

ASEAN Together: A Case Study of a Thai Television Program on ASEAN

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Abstract— Where is the knowledge about ASEAN member countries from? Thai people can not learn about ASEAN member countries by direct experience, but they can learn and enjoy through mass media like window to ASEAN neighbors. TV programs concerning ASEAN is an interesting case study. The TV programs on ASEAN present various aspects, such as social, cultural, religious, historical, economic, political, and leisurely facets of ASEAN member countries that are ASEAN daily lives. In Thailand, ASEAN Together is one game show TV program for youth mainly concerning about ASEAN and ASEAN member countries. The images represented ASEAN member countries in the media is important for Thai people's perception on international relation, and Thai people's attitude toward other countries in ASEAN. Also, this research analyses and focuses the proportion and reproduction the content about ASEAN member countries, and the representation of ASEAN member countries embedded in the content of ASEAN together.

Keywords— ASEAN, representation, construction, media, Thai television program

I. INTRODUCTION

Where does knowledge come from? Knowledge is an understanding of society toward something, such as facts, information, and description that are certifiable, reasonable, and regularity. Kanjana [1] stated that we can get the knowledge through learning from various ways, both of world of reality, and world of knowledge and thinking, such as education system, society, religious, and importantly mass media, since it is a significant factor in modern culture. Komjorn [2] showed that people enjoy receiving media and gain knowledge from world of media more than world of reality or direct experience, especially, international relation issue, because most people have no direct experience with international relations. Also, they must learn about other countries through transnational media.

ASEAN community has become a hot issues in the region, and mass media is an important tool to encourage people to have a mutual understanding and knowledge about ASEAN. In Thailand, there are some TV programs concerning ASEAN and ASEAN member countries. Nontharee Hemtanont [3] studied Thai TV program concerning ASEAN aired on national commercial television that are owned by the government such as Chanel 5, and Modernnine TV, and owned by the private under state contracts, such as Chanel 3, and Chanel 7.

Chanel 3 has three TV programs concerning ASEAN, presented in talk show, and mostly in economics news, such as Asia Connect, Jor Loke Setakit (world's economics), Mong Lok Baeb Vikrom (Vikrom's view toward world). Chanel 5 has one TV program concerning ASEAN, presented in cultural tourism documentary, such as Teenee ASEAN (at ASEAN). Chanel 7 has two TV programs concerning ASEAN, present in news presenting, such as Dat Setakit (excellent economics), and Hong Khao Jed See (Chanel7 news). Modernnine TV has one TV program concerning ASEAN present in game show, such as ASEAN Together (Nakkid Talui ASEAN). From the study, there are several contents of these TV programs, such as economics, politics and security, and socio-culture. However, the economic dimension is mostly concerned in Thai TV program concerning ASEAN, especially the content about economic growth. In addition, from my review the TV show schedule of national television stations, there are some TV program concerning ASEAN, aired now, for example; the economic and business programs, such as Turakit Pichit ASEAN or business for achieving ASEAN (Modernnine TV), Ar Yu Noi Ruay Larn Su ASEAN or young businessman achieves ASEAN (Modernnine TV), and AEC Mee Thang Ruay or richness from AEC (Modernnine TV); the social, cultural, and traveling programs, such as Unseen ASEAN (Ch.5), See San ASEAN or the colorful of ASEAN (NBT11), Nitan ASEAN or ASEAN's fairy tale (NBT11), and spirit of Asia (Thai PBS); and the variety programs, such as Roo Wai Chai Wa ASEAN Community or ASEAN coomunity you should know (Ch.5), Yong Yai ASEAN or the connection of ASEAN (Ch.7), and ASEAN news (NBT11).

