TELEVISION NEWS AND THE BUILDING OF NATIONAL IDENTITY IN MALAYSIA:
A STUDY OF MULTI-ETHNIC YOUTH AND 1MALAYSIA

Thesis submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
At the University of Leicester

By:

Haida Baba Zain
Media & Communication Department
University of Leicester

December 2015
This thesis contributes to the study of the role of communications in national development. It examines news item content used to promote a sense of common identity among Malaysians in the 1Malaysia media campaign and how different ethnically composed audiences negotiate the meanings offered in the media campaign material. The aim is to understand those patterns and structures in the broadcast campaign strategies to construct shared discursive positions on identity in Malaysia. To see whether these media discursive strategies are effective in addressing concerns and tensions in multi-ethnic Malaysia, the project combines this analysis of selective news content from the campaign together with findings from eight focus groups discussions with young multi-ethnic audiences of the campaign. The thesis investigates how the audiences' negotiate the campaign messages and the role that ‘ethnic background’ plays in shaping their engagement with its meanings. This study showed Malaysians accept in general the 1Malaysia concept, but each ethnic group in this country still have a narrow notion of the idea. Malaysians are still sceptical about the impact of the 1Malaysia over life and relationship among them. This study uncovers significant differences in the way audiences from different ethnic backgrounds read the same news content and argues therefore that social identities affect the interpretation of the campaign messages. This study, aligned with recent case studies in communication research, indicates that audiences are active and heterogeneous and informed specifically by understandings and experiences of living an ethnic identity in Malaysia, these challenge the discursive strategies and the wider campaign aim to build a single national identity.
Acknowledgements

First and foremost, to ALLAH the Most Merciful, Most Forgiving and The Knower of All Things, this thesis would be nothing without Him.

I would like to express my heartfelt appreciation and gratitude to my family – my beautiful daughter Yasmin Azra, my beloved husband Mark Hughes, my dad, and wonderful brothers and sister – as well as friends, Lawrenicia, Maya and Dima whose patience and faith have become a great source of spiritual strength, inspiration, endurance and perseverance. They have been faithfully with me throughout these gruelling years, and are most invaluable to my life. I am also thankful to Shaheezam Said for all the support.

Also, this thesis would not have become what it is today without the constant and invaluable guidance from my supervisors, Dr Julian Mathews and Dr Roger Dickinson.

I also wish to acknowledge the support and sponsorship provided by the Malaysian government through the Public Service Department (PSD).

To all members of the Department of Media and communication at Leicester University, I thank you all for the support and help rendered throughout my time here.

Finally, to my employer – Department Of Broadcasting Malaysia, The Malaysia Ministry of Communications and Multimedia, the universities involved and the students who enthusiastically participated in the research. I thank you all for the cooperation and support from the bottom of my heart.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This doctoral thesis draws on data from fieldwork that followed the television news consumption of multi ethnic youth in Malaysia. The project has drawn on a body of knowledge contributed by cultural studies and reception analysis endeavour, which are useful to understand the role of media in the lives of transnational communities and Diasporas.

Specifically, this study is concerned with how media communications have a role in building national identity and nation building and the impact it has on the perceptions of those who it is aimed at. The study is concerned with the area of research which is communication and development, specifically in the present study the communication is media news items present through state media and the communication is a message of national identity and unity. The development aspect in the present study lies in the intention of the media messages, which is to instil a greater sense of racial unity among the difference races in Malaysia and instil a sense of national identity which forms part of the overall development policy of the country.

Communication research has played an important role in the field of communication and development. Communication models have become increasingly important in relation to programmes that are being used for development. Communication is the way that values and ideas that are needed for the developmental goals of countries are stimulated and diffused. Moreover, the concepts that lie behind the idea of a link between development and communication raise questions about in what way, to what extent does communication contribute to modernisation (Thomas, 2006).
The answer to this question has depended on using transmission models of communication which have been based on the work by Shannon and Weaver, during the 1940s and 1950s. Their work relates to the role that communication plays in the diffusion of ideas and political campaigns. Models based on their work are basically linear in nature because they consider the information source, the transmitter, the channel, the receiver and the destination. However they do not consider the more psychological, sociological and organic approaches to communication as were the case with earlier studies (Thomas, 2006).

Malaysia is a country that has quickly modernised since its independence in 1957. From the viewpoint of political science, development and how it was achieved, is viewed primarily in terms of nation building (Thomas, 2006). Moreover, from the point of view of psychologists, development and modernisation depends on modern values and personality orientations that are associated with political participation and achievement (Thomas, 2006).

Based on the argument that news media plays an important role in nation building in Malaysia, and act as the government partner to promote national integration, this study aims to serve the larger national interest of building a united, harmonious and prosperous nation under the concept called 1Malaysia by addressing the questions about ‘How multi-ethnic audiences receive and interpret television news reporting of 1Malaysia campaign, and what interpretive resources do they use to reach their understandings?’.

This News Audience research project proposes to investigate how young people of different ethnic backgrounds in Malaysia interpret television news messages about unity and national identity. It will analyze the interpretation of news meanings to audiences as to seek understanding of the Media and Identity relationship: of how people articulate their identities and what impact the television news has on the way people talk about themselves and the nation. The particular interest of this study is to explore audience’s perceptions of television news messages about the 1Malaysia concept, which was introduced by the Malaysia government.
Malaysia as a multi-ethnic and multi-religious country has a unique government-media system which offers an interesting context in which to investigate the relationship between television news and construction of nation and national identity, and to determine whether the relationship is influenced by ethnicity. While there are many ethnic groups in Malaysia, the focus of this study will be on the three main ethnic groups comprising, Malay, Chinese, and Indians.

The importance of this area of study remains vital as it was observed that much of the literature on news audiences, especially involving young people, is rather ethnocentric in the sense that it refers mostly to the experiences in the United States and the United Kingdom. However, it is written in general terms as if the structures and forces explained were universal (Hallin, 2004).

This study is particularly significant in the context of Malaysia as television is still the main source of news and information for its people. Furthermore, looking at studies conducted in Malaysia, one can witness that there exists a critical gap in the literature on the relationship between television news and Nation Building. Despite attempts to study young people’s news preferences, research has failed to grasp what is obtained from television news stories; what appears to be the important information for each recipient; what conclusion recipients reach and the assumptions they use to make sense of the television news.

In an attempt to investigate young audience understanding and interpretation of television news messages about nation building, constructing national identity in Malaysia and cultural factors that help shape the reproduction of news meanings, this project chose a qualitative approach, as it allows researcher to uncover people’s personal experiences of the media. A theoretical framework within the sphere of reception studies was employed to analyse those interpretations. It also provide different sets of discourses of identity and belonging in Malaysia to help readers understand the nature and direction of the development of social ties and civic engagement in communities and to promote national identity among a multi-ethnic audience in Malaysia that has been overlooked.
The primary method used in this study, is the focus group interviews involving young people aged 18-24. It was also supported with content analysis of news stories to sketch out how television news in Malaysia talks about unity and national identity, what are their focuses in telling the story and what kind of language, words, and images were used in conveying the message.

Both methods used to obtain participant’s interpretations and understanding of television news on news messages, will provide understanding of how and to what extent the government news media, Radio Television Malaysia (RTM) has played a role in Malaysia’s nation building process. In particular, the focus is on the aspects of media framing and on the above-mentioned issues, and their impact on Malaysia’s nation building as seen by readers across different ethnic groups.

The research approach and its contribution to Malaysia media studies will be outlined in the research statement that follows.

1.2 Research background

Issues of ethnicity and race have been incredibly important to Malaysian history, economy, politics, religion, and society. Ethnicity or race, plays a significant part in the discourse concerning virtually any Malaysian social condition or issue (William, 2005). The main aim of managing multiculturalism in Malaysia is to maintain national integration in which all their various cultural communities could live alongside each other while maintaining their own original identities (Ibrahim, 2007).
1.3 The Research Problem

A study suggests that immigration can transform a society or community’s sense of self-definition (Breton, 1992). ‘Cultural-symbolic constructions’ what Breton called this process, forces a redefinition of an original collectivity. A reassessment of their collective representations of the past, visions of the future, relationships with other groups, and significance of various lines of social differentiation. In order to understand the cultural-symbolic constructions of Chinese and Indian immigrants living in Malaysia (formally known as Malaya) in terms of the discourse-historical approach, it is first necessary to know a bit more about Malaysia policies of integration, as well as the history of migration of Chinese and Indian people to Malaysia.

Malaysia has always been seen as a country divided on racial grounds. Sankar, (2010) has identified four problems related to ethnic relations in Malaysia, listed as religion, Malay special rights, politics, and Equal opportunities. Similar findings have been echoed in some other studies (Khattab, et al, 2007). This proposed study, however, has no intention to add to the list of many more dilemmas facing ethnics in Malaysia, instead it is more interested in investigating young people’s interpretation and understanding of message about national identity and unity as portrayed on television news.

In most developing societies, the role and functions of the mass media are tied closely to the needs of the government and the people. Often the media acts as a natural conduit that helps disseminate important messages aimed for national development and nation building. The facts that the governments of these nations use the mass media continuously in their development plans and strategies shows its potential in facilitating developmental efforts (Ibrahim, et al, 2003). The role played by the media however is often indirect and only contributory in nature, rather than direct and authoritative (Rogers, E.M., 1976). That does explain why mass media has taken a central role in Malaysia where socio-economic development, national growth and societal well-being are the priorities.
In Malaysia, the media is not only required to inform, educate and motivate people towards developmental goals set by the government, but they are also expected to align themselves with national priorities in order to remain relevant. Against the backdrop of a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi religious society, the media in Malaysia are expected to help the government foster the spirit of understanding and strengthen the friendship and unity among people. The mass media, particularly the mainstream is urged to adhere to this role, but the question is to what extent the media had subscribed to this role. This issue has posed a great challenge to the nation, government, and society ever since the nation achieved its independence from British in 1957.

As the mass media was known to have played a critical role as sources of information they have the potential to correct misconceptions and reduce tensions, but at the same time, they also can cause fears and anxieties within a society (Faridah et al., 2012). Malaysia, a nation that aspires to be a developed country by 2020, needs the support of its people, especially the mass media by not raising sensitive issues but stressing shared values and concerns.

As stated by Idid et al, (1989), as a multi-ethnic country, Malaysia’s economic and political stability depends on the level of unity achieved among the people from different ethnic backgrounds. They argue that national unity may not lead to nation building, but nation building definitely requires national unity. In other words, for a multi-ethnic country to move forward, peace and well-being are essential along with trust and confidence among fellow citizens. Such situations will create social cohesion which will unite them in the struggle for nation-building.

With much debate on ethnic polarization among Malaysians, and the urgent need to foster a true national identity have triggered the Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak, to design the 1Malaysia program (pronounced One Malaysia in English and Satu Malaysia in Malay). 1Malaysia was presented to the people as a national mission on 3rd April 2009 in his capacity as the sixth Prime Minister of Malaysia. 1Malaysia was anchored in the Malaysian Constitution and linked to the Rukunegara (National principles) and Vision 2020 (Wawasan 2020), which are instruments of nation-building.
1.4 What is 1Malaysia

The idea of '1Malaysia' was introduced by Malaysia’s Prime Minister Dato Sri Mohd. Najib Tun Abdul Razak, when he took over the nation's administration in 2009 to foster unity among Malaysians of different race and ethnicity in agreement with the provision in the Malaysian Federal Constitution and principles of the national ideology. As written by the Malaysia Ministry of Information Communication And Culture in their official website (http://www.jasa.gov), an effort to create a generation of 1Malaysia is not a process of assimilation to eliminate racial or ethnic identity, and replaced with a single national identity as practiced in other countries. In contrast, 1Malaysia values and respects and is eager to maintain the true identity of each ethnic group. In fact, the uniqueness and variation that exists among Malaysians is an asset or advantage to be proud of, as it can help in improving the development and progress of the country to a higher level. (http://www.jasa.gov.my/index.php/bm/media/koleksi-artikel/1-politic/387-peranan-semua-kaum-dalam-menyemarakkan-semangat-gagasan-1malaysia.html).

1Malaysia as stated by the prime minister is the continuation of an agenda to build the country (http://www.1malaysia.com.my/). To achieve development for the country, the people must progress. This begins with creating an attitude of acceptance among the different races that will lead to unity. When unity is achieved, the country’s development will be expedited.

As its initiator, Prime Minister Dato Sri Najib Tun Abdul Razak defines the 1Malaysia Concept as “We stand, we think and we act as Malaysians. And we take actions based on the needs of all ethnic groups in our country”. 1Malaysia leans against three tenets in enhancing national unity, which are; Principle of Acceptance, Principle of National Spirit, And Principle of Social Justice (http://www.1malaysia.com.my/).

Principle of Acceptance means that even though Malaysians live different lifestyles, practises and culture, we accept each other as loyal friends.
Principle of National Spirit refers to unity concept, nationalism and love for the country that have been inculcated early on by past leaders that fought for freedom, independence and many more policy aims to unite the multi-races in this country.

Principle of Social Justice means each race in this country regardless of background or religion will be accounted for fairly and equitably in their welfare and other social aspects (http://www.1malaysia.com.my/). In the course of the 1Malaysia Concept, every envoy needs to rise above racial boundaries and broaden their services to other races. The 1Malaysia Concept, which adopts social fairness principles, is not a podium for any quarter or party to make extreme claims or demands.

The values of 1Malaysia as articulated by the Prime Minister are perseverance, a culture of excellence, acceptance, loyalty, education, humility, integrity, and meritocracy (http://www.1malaysia.com.my/blog/values-of-1-malaysia-part-1-a-culture-of-excellence/)

Underneath the three main principles, 1Malaysia Concept folds in eight values, drawn up with the hope of uniting Malaysians in mind and action leading to one goal for the country. These eight values are:

- The Culture of Excellence
- Endurance
- Humility
- Acceptance
- Loyalty
- Meritocracy
- Education
- Integrity

(Source: http://www.1malaysia.com.my/en/values)

Improving government efficiency is also an important aspect of 1Malaysia built on the principle of ‘People First, Performance Now’ is a notion in administration that suggest
government leaders carry out their tasks efficiently, trustworthily and responsibly for the sake of the public. The fundamental foundation of all these is the principle of fairness for all races; that all races will be taken care of, and no one will be mistreated. Fairness must take into account the state of development of each race as they are of different levels of advancement. Therefore, government policies and federal allocations to those in the need will continue.

The use of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and National Key Result Areas (NKRAs) is thus an important part of the 1Malaysia effort. The prime minister in his press release issued in a prime minister official website explained, the KPIs provide an instrument for the assessment of ministries and other government agencies including performance reviews carried out every six months. The NKRAs with six major policy areas play an especially important role in improving the effectiveness of the Malaysian government. It includes crime prevention, reducing government corruption, increased access to quality education, improvements in the standard of living for low income groups, upgrades to rural infrastructure, and improvements in public transportation (http://www.pmo.gov.my/).

Nevertheless, 1Malaysia concepts respect and fulfil the aspirations of Malaysians in line with the provision preserved in the Federal Constitution and National Principles.

The 1Malaysia Concept, according to Dato Sri Najib Tun Abdul Razak:

‘We stand, we think and we act as Malaysians. And we take actions based on the needs of all ethnic groups in our country but this doesn’t mean that we marginalize affirmative action, which is the policy to help Bumiputeras as long as the policy is executed fairly and due consideration is given to Bumiputeras who qualify to get a certain consideration from the government. We venture out of acting within the ethnic walls which was practiced for a long time’. (http://www.1malaysia.com.my)

At this point, it is important to give an overview about the Malaysia Constitution to help readers understand the make-up history of existing Malaysia.
1.5 Malaysia Constitution

The Federal Constitution of Malaysia is the supreme law of Malaysia and central reference for the administration of the country (Fernando, 2002). It contains 15 parts and 183 Articles. Malaysia practices Parliamentary democracy under Constitutional monarchy with his Majesty the Yang di-Pertuan Agong or King as head of country. It provides for the establishment of three main branches of the government: the Parliament, consist of the House of Representatives and the Senate; the executive branch led by the Prime Minister and his Cabinet Ministers; and the judicial branch headed by the Federal Court (source: http://globaledge.msu.edu/countries/malaysia/government/). One of the conditions the Government's systems of parliamentary democracy is the delegation of administrative authority to three parts namely executive power, Judicial Power and legislative power. Delegations of authority were conducted at both the Federal Government and State Government (Azmi, 2012).

Nazaruddin (2001) defines the Constitution as a set of rules about the rights, powers and procedures as well as the responsibility of the controlling and guiding the relationship between an authority with other authorities as well as between authorities with its citizens. There are clauses inherited since the British invasion and is still maintained in the Malaysia Federal Constitution. It is the traditional elements generated based on aspects of history. It was regarded as a social contract, which covers four aspects including the institution of monarchy, Islam, and the special position of the Malays and Bumiputera (Abas, 1985). The Malay special rights were part of the social contract agreed to by the non-Malays in exchange for their receiving citizenship status during the constitutional negotiations (Guan, 2005). Safeguarding the Malays was central to this compromise (Abbott, 2007). Up to today Federal Constitution has been impressively successful in managing ethnic relations and to uphold political stability through its acceptance by the Malay majority and ethnic support from the Chinese and Indians. However, there is evidence that there is still widespread resentment against privileges granted to the Malays and Bumiputeras.
To help additional understanding the following topic will explain further the composition of the culture and religion of the Malaysian society and enlighten the reader about the formation of the Malaysian identity. The Geographical, Cultural, Religious, and Make-up of Malaysia.

1.5.1 ‘Malaysia’

![Figure 1: Map of Malaysia](http://www.freeworldmaps.net/asia/malaysia/malaysia-map-physical.jpg)

Malaysia, a country located in Southeast Asia consists of two parts, being Peninsular Malaysia to the west and East Malaysia to the east. Peninsular Malaysia is more populated than East Malaysia. According to the latest figures by Malaysia’s Economic Planning Unit (EPU), as of July 2010 Malaysia population estimated to be 28.3 million. Multiple ethnic groups represent the demographics of Malaysia. According to 2010 census, there were 60.3% Bumiputera or Malay ethnic, Chinese 22.9%, and the Indians 7.1% of the total population. Malaysia’s ethnic population resides according to its geographical make-up.
The Malays, who are the dominant and original inhabitants of Malaysia, reside largely in Peninsular Malaysia.

According to the latest figures on Malaysian population by Malaysia’s Economic Planning Unit (EPU) in 2010, Malaysia’s population is estimated at 28.2 million. The number of Malays/Bumiputeras has risen to 17,947,371 million, in contrast to only 6,520,559 Chinese, 1,969,343 Indians and 347,692 residents of other ethnic groups. This means that the Malays and indigenous Bumiputera continue to be the major ethnic group in Malaysia. (Source: [http://epu.gov.my/html/themes/epu/images/common/pdf/eco_stat/pdf/1.2.5Pd](http://epu.gov.my/html/themes/epu/images/common/pdf/eco_stat/pdf/1.2.5Pd)).

The indigenous Bumiputera group includes the natives to the East Malaysian states of Sabah and Sarawak. The Kadazandusuns form the largest indigenous group in Sabah. Together, the Malays and Bumiputera have similar privileges and rights accorded to them as the natives of the country, under Article 153 of the Federal Constitution. The special rights given to the Bumiputera were part of the agreement when Sabah and Sarawak agreed to join the Federation of Malaya to become part of “Malaysia” in 1963 (Federick, 2012).

Other ethnic groups such as the Chinese and Indians migrated in large numbers to Peninsular Malaysia as a result of the British colonial rule between 1786 and 1957. According to Gullick (1981), the Chinese came to various parts of Peninsular Malaysia, particularly the state of Malacca, but the mass migration of Chinese did not begin until “the second quarter of the nineteenth century.” The mass arrival of Chinese and Indian peoples to Peninsular Malaysia was partly due to economic reasons. The booming economy of tin, initially found by the British in the state of Perak and Selangor, resulted in Chinese flocking to these areas.. When the country sought independence from the British, the Chinese and Indian migrants, who by then saw Malaysia as their home, had to be accepted as citizens. In terms of religion, Islam has the greatest number of followers with 60.4 percent of the population being Muslim. Religion is seen as a major aspect of cultural identity for Malaysians, as the country’s population is made up of followers of all the major religions of the world.
Based on the report of Population and Housing Census of Malaysia 2000, Department of Statistics Malaysia (https://www.statistics.gov.my/) about 19.2% are Buddhist, 9.1% are Christian, 6.3% are Hindu and 2.6% follow Confucianism, Taoism or other ancient Chinese religions. What characterises Malaysia’s population is the fact that ethnic identity correlates strongly with religion. For example, the Malays are all Muslims. There are no Malays who are followers of other religions, but there are Non-Malay Muslims. There are 69,043 Indian Muslims and 57,221 Chinese Muslims (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2000). Chinese are largely Buddhists (4,324, 971 million), while Indians are mostly Hindu (1,412,686). The Bumiputera, Chinese and Indians comprise the Christian population of Malaysia. Among them, the Kadazan dusun in Sabah and the Ibans in Sarawak comprise the greatest portion, about 1,273,968 followers. Chinese follower’s number 539,556 and Indian followers are estimated at 130,408.

Malaysia officially identifies itself as an Islamic country, making Islam the country’s official religion, and giving it a special position enshrined under the Federal Constitution. Nevertheless, the government allows Malaysians the freedom to carry out other religions apart from Islam, which guaranteed according to the constitution. Consequently, one can easily find mosques, churches and temples everywhere.

Part of the reason why religion and ethnic culture is a key characteristic in Malaysian cultural identity is that the state’s ideology of the Rukunegara placing the belief of the existence of God as the main principle of the country’s identity. Therefore, despite professing different religious beliefs and cultures, the basis of Malaysia’s value system is on religion and spirituality. The government ruling Malaysia never envisaged being a secular state. Nevertheless, this does not mean that the cultures of Malaysians are fixed and unchangeable. As it has adopted a capitalist economic system and is becoming more open to the global economy, Malaysians are embracing a consumerist culture. The presence of transnational companies from fast food, toy and entertainment industries has become a part of Malaysians way of life.

In order to really grasp the situation of young Malaysians, it is important to take into consideration the complexity of Malaysian society, one that consists of differences in
ethnicity, class, education, religion, language and geographical location, which in itself produce’s young Malaysians of various identities.

Young Malaysians lives, irrespective of ethnicity, religion and class, are very much influenced by religion, custom and culture. However, it is the level of attachment of their parents to religion and ethnic culture at home that differentiates young Malaysians from one another. Thus, some young Malaysians have a more liberal upbringing. Also, religion, ethnic culture and values fill their social worlds, such as through school or the media. Ethnic minorities tend to take extra measures to preserve the cultural identity of their children.

This is exemplified by Indian parents who go to the extent of sending at least one of their children to a Tamil medium school or Indian language classes. Young Malaysian Indians also attend Hindu religious classes or Indian classical dance and Sangeetham (carnatic vocals) classes as a way of strengthening their ethnic and cultural identity (Balasubramaniam, 2006). Similarly, Chinese parents who wish their children to be able to continue speaking, reading and writing in their mother tongue send their children to Chinese medium schools. Young Kadazan dusun, who are the majority of Christian Bumiputera face a much more mixed cultural upbringing. Young Kadazan dusuns have to create a balance between attending church and its activities with the other aspects of their lives.

Islam is a way of life for the Malays, thus their activities and worldview essentially revolve around the religion. Learning to read the Quran and other aspects of becoming a Muslim, such as fasting and prayers, are integral parts of Islamic parenting. By the age of seven, a child generally has to start to pray and join their family in congregation prayers at home. Malay parents in urban areas are most conscientious about their children’s religious and moral education. It is said that although Malaysian schools compel Muslim students to attend Islamic Studies, their parents still send them for extra religious classes outside school (Embong, A.R., 2002). However, the enforcement of this practice varies from one family to another, depending on the degree of religious consciousness of the family.
Nevertheless, learning to read the Quran, praying and fasting is something that becomes part of almost all Malay families’ home lives.

The Islamic resurgence between the late 1960s and 1970s led many Malays, especially the younger generation, to become more religiously conscious. Study has shown how this transformed the social landscape of the country. The resurgence emerged as a response to the failure of the NEP (National Economic Program) to help the Muslim Malays, in which the Islamic model of development was believed to be the best alternative (Anwar, 1987). According to Jomo et al (1992), the resurgence was a “cultural response” led by several Islamic groups who fought for more spiritual lifestyles against secularism. The influence of the movement was significant. The number of young Muslims wearing Islamic attire rose from the period before the resurgence occurred. In the early 1960’s, the majority of Malay women did not wear a headscarf, choosing instead Western clothing. However, after the influence of the Islam resurgence, Muslim women begin donning the modest Malay traditional attire – *baju kurung* and a headscarf. Discarding Western mini-skirts and dresses, the headscarf is becoming a natural part of Malaysian Muslims' identity (Anwar, 1987).

With the state widely promoting Islam in various aspects of public life, such as the introduction of Islamic banking, television broadcasts of national and international Quranic reading competitions during the month of Ramadhan, the call to prayer on Malaysian television and radio, Islam has moved from being a way of life in Malay homes to the official Malaysian culture. The state is active in promoting Islam and its values in the public sphere, but only for the Muslims. The implication of this development is that over the years, young Muslims have tended to blend two identities – religion and modernity.

In general, whether religious or ethnic cultural identity is more prominent in their lives, young Malaysians inevitably do not lead a life that is completely free from tradition. What differentiates them is how their parents set their home lives and, of course, how young people perceive forces of tradition and modern values for themselves.
1.6 Managing Inter-ethnic Relations in a Plural Society

Managing ethnic relations becomes one of the biggest challenges for any country in a plural society. As Malaysia boasts of being multi-ethnic and multicultural, such cultural diversity can sometimes pose a challenge to inter-ethnic relations. In Malaysia it is important that these differences be managed carefully to avoid problems of cultural and religious sensitivity. Owing to the fact that Malaysia had once experienced an ethnic riot in 1969 between the Malays and non-Malays, it became apparent that managing ethnic relations needed to become a top priority for the government. Various steps were taken to achieve this goal especially through education policy; media control regulations and National Development Policies. At this point is vital to shed some information on what happened on the 13th May 1969 and ethnic issues that led to it. A black point in the history of Malaysia that almost tore the nation apart (Fakhri, 2012). It has been regarded as a means for important changes in Malaysian public policy, and has shaped Malaysia’s social, political and economic landscape for the past 45 years (Fakhri, 2012).

1.6.1 ‘The 13 May Ethnic Riots’

The May 13, 1969 incident was an ethnic riot and climax to the problem of unity in Malaysia (Soong, 2008). Events well remembered and still feared to this day. It is still a taboo topic of discussion after 45 years. Reports say, on May 13, 1969, riots erupted between the Malays and the Chinese in the capital city Kuala Lumpur and elsewhere in the country. It was directly connected to the general election held on May 10, to processions and counter-procession, and to threatening political changes (Horowitz, 2001).

The riots which occurred on a national scale were taken as a turning point to re-examine the policies of the country since independence (Soong, 2008). One of the initial reactions to the riots of 1969 was the formation of the national ideology or Rukenegara (Brown, 2007). The belief in God is the first statement of the National Ideology which was formulated in 1970. It has provided the direction for education, national unity, justice,
liberty, diversity and progress. It declares that Malaysians are dedicated to achieving a greater unity of its entire people, regardless of their ethnic origins or religion affiliations (Manickam, 2004). The principles of Rukenegara are: Faith in God, loyalty to king and country, upholding the constitution, the rule of law, and good behaviour and morality.

The Malaysian government has worked hard to cultivate peace and respect among its citizens. It adopted the approach of empowering all ethnic and religious groups by giving them a share in decision making, a say in collectively charting the future of the country (Fakhri, 2012). The Department of National Unity was established as a bureaucratic instrument to keep watch of the state of ethnic relations in Malaysia. It was given the critical role of consciously fostering unity and integration. The government of Malaysia had realized that sweeping things under the carpet was not the solution. It mobilized all its resources to find immediate remedies and long-term solutions (Fakhri, 2012).


The fundamental practice of affirmative action typically involve introducing measures to raise the participation of members of an economically disadvantaged group in the in the areas of education and employment and business (Guan, 2005). While affirmative action policies vary across countries in term of the beneficiary group, Malaysia Affirmatives action policy introduces preferential policies to raise the dominant majority ethnic group (Malay) economic status as against that of economically more advanced minorities (Chinese) (Guan, 2005).

During the colonial period, Malay involvement in the emerging capitalist economy was not encouraged by the British, who preferred that the Malays remained in food production, primarily of fish and rice (Wong, 2008). The Malays attempt to venture into modern commercial sectors was blocked by the British by imposing restrictive cultivation
conditions on land. These early discriminatory policies in favour of British plantation interests severely limited the potential development of indigenous capital and shackled Malays to low income economic activities (Wong, 2008).

The British hindrance toward the development of the Malays was used to justify the post-1969 policies that were positively in favour of the Bumiputera. It also produced an elaborate structure of policies aimed at improving the welfare of economic and political power of the Malays, who are concerned with economic power and the vitality of the immigrant communities. The government enforced special rights for Malays through quotas for government and private-sector employment, admission to higher education, and access to public housing, as well as through a variety of development programs targeted at Malays (Means, 1996).

Following that the Malaysian government implemented an ambitious social engineering plan in 1971 to achieve national unity. This New Economic policy (NEP), sought to achieve national unity by eradicating poverty, irrespective of race, and restructuring society so as to achieve inter-ethnic economic parity between the predominantly Malay and the predominantly Chinese non-Bumiputera. The measures used to achieve these goals included requiring companies to restructure their corporate holdings to ensure at least 30% Bumiputera ownership and by allotting publicly-listed shares at par value or with only nominal premiums to Bumiputera. The government would subsequently encourage inter-ethnic business partnerships, as a means to promote ethnic co-existence as well as help advance the involvements of Malays in business (Wong, 2008).

As the result of the unfortunate incident of 1969, Malaysia also reviewed its legislative provisions and education policies.
1.6.2 Education

Education is one of the key areas that the state foresaw as an effective tool in managing ethnic relations among young people. Historically, Malaysia's education policy has always been to create an education system that will lead to a united Malaysia with a clear sense of Malaysian consciousness. The need to do so was particularly crucial since Malaysia's education system is characterised by the presence of vernacular schools. Notions of “national identity” have been made implicit to the young through education, so that being “Malaysian” is not something that is taught but rather comes naturally to mind. It is so natural that it is like having “a nose and two ears” (Gellner, 1983). In the years before independence, the government already was conscious of the need to “nationalise” existing schools in Malaysia as a means of uniting the people.

Based on two major education reports – The Education Committee Report, 1956 (The Razak Report) and the Education Review Committee Report, 1960 (The Rahman Talib Report) – national identity was to be constructed through the use of Malay as the medium of instruction, one standard curriculum and common public examinations for all (Singh & Mukherjee, 1993).

The May 13th ethnic riots pushed the government to strengthen national integration and characterise a “Malaysian identity” and culture. With the New Economic Policy (NEP) and National Cultural Policy (NCP) as the main national policies underpinning all measures to achieve national unity, conscious efforts were taken to construct a distinctive Malaysian identity in textbooks. The use of Malay as a medium of instruction, in addition to being a language subject, for vernacular schools involving Chinese and Tamil schools, has meant that the language has a far-reaching implication for the next generation of Malaysians. First, non-Malay students become trilingual, proficient in Malay, English and Mandarin/Tamil, while Malay students are bilingual, speaking Malay and English at school. The decision to transform Malaysia’s education system into a “national” system was, in some sense, an effective way of creating national identity. With the new generation able to speak, read and write in Malay, it was believed that the ideals and aspirations of the state could be easily communicated, as they would be able to understand them literally and
laterally. According to Gellner (1983), the initial step taken towards forming a nation is through the creation of a “high culture” in the form of a mass standardised education system.

“High culture” refers to employing one standard medium of instruction to create effective communication among multi-ethnic citizens where shared meanings exist. It enables standardised knowledge to be imparted because it is taught based on one common language, understood by all. It is through schools, Gellner (1983) goes on to argue, that the task of inculcating deep loyalty to the nation in its citizens and maintaining the high cultures has helped to organise people. A standardised curriculum plays an important part in the creation of a nation with a clear national identity.

Textbooks are written with a local Malaysian context and perspective. Subjects, like Geography, teach students about the 13 Malaysian states, their economic activities and the exact location of the capital. It is essential that young Malaysians know the existence and the exact location of the 13 states first before anything else.

This is a strategic move towards creating an “imagined political community” where a sense of belonging is built based on a sense of pride, not only among the three major races, but also among the inhabitants of both Peninsular and East Malaysia. Young people from Peninsular Malaysia may not have otherwise known about people in Sabah and Sarawak, but through education, they can feel like they have known their Sabahan and Sarawakian peers as if they could “meet them, or even hear of them” (Anderson, 1991). Peninsular Malaysian students can equally share the pride of having Mount Kinabalu, the highest mountain in Southeast Asia, with their Sabahan peers. Similarly, young Sabahans and Sarawakians can identify Kuala Lumpur as the site of the National Monument, Muzium, Parliament, Merdeka Square and even the location of the National Palace. They will know it as a city of importance where major events take place and a symbol of their nationality.

Over the years, the Malaysian government has streamlined its strategies to improving inter-ethnic relations by attempting to achieve two objectives. One is to teach young people about all the traditional customs, beliefs and religious teachings, in an attempt to instil in them tolerance for other Malaysians. The second is to imbue a strong sense of
pride about being Malaysian. The concept of *Bangsa Malaysia* is most evident here in that Malaysians can exist with their distinct ethnic identities, but all share the common pride of being Malaysian.

To achieve this aim, more subjects have been introduced to Malaysian schools with a heavy emphasis on educating and disseminating the definition of the Malaysian culture and way of life. As Brown (2007) rightly says, “public education in Malaysia – particularly, but not exclusively, at the pre-university level – is promoted as a nation-building tool, seeking to inculcate a sense of Malaysian-ness and patriotism”.

Hence, subjects such as moral education, local studies, history and civics and citizenship have been introduced for that purpose. In schools young Malaysians are taught the various principles of all the major religions of the country, and the local customs and traditions of all the major ethnic groups, to promote understanding of different ethnic cultures of Malaysia.

Interethnic relations are also one of the key topics taught in history, where an aim in Malaysia is the development of an ethnically integrated nation. However, it is through history lessons that the ideals of national identity are given heavy emphasis. Brown (2007) criticises such a move as an attempt to use education to strengthen the position of the existing government. The sole purpose of nationalising education was to ensure young Malaysians had a clear sense of ethnic and national identity. This is the idea that Malaysians see themselves first as “Malaysians”, then identified by ethnicity second. The concept of *1Malaysia* is most evident here in that Malaysians can exist with their distinct ethnic identities, but all share the common pride of being Malaysian.

1.6.3 Multi-ethnic Media

The media is the next most important institution that the state used to manage ethnic relations. One of the main characteristics of Malaysian media is that it is prohibited to discuss, criticise or question the religion and ethnic culture of any ethnic group in the
country. This prohibition is a measure to prevent the recurrence of the 13 May 1969 ethnic riot. Since the 1970s, no media source in Malaysia has been allowed to conduct public discussions or criticism of the special rights of the Malays/Bumiputera, the position of the king and state rulers, the Federal Constitutions and Islam, or condemn the culture and religion of the non-Malays. This continues even now that the Malaysian broadcasting industry has been commercialised.

The state ruled that the Malaysian media was to ensure continuity in terms of cultural identity towards the ethnic community it served. This explains the existence of multi-ethnic media in Malaysia. Multi-language broadcasts began in 1963 when Malaysia first launched its television service to the nation. According to Kitley, (2003), the multiple language programming was part of the government’s plan of nation building after the Communist insurgency. However, as times change, the multi-ethnic media has become a unique feature of the Malaysian media system. With such a system, one is able to witness the spread of multi-ethnic print and electronic media. In Peninsular Malaysia, Malay, Chinese and Indian readers are able to read newspapers and magazines in Malay, Chinese and Tamil, while in East Malaysia, such as in Sabah, a unique system is found. Malay, English and Kadazandusun languages are used daily. Broadcasting services, such as the radio, and television are also multi-ethnic.

The main purpose of this is to allow the promotion of the cultures and languages amongst all ethnic groups, as well as to fulfil the entertainment needs of different ethnic groups.

