from various segments of the audience, SET’s survey only took educated television viewers. Some 191 educated television-lovers in major cities across the country involved in the survey to judge television shows based on their informative content, social empathy, factuality, critical views, balance, objectivity and public interest.

Kristi said some episodes of Kick Andy’s content were initiated and devised by her and other members of her production team, while some others were based on advertiser’s initiatives proposed to the station’s sales department. She said her program would accommodate sponsors initiatives in putting promotional messages into the program as long as the messages were not in contrary to the program’s missions and images. Kristi said (A. Kristi, personal communication, December 21, 2013) as the followings:

“There were episodes of the program which were idealistic or original derived from production team’s ideas or from producer, but there were episodes which were suggested by team of sales. It means, since the idea came from the sales team so it has something to do with advertisers or sponsors who committed to make a built-in content into the program.”

Kristi cited an example, when Nestle, a Swiss multinational food and beverage company, once proposed a built-in promotional message (product placement), a type of television commercials in which the brand of a product or service are observable during television program. She said advertiser wanted the talk-show program to discuss the company’s mission to promote ‘sporting and hard work values’ in an attempt to boost the sale of the company’s sport nutrition products in Indonesia market.

Kristi said the company’s messages were not opposite to the program’s missions and images, and she found no difficulties to put the messages into the program content. Product placement was presented in way that create positive sentiment towards the advertised brand. Kristi said the advertiser’s message was mentioned and discussed through the program. However, she added that Kick Andy didn’t display a blatant product placement. The program showed the promotional message and product brand in a subtle manner.

We can conclude from the data above that advertiser played significant role in shaping the program content. It is common for television stations to get advertisers to help produce programs. Stations may design sponsorship programs and directly solicit advertisers to provide funding for the program to produce. Stations may also provide time slots for advertisers to promote their cause on existing programs. Advertisers were allowed to shape the program content they financed.



## V. CONCLUSION

Advertiser played significant role in shaping the program content. It is common for television stations to get advertisers to help produce programs. Stations may design sponsorship programs and directly solicit advertisers to provide funding for the program to produce. Stations may also provide time slots for advertisers to promote their cause on existing programs. Advertisers were allowed to shape the program content they financed. Advertisers who held full sponsorship had a chance to determine up to 80% of program content. News program sometimes broadcasts a news story from advertisers as a result of engagement between advertisers and the television marketing department. Advertisers contribute ideas to the text that must be written or the video that must be displayed. Although advertisers assume important role in molding television content and contributing revenues for the station's prosperity, however their influence are not unlimited especially when their missions go against the owners.

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