ASEAN together (Nakkid Talui ASEAN) is a prominent TV program. It is one game show TV program for youth mainly concerning about ASEAN and ASEAN member countries, and it is under the cooperation between Modernnine TV (Thai television station), Zense Entertainment Company (TV production company), and Office of the Basic Education Commission (Thai government sector). The office of Basic Education Commission has the policy to improve the quality of education about changing of economic, social, political, educational and cultural in the region. Also, they have supported for creating the television variety show and game show to promotion the knowledge about ASEAN,

especially deep understanding of the politic, security, economic, social and cultural, scientific and technology of each country in ASEAN community, to student and general people. It is aired on Modernnine TV, Saturday during 10.00-11.00, which is the time for weekend, and youth and student, who are main target, can access television in this time. In term of content, because it is the television program for youth and student, this program present the knowledge about ASEAN and its member countries through entertainments, and the quiz show between students of two schools. There are three questions, and the questions are about interesting knowledge of ASEAN members, and there is an expert from Office of the Basic Education Commission to explain more information.

“Cultural Studies” focuses on representations in cultural texts, including media culture, and their relationship to real-world ideologies of class, gender, race, ethnicity, and nationality. Cultural Studies researchers were among the first to study the effects of newspapers, radio, television, film, and other popular media forms upon their audiences. Contemporary research in Cultural Studies on entertainment media is very interesting.

In this research, I will show the representation of ASEAN member countries embedded in ASEAN together. Thereby, I will focus on the representation in term of constructionist approach. Moreover, in order to understand the construction on representation of ASEAN member countries, this research focuses on two central research questions:

- What is the frequency and proportion of content about ASEAN member countries in “ASEAN Together”?
- What is the character of the representation of ASEAN member countries in the content of “ASEAN Together”?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Representation

Culture can be understood in terms of share meaning (Hall, 1997). In modern world, the media is the biggest tool of spreading these meaning, including representation. The concept of representation has come to occupy a new and an important place in the study of culture and media. Representation connects meaning and language to the culture, and it is an important process for exchange information among member in culture. Nattakrit [4] showed that the circuit of culture is a process for creation meaning and cultural artifact, and it is related directly with representation. This circuit includes representation, identity, production, consumption and regulation articulated endlessly, and affect each other as fig. 1.

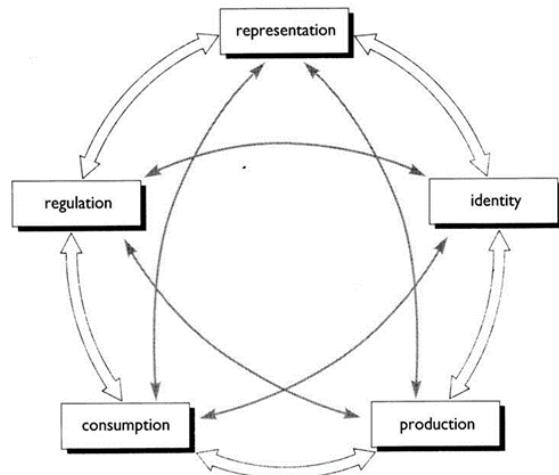


Fig 1. The circuit of culture

According to figure 1 shows that these elements works together; they are all very closely connected, co-constructs, and it is a part of all the others. First, production (construction) is about inventing something and how it is made and encode meaningful basing on economic factor, who pay for the job and people who do it. Second, consumption (reading) is about choosing and paying for something, and concerns on the factor for consumption. Third, regulation is about formal and informal rule and condition that affect to something and how does regulation shape its usage? Fourth, identity is how individuals, consumer groups, corporate, national and international identities established an identification with the object, exploring the ways in which designers attempt to bring together between production and consumption. Final, representation is the establishment of cultural meaning through language, both oral and visual.

For representation, Hall [5] mentioned that it can explain in three concepts; reflective approach, intentional approach, and constructionist approach. First, reflective approach, everything in the real world has its representation namely language. Language function like mirror to reflect true thing that fixed in the word. Second, intentional approach, meaning in representation is intention of individual, speaker, writer, and author to convey and communicate their need to other people. Finally, constructionist approach, representation is constructionist, the meaning of everything in the world is construction. It is the language system, symbol system, or whatever system we are using to present our idea and concept, and communicate to other people. For this research, I will follow the representation in constructionist approach. It is different from reflective approach and intentional approach that I mentioned before. It concerns construction by encoding meaning in the media, and, then, convey the representation to audience.