1.6.4 National Development Policies (1970-onwards)

One important aspect concerning Malaysia’s national development policies is that it is very much influenced by the state of ethnic relations among its people. The New Economic Policy (NEP) (1971-1990) was introduced, largely in reaction to the ethnic riots that erupted in 1969. While Malaysia was experiencing steady export growth prior to 1970, critics claim there was insufficient focus given to equity distribution among different ethnicities (Malaysia, 1965). In terms of income, there is a wide disparity among
different ethnicities. According to the Malaysia Economy Planning unit, the average monthly household income for Malaysian homes was RM264. A Malaysian Chinese’s gross monthly household income of RM394, followed by Malaysian Indian’s incomes averaging RM304. The average for a Malay household was the lowest, only RM172. The socio-economic imbalance among ethnic groups in Malaysia resulted in ethnic riots.

The NEP, which was introduced not only for growth and equity distribution, also aimed to promote social cohesion among different ethnicities based on two main objectives:

- “To reduce absolute poverty, irrespective of race, through raising income levels and increasing employment opportunities for all Malaysians

- To restructure society to correct economic imbalances, and to reduce and eventually eliminate the identification of race with economic function


Apart from economic approaches, several measures have been identified in trying to create a national identity, an identity that all ethnic groups could be identified. This was documented in the Second Malaysia Plan (1971). Those measures were-

(a) The formulation of educational policies designed to encourage common values and loyalties amongst all communities and in all regions.
(b) The cultivation of a sense of dedication to the nation through services of all kinds.
(c) The careful development of national language and literature and of art and music.
(d) The emergence of truly national symbols and institutions based on the cultures and traditions of the society.

However, the government’s move was widely criticised as favouring the Malays and Bumiputera group over other ethnic groups like the Chinese and Indians (Jomo, 2004). Yet, even as the NEP drew close to an end in 1989, the Chinese were already averaging a gross monthly household income of RM1,631, followed by Indians averaging RM1,209. Malays remained the lowest, averaging RM940 (source: Economy Planning Unit) (http://www.epu.gov.my/c).

Despite the constant criticism, the push for more development that is inclusive of all ethnicities, have continued with subsequent national development policies from 1990 onwards. Eradicating poverty remains its main agenda, and providing education for all ethnic groups was seen as the vehicle for upward social mobility. The new plan was referred to as The Third Outline Perspective Plan, 2001-2010. Industrial and vocational training was provided for the poor in the rural areas, in addition to credit facilities to aid them in starting businesses. Various schemes were drawn up under the Third Outline Perspective Plan aimed towards low-income Malaysians.

The government’s effort to achieve “development” in a holistic sense is the most vital feature in Malaysia’s national development policies. These policies were created with the hope that while achieving material and wealth development, the fruit of those developments was to be equally shared by all ethnicities. This serves as the foundation of Malaysia’s cultural values, balancing the material with the spiritual, cultural and humanitarian success, and of becoming modern yet still traditional in spirit and values.

1.7 Challenges to Inter-Ethnic Relations

Apart from the challenge of changes in social values, nothing is more challenging than the kinds of tension and problems that arise in managing interethnic relations (Gomez, 1999). Historically problems of inter-ethnic relations were deep-rooted in economic issues where the government, which was, incidentally, Malay-Muslim dominated, was accused of initiating national pro-Malay economic policies at the expense of the Chinese and Indians (Gomez, 1999).
But nothing is more sensitive than the challenges relating to culture and religion. As Malaysians religious faith, is often recognized through their ethnicity, ethnic identity became fixed. For instance, because the Malays are all Muslims, the Federal Constitution defines Malays as Muslim, and vice versa, under Article 160 (a) and (b). Consequently, it is hard to separate “Malay” from “Islam” in Malaysia.

“Islam is not only the faith of the Malays: it serves also as one of the core foundations upon which their self-identity is based.” (Frith, 2000: 117)

This proves very challenging because in reality, there are non-Malay Muslims among the Kadazandusun, Chinese and Indians, although the number is not large. The consequence of this definition has put non-Malay-Muslims in a dilemma, as it may imply that as Muslims they have now become “Malays” in Malaysia. This is indeed a major issue, as this restrains non-Malays from becoming Muslim while retaining their ethnic identity as “Chinese” “Indian” or “Kadazandusun”. Among non-Malays, the Chinese are particularly sensitive to this definition because the community perceives being Muslim as needing to assume a new surname, as they would now be known as “Malays”. Study highlighted the problems faced by Chinese who become Muslims (Lam, 2004).

Because Chinese culture places a heavy emphasis on family ancestry, especially continuing the family surname, it has been perceived that conversion to Islam means disowning one’s cultural identity. Moreover, before 1996, converts were required to take a Muslim name; Women were required to adopt “binti Abdullah” (daughter of the servant of God) and men “bin Abdullah” (son of the servant of God) as their surname (Lam, 2004). This heightens the perception that conversion means discarding one’s ethnic identity. This problem is significant because it affects ethnic relations between the Malays and non-Malays, especially with the Chinese. According to Tan (2000), Muslim Chinese face a dilemma because the Chinese community does not accept their status as Muslim. They are viewed as having become “Malay” while the Malay community often suspects they converted to gain the special privileges accorded to Malays.
Conversion to Islam also leads to the issue of interethnic marriage, as one of the main reasons for conversion to Islam is marriage between a Muslim and a non-Muslim. Daniels (2005), who conducted an extensive ethnographic study on the issue of building national culture in Malaysia, found that beneath the surface of the purported harmonious multi-ethnic relations in Malaysia lie tensions among non-Muslims towards Islam. Interethnic marriage between Muslims and non-Muslims also raises the pertinent issue of preserving one’s ethnic culture and identity. Non-Muslims see a problem with marrying a Muslim, particularly Malay, since Islam clashes with their ethnic culture and religion.

The state might have tried to promote racial and religious tolerance through schools, which have to teach young people tolerance and respect for different religions and customs. However, in reality, this would only be useful if interethnic relations do not lead to marriages among Malaysians of different ethnicities and religions. In addition, schools do not address issues pertaining to interethnic marriages where conversion is involved.

All of this shows how two conflicting identities “authority-defined” and “everyday-defined”, suggested by Shamsul (1996), operate in Malaysian society. What Shamsul (1996) failed to mention is that varying identities in Malaysia are often contradictory and conflicting rather than in harmony. Therefore, that is how Malaysian identity should be studied.

Due to the fixed notion of “identity” and “ethnicity”, young Malaysians sense of self is most definitely affected. Therefore, it is within this myriad of economic, political and social realities that young Malaysians are forced to form an identity. Unfortunately, it is not widely known how young Malaysians negotiate their identity against the conflicting sources of “authority” and “everyday-defined” identities in their everyday lives, with the fixed notion of “identity” and “ethnicity” in the media. Despite focusing on media penetration and cultural identity, Rahim (2009) fail to show how the media is used to construct young Malaysians various social identities. They also failed to show what new identities are emerging based on this situation. While numerous international studies have highlighted the contrast between lifestyle and cultural values among young people, articulated through media consumption (Roussou, 2002), there is yet such a study among
young Malaysians. This is particularly pertinent, as Malaysia is becoming an increasingly mediated society. It is based on this inadequacy that this study is interested by what social identities are being articulated by young Malaysians, and if ethnic groups are affected differently, by the media. At this point it’s important to shed some light on the type of media system run in Malaysia.

1.8 Malaysia Media system

The Malaysian mass media has come a long way, from the colonial period and subsequently the struggle for independence, through six premierships and changing policies to what it is today. The Media has grown and prospered under different editorial policies with specific mission and vision but always with a common goal – to develop the country and its people.

The Malaysian media is unique in system and content. Due to the multi-ethnic nature of its population, the Malaysian media is multi-ethnic, be it in print or electronic. The national newspapers are available in Malay, English, Tamil and Mandarin, and in East Malaysia, such as in Sabah, the national dailies and regional newspapers are trilingual.

In the electronic media, all languages – Malay, English, Mandarin, Tamil and all the languages of the indigenous people in East Malaysia – are broadcast. Malaysian television broadcasts in four languages – Malay, English, Mandarin and Tamil. Multi-language broadcasts began in 1963 when Malaysia first launched its television service to the nation. The real challenge was to decide which kinds of services were appropriate for a multi-ethnic audience. The idea was to broadcast programmes in three different languages – Malay, Chinese and Tamil – on one channel based on a ratio of 45:40:10 (Karthigesu, 1994). However, the government had to find ways of balancing English programmes in RTM1, because it still relied on imported programmes to fill airtime. This resulted in a new language distribution ratio of 45 (Malay):30 (English):20 (Chinese): 5 (Tamil) (Karthigesu, 1994). According to Kitley (2003), one of the reasons for multiple language
programming in broadcasting is the government’s plan for nation-building and national culture.

Over time, the above formula was revised. Started by the Japanese occupation during the 1940’s, and by the ethnic riots on May 13, 1969. The Malaysia mass media underwent many changes and restructuring, as noted by Elliot S. Parker (cited in Faridah, 2011), the ethnic riots were the prime reason for the restructuring of the Malaysian demographic architecture which had tremendous effect on the mass media.

Irrespective of the type of ownership, whether public or commercial, all media sources are expected to play a role in nation-building, fostering national unity and promoting local cultures and values. One ways for the media to fulfil this role is to allow legislative means from the state to regulate the content, rather than self-regulation. The government felt that if the media played a constructive role, it would foster ethnic relations and local cultures.

The existence of specific laws, such as the Sedition Act 1984, serve to regulate the Malaysian media from publishing, reporting and commenting on potentially sensitive issues, such as religion and race (Khattab, 2002). In addition, other laws, such as the Defamation Act 1948, the Printing Presses and Publication Act 1984 and the Official Secrets Act 1986, were introduced to control the dissemination of issues that may provoke racial unrest. All have been widely criticised as a means for the state to control public discourse (Zaharom, 2002). In answering critics of its alleged stranglehold on the press, the government has argued that a “guided” press is important for national security and nation building in multi-ethnic Malaysia (Ibrahim, 2007).

Socially, the Malaysian government has resorted to introducing a rating system for films and television, arguably as a means of weeding out cultures and values that are deemed unsuitable for a Malaysian audience, especially for young people. The rating system is as follows:

U: general viewing suitable for all levels of society;
18SG: 18 + with non-excessive violent/horrifying scenes;
18SX:18 + with non-excessive sex scenes;
Elements considered unsuitable are sex, horror, violence, profanity, and religious blasphemy, as well as political ideologies that seem to challenge the national culture and norms. The broadcasting and multimedia industry is regulated by the Malaysian Communication and Multimedia Act. The Malaysian Communication and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) amongst others regulate, and monitor the promotion of local cultures and values. The promotion of cultures of all ethnic groups is believed to benefit young Malaysians.

Within this context, the multi-ethnic Malaysian media must comply with the existing laws and the rating system. Aside from these, the multi-ethnic media has become a tool for representing the interests of the ethnic community. For example, the Malay dailies usually highlight problems and issues affecting the Malay and Bumiputera, while Chinese and Tamil newspapers have become a space for both communities to discuss individual issues of concern. In terms of news coverage, all Malaysian media gives due attention to reporting the Prime Minister and events of national interest, with other stories revolving around their own ethnic readers.

In terms of ownership, only the electronic media has two systems of ownership, public and private, while the print media is all privately owned. Consequently, audiences are exposed to different forms of television programmes in terms of content. Programmes on public broadcasting stations tend to closely adhere to national policies.

1.8.1 Malaysia Broadcasting Industry

The Malaysian broadcasting industry has gone through two phases of development, the pre-privatisation phase (1963-1983) and the privatisation phase (1984-onwards).
The first television network was *Radio Televisyen Malaysia* (RTM), which is under the control of the Department of Broadcasting in the Ministry of Information. This places broadcasting services under the direct control of the state. In the same year, 1969, the ministry issued a directive, which states the role of RTM as:

a) To explain in depth and with the widest possible coverage the policies and programmes of the government in order to ensure maximum understanding by the public.
b) To stimulate public interest and opinion in order to achieve change in line with the requirement of the government.
c) To assist in promoting civic consciousness and fostering the development of Malaysian arts and culture.
d) To provide suitable elements of popular education, general information and entertainment.


To cater to the needs of all ethnic groups among the Malaysian audience, RTM with two channels - RTM 1 & 2 for television (Zaharom, 2002). Even though it was never clearly stated who the target audience for RTM 1 is, it is apparent based on its programmes that it serves predominantly the Malay and Muslim audiences. In addition, RTM 2 offers programmes in Cantonese, Mandarin, Tamil and English, and caters to non-Malays. As it is under the direct ownership of the government, RTM’s news programme, whether in Malay, Mandarin, Tamil or English, reports government activities, plans and speeches. Its news programme often gives more prominence to government messages of nation-building and national unity compared to commercial television stations. The state uses RTM 1 as a tool to disseminate and reaffirm elements of national culture. For instance, there are more Islamic elements in RTM 1; before the start of a broadcast, there is a reading from the Quran. Its talk shows are avenues for official views to be disseminated and national policies to be explained, and often avoids issues of democracy that are sensitive, and religious and cultural issues that allow critical public engagement and debate.
Commercialisation of the broadcasting sector in the 1980s saw an important trend (refer figure 2). The privatisation of the media began in 1984, a year after Malaysia launched its Privatisation Policy. One of the reasons for the commercialisation of television services was to increase the number of entertainment programmes, which RTM was unable to fulfil (Karthigesu, 1994). The first commercial television station in Malaysia was TV3, which is handled by a company called Sistem Television Malaysia Berhad (STMB). TV3 proved to be more popular than RTM, especially among urban Chinese viewers, because it brought in more of the latest imported Chinese programmes. Prior to TV3, video cassettes (VCR) rentals of Hong Kong films were high due to the lack of sufficient entertainment for non-Malay audiences (Hashim, 1995).

The popularity of TV3 spurred the emergence of more commercial television stations. In 1995, another station called Metro Vision was launched, which is owned by a consortium of four companies. Two of them are the Utusan Group and the Melewar Corporation, both of which are closely aligned with the government (Zaharom, 1998). However, Metro Vision collapsed during the economic crisis in 1997-8.
Lists of type of television services & ownership in Malaysia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stations</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Ownership</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Radio Televisyen Malaysia (RTM 1 &amp; 2)</td>
<td>1963</td>
<td>State-owned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TV3</td>
<td>1984</td>
<td>Commercial (terrestrial)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metroversian (terminated)</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Commercial (terrestrial)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NTV7 (terminated)</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Commercial (terrestrial)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8TV (terminated)</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Commercial (terrestrial)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TV9 (terminated)</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Commercial (terrestrial)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mega TV (terminated)</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Commercial (cable operator)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Astro Satellite TV</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>Commercial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TV Al-Hijrah (Terrestrial)</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Commercial</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2: List of television services & ownership in Malaysia
The third station is NTV7, which was owned and operated by Natseven TV Bhd but is now a wholly owned subsidiary of the sole media conglomerate in the country – Media Prima Berhad. Its target audience is urban Chinese and youths. NTV7 first made its appearance in 1998. The latest station, 8TV was launched in 2005. TV9 or Channel 9 began operating in 2003, but ceased operation two years later. However, under a new owner, Media Prima, it was re-launched in 2006. Both stations added more choice of entertainment for Malaysian audiences. All four commercial stations – TV3, 8TV, NTV7 and TV9 are claimed to be successful by owner Media Prima Berhad. Despite owning other media sectors, such as radio and print, television remains Media Prima’s major source of revenue. (http://www.mediaprima.com.my/pdfs/2008/operationreview09.pdf).

Mega TV was the first subscription-based television channel introduced in Malaysia. It was operated by TV3 and went on air in 1995. It was popular in the urban market; however, it failed to compete when Astro (All Asia Television & Radio Organisation) which commenced operations in 1996 and offered a greater variety of channels at a more reasonable price.

The most important development in the Malaysian broadcasting industry was the advent of Astro. Astro is a cross media group, which offered the country its first satellite television in 1996. Astro, under Astro Holdings Sdn Bhd, owned by Usaha Tegas Sdn Bhd and its affiliates Khazanah Nasional Berhad (source: http://www.astro.com.my/portal). Astro has revolutionised the Malaysian television viewing experience. It imitates global television formats for its local programmes. With a customer base of 4.6 million residential customers or approximately 65% penetration of Malaysian TV households, from 22 channels in 1996 Astro now offers 179 TV channels, including 49 HD channels, delivered via Direct-To-Home satellite TV, IPTV and OTT platforms119 pay-tv channels across Malaysia and Brunei (https://www.astro.com.my/mediaroom/aboutus).

One of the most attractive features of Astro is that it offers a more diverse choice in terms of local and imported programmes. It is not only diverse in terms of genre but it now has more specific channels for each ethnic group. Astro distributes and produces television programmes in the various languages of Malaysia. Astro holds the distinction of the
‘Gold’ award in the Media and Entertainment category at the Putra Brand Awards for six consecutive years from 2010 to 2015, including the ‘Brand of the Year’ award in 2012 and the ‘Brand Icon’ award in 2013.

TV Al-Hijrah, which was launched in 2009, marks a new era in the broadcasting industry in Malaysia. Focusing on Muslim programs, which promote the teachings of Islam, the content however is appropriate for all ages, for an audience of Muslims and non-Muslims. The main demographic is targeted at young people and groups of spectators below 40 years old.
CHAPTER 2

RESEARCH CONTEXT

2.1 Introduction

Malaysia is a good country to illustrate the value of audience analysis (Grenfell, 1979), as its broadcast audience is uniquely segregated by ethnic differences. Furthermore, much of the literature on news audience especially involving the young generation is rather ethnocentric in the sense that it refers mostly to the experience in the United States and the United Kingdom, describing the various structures and forces outlined as universal (Hallin et al, 2004: 2). This study by contrast looks to Malaysia and seeks to investigate specifically how young people understand and interpret Television news messages and its role in addressing youth in a multi-ethnic, multicultural and multilingual society.

To understand inter-ethnic relations in Malaysia, it is useful to look briefly at its history. Malaysia (formerly the Federation of Malaya) began with a large immigrant population. The colonial rulers instituted policies favouring a massive immigration of Chinese and Indian labour, primarily to meet the labour needs of the colony, to the point of radically and permanently altering the original demographic profile of the Malaysian population. More importantly, as pointed by Furnivall (1956), the colonialists had instituted a divide-and-rule policy that resulted to a social order segmented by ethnicity and customs. Each ethnic group holds to its own religion, its own culture and language, and its own ideas and ways. In the economic sphere, there is a division along ethnic lines. Economic disparity has grown as Malaysia progressed during the early post-war years, and the economic disparities emphasized ethnic and cultural cleavages. This economic divide is still an issue after almost five decades of independence (Sriskandarajah, 2005).

In order to get a sense of young Malaysians’ position, a look was taken into the trends and developments of the research undertaken regarding young people by local academics.
2.2 Underlying Ethnic Tensions in Malaysian Society

In reality, young Malaysians’ lives are far from smooth. One of the major tensions that exist lies in the tension between ethnic culture and national identity, although this is often not widely exposed. In his meticulous study on the construction of national identity based on selected secondary school textbooks in Malaysia, Anuar, M.K., (1990) reveals how “Malaysian identity” is biased towards a specific ethnic group. Even though national unity among all ethnic groups became the main objective of the country’s education system and curriculum, he found that textbooks often emphasise certain ethnic groups over others. Thus, Mustafa followed this up by surveying and interviewing young Malaysians and found that young people’s sense of identity is in actual fact variously polarised from “Malaysian” to “Malay-Malaysian” and “Chinese-Malaysian” to ethnic “Malay” or “Chinese”.

In addition, the use of national culture in the media as a form of national identification has proven problematic for young Malaysians. In a study by Wahab (2002), it was found that some young Malaysians do not seem to recognise the national culture as a culture for all, but saw it as a promulgation of the Malay/Muslim hegemonic culture on television; this was despite the fact that the Bangsa Malaysia already existed at this time. Although, Juliana’s respondents were young adults of age 20 and above, little is known about whether experiences during reception are reflected in media consumption as a response to the state’s national identity and culture.

Young people continue to exist in polarised forms and at school tend to socialise within ethnic communities (Santhiram, 1995). Therefore, a tension has formed between how young people define themselves in the context of Malaysia, and the state’s discourse of Malaysian society. The accuracy of the state’s perception of an ethnically integrated Malaysian identity is put into question by the continued tension among young people, contradictory to the official view.
As the eligible age to vote in Malaysia is 21, young people in Mustafa’s study had already shown a political inclination in ethnic politics through media consumption. Although his study was limited to examining the consumption of newspapers, Mustafa’s findings do show that the choice of newspaper is significantly shaped by individual ethnic interest. The high consumption of their own ethnic-based newspaper reflects their sentiment as an ethnic minority in this country. However, only limited attempts by local academics have been made to understand how the use of media in propagating national ideology is affecting young Malaysians.

Muda, (2007), who investigated the level of engagement of young multi-ethnic Malaysians in national policy and campaigns in public advertisements, found that Malaysian-Chinese students only show interest in government campaigns if they depict the life and culture of Chinese people. However, both Malay and Indian students show a higher level of engagement. This displays a continued tension between ethnic and national identity, even 51 years after independence and with all the efforts to nationalise the education system for young people.

Elsewhere, young Malaysians continue to find ways to express their constraints and dissatisfaction. In a National Youth Survey conducted by the Merdeka Centre for Opinion Research, a local think tank in 2007 found that 51 percent felt that the government gives equal treatment to the people, with the majority of Malays and indigenous Bumiputera agreeing. However, Chinese youths differed in their opinion and were most often seen as having a negative perception of the government.

What this shows is that there is still a continued struggle among young people to contest the state based on ethnic sentiments. Hence, as the newly reconstituted national identity – 1Malaysia – seeks to move young people above ethnic identification into something universal like patriotism, has it changed anything? Why do young Malaysian Chinese continue to resist the state and, in some sense, exclude themselves, as evident in Muda, (2007). Why does cultural/ethnic identity still prevail? What does this reflect of their cultural identity and values? Are all young Malaysians becoming more insular? Or is it limited to certain groups of young Malaysians?
What is interesting about all these developments is that they are often expressed through media consumption. This suggests that young Malaysians communicate more frequently through the media. In view of the past and recent developments discussed, this raises several questions. For instance, while those studies have succeeded in suggesting shifts and tensions in attitude towards state-defined identity by young people, unfortunately, “identity” here has been narrowly confined to political identity.

It was also observed that the group of young people that came under the study was not representative of all young Malaysians, particularly in addressing question of “ethnicity”. There seemed to be more emphasis on non-Malays, especially the Chinese. In addition, young Malays were also neglected in the study of identity and media consumption. Much is not known about whether young Malays’ media consumption is similar to that of the Chinese, where it serves as a form of symbolic resistance to the national culture.

As there are no comparative studies including all young Malaysians, to what extent can one assume that the issues of preserving ethnic identity are more extensive among the Chinese? How do other young Malaysians feel about the position of their ethnic culture and identity in the context of national culture? What is greatly needed is to take into consideration the possible differences in outlook by ethnic groups in Malaysia encompassing young people from the major ethnic groups in Malaysia, the Malays, Chinese and Indians.

Although the respondents in the studies of Wahab, (2002) and Muda (2007) were multi-ethnic, both studies failed to address the context and reason behind the different opinions and stance expressed by the various ethnic groups based on their origin values.

Before proceeding further this thesis would like to enlightened readers about the meaning of “identity” and “ethnicity”, which serves as the core concept of this whole issue of identity among young Malaysians.
2.2.1 Defining Identity

Different theories provide different definitions for identity, the nation and its origins and nationalism (Ozkirimli, 2010).

‘Identity’ from the perspective of similarity and difference has been found in a more sophisticated discussion of ‘identity’. Lawler (2008), in particular, explains that people are not only the same or identical with oneself, in the sense, that everyone was born as 'men' or 'women' but we are also differentiated by other factors such as nationalities, ethnicity or religion. A person may share the same gender as a “woman” but as a person, a woman can also be identified in other categories at the same time. For instance, a person can be a ‘woman’ but also assuming different roles such as a ‘mother’, in a different social position as ‘middle-class’ or from different ethnicity – ‘Asian’. In this sense, a person is made up of different and multiple identities which they can be identified. No one person can be the same as to the other.

The strength in Lawler (2008) conception of ‘identity’ is that the true ‘self’ must be understood not only from ‘within’ the person but as socially produced ‘between persons and within social relations’. This differs from Jenkins (2008) and Woodward, (2000) who saw 'identity' as being constructed by the individual in relation to society. It is precisely because the individual’s sense of who they are, is being determined by their social world that Lawler (2008) argues that the presence of “difference” or “uniqueness” as she prefers to call it does not solely come from the individual themselves but the fact that the social world has some influence to one being “different”. What this means is that an identity that was produced was never individually constructed but it is collective in nature. Hence, identity is often negotiated and is subjected to conformity towards social rules. The role of society and structures in shaping our identity draws different explanations from these scholars. By offering his internal-external dialectic of identification model, Jenkins (2008) viewed “identity” as a process which entangles the individual with the collective. By internal, Jenkins refers to how one sees him or herself through a process called self-definition while external implies how others have perceived us. And one’s identity is constructed simultaneously by how we have seen ourselves and how others perceived us.
Jenkins’ model did not emphasize the role of the institutions as a source of constraint or tension in identity formation. In contrast, Lawler (2008) argument that ‘identity’ is not detached from the individual to society but the ‘self’ is embedded within the social world.

“The idea that we can 'be whatever we want to be' relies on an illusory eclipsing of the social world. Against this, the perspectives I have presented here conceptualize identity, subjectivity, personhood – all these slippery and yet necessary terms – as embedded within and produced by the social world. The social world both produces and constrains us as persons”

(Lawler, S., 2008:144)

Lawler (2008) viewed the “outside” or social world has having greater control over the individual. What Lawler is proposing is that, it is looking at the complex formation of “identity”, so one must begin by looking at the social world they are embedded in. Her points echo with that of Woodward (1997: 2000) who spoke of constraints in the form of structures and agency, taking into account how structures can shape our identity beyond our control and, the tussle between structure and agency, creating a tension in identity. However, Woodward is more optimistic whereby while it is important to consider the role and influence of structures in shaping our identity, she also believes people can influence social structure and reproduce identities out of it.

In expanding the role of structure in constructing “identity”, Malaysian scholar Baharuddin, (1996) offers the definition of “identity” in the context of Malaysia, based on two forms of social reality – the “authority-defined” and the “everyday-defined”. By “authority-defined”; Baharuddin, (1996) refers to an identity that is “authoritatively defined by people who are part of the dominant power structure”. “Everyday-defined” identity, on the other hand, refers to “one which is experienced by the people in the course of their everyday life” (ibid). He argues that in the context of Malaysia, both forms of identity exist, juxtaposed with one another. Baharuddin, (1996) definition suggests a two-level social reality in which one’s identity is defined through both levels.
What one can gather here is that identity is certainly not something natural, fixed and within complete control. Rather where it may be processual, changeable, multiple, and fragmented, it also sometimes leads to contradicting identities. But what is more crucial here is to look deeper and beyond, into those multiplicity and diversity of identity where it is formed not necessarily out of free-will, but sometimes due to constraints. Lawler (2008) underlines the role of the social world as the prime factor for identity construction.

Jenkins (2004) on the other hand, views that identity is a consequence of human actions through interactions. By comparison, Woodward (1997) definition seems to be more encompassing where she saw it as involving individuals and society, subconscious self as well as structures and agency. Her views involve looking at the process of identity formation vertically and horizontally. Vertical, in this respect means the relations among individuals and between societies while horizontally, revolves around the relations between institutions and legislations with individuals. Another important definition for “identity” is the idea that the “self” in this age of late modernity has become a “reflexive project” by Giddens (1991). In the following section, Giddens “idea of the self” will be discussed.

2.2.2 National Identity

The national identity is a theme of growing interest, due to the importance that the national identity forms at all political, social and academic levels. Al-buhouachi (2000) identifies the national identity as the linking of the individual with a piece of land known as the homeland (cited in Fakhri, 2012). Muneer 2002 (cited in Fakhri, 2012) also believes that the national identity is identified through indicators that include the features and characteristics relating to the individual as he identifies his identity and patriotism, choosing and deciding with full freedom, and expressing his affiliation to his nationality and identity. The concept of national identity argued by Khaliq, (2008), consists of several elements, including what is constant, such as the land and language, as well as allegiance and affiliation to the State, and what is inconstant or transformed such as clothes, prevailing crafts and architecture. Therefore, the national identity is no longer a static...
entity and pure substance but a blend of compound cultural mixtures, overlaps and interactions. National identity is a person's identity and sense of belonging to one country or to one nation with its history, commonly perceived values, and traditions. It is not just a name–tag or badge that is worn saying, “I am a Malaysian”. It is a complex and dynamic psychological structure involving a system of core beliefs about the national group, and associated emotions and feelings.

2.2.3 Nation Building

The expression of nation building originates from the English language, which was popularised by the Western world as they were the ones who conceptualized the notion (Husin, 2011). A nation can be described as a community of people who have a common historical memory, who reflect common values in their daily lives, and who believe in a common shared destiny. Nation building is of paramount importance to Malaysia, Fakhri (2012) refers to it as the process of constructing or structuring a national identity using the power of the state. In Malaysia, the objective of nation building and forging national unity amongst the various ethnic groups ranks very high in educational and political agendas. In fact, national unity and integration is the cornerstone of the education policy (Haimi et al, 2001). The education policy has played a significant role in reinforcing the national agenda of building the nation. The Malaysian government has always been asked to establish the identity as "Nation" of Malaysia (Leung, 2003).

2.2.4 Understanding Multiculturalism

Multiculturalism is a system of beliefs and behaviours that recognizes and respects the presence of all diverse groups in an organization or a society. It brings together human beings from a variety of cultures to enable them to reach their fullest potential. The understanding of other cultures is crucially important, and it may help to maintain stability in society. Living in a multicultural society requires a high level of understanding and respect of those from other cultures. It is important to address racial differences effectively
in a country like Malaysia. People should understand and respect each other, and negotiate on an equal footing, with a view to seek common ground. Once the social fabric is torn, it cannot easily be sewn together again (Fakhri, 2012). The main aim of managing multiculturalism in Malaysia according to Ibrahim (2007) is to uphold national integration in which all their different cultural communities could live together with each other while maintaining their own original identities.

2.3 Defining Ethnicity & Diaspora

The second key concept to be examined here is 'ethnicity'. Three schools of thoughts offer different way of defining 'ethnicity' namely the primordialist, the instrumentalist and constructivist (Taras, et al., 2008)

The primordialist regards ethnicity as something natural, given, and biologically rooted. Ethnicity was formed out of natural primordial attributes such as ancestry, myth, language, religion, custom, tradition, diet, dress, and other cultural attributes. Assumedly, people constitute as from one ethnicity when they share common cultural attributes mentioned above, while those who do not, are marked out as of different ethnicity.

In addition, the subjective and psychological feeling of bonding, sense of belonging, which induces people to identify themselves with a particular ethnic group, constitutes ethnicity. The fact that an individual identifies himself with a particular ethnic group, and its culture, can form part of the formation of ethnicity and the strengthening of it.

The instrumentalist approach in studying ethnicity differs from the primordialist whereby ethnicity is seen as “a tool used by individuals, groups, or elites to obtain some larger, typically material end” (Taras, et al 2008). What this means is that ethnicity exists when there is a group of people, whether out of defence or provocation, as a response to threats or opportunities for themselves or a group, will manipulate certain ethnic symbols for material and political gain.
The third approach is the constructivist. Constructivist rejected both primordial and instrumentalist notions of ethnicity. It opposes the idea that ethnicity is given and natural, nor does it agree that it is a tool for manipulation. Rather, it suggests that ethnicity is socially-construct whereby human beings form ethnic groups through shared belief in common ancestry. In other words, ethnicity exists through actions and choice and not given or natural. Ethnicity is contingent of changes in society, politics and economy, which influences group members' interaction with society and how they view their own ethnicity. It is out of necessity that shifts in cultural practices and beliefs had to be done, in order to ensure the sustainability of the group identity.

Barth (1969) is among the most influential scholars under this school of thought. His contribution to the study of 'ethnicity' was by introducing the concept of 'ethnic boundaries' as a way of viewing 'ethnicity' or as he called it 'ethnic group'.

The concept of 'ethnic group' is useful in understanding the nature of ethnicity and how it operates. 'Boundary' that was implied here means the social boundaries that encircle an ethnic group. It is not the cultural traits that is important but the sociality that continues within the ethnic group that creates a boundary where members of the group stays within and marking out non-members as outsiders. Ethnic group boundaries can be produced and re-produced.

“If a group maintains its identity when members interact with others, this entails criteria for determining membership and ways of signalling membership and exclusion” (Barth, 1969)

'Identity' with regards to ethnicity, is determined by the continued social contact among group members as a way of maintaining these boundaries. 'Boundaries' in this sense, can be interpreted as a means of maintaining sameness for individuals who identify themselves to an ethnic group while at the same time, marking out differences to those who do not. Ethnic boundaries have a role in organizing people's social life. It is through the actions and decisions of individuals in ascribing and self-ascribing cultural similarities to another person, to allow the person to be a member of the group is what makes “ethnicity”. Its
existence and continued existence relies on subjective feelings of how one sees himself, as well as how others perceive them. More importantly, it changes over time depending upon a situation and how one continues to see themselves (Cornell, et al, 2007). “Ethnicity”, therefore is fluid and contingent.

A somewhat similar definition was also made by Eriksen, (2002) where 'ethnicity' is referred to as “aspects of relationships between groups which consider themselves, and are regarded by others, as being culturally distinctive”. “Ethnicity” is also seen as a form of “classification of people and group relationships” (Eriksen, 2002). This is in contrast with Nash (1996) who identifies three key elements of ‘ethnicity’ to be kinship, commensuality and religious cult which serve as cultural markers that maintain ethnic boundaries.

Taras, et al (2008) offers a lengthy definition:

“...as a large or small group of people, in either traditional or advanced societies, who are united by a common inherited culture (including language, music, food, dress, and customs and practices), racial similarity, common religion, and belief in common history and ancestry and who exhibit a strong psychological sentiment of belonging to the group”

The fact that 'ethnicity' relates to being culturally distinctive to non-group members indicates that the 'ethnicity' of a person depends upon similarity, or affiliations the individual shares with the group which is distinctively different to outsiders. This means that in determining similarity or differences, there is a substantial amount of selecting and appropriating of cultures involved, in order to form an ethnic group.

However, this process is not as easy or straightforward as it seems. Nagata (1974) argues 'ethnicity' should be defined situationally according to one's needs. In highlighting her point, Nagata, (1974) found that 'ethnicity' is fluid in multi-ethnic Malaysia. For example, many of the Muslim Malays' customs and traditions, particularly wedding ceremonies actually originate from Hindu tradition, but this is not shared by other Muslims of Arab
descent in Malaysia. However, the definition of ‘ethnicity’ in Malaysia consists of two levels, that of ‘authority-defined’ and ‘everyday-defined’. This is problematic going by Nagata’s example.

Culture, tradition, and beliefs were purportedly used as a means of promoting a group’s cultural distinction over others, were never natural or given but were borrowed and appropriated into another ethnic group. More evidence which points to the fact “ethnicity” is socially-constructed in Malaysia lies in Hirschman (1987) study on how the definition of “ethnicity” had been systematically re-defined through the Malaysian census report.

Attempts at refining the definition of ‘ethnicity’ to capture a more dialectic nature of 'ethnicity' can also be found in Brass (1991). In defining 'ethnicity', Brass (1991) believes 'ethnicity' to be an “objective cultural markers which also recognizes that they are susceptible to change and variation”. By objective cultural markers, he refers to cultural features that distinguish an ethnic group from one another such as language, religion or colour. Brass’ definition implies although a group are clearly marked out of its cultural distinctiveness, such differences are not fixed or static but is liable to change.

Some scholars attempt to define 'ethnicity' as something processual that is constantly evolving. Through his 'basic social anthropological model of ethnicity', Jenkins (2008) made several propositions to understanding ‘ethnicity’, which is-

(1) Ethnicity is a matter of 'cultural' differentiation (bearing in mind that identity is always dialectic between similarity and differences);

(2) Ethnicity is a matter of shared meanings – ‘culture’ – but it is also produced and reproduced during interaction;

(3) Ethnicity is no more fixed than the way of life of which it is part, or the situations in which it is produced and reproduced; and
(4) Ethnicity is both collective and individual, externalized in social interactions and the categorization of others, and internalized in personal self-identification.
Even though, 'ethnicity' is associated to a group of people who are linked by shared ancestry, language, either with national or regional origins, differentiating from those who are not culturally similar. Fenton (1999) argues that such definition is open for contestation and re-definition. Instead, Fenton (1999), suggested “ethnicity” should be seen as a “social process, as the moving boundaries and identities which people, collectively and individually, draw around themselves in their social lives”.

Fenton also views it as a dimension of social relationship encompasses between groups relations into global and local, macro-meson and micro ethnicity and de facto de jure ethnicity. In his later works, he (Fenton, 2003) further explained, “ethnicity” is a social construction of “descent and culture”.

“A further step or two would be to say that ethnicity refers to the social construction of descent and culture, the social mobilization of descent and culture, and the meanings and implication of classification systems built around them. People or peoples do not just possess cultures or share ancestry; they elaborate these into the idea of a community founded upon those attributes,”

(Fenton, 2003:3)

Finally, Giesen, et al, (2002) suggests that one needs to consider the structural context from where “ethnicity” is being defined. He argues that one cannot assume that “ethnicity” is often constructed in a peaceful and stable state but to take into account that it can exist as a consequent of conflict and tension.

Definitions given by all the scholars mentioned in this chapter seemed to point in several directions. The first is where 'identity' as a whole concerns itself with the process of identifying oneself in which elements of similarity bind people together but at the same time, those similarities also serve to mark out difference to those who are culturally dissimilar. It serves as a means of forming alliance for these individuals to establish themselves as a 'group' as well as marking out their boundaries. This brings us to the
second point where with the exception of Nash (1996), 'ethnicity' is seen as socially constructed through interactions, create and re-create ethnic boundaries, and a constant process of identifying similarities and differences, of which suggest that 'ethnicity' itself is not something fixed and natural.

A pure primordial approach that sees 'ethnicity' on the basis of common ancestry, custom, and language is problematic for a more complex societies like today, because cultural traits within a group could actually be a product of an 'imagined society' which has been re-defined, re-constituted, re-invented and re-produced. This process of identification itself, is constantly evolving, hence 'ethnicity' is not necessarily a natural or given identity but rather socially-constructed. More importantly, the macro setting and the conditions of where ethnicity is situated within, that propels it to being re-invented, re-defined and reconstructed.

Despite, the various definitions offered from the three different strands of thoughts, what can be inferred from the meaning of 'ethnicity' is that it is a collective identity, which unites individuals through cultural markers that serves to distinguish themselves from outsiders.

This study strongly believed that 'ethnicity' is contingent. It goes through moments of constant negotiation, expanding of boundaries and even doing away with some practices, which are irrelevant. All these happen either due to changes in economic and social condition, the role of institution and external forces of globalisation that triggers the recreating of 'ethnicity'.

Although it exists on primordial ties but those are essential merely for symbolic purposes of group identification. In reality, 'ethnicity' is constantly evolving, appropriating outside values and practices over time, to ensure its relevance and sustainability. It is another form of collective identity that serves to bind those who see themselves as culturally similar to each other, that as Fenton (2003) said, people elaborate on those cultural traits, as a way of group identification. The community rebuilds and expands its ethnic boundaries for the purpose of continuity and maintenance.
What is more crucial here is how the media aided the construction and reconstruction of one’s ethnicity amongst young multi-ethnic Malaysians? What form of ethnic identity that is being produced across ethnicity? However simply sorting the ethnic or races in Malaysia is a huge undertaking.

2.4 Conceptualising “Diaspora” and addressing “ethnicity” in Malaysia context

With regards to ethnic minority Malaysians, although they originate from China and South India, there are issues pertaining to the use of the word 'ethnicity' with 'diaspora' in the existing literature, which is perplexing when applied to Malaysia. In the context of Britain, non-white British are considered to be 'diaspora' when they are British citizens. But in Malaysia, where Malays and indigenous are the equivalent of the white British, non-Malay Malaysians, such as the Indian and Chinese, are considered to be of another ethnic group, but never labelled as 'diaspora'. In fact, Malaysian Chinese and Indians were never viewed as a 'diasporic community' simply because they have been citizens of the country since Malaysia first gained independence in 1957.

It is more apt to use the term 'ethnicity,' rather than 'homelands' and 'diaspora'. In support of this argument, Tan (2004) emphatically states that Malaysian Chinese should rightly be regard as another ethnic group because while they may be identified as ethnically “Chinese” in relation to other ethnic groups, that does not make them “Chinese” in the sense of Mainland Chinese. Tan (2004) underlines the fact that one should not view “Chinese” in a fixed and totalizing manner by equating Malaysian Chinese as similar to other Chinese elsewhere. It is the locality from where they build their lives that makes them different from one another. For example, Malaysian Chinese differs from Indonesian Chinese, in terms of the language they speak. The influence of local indigenous languages means Malaysian Chinese speaks Chinese using Malay words and expressions not understood by other Chinese speakers overseas.
“Even the Chinese-educated Chinese Malaysians who may share many similar literary interests with people in China or with “Chinese-educated” Chinese in the Philippines, may have different subjective experiences of being Chinese. For a Chinese Malaysian, his experience is shaped by his experience as a Malaysian. Similarly, a Chinese American is shaped by his experience of being an American,” (Tan, C.B, 2004)

Therefore, factors such as the experience of being within a particular locality detach them from the “Chinese” in China. This brings up the point of nationality. While one may be “Chinese” in Malaysia, nationality differentiates them from other “Chinese” elsewhere. It is nationality that polarises ethnicity as well. Malaysian Chinese see themselves as a hyphenated identity, “Malaysian-Chinese”, not as simply “Chinese”. Conceptually, although 'diaspora' has been defined through various ways, its most general criteria remain that of 'dispersion.'

“Etymologically, the word "diaspora" stems from the Greek diaspeirein, meaning "to disperse", or as speirein suggests, "to scatter", as if seed. "Diaspora" thus refers to a dispersion, or scattering, of people belonging to one nation or having a common culture beyond their land of origin.”
(Sinclair, et al, 2001)

Helly (2006) also defines 'diaspora' using 'dispersal' as a constitutive element of the term in which she states it is a “loss and dispersion as the result of a forcible displacement of people from countries or regions defined as their cultural and historical centres.” In contributing to the various debates on the concept of 'diaspora', Brubaker (2005) suggests three core elements that define 'diaspora':

1. Dispersion in space (either voluntarily, traumatically across state borders);
2. Homeland Orientation (whether imagined or real);
3. Boundary-Maintenance;
Cohen (2008) provides a more exhaustive list of the 'common features of diaspora,':

1. “Dispersal from an original homeland, often traumatically, to two or more foreign regions;
2. Alternatively or additionally, the expansion from a homeland in search of work, in pursuit of trade or to further colonial ambitions;
3. A collective memory and myth about the homeland, including its location, history, suffering and achievements;
4. An idealization of the real or imagined ancestral home and a collective commitment to its maintenance, restoration, safety and prosperity, even to its creation;
5. The frequent development of a return movement to the homeland that gains collective approbation, even if many in the group are satisfied with only a vicarious relationship or intermittent visits to the homeland;
6. A strong ethnic group consciousness sustained over a long time and based on a sense of distinctiveness, a common history, the transmission of a common cultural and religious heritage and the belief in a common fate;
7. A troubled relationship with host societies, suggesting a lack of acceptance or the possibility that another calamity might befall the group;
8. A sense of empathy and co-responsibility with co-ethnic members in other countries of settlement even where home has become more vestigial; and
9. The possibility of a distinct, creative, enriching life in host countries with a tolerance for pluralism.”

Additionally, Cohen (2008) offers a typology of 'diasporas', which he labels the 'ideal' types of 'diaspora', suggesting the breadth of the term. The 'ideal' type of diaspora has been classified as victim, labour, imperial, trade and de-territorialized. However, these terms have been contested by social constructionists particularly in linking 'diaspora' with homeland, as it now rendered irrelevant in the context of today's current situation involving diaspora (Cohen, 2008)
Among the key arguments against the use of the word 'home' or 'homeland' is that it views 'diaspora' from an essentialist notion of static and fixed diasporic identities. Drawing on Anderson's “imagined community” (1991), Fazal, et al, (2002) argue that diasporic identities are “imagined,” where its “sense of belonging” is socially constructed on the basis of an equally “imagined” common origin, mythic past, diasporic condition or some other raw material upon which identities can be “imagined”. Tsagarousianou (2004) went further to say that as an imagined community 'diaspora' is continually reconstructed and reinvented. The presence of media technologies and the diasporic media have become crucial tools in re-constructing and re-imagining diasporic identities (Tsagarousianou, 2004). Similarly, Sökefeld (2006) proposes it be defined as “imagined transnational communities”, of which he draws from the social movement theory.

Further criticism of the way diaspora was conceptualised from the notion of 'homeland' and transnational communities notably comes from Anthias, F., (2001). In provoking a more dynamic way of examining 'diaspora', she pointed out two problems that have been overlooked. The first is the inability of most scholars to address problems of loyalty among diasporic communities between homelands and host countries. Also, the failure to acknowledge the intersectionality of class, gender, trans-ethnic alliances and power relations within diaspora.

In the context of the ethnic minorities of Malaysians, the Chinese and Indians, this study is of the opinion that their consumption of overseas Chinese and Tamil programmes should be seen as an “imagined diasporic” audience. This is because while they can be considered “diaspora”, they have little affiliation with their ancestral lands anymore. The only connection they may have is the similarity of custom, religion and language. In everyday lives and their interactions with fellow Malaysians, they are to be identified as an ethnic group, but outside Malaysia their position is categorised as “diaspora”.

“Ethnicity” in the context of this study, lies in how ethnic groups in Malaysia ascribe themselves and how others ascribe them culturally. In addition, their cultural attributes are constantly being reworked due to changes in time and situations. The focus here is more towards the subjective and psychological feeling of how they see themselves and others.
This study defines “ethnicity” following Barth’s stance (Barth, 1969). This study also draws on Fenton, (1999, 2003) definition of ‘ethnicity’ that engages the broader institutions and society of the global-local, macro meson, and micro ethnicity and de jure de facto in defining “ethnicity”. In this, each ethnic group constructs and re-constructs their cultural attributes through the change of time and situations. Only in the context of analysing their consumption of overseas Chinese and Tamil media will they be defined as “diaspora”.

2.5 Research Questions

The proposed project will conduct a content analysis on the Television news and in-depth focus group discussion study on news audiences specifically young people aged between 18-24 years in Malaysia, to gather information on their understanding and interpretation of Television news messages about media and nation building. Using both methods, this study will ask specific questions based on the following broad area:

1. What discursive strategies television news adopts to promote the 1Malaysia campaign and collective identity in multi-ethnic Malaysia?

2. How do multi-ethnic audiences receive television news reporting on the 1Malaysia campaign, and what interpretive resources do they use to reach their understandings?
2.6 Research Objectives

This audience study seeks to determine and to investigate how television news in Malaysia talks about nation building and how this message encourages or discourages young multi-ethnic Malaysians to maintain good relationships, share knowledge and culture, participate in the public sphere, and negotiate (new) collective identities that is 1Malaysia.

The objective of this research can be summarised as follows:

1. To identify media strategies in promoting nation building in Malaysia.

2. To explore the possible cultural influences on the audiences' way of interpreting television news messages and the impact it has on their way of life, their thinking, and how they talk about themselves and the nation.

Based on the idea that television news conveys cultural messages, it inquires whether or not television news is likely to reinforce, change or bring about new cultural values and lifestyles on a young multi-ethnic audience in Malaysia.

As this study hopes to contribute to the academic field of audience studies it also can be a beneficial reference to media and communication practitioners who need to keep abreast of perceptions and misconceptions in media practices of making 1Malaysia a success story.

2.7 Rationale of the Study

Despite tremendous growth on the studies of News genre mostly related with its impact on society, the question about its audience has often remained an implied category. As argued by Madianou (2009), early studies on audiences has not received much attention
comparatively to the questions of the economy of production, news work, news source, and representation that have been studied intensively (Madianou, 2009).

Although focuses on audiences have started to gain attention among Malaysian scholars, only a few studies have attempted to analyse audiences' engagements with television news from the audience’s perspective and within specific cultural contexts in Malaysia. In most cases, studies investigate audience viewing habits and preferences. Most studies have been informed by quantitative approaches and used survey questionnaires providing useful background information on the level of television consumption, but failing to generate an in-depth and detailed picture of the complexity of context of news consumptions. In particular, they have tended to ignore actual contexts of viewing and have failed to understand audiences' own perceptions and interpretations of television news messages.

This proposed research will be therefore one of a few projects which will focus on the multi-ethnic young audience, employing a qualitative approach to study their relationship to television news on promoting nation building. It wants to investigate how cultural factors shape the audiences' understanding and reproduction of news meanings in particular ways by allowing the audiences to 'speak for themselves'.

This study hopes to generate real and valid data on whether or not young people believe, accept or negotiate with television news messages which promote National Identity and 1Malaysia programme as a Culture of Malaysia. By doing so this study hopes to support the idea that the media doesn’t have a direct powerful influence over its audience as argued by Katz and Lazarsfeld (1955) and the ability of the individual to understand media text, is influenced by specific social circumstances or situations that individuals are in (Morley, 1980, 1986).

2.7.1 Why focus on Multi-ethnic Young People?

In Malaysia, youths are defined as people between the ages of 15 and 40 under the National Youth Development Policy (http://www.youth.org.my/ippbm/dokumen/DPN.pdf).
In 2005, there was a reported total of 11.1 million youths in Malaysia (EPU, 2006), comprising 41.5% of the population. The greatest proportion of these are Malay and Bumiputera, comprising 57.9% of the youth population, of which 47.2% are Malay and 10.7% are non-Muslim Bumiputera. Chinese comprise 24.9% while 7% are Indian. (http://www.unescap.org/esid/hds/youth/youth_malaysia.pdf).

The youth generation that make up to more than 40 percent of Malaysia’s total population are the main consumer of media and play a vital role in further progressing the country economically and politically (Tamam, 2011). Therefore, it is very important to study the strength of Unity and National Identity among the Malaysia youth of various ethnic groups, and the relationship with the exposure to the News Media.

Despite the impressive body of research on young people from around the world, there remains a need to conduct research on young people of different ethnicity in Malaysia. Studies focusing on the unique multi-ethnic young people of Malaysia in particular are very few and have yet to capture the considerable changes taking place in this country. Despite young people being the subject of many studies, there was no academic research in Malaysia which attempts to understand how young audiences interpret news item that was presented to them.

Although efforts at promoting unity, national integration and inter-racial interaction can sometimes be seen in the media in the form of news coverage of speeches made by political leaders or other opinion leaders, research has yet to ask what does this mean to the young people of Malaysia. The focus group interviews proposed by this study, hope to obtain a more collective insight of young people’s perception and understanding toward the issues being presented by television news particularly related to 1Malaysia which promotes unity and national identity. Scholars have argued how ethnic interests are addressed in the nation’s economic and social development, will be one of the major determinants of the success or failure of 1Malaysia (Muzaffar, 2009).
2.7.2 Why focus on 1Malaysia?

Young Malaysians preferences for socializing only within their respective races and the resultant lack of inter-racial interaction are seen as a problem and a challenge to national integration (Firdaus, 2006). One of the proposed solutions to the ‘problem’ of racial polarization is to promote the idea of a single Malaysian race. In the effort to create a Malaysian race that is more resilient in overcoming all kinds of challenges brought about by globalization, including socialistic, economic and political, Prime Minister of Malaysia, Dato Sri Mohd Najib Tun Abdul Razak has introduced the concept of 1Malaysia. It calls for all Malaysians, regardless of race or religion to think and act as one race. The Malaysian race that thinks and acts towards a common goal to build a country that is prosperous, progressive, peaceful and safe thus enabling it to compete with other communities in the world. Therefore a focus on the 1Malaysia programme is considered to be timely and much needed, as argued by various scholars, especially as studies reveal that young people had the tendency to identify themselves first with their ethnicity and secondly being a Malaysian (Rahim, et al. 2009).

The 1Malaysia concept runs parallel to the long-standing efforts by the government to promote a culture of tolerance and compromise among Malaysia’s diverse ethnic groups (Hashim, 2011). It aims is to create a multicultural Malaysia that strives on excellence, perseverance, acceptance, education, integrity, meritocracy, humility and loyalty. As such, human development programmes that ascertain a continuous process of effective communication among its diverse ethnic groups are crucial. The Prime Minister’s personal website describes 1Malaysia as intending to provide a free and open forum to discuss the things that matter deeply to Malaysians as a nation. It provides a chance to express and explore the many perspectives of its fellow citizens (1Malaysia.com, 2009).

Although 1Malaysia has been the buzzword of Malaysia ever since it was launched and mooted by the Prime Minister, on 3rd of April 2009, the policy has yet to be fully understood by the public (Hassan, et al., 2009). In a poll conducted by the Merdeka Centre for Opinion Research pertaining to the Prime Minister’s 100 days in office reveals that Malaysians remain unclear as to the purpose of the 1Malaysia concept. Thus it was
suggested that the 1Malaysia concept must be properly explained to the people (Hassan, et al., 2009).

2.7.3 Why focus on RTM

The media system in Malaysia is a vital agent of socio-political, economic and cultural change in the society (Hamzah, 2008). “Its power, influence and impact has no limits and if wrongly managed may disrupt and destabilize our society” as argued by Hamzah, (2008). Hence, it is very important that this study looks at the role of the media in a fragile country like Malaysia, on how it brings about stability and how it pushes towards making Malaysia a developed, strong, and prosperous nation.

Since its introduction, the 1Malaysia concept has been promoted through a wide range of great activities to educate and promote unity. Television channels including RTM have incorporated notions from 1Malaysia into numerous TV programmes including the News programmes, by establishing different ethnicities hosts and actors. RTM as the government’s Television Station has a crucial role to make everyone understand about 1Malaysia and its concept. Therefore this study seeks to investigate young people’s interpretation and understanding of Television news messages particularly news about 1Malaysia campaign and its role in supporting this national agenda. It is really important to understand what kind of messages about National Identity are being promoted by RTM, and whether it meets the aim and aspiration of the government and the people of Malaysia.

RTM was also chosen because of its role as a public service broadcaster in Malaysia. As argued by scholars (Banerjee, 2005), RTM has an important role to play in providing access to, and participation in public life and can be instrumental in promoting access to education and culture, developing knowledge and fostering interactions among citizens particularly in developing countries. As the government/public channel of communication, RTM had to deliver government programs and policies to the people. RTM official guidelines stated that news and other programs were to promote the Principle of National Ideology (Rukun Negara) and the New Economic Policy that would support an effort to
build a united Malaysian nation thru communal harmony, religious tolerance and understanding (CheLah, 2001). UNESCO itself has been committed to supporting and promoting public broadcasting as well as preserving its contents which it is suggested serve the interests of people as citizens rather that as consumers, by reaching all populations and specific groups and thereby contributing to social inclusion and strengthening of civil society (Banerjee, 2005).

This study that focus’ on RTM is very relevant as national television still acts as a fundamental purpose and symbol for Malaysians and for society to keep its feet firmly on the ground. As Basri, et al (2011) argued, national television is still very much a national necessity. RTM has become a leading agent in upholding unity since the conflict of ethnic riots in May 1969 (McDaniel, 1994). By investigating the role it played in contributing to ethnic polarization or national integration in Malaysia will provide valid data that could help policy makers in formulating future media policy especially involving the perspective of young Malaysians.

At present, RTM operates 2 national terrestrial television channels called TV1 and TV2 as well as 8 national and 26 state radio stations. RTM was once the only form of broadcasting in Malaysia. It however has experienced tremendous market changes during the past three decades, including an expansion of commercial channels, satellite services and Online Media that has increased competition for audience attention and lowered audience shares of existing channels. RTM news however still enjoys a slightly more balanced mix of different races of audience when compared to the other stations (Amira, F, 2006). It is worthwhile to note that RTM’s second channel, TV2 airs many Chinese language shows, including Chinese language news and Tamil language news.

The chapter that follows explain further the theoretical framework that will inform the study.
CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Introduction

This part of the thesis deals with the theoretical issues, providing historical context and direction taken in the past towards theorisation of the relationship between media, audience, and identity with the objective to understand what role media play in shaping identity and nation building. Based on the limitation of existing approach to understanding the relationship I attempt to focus on anthropological and cultural perspective to approach the matter which is more suitable particularly in Malaysia context.

There have been many good works on spectatorship, audience theory and fan cultures published in the past three decades. From studying senders’ messages and communication strategies through content analysis, scholars in the recent years focus on how texts and imageries are perceived and re-appropriated by specific audiences, according to their backgrounds and patterns of everyday life (Laberge, 2005). Efforts to classify the wide range of audience research can be found in Jensen (1990), Anderson (1996), and Livingstone (1998).

In an extensive account of social theories on reception and audiences, Schroder, et al (2003) in their book ‘Researching Audiences’ recognize at least two main paradigms on which audience studies can rely on: firstly ‘a social scientific “process school” seeing communication as the efficient transmission of intentional “messages” from senders to receivers’ and secondly, in interest of this study is ““semiotic school” seeing communication as a socially ritualized production and exchange of meanings resulting in the creation of ideologies and cultural identities. They in fact, confirms that members of audiences can be seen as active individuals in the communicative interaction; although they cannot change the contents of what is seen or read, they can somehow interpret it in their own way. The ‘Researching Audiences’ (2003) present four main approaches to
audience research: media ethnography, survey research, experimental research, and the more related to this study is the Reception research.

The central focus of this study is to media and audience in Malaysia and their reception of television news messages about government campaign of ‘1Malaysia’ promoting national identity and unity. Indeed, news of national aspiration and achievement, social cohesion and harmonious co-existence of the various ethnic and religion groups in Malaysia have continued to be among the dominant themes and narratives in the local mainstream media (Tamam, 2005). This chapter will also provide different sets of discourses of identity and belonging in Malaysia help understand the nature and direction of the development of social ties and civic engagement in communities and to promote national identity among a multi-ethnic audience in Malaysia that has been overlooked.

A theoretical framework that draws on the concept of 'active audiences' within the sphere of Reception Theory will be employed in this study to examine how and why people of differing ethnic backgrounds have different interpretations and understandings of the same media message. By doing so this study hopes to uphold the idea that the media does not have a direct powerful influence over its audience and the ability of the individual to interpret media text shaped by cultural factors and specific social circumstances that individual are in.

This chapter or section addresses the main theories and approaches in understanding audience interpretation of media messages and how the variables in the theory are related to the variables relevant to this study. The theory was chosen in consideration of the dimensions that this study presents, i.e. the interpretation of a message, the response to the message, how cultural aspect: ethnicity plays a role and the decoding process of the message. Therefore, Reception theories that accept these variables will guide the design and research methodology of this study.

To understand the development of this new audience studies it is necessary to define the field by providing an overview of its historical emergence. As this is an ‘Audience’ study it is obligated to acknowledge the range of historical research tradition in the
interdisciplinary field of media and communication research. Three such traditions identified by scholars believed to have been seminal to the melange of contemporary audience studies are: ‘affects research’, ‘uses & gratification research’ and ‘cultural studies’ (Schroder, et al, 2003).

The early thinking about the impact of mass media on society was based on the theory that mass media was so powerful that it had direct and immediate effects on powerless and passive audiences. In relation to this, a model known as the Hypodermic Needle was influenced by Lasswell’s effects of propaganda study. However, this idea was later challenged by media effects theory that began to emphasize the independence and autonomy of audiences (Curran, 1990).

Effect research later progressed beyond opinion leaders to the general population and invested more power in audiences in assessing how the media are used by different groups of people. It was argued by the Uses and Gratification approach that, the audience brought its own needs and desires to the course of message reception, which structured the way in which the message is received (Williams, 2003). McQuails et al (1972) also concluded that there are four types of uses and gratification that influence the audience, first the media provide ‘diversion’ that allows people to escape from everyday life constraints; secondly it offer a ‘personal relationship’ with some people in the form of companionship, thirdly, the media play a part in the development of ‘personal identity’, and finally, the media offer the opening for surveillance of what is happening in the world. In other word uses and gratification's perspective introduces the notion of the ‘active audience’ who seek to satisfy various individuals and social needs through the mass media (Schroder, 2003).

Ever since Reception studies began to produce evidence how audiences could challenge the messages from the media by interpreting the output in a number of ways. The focus of Uses and Gratification theory on the role of individuals in making sense of media was, however, criticised as being a model that was narrowly psychological and has failed to locate the message or the audience in a broader social context. Television consumption, for example, could be socially undertaken with others such as family members and make sense of media content are normally done through conversation with friends, family, and
workmates (William, 2003). Theoretically, uses and gratification researchers rest on the same positivist foundation as effects research, focusing on patterns of media exposure and on the gratification people says they get from media with quantitative measurement, what has come to be branded as ‘virtually synonymous with questionnaire surveys’ (Zillman, 1985) … Employing the same measure of exposure in survey research, however, is problematic … be conceptualized as just another kind of questionnaire.

Out of the disappointment with limited effect theories, emerged Cultural effects theories that sought to comprehend the effect of media in broader social context. The focus of these theories was on what the audience think and how they understand society. While accepting the media have an effect on their audience, interpretation of media messages by audiences was determined by diversity of individuals and social and cultural factors.

Drawing on cultural approaches, audiences are no longer considered to be an ‘undifferentiated mass of passive recipients of messages’ and there has been a resulting new audience research which is interested in how audiences actively create meaning from media messages (Williams, 2003)

The active audience approach is considered appropriate for this study because it is based on the encoding and decoding model presented by Hall, S. (1980). The development of Hall’s model rejected traditional effect theories which were limited to the effect that media had on behaviour such as a shift in political affiliation, for Hall this ignored social and political power, social structure and wider political processes (Williams, 2003). This study is mainly about the interpretation of a political message by three different ethnic groups and an important variable in this process is the message itself, therefore, like Hall’s approach, both message and interpretation of the message should be considered as part of the ‘mass communication process in its totality’ (Williams, 2003 p.195). Indeed, Hall also suggests that the message is determined by the production process in the pursuit of a meaning wanted by the powerful groups in society, in this study it is the Malaysian government promoting a message of national unity.
On the other side of the communication process, the decoding by the audience, Hall does say that the message is subject to interpretation, however, how individual interpret message affected by their particular social situation or background (Williams, 2003) e.g. ethnicity rather than their personal inclinations. Indeed, where this is relevant to this study is that it is not concerned with the individual but rather with ethnic groups within society who are recipients of a message. Hall also says that the decoding of the message can be in three different ways: dominant, negotiated and oppositional and in making a comparison about the way ethnic groups in Malaysia interpret a message, this approach is appropriate because it shows whether a group accepts a message, rejects a message or interprets it for their own means.

It should be noted that this study assumes that young, different ethnic groups audiences have an oppositional type of decoding towards television news stories about national identity in Malaysia based on the ethnic polarization reports in the country. This assumption was verified by analysing content and empirical research through in-depth focus group interviews and reception analysis of audience interpretation of news messages that has never been done before in Malaysia.

Although this study focuses on the audience’s response to the 1Malaysia message and also its effects, it included some analysis of the message itself. The idea of researching both sides of the communication process also supported by among many, Madianou (2005) and Schiappa, et al (2007). Schiappa, (2007), argued that in audience research is served well by attempting to answer questions such as how do popular culture texts influence a change in behaviour and beliefs? To what extent people affected by a message? And importantly for this study, why are some members of groups, i.e. ethnic groups in Malaysia society, more resistant or more productive viewers than other groups? In fact, Schiappa, et al, (2007) bring attention to three elements that should be incorporated in any research project; the text, the audience, and the context. In this study the text is the 1 Malaysia message, the audiences are the Malay, Chinese and Indian, and the context is the multi-ethnic society where the government pursues a common national identity. They also stressed that there has been recognition of the fact that in cultural and media studies it has
been necessary to combine audience and textual research to understand why audiences interpret the same message differently.

Madianou, (2005) however, provide some caution about approaches used in understanding the effect of media on national identity because they under-theorise culture and neglect the issue of identity. Moreover, a media-centric approach may bias the role of the media and influence the results of the study. Thus, Madianou, (2005) proposed a new theoretical approach, which not only supports the aforementioned evidence for investigating both sides of the communication process, but also avoids seeing cultural groups as distinct homogenous entities, which she argued that in an era of global mobility cultures are not pristine and that there are cultures within cultures. This latter point will be considered in this study to avoid stereotyping of the three ethnic groups and will determine the research and analysis in terms of accepting that culture and identity are lived and experienced (Madianou, 2005) and are not concrete. Furthermore, Jensen (1990) says that many cultural studies about audiences resisting messages from mass media have used explanations outside of the dominant social order.

In terms of the methodological approach in relation to active audiences, Madianou, (2005) opted an ethnographic approach to uncover people’s personal experiences of the media. Indeed, previous research has depended on a quantitative approach using surveys and questionnaires, however, scholars have adopted ethnography as a means to understand the creation of meaning from media texts (Williams, 2003). Indeed, the idea that culture and identity are lived and experienced warrants an ethnographic approach, as adopted by Madianou, (2005), which is also supported by Williams, (2003) that claimed the media-audience relationship is often examined using transcriptions from the group discussion. Ethnography approach, however, has been a contested issue as there is some disagreement over whether it is really a form of ethnography. Some have remarked that the term often used to indicate qualitative methods in general (Lull, 1988, Nightingale, 1996). Due to time constraint and suitability, my study chooses to adopt the Focus Group discussion instead of ethnography. It is, in fact, a reception analysis that analyses the audience and the message using empirical data from in-depth interviews and qualitative approaches to data analysis for both content and audience data.
This study is interested in how different ethnic groups in Malaysia actively interpret a media message and how factors which are external to the media; determine how they make sense of the message. Moreover, audiences are considered to be active and intelligent (Williams, 2003) and in Malaysia, there are racial, social and political factors specific to each ethnic group, and in order to understand how they form the meaning of media messages, it is necessary to acknowledge the cultural dimension in the theory. In fact, new audience and reception theory are based on a cultural approach which is interested in how audiences feel that media influences their lives (Williams, 2003).

While the theoretical framework of this study requires understanding of the fact that audiences are active and that factors outside the media significantly impact the interpretation of media messages, in the specific context of this study, i.e. a comparison between ethnic groups in an ethnically diverse society, it is necessary to draw on theory related specifically to how ethnicity affects message interpretation. It has in fact been the development of audience research generally, i.e. the move away from the mass audience towards the idea of diverse audiences, that has led to studies which examine how media messages affect people of different ethnic backgrounds. One such study was by Liebes, et al (1990) who examined the responses of different ethnic groups to the popular television drama Dallas. Their study found that media messages were interpreted differently by different social groups and this led to the idea of ‘ethnic audiences’ (Mahtani, 2008). Further evidence that membership of a particular ethnic group has a bearing on how messages are decoded is the work of Morley (1992) who says that members of a particular cultural group tend to decode messages in the same way (Mahtani, 2008).

Because my own study is framed by theoretical perspectives that have been developed from the variety approaches in researching media-audiences relationship, I will outline the main trends in audience studies to show different emphasis that exists within this broad research area in Malaysia and as a whole. The following is a presentation of key literature on audience and reception studies that helps design this particular study.
3.2 Literature Review

Interests in studying the relationship between the media and their audiences have many approaches and are diverse drawing on a number of disciplines in the humanities and the social sciences. Jensen (1990) outline five approaches as the main research tradition in examining media-audience links which are the effects research, uses and gratification research, literary criticism, cultural studies and reception analysis. Centre of attention on the early study of audiences was on the investigation of how a message is communicated to a “mass” audience (cited in McQuail, 1997, p 6).

The modern media scholarship, however, shift away from examining how particular messages influence people but are more concerned about what audiences say about the influence of the media in their lives and the way they generate meaning to media messages (Williams, 2003), which is also the interest of this current study. However, knowledge of the effect research tradition is important for audience research as it provides valuable insight into the historical development of central research questions about audiences and media (O’Neill, 2011). Moreover, wider understanding of the effect research will also provide insight into how media research and its dissemination can be socially relevant and meaningful. Therefore, the following topic will discuss relevant effect research concerning the widespread impact of media in the everyday social process. It will be limited however to the related discussion of effects research from audience researcher point of view, exploring the diversity of the tradition and assessing its contribution to an understanding of audience engagement and media-nation relationship.

3.2.1 The Powerful Media Effects Paradigm

The media effects traditions play an influential and significant role within communication research and according to McQuail (1983); the whole study of mass communication is based on the argument that there are effects from ‘the media.’ According to Harold Lasswell (1948), the mass communication process is: ‘who says what through which channel to whom and to what effect’, this has provided a foundational position to the study
of effects that breaks down the area in which media researchers have focused their attention. Mostly, studies have concentrated on audiences and effects (cited in Williams, 2003).

The early thinking about the impact of mass media on society was based on the theory that mass media was so powerful that it had direct and immediate effects on powerless and passive audiences. In relation to this, a model known as the Hypodermic Needle was influenced by Lasswell’s (1971) effects of propaganda study. However, this idea was later challenged by media effects theory that began to emphasize the independence and autonomy of audiences (Curran, 1990).

Research in the second phase of communication viewed media as having only a limited or indirect effect on audiences. The ‘two-step step model’ put forward by Katz and Lazarsfeld in 1955, (cited in Williams, 2003,) argued that people are more influenced by their family, friends, neighbours and fellow workers whose views and ideas were respected and this group of people was referred to as ‘opinion leaders’. This groundbreaking study of ‘Personal influence’ by Katz and Lazarsfeld (1955) studied the patterns of Radio listening and subsequently media influence in election campaigns and emphasise on the role of media in shaping people’s attitude (Williams, 2003).

Effect research later progressed beyond opinion leaders to the general population and invested more power in audiences in assessing how the media are used by different groups of people. It was argued by the Uses and Gratification approach that the audience brought its own needs and desires to the course of message reception, which structured the way in which the message is received (Williams, 2003). McQuails et al (1972) concluded that there are four types of uses and gratification that influence the audience, first the media provide ‘diversion’ that allows people to escape from everyday life constraints; secondly it offer a ‘personal relationship’ with some people in the form of companionship, thirdly, the media play a part in the development of ‘personal identity’, and finally, the media offer the opening for surveillance of what is happening in the world.
Ever since Reception studies began to produce evidence how audiences could challenge the messages from the media by interpreting the output in a number of ways. The focus of Uses and Gratification theory on the role of individuals in making sense of media was, however, criticised as being a model that was narrowly psychological and has failed to locate the message or the audience in a wider social context. Television consumption, for example, could be socially undertaken with others such as family members and make sense of media content are normally done through conversation with friends, family, and workmates (Williams, 2003).

Out of the disappointment with limited effect theories, emerged Cultural effects theories that sought to comprehend the effect of media in broader social context. The focus of these theories was on what the audience think and how they understand society. While accepting the media have an effect on their audience, interpretation of media messages by audiences was determined by diversity of individuals and social and cultural factors. Development of a new field of research, namely audience studies which drew on cultural studies began in the 1980s and it was often associated with David Morley study of the Nationwide. The following is a presentation of key literature on audience reception studies that helps design this particular study.

3.2.2 Media-Audience reception: complex interpretation

The Effects model is recognized to be an insufficient representation of the correspondence between media and general society, as it does not consider the crowd as people with their convictions, estimations, standards and state of mind (Vreese, 2014). Viewers or audience are not vacant sheets of paper on which media communication can be written; a group of an audience will have prior thoughts and values which will determine how valuable media messages or news are (Turnock, 2007). Supporters of the Effects model accept the gathering of people is inactive in the getting and translation of media writings and news. Extraordinary stress is put on the content itself and its energy to influence the group of the audience regarding news item. Implications in the content are promptly accessible and simple to discover (Agrawal, 2009). The impracticality to measure news item impact is as
a result of not being able to isolate the media from all the other potential influences at work in society. This leads to the Effects model usually being overlooked when considering the audience's reaction to the media and news. TV News channels have certain zones where they have been reliably performing well, however taking to unreasonable intends to draw individuals into expanding viewership is unquestionably not right. General thoughtfulness is critical if one needs to quit framing contentions, clashes and roughness through exciting reporting (Biagi, 2012).

The new approach to audience research proves how audiences are more complex, diverse and challenging than is assumed by the media and scholars of the effect approach (Williams, 2003). A number of studies have contributed to the vibrant view of audience research; the most influential is the empirical study of ‘Nationwide’ by David Morley (1980). He started his work with Charlotte Brunsdon on the BBC TV News magazine ‘Nationwide’ in 1978 to study the encoding-decoding model, developed by Stuart Hall (1980).

Morley in his study tested a hypothesized connection between socioeconomic status of audience members and their specific interpretations of the television show (Schiappa, et al, 2007). It was a qualitative research with various informants from diverse educational and occupational backgrounds and examined their different responses to a clip of its budget special to see their reading position according to the three categories of readings proposed by Hall, dominant, oppositional or negotiated readings. His study confirmed that the reading of the text was based on ‘cultural differences embedded within the make-up of society…which guide and limit the individual’s interpretation of messages’ (Morley, 1992).