2. Content analysis

Content analysis is a media research method, focusing on the content of media. Kanjana [6] divide content analysis into two groups: "quantitative content analysis", and "qualitative content analysis".

Quantitative content analysis aims to exam the amount of message sent.

Qualitative content analysis aims to study the meaning and ideology constructed and embedded in the content of media.

For this study, to cover my research problems, the research methods include both quantitative content analysis, and qualitative content analysis.

3. The relevant research

Nattika [7] studied news about ASEAN countries in Thai daily newspapers. She used 92 newspapers (including "thai rath," (The Thai State), "Daily News," "matichon," (The People's Choice) and "krungthep turakij", (Bangkok Business) as data sources to find the frequency, amount of space, format, and values of ASEAN country presentations in Thai daily newspapers. In this discipline there are three standardized values (called "directions"): positive, neutral, and negative. She collected the data on a code sheet, and found that "krungthep turakij" has the highest number of ASEAN news items, followed by "Daily News," "matichon" and "thai rath." Indonesia was the first-ranked country, followed by Singapore, Malaysia, the Philippines, Myanmar, Vietnam, Cambodia, and Brunei. As for the content of news, politics was the most frequent topic, followed by economics and terrorism. For attitude embedded in such news, Cambodia, Vietnam, and the Philippines were always presented in a negative light because of evaluations by foreign news offices. In addition, this study shows that newspapers have a clear role in setting the agenda as they make their selections for publishing.

This research is relevant to my study, because these authors use similar content analysis methods: frequency of news on ASEAN, and analysis of news formats. Moreover, there is the code sheet as a tool for collecting data. Thus Nattika's research is a good guideline for my work.

ThreeDET [8] studied representation of Burmese in Thai films, and basically, it is a qualitative research, using a content analysis to understand the meaning of the film context. He studied 6 Thai films from the 1930s by procedure of purposive Sampling. The theories and concepts used as framework for this study include stereotypes, film character, film portrayal, and the relationship between Thai & Burmese. He found that the accordance of Burmese characters in this study relates to many screenplays which were reproduced the same story. It reflects the beginning era of the Thai film industry, therefore, the film makers noticeably tended to create the national enemy in the figure of Burmese as are distinctly cruel. Furthermore, the interpretation of demographic and psychographic of most characters is simple. They are likely to interact with others in a villainous way. This study is shown the representation of Burmese are still remain consistent throughout media in modern times.

From my point of view, the representation of Burmese in Thai film can show some Thai pointview embedded in the content of Thai film and media, and it is relevant with my study, because, I can guess some trend, stereotypes,

and reproduction in Thai media through characterization and storytelling.

Nonthareeh [9] studied ASEAN television programs in Indonesia. The purpose was to study the format and the content of television programs about ASEAN in Indonesia. The researcher used qualitative methods: in-depth interviews, documentary research and content analysis. The researcher chose the Indonesian program "ASEAN Today" to be the case study. The content of this TV program is presented in English, and through a magazine-style program; that is, stories presenting the diverse content, but connected in one theme. The show was based on the three pillars of ASEAN. The researcher found that this TV program played a range of important roles: surveillance of the environment, correlation of the different parts of society in responding to the environment, transmission of social heritage from one generation to the next, and creating ASEAN awareness. These were the main functions of the TV program. According to this study, the program fulfills its purpose and the policies of its TV station by helping to link the country together under the slogan "think global, act local", and to link ASEAN together as "a dynamic and outward-looking region in an increasingly integrated and interdependent world".

In my opinion, this study could be applied by a Thai media producer to develop and improve Thai TV programming on ASEAN. This study is a relevant example for me as well, especially the analysis of content and format of the program. In addition, Nonthareeh critiqued the important role of this TV program and TV station, applying mass communication theories. I have also adapted this concept to show the important role of television.