However, the encoding/decoding model and Morley’s study have been criticize for class determinism, linearity and for introducing two problematic terms, the ‘preferred’ reading and the ‘negotiated’ decoding and has also been criticized for emphasizing interpretation and underplaying other processes such comprehension, which plays an importing role in the decoding of news item (Madianou, 2009).
Although Morley’s (1980) study has some limitations, it has become one of the most-widely cited studies of the television audience. Hall’s model and Morley’s study have been significant in opening the field of audience research (Livingstone, 1998). Hall’s ‘Encoding and Decoding in the Television Discourse’ laid the foundation for and articulated the problems to be addressed in the ‘Reception paradigm’ (Alasuutari, 1999). The idea that a message is determined by a programme producer and then made sense by receiver’s means that the sending and receiving of messages are not necessarily the same, and different audiences may interpret or make sense of programmes in different ways.

The development of media audiences’ studies which occurred during the 1980s was very much encouraged by Hall’s encoding/decoding model. It has also shaped a series of empirical studies about the reception of television programmes by diverse audiences. It was an innovative theory had led to many more empirical projects carried out by an enthusiastic group of new researchers in the 1980’s such as Hobson's study of Crossroads viewers (1982), Ang's study of Dallas viewers (1985), Fiske's study of Television Culture (1986), Radway's study of readers of romance fiction (1987), and the work of Liebes on the consumption of American TV fiction in other cultures (1993). Reception analysis in these studies was more inclusive, as it covers a various form of qualitative experimental audience research (Jensen, 1986). Following Hall and Morley, there was also a growing body of studies on the interpretation of news audiences which is more related to the interest of this study.

Although there are some similarities within readings of television, actively making sense of the same news item creates very different readings. Having looked at this complex issue of interpretation and how it can differ among viewers of the same news broadcast, it can be seen that there are a number of factors which must be considered in determining why these differences exist. Philo (1990) was one example of research which examined the reception of news about the 1984-85 miners’ strike in Britain. Philo and his colleagues interviewed a number of audience groups following a similar methodology to the ‘Nationwide’ study. Philo’s study revealed that belief in the dominant media frame was highest amongst those who were most reliant on television news; on the other hand, those
who rejected the media account either had direct experience of the event, knowledge of the subject or have access to alternative sources of information (Philo, 1990).

Liebes (1997) in her study of the reception of the news about the 1990s Intifada in Israel, found that the news support pre-existing ideas. As news programs tended to reflect the dominant viewpoint, they were in agreement with the position in Israel society. Liebes (1997) who studied the reception in family contexts, observed how the news provided a tool for the ideological socialization of the children. In such a tense socio-political environment, oppositional readings were unusual and dependent on the viewer’s media literacy skills and educational capital.

The study of Family Television: Cultural Power and Domestic Leisure by Morley (1986), demonstrates that informants can be influenced not only by the environment in which they view a programme, but also by their lack of familiarity with the genre (Graber, 1988) and the structure of the narrative itself (Lewis, 1991). In addition, differences in meaning and comprehension of the news may rely on whether the participant has an actual interest in the story they are watching or a prior knowledge of the item being covered. Graber (1988) argued this is the key deciding factor which determined most of the responses throughout her study, one which Graber stresses will determine the level of recall displayed by informants, and whether informants will actually learn from the news.

Meanwhile, Marisa (2002) argued that many different interpretations of news messages are also made based on what the text presents, due to the existing schema and the strategy used to best store and retrieve information. Viewers she added, have many different schemes with which they draw upon to ‘fill in’ what the text does not provide in order to make sense of it. This clearly becomes a problem when prior knowledge of the news story in question is incomplete. The viewer will select information from a wealth of previously held knowledge which seems relevant to what is being presented to them. The news presents its stories in a way which is very much open to interpretation because it has its own production constraints and does not always obey an enigma/resolution narrative, often omitting necessary causal information, leaving the viewer to draw on possibly
inappropriate knowledge or schemas. Therefore what is interpreted is often very different from what the news broadcasters had hoped for their stories.

A study by Madianou (2005) who examined the reception of two events in Greece points to the importance of direct personal experience in challenging news content. Madianou (2005) observes that although the news discourse for two chosen events remains largely ethnocentric, the viewer’s responses were obviously differentiated. One explanation for the discursive shifts is the personal experience. The study also witnesses the fact that news reception is a relational and dynamic process that involves not only national news and their local audiences, but also the transnational. This leads to the study of media and identity. The following topics take issues with the dominant theories of the relationship between media and identity to find a pertinent theoretical framework to understand the complexity of the empirical data and new direction towards the theorisation of the relationship between media and identity.

3.2.3 Understanding National Identity, Nation building, and Multiculturalism

The national identity is a theme of growing interest, due to the importance that the national identity forms at all political, social and academic levels. Al-buhouachi (2000) identifies the national identity as the linking of the individual with a piece of land known as the homeland. Muneer 2002 (cited in Fakhri, 2012) believes that the national identity is identified through indicators that include the features and characteristics relating to the individual as he identifies his identity and patriotism, choosing and deciding with full freedom, and expressing his affiliation to his nationality and identity.

The concept of national identity argued by Khaliq, (2008), consists of several elements, including what is constant, such as the land and language, as well as allegiance and affiliation to the State, and what is inconstant or transformed such as clothes, prevailing crafts and architecture. Therefore, the national identity is no longer a static entity and pure substance but a blend of compound cultural mixtures, overlaps, and interactions. National identity is a person's identity and sense of belonging to one country or to one nation with
its history, commonly perceived values, and traditions. It is not just a name – tag or badge that is worn saying, “I am a Malaysian”. It is a complex and dynamic psychological structure involving a system of core beliefs about the national group, and associated emotions and feelings.

The expression of nation building originates from the English language, which was popularised by the Western world as they were the ones who conceptualized the notion (Husin, et al, 2011). A nation can be described as a community of people who have a common historical memory, who reflect common values in their daily lives, and who believe in a common, shared destiny. Nation building is of paramount importance to Malaysia, Fakhri (2012) refers it to the process of constructing or structuring a national identity using the power of the state. In Malaysia, the objective of nation building and forging national unity amongst the various ethnic groups ranks very high in educational and political agendas. In fact, national unity and integration is the cornerstone of the education policy (Haimi, et al, 2001). The education policy has played a significant role in reinforcing the national agenda of building the nation. The Malaysian government has always been asked to establish the identity as "Nation" of Malaysia (Leung, 2003).

Multiculturalism is a system of beliefs and behaviours that recognizes and respects the presence of all diverse groups in an organization or a society. It brings together human beings from a variety of cultures to enable them to reach their fullest potential. The understanding of other cultures is crucially important, and it may help to maintain stability in society. Living in a multicultural society requires a high level of understanding and respect of those from other cultures. It is important to address racial differences effectively in a country like Malaysia. People should understand and respect each other, and negotiate on an equal footing, with a view to seeking common grounds. Once the social fabric is torn, it cannot easily be sewn together again (Fakhri, 2012). The main aim of managing multiculturalism in Malaysia according to Ibrahim (2007) is to uphold national integration in which all their different cultural communities could live together with each other while maintaining their own original identities.
Madianou (2002) highlights two major traditions that are eminent in theorising identity and nationalism, namely ‘primordialism and modernism’. The ‘modernist' theories she said emphasised on the modern character of the nation-state and the building of identity. On the contrary, ‘primordialists’ stress on the ancient roots of nations and the fixity of identity as a quality given by birth. Of course, there are differences within these traditions, that has led to more than two major approaches. There are other alternative names attached to the modernist school such as constructionist, situationalist or contextualist. Geertz (1995) have been quoted by many literatures as the author that introduces the concept of the primordial attachments and sentiments of an individual to the world. Primordialists see ethnic differences and identities as natural and given. This theory has been widely disregarded for simplifying complex situations, and its suggestions of ethnic conflict being, therefore, natural and to be expected (Weir, 2012). Although have been criticise, Geertz contributes a breakthrough to anthropological theory- which used to be the evolutionist, diffusionist, functionalist or structuralist.

3.2.4 Dominant Media and Identity studies

Existing theories on media and identity, spread along the conflict between powerful media and weak identities, or alternatively, strong identities and weak media (Madianou, 2002). Theories that argue for powerful media most often adopt a top-down viewpoint, which ignores the nature of audiences and their identities as lived and as performed. In contrast, theories of powerful audiences and identities are grounded in audience research.

Different theories provide different definitions for identity, the nation and its origins and nationalism (Ozkirimli, 2000) making it an interdisciplinary field. The three interrelated concepts about identity, nation, and nationalism were understood and defined differently depending on the author’s viewpoint and the discipline. In general, according to Madianou (2002), identity refers to the cultural realm whereas nationalism refers to the political realm.
‘Identity’ from the perspective of similarity and difference has been found in a more sophisticated discussion of ‘identity’. Lawler (2008), in particular, explains that people are not only the same or identical with oneself, in the sense, that everyone was born as ‘men’ or ‘women’ but we are also differentiated by other factors such as nationalities, ethnicity or religion. A person may share the same gender as a “woman” but as a person, a woman can also be identified in other categories at the same time. For instance, a person can be a ‘woman’ but also assuming different roles such as a ‘mother’, in a different social position as ‘middle-class’ or from different ethnicity –‘Asian’. In this sense, a person is made up of different and multiple identities which they can be identified of. No one person can be the same as to the other.

The strength in Lawler’s (2008) conception of ‘identity’ is that the true ‘self’ it must be understood not only from ‘within’ the person but as socially created ‘between persons and within social relations’. This differs from Jenkins (2004) and Woodward (2000) who saw ‘identity’ as being constructed by the individual in relation to society. It is precisely because the individual’s sense of who they are, is being determined by their social world that Lawler (2008) argues that the presence of “difference” or “uniqueness” as she prefers to call it does not solely comes from the individual themselves but the fact that the social world has some influence to one being “different”. What this means is that identities that were produced were never individually constructed but it is collective in nature. Hence, identity is often negotiated and is subjected to conformity towards social rules. The role of society and structures in shaping our identity draws different explanation from these scholars. By offering his internal-external dialectic of identification model, Jenkins’ (2004) perceives “identity” as a process which entangles the individual with the collective. By internal, Jenkins refer to how one see him or herself through a process called self-definition while external implies how others have perceived us. And one’s identity is constructed simultaneously by how we have seen ourselves and how others perceived us. Jenkins’ model did not emphasize the role of the institutions as a source of constraint or tension in identity formation. In contrast, Lawler’s (2008) argument that ‘identity’ is not detached from the individual to society but the ‘self’ is embedded within the social world.
“The idea that we can 'be whatever we want to be' relies on an illusory eclipsing of the social world. Against this, the perspectives I have presented here conceptualize identity, subjectivity, personhood – all these slippery and yet necessary terms – as embedded within and produced by the social world. The social world both produces and constrains us as persons”. (Lawler, 2008: 144)

Lawler (2008) regarded the “outside” or social world has had greater control over the individual. What Lawler is proposing is that it is looking at the complex formation of “identity”, one must begin by looking at the social world they are embedded in. Her points echoes with that of Woodward (1997; 2000) who spoke of constraints in the form of structures and agency, taking into account how structures can shape our identity, beyond our control and the tussle between structure and agency, creates a tension in identity. However, Woodward is more optimistic whereby while it is important to consider the role and influence of structures in shaping our identity, she also believe people can influence social structure and reproduce identities out of it.

In expanding the role of structure in constructing “identity”, Malaysian scholar Shamsul, A.B (1996) offers the definition of “identity” in the context of Malaysia based on two form of social reality – the “authority-defined” and the “everyday-defined”. By “authority-defined”, Shamsul (1996) refers an identity that is “authoritatively defined by people who are part of the dominant power structure,”. “Everyday-defined” identity, in contrast, refers to “one which is experienced by the people in the course of their everyday life” (ibid). He argues that in the context of Malaysia, both forms of identity exist, juxtapose with one another. Shamsul’s definition suggests a two-level social reality in which one’s identity is defined by both levels.

What one can gather here is that identity is certainly not something natural, fixed and within complete control. Rather where it may be processual, change, multiple, fragmented but it also sometimes leads to contradicting identities. But what is more crucial here is to look deeper and beyond, into that multiplicity and diversity of identity where it is formed
not necessarily out of free-will but sometimes due to constraints. Lawler (2008) underlines the role of the social world as the prime factor for identity construction.

Jenkins (2004), on the other hand, views that identity is a consequent of human actions through interactions. By comparison, Woodward’s (1997) definition seems to be more encompassing where she saw it as involving individuals and society, subconscious self as well as structures and agency. Her views involve looking at the process of identity formation vertically and horizontally. Vertical, in this respect, means the relations among individuals and between societies while horizontally, revolves around the relations between institutions and legislations with individuals. Another important definition for “identity” is the idea that the “self” in this age of late modernity has become a “reflexive project” by Giddens” (1991).

3.2.5 Theorising Identity and Nationalism

Madianou (2005) emphasizes the two sets of theories about media and national identity; one which says that the media is powerful and shapes culture and identity, and the other that it is local culture or ethnicity that shape the media and its consumption. Early studies on audiences focused on an investigation of how a message is communicated to a “mass” audience without consideration of the diversity among members of that audience, the notion then was ‘Text is powerful’ and only in 1980s researchers starting to challenge the idea that the media have direct power to determine the interpretation and understanding people have of media messages; instead of examining how particular message influence people, the modern media study are more concerned in what audience says about the influence of the media in their lives and the way they generate meaning to media messages (Williams, 2003). This beginning of the ‘new audience research’ is often associated with David Morley study of the Nationwide (1980).

However, it was the breakthrough study by Liebes and Katz (1990) that has provided the important turning point for the work in critical communication studies and perception of audiences with the different cultural background which is the emphasis of this study.
Liebes and Katz (1990) in their cross-cultural studies of Dallas program analysed responses of particular ethnic audiences and found that media products have different meanings for different social groups.

Likewise, Jhally, et al (1992) examine how ethnicity shapes the interpretation of The Cosby Show. It offers a radical challenge to the conventional wisdom concerning racial stereotyping in the United States and demonstrates how apparently progressive programs like The Cosby Show, despite good intentions, actually help to construct enlightened forms of racism. The work of Gillespie, (1995) has been particularly important in the study of racial or ethnic audiences and provides an ethnographic account of Punjabi Londoners and their viewing patterns of soap opera. Gillespie examined how television is implicated in the remaking of ethnicity, racialization, and cultural identities. She argues that the combination of culturally diverse television programs and films in Punjabi homes in London sparks cross-cultural and contrasting analyses of media texts and that this heightens an awareness of cultural differences. Although ethnicity is the main factor and Gillespie focus, this research also makes the point that interpretation is shaped by more than one aspect of social identity; she also notes that the code of ‘izzat’, or family honour, effects young female viewer’s engagement with the soap subtly different from that of their male friends. In reference to the salient of news in media studies, one can note a trend to see them as a kind of resource. The topic that follows addresses aspect of the complex area studies on the young audience and television news consumption.

3.2.6 Youth, Media Consumption, and Identity struggle

Studies of media consumption among youths in the context of globalisation have indeed moved in various directions. Leichty’s (1995) study of young Nepalese shows that their consumption of foreign television programmes serve as a means of contrasting “quality living” with the reality that they experience in their own country, which is, perhaps, their way of trying to break away from the hegemonic culture of Bikas (state ideology of progress). The state’s use of the term Bikas as a form of identifying one’s sense of Nepaleseness against the reality of the country’s status as one of the world’s Least
Developed Countries (LDC) has brought tensions with young Nepalese who contest and resist the idea. It is through young people's consumption of American films and television shows that they have become aware of what they are lacking. In the case of Malaysia, it was observed that turmoil in other countries used to instil fear among the people. Television, in particular, news item, would show numerous problems in foreign countries such as poverty; war and violence to make them feel more grateful and appreciate the fortune and prosperity in Malaysia.

The struggle between young people and the state continues, as is evident in Gritxi’s work (2006) among young Maltese. The pervasive influence of the global media and young people’s consumption of it has created a unique Maltese identity. Gritxi (2006) disagrees that it could replace or weaken the local cultural identity of Malta, but has found through their discourse that it builds a different Maltese identity, one that embraces global modernity. What this study shows is that the struggle of young people with national identity is an ongoing dialectical process.

Young people’s acceptance of national identity very much relates to the political, economic and social conditions they are living within. Young people will resist if they feel that national identity proves a disadvantage or marginalises them from acquiring a “quality” life.

If young Maltese’s sense of national identity was differentiated by class, South African youths, however, was differentiated by ethnicity. It is found that while rural South African youths known as the “homelands” identifies themselves to the local culture in local television programmes, the White, Coloured and Asian South Africans identifies themselves more towards imported programmes (Strelitz, 2002). This serves to show that the country is facing an issue of a fragmented sense of national identity among young people.

Consumption of the global media often leads local youth to reflect and make sense of them in terms of “tradition against modernity.” Young Lebanese Maronites admire the perceived individual freedom that exists in West, which they identify as “modern” values.
Their understanding of “modernity” comes from what they see in American comedies – The Cosby Show and a teenage serial drama – Beverly Hills 90210 (Kraidy, 1999). There are times when young people contest local tradition and culture and reflect on their own individual needs.

The clash between “tradition and modernity” is also relevant to migrant youth. At home, their lives and parents are a site for maintaining their cultural identity against the cultures of their new homeland, outside. Young British Asians in Gillespie’s study (1995) negotiated their various social identities within these conditions as well as constructing new forms of identities through consumption of the media.

While all these studies have succeeded in highlighting the various dimensions of young people's identities affected by media consumption, they focus on a specific group of young people through their gender. On the other hand, Gillespie (1995), who studied British Asian youths of different religions – Hindu, Muslim, and Sikh – did not highlight the difference in the values of Muslims youths compared to Hindu and Sikh youths. Consequently, this study differs in several ways. Firstly, it attempts to show that there are differences in how Muslim youth construct their identity from non-Muslim youth as influenced by media consumption. Moreover, in the context of how Malaysia is facing similar issues regarding ethnic identity among its young people, it is imperative to interview young people from all ethnic groups instead of just focusing on one specific ethnic group, as Strelitz (2002) did.

This approach is appropriate, particularly when studying a multi-ethnic audience where issues of ethnic relations and cultural exclusion are still being confronted, as in Malaysia and South African societies. Therefore, this study has been expanded to explore whether all ethnic groups face similar problems of cultural exclusion pertaining to their own ethnicity and how they deal with this in their everyday lives. There are many questions to answer: How is cultural identity formed within the confines of the private life of young people? What are the constraints, challenges that they face, and are there are differences or similarities across ethnic groups? How do all these factors contribute to the kind of cultural identity that exists among different groups of young people?
Finally, what previous studies lack is a comparative approach in determining the differences and similarities in attitude or opinions among young people. All these studies have assumed that young people are a homogeneous group and have failed to pay attention to the specificity of social identity. For example, Strelitz’s (2002) study examines young people of different ethnicities, social classes, and political histories, yet he focuses on Black South Africans regarding cultural identity and values, and not on other young South Africans.

3.2.7 Media-Identity studies in Malaysia: Stereotyping Audience

The focus in media studies on the ethnic groups and their relationship with the media in Malaysia mainly examines how these groups are targeted and stereotyped in the media. The issues about media help dictate the nature and direction of the development of social ties and civic engagement in communities and to promote national identity among a multi-ethnic audience in Malaysia has been overlooked.

Early audience study in Malaysia by Grenfell (1979) traces the progress of audience research in Malaysia from 1959 to 1975. Its primary aim was to measure the size and composition of media audiences. Indeed, the use of the quantitative survey method as part of an empirical science approach to studying audiences continues unabashed today (Tamam, 2010). However, the relationship between public television, public culture, and audiences have developed recently as an area of the research study (Khattab, 2006). The article explores how the state strategises public and private television in manufacturing a public culture.

However, Firdaus (2006) raises questions about the role of journalism in creating and maintaining a sense of ‘National identity’ in Malaysia. She argues that national integration is virtually ignored in Malaysian media, including the news media, claiming that Malaysian media seeks to target audiences and create niches according to racial lines and language (Firdaus, 2006). She argued that the incongruity (lacking harmony) of government policies relating to media and identity has impacts on news media preferences.
of the three main ethnic groups in Malaysia, with each ethnicity preferring certain newspapers, television channels and radio stations. But her study failed to understand news media preferences of the three main ethnic groups in Malaysia based on the audience perception and interpretation.

One study about the audience and national identity that is very close to this study was the work of Tamam (2011) that was undertaken to determine whether exposure and attention to the local news in television and newspaper predicted national pride. Despite his positive findings that suggested youth in the country, aged between 15-25 years, had a favourable attitude towards the country and being a Malaysian, it seems that local news consumption among the youth is low. The reason for this is not clear as this study has overlooked to include questions on antecedents of news media use.

Another issue worth pondering is that more Malaysian youth asserting themselves in terms of ethnicity than nationality (Tamam, 2011). However, there are several limitations of this study, firstly, the measurement of national pride may be inadequate if national pride is viewed as multidimensional construct, and the measure may not have captured the theoretical domain of the construct of national pride, secondly, a self-report measure of exposure and attention to news in news media is not the best method to measure news consumption, and finally, the study has not ascertained which news types and narratives were actually consumed and contributed to national pride.

In his earlier research, Tamam (2008) establish findings to support the assumptions that knowledge and attitude directly influence the behavioural component of ethnic tolerance as purported by Ben-Ari (2004). The level of ethnic tolerance could also be predicted from the level of exposure to news on public affairs. However some conceptual and methodological limitations in this study need to be highlighted; firstly, the findings are not very conclusive as it only employed one short cross-sectional survey, and secondly, the study has overlooked the possible confounding influence of interpersonal communication sources and interethnic contact in predicting ethnic tolerance.
It’s been noted that television news is important because it informs people's understanding of their immediate and distant surroundings and in most countries are a staple of peoples’ “media diets” (Keown, 2006). Coining the phrase “media diet,” Keown found that Canadians, especially seniors, are very likely to have a daily diet of news and that television is the staple “food” of the frequent users of media. However, no focus was made specifically on the thoughts, perceptions, and beliefs about TV news among immigrants.

3.2.8 Communication and Development

Traditionally, the relationship between communication and development has often been viewed in terms of the economic significance of communication that communication is increasingly used to promote economic growth (Thomas, 2006). This has been based on the idea that development is seen as economic development. Moreover, communication and communication media support this development through teaching ideas, dissemination development messages and also providing a medium for feedback, basically, communication is a way of getting people to support development (Thomas, 2006).

Khan (2013) tells us about a new approach to communication and development by Manyozo (2012) who classifies development communication according to three approaches, namely; media for development, media development, and participatory communication. The first approach emphasises content and is about the strategic employment of communication to educate people about development and important social issues, moreover and more specifically to the present study, this approach considers the challenges of content in a multi-stakeholder environment using popular media (Khan, 2013). This is relevant to the present study because multiple stakeholders can refer to the different races in Malaysia and the popular media, the news. The second approach is also relevant to the present study whereby it refers to the externally developed structures that are used to build media infrastructures, capacities, and policies in developing nations, specifically; this also refers to post-colonial countries and their use of media for governance. A third approach, participatory communication, places an emphasis on
community engagement in the production and content as well as the design of communication policy (Khan, 2013). Thomas (2006) approaches communication and development from the perspective of social change which is about understanding the role that is played by communication in effecting social change and the leveraging of media for social change.

This topic reviews the audience interpretation frames on television news reception. It evaluates the impact of news media on the audience in relation to the culture. It further identifies the influence in the light of the effects model.

Television news is a report of a current occasion or future occasions broadcasted on the television. It’s found as a description about present ongoing (Agrawal, 2009). From all these, an individual can carefully understand the television news as a development that has occurred in the recent past, which was not known exterior and which is of wide interest and to the people that which generates curiosity among people. However, scholars have been thinking that television news has a direct impact on the audiences they serve, and consider the television as a relatively weak control in moulding an individual value, attitude, and mind-set (Dworkin, et al., 1999). Different variables show in the public arena, for example, individual contact and religion, are more inclined to impact individuals (Gauntlett, 2002).

News through T.V has also played a vital role to enhance the understanding of different culture by offering informative programs and uniqueness of their traditions. It has observed that news has an influence of the culture that ultimately influences its audience (Kraidy, 2001). The reason is lying in the ways things are highlighted in news and ways in which people react to it. People of different cultures reflect differently to the same news as it means different to them (Biagi, 2012).
CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

This section discusses the design of this research. It underlined the research questions used to guide the study, as well as the methodologies, sampling and procedures used, locations, and ethical issues related to the study, and the challenges involved in the fieldwork.

4.2 Research Questions

As mentioned in the beginning of this thesis, the initial question this study set out to investigate is whether the media, television news in particular is a catalyst for sense of belonging to the nation and influence how audience interpret what they see on their screen to make sense of their identities. It also aims to determine if there are differences and similarities in reception of media messages between ethnicities in Malaysia. The initial research questions been restated to emphasise the relationship between identity and the media in Malaysia. Using multi qualitative methods, this study asked these specific questions:

1. What discursive strategies television news adopts to promote 1Malaysia campaign and collective identity in multi-ethnic Malaysia?

2. How do multi-ethnic audiences receive television news on 1Malaysia campaign, and what interpretive resources do they use to reach their understandings?
These questions were posed to determine the reception and perception of young multi-ethnic Malaysians of the cultures, values and norms disseminated through the media, and their reactions to them. Previous local studies rarely asked young Malaysians about the influence of norms and institutions in their consumption practice. The research questions outlined explore whether or not the consumption of the news media is also a symbolic act of accepting or rejecting cultures and values of 1Malaysia, and how different ethnic groups react to it. The bottom-up perspective that will examine the meaning of 1Malaysia will respond to the questions about, in what ways and contexts do the media inspired identity discourses. What role do the media play in relation to inclusion and exclusion from public life? This study decided to follow the path of Gillespie (1995) and Strelitz (2002), who see media consumption as a means to explore and study young people’s construction of identity. It however broaden its focus by looking at a multi-ethnic group.

4.3 Audience Reception Studies

The various studies of media reception, identity formation and young people have employed various theoretical frameworks, approaches and methods. However, taking into consideration the aim of this study, the research questions were tested using a multi-qualitative approach, drawing on focus group interviews and content analysis. The reason for engaging in these methods was to facilitate the researcher to examine young Malaysians identities, as a group as well as at the sphere in their everyday lives. By doing so, a broader picture of young Malaysians identities would result.

This study has a dual ‘edge’. The central focus of this study will be on the audience in Malaysia and their reception of television news messages about 1Malaysia concept with focus on formation of unity and national identity. Main concern of this study is in the interpretive activity by which viewers comprehend and attach significant to what they see and hear. Adopting Reception Theory this study proposes to examine why and how people of difference ethnic backgrounds have different interpretations and understandings of the same media message. At the same time, it will also ask questions about Television news as form of public communication, focusing on the television news exposition discourses.
Thus, Audience reception studies were conducted through focus group interviews, while the Content analysing method was employed to examine discourse patterns.

This section will introduce the research approach that will be used for the study. It introduces the research questions and the research design that involves two techniques, that is content analysis and focus group discussion. The advantages and justification of the chosen research techniques will be clarify in the following topic. It will also discuss in detail about the chosen content, population, and sampling size for the Focus Group.

First phase of the study will involve selecting and analysing the television news content to grasp the main themes of television news to understand what discursive strategies television news adopts to promote 1Malaysia campaign and collective identity in multi-ethnic Malaysia. It will also help to select representative news stories as stimulus for informants taking part in the focus group discussion.

4.4 Analysing News Content

Content Analysis becomes a very popular textual analysis method in media reception studies because it seems so able to quantify textual analysis. This traditional approach to content analysis tended to count words rather than meanings and sometimes bundle data up into the boxes or a priori categories, which were thought up by the investigator (Philo, 2007). This current study however has chosen the qualitative content analysis approach that goes beyond merely counting words and focus on the latent meaning, taking into account the context by examining the text, images, actors, venue and additional background information.

In the context of this study, news analyses were carried out with combination of qualitative and quantitative methods in the broadest sense as the quantification of occurrence of selected themes in the news reports. This process was considered suitable for the analysis of the news reports mainly due to their substantial number. The reason for
this is to reduce the data to only fairly reports on the 1Malaysia, which were thus manageable amount for analysis and interpretive in the focus group discussion.

As the goal of analysing news in this study is to “provide knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon under study, this analysis process will be guided by Thematic analysis within a qualitative paradigm characterise by theoretical flexibility and organic processes of coding and theme development according to Braun, (2006) approach. Thematic analysis allowed data reduction and quantification systematised what would otherwise be fleeting or impressionistic comments (Madianou, 2002). Given the significant attached to broadcast news both by audiences and by broadcasters it chose to focus on the current affairs content, the broadcast news; form in which most contributed to public understanding of the 1Malaysia concept. Therefore, the focus will be on news aired by major terrestrial broadcasting channels. The news that people most people familiar with: claimed as the main source of the news for most of the people most of the time (Montgomery, 2007).

Although the central focus of this study is on the audience reception and responses to specific ‘public issue’ as depicted through television discourse but duality approach and by also studying the news content will help us look at different depiction of this issues and different methods and devices of depiction (Corner, 1990). The outcome will inform us, the role played by news media to bind people together and as a tool promoting National Identity and enhancing Unity and ethnic tolerance in a multi-ethnic society of Malaysia. Using this approach, this study will seek answers to this specific question:

‘What discursive strategies television news adopts to promote 1Malaysia campaign and collective identity in multi-ethnic Malaysia?'
4.4.1 Sampling the News

This study looked at a week-long sample of RTM television news between 19th to 25th August 2012. This amounted to over 350 news stories. These particular dates were selected purposefully on the basis it was observed in this period of time great amount of coverage was given on the stories related to unity and national identity with much effort taken to explain to people about 1Malaysia objective and vision. It is mainly because it’s the month where the main religious celebration Eidul Fitri and The National Day was celebrated.

While the purpose of analysing television news content in this study is to grasp the main themes of news about 1Malaysia shown on television and to isolate representative news for viewers interpretation, this is the best date that will give this study a wide range of news selection and information. Chosen news stories will act as a stimulus item for the focus group discussion.

In analysing the data from the selected broadcast news, researcher decided to mainly used Thematic Analysis (which will simply call TA). The reasoning behind the use of TA in this study is its flexibility, which stems from the facts that TA is only a method not a methodology (Braun, 2006). While most qualitative analysis provides a theoretically informed framework for collecting and analysing qualitative data, TA only specifies analytical procedures, centred on coding and theme development. This mean it can be use to address most types of qualitative research question, including questions about the social construction of meaning (Braun, 2006).

As its aim was to discover the discursive strategies television news adopts to promote 1Malaysia campaign, investigating these patterns sought to identify the patterns in the ways television news promote collective identity and unity in multi-ethnic Malaysia. This is parallel to how Braun, (2006) defined TA, “a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data.”
4.4.2 Text Analysis Procedure

The approach I followed in sampling the news stories for this study is similar to what has been termed as thematic content analysis by Braun (2006) who provide an outline guide through the six phases of thematic analysis:

1. Familiarizing with data:
2. Generating initial codes.
4. Reviewing themes.
5. Defining and naming themes.
6. Producing the report.

Familiarizing with data phase started by taking notes and marking ideas before doing formal coding. Because the television news is verbal data it was first transcribed into written form in order to conduct a thematic analysis. This process is an excellent way to start familiarizing with the data (Riessman, 1993). Some researchers even argue it should be seen as ‘a key phase of data analysis within interpretative qualitative methodology’ (Bird, 2005: 227). Meanings are created, rather than simply a mechanical act of putting spoken sounds on paper (Lapadat, 1999).

This process have also help generated an initial list of ideas about what is in the data and what is interesting about them before the official coding proses started. Coding is observe to be the most widely known and popular method of qualititative data analysis (Schroder, M, 2003). At this stage the focus was on the particular feature in coding with semantic approach. The coding was based on a specific research question ‘What discursive strategies television news adopts to promote 1Malaysia campaign and collective identity in multi-ethnic Malaysia?

The analysis at this point is not looking for anything beyond what has been written but simply organizing data to show pattern in semantic content within the explicit or surface meanings.
of the data focusing on ‘1Malaysia’ as a code. Items involved were of varying duration. Only 1Malaysia news stories were coded. An item was identified as relating to 1Malaysia if it had a direct or indirect reference to the word 1Malaysia. The intention was to examine the whole range of discourses and issues that this topic /word produced. In total 350 items were coded and analysed. The first approach was analysing the headline or lead of the news stories focusing on any statement or phrases containing the 1Malaysia word. On examining the content of the data, the analysis also included items that focused on the discourse on national identity and unity.

In searching for themes, the examination of the long list data with different code found that attention was given to two themes when constructing television news about 1Malaysia. They are:

1. Construction of shared history and collective culture
2. Construction of togetherness and sense of acceptance

This theme accurately reflects the meaning of 1Malaysia criteria listed in 1Malaysia booklet produce by Malaysia Ministry of Information. 1Malaysia concept was defined as “We stand, we think and act as Malaysians… and the Government take actions based on the needs of all ethnic groups in our country” (http://www.1malaysia.com.my/). 1Malaysia leans against three tenets in enhancing national unity, which are; Principle of Acceptance, Principle of National Spirit, And Principle of Social Justice. These core principles of 1Malaysia were used as a guideline to refine the specifics of each themes and generating clear definitions and names for each theme.

This thematic analysis has also allow me to reduce the news story to core narratives in order to provide good evidence of the news discursive strategies and to make cross comparisons with focus group discussion. Deliberate choices were made in choosing which narratives best represented the goals, which are (1) to grasp on focus in Television news to portray message about 1Malaysia, collective Identity and unity, and (2) to select representative news stories as stimulus item in the focus group discussion. Researcher successfully selected four news stories that best represent the objectives.
4.4.3 Results: Identifying discursive patterns

The textual analysis in this study aims to identify any thematic and discursive patterns in the television news reports to promote 1Malaysia campaign and collective identity in multi-ethnic Malaysia.

After the reduction process, the data analysis of this study centred on four news stories that best demonstrate the 1Malaysia concept in the text and images used. The process was also cross check with cores principals of 1Malaysia listed by Malaysia Ministry of Information.

The idea of '1Malaysia' is to foster unity among Malaysians of different race and ethnicity in agreement with the provision in the Malaysia Federal Constitution and principles of the National Ideology. 1Malaysia Concept was defined as “We stand, we think and act as Malaysians… and the Government take actions based on the needs of all ethnic groups in our country”. 1Malaysia leans against three tenets in enhancing national unity, which are; Principle of Acceptance, Principle of National Spirit, And Principle of Social Justice.

*Principle of Acceptance* means that even though Malaysians live different lifestyles, practises and culture, they accept each other as loyal friends. *Principle of National Spirit* refers to unity concept, nationalism and love for the country that have been inculcated early on by past leaders that fought for freedom, independence and many more policy aims to unite the multi-races in this country. *Principle of Social Justice* means each race in this country regardless of background or religion will be accounted for fairly and equitably in their welfare and other social aspects (http://www.1malaysia.com.my/).

The four news stories chosen for detail analysis titled (1) Independence: In the eyes of Young Generation (2) Independence capsule: Malaysia 1 Big Family, (3) Malaysia Day Celebration: Success of 1Malaysia, and (4) Ethnic and Religion diversity: Malaysia’s uniqueness

In the context of this study, participants were shown four visuals/videos from local daily Television news title"
The first video chosen was “Independence: In the eyes of Young Generation”. It is a special report by a local Journalist, reporting on the meaning of independence from the youth’s perspective. It is news stories aired on 23th August 2012, a week before the celebration of the 55th years of the country’s Independence Day with the mission to foster the spirit of patriotism to the country. It shows impressive visuals and tells the viewers about rapid development of the country after 55 years of its independence. All attained world recognition through its success in sports as well as in entertainment industry. It also includes some interview from youth sharing with viewers about the real meaning of independence to them.

Concerning “Independence capsule: Malaysia 1 Big Family”, the video was chosen because it explores social issues. For this study, the chosen scene involves an interethnic relationship. The ordinary and interethnic relationships were used as a means to expose how Malaysians from different cultures, religious beliefs, gender and geographical locations negotiate their identities. Using different relationship situations allowed for an examination of how the media may become a context for contesting or negotiating existing “authority-defined” ethnicity.

The third video, “Malaysia Day Celebration: Success story of 1Malaysia” is a news report about the preparations of independence celebration. It display the participation of the Prime Minister joined thousands of young generation at ‘Merdeka Square’ in preparations of Independence day. The selection of videos was based on the image used displaying participation of young Malaysian of all races. In terms of languages used, it contains elements of 1Malaysia storytelling, such as emphasizing the values of unity and understanding between the various ethnic groups.

The last video chosen is “Ethnic and Religion diversity: Malaysia’s uniqueness”. It highlighted about Ethnic diversity and religion.

‘Questions concerning why the media produce what they do and what impact the media has on the audience are question that cannot be answered by just studying media content. Content Analysis is capable only of discussing content’ (Sumser, 2001)
4.5 Focus Group Discussion

As argued Focus Group is particularly useful when researcher seek to examine participants’ meanings and ways of understanding (Lunt, 1996). Thus in this study, the focus group interview will be the main method used to gather data on audience interpretations of news item message and the reasons given for those interpretations. The use of focus group interviews here helped understand the workings of young Malaysians’ identity as a group.

Focus Groups have been very popular in Mass Communication research (Lunt,1996). Historically, it is a method first used by Lazarsfeld in the 1940's (Suter, 2000). The work included group discussions of informants' positive and negative emotional reactions to radio programs. Later in 1956, Merton, Fiske, and Kendall labelled this method the "The focused interview" and layered out its nature, uses, criteria, and procedures.

The modern interest in focus group in academic research however was seen arisen out of the cross-over of the techniques from commercial market research (Bloor, 2001). Academic marketing research relied on the focus group method as a means of discovery consumers' psychological motivations. Only in 1980's, applied social researchers began to find focus groups useful for their purposes (Morgan, 1996). Morgan later collaborates with Krueger's and produces a comprehensive introductory ‘Focus Group Kit in 1997. In the study of News Reception, Focus Group has been mostly popular especially since Morley’s Nationwide study (1980), that later followed by many other studies (Gamson, 1992; Philo, 1990, Buckingham, 2000; Madianou, 2005; Wayne, et al (2008).

4.5.1 Rationale and uses of focus groups

Although some has raised question over the explanatory power of conventional empirical approaches within the social sciences but there seems to be an emerging consensus that a great many central research concerns cannot be sufficiently explored through the kinds of
questions that are posed by hypothetic-deductive methods and addressed with quantifiable answers (Jensen, 1991).

Qualitative studies are contextual, and take into account the surrounding factors of the respondents in answering the question “why”. Hence, they have a stronger explanatory power to light up the event of a social phenomenon and it is able to study process.

The rationale for using a focus group interview for this study was in agreement with what reported by Barbour (2005) and Macnaghten (2004). They believe focus groups are useful in exploring group norms for a particular issue. Focus groups offer the opportunity to provide information on the insights, feelings, attitude and beliefs of a selected target population (Breen, 2006).

Focus groups were ideal for this study since it was aimed at investigating identities of young people of different socio-cultural backgrounds by examining their attitudes and values. Looking at how different ethnic groups make sense of ‘unity and national identity’ meaning in ‘1Malaysia concept’ shown on television news, patterns and similarities or differences in values in terms of ethnicities.

This Focus Group discussion seek answers to specific questions based on this broad area.

*How do multi-ethnic audiences receive television news reporting on 1Malaysia campaign, and what interpretive resources do they use to reach their understandings?*

This qualitative based project with emphasis on people’s “lived experience” are fundamentally well suited to locating the meaning people place on the events, processes, and structures of their lives: their “perceptions, assumptions, prejudgements, presuppositions” (Miles, 1994).

There are many advantages to the group discussion technique, the main one being it allows the researcher to gauge the social formation of opinions (Madianou, 2009). Instead of the
researcher asking each person to respond to a question in turn, people are encouraged to talk to one another: asking questions, exchanging anecdotes and commenting on each other's experiences and points of view (Kitzinger, 1995).

The method is particularly useful in this study for exploring people's knowledge and experiences and can be used to investigate not only what people think but also how they think and why they think that way. Morgan (1998) argues that group processes can help people to explore and clarify their views in ways that would be less easily accessible in a one to one interview. (Morgan, 1998).

This Group discussion is also particularly appropriate to current study since the interviewer has a series of open-ended questions and wishes to encourage informants to explore the issues of importance to them, in their own word, generating their own questions and pursuing their own priorities. Thru this technique researcher can obtain deeper levels of meaning; make important connections, and identify subtle nuances in expression and meaning (Steward, 2007).

This method also allows the researcher to interact directly with respondents, have the opportunities for clarification of responses, and ask follow-up questions. In addition, it helps researchers tap into the many different forms of communication that people use in day-to-day interaction and observe nonverbal responses, including gestures, jokes, anecdotes, teasing, and arguing, which may carry information to supplement the earlier responses. Such interpersonal communication can also highlight (sub) cultural values or group norms, which is vital to this study. Analysing different types of narrative used within the group, researcher can identify shared and common knowledge. This is why Focus Group so often used in cross cultural research and work with ethnic minorities (Hughes, 1993). That is why it makes the perfect approach for this study, which involves audience with different ethnic and cultural background.

Gaining access to such variety of communication is useful because people's knowledge and attitudes not entirely encapsulated in reasoned responses to direct questions. In this sense according to Kitzinger (1995), focus groups reach the parts that other methods
cannot reach; enlightening dimensions of understanding that often remain unexploited by more conventional data collection techniques.

Kitzinger (1995) argued that, “direct observation may be more suitable for studies of social roles and formal organisations but focus groups are particularly suited to the study of attitudes and experience and are more suitable for examining how knowledge, and more importantly, ideas, develop and operate within a given cultural context. Focus groups are also better at exploring exactly how opinion are constructed and explain why certain gap exists between knowledge and behaviour (Kitzinger, 1995).

Another important advantage of adopting Focus Group as a method that it gives extremely user friendly results and easy to understand by researchers and decision maker which is not always for the case with sophisticated survey research that employs complex statistical analyses (Steward, 2007).

4.5.2 Selecting Informants

Two critical elements in successful Focus Group research are the recruitment of informants and the design of the interview guide (Steward, 2007). As interaction between informants is a key feature of the Focus Group method, careful consideration of group composition is vital. According to Bloor, there has to be sufficient diversity to encourage discussion (Bloor, 2001). Because random sampling is not always appropriate as Krueger (1998) mentioned in his Analysing & reporting Focus Group Results book, Focus group in this study instead used ‘purposeful’ sampling, whereby participants were chose based on the purpose of the study. This current research objective is to study young people of different ethnic respond and interpretation of a specific program that is the 1Malaysia program about Unity and National identity in Malaysia.

From a theoretical perspective, it is difficult to decide an optimal number of informants that should be included in a focus group. Despite recent attempts, critical factors for the determination of the size of a focus group remain uncertain and can further be elaborated.
From a practical perspective, most focus groups are composed of 6 to 12 people (Steward, 2007). It has also been observe that most of previous studies of audience studies have also adapt to the similar size of Focus group (Philo, 2004).

As for suitable number of groups, Focus group studies can consist of anything between half a dozen to over fifty groups, depending on the aims of the project and the resources available (Kitzinger, 1995). Most researchers recommend aiming for homogeneity within each group in order to capitalise on people's shared experiences.

4.5.3 Conducting focus group

In order to examine News audience interpretation and understanding of television News messages about unity and national identity in Malaysia campaign, 41 people were gathered in a small group of eight to discuss about a selection of four news stories from RTM primetime news bulletin. The news stories were chosen from the content study done earlier.

The informants were organised so that they share homogeneity factors that bring them together and selected according to the criteria of ethnic, gender, and age. Although Merton (1956) originally used relative strangers of diverse socio-demographic categories, the selection of participant for this study is consistent with much more innovative work in focus group design that has move away from survey sampling approach to engage naturally with groups of like-minded people. For example, Madianou (2005) interviews 72 informants in a group discussion where all informants were familiar with each other (either as family members or friends or colleagues). Madianou’s approach resembles the approach use by Liebes and Katz (1990) in their study of the reception of Dallas.

A study of a school environment has important implications for educational research but is also relevant to Media and Cultural Studies. If investigating the lives of young people - and the role of media and popular culture within those lives - an important location to study is the school, where a large percentage of these young people’s time is spent and
where peer relations and issues of identity and development are played out. With focus on securing the familiarity of the environment to the subjects, all informants were gathered from a local university, an appropriate natural setting for multiracial young Malaysian.

The focus group interviews were carried out during the period of the 15th to 30th September 2012 with students from three Public University in the state of Kuala Lumpur and Selangor in Malaysia. Those three universities chosen to conduct the focus group discussion were randomly sampled. To make sure a balance mix of samples, it was plan that one third of the informants will be the Malays, one-third Chinese, while the remaining one third is Indian. Each Focus group will have six informants with a balance combination of males and females informants. There will be three groups of Malays, three groups of Chinese and three groups of Indians. The reason for the sets of ethnic groupings is merely to allow for more free flow of discussions between the various informants and is to ensure that informants are not restrained to express themselves with the other ethnic groups.

However the group size of participant and the numbers of interviews were not necessarily even, although effort was made to retain as much balance as possible. This is mainly related to the problem of accessing audiences, which involved difficulties especially in the case of the Indian ethnic participants. At the end the total number of pupils participated in this focus group study was 41 students, 21 males and 20 females. All focus group interviews were conducted in the University premises, after seeking permission from all relevant parties. Total of eight sessions was conducted with all ethnic group. Each session last between 50 minutes to one and half hour as an appropriate period, adopt by most focus group study.

One of the important things in running focus group is to produce informality in the discussion where according to Puchta (2004) should be more like a “conversation”. An audio tape recorder and digital video camera used to record the whole session. Although most of the analysis will focus on respondents verbal statements (Priest, 2010) videotaping will capture facial expression and body language that could contribute to the analysis of the data.
In most audience studies and central to the nature of the focus interview according to the classic work of Merton (1956) and the more recent work is that Focus groups often begin with a presentation of material on which the attention of participants is centred. In this study the selected groups were shown visual material of news stories picked from the content study done earlier. After watching these videos, the moderator threw in the first question to start the discussion.

4.5.4 Moderating focus Group

Moderator plays a very important role in this study. To achieve an appropriate outcome from the focus group discussion, the researcher plans to appoint one designated group moderator for the session with the Chinese and Indian informants. As this research is working with unique ethnic, linguistic and cultural groups, it is particularly proper to use a moderator that comes from the same community or is familiar with it. As Farquhar, et al, (1999) pointed out, the gender and ethnic identity of the researcher conducting the focus group can have an important influence on its success, particularly where sensitive topics are being discussed. During this session the researcher will recede into the background to allow more free flow of discussion and maximise the level of openness among informants with a moderator of the same ethnics.

Morgan (1998) stresses that the quality of the data rest on the experience of the moderator and the use of professional moderators are essential in order to produce the best data. However it was also argued that a less experience moderator who has more contact with the subjects will produce better data than a professional moderator who has never worked in the research area. On that point, this study decided to use someone from the Television news Organization that has vast experience in the research subject and have the ability to relate better to the research objectives. As Morgan approves that the moderator’s experience will be most valuable when it is directly related to the topics and informants in the actual project. (Morgan, 1998).
4.5.5 Analysing focus group

According to their nature ‘the fundamental data that focus group produce are transcripts of the group discussion’ (Morgan, 1998) and the result of focus groups are expressed verbally and qualitatively. For that reason, the analysis of focus group data involve of the researcher’s subjective process of making sense of what was discussed in the groups. In this way a final written report of the focus group data will be put together and discussed under the major themes and research questions that took place across the full set of groups including a description of the number of session and participants, and in addition the date, time and place of the sessions.

Focus Group analysis occurs concurrently with data collection. as Krueger (1994) suggest that a helpful way of analysis focus group discussion is to consider a continuum of analysis ranging from the simple accumulation of raw data to interpretation of data. The distinctive aspect of framework analysis uses thematic approach that allows themes to develop both from the research questions and from the narratives of research participants. This stage was followed by familiarisation with the data which achieved by listening to video and audio recordings, reading the transcripts several times and reading the observational notes taken during the interview and summary notes written immediately after the interview. The aim is to immerse in the details and get a sense of the interview as a whole before breaking it into parts. During this process, the major themes begin to emerge.

The following stage involves identifying a thematic framework, by writing memos in the margin of the text in the form of short phrases, ideas or concepts arising from the texts and beginning to develop categories. At this stage, descriptive statements were formed and an analysis was carried out on the data under the questioning route. The third stage, indexing, comprises sifting the data, highlighting and sorting out quotes. The fourth stage, involves lifting the quotes from their original context and re-arranging them under the newly developed appropriate thematic content. Understanding the interpretation of media texts by audiences will be facilitated by the informants themselves, as their own understandings
of news item stories will be articulated in terms of their importance and consequences at a personal level.

To avoid adding researcher bias, I refrained from asking leading questions. The sessions began with the participants describing what they understood from the video shown. The discussion developed from there. Follow-up questions were then asked to clarify unclear answers. All of the data from the Focus group discussions will be transcribed in English with a word processor and then manually categorised.

**4.6 Ethical issues**

The social scientists had underlined a particular code of ethics in order to undergo research studies. Christians (in Denzin et al, 2003) emphasized four key guidelines in steps to implement research study clear of ethical issues:

a) Informed consent - subjects of research study will be informed and briefed on the nature and consequences of the study. Agreement from the subject is required and has to be notified in a public manner.

b) Deception – active deception and deliberate misrepresentation are immoral thus strictly prohibited and shall be avoided by a researcher in any manner.

c) Privacy and confidentiality – the code insists for any researcher to shield individual’s identities, locations and data especially when they are requested by a research subject.

d) Accuracy – assurance of the originality and accuracy of data and information should be the utmost priority in every situation of a study.

In line with the code of ethics, this research study aims to investigate young people’s perception and understanding of news stories in Malaysia particularly on 1Malaysia programme.
As the research involves issues, which require detailed information and conversation, an in-depth focus group interview approach will be used as the primary method. The fieldwork will involve first year Local University’s students. The research informants will be interviewed in an office room, most probably within University premises. The interview session will be recorded using either a digital tape recorder or digital video camera or by using both, whichever is preferable or suitable subject to the conditions of location and timing.

As stressed by previous study on the importance of requiring permission for any recording, consent for disclosure and provision of adequate information for approval, consent forms will be prepared and allocated to the informants as an acknowledgement of the confidentiality of the information given through the interview sessions. This is to ensure that all information revealed by the study is endorsed by the informants. A false identity will be used in the case where the informant is reluctant to reveal their real identity. Berg (2007) asserts the importance of confidentiality and anonymity in qualitative studies, stressing that a researcher needs to ‘systematically change each subjects’ real name to a false name or case number when writing data reports’.

The content analysis which involved investigation of television news stories collected from Radio Television Malaysia (RTM) News and Current Affairs Unit in the head office in Kuala Lumpur. A formal letter will be prepared and sent to the Director General of RTM for his consent and approval for the research study.

In order to explore audience responses to a specific “public issues” as portrayed through television discourse, this study will also investigate rhetorical intentions and discursive operation of sample programmes. It will look at different description of 1Malaysia at different approaches and strategies of portrayal by Television news. Content analysis has long been associated with investigation of the way social issues represented in the mass media; next topic explain further type of media content analysis used in this study.
CHAPTER 5

TEXT ANALYSIS: DISCURSIVE CONSTRUCTION OF 1MALAYSIA

5. 1 Introduction

Discussion in the previous chapter provides historical context to the discussion topic in chapter 2 and the theoretical and methodological issues in chapter 3 and 4, this Section however will move on the data analysing stage with focus on television news discourses.

This chapter aims to understand how television news is differently structured and patterned, and what strategies media deploy to create shared views around the mentioned matters. The theme emerge in this analysis was later incorporated into sets of questions for focus group discussion to investigate whether these discursive strategies are effective in transmission the objective of 1Malaysia and addressing concerns and tensions in multi ethnic Malaysia. It is also set to investigate how cultural factors such as ‘ethnic background’ shape the audiences reception of hegemony messages and what actually influences the reproduction of news meanings in a particular ways.

This study looked at a weeklong television news stories, which was aired in the prime time news bulletin in the month of August in 2012. This amounted to over 350 news stories aired by TV1 on Radio Television Malaysia (RTM) over a period of 19th to 25th August 2012. RTM is a public television station in Malaysia that has been the government dissemination tools promote state message or agenda. In this study, the message is about 1Malaysia. This concept emphasizes the importance of national unity among people of different races, backgrounds and religious beliefs for the sake of the well-being of all in the future.

These specific dates were selected because it appears that additional attention and news coverage was given to news stories about 1Malaysia campaign and national Unity around
these dates. One of the reasons for the increased attention to 1Malaysia issues about national unity at these times is because two very important events to Malaysian were celebrated in this month; they are the main Muslim’s religious celebration Eidul Fitri and the celebration of Malaysia 55th Independence Day. Observation as a Malaysian and my personal experience working in the news and current affairs department, I can say that this is a common practice by all media not just by the public television station. Media put additional effort around this time to talk more and promote 1Malaysia campaign; the objective and vision, largely promoting the nation success and the importance of national unity.

The media coverage and reporting of different ethnic traditions celebrations and Festival such as the Eid, Chinese New Year, Diwali and Christmas, has become a spur to the value of collaboration, solidarity and harmony; a symbol of integration in Malaysia. Like what Dayan, et al, (1992) describe as ‘media events’ and how it brings the nation together. Events like the Eidul Fitri and the National Day celebration in Malaysia is the kind of events that hang a halo over the television set and transform the audience viewing experience. As Dayan (1992) argue that it is through the broadcasting of special occasions, that the sense of collective identity is heightened, the event what they call the 'high holidays of mass communication. Alternatively, some others called it television ceremonies," or "festive television," or even "cultural performances" (Bausinger, 1984).

The analysis of the television news was based on a qualitative methods, namely thematic content analysis and interpretive analysis. The analysing process at this stage was to select news item about 1Malaysia and to isolate representative news for audience interpretation. Three news stories including one news advert was selected in the process and was empirically studied to demonstrate the discursive strategies adopted by Malaysia Television news (RTM) to promote 1Malaysia campaign, one identity and national unity among Malaysian audience. The three news stories and one advert were short-listed as it contains the most element of 1Malaysia based on the criteria of the core principles of the 1Malaysia notion listed in the 1Malaysia booklet (http://www.kkmm.gov.my/pdf/Booklet_1Malaysia.pdf). The booklet was an official
documents produced by the Ministry of Information when the idea was first announced by the Prime Minister to promote National Identity and steps to strengthening national unity. The data from the content analysis was cross analysed with the reception analysis of audience acquired from the focus group discussion. The selected news items in the content study were also used as a stimulus for the focus group discussion. Qualitative content analysis used to analyse the four selected television news items, focuses on three main areas: communicative design, theme, and visualisation. This approach goes beyond merely counting words. Rather, it examines language and images in order to generate an understanding of how the 1Malaysia concept promotes nation building, national identity and unity.

Modern nation-states described by Anderson (1991) as ‘imagined communities’ are large and impersonal forms of socio-political organization, communities that are so convinced they belong to a unique national community even the smallest nations do not know the majority of their fellow-citizens, do not meet, do not hear from one another. Their collective knowledge of the country and compatriots did not come from personal face-to-face communication, but from more impersonal and widely dispersed agencies of socialization like the educational system and the mass media that make possible the participation of vast numbers of people in a ‘national’ life through, for example, nationwide broadcasts of national ceremonies and rituals.

As the objective of this research is to understand what role do mass communications play in forming and maintaining this relationship of member with member, of member with nation?, the analysis of news item content is to see how are media used as tools by governments to build nations out of disparate groups of individuals in Malaysia. These questions are always pertinent and will add another dimension to the validity of national identities and nation-states. Moreover, modernist grand theories tend to assume that all nationalisms are the same, thereby underestimating the complexity and historical specificity of particular empirical cases (Madinou, 2002).

This audience research will be one of a few projects in Malaysia, which focus on the multi-ethnic young audience, employing a qualitative approach to study their reception of
Television news messages on promoting common identity (1Malaysia) and unity. Justification why this study decided to take account of the different ethnic (non-Malays) youth is because they are from the minorities group in Malaysia. As Madianou (2002) argued, it seemed problematic to look at an increasingly multicultural society without taking into account the minorities in the sample. In addition, based on the assumptions that the media bind the nation together as Anderson’s arguments in *Imagined Communities* (1983), the marginalised and oppressed should be included in the research design to provide an interesting case study to explore issues of inclusion and exclusion (Madianou, 2002).

Ethnic dilemma faced in Malaysia said to be attributed to the media because of the ‘Group dominant ’ approach used when discussing the issue of ethnicity and national identity. (Khattab, 2006). Sidanius et al. (1997) explain this perspective describes a multi ethnic nation that comes into being because of one ethnic group conquering another. Thus a sense of belonging to the nation is found among the dominant ethnic group, but not among the subordinate group. Scholar sees Malaysia Government TV station known as Radio Television Malaysia (RTM) has fail to represent diverse differences within and between various ethnic and indigenous groups in Malaysia (Khattab, 2006). Her argument that RTM that has functioned as state mouthpiece when discussing deep differences between ethnic groups was tend to reflect Malay culture in hegemonic and monolithic terms, arguing that the desire to create a public Malay(sian) culture for poly-ethnic and multi-religious, appears to be largely a mythic one (Khattab, 2006). Meanwhile, the issue of affirmative action, designed to bring Malaysian’s indigenous peoples to economic par with other races, namely Chinese, is often framed in the media and by political players in a way that depicts an ‘us’ vs. ‘them’ dichotomy, where affirmative action is hailed as a remedy to ethnic imbalance (Richardson, 2005).

However, it has been observe that Malaysia public television’s commitment to promote national unity under the 1Malaysia campaign programme has changed since 2009 to the idea to promote the ‘multicultural perspective’, which scholar describe as a perspective “rather than dissolving into a unitary ethnicity of nationhood, ethnic subgroups continue to maintain their distinctiveness, (where) all of these ethnic subgroups are considered
coequal partners in society … and individuals can simultaneously maintain a positive commitment to both an ethnic particularism and to the larger political community. These dual commitments should be seen as complementary loyalties, where commitment to one identity in fact helps cement and reinforce commitment to the other identity (Sidanius et al. 1997). Public Service broadcasting (RTM) seem to have move away from ‘national programming’ that attempts to pigeonhole, stereotype and label groups of people and acknowledge the clear differences of Malay, Chinese and Indian cultures in their programme. This current study will look at how has this new commitment by media has change about how different ethnic in Malaysia was portrayed on the National television news stories, what strategies media deploy to create shared views around the mentioned matters and whether these discursive strategies are effective in addressing concerns and tensions in multi ethnic Malaysia

Previous studies on the role of media in construction of a common identity by Morley and Brunston (1999) had shown how the nation was induced over the analysis of a current affairs programme. The role of public service broadcasting was also recognized in shaping national identity (Scannell, 1989) and Dayan and Katz have demonstrated how media events bring the nation together despite labelling media events as hegemonic manipulation (1992).

Draws on these literatures, this chapter aim to investigate the construction of common identity through the textual features of television news in Malaysia and an analysis of news form. As discussed by Madianou (2002) most of the studies on media and identity had focused on media texts as the locus of identity construction with most of it focusing on form, broadcasting context and technology. Madinaou chose to emphasis both on texts and on form in her study on Mediating the Nation: News, Audiences and Identities in Contemporary Greece. This study will also look to examine text and form. Form in the context of this study refers to the basic characteristics of news item broadcasts, including the mode of presentation and images used in news item broadcasts.

This chapter describes some features of news item, which will be then examined in relation to the viewers' responses. So it should be seen in relation to the chapters that
discuss the reception of news item in chapter 6 and 7. The purpose here is not to contend that television news is projecting a common identity, but to examine what discursive strategies does the 1Malaysian campaign adopt to promote the idea. The question about how effective are the strategies in addressing concerns and tensions in multi ethic Malaysia will be answer by analysing focus group discussion.

The analysis of the four news items further contributes to discussion about the aspects of communicative design and theme. As with Corner’s (1990), this study chose to separate the discussion into sub-section in order to get greater consistency into the discussion of ‘form’ and ‘content’ respectively. This chapter will provide clear discussions of how the discursive strategies common to 1Malaysia are constructed through words and visuals. It will show how words, phrases and images (sometimes together, sometimes separately) build these distinctive discursive strategies.

Communicative Design includes the main structures of each news story’s rhetorical (linguistic) organisation, with reference to terms to address the audience. Under themes, the media items are reviewed from a substantive perspective, indicating which aspects of the 1Malaysia debate was foregrounded in each item, and how they are treated. Because visual material makes a particularly strong contribution to the overall meanings of this study, the analysis will also consider visualisation to reveal the contribution of visual images to the media items.

5.2 Overview of selected media items

The broadcasts news stories chosen for this research share a large number of common attributes, which we shall attempt to identify. First this section will provide brief overview of each news stories selected for the discourse content analysis.

News Item 1: Independence: In the eyes of the Young Generation is a special report by a local journalist reporting on the meaning of independence from the perspective of the youth. It shows impressive images of rapid development in the country after 55 years of
independence. The report presents accomplishments in reference to world recognition through its success in sports as well as in the entertainment industry; it also includes some interviews with young people sharing views about the real meaning of independence.

News Item 2 (Advert): Malaysia 1 Big Family is an advert or promotional media item produced specifically in conjunction with the country's independence celebration and aired everyday in every bulletin for the whole month of August to display and promote ethnic relations.

News Item 3: Malaysia Day Celebration: Success of 1Malaysia shows the joviality on the day of the Independence Day celebration. It shows the participation of thousands of Malaysians, especially the youth, gathering in the Independence Square with the King and the Prime Minister in an apparently informal and fun event.

News Item 4: Ethnic and Religion diversity: Malaysia’s Uniqueness is a news item about ethnic and religious diversity portrayed as a privilege of Malaysians that has not been achieved by other countries. It uses history to prove how such diversity became a pillar of strength based on unity.

Discussion in the following section will focus on selection of the texts as examples of different discursive strategies used in the broadcast campaign proving that the text is attempting to communicate a particular message.

5.3 Television News and the Projection of One-Identity

Interpretative analysis in this study draw on different traditions, namely those of grounded theory (Glazer, et al 1967)) and discourse analysis (Van, 1985). Data were collected while the study is in progress, the coding categories are not established exclusively prior to the analysis, but partially emerge from the data and the context of the research (Altheide, 1987).
The text interpretative analysis of news item stories in this study aims to identify any thematic and discursive patterns in the news reports. The focus is on the discursive construction of national identity by media in Malaysia with regard to 1Malaysia campaign.

After reviewing the data, the following two content topics were isolated as the most relevant to the discursive construction of national identity or a collective identity as what 1Malaysia mean in the national television news media. They are:

1. Discursive construction of shared history and collective culture
2. Discursive construction of togetherness and sense of acceptance.

Drawing on the analysis of 3 news reports and one news advert during the one week period in the month of August where two important event were celebrated, this chapter discusses how the word ‘we’ is continually raised both through the text and the form of the news.

5.3.1 Discursive construction of shared history

Independence: in the eyes of Young Generation’ was the first news item analysed in this study. It contains narrative about Independence nation which supports discursive construction of shared history or a common past. The news items were selected based on the text, form, actors, and images used to emphasise the meaning of sovereignty, independence, and development. Looking at the Communicative Design, this news item, which is about the country’s independence and sovereignty, was aired on 23th August 2012, a week before the celebration of the 55th years of the country’s Independence Day. The aim of the items was to stir the spirit of patriotism towards the country. As proved in every broadcast campaign that the text is attempting to communicate a particular message, the intended message in this particular news reports was that: nation’s achievements are only possible with national unity and spirit of strong patriotism among its people particularly the young generation.
As the focus group of this study is the youth, this news item has met the first criteria. It was clearly targeted for the youth as evidence in the opening script presented by the newsreader.

**NEWSREADER:** Almost 45 percent of the population in this country is the younger generation. They are a valuable asset with high potential to be developed to help the success of the country.

This opening has a clear objective to capture young viewer’s attention. It directly mentioned about how the country value the young people of Malaysia and acknowledge their importance to shape the future of the country. The direct and short opening script recognised young people’s potential. In addition, news item was written and narrated by a young journalist, Yunos Sabri and interviews young people in order to relate more to the younger audience.

In the production of this news story concerning the country’s independence and sovereignty, the national television news station made use of the past to highlight its importance in the present.

**NARRATOR:** 55 years of independence Malaysia can already be proud of various development strategies. As a result, we have attained world recognition through many of our success. In sports, we have many world class internationals champions, as well as in entertainment industry. However, the success achieved today is impossible to realise without the freedom of independence.

The word of ‘independence’ was portrayed as symbol of power that has allowed the country’s tremendous achievement. Young people’s sense of pride and supports for the country’s achievements and success was featured heavily in the interview sequences.

“...we are able to develop our nation that should have well known to others. Not many people know about Malaysia before. But now people know Malaysia, we can
easily hear everywhere that KLCC (Kuala Lumpur Twin Towers) has been mentioned as the country’s landmark.”

(Mohd Asrul Abu Seman, - Young Government Officer)

The news uses a voice quotes from an interview with a Malay boy that make an assimilative ‘we’ in talking about the country’s achievement which indicate the inclusive ‘we’ of him as a Malay and his fellow Chinese and Indian friends as one national group of Malaysian. He is talking on behalf of all Malaysia as one voice of people that share the same background and history.

The interviewee again use the word ‘we’ to share the sense of proud feeling about the country’s achievement in attaining the Kuala Lumpur Twin Towers (KLCC). As scholar noted (Lee, 2014), skyscrapers are a primary symbol of nation’s modernity and economic progress. Large-scale urban transformation in Malaysia is the most visible sign of the rapid development, which has accompanied the premiership of the former Prime Minister, Dr. Mahathir Mohamad (Bunnell, 1999). KLCC played a symbolic role in realising a state vision of national development, the so-called Vision 2020. Being the first tallest building outside the west, the building seen as image Malaysia as a “world class” national player and Kuala Lumpur as a “world city” (Bunnell, 1999).

The news items used more interviews with other young Malaysian to further support the intended objective to promote the concept of Malaysia as a Multiracial-developing nation. The young interviewees lay emphasis on what independence meant to them, and how it enabled the country and its people to grow. The presence of young people in news concerning the country’s independence is also another approach to address the issue of low representation of youth on TV as scholar argued failing to offers room for the citizens to express political opinions and offer solutions to problems (Lewis, 2004).

The portrayal of young people images in television news also contested studies that claim younger generation does not prefer patterned news program because it does not have to do with the experience of their lives. This news report indications how the young generation
in Malaysia are concerned with the country and its people wellbeing and want to be involve in the interpretation of news they received.

Commenting about the country’s achievement the youth make frequent references to the past, especially to the time before Malaysia got its Independence.

“..We can strive to achieve what we wish for without barriers and restrictions and this is the meaning of independence – when we can afford to carry out tasks or ‘behave’ without fear.”

(Muamar Gadafi Jamal Jamaludin, President 4B (Youth Movement of Malaysia)

“Malaysia will not be like today if we did not seek our independence, so obviously this is something to be very proud of.”

(Mohd Azlan Iskandar, National Squash Player/Youth Icon)

Patriotism is a sentiment that emphasizes the aspect of loyalty and love to the nation. The spirit of patriotism is vital in every citizen of an independent nation. Effort to gain independence is different for each countries and achieving it is not something easy.

Even thou most of the interviewees were too young to remember and not really have experienced the hardship during the pre-independence period but their reference was made based on knowledge they had and share with all Malaysian either through schools, family experience, reading and the Media reports. The post-independence era displayed a high spirited love for the country among people of Malaysia. Through education, people of various ethnic group studied history and civic subject to nurture and nourish their spirit of love for the place call homeland.

In an effort to gain independence from the colonial era, all countries in the world have their own tales and experiences in fighting for independence. There's a struggle that killed
many lives, some are forced to work with the militants and the underground movement. At the same time there are some who believe in the fight without violence. In Malaysia context the country's independence was achieved through cautious way namely through negotiations without having to shed blood. This is the most unique thing which distinguishes Malaysia and other countries in the struggle for independence. However this does not mean we obtain independence easily. Independence Day the 31st August 1957 was a turning point in history for people of Malaysia.

Among the most important thing that can be collected and used as an example and appreciated at the end of the struggle for independence is the existence of a memorandum of understanding between the three biggest races, namely the Malay, Chinese and Indian. This understanding has become the main recipes in the unity among the people in Malaysia and was supported to sustainable the peace and well-being of the country.

Media has always been the most effective medium to inflame the spirit of nationalism. It has managed to blow the spirit of anti-colonialists back then, using the techniques of writing to oppose the colonials and at the same time inculcate the spirit of nationalism. The work continues until today. Even though the foreign colonisation has ended in 1957 but the task of uniting the people of various ethnic groups in this country never ended.

Empowering youth opinion in news report also displaying youth recognition about the country’s achievements and the importance to protect the country’s independence and sovereignty. One way to remain independent is through the development of the country and harmony of the people.

“...Rapid development of the country as recognition of independence need to be intensified before independence lost their meaning.... we see a lot of countries that are not yet independent or already achieved independence, but did not enjoy the right of independence. Not able to choose their own leaders, incapable of running their own administration, but we in Malaysia, we are capable of doing all that.
(Dr Mohd Ariffin Nawar, Head Of The Public Chamber Of The Mosque and Youth Icon Of Malaysia)
From the aspect of visualisation, news item message was complemented by images of aerial shots of the capital city of Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur as symbolic of the nation progress and success in development. The placement of skyscrapers in capital city as argued by scholars symbolizes the successful management of the country as a whole (Lee, 2014). Thus, Lee in his article on 'Citizenship in the city: Visions and revisions of Malaysia stated that symbols of success and country’s accomplishment not only to signals to those overseas that a nation is a success, but equally to local populations who may read a skyscraper as testament to the government’s ability to act as competent custodian of the nation’s affairs.

With economic growth, a variety of special buildings that represent the country had been built, namely the Kuala Lumpur Tower, Petronas Twin Towers and so forth. The towers are produced from modern technology has shown the strength of the national economy. The intended reading of these depictions are as testament to government competence. In
addition, news item report also portrayed images Malaysia as a country capable of manufacturing quality local goods such as the National car, PROTON. Malaysia achievement of manufacturing car and motorbike had opened the world's eyes on its capacity and expertise especially in era of the 80s where Malaysia was a country that recently recovered from the economic downturn.

Additionally, news item item also include images of Malaysian stories of success in the areas of sports and entertainment and put this in a form of collage of these successes. Malaysia's successes in various sports arena have greatly raised the name of the country in the world arena. Badminton is one of the sports that have brought good name to the country at the international level. In numerous other arena such as bowling and squash. The country's athletes have a lot of success in various events.
These images were also used to illustrate how Malaysia has gained global recognition through achievements in sport as well as in the entertainment industry. The images used also draw viewer’s attention to 1Malaysia elements where the actors this picture represent various ethnic background.

The news report closed with further commitment from an authoritative figure with assurance of the government’s policy to engage more with the young generation and a symbolic continuity of strengthening the future of independence.

Two main themes were identified within news item item; national successes and the importance of the young in these national successes. These main themes were comprised of sub-themes, which alluded to ideas about stability, economic development and success, independence, sovereignty, unity and rigorous administration. In promoting these ideas, there was also the theme of recognition in terms of the world stage of Malaysia’s achievements.

As proved in every broadcast campaign that the text is attempting to communicate a particular message, the intended message in this particular news reports is to say that the nation’s achievements are only possible with unity and a spirit of strong patriotism among its people particularly the young generation.

5.3.2 Discursive construction of togetherness and acceptance.

Malaysia, 1 Big Family is a government campaign advertisement or promotional material that was used in every news bulletin during the period of this study. The video, produced by the Ministry of Information, was labelled as 'Independent Capsule’ in the news line-up. It was produced specifically in conjunction with the country's independence celebration and aired every day in every bulletin for the whole month of August.
Looking at the *Communicative Design* this video uses a simple dialogue between a Malay boy and an English boy (see figure 5) to show the idea that everyone in Malaysia is part of one family. This is achieved through introducing an outsider who appears not to understand this concept.

The structure of the communicative design is a simple dialogue where the Malay boy talks to each of the three races as he moves through the market with an explanation at the end which aimed to bring across the overall message:

*Boy: We are not related. But, we Malaysians are one big family.*

![Figure 5: Image of a Malay and English boy in farmer’s market](image)

![Video]

*Figure 5: Image of a Malay and English boy in farmer’s market*
The characters that in the video are from different races, the boy is Malay and the trader is called Uncle Lim which is a Chinese name, the aunty is Malay and another trader is Indian. Strong words are used to show the idea of being a family, for example ‘aunty’, ‘uncle’ and ‘brother’. However, from the researcher’s knowledge, these terms are used culturally as a sign of respect for elders in the community, and the term brother culturally comes from Islam where males are brothers to one another. These terms or titles that are given to people are more reflective of the respect that people show one another in Malaysia especially towards elders and do not necessarily come from the idea of one big family.

An example of this use of language is illustrated in the following quotation, however, it is important to understand that the term ‘abang’ is an everyday term in Malaysia to address a male who you are not on first name terms with and does not denote that that person is part of the same family.