Nongnuch [10] studied the role of presenting ASEAN news, focused on a TV program which presents ASEAN news organized around the ASEAN three pillars, and presented content in several ways: storytelling, talk, and interview. She analyzed the role of this TV program in society, using the performance theory of mass media by McQuail (1983), which considers the roles filled by the program: providing information and news, coordinating different parts of society, creating social continuity, entertaining, and campaigning on social, economic, and political issues. She used qualitative methods, in-depth interviews and content analysis. Her results showed that although the program focused on the three pillars of ASEAN, most content was in the socio-cultural dimension.

In my opinion, since some TV programs presenting ASEAN news do not cover all dimensions, this study may help mass media to develop and improve their presentation of ASEAN news in all three basic areas: political-security, economic and socio-cultural.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Population and samples

For method of random sampling, I group the sample into three group; first year (2013), second year (2014), third year (2015), and in each group I made lot with the date of show as number of back-up tapes uploaded to Youtube in each year, and then pick ten lots from each



group, totally 30 tapes, including 99 questions about ASEAN member countries.

B. Research method

I used two main research methods, such as quantitative content analysis and qualitative content analysis. For quantitative content analysis, I will analyse and classify the data from the questions with my data collection sheet. According to study on content of "ASEAN together", there are various content and information about ASEAN member countries, such as history, politics, economics, and socio-culture. So, I will show the content and information presented for each country, and classify in the table including date of air, competitors, country, information and image of country divided to physical and social characteristics, question, brainstorming from student in the game, and the correct answer (see the table in appendix one). For the next process, I will count the frequency of presenting information and content about ASEAN countries from 99 questions collected in data collection sheet, and, then, calculate with preliminary statistics method to find percentage and proportion of presenting ASEAN member countries as question in "ASEAN together", and presenting information and content about ASEAN member countries in "ASEAN together".

Finally, for qualitative content analysis, I analyse the representation of ASEAN member countries constructed in this TV show to find the construction on representation of ASEAN member countries in "ASEAN together" and generally classify into two groups as follows;

1. The representation of ASEAN member countries in physical characteristics

2. The representation of ASEAN member countries in social characteristics (historical-political, economic, and socio-cultural)

Definition and scope of area

- Physical characteristics are used in constructing and presenting ASEAN countries through information and knowledge about geography, location on a map, climate, landscapes and scenery.

- Social characteristics are used in constructing and presenting ASEAN countries through information and knowledge about the activities in society, which are not information and knowledge about physical and geography.

- The historical-political type occurs when ASEAN countries are constructed and presented through information and content about important historical situations in Southeast Asia: the periods of prehistory, ancient kingdoms, ancient wars, European colonization, independence, The Cold War, The Vietnam War, and globalization. These will also include important persons in history: kings, colonial leaders, and nationalist leaders. And for contemporary politics in Southeast Asia, it will include political systems and political organization.

- The economic type occurs when ASEAN countries are constructed and presented through information and content about economic systems in ASEAN: trading networks, investment, finance, goods, industries, services, tourism, income, class and ethnic divisions, economic growth and economic stability.

- The socio-cultural type occurs when ASEAN countries are constructed and presented through information and content about lifestyle of people in ASEAN countries: culture, language, religion, belief, social norms, traditions, education systems, class and ethnic divisions, and popular culture.

IV. RESULTS

Research question 1: What is the proportion and reproduction the content about ASEAN member countries in "ASEAN together"?

To address this research question, I did quantitative content analysis, and the results of the study are as follows.