Chris: ‘…. I know ‘abang’ means brother, but he is not your brother, right? Malay boy: ‘... Yup, he is not my brother’.

In light of this criticism, it would have far more appropriate to use these terms to demonstrate the respect shown between the people in Malaysia. Moreover, given that most Malaysians use these terms on a daily basis then it may be expected that they would detect that they are being used to portray a different message to their meaning.

The Malay boy introduces the English boy as his friend and not as ‘abang’ which could further emphasise that the English boy is an outsider to the country.

In regard to the socio-political effects of independence, the broadcast makes clear the element of togetherness and acceptance in their depiction of 1Malaysia element through this television news material. Multiracial faces mingle together in daily live activity. These are also the principles of core unity element in the 1Malaysia campaign as a culture and practice of all Malaysians. Basic components that strengthen spirit of unity among people
of various ethnic groups. 1Malaysia emphasize acceptance among people of different ethnic groups, where people accepting the uniqueness of other races so they can live together in mutual respect as citizens of one nation.

*Visualisation aspect*: the video was made in the setting of the farmers markets known to Malaysians as ‘Pasar Tani’ with stalls run by traders of different races, which was clearly a 1Malaysia element.

The farmers market represents a setting that most Malaysians are familiar with and can relate to in their daily lives. The images (see figure 5) in the video comprise mix ethnicity of Malaysian, displaying the true composition of Malaysian society, in which Malays, Chinese, and Indians are represented. There are numerous stalls displayed with different types of produce, which represents the idea of prosperity and success.

![Figure 6: Image of Farmer’s Market](image-url)
Thematic Development: The main theme that emerged through this media item was respect. This was illuminated in the way in which respectful titles were used. This also leads to the idea that this type of respect is found among people of different races and thus the overall theme here is racial unity. This is evidenced by the fact that all three of the main races in Malaysia are represented.

The use of an English boy as the outsider revealed a theme relating to the idea of Malaysia as a distinct entity with its own identity within the world stage. This is evidenced by the way in which the English boy did not understand why the Malay boy referred to other Malaysian as brother, aunty etc. In a way, this emphasised nationhood by emphasising the ‘them and us’. One could go further and read into the choice of an English boy in particular. Malaysia was once part of the British Empire and gained independence in 1957.

Since independence is a theme that has been prevalent in the media in terms of highlighting the success of the nation and unity, using an English boy who does not understand aspects of the country and its culture shows how independent the country is of its colonial past. This idea is certainly supported by the name of the media item ‘Merdeka Capsule: Malaysia 1 Big Family’ where ‘Merdeka’ means independence.

Overall, therefore, the two main themes that emerge from this media item are racial unity and independence.

5.3.3 Discursive construction of shared history / collective culture

Malaysia Day Celebration: Success of 1Malaysia is the third news story analysed in this study. The communicative design of news item is similar to the first video. It contains narrative about Independence nation which supports discursive construction of shared history. Similarly, this video aims to encourage patriotic spirit among young people. The communicative design involved mainly an address to the people gathered for the Independence Day celebrations by the Prime Minister of Malaysia Dato’ Seri Najib Tun Razak.
When the Prime Minister addresses the people, he is portrayed as being among the people and is wearing the same casual or sporting clothing as the people. Evidence for this is that he is among the crowds and takes the time to greet people personally.

Besides the address by the Prime Minister and footage of the Independence Day celebrations, there was a commentary by the newsreader in the background.

The audio narration/language used in the lead script says the following:

NARRATOR: “Prime Minister Dato’ Seri Najib Tun Razak make ground visit to meet all the participants personally, making this year event more meaningful to all participants”.

This extract is politically motivated and demonstrates the nature of the Prime Minister as warm, welcoming, approachable, and people friendly.

Visualisation: The first visually striking aspect of the media item is various bright colours. Most people are wearing red, yellow, white and blue, which are the colour of the Malaysian flag (see figure 8). Moreover, in relation to the clothing there was high level of uniformity, both among those in the crowd, the officials and the politicians themselves.
The setting of the celebrations was in the large Independence Square in Kuala Lumpur a space dedicated to the celebration of independence. The Prime Minister was very much part of the crowd and there was a slightly raised podium and no lectern.

Overall, visually it was very celebratory and very casual. There were no ceremonial procedures, just many people in colourful clothing enjoying the celebrations. Even the filming by the camera crew was very ad hoc with the camera moving around not in a fixed position. This contributed to the relaxed nature of the event. This news report was complemented by the visual image of the Prime Minister engaging with thousands of Malaysians at the Independence square (see figure 9). Beside his special presence at the historic venue, the Prime Minister emphasised and made a special address to young people’s involvement in the country.
PM: “Today I can see the strong independence spirit in the young generation. The future of Malaysia lies in your hands who will navigate our country. If this is the face of Malaysian future, there is no doubt that Malaysia will InshaAllah (God willing) continue to succeed because of all of you. So, let’s join me and shout loud 1Malaysia, 1Malaysia, 1Malaysia and Merdeka, Merdeka, Merdeka”.

Figure 8: Prime Minister greeting crowd at Independence Day celebration

This news report also uses a very colorful visual of thousands of Malaysian taking part in the Independence Day celebration preparation, displaying jubilant, cheerful, unity and a harmonious Malaysia. The logo of 1Malaysia is also visible throughout news item report (see figure 10).
Thematic Development; A number of themes emerged from this media item. The main theme was independence as this was the purpose of the celebration. A number of themes emerged from the Prime Minister’s speech. There was the idea that the Independence Day celebrations were enjoyed primarily by Malaysians. Moreover, the Prime Minister referred to the younger generation as part of the future success of the country and national success itself was very much a theme.

Another major theme that emerged from the analysis of the media item was the idea of 1 Malaysia. This was not only directly mentioned in the speech but after the speech, the crowd repeated after the Prime Minister when he shouted ‘1 Malaysia’ three times, and interestingly this was shouted before ‘merdeka’ (independence) was shouted three times, prioritising the 1 Malaysia message over independence on Independence Day.
Ethnic and Religion diversity: Malaysia’s uniqueness is the last news story analysed in this section. The news items was selected based on the content and the actors used to convey the message about unity and ethnic relation. It stresses more on understanding and social obligation of all Malaysian to make Malaysia a success and harmonious country. It does not specifically use the word 1Malaysia but it appears to utilize a spiritual and psychological subtle approach in promoting the concept. Centered on the patriotic spirit of Independence Day and the main religious celebration Eidul Fitri, this video focuses on the uniqueness of Malaysia’s ‘diversity’.

Looking at the Communicative Design, the opening script highlights the uniqueness of Ethnic diversity and religion in Malaysia, a privilege that has not been achieved by other countries. In addition, it stresses the fact that ‘History has proven that its diversity has never been considered a weakness or the cause of tension. On the other hand, its existence becomes the central strength and solid reign built on unity’. This fact was perhaps used to remind Malaysians about how all Malaysians of all ethnic and races worked together to achieve their Independence from colonisation.

Opinions are given by ordinary members of the public, including one expert in anthropology. Interestingly, there was diversity among those interviewed; the expert was a Doctor of anthropology and from the Sikh faith (a minority religion in Malaysia), and one young man was Malay, another Chinese, and another Indian. The latter three were interviewed on the street in what appears to be a random interview.

Thematic Development: The main theme of this new item relates to religion and ethnic diversity, and portrays them to be unique in the context of Malaysia and something to be celebrated. The theme emerged within theme of independence and a celebration of nationhood. In fact, news item article opened with an image of the national flag and a mention of independence celebrations.
The news items lays emphasis on the strength of Malaysia as a sovereign nation, and highlights the independence and progress of the country.

There is a calling on all Malaysians to appreciate and continue to develop and nurture unity. The item serves as a reminder of the importance of the role and contribution of each individual towards the well-being of the country, and suggests that the interests and welfare of minorities should never be neglected. It also expresses that the rights and privileges of each Malaysian should be preserved and shared equally, as stated in the Constitution. The word ‘Constitution’ was used in the sentence to show how much these values are entrenched.
Mutual respect and unity was another major theme in news item item. The interviews with the three young men clearly emphasised the idea of toleration of different ethnic groups, ethnic relations, and unity:

1. Hafizal Razali:
“There should not be any problem, as long as we respect and accept each other, we will understand the meaning of unity and strengthen our relationship.

2. Yap Zhen Tang:
“Each race has their own beliefs or way of life, which is, obviously will not be the same, but we should take the opportunity to learn from each other.”

3. Pragash A/L Muthurajan:
“We are lucky, could live together in the multiracial society. I enjoy living in cultural diversity nation. It makes my life livelier... variety of clothes, food, traditional games and festivals, and we can even have more Public Holiday in calendar.”

The news items further strengthens these themes by voicing the views of an expert speaker. Marking Malaysia as a respected nation globally, the news items highlighted elements of integrity and tolerance that should be prioritised by respecting each other rights and beliefs. To support the argument, the news items utilises the opinion of a Social Anthropology Expert to stress this point.

“Many Foreign countries wish to learn how Malaysia had unites its citizen. The ethnicity relationship management is important. Now I see the Prime Minister played an important role to ensure that society favour’s unity. Ethnic relationship management should always be nourished and this is where, the role of all parties is very important. Moreover, this is not just the responsibility of the politicians.’

Interview SOT: Dr. Sarjit S. Gill, Social Anthropology Expert.
The producer’s decision to include an expert to discuss ethnic relations as opposed to a politician is viewed as very appealing in Malaysia. The fact that the expert was not from the Malay ethnic groups (see figure 11) created even wider implications, as Malays have always been seen as dominant actors on TV (Khattab, 2006).

**Figure 11: Anthropology Expert**

*Visualisation:* There were many repeated images of the national flag and national celebration in between the interviews. There was also footage of national iconic buildings, such as the country’s main courts. There were also visual displays of the country’s success and development as well as harmony.

The students chosen for the interview were visually similar (see figure 12) in a number of different ways. They were all of a similar age, they all possessed rucksacks which gave the impression that they were students, they all wore spectacles, and their hairstyles were very similar. The screenshots below demonstrate these observations.
Figure 12: Multiracial faces of Malaysian participate in the news report
It may be the producer’s intention to represent the true faces of Malaysians on TV, which before was dominated by only one ethnic group, the Malays. This is appealing to the different races and will attract a much wider audience.

5.4 Summary

In reference to the content of news items there was an emphasis on patriotism, independence and nationalism which were all linked with national unity; clearly the message was that all of the races should be united under one nation.

All races were represented, but what was noticeable is that each individual race was represented separately in turn which seem to give more emphasis to the idea that the races are distinct group. It would be better if the news items portrayed more the people together instead of in some way reinforcing the idea that the country is comprised of three races. Despite this, the message is reinforced that there is diversity and it is something that all citizens should be proud of and celebrate. The messages were also clearly targeted at the younger population.

Visually the campaigns are very colourful and show a sense of happiness and celebration. Moreover, there many representations made of the countries successes, especially economically; however, it is important to note that this is commonly used to promote nationalism generally and it not always related to the idea of national unity.
6.1 Introduction

As Krueger (1998) indicated, the concept of analysis starts by going back to the intent of the study. As for this study, the intention is to collect information about how three main ethnic groups in Malaysia engage with television portrayals of National Identity and Unity program called ‘1Malaysia’. Drawing on the theoretical field of cultural studies it wish to study if viewer’s interpretations differ across ethnic background. The possible cultural influences on the audiences’ way of interpreting television news messages and the impact it has on how they talk about themselves, their identity and the nation. It will answer the question, whether or not television news are likely to reinforce, change or bring about new cultural values and lifestyles on complex structure of multi-ethnic audiences in Malaysia.

Eight focus group discussions were used to collect the information on each different ethnic group on the way they interpret the same news messages. Decision to focus on informants of different ethnic is to investigate if audience interpretations differ across ethnic background and to understand factor Influences the reproduction of news meanings in a particular ways.

6.2 Data Overview

The focus group interviews were carried out during the period of the 15th to 30th September 2012 with students from three Public University in the state of Kuala Lumpur and Selangor in Malaysia. The three universities chosen to conduct the focus group discussion were randomly sampled. The total number of pupils participated in this focus
group study was 41 students, 21 males and 20 females. All focus group interviews were conducted in the University premises, after seeking permission from all relevant parties.

All informants selected share homogeneity factors that bring them together and selected according to the criteria of ethnic, gender, and age. The selection of informants is consistent with recent work in focus group sampling design that engage with groups of like-minded people. For example, Madianou (2005) in her study on the relationship between media and identities contemporary Greece, interviews 72 informants in a group discussion where all informants were familiar with each other (either as family members or friends or colleagues). Madianou’s approach resembles the approach use by Liebes and Katz (1990) in their study of the reception of Dallas

With focus on securing the familiarity of the environment to the subjects, all informants were gathered from a local university, an appropriate natural setting for multiracial young Malaysian, where a large percentage of this young people’s time is spent and peer relations and issues of identity and development are played out.

To make sure a balance mix of samples, the initial plan was to have nine Focus Group Discussions with three groups from each ethnic and each group would comprise of six informants with a balance combination of males and females representative. However, due to low admission among Indian student in the chosen university, researcher only managed to gather two focus groups for Indians informants. However, the number of Indian informants is still acceptable as it still answers the research question and fulfils the objective of the study that is to study different ethnic background reception of television message. Indian ethnic in Malaysia is very small, and only represent about 7 percent of total population of the country (Department of Statistic, Malaysia, 2010). Its also explains their low presence in the public universities (see Table 1 for distribution of ethnic group in Malaysia).

This however, does not compromise the reliability of the study. Focus group was use in this research with the purpose to gain a more comprehensive understanding of selected
topic by dynamic group interaction. This research was design to investigate the informants’ reaction to television message with the aim to compare the cultural differences effect. Reason for the sets of ethnic groupings is merely to allow for more free flow of discussions between informants. It is also to ensure that informants not restrained to express themselves with the other ethnic groups.

Table 1: Ethnic distribution in Malaysia (source: Department of statistic, Malaysia, 2010)

The distribution of the informants for all focus group stood as follows, seven (7) informants in one focus group, six (6) informants in each for 3 focus group, five (5) informants in one focus group, four (4) informants each in two focus groups and 3 informants in another one focus group discussions, which added together 41 informants averagely five for each group discussion. Averagely all the 41 informants were into the age bracket of 20 to 27 years old, and belong to three main ethnic in Malaysia that is Malay, Chinese and Indian.
Two broad questions was constructed and used. The interviews consisted of 15 specific questions, and the average length of each focus group interview was between 50 minutes to one and a half hours. All interviews were recorded on a digital recording device after seeking permission from the informants and University administration. The manageable size of data permitted the focus group discussion to be transcribed manually for analysis purposes.

Before the focus group discussion began, the informants were shown one advert and three news stories selected from a week-long sample of RTM prime-time television News programme in between 19th to 25th August 2012. This particular date was chosen because it was observed in this period of time great coverage was given to the stories of building National Identity with much effort taken to explain to people about 1Malaysia objective and Vision. The advert and news stories selected best described the element of 1Malaysia based on the criteria listed in the 1Malaysia Booklet and news line up. Please refer to chapter 1 where this criterion was discussed in depth.

Based on the findings from the focus groups discussion, this chapter reports Malaysia’s multi ethnic audience Interpretation of issues with related to Understanding television news messages about 1Malaysia, unity and National Identity. It also gauges perspective towards Malaysia’s politics, government and the country.

6.3 Descriptive data

Before reporting on findings of the Focus group discussion this chapter will first present the findings regarding the demographic characteristic and audience background of informants based on simple questionnaire answered by all 41 informants just before the group discussion began. The subject, purpose and objectives for the study were clarified to all informants before the beginning of the interview, and the freedom of informants to air their opinions, stay silent, or withdraw was explained.
After signing the consent form, informants were asked to fill a short questionnaire. They were asked to respond to a five category items to identify their demographic profile and questions to grasp their exposure to Television and News.

They were asked to report their Gender, age, ethnic identification preference, and how frequently they watch television and how much attention they pay to News. Information gathered from the questionnaire presented in charts below.

6.3.1 Gender and age

![Gender Breakdown Chart]

Table 2: Focus Group informants gender breakdown

Concerning the gender of the informants, charts show quite a balance representative of male and female informants in the study. There are a total 41 informants with 21 male and 20 female respondents in the range age between 20-27 years old. Gender however is not significant in characterising informant’s reception of television news messages about 1Malaysia in this current study.
6.3.2 Ethnic composition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic</th>
<th>Malay</th>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>Indian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Focus Group ethnic composition

As the chart shows, the distribution of informants is almost equal for all ethnic groups.

This study original plan was to have a balance mix of informants from each ethnic group. One-third informants from the Malays, one-third Chinese, while the remaining one third is Indian ethnic. Each Focus group will have six informants with a balance combination of males and females informants. Three sessions was plan with each group with a total of nine groups.

However, due to some obstacles researcher only manage to gather eight focus groups, short of one group for the Indian ethnic informants. The number of Indian informants is still acceptable supported by the facts that Indian ethnic in Malaysia is very small, they only represent 7% of total population of the country. This also explains their low presence in the public universities. This setback does not compromise the outcome of the study as the reason for the sets of ethnic groupings is merely to allow for more free flow of
discussions between the various informants. It is also to ensure that informants are not restrained to express themselves with the other ethnic groups.

6.3.3 Ethnic identification preference

After 57 years of its independence Malaysia remains a cultural unit of identification, at least when one travels abroad and is confronted with the question, ‘where are you from?’ Thus, the answer, ‘from Malaysia’. However, the answer will not be the same if the question was ask to a Malaysian back home. For many deep-seated issues Malaysian are at odd.

This study proves that the level of ‘ethnic consciousness’ is quite high among Malaysian because everyone want to be seen belongs to an ethnic group rather than just ‘Malaysian’. Such identification is obvious in the chart below displaying Malay, Chinese and Indian informants’ ethnic identification preference.

These following charts are just going to be a descriptive facts as the questionnaire did not ask the informants to specify the reason for their choices of answer. However, the simple questionnaire did provide some ground for future study.
Malay or Bumiputera term means son or prince of the soil also seen as State-privileged ethnic compared to two other ethnic in Malaysia. That could be the reason almost half of Malay informants prefer to be identified as Malays rather than Malaysian.

This chart shows majority Chinese informants/respondents, which is 86 percent, would rather be referred to as ‘Malaysian Chinese’ rather than just ‘Chinese’. The choice could
be their way of showing sense of belong to Malaysia and not to be associated to Chinese in China.

**How Indian informants like to identify themselves**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indian</th>
<th>Malaysian Indian</th>
<th>Malaysian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>30%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6: Indian ethnic identification preference

6.3.4 Exposure to television

**Exposure to Television**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>None</th>
<th>Less than 30 Minutes</th>
<th>31-60 Minutes</th>
<th>More than 60 Minutes a day</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7: Focus group informant’s exposure to television
6.3.5 Attention to television News

Table 8: focus group informant’s attention to News

This question was useful to researcher to examine informants’ exposure to television news particularly. The findings show that more than 50 percent of the informants give at least some attention to News on TV and have some level of knowledge about 1Malaysia stories on in the news. This supports their respond when indicating their perspectives on news about 1Malaysia, unity and National identity.

6.4 Getting the message

Like most developing societies, the role and functions of the mass media are tied closely to the needs of the government and the people. In Malaysia the media not only are required to inform, educate and motivate the people towards developmental goals set by government, but they are also expected to align themselves with the national priorities. Media in Malaysia are expected to uphold the government initiatives to foster the spirit of understanding and strengthen the friendship and unity among the diverse people of Malaysia. Media, particularly public television in Malaysia has an obligation to support
initiative by the government such as the 1Malaysia campaign to encourage unity and improve racial relationship in Malaysia.

Television news as the main source of information in Malaysia plays its role by illustrating the advantages of the concept, delivering information about program implemented under the concept that benefit the country and its people. As explained in the content analysis section earlier, most television news texts are encoded with meanings inline with the government aspiration. The producer’s preferred meaning of 1Malaysia news stories was around the matter of unity, stability and country’s development.

This chapter began with analysing television news content to show how it might contribute to uniting or dividing the society as a whole. The first task of the analysis was to see if what assume by broadcasters and by those who supplied the news was shared by the audience. In this case the focus was to promote the basic objective of 1Malaysia that is to maintain and enhance unity in diversity that has become the strength of the country as well as its people. It also emphasised the importance for it to be protect and preserve to help the country cope with challenges in the future.

Generally the philosophy of 1Malaysia received well by the majority of Malaysians. This audience analysis shows that the messages and objective of the campaign as intended by the producer was clearly understood and accepted by all informants instantly. The study reveals the views of informants about their understanding of 1Malaysia and national identity contributed or acquired from media and Government campaigns. Informants were asked to discuss about a selection of news item from RTM primetime news bulletin chosen from the content study done earlier. They were askes to give their opinion about the video and its role in promoting unity and 1Malaysia.

Radhi: … 1Malaysia concept from my understanding is all positive things. It is the same, unity of all. Importantly, in my opinion, the concept of 1Malaysia is the Government's efforts to maintain independence. If we do not preserve the
independence, unity will be destroyed.... if we don't preserve what we have, or if there are no efforts to foster the younger generation, it will be lost. So, it is (1Malaysia) one of the initiatives made by the Government.

Empathi: ...If we look sensibly, (1Malaysia) is about creating one specific identity for the country and we can witness that, even we are a variety and diverse society it does not make us different. We see that 1Malaysia introduced by the Prime Minister, is an interesting program involving all races, and united in one large cluster.

Kamala: ...Solidarity, united three races, promote togetherness ...that is what 1Malaysia is about.

Sugania: Yeah, it means Unite with each other; all races can get to know each other better, and know the culture of the nation.

Noormi: ...for me, 1Malaysia searching for a point of common, err between all ethnic groups in Malaysia. Malaysia, we are indeed many ethnic, dozens... many of us don't even know who we are, our own Malaysian doesn’t know we consists more ethnic ...of the many ethnic groups. In terms of 1Msia motto itself, trying to develop spirit of oneness, even though we are from different ethnic groups and religions, but the spirit of nationhood we are one.

Although the concept of 1Malaysia is the continuation of the many government efforts in the past to unite the people and develop the country, but implementation of any new idea has never been easy in this multi-ethnic, multi-religion country. People acceptance is crucial. At this stage, informants shows clear acceptance and strong agreement that 1Malaysia is trying to promote mutual understanding and unity in Malaysia diversity.

Tham: I support the idea (1Malaysia) because logically it (unity level) does have effect, because if there are problems it is difficult for the country to develop and prosper.
Andrew: I agree with the 1Malaysia, to introduce only one race in Malaysia regardless of race religion and background.

Aizat: ... I can see the government’s effort to unite us

The basic concept of 1Malaysia is to achieve unity among the races in Malaysia so that aspirations to achieve vision 2020 (Developed Nation status) realised successfully. It is also hoped to boost the spirit of solidarity and brotherhood to continue and support for the Nation building agenda.

Malaysia media from many of its forms have encouraged inclusive 1Malaysia media reflecting the diversity of ethnic groups in Malaysia. Print media and electronic media in Malaysia have been growing in four languages, namely Malay, Chinese, Tamil and English. What have been the advantages of this situation is that societies of various ethnic backgrounds are always well informed of local and global latest developments. Generally, all informants in this study, irrespective of ethnic background, have basic knowledge about the purpose and goals of the 1Malaysia concept. Informants display high level of understanding about what 1Malaysia program is all about as the result of watching television news. Although findings from previous study indicate majority the young adults Malaysians prefer online news instead of traditional news media as their source of information (Freeman, 2013).

“Noormi: Personally, I rely more on social media but I agree that TV is most effective in spreading 1Malaysia message because not everybody has internet access. To spread the element of unity, TV indeed is very instrumental, the reason, people in village mostly own a TV.”

Mas: ... I do think that 1Malaysia television report create awareness about how important that we all come together and unite about, three races combine....

Gobalan: I grew up in a family that watched a lot of TV especially news, so I would say it is effective to instil unity. I can relate to that idea.
Kumar: well, I went to a Tamil school, my family speaks our language at home, and we watch Tamil news. When I was growing up not much channel showing Tamil news, only the government TV so the TV especially news informed us about everything going on in the country.

Factors that become a catalyst to the formation of a successful Nations are democracy, nationalism, patriotism, and integration. For Malaysia, characteristics of a nation is to have a society that is multiracial, but could live with united, sharing politics ideology, and has the confidence and faith in the system of the rule of the country and the Constitution and laws of the country. The individual and race are the basis for the formation of the nation and the country because every interaction done among them will affect other individuals and will form a group with the characteristics of equality and common interest that will ultimately form a nation that has a motif of self-government and establish a country. (Embong, 2002). Trust between fellow members of a nation and towards the country is important in shaping an identity. But what derived in the next stage analysis of this study surely be a challenge to the ruling government and crucial in the realization of 1Malaysia.

Things that could be seen as a benchmark to assess the degree to which racial unity achievable through the 1 Malaysia concept are the acceptance and celebration of people, the involvement of the people in the programs of a 1 Malaysia, and adoption of the concept of 1 Malaysia by Malaysian,

Although this research so far shows Malaysians accept in general the 1Malaysia concept, but each ethnic group in the country still have narrow notion of the idea. In other words, Malaysians still worry and ‘sceptical’ about the impact of the 1Malaysia over their life and relationship among them. Distrust and scepticism is constant among many respondent regarding the honesty of the Government in the implementation of 1Malaysia idea.
6.5 The SKEPTICISM Viewers

This study is mainly about the interpretation of a political message by three different ethnic groups the Malays, Chinese and Indians. The message is in the pursuit of a meaning wanted by the powerful groups in society, in this case the Malaysian government promoting a message of national unity through the 1Malaysia concept and Television news as its agent delivering information and illustrating the advantages of the concept that benefit the country at its people.

This study validated that television is still the main source of news and information for multi-ethnic youth in Malaysia. It has also established that Television news remain as a main source of information about 1Malaysia program. Most informants reveal that they got most of the information and explanation about 1Malaysia program through television news. It helps them understand what 1Malaysia is all about but in their own way of meaning and understanding.

All informants immediately engaged with the 1Malaysia advert and news items showed to them. The impressive development, variety people, food and culture however did not distract them from misconstrued image portrayed from the video of Malaysia as a multi-racial country where all races are living harmoniously. Each different ethnic group interpret the message of chosen television news program in their own cultural, social, and political meaning.

Main themes emerge from the discussion were mainly on their scepticism to the perceived intention of the government and message of the television news. They however at the same time demonstrated awareness and understanding about 1Malaysia and National Identity; recognise the government and television news role in encouraging unity and Nation building. The following topic will explore these themes.
From the responses of all of the informants from all ethnic groups, there was a large amount of skepticism expressed. This skepticism was related to the perceived intention of the message, that the message was not truly portrays unity and represented all Malaysians. Moreover, there was the idea expressed by some informants that the message is politically motivated and therefore, there was a feeling of cynicism in the message. This section also reveals that the informants were very aware of the situation in the country in terms of racial unity and could not easily be won over by the message, even though they clearly expressed a belief in its principles.

6.5.1 SUB SKEPTICISM ABOUT THE INTENTION OF THE MESSAGE.

Some see 1Malaysia as nothing more than just a catchy slogan. In fact, some informants actively resisted the idea that 1Malaysia concept was capable of conveying any ideological message at all. This idea was not from any particular ethnic group, there were informants from all ethnicities who felt this way.

The issue of Government’s sincerity or intention rose particularly amongst the non-Malays ethnic group in the related to the goals or objectives of 1Malaysia. It should be explained that 1Malaysia was developed based on the Federal Constitution and the pillars of the country. This means that the Government’s policies and development programs provided for the bumiputra and non-bumiputra will remain available based on the provisions in the Federal Constitution. All racial and ethnic groups will get the defenses and assistance in accordance with the provisions of the Federal Constitution drafted based on the spirit of tolerance between races.

Most of Non-Malays informants argue that they did not have the same opportunities in their life. They suggested that there was discrimination; cronyism and nepotism in the country and ethnicity play an important role in their opportunities in life in Malaysia. Informants also blame the ethnic oriented political system and politician for responsible triggering racial disharmony and created many ethnic disputes. Informants viewed politics and politician as polluting honest principles of 1Malaysia concept. That drove Informants
questioning governments’ determination and sincerity in pursuing 1Malaysia. They are not happy with government’s policies and administration.

Shikin: ...My opinion, the level of unity in Malaysia is declining, that’s why 1Malaysia is here, program to help encourage unity again. But what I worry this program which introduced by current Prime Minister would just be another program, and then replace with new ones when another Prime Minister come.

Q: Are you saying 1Malaysia news report was politicized and these are setbacks to unity effort?

Radhi: ...for me 1Malaysia is good but just have to avoid political elements...., 1Malaysia idea is good but I don't support people who makes the program....they have to avoid injecting political elements... without the political element we can achieve the objective to unite people but if contain elements of politics, people will have wrong impression and loose the good site of it.

Noormi: ...I cant really see that its trying to convey 1Malaysia message, I'm only seeing this now because the election is around the corner. Its very seasonal... even the Theme for the independence day was controversy... the slogan was politicize ... we can see that every time come election they will try to raise the issue of racial ... I do believe 1Malaysia wants unity but its looks more to fulfil certain political goals.

Amree: ...like I have mentioned earlier, 1Malaysia news report and program should be seen sincere to unite the people and free from any political elements.

Noormi: ...I agree with Amree, keep political elements away from media and 1Malaysia. You don’t always have to show politician talking about 1Malaysia. We appreciate our government effort to unite us but let this be a genuine cause to unity and not for something else.
Although the Prime Minister and the Government often chanted that the 1Malaysia concept is to build a country and not for political purposes but substantial community reaction was obviously different. The study clearly showed that although the position of the Malays continued to be protected under 1Malaysia but it does not stop them from criticising it and surely not a relief to the Malay community.

The same view was voiced by the Chinese informants. Clearly the 1Malaysia concept has yet to convince the Chinese community who still see this concept has been tainted with certain political interests and insincerity of various parties.

Lee: ...For me, there was no need for 1Malaysia, because we Malaysian have already achieved unity. Not everybody have the same opinion about 1Malaysia. Frankly, Malaysia has achieved the unity very well and we speak the same language and mix but somebody is playing behind the issue of unity.

Ng: ...I agree, the impact is not real, it seem like not all understand the concept (1Malaysia). Some people are not sincere with this concept.

Paul: ...They (the government) promoted the idea (1Malaysia) very strongly but in reality the concept is not being implement on the ground level... it's just like a show in television.

Yu: ...I agree, you see in front of camera everybody support 1Malaysia, but in absent of sincerity.

Obviously there are several issues that still concerning the Chinese ethnic, that has lead them not seeing or accepting the news intended message. Despite the video showing representation of Chinese ethnic actor in news video, few Chinese informants however see it as one manipulation move.

Paul: ...I think the stuff that has been shown in the video is like some form of exploitation, like Lee Chong Wei, he plays badminton so he very well known in the country and the country like him. However, if you are just a ordinary person they
will ignore your welfare need and voice, when try to voice out, media should be independent to remain free and fair to report it.

Ng: ...I think that no advertisements in television should use public figure like Datuk Lee Chong Wei, or Yuna. I think we should use communes because it represents more of our society.

Paul: ... we love this country what we do not like is the politics.

Lee: we all are united and the idea of 1Malaysia is already exist. The idea is truthful for the unity but being smear by the politician, they use it as a tool not to unite us but to break us more.

Here the Chinese respondents express their love for the country as something that does not need to be indoctrinated through mass media and in fact, they express the idea that the people can do unity and do not need the politicians who they do not trust. Other respondents in this study have already said that politicians manipulate racial differences for political gain so it is understandable that people of skeptical of a message that is being disseminated by a state controlled media outlet.

Similarly, the Indian respondents also expressed the idea that there is already unity and that there has been for a long time since political alliances between the different race-based parties.

Tama: (interrupted) I know One Malaysia started two years ago. But, why now after being independence for 55 years. Does this this mean there was no unity before? Why is it like that? We already have the First Alliance Party in 1956, the Umno, MIC, and MCA. Are they saying there was no 1Malaysia since then? It just exists in the past two years?

Rakesh: How to unite when we are still being discriminated.

Tama: We can unite when we are all the same. Until that happen 1Malaysia will just be another rhetoric campaign.
Rakesh: Unity exists but not as much as portrayed by TV. It only make obvious for certain reason you know. Like now it is because of the it’s the independence celebration month.

Anusha: Yes and a little bit like tourism promotion. Especially the one with the nice picture of development and good transportation system.

Racial issues that were widely and openly discussed in the media especially by political parties sometimes try to manipulate situation and racial issues only to the interests of their party and votes. Moreover, looking at the political reality in Malaysia is extremely difficult to avoid political issues and racism mainly because the political parties formed in this country was based on race. As long as the multiracial Malaysians still lead their life separately according to their races, its difficult to see a political party that is not based on ethnic groups existed in the country. Politics in Malaysia since it independence (1957) have been dominated by the United Malays National Organization (UMNO), which has ruled through coalition alliances with ethnic parties such as the Malaysian Chinese Congress (MCA) and Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC).

Further skepticism in the message is expressed here by informants in terms of its timing, on Independence Day, and there is even a parallel made with the idea of success in development, something that was found in the analysis of the media messages themselves. Mass media has its own function let whatever the interpretation is given to a media. Typically, each of the target media has its own audiences and therefore it sometimes played a different role that could be seen negative but certain sector.

The media coverage and reporting of local ethnic festivals and National Day celebration have become a spur to the value of collaboration, solidarity, and harmony; a symbol of integration in Malaysia. Like what Dayan and Katz (1992) describe as ‘media events’ and how it brings the nation together. It is through the broadcasting of special occasions, that the sense of collective identity is heightened. Awareness of the need to understand and
accept the presence of other ethnicity has given ideas to the Malaysian Government to conduct programs that will enhance ethnic unity. Last few years, the Government began to make the celebration of important events as the national level. Ethnic tradition festivals were given widespread coverage by the media as a strategy to bridge the ethnic relations.

As similar idea to the previous idea is that the message is not realistic in that it does not represent real life situations and is not a representation of what is going on, in other words the message paints a rosy picture. There is also the accusation that this picture is being painted seasonal, just for the national celebration event.

*Noormi: we see it in the video because they are only covering their own event... they should be more comprehensive...look at the view of people in the villages.*

*A’a: Yes go get people’s opinion randomly not only in planned program.*

*Nad: Normally after watching this sort of report on TV will double check it on internet. I would like to know people’s response on it. Just checking how far it is true. Because sometime things shown on TV not as seem like it in real life. Too beautiful to be true. TV only reported good things.*

Malaysia is a country famous for its multiracial community and descent and often proclaimed as harmonious and peaceful races that can work together collectively and practicing the principles of solid unity. The intended message of the television news was to parallel with this claims. In addition to speeches by country leaders, television news strives to portray this condition. Thus the Malays, Chinese, and Indians were organised side by side in the image to parade how good is ethnic relations in Malaysia. However, the media overview of the unity level greeted with skepticism by respondents of this study.
6.5.2 SUB SKEPTISISM - PORTRAYING UNITY

Most informants agree that Malaysian is united at certain level but not as perfect as shown in television. Informants rejected the depiction about unity level portrayed in news item video. This view was mainly raised across all ethnic focus group discussion. They look at TV news depiction was rather a deception.

*Wong:* I think what show in the video was only one fiction, deep inside there is a different story; there is a problem and need to be voice out.

*Ng:* I agree, the impact is not real, for me it does not seem like all understand the concept. Some parties are not sincere with this concept.

*Ng:* What is missing in videos is that they do not show the true condition in Malaysia. Yes they promote the idea have to be proud to be Malaysian yes I'm proud as Malaysian but the video did not show the real situation.

*Paul:* They promoted the idea very strongly but the truth is the concept is still not implemented in the ground, how to say in the aspect in real life, it's like a show in front of television

Although the media displays 'smile and laughter' and all the friendly condition among the people of Malaysia, it does not stop them from addressing many issues that have instigated ethnic tension in Malaysia particularly involving problems relating religion and politics. There was a strong agreement that the reality on the ground is different to the image that is being portrayed. Essentially, the people are saying that they know better what is going on in reality and they are not totally convinced with the effectiveness of the approach used to promote 1Malaysia.
Radhi: Yes I think its being implemented, I can see that, but what people's perception about it I have no idea. The 500 ringgit given under 1M plan, we took it and we are thankful and understand its part of the one Malaysia plan but not sure if it achieves its objective.

Radhi: 1M, the idea is great, but the objective of the policy, to achieve unity I guess not realized yet.

Parbavathi: I think the media can play better role in making us feel we are really part of this country.

Anusha: Media have to promote unity program continuously. Don’t just wait for festive season and when we celebrate Independence Day or even just when the elections come.

In addition, the issue of the lack faces of multi-ethnic in 1Malaysia news program was also mentioned by informants. The portrayals of minorities on television are still issues concerned especially among non-Malay ethnic in Malaysia.

6.5.3 SUB SKEPTICISM - NOT ALL RACES REPRESENTED

As the discussion go deeper into deliberating the content of news item stories and whether watching the Television news makes they feel part of Malaysia, not surprisingly most Chinese and Indian ethnic informant’s feels there were not fairly presented in news item program about 1Malaysia. In term of the visual used in the news item, informants see it as more oriented towards the Malays. Chinese and Indian informants see it as ‘pro-Malay’ or ‘Malay chauvinism. Informant’s respond at this point however is not resistance to 1Malaysia ideological content but rather an obvious exhibition of very poor video production values.
As 1Malaysia campaign is supposed to be about all Malaysian, some informants does not feel they are being represent in the 1Malaysia media campaign especially Television news. The Indian ethnic group was found to be the most skeptical about all races being represented in the 1Malaysia message.

Q- Going back to the video we have watched, do you think it is talking about 1Malaysia?

K. Gobalan: Yes there are multiracial elements, but I do not see any Indian people in that video.

Kamala: I know it’s written that Malaysia is country of multiracial but not quite visible in pictures I guess.

Kumar: It is talking about Malaysia fine, but I do not think it is fully represent me as an Indian Malaysian.

Despite their small population, in Malaysia, ethnic identity for Indian is expressed by the promotion of Tamil language in education, mass media, and government. There is also radio broadcast in Tamil that can be heard for almost 24 hours daily. Similarly, daily news and programs are telecast at certain hours on national television. This study, however, contest media claimed that all ethnic group has equal media access and given fair space. Indian ethnic informants contested the video depiction as 1Malaysia. Mostly their response is cynical.

Tama: Represent me? Well, for me if you want to show one Malaysia it has to show all races and ethnic, it is not only the Malays who live in Malaysia you know.

Suresh: True, I do see us (Indian) sometime but most of the times we are invisible.

Anusha: media sometime just forget we are also part of this country, as well you know.

Anusha: We are invisible Malaysian most of the time.
Although there was recognition of the fact the 1Malaysia message instilled a sense of national pride in all Malaysians through the achievement of Malaysians as Malaysians and not as people from a particular ethnic group, there was still skepticism from the Indian ethnic group about fair representation.

Q- Did the video succeed in its objective to make you feel proud and share the athletes and Nation achievement?

*Kumar:* Yes, im also proud, but they have to try to highlight achievements of all races in Malaysia, not just the Malays or the Chinese.

*Tama:* Generally, I feel proud of any Malaysian success but I would also like to see successful Indians. We are also part of Malaysian you know.

*Rakesh:* Yes, although we are minorities we still contributed to this country in some aspect, some of us did make the country proud as well.

*Suresh:* Yes, successful people like Ananda Krishnan and Tony Fernandez there are Indian and among the richest man in Malaysia, even in Southeast Asia.

*Parbavathi:* If the video is talking about 1Malaysia it has to make sure all Malaysian are in it.

*Gobalan:* I agree. Be fair to all.

Even where an Indian respondent is proud of Malaysia, the issues of lack Indians being represented arises. They question the media role in portraying Indian figure as a role model. And these are some of the response to a question about whether the news video was effective in making the respondent feel proud of national achievements.

*Gobalan:* Of course im proud, but I also like to see more of other races on TV so that it really mean 1Malaysia.
Kamala: I do see in text, written that Malaysia is country of multiracial but not quite visible in pictures I guess.

Parbavathi: Another thing I notice that it is very rare that media portray Indian figure as a role model.

Informants of the ethnic Chinese shared similar views though not as harsh

Cindy: Yes, I can see that its talking about unity and that we have to love our country but.. What we can see in the video there are more Malay faces, it should show more Chinese, Indians and even the people of Sabah Sarawak.

Ah Kong: Why only a lot of Malays, and focus on three races only. Sometime we forget other races and we neglect the west Malaysia.

It was not only the Chinese and the Indian ethnic groups who felt that not all races were represented, some of the Malay respondents felt the same way

Noormi: I don’t think it represent everybody.

Nad: I think the same... I think it mostly focus on Malay. There are Chinese, and Indian, but very little.

Developments and economic growth, has long used by media as testament to government competence through writing and images. In addition, media now includes stories on successful Malaysian, featuring well known personalities aimed at inspiring the young generation. Addressing the research question on what discursive strategies television news adopts to promote the 1Malaysia campaign and collective identity in multi-ethnic Malaysia, this study chose to used one news video featuring successful icon in the areas of
sports and entertainment. It was seen as the broadcaster and producer effort to display inspiring Malaysian of various races as 1Malaysia icon in their television news reporting. Malaysia's successes in various sports arena have greatly raised the name of the country in the world arena and has proven to unite all Malaysians of different races and religions. The producer move is to portray Lee Chong Wei, a Chinese ethnic as ambassador of unity. The task here is to analyse if RTM television news have succeed in delivering the intended message of 1Malaysia to the young multi ethnic audience of Malaysia.

6.5.4 1Malaysia Icon = RACE REPRESENTATION

The news producer decision to use faces of various ethnic icon, personality and celebrities in the video was a very clear and dominant attempt to inject elements of 1Malaysia in news item program. Television news in Malaysia for so long has been accused of serving predominantly the Malays. Contrasting the perception they now incorporating the 1Malaysia element in their TV production to cater to the needs of all ethnic groups among the Malaysian audience. Of course, this decision is inline with 1Malaysia objective concept champion by the ruling government demanding Malaysia Media play their role to uphold the idea.

Therefore, the objective of displaying respected and successful multi-ethnic faces in news item is to get Malaysian united, to be proud and cheer for the success of Malaysian regardless of their ethnic background. The icon faces portrayed are no stranger to Malaysians, especially to the younger generation. Most informants welcome and support the idea of using such elements to unite the Malaysian. These are some quotes of informants agree with the preferred meaning of the news message.

Q-When you watch the video which highlights the Malaysian success story and the pride of Malaysia, like our world badminton Champion, Lee Chong Wei, our outstanding bowling team and internationally recognized singer like Yuna, how does this make you feel?
Noormi: I have to admit, seeing Lee Chong Wei won make me feel proud and there are no ethnic differences exist. I see the success as success for Malaysia. The feelings are spontaneous, proud for Malaysia.

Ju: emm Im also proud like Normi said, Lee Chong Wei represented Malaysia right, If he wins, he actually raised the name of Malaysia, I am proud, doesn’t matter if he is Chinese.

Ridhuan: For me it makes no different. Watching the video especially about our success in sports and entertainment by various ethnic groups at the international level such as Lee Chong Wei, Yuna and football player. When they played and success we cheer and pride regardless of race. Never because the achievement is by a Chinese I do not feel proud of his achievement.

The same view was voiced by some of the Indian informants.

Rakesh: I do feel part of the success because the success is carrying Malaysia name, my country.

Tama: Our people, Malaysian manages to stand out at international level of course, we are happy.

Gobalan: As Malaysian, I’m proud that my fellow Malaysian are able to achieve international level of recognition.

Anusha: Every Malaysian should feel proud of it.

Obviously informants agree that the sporting event Olympian is able to unite the people, however, it doesn’t distract them from the ethnic issue in this country. Some opinion is still overshadowed by the issue of representation on television particularly among Indian informants.
Kumar: Yes, im also proud, but they have to try to highlight achievements of all races in Malaysia, not just the Malays or the Chinese.

Tama: Generally, I feel proud of any Malaysian success but I would also like to see successful Indians. We are also part of Malaysian you know.
Rakesh: Yes, although we are minorities we still contributed to this country in some aspect, some of us did make the country proud as well.
Suresh: Yes, successful people like Ananda Krishnan and Tony Fernandez there are Indian and among the richest man in Malaysia, even in Southeast Asia.

The Chinese however have a different point of view. Despite the video showing obvious representation of Chinese ethnic actor in news item, Chinese informants however see it as one manipulation move.

Paul: I think the stuff that has been shown in the video is like some form of exploitation, like Lee Chong Wei, he plays badminton so he very well known in the country and the country like him. However, if you are just a ordinary person they will ignore your welfare need and voice, when try to voice out, media should be independent to remain free and fair to report it.

Ng: I think that no advertisements in television should use public figure like Datuk Lee Chong Wei, or Yuna. I think we should use communes because it represents more of our society.

Overall the Chinese informants did not like the idea that celebrities or those who have been successful are used to represent them as a race. This is reflective of the idea that informants responses and the analysis of the news items show that the unity message is mixed with ideas of national identity, patriotism and national successes, this creates
further skepticism about the intention of the message, is the message based in ideas of unity for the sake of unity or unity for the sake of development?

**6.6 Summary**

The suspicion about the message being politically motivated has been a theme throughout the focus groups and has been found in the analysis of the media content. It should be said that not all references to the message being initiated by the government were skeptical about political intentions; they merely acknowledged that the government was trying to create unity. This is in contrast to other opinions where the message was seen as political propaganda.

Generally, the high level of agreement indicates that the young multi ethnic Malaysian realise what is 1Malaysia concept about. Although it is just a general observation at this point but it’s quite significant as previous survey by the Information Ministry showed that 62% of Malaysian don’t understand and need an in-depth explanation about 1Malaysia (The Star, 23rd March 2010). (pg55).

Even though all informants show some level of understanding about what 1Malaysia program is about as the result of watching television news, but it does not mean they totally accept or agree with the objectives. Process of understanding the true meaning behind those responds are much more complicated as the questions and discussion began to be more specific about what 1Malaysia really mean to them. Complementary support shown to the 1Malaysia concept however filled with hint of dissatisfaction.

From general discussion related to informants understanding of 1Malaysia concept and objectives, further questions design to focus to know different ethnic viewers perception towards television news role as a tool to uphold 1Malaysia and encourage unity, which is the main agenda of this study.
Like most developing societies, the role and functions of the mass media are tied closely to the needs of the government and the people. In Malaysia the media is not only are required to inform, educate and motivate the people towards developmental goals set by government, but they are also expected to align themselves with the national priorities. Media in Malaysia are expected to help the government foster the spirit of understanding and strengthen the friendship and unity among the people. Despite claim that mainstream media target audiences from all cultures and ethnic groups, it does not seem like it to the Non Malay.

News Media, particularly public television in Malaysia has an obligation to support initiative by the government to support 1Malaysia, encourage unity and improve racial relationship in Malaysia. Television news as the main source of information in Malaysia plays its role by illustrating the advantages of the concept, delivering information about program implemented under the concept that benefit the country and its people.

As explained in the content analysis section earlier, most texts are encoded with meanings that the majority of viewers/audience will be familiar with and understand in broadly similar ways, even if they have different responses to, and evaluations of (Condit, 1989). Inline with the government aspiration, the broadcaster/producer preferred meaning of 1Malaysia news program always around the matter of unity, stability and country’s development. The messages seem clearly accepted by some informants instantly.

Informants were asked to discuss about a selection of news item from RTM primetime news bulletin chosen from the content study done earlier. Informants asked to give their opinion about the video and its role in promoting 1Malaysia.

General perception was, most informants agree that media has a significant role to play in the Nation building process. They can see media playing their basic function as a medium to report and assimilate information about the nation. These include government program, political developments, socioeconomics and cultural activities that can have impact on the
country. Most Informants appreciate the role of media in promoting unity. Most respondent are convinced that media especially television news coverage is geared towards the creation of a strong Malaysia spirit and nation building. However responds to specific 1Malaysia news program was overwhelmingly negative. What informants actually articulated was that 1Malaysia news programs are chauvinism, deceptive, and manipulating.

As the discussion go deeper into deliberating the content of news item stories and whether watching the Television news makes they feel part of Malaysia, not surprisingly most Chinese and Indian ethnic informant’s feels there were not fairly presented in news item about 1Malaysia. In term of the visual used in news item, informants see it as more oriented towards the Malays. Chinese and Indian informants see it as ‘pro-Malay’ or ‘Malay chauvinism. Informant’s respond at this point however is not resistance to 1Malaysia ideological content but rather an obvious exhibition of very poor video production values.

As 1Malaysia campaign suppose to be about all Malaysian, some informants does not feel they are being represent in the 1Malaysia media campaign especially Television news. For the same reason, more Indian ethnic informants contested the video depiction as 1Malaysia. Mostly their responds are cynical. Surprisingly some of the Malay informants also share the same opinion. They can see media unfairness on the non-Malays when discussing about the faces portrayed in 1Malaysia news program.

In addition to the issue of the lack faces of multi-ethnic in 1Malaysia news program, informants also rejected the depiction about unity level portrayed in news item video. Most informants agree that Malaysian are united at certain level but not as perfect as shown. This view was mainly raised across all ethnic focus group discussion. They look at TV news depiction as a deception.

The news producer decision to use faces of various ethnic icon, personality and celebrities in the video was a very clear and dominant attempt to inject elements of 1Malaysia in
news item. Television news in Malaysia for so long has been accused of serving predominantly the Malays. Contrasting the perception they now incorporating the 1Malaysia element in their TV production to cater to the needs of all ethnic groups among the Malaysian audience. Of course, this decision is inline with 1Malaysia objective concept champion by the ruling government demanding Malaysia Media play their role to uphold the idea. Therefore, the objective of displaying respected and successful multi-ethnic faces in news item is to get Malaysian united, to be proud and cheer for the success of Malaysian regardless of their ethnic background. The icon faces portrayed are no stranger to Malaysians, especially to the younger generation. Most informants welcome and support the idea of using such elements to unite the Malaysian. These are some quotes of informants agree with the preferred meaning of the news message.

Responses to question about audience perception towards the Media indicate that they do not perceive the media as a factor that triggers political or racial disharmony, but they do think media should play bigger role in promoting understanding as well as resolving ethnic disputes. Although the question was directly about the role of Television news, responds from informants seem to be directed to mass media in Malaysia as a whole.

_Mas: In my view, media indeed play a very important role in Malaysia. However, in Malaysia not to mention any media but there are media more incline to politics... Only report good things. Majority of these channels are controlled by certain political power, so we only see one-sided report. So, I guess for 1Malaysia to work media have to be fair. ... Many of us are educated so want all the information when we go to vote next time. So, if the media is trying to provoke the people’s mind with one sided reporting people will resort to alternative media and not watch TV ... For me, the real 1Malaysia concept have to be fair to everybody._

Most mainstream media are already branded as pro-government spokespersons in the way they shape news stories to be offered to the public. For instance, national TV station which reaches the majority of Malaysians is clearly pro-government biased based on the ownership of the management of the TV station controlled by the ruling authorities. In
support of the Malaysia vision 2020 to become to fully develop country, informants suggest that media in Malaysia should not be biased. Informants stressed the important for citizens to have access to unbiased news to help the country achieve its objective. Developed nation requires variety viewpoint. They believes that if readers are allowed to reach at their own conclusions after understanding both sides of the argument, it would generate a more mature open audience who can arrive at their own decisions rather than sightlessly following what the government directives. Consistent with the news role to inform and educate, most informants also demanded that media be more truthful to people of Malaysia.

*Chan:* The media have to tell the citizens the truth not just show good thing and cover the bad thing, some of the big issue let the citizen know and may be they can come out with the solution and show good thing and take care of the image and at the same time tell the truth to the citizen.

*Ng:* Every Malaysian deserves to know the truth what is happening in this country, even the news relating to the politics and government. Especially what is happening during parliament session should be shown to viewers of Malaysia.

*Rakesh:* Media have to show the truth, what actually happen in this country.

*Tama:* Just Show the actual thing and the actual situation with prove.

Any study trying to understand media-audience relationship in Malaysia need to start by learning actual viewer’s perception about media role and existence in Malaysia. Only by knowing this, one can conclude knowledge behind making sense of any news messages. Some of these quotes should open the eyes of media organization and the Government in ensuring the success of any message they tried put across to the people of Malaysia.

As various models of reception in the past this research objective is to study audience responses to textual form in line with the Hall’s (1980) schema of dominant/ preferred, negotiated, and oppositional decoding’s. Working with Hall’s ‘Encoding and Decoding
model in the Television Discourse, Morley (1980) has explored new and provocative ways which provide evidence that “text-reader” interaction produces socially differentiated meaning and it has rightly been one of the most cited and discussed works in audience research over the last three decades. This current reception study also conceived within the broad framework of the Morley’s venture, though with considerable differences in some of the guiding ideas and analytic methods.

Drawing on a critique and revision of Morley’s application of this schema, along with a critical review and synthesis of various other models of audience reception (Carolyn, 2007), this study go for a more workable and acceptable consolidated model as the best approach to capture the full complexity of audience reception.
CHAPTER 7

FRAME OF REFERENCE

7.1 Introduction

Critical theory of audience study must look beyond the initial classificatory process to explain the relationship between modes of reception and viewers’ social position (Carolyn, 2007). This chapter looks at the different influences on the different ethnic groups’ perception of the 1Malaysia Message.

This study aims to capture understandings of the attitudes and values of different ethnic groups in Malaysia, particularly from different cultural backgrounds towards understanding the different perceptions of unity and national identity in the 1Malaysia media message. Differences exist between groups and also within groups in terms of religion, politics, culture, education and understanding of national historical events and could, therefore, be influences in the interpretation of the 1Malaysia message.

In chapter seven it was revealed that there was agreement about the basic understanding of the 1Malaysia concept and an agreement that it was a positive concept. However, consensus was not always reached about the subject matter and there were different interpretations of the message between the different ethnic groups. Therefore, there was a need to understand the reasons behind the different perceptions through examining the influencing factors, which have a bearing on the construction of their identities and their interpretation of messages.

Since each group of participants gave different interpretations of the programme released in their own cultural, social, and political meaning, this chapter will further explore the findings of the focus group to understand sources of knowledge that influence the participants interpretation of the 1Malaysia message.
7.2 Influences on Perception

Findings of previous studies suggest that there are certain similarities of television news meaning making in multi-ethnic societies throughout the world, however, Malaysian audiences distinctively structure their patterns of television news understanding within their own perspectives and their unique cultural values.

Research into audiences perception has evolved from simple cause and effect, to understanding that there are influences on perception such as family and friends (Katz and Lazarsfeld in 1955, cited in Williams, 2003, p.166), to understanding how needs and desires influence perception of media (Williams, 2003). Moreover, there has been an interest in how culture effects perception in wider society (Madianou, 2005). In response to the limitations of the ‘effects’ approach to media perception has been a new approach to audience reception which considers more complex and diverse aspects of audiences (Morley, 1970) and how socioeconomic status affects interpretation of media.

This chapter discusses the findings drawn from focus groups discussion among multi-ethnic youth in Malaysia in light of the second research question: How do multi-ethnic audiences receive television news reporting on 1Malaysia campaign, and what interpretive resources do they use to reach their understandings? Specifically here, the chapter aims to present the influences that the different ethnic groups in Malaysia have which have a bearing on how they interpret the message. These influences were drawn from the responses provided in the focus groups.

When interpreting a TV program, audiences not only use the information in the program, but also interpret the information using their own personal and social experiences. Furthermore, they integrate these different sources in coherent and complex ways. An important element of this ‘Reception’ study is an investigation into how viewers make sense of the messages from news programs. This is consistent with newer developments in audience ‘Reception’ studies that give attention to the detail of significant form (image and language) and to the “creative” processes of interpretation (Corner, 1990, pg.: 47).
In line with the idea put forward by Hall that we should consider social structure and political processes in addition to the traditional effect approach. Retaining Hall’s categories of dominant/preferred, negotiated and oppositional readings in the first part of this analysis allows this study to identify the different audience members’ positional response to the connotative meanings of the message. The additional evaluative categories of hegemonic, contesting, and counterhegemonic reading allow us to consider what audience’s position actually means in the broader scheme of things. This chapter will give attention to the way in which viewers draw upon knowledge sources external to the text (Roscoe, et al, 1995). These knowledge sources are related to history, experience, education, politics and religion and were drawn from qualitative analysis of eight focus group discussions.

Through the process, one 1Malaysia advert and three news stories that best describe the element of 1Malaysia were selected. The video was then used as a discussion item for the focus group discussion.

Based on review of the responses to present and discuss their interpretation of the media item, this study was able to form a notion of influences on respondents as the source of reference and understanding that helps them evaluate program forms and content. Central among these influences is what this study termed as “historical background”, concerned with the sovereignty of the main ethnic (Malay race) in addressing a multi ethnic audience on a sensitive topic.

The notion of interpretive frame in the schema of The ‘Referential’ mode was very helpful to approach this current study in the sense that viewers/audience perceive the text as standing alongside the real world, and make comparisons and analogies between that depicted reality and their own knowledge and experience —experience that may be first hand, or itself mediated through encounters with other cultural texts (Carolyn, 2007).

In adopting this mode of reception, viewers are able to draw from three sources of information, and have use this information to question the accuracy of textual depictions of people and events and the version of “reality” presented in a particular text.
The following is a presentation of the different influences that were found among the three ethnic groups which influenced their interpretation of television news message about 1Malaysia and unity.

**7.3 Historical Background Influence**

In the history of Malaysia, both prior and since its independence in 1957, race and race relations has been a significant feature of political, economic and social life in the country.

Historical background was found to be the most significant or most evident reference when discussing perceptions of the 1Malaysia media items, especially for the Malays and often referred to as the root of problems associated with ethnic tensions in the country. Understanding this historical influence will help to better understand audience reception of news messages about 1Malaysia.

Historical background was not only the main point of reference for the Malay ethnic group but also the main driver for the other frames such as the religious and political frames found in this study.

Presenting and discussing their responses to chosen items which promoted unity and national identity, the Malays often made references to certain privileges, something that was afforded to the Malays after independence as an appropriate form of "affirmative action," while non-Malays generally see such policies as inherently discriminatory and a fundamental denial of equal rights for all citizens. These conflicting perspectives have proven difficult to reconcile.

History featured in many of the responses and was clearly a significant part of the process of interpretation of the 1Malaysia message. The following statements reflect this idea:
Radhiiah: I think its trying to show the transformation that this country has gone through to for today’s Malaysia to exist. And I think that the video about the boy at the farmer’s market is very effective in displaying the real race relation in Malaysian in which we saw no racism. The attitude of respecting others especially the elder is still very much practice by all Malaysian or different age.

Kuya: Sometimes when we hear about government’s move to promote 1Malaysia, we always wonder whether its going to be a success effort. Actually, we have already been able to apply it in ourselves since we became independent.

Empathi: For me unity is vital to all. Imagine if this country break up according to ethnic and at war with everybody. There will be bigger problem, there will be powers from foreign countries will try to colonize us again, not specific to the military but colonial occupation in mind just like how they influence us socially, like the way we dress, it has influenced us subtly indirectly.

The independence gained by the country in 1957 was a significant historical event in the country and in discussion about the 1Malaysia message reference to this event, and its significance to the issue of unity, was often mentioned. Evidence of the historical frame can be found in the following responses:

Radhi: 1Malaysia concept from my understanding is all positive things. It is sameness, unity for all. Importantly in my opinion, the concept of 1Malaysia is about Government’s efforts to maintain independence. If we do not preserve unity the independence will destroy... if there is no effort to fostering the younger generation, what we have today will be lost.

Fariza: For me, the relationship between races in this country has always been good. When we learn the history, we know how they are willing to sacrifice whatever it takes to keep the unity. The spirit of 1Malaysia has existed long time ago, its now that we started to split. However, since 1Malaysia was introduced I
started to see we are getting back like before. Many efforts have been introduced, comprehensive effort. We might not be hundred percent united but with God willing it is possible, we will be as we used to be.

Radhiah: I would suggest in terms of the news, there should be documentary on history. Like what we used to read in the books in school. TV could show the story about hardship to obtain our independence so that people more appreciate what we have today.

These views reflected an appreciation for unity and a concern to protect independence which was made in reference to history and knowledge about the struggle to gain independence from the British and how the Malays have work together with Chinese and Indian immigrants at that time to make it happen. Mainly they also understand how important it is for Malaysian to unite and be strong globally.

Efforts towards Racial Unity started in 1949, thru the Inter-Racial Relations Committee, which was formed, to enable leaders of various ethnic groups back then to find a solution to the existing racial problems. In 1951, the British government formed the Member System, with the hope of achieving racial unity. The member system was similar to the Cabinet system as we know it today, and enabled people from various ethnic groups to get involved in the administration of the government and hold portfolios in areas such as Home Affairs, Agriculture, Land, Mines and Communication, Education, Health, Forestry, and Works and Housing. Most Malays participants understand the historical facts and the importance for it to be maintained and protected.

The ideas of unity are also found in the following answers to the same question and are framed within a historical context:
Amree: historically we know that we (all ethnic) have been merged, and the world will surely be afraid of us if we come together, combine ideas. We see in other countries how they have difficulties to unite and how it has affected their development. I guess, the advantage of Malaysia is that if the three groups (Malays, Chinese and Indian) united, God willing, we likely to be more advanced than countries such as the America and others.

Noormi: For me, I understand that we have to compromise, and power sharing is important to the country’s stability... we know, the Malays is the original people of Malaysia but we are all here now, so we have to be united. We are all part of Malaysia now. On the one hand, I want to maintain the Malay supremacy but also we want to keep the togetherness spirit and this stability. We have been too long together in this country to spoil it.

Noormi: My perception influenced by understanding and knowledge about our history. After all, not all Chinese and Indian are bad. Some are good. Therefore, I will not let certain incident influence my feelings towards my fellow friends... power sharing I think, indeed is very necessary, cannot just consist Malay in the administration, have to also cater for the needs of other races. We need to balance it. However, what already exist in Parliament, the Constitution, let it be. Just maintain and balance it.

Arafat: For me, this concept of equal rights among Malaysians is more secure after independence. We cannot change the history and when history passes and became the benchmark for making Malaysia a peaceful prosperous country, the people have to hold on to that history...

As shown in the previous chapter views on the role of media influencing the awareness and the importance for all races to unite and share power in order to maintain the stability
of the country were evident, most participants agreed with the positive role media played. However, the views of the Malays were shaped by their knowledge about the history of ethnic relations in the country. Although they are open to the basic idea of unity in 1Malaysia, and understand the importance, they are still concerned about the need to protect the special privileges of the Malays. ‘The Malaysian Development Experience, Changes and Challenges book published by National Institute of Public Administration, INTAN, stated that Malaya is "a colonial creation with ethnic groups living side by side but never mixed".

The Malay participants as the dominant ethnic group or indigenous people in Malaysia repeatedly indicated their strong standpoint about protecting their special right/privileges when talking about unity and the National Identity program. This opinion was central and framed within the ‘historical background’ perspective. The following statements clearly show the historic perspective, especially in relation to the historic rights afforded to the Malays and the need to protect such rights:

**Mas:** *For me, I do think that 1Malaysia television report create awareness about how important that we all come together and unite, about three races combine, but I always have this worry about how it will affect the Malays special privileges. If we combine (everybody is equal) they (non-Malays) will ask for our privilege to be taken away from us... that I do not agree. Because, to us (Malays) even we unite, the origin people of this country is still the Malay, the country is still our country originally... Therefore, for me, its ok to merge but nobody should touch or change the special rights of the Malays.*

**Ju:** *Watching the reports on 1Malaysia and unity actually do make me feel the togetherness as long as they do not touch the sensitive issue of the Malays. Questioning this shows that they are not sensitive to us, do not understand us, and our rights...*
These views are made in light of informants’ knowledge about the history behind Malaysian independence in 1957 (formerly the Federation of Malaya), where the position of the Chinese and Indian immigrants was made secure by the sacrifices of the Malays. As Baharuddin (2005) stated, prior to independence, Malaysia had its share of ethnic strife. However, Malay - non-Malay relations made much progress partly attributed to a social contract that was instituted in the federal constitution (Mohd, et al, 2004). The most significant aspect of the contract was the agreement by the indigenous peoples (the Malays) to grant citizenship to the immigrant communities. This changed the character of the nation from one that originally belonged to the Malay to one that also belonged to the Chinese and other ethnic groups. The non-Malays now shared political power with the Malays. In return for being granted these political rights, the immigrant communities agreed to special economic privileges for the Malays, given their disadvantaged position. This was seen to constitute the political, economic, legal and moral foundation for the distributive justice policies of the country (Tamam, 2009).

Although the Malays accept the fact that the Chinese and Indian are now part of the Malaysians and the importance of all ethnic groups in the country uniting to live in harmony, many of the respondents insist that the power remained in the hands of the Malays.

A'ha: I agree with Mas opinion. We don’t want one day after we have united and merged, the non-Malays ruled the country. We do not want that, do we?.. I also see that this unity and issue about power sharing are being manipulated in the heat of election... However, the unification and power sharing must give priority to the Malays with also advantages to other races, allowing them to hold position in the government.

Noormi: “Knowledge about history and watching TV make me know and understand the importance of Unity and power sharing but I want the Malay privileged to be protected”... because “Once we agree to power sharing, the non-Malays will start questioning our special right”.

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There have been historical incidents that occurred in the post-independence era that has tainted ethnic relations. In the 1960s, the cultural landscape was a fiercely contested arena (Guan, 2000). Malays and non-Malays held opposing stands on cultural, religious and language matters. While the Malays’ opinion strongly backed the dominant and privileged position of Malay culture in the new nation, the immigrants, especially the Chinese, were strongly and persistently demanded equal rights for all Malaysians. This tension led to a bloody ethnic riot in 1969. Obviously, the Malays were not open to the idea of equal rights then, and evidence from this study suggests they are not open to this idea now.

There was also an indication in the responses given by the Malay participants that they question the sincerity of their fellow citizen’s support for the 1Malaysia concept, and they suspect they have a hidden agenda.

Mas: Right? I do not think the other races is sincere about wanting to unite, they just want compete with us... if our quotas are taken from us, it is not fair. In term of that, I am worried...Nothing wrong with us being unifies but the issue of the rights of the Malays is sensitive issue. I think if we touch or try to change the quotas and divide it to equal the three races, there would be riot.

These ideas reflect the heated conflicts where the Chinese demands for complete equal rights brought about the ethnic riots in the 1960s.

Even where Malay participants no longer see the Chinese and Indians as immigrants, accept them as part of Malaysia and respect the idea of unity and fairness for everybody, they still do so with the condition that they do not give up Malays rights, as the following statements reveal:
Amree: I accept unity, just, do not change our rights.

Mas: I am ok with them; I don’t consider Chinese and Indian as immigrants. They are part of 1Malaysia. We can be friend no problem. My only concern, just like what Amree said, the Malay’s right is a sensitive issue and have to be handle wisely. Indeed, we appreciate and enjoying the relationship with the non-Malays. We get to learn a lot about their culture...

Even where the Malays were more sympathetic to the other races and acknowledged the need for unity, they still made reference to the privileges afforded to the Malays, as the following statements illustrate:

Radhi: I have a sense of sympathy towards non-Malays... my opinion may not match with the rest (Malays). What I think, if we really want unity everybody must feel equal. However, equal involve everything including our privileges, what will happen then nobody really know. That is probably what our leaders trying to do, to protect what would happen. We do believe in power sharing but just skeptical. We do feel sympathy towards non-Malays but at the same time support our leader for protecting our rights. However, for other things we should imagine ourselves in their shoes. They can question about 1malaysia, if its unity of all, but why things like this even still here? Why there is still special privilege. That maybe what they think, but, if we are equal it doesn’t mean they will not take of the power we have, I mean like the reign, maybe they want to have Emperor instead. We do not really know their ideology, or anything beyond that. So, just feel sympathy, occasionally that’s all.

Amree: I agree with Radhi. I do feel sympathetic, But, only in certain issue. Maybe I would be dissatisfied also if im non-Malays because I'm also Malaysian why certain group have advantages over others. However, that’s how things have been since before until now indeed it the special right we have as Malays. I hope they
can accept that. Just like other countries that have their own policy and laws. So, just have to accept it.

Noormi: I do have a bit more sympathy for them. My own experience when I was in Uni. My non-Malays friends were telling how hard it is for them to get into University. Even with good result, 7A shall not necessarily enough for to be accepted into the Pre-Uni courses. Compare to us (Malays) with just 4A already and could have been accepted into University. In terms of that, I do feel sympathy. However, this topic of Malay supremacy is very sensitive and untouchable. I do feel sympathy but what can we do. It’s their (non-Malays) fate maybe. I understand their frustration and dissatisfaction seeing Malays gets all this special treatment. However, at the same time I did witness bias towards Malay students by non-Malays Lecturers when I was in Uni. Sometimes it make hard to be sympathetic when we think about their attitude and racism. As friend, I do sympathy but thought of my future always come first.

There were suggestions by some of the Chinese participants that they felt that the unity message and what it aims to achieve will not be successful because of the privilege issue is resolved:

Paul: They promoted the idea very strongly but the concept is still not implemented in real life…it is like a show on television.

Yu: On camera, everybody seems to support 1Malaysia but I think the program has lost its sincerity.

Chan: unity does exist. However, there are problems and it’s quite a big problem even. 1Malaysia have to face and solve the problem.

Wong: I think what was showed in the video only one fiction, deep inside there is a different story; there are problems and need to be voice out.
When asked about their opinion on the real issues that created the gap between different ethnic groups in Malaysia, the Malays made reference to history, placing blame on colonisation.

*Izzah:* *What I understand that the angry feelings between races begin since the “Divide and Rule” concept introduce by the British. Colonial divide and break us. Its something people used to for a long time so it makes difficult to form cooperation. Issue of racism still arise in every cooperation. My own experience at work where management dominated by Chinese people, I saw Malay being discriminated. Therefore, cooperation will never only exist if there are advantages to a certain race.*

English colonial policy practicing the concept of ‘Divide and rule’ has been the cause of the divide between the races either in terms of economic as well as racial polarization. Classification of jobs and different education systems has been a barrier to interaction between the ethnic populations in Malaysia. For example, the Chinese lived in cities and were engaged in business as well as mining and they are economically successful in Malaysian society. Malays lived in rural areas as farmers or fisherman, and there was awareness among Malays they had been left out and oppressed on their own soil due to poverty. Meanwhile the Indians were mostly worked as farm labour. This policy indirectly has created feelings of enmity towards each other which led to the riots in 1969.

In summary, the historical background reference was found to be the most mentioned when interpreting the 1Malaysia message. Often when asked questions about the 1Malaysia message reference was made to the history of the country, in fact issues of race were often perceived within the context of the country’s history which is rife with struggle between the races. Although all of the ethnic groups made reference to this influence, it was particularly significant for the Malays and was related to the concern about maintaining privileges. Moreover, respondents felt that historical events were very much responsible for the situation in the country today as regards the roles that the different
races play and the non-integration between them. Historical issues were not extracted from the responses, often the entire response was made in reference to history, and therefore, historical background strongly affects the interpretation of the message.

7.4 Political Background - The Politics of Racism

Racial issues exploited by political parties can create differences among multiethnic Malaysians and thus influence their views of unity messages in news items. Political differences along the lines of race were a powerful influence and from the responses that follow such differences had a powerful influence in the interpretation of the 1Malaysia message.

*Yeoh: I think basically we are united from the surface but when it come to personal benefits we all will still stick on our own race ... during General Election we still prefer vote for our own races, when come to new policy we not focus on whole Malaysia but just on our own races.*

This political division in the country as a result of the exploitation of politicians was evidenced in the following statements:

*Ah Kong: we Can unite if all speak one language only but we have native language, many prefer to speak the native language, as we can still speak together play together, unity is still there, but the politician play racial issues.*

*Anusha: Agree. Even our politics are racially driven. Politicians are only concern for their only race.*
Suspicion that the 1Malaysia message could be politicised was even expressed:

Parbavathi: I would say that our unity level is workable as long as it does not being politicise.

Further evidence of the influence of possible political division was found in the following statements

Wendy: People abroad think that our Malaysian very united, all three races unite well but actually not, it is a political thing. I think the video is to boost the spirit of ties between Malaysian.

There was even scepticism about the political motives of the 1Malaysia message where the message is perceived as a political ploy:

Ah Kong I don't see anything about 1Malaysia just saw a lot of politician.

However, not all reference to the political makeup of the country was negative as regards division between the races; reference in the following statement is made to the ruling coalition which is made up of Malay, Chinese and Indian political parties:

Tama: (interrupted) I know One Malaysia started two years ago. But, why now after being independence for 55 years. Does this this mean there was no unity before? Why is it like that? We already have the First Alliance Party in 1956, the Umno, MIC, and MCA. Are they saying there was no 1Malaysia since then? It just exists in the past two years.

Recognition that political differences are related to the political leadership is found in the following statement:
Kuya This national spirit should not be only in us but also have to be inside our leadership. Even with political differences, we remain focus, namely in developing our country.