TABLE I
Frequency and proportion in presenting ten ASEAN member countries as question in "ASEAN together"

Country	Frequency of presenting as question	Percentage
Brunei	1	1.01 %
Cambodia	14	14.14 %
Indonesia	7	7.07 %
Laos	9	9.09 %
Malaysia	9	9.09 %
Myanmar	7	7.07 %
Singapore	6	6.07 %
Thailand	20	20.20 %
Philippines	11	11.11 %
Vietnam	15	15.15 %
Total	99	100 %

According to table 1, it shows frequency and proportion in presenting ten ASEAN member countries as question in "ASEAN together". From 99 questions in 30 sample tapes, the result found that Thailand is presented as question in "ASEAN together" in the first rank with 15 times, or 20.20 percent. Second, Vietnam is presented 15 times, or 15.15 percent. Third, Cambodia is presented 14 times, or 14.14 percent. Fourth, the Philippines was present eleven times, or 11.11 percent. Fifth, there are two countries in this rank, such as Laos, and Malaysia. Each country is present nine times, or 9.09 percent. Sixth, there are two countries, such as Indonesia and Myanmar. Each country is present seven times, or 7.07 percent. Seventh, Singapore is presented six times, or 6.07 percent. Finally,

Brunei is present once, or 1.01 percent. It can show the proportion of presenting ten ASEAN member countries as question in "ASEAN together" like fig 2.

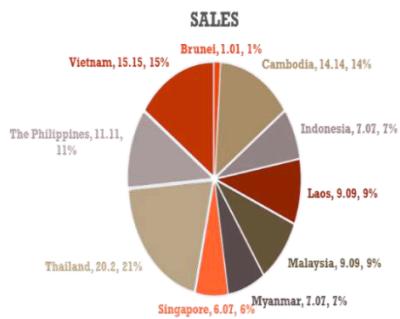


Figure 2. Proportion in presenting ten ASEAN member countries as question in "ASEAN together" (percentage)

Comparing mainland Southeast Asia and maritime Southeast Asia, according to Table 1; frequency and proportion in presenting ten ASEAN member countries in the questions in "ASEAN Together", the number in quantity indicates some meaning from a Thai point of view. "ASEAN Together" presented countries close to Thailand, like those in mainland Southeast Asia, more than those in maritime Southeast Asia. According with Thompson & Chulanee [11] mentioned about the general perception in ASEAN, among mainland nations, there is a notable disconnect between salience (general awareness) of neighboring countries and familiarity.

For the result in collective ASEAN member countries level, the maximums of information and content constructed as representation of ASEAN member countries is physical dimension with 40.48 percent. Second, information about socio-cultural dimension has 34.29 percent. Third, information about historical and political dimension has 14.29 percent. Finally, information about economic dimension has 10.95 percent. It can show the proportion of information and content, constructed and presented as representation of ASEAN member countries like fig 3.

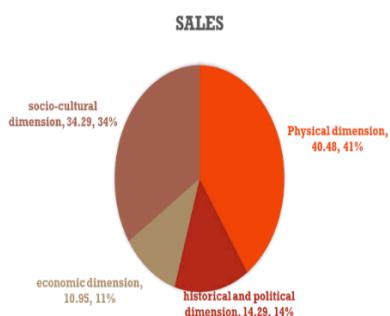


Fig 3. Proportion of information and content constructed as representation of collective ASEAN member countries in "ASEAN together" (percentage)

Discussion of the results in Thai media context

The proportion of the content of each country, and the proportion of information about ASEAN can show the perception and presentation about ASEAN member countries in Thai media context.

In general, the result accords with the content about ASEAN presented in Thai mass media. For example, excluding information about physical dimension which is basic geography and location of each country, the result of my study is consistent with a study about the role of presenting ASEAN news in "ASEAN Journey", a Thai television program of the National Broadcasting Services of Thailand (NBT) presenting various content about ASEAN members, comparable to the content of "ASEAN Together." Nongnuch [12] studied the presenting of ASEAN news. Her research focused on how the TV program presented ASEAN news in three pillars: ASEAN economic community, ASEAN political security community, and ASEAN socio-cultural community. The results showed that the most content is socio-cultural, at 45.73%, as in fig 4.