To free Malaysia from racial-based politics is not something simple. As long as the Malays, Chinese and Indians retain the spirit of race-based politics, it's difficult to reject the existence of race-based parties. This makes Malaysia a unique country and is responsible for shaping the political landscape we are seeing today. Indeed, race-based politics has had an influence over the development of the country over the years.

To summarise, there were some respondents that felt that the differences between the races was played out in the political arena and that politicians may even exploit racial differences for their own gain. Clearly, politics plays a role in the interpretation of the 1Malaysia message because people feel that politics is divisive, that the actual political situation goes against the essence of the message, and given that the message is perceived as coming from the government it is understandable that they are sceptical about the sincerity of the message.

7.5 Immediate life world experiences

Another source of referential information available to viewers is that of their immediate life world experiences, including their experiences and observations of people such as extended family members, friends, neighbours, colleagues, and acquaintances, and their involvement in activities and concerns related to the public sphere, for example, education and employment; social and demographic group memberships; cultural, political, economic interests, and affiliations.
In Mas’s case, life as a student apparently provided an alternative source of referential information as she drew on her eight years of experience socialising with non-Malay friends in the public university:

*Mas*: for me, during 7 years of my study in this university (UPM), since diploma to master, I can say as a student our relationship is ok… when we were given group assignment, Chinese, Indian, Malay work in same group. But, usually after regular classes, we only mix with our own colleagues, our own ethnic…The Government might try to make us close to each other, but we still go separate ways in most of the time.

Normi shared similar experience when she was in secondary school:

*Noormi*: possible, there are effort from government, but sometimes, it’s our perception...It's from school, for example of my own experience. I go to a school which all Malays, no Chinese or Indians. We build some kind of perception that makes a little difficult to get along with other races. In the University, its fine when we are doing group assignment, But, we just don’t hang out together beyond that, its just hard for us to find things in common. Its more comfortable with our own people, they understand more or can relate to our problems.

The idea of a social separation between the different ethnic groups was further supported in the following statement:

*Aizat*: My own experience. When I was in school I once asked a Chinese friends why they don’t like chatting with the Malays. They said they would like to but they feel isolated. Its just that way in school, the Malay only talk or group with Malays and Chinese went with Chinese.
The idea of a social separation was even expressed within the same ethnic group:

_Empathi_ Sorry to say this, I am not racist. However, from my observations after 4 years here, when we socialize with people from Kelantan State I don't understand what they are saying. The dialect is difficult to understand. They end up socializing among themselves. It means even among the Malays you have to learn something new if you want to be accepted.

Clearly, the above statements show that in reference to a message that seeks to promote unity among different ethnic groups, experiences can be of something opposite to unity, namely non-integration. However, in contrast to her first experience, Mas supports the idea of introducing 1Malaysia as a way to make Malaysians think and act as one. She drew on another experience of her acquaintance with a non-Malay to affirm possible success of 1Malaysia.

Mas: we can still get along even we are difference from race… I have a non-Malay friend, he is Chinese, but he's open minded. He's different, he hang out with us (Malays), I even have some Indian friends… actually its all depends on their way of thinking.

A similar idea was expressed with reference to village life in Kuala Selangor:

_Tee:_ I have other aspects, most people do not unite most of is because they were not educated. If students or educated enough they can understand this concept. They can understand this concept and respect each other, for my village in Kuala Selangor; mostly Chinese in some aspect they do not want really approach Malays to be their friend. This is so sad.
Similarly, Normi drew on her experience as a resident and member of a village community to support the idea of togetherness among Malaysia.

Noormi: Watching the video report we can feel the togetherness. Like if, each race has a mutual understanding, give and take spirit... Like in my own village in Kelantan (East coast state), the Chinese over there are very open to local culture and in return they being accepted easily by the community because they adapt to Malay lifestyle. They even wear cloths like the Malay, the ‘sarong’ and they speak local dialect fluently. In that sense, I am very proud. We should try that too. It’s sad that we didn’t try to learn their (Chinese and Indian) language. We should take the advantage so we can better understand them as they tried to understand us. I am sure we can with God willing.

In the following statement, a personal experience was used to make a comparison between West Malaysia and East Malaysia:

Empathil: I learned that when we have the nature of curious, we will learn. .. For examples in Sarawak (west Malaysia) where I came from, there are 32 different ethnic, everybody tries to learn each other language... It created a very interesting bundle of language. It is a shame most of my friend in the peninsular do not understand the situation in the West Malaysia.

Even viewers with no relevant personal experience may draw on their knowledge of the experiences of others within their own life world to assess the accuracy of textual depictions.
EMPATHI: Actually, if we look at the terms of unity its difference between location. Often many say that people in the urban are less united. Even living next to the house, they do not know each other… Which means race segregation is still a problem. What we should do is to enhance inter race relation not to just focus on one race. As Radhiah said, this way unity will grow and increase slowly. Just what it needed here is the effort and the right attitude of the people and the country itself.

In summary it was found that the experience of living in a multiethnic society allowed participants the opportunity to encounter other ethnic groups. This was particularly influential because it allowed them to understand the differences between the ethnic groups, something that influences the interpretation of the message of unity. However, it was also clear that there was a social separation between the ethnic groups which was expressed in interpretation of the 1Malaysia message.

### 7.6 Religion and Moral Values

Religion and moral values were shown to be a factor in interpreting the 1Malaysia message. However, it was not a strong factor because within the different ethnic groups there are different religions. In the following extract Mas draws on the discourse of the religious/moral perspective to construct an oppositional reading toward 1Malaysia strategies, which use entertainment as a pull factor.

Mas: For me the approach is not right...I know its trying to charm young generation but indulging them with entertainment but is not right although we know they love having fun… In terms of the negative approach is about bringing in lots of foreign singing band like the one from Korea. There is better way to promote 1Malaysia to the youth other than using entertainment? I do not really agree with the approach.
Mas also emphasized religion in response to the approach used in the 1Malaysia concept to instill unity in response to a question about how people’s perception about unity could be changed if the 1Malaysia media message failed:

\[ \textit{Mas: I think maybe it's more successful to use religious approach. Normal talks have no effect... I know It’s not easy to change peoples mentality, but maybe if its being apply through religious values, I will definitely work on the Malays because they are Muslim... for other races, they can do the same through the church.} \]

A reference to religion was expressed in response to the 1Malaysia message, here it is clear that religion is an issue that is relevant to the different ethnic groups and is made in reference to disunity:

\[ \textit{Suresh: It was not about religion; it shows we are all the same.} \]

\[ \textit{Wendy: I think generally we are united. But the culture and the language not the same ... some people cannot accept other peoples language culture and religious views.} \]

It is important to note that within the same ethnic groups there are different religions, the Chinese have Buddhists and Christians, the Indians have Hindus and Christians and although the majority of Malays are Muslim, in east Malaysia there Malays who are Christian. Religion could even be used for unity:

\[ \textit{Empath: For me who came from the west of Malaysia, I get to see and share so many more culture and custom that are different even though we don’t share same} \]
religion. I’m Christian and most of my friends are Muslims. Religion does not
distinguish. It never distinguishes me. In my second year in Uni I experience
fasting in the month of Ramadan with my Muslim friends. I learn another culture
and its very fun.

Overall, it was found that religion was not a strong influencing factor in the interpretation
of the 1Malaysisa message and was often mentioned together with cultural values.

7.7 Education

Undoubtedly, school is the perfect place to start the process of integration between the
races. It provides opportunities for students of various races to interact directly and have
the opportunity to get to know each other and understand each other better. As such, they
will grow up with the attitude of tolerance and respect for the culture and religion of other
races. It will foster understanding of race and thus speed up integration.

Historically Malaysia’s education system varied according to different
ethnic groups in terms of syllabus, curriculum and methods of dissemination. There was
no such thing as a standardised education system. Since these vernacular schools
comprised a single race, lessons were conducted in the respective languages, such as
Malay, Mandarin and Tamil. Due to the inconsistencies and differences in the education
system, there existed barriers and gaps among the different races in the country. Malaysia
is the only country in the world that has three educational systems running simultaneously.
‘Sekolah Kebangsaan’ or National School, exist alongside vernacular schools for the
Chinese and Indians. The following statement is evidence of how vernacular schools
prevent and hinder racial integrity and were made when interpreting the 1Malaysia
message:
Kumar: I went to Tamil school and I grew up in a village where there are very little Malay and no Chinese so it is difficult to have that ideal good relation. Now in University I still find it easier to just stay in my own group of ethnic.

Mostly Malay informants drew from their experience being educated by the National School and support the idea of a national system of education. They strongly believe that National School must become the only national education system if Malaysians really wants to see the existence of 1Malaysia. They felt that as long as there is a vernacular inflows of the racial polarization will continue to remain.

They also suggested students of various ethnic groups to be exposed to the diversity of race and religion in the early stages or their life, efforts to form a multiracial society could be done more effectively. In fact, they think this element should be planted as early as possible because when they reach adulthood they have already formed a distinctive impression of others. Schools are the foundation for people to build and mould their individuality. They believe more should be done to foster and help fortify the concept of a race-less society.

Radhi: Until now I'm still searching for formula to be close to my fellow Chinese friends, its very difficult... when I look into their background, most of them came from all Chinese school (vernacular school), that could explain why they are reluctant to our request of having activities together.. I do know a few Chinese that study at national school, we mix well, we play Sports together, no problem .. we do all sort of things together, he understands and respect out religion, culture, everything. He can even wear the Malay national costume, he understands the Malay language and I even understand a little bit of his language... this is the different.

Nad drew on her experience in National School, not opposing the idea that National school is the ultimate solution to unity and ethnic problems. She just feels that there are
underlying problem that requires deeper solution and beyond the schooling itself, such as the influence of media, family, society, religion and culture.

Nad: it's not just Chinese school, in my school for instance, I went to a national school that consist of all races, I'm friend with everybody but you cannot help to realize that there are always issues to deal with... each races holds grudge and dissatisfaction in their heart and hate towards each other... there's always something to create tension. So the 1Malaysia strategy cannot just focus on one races, it is all related actually.

However, not everybody shared the same opinion. The non-Malays do not see the national education system as an answer to many ethnic problems existing in the country. They see the larger issue is injustice in terms of special privileges and different treatment received by different ethnic group.

Gobalan: Well I went to the National School and have lots of Malay friend, and even some Chinese friends. We are close but it is difficult sometime to understand why we do not get to enjoy certain privileges that our Malay friends have. I am not racist but it is just not fair sometime.

Education in the country is polarised, at the one end there are schools based on ethnicity, at the other end there are schools that are based on a national identity. This confusion in the education system reflects the situation in the country and how people will perceive messages of unity. On the one hand the message is portraying unity, but on the other hand it is being perceived as something that causes more separation among the ethnic groups, which was clearly related in response to the 1Malaysia message.
7.8 Civic Awareness

Despite the differences that exist among Malaysians, openness and responsibility to create a harmony, exist in all the hearts of people. The younger generation is capable of setting aside differences among them for the sake of peace and unity. Proof of this can be seen from the informants responses to the video title which talks about the country’s independence and sovereignty, such responses were largely positive and made within a version of what Corner (1990) describes as civic framing with most informants agreeing with the idea that Malaysians have the obligation to be united to maintain the country’s freedom and development. The following statements support this idea and showed that civic awareness was something that was used as a point of reference when interpreting the 1Malaysia message:

A. ‘I think it is a positive report showing how important is unity among all races in this country to maintain our independence... It’s a government initiative to come close to young generation and making them understands its importance’.

B. ‘I share the opinion of youth in the video about our independence... we should be proud to be Malaysian and its achievements’.

C. ‘Yes, everybody knows that unity is vital to a steady, strong country and politics.

Feelings of an affiliation with the country and a sense of civic awareness were also evident in expression a sense of national pride:

Suniaga:  I feel proud, as Malaysians we are able to achieve that level of success.

Rakesh: I do feel part of the success because the success is carrying Malaysia name, my country.
These opinions were a reflection that respondents felt proud and responsible for the success of the country, they agree with the idea behind the message and believe that unity is needed for the future success of the country.

7.9 Summary

In summary, although the responses showed that Malaysians supported the idea of unity in the country and the message that was being present by 1Malaysia, it was clear that the differences between the races that were based on race, religion, culture, politics and education were negative influences on the interpretation of the 1Malaysia message. The respondents showed that they were very much aware that unity was possible and knew what needed to be done in the country to achieve unity, and that perhaps the idea within the message is accepted, but met with suspicion and criticism. These strong opinions about how to achieve unity were found throughout the focus interview and clearly influence interpretation of the unity message.
CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION

8.1 Introduction

Before concluding this study, this chapter begins by revisiting the research questions and concepts that had been discuss and used in the earlier chapters.

This study started its journey with the mission to understand the media-nation relationship in Malaysia. Of course, the national identity formation is a much wider process than just the part established through the mass media. However, the study of national culture as offered by the media forms an important part of a better understanding of processes of identity formation and of the role of the media (Van, 2001). The main aim here was similar to Van’s attention about what role mass media play in the creation and maintenance of relationship between the members of a nation and members to the nation? The approach is to study the strategies adopted by the media to promote the idea of collective identity among its diverse community and whether these strategies are effective in addressing concerns and tensions in multi-ethnic Malaysia. Specific focus of this research is on television news from public broadcasting station in Malaysia (RTM) and how it contributes to the modernist process of nation building. To illustrate its policy, the study refers to news message. In particular, the analysis concentrates on the television news content discursive strategies in respect of 1Malaysia campaign.

Focus group was given a central role in this process as a pertinent method for the investigation of the media and identity relationship. I decided to focus on the ways in which people articulate their identities and how they shift from more open to more closed discourses. Alongside this method is the study of the media content. The textual analysis of the television news aims to identify any thematic and discursive patterns in the reports. The focus is on the discursive construction of a common identity (‘we’). The combination
of methods is essential as it was described as the multifaceted process to see the media and identity relationship as a dialectic process (Madianou, 2002).

What this final chapter will provide is the concluding statements of the study on the television news role in building national identity, a case study on Malaysia multi-ethnic youth reception of 1Malaysia campaign. Discussion will include summary of the empirical findings, recommendations for the television industry as well as for the decision makers, and some suggestions for future research. It will also evaluate the relevance and limitation of the study.

8.2 Summary of main findings

The findings of this study have opened a new perspective for audience reception studies and understanding media-nation relationship in Malaysia. This study was not done in the typical method for studies on Malaysia. It is indeed one of a few projects which attempted to analyse audiences' engagements with television news from the audience’s perspective and within specific cultural contexts in Malaysia. Although focuses on audiences have started to gain attention among Malaysian scholars, only a few studies have make an effort to focus on the multi-ethnic audience, employing a qualitative approach to study their relationship to television news on promoting nation building, generating an in-depth and detailed picture of the complexity of context of news reception.

Chapter 3 argued for a new approach to look at media-nation relationship in Malaysia. After examining the existing media, identity and nation literature it concluded that what has been rather neglected is the perspective that examines audience as active. This paradigm revolve around the idea that audiences were actively interpreting media messages, making sense of them in their own ways, rather than passively accepting them. This study verifies that different audiences comprehend and construe media messages in different and often unexpected ways influence by cultural backgrounds, Personal experiences and ideological beliefs.
This study rejected the top-down approach which has assumed strong media effects on identity instead favoured the ‘bottom-up’ perspective that argued for powerful audiences and strong local cultures. The thinking of culture and the nation are understood through a historical viewpoint that recognises their basic construction and diversity. Identity in this study is theorised as Madianou (2002) call it as ‘lived and as performed’ rather than ‘fixed and stable’.

It was suggested in Chapter 3 that this research would centre on the ways people express their identities in different contexts. In particular I was interested in how people articulate their identities and what impact the television news has on the way people talk about themselves and the nation. In order to do so I followed the circulation of discourses about the nation in the media and in people's lives. This study benefits from Barth (1969) seminal work on *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* theory in that instead of focusing on difference and thus taking it for granted, the focus was on the processes that create boundaries and thus difference. His contribution to the study of 'ethnicity' was by introducing the concept of 'ethnic boundaries' as a way of viewing 'ethnicity' or as he called it 'ethnic group'. Drawing on Barth (1969) work and other anthropologists, I investigate whether the media play any role in creating those boundaries. 'Boundary' that implied here means the social boundaries that enfold an ethnic group. It examined and explained how and why people of differing ethnic backgrounds have different interpretations and understandings of the same media message.

Different methods are required to study different sides of the communication process namely the text and its reception. To perceive the media and identity relationship as a dialectic process requires a combination of methods that can describe the complicated process. Content analysis and Focus group discussion were given a central role in this study as a pertinent method for the investigation of the media and identity relationship. Drawing on existing work in audience research and other fields in media studies, this study emphasis on texts, and audiences thus, echoing recent developments towards a theory of reception. Chapter 4 also provides an account of the procedure of data collection through in-depth and group interviews with 41 informants, as well as sampling over 350 television news stories and in-depth analysis of four chosen television news reports.
Focusing on the different moments of this dialectic process allows the researcher to understand how they might, or might not, influence each other.

The second part of the thesis, Chapters 5 to 7 presented the empirical analysis. Finding chapter 6 reports the demographic characteristic and audience background of participants based on simple questionnaire answered by informants just before the group discussion began to identify their demographic profile and questions to grasp their exposure to Television and News. In this findings chapter I explore informant’s interpretation of 1Malaysia television news role which is to instil a greater sense of racial unity among the difference races in Malaysia and instil a sense of national identity which forms part of the overall development policy of the country. This study validated that television is still the main source of news and information for multi-ethnic youth in Malaysia. It has also established that Television news remain as a main source of information about 1Malaysia program. General perception was, most informants agree that media have played significant role in the Nation building process and function as medium to report and assimilate information about the nation. Most respondent are convinced that media especially television news coverage is geared towards the creation of a strong Malaysia spirit. However, responds to specific image and 1Malaysia television news content was overwhelmingly negative. Participants articulated were that 1Malaysia television news reports are chauvinism, deceptive, and manipulating. Main themes emerge from the discussion were mainly on their scepticism to the perceived intention of the government and message of the television news. These points are summarised below.

(1) Skepticism about the Intention of the Message

The issue of Government’s sincerity or intention rose particularly amongst the non-Malays ethnic group in the related to the goals or objectives of 1Malaysia. Most of Non-Malays participants argue that they did not have the same opportunities in their life. They suggested that there was discrimination; cronyism and nepotism in the country and ethnicity play an important role in their opportunities in life in Malaysia. Participants also blame the ethnic oriented political system and politician for responsible triggering racial
disharmony and created many ethnic disputes. That drove Participants questioning governments’ determination and sincerity in pursuing 1Malaysia. They are not happy with government’s policies and administration. The analysis of the empirical data does not support the existence of a causal relationship between media and identity. Moreover, it has indicated that in some instances such an assumption would be misleading and might have adverse consequences. To assume that multi ethnic society become more Malaysian because they watch television news does not reflect reality and in contrast could encourage ethnic segregation.

(2) Skepticism on unity portrayal

When informants reflected on their identities and place in society in the context their daily interactions there was often openness in their discourses. However, when they were confronted with closure in the media, some informants adopted a more ‘closed’ discourse themselves. In addition to the issue of the lack faces of multi-ethnic in 1Malaysia news program, participants accept that images of people taking part in national event portrayed by television news as true. However, when asked to comment in an open context they rejected the depiction about unity level in the country. Most participants agree that Malaysian is united at a certain level but not as perfect as shown. In their opinion unity means much more than just gathered at festive open houses or watching Independence day celebration. Unity is about risen up and coming together hand in hand on issues that are important and impact the people of Malaysia. This view was mainly raised across all ethnic focus group discussion. They look at TV news depiction was rather a fiction and deception, deep inside there is problem that needs to be voice out.

(3) Skepticism - Not All Races Represented

Informants, particularly the non-Malays feels they were not fairly presented in television news stories about 1Malaysia. In term of the images used, informants see it as ‘pro-Malay’ or ‘Malay chauvinism. This study, however, challenge media claimed that all
ethnic group has equal media access and given fair space. Even where an Indian respondent is proud of Malaysia, there was still skepticism particularly about fair representation. They question the media role in portraying Indian figure as a role model.

(4) 1Malaysia Icon = Race Representation

Producer’s attempt to uses faces of a multi-ethnic icon, personality, and celebrities in the television news report was an effort incorporating the 1Malaysia element to cater to the interest of all ethnic groups of Malaysian audience. Most participants welcome and support the idea of using such elements to unite the Malaysian, however, some opinion is still overshadowed by the issue of representation on television particularly among Indian informants who don't see media doing enough to highlight achievements of the successful Indian citizen. Demanding that, although they are minorities they still contributed to this country in some aspect. As for the Chinese informants, images of Chinese ethnic actor in news item seen as some form of exploitation and manipulation. Overall participants reject the idea that celebrities are used to represent them as a race.

This study verifies that while the television news brings people together on some occasions, they simultaneously exclude others. Obviously they is no simple way to answer the question does the media bind the nation together.

The results of the study revealed that the differences between the races in terms of race, religion, culture, politics and educational background were the very attributes that lead to different interpretations of the message that the news item were trying to deliver. What is significant to the study is that these differences between the people of Malaysia were the motivator behind the media message, i.e. 1Malaysia. In an attempt to promote unity among people of different races using a unity message, the message itself was received in different ways. Moreover, where the frames of reference of each of the three main races were elicited it was shown that they were situated in very political, religious and cultural ideas, and that these ideas could be contributing cause to racial disunity in the first place. To provide an example, the frame of reference for the Malays was very strong in terms of
history and religion in the sense that they had a historical right to the country and that the country is a Muslim country.

The findings also showed that although the message of national identity and unity was successful in terms of its clarity or what it is trying to communicate, it was not completely successful in convincing the people of the message. Evidence of this was the resentment that was expressed about the message in terms of it being patronising, that it in some way insulted the intelligence of the people who clearly saw it as a politically motivated message that may not necessarily have the interests of the people at heart. Moreover, there were numerous suggestions made by the respondents of how the message can conveyed in a better way.

This study proved that audience are critical and active and there are factors outside the media significantly affect the interpretation of the media message. Findings of this current study also rejects the traditional effect theory and proves that media does not have direct powerful influence on its audience. Audiences are no longer considered homogenous mass of passive recipients of a message.

Even in the development of the theory about communication and development there were developments that would support the findings of this study. White (1982) says that “the narrow emphasis on media and media effects has ... led to a premise ... that media information is an all-powerful panacea for problems of human and socio-economic development”, which it is not. Furthermore, there was an obsession with the idea that mass media is something that is done to another which was used to explain the powerful effects of mass communication but does not explain the factors of social change that result in democratisation (Thomas, 2006). Therefore, this suggests that there are other forces that lead to development and democratisation. This study has shown that the media message in Malaysia is not something that is done to the people, it is more complicated in that the message has different interpretations and therefore, different effect on the people.

Another development in the area of communication and development was a shift in the theoretical view of communication and media away from the idea of the omnipotent
effects of media towards a view that sees communication in terms of minimal effects and conditional effects that the media works among other influences in a complete situation (Thomas, 2006). In the present study this idea has been found to be true. Although the message of national unity has been aimed at the entire population of Malaysia with the intention of impacting a universal message, this study has revealed that the situation is much more complicated in that the differences between the people in terms of religion, culture and politics have a major impact on the receiving and interpretation of the message, and therefore, its impact.

This is a move away from the idea found in the transmission models of communication which involve a linear process from the source of the communication to the recipient as the destination. This process has been seen as a way to spread ideas in political campaigns. Unfortunately, these models do not consider the psychological and sociological aspects of communication. The present study, however, has considered the psychological and sociological aspects of the communication process, namely; considering responses to the message from the different viewpoints of the three races and by the elicitation and consideration of the different frames of reference that the participants had. Importantly, the present study has shown that such factors have a significant effect on message receipt and interpretation, which shows that the ideas found in the traditional linear transmission models are flawed.

Moreover, although the models about communication and development did later consider other influences, they are generally ahistorical and do not consider the historical influence on the reception and interpretation of media messages. This study has clearly shown that there is a need to consider the historical factors in the interpretation of media messages. The message was about unity in a country that has a history of trouble in this area, which has even erupted into violence, and therefore historical factors cannot be ignored in any study about communication and development and reception studies.

In reference to the three approaches to media and communication that are proposed by Manyozo (2012), the present study has clearly related to all three approaches. The first approach is about the content being used to inform people about development issues and
also considers a multi-stakeholder environment; this has been shown to be the case in this study. The second approach looks at the development of initiatives designed to build media infrastructures, policies and capacities in developing countries and the idea that media is used for governance. In consideration of the very serious civil unrest with the race riots, the 1Malaysia message can be seen as a tool for governance. This was supported by the fact many of the participants felt that the message was a political message disseminated from the top, while at the same time acknowledging that were still some issues between the races. The third approach to communication and development suggested by Manyozo (2012) was that of participatory communication, this suggests that there is community engagement in the production of content as well as the development of communication policy. This was not shown to be the case in the present study, there was no evidence that any of the participant took part in the development of the communication, if anything the opposite was more evident because the respondents felt that it was a politically motivated and initiated message and they felt that the message did not fully represent the reality on the ground.

In reference to the first research questions of this study about *What discursive strategies television news adopt to promote 1Malaysia campaign and collective identity in multi-ethnic Malaysia*, the strategy adopted by the (media) government to promote the message is to link nationalism to national identity, the appeal of nationalism to the extent that people are prepared to sacrifice their lives for the nation. The message that everyone is part of the same nation, has been achieved through visual displays of national success and references to the independence of the country. However, the problem identified in this study is that there is an emphasis on the different races within a context of national unity, but from the responses it is clear that differences do not need to be emphasised and that there has been unity for decades.

In reference to the second research question of *How multi-ethnic audiences receive television news reporting on 1Malaysia campaign, and what interpretive resources do they use to reach their understandings*, it is very clear from the responses that the media messages are understood in different ways according to the different races, each race had its own concerns. The frames of reference of each race was very different, the most
prominent of which was Malay privileges and under representation of Indians. It is interesting to note that when the frames of reference used to interpret the media messages were elicited they were all related to the differences between the races. These frames included educational backgrounds whereby different races attend different schools, religion, life experiences, politics and history with reference made to the troubled history and the rights of the Malays. Therefore, the respondents criticised the portrayal of differences while and the same time used those differences to interpret the media messages.

As public broadcaster, RTM main goal is to stimulate the public interest and develop civic awareness, while providing information and education. It however has a prevailing objective that is in line with the country’s development plan: the achievement of national unity and harmony. Being the National Television, RTM is the station that did most promotion of the 1Malaysia program. This evidence clearly display by audience interviewed in the focus group. All informants declare that they got the message about 1Malaysia through TV program especially RTM news. They admitted receiving information and understanding about the 1Malaysia program through this news and TV program. This evidenced that News Media, in this particular study, RTM have succeed in delivering the intended message of 1Malaysia to the young multi ethnic audience of Malaysia.

Although previous study have found RTM to be old-fashioned, boring, not technologically-driven, not sensitive to changing market needs, and simply lagging behind in attractive programs but it is still the most valid and reliable channel in terms of official announcement for example the live telecast of National Budget or in determining the date of the beginning of Ramadan and Eid (Basri, et al (2011). Focus group respondents acknowledges the importance of RTM as the official government channels. They are believed it has carry out its role in promoting national agenda and delivering Government messages beneficial to society and the nation.

Although national television is, seem to be under threat in the midst of new stations, new programming formats, and new communication technologies. Yet, at the same time, it is
still very much lauded and welcomed as worth keeping of our identity and history (Basri, et al, 2011). National television still acts as a fundamental purpose and symbol for Malaysians and for society to keep its feet firmly on the ground. In the face of a changing and fast evolving mediascape, it would seem that national television is a dying product, but it will not die so easily, simply because it is still very much a national necessity (Basri, et al, 2011). Although It was suggested that RTM invest in re-branding it identity and program content to remain competitive but most study share audience view that it shouldn’t compromise its national objectives (Basri, et al, 2011)

This study proved that audience are active and there are factors outside the media significantly affect the interpretation of the media message. Findings of this current study also reject the traditional effect theory and prove that media does not have direct powerful influence on its audience. Audiences no longer considered homogenous mass of passive recipient of message.

As far as the state is concerned, independence is evident in the ability of the people to govern their country by themselves without any foreign forces or interference. However, for a nation of diverse races like Malaysia, the spirit of independence should also be assessed through a truly independent way of thinking among the people without of any elements of narrow-mindedness and intolerance. The dynamism of the independence-minded among citizens should be based on the fundamental principles of reason, paramount rule of law and noble principles of religious ethics and virtue. Relatively in ensuring progress and integrity of a country is the value of its people to continue to contribute on a Unification and togetherness. Look at everything that has become history, and make the events as lesson for lasting wellbeing.
8.3 Implication / Contribution of Study

Implications of the study drawn for three parties; academic field of media and audience studies, broadcasters and Malaysia’s decision makers. First and foremost, it is hope that the study will contribute to the scholarly interest and research on media and audience studies. It also can be a beneficial reference to media practitioners who need to keep abreast of the perceptions and misconceptions in media practices.

The study provides information regarding audience reception of 1Malaysia campaign through television news. It illustrates how cultural factors such as race and ethnic background are influential in determining the reproduction of news meanings in a particular ways, which will be useful for broadcasters and policy maker. Study findings that reveal different ethnic audience point of view about news content should be a good guideline for the broadcasters to develop a more comprehensive content that can attract a particular target audience. This information should also help policy makers develop and formulate strategies for effective approach to meet the different interests and needs of each set of its diverse society.

8.4 Relevance of study

Although this study is about Malaysia, its findings are relevant to other empirical context.

Regarded as a typical modernist project of cultural elite (Van, 2001) it is important to look at how Public Service Broadcasting contributes to a common culture that all members of the community could refer to and identity with.

Although PBS seem to be under threat in the midst of new stations, new programming formats, and new communication technologies. Yet, at the same time, it is still very much lauded and welcomed as worth keeping of our identity and history (Basri, et al 2011).
The study that focuses on Malaysia public television, RTM, is very relevant as national television still acts as a fundamental purpose and symbol for Malaysians and for society to keep its feet firmly on the ground. As Basri et al. (2011) argued, national television is still very much a national necessity. Focus group respondents have also acknowledged the importance of RTM as the official government channels. They approved that it has carried out its role in promoting national agenda and delivering government messages beneficial to society and the nation.

RTM has a prevailing objective that is in line with the country’s development plan: the achievement of national unity and harmony. Unity can only be achieved if the people understand, appreciate, and practice the core values of unity. It is important to study if this government tool has succeeded in delivering the intended message of 1Malaysia to the young multi-ethnic audience of Malaysia and has played their role effectively in building national integration.

8.5 Recommendation for Future research

The researcher proposes some recommendations for future studies related to media and building national identity in Malaysia.

1) Future research should do a more comprehensive study of audience reception of media content by studying people of different backgrounds from different areas of the country, including rural settings, so conclusions can be reached from a wider scope.

2) For more intensive research in this field, future researchers should include organization study and the source of the media content in order to get comprehensive and complete information. Both van (1988) and Gee (2001), acknowledges the significance of sources other than textual material for a comprehension of the underlying structures of discourse. They say...
discourse analysts may need to interview editors in an attempt to shed more light on their discursive production. As Wieder et al, (1990) point out, critical analysts need to have a good idea of who the writers are, what they are doing in order to make sense of what they have done or written.

It should be noted that the point of view about inclusion and exclusion in this study is relevant to the genre of news item. It is possible that a focus on other genre might have generate different data.

The study focus on the different ethnic living in the urban area, future research should do a more comprehensive study of audience reception of media content by studying people of different background from different areas of the country, including rural setting so conclusion can be reached from a wider scope. It would also be interesting to study the reception contrast between those different environments.

I would like to conclude by quoting Faruqi (2014) statement that “… there is no universal set of ‘best practices’ or institutional and constitutional design to manage conflicts arising out of ethnic, religious, linguistic and geographical diversity’. There is no one ultimate solution to this scenario. In my opinion the only reason why Malaysia still can survive because majority of Malaysian still have tolerance and respect to each other.

Accommodating diversity, Malaya in 1957 and, even more so, Malaysia in 1963 were inspired by the inclusivity approach that each constituent group can preserve its language, culture and custom and yet participate fully in the nation’s political and economic processes. Integration (or inclusion and empowerment) is based on the recognition of diversity as a defining characteristic of the polity (Faruqi, 2014).

Media should act as a public space where representation and negotiation of diverse identities can be carried out. Similar to Sanem S. study (2011) the findings of this research showed that diverse identity discourses had limited access to the public sphere through the television news, as the dominant collective identity in news item was a
national one. For instance, the mediation of the symbolic nation includes very little other ethnic minorities, indicating their absence in the public sphere. As scholar argued (Sanem, 2011) this situation not only limited the reflection of society as a pluralistic formation but also prevented it from becoming one by restricting diverse and different representations of and discourses about the society.

1Malaysia is like fragrant flowers, inciting the spirit of unity, goodwill of the people, aspects of integration and the creation of the nation of Malaysia as well as the drive to accelerate the achievement of vision 2020. It requires the leadership and people of high integrity, honest, skilled, transparent, and trustworthy in carrying out their responsibilities to the country.

Malaysia still far to achieve its goals, we need to have long-term policies that can provide benefits to all levels of society. We should recognize and celebrate group differences but at the same time, encourage inter-group understanding and interaction that enables cooperation for mutual benefits. It is challenging but it doesn’t mean that Malaysian are not open about it. Through healthy intelligent discussion, Malaysian can decide together to either change or discontinue some policies. Intellectuals discourse on the Constitution will help create a better Malaysia for all Malaysian. Race-based policies could not continue forever to make 1Malaysia a reality. National policies should evolve to help those in need regardless of ethnicity. Focussing on commonalities instead of emphasising on differences is the key that would bring the nation together in the realisation that all Malaysian ultimately headed towards the same destiny.

Leaders should organize and get involve in constructive dialog on Nation building and get Malaysian especially the young minds to speak out their mind to help shape a better Malaysia. Its time for the country leaders to discuss what is best for all Malaysian. We need to have solid commitments and adopt a tolerant attitude to maintain harmony and avoid things that can break us. The approach of moderation is very important to avoid anybody from slipping into extremism.
Appendix A

Participant Consent Form

Project: Television News and building National Identity in Malaysia: A study on Multi-ethnic Youth and 1Malaysia

CONSENT STATEMENT

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. Before we carry out the research, we would like you to read the following statements and confirm your agreement to take part in this study.

Please tick to confirm

☐ I confirm that I have read and understand the Participant Consent form dated............................ •

☐ All the questions that I have about the research have been satisfactorily answered. •

☐ (DELETE/AMEND IF NOT RELEVANT) I give my consent to the recording and transcription of the interviews by the researcher. •

☐ I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time, without giving reason. •

I agree to participate.

Participant’s signature: ______________________________

Participant’s name (please print): ______________________________

☐ Tick this box if you would like to receive a summary of the results of this study (no personal results) by e-mail

E-mail : ______________________________

Date : ______________________________
Appendix B

Demographic Profile Questionnaire

Gender:
   a) Female  
   b) Male

Age:

How would like to identify yourself with response option of  
   a) Malay  
   b) Chinese  
   c) Indian  
   d) Malaysian Malay  
   e) Malaysian Chinese  
   f) Malaysian Indian  
   g) Malaysian

How often do you watch national and public affairs news in Television?  
   a) None  
   b) Less than 30 minute  
   c) 31-60 minute  
   d) More than 60 minute a day

How much attention you pay to the news?  
   a) No attention at all  
   b) Little attention  
   c) Some attention  
   d) Much attention  
   e) Very much attention
Appendix C

Focus Group suggestion questions

1. What do you understand about 1Malaysia concept?

2. Where did you get information about 1Malaysia?

3. What do you think about 1Malaysia program as an approach to foster National identity and unity?

After Video

1. What do you think about the video (TV News) you just watched?

2. Do you think news item contain the element of 1Malaysia that you understand or imagine?

3. Does watching this video make you feel part of Malaysia society?

4. Does it encourage shared experiences in you as a citizen of this country?

5. Does it give you a feeling of one common identity?

6. Does it make you feel proud to be referred as Malaysian?

7. Do you feel proud that Malaysia is made up of various race and ethnic groups?

8. Does it make you feel Proud of the cooperative spirit achieved among the various ethnic groups?
9. Do you think its showing the real level cooperation among ethnics in this country?

10. Does this video make you feel or think that the Power sharing among various ethnic groups is important and a core national attribute that have ensure political stability in the country?

11. Does watching this video encourage Loyalty and commitment to the country?

12. Does it encourage the feeling of love and care for the country more?
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