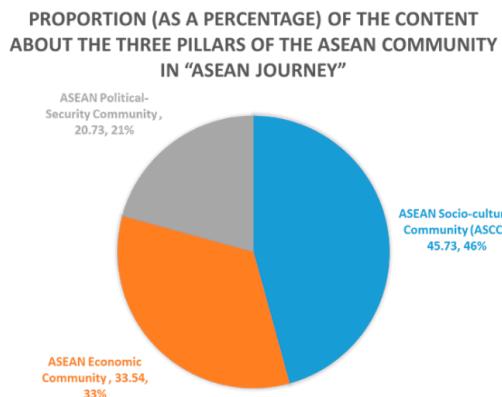


Fig 4. Proportion (as a percentage) of the content about the three pillars of the ASEAN community in the Thai news program "ASEAN Journey"

Socio-cultural content is the most interesting information for any audience. It is about people, including lifestyle, art and culture, tradition, religion, education, and daily life. The audience feels it is easy to understand, and identifies with the people shown. Moreover, the socio-cultural diversity of each country is an interesting topic. Pornchai [13] studied a presentation of cultural contents in the ASEAN Community on a Thai TV documentary program. The presentation of cultural contents can be divided into three groups: (1) In-depth stories about culture in each society, (2) Cultural stories connected with politics and history, and (3) Content based on the ASEAN Socio-cultural Community; for example, human development, social welfare and protection, social justice and rights, ensuring environmental sustainability, building the ASEAN identity, and narrowing the development gap.

The ASEAN agenda in Thai television programming differs depending on the media producer. Dhanakorn [14] mentioned that the content about ASEAN in Thai television programs can be divided into two groups depending on the television station. First, commercial television stations Channel 3 and Channel 7 always present

economic information. Second are state television NBT Channel, and public television station ThaiPBS Channel. NBT Channel always presents knowledge about ASEAN, but not very often and not very effectively. ThaiPBS Channel, as a public television station without political and economic influence, can promote several kinds of information about ASEAN to different target groups.

Research question 2: What is the representation of ASEAN member countries embedded in the content of "ASEAN together"?

To address this research question, I did qualitative content analysis, and the results of the study are as follows.

According to cultural studies, the content in media is not reflectionism, but it is constructionism. "ASEAN together" constructed the representation of ASEAN member countries in two characteristics: physical characteristics and social characteristics

The representation of ASEAN member countries in physical characteristic is geographic and physical information of ASEAN countries. In term of content, it presented elementary and interesting information about geography, location, landscape, weather, natural features, plant, and animal in ASEAN member countries. There are definition about physical characteristic of ASEAN member counties from Thai pointview as center.

The representation of ASEAN member countries in social characteristic is constructed from activity, practice, project, and symbol in ASEAN member countries, such as historical and political, economic, and socio-cultural. For historical and political, "ASEAN together" presented information about ancient kingdom in Southeast Asia, colonial period in Southeast Asia, relation with Thailand in term of history, and contemporary politics. For economic, "ASEAN together" presented information about economic growth and economic stability in ASEAN, goods and trading in ASEAN, and service sector in ASEAN. For socio-cultural, "ASEAN together" presented information about belief and religious, lifestyle, and tradition and norm in daily life. For this type, it showed some similarity and some difference of lifestyle, language, belief, and culture in ASEAN.

In general, the result accords with Komjorn's study [15]. It shows how Southeast Asian countries are constructed in Thai film. He analyzed the content of Thai films which mentioned neighboring and Southeast Asia countries from the past to the present, and did a textual analysis based on narrative method and Thai social context. He found that all films construct images or representations, and that everything in film is selected and elaborated. Thai producers will present Southeast Asia from Thailand's perspective; that is, they present the other countries as if they were marginal areas of Thailand. Thai films always present the similarities and differences between Thailand and other countries in Southeast Asia through language and lifestyle. Finally, Komjorn stated that there are both positive and negative representations of Southeast Asian countries in Thai film, and he posited three relationships between Thai and other Southeast Asia nationalities, namely "enemy," "love-and-hate," and "lover."

V. CONCLUSIONS

ASEAN together plays the role on edutainment about ASEAN and ASEAN member countries to Thai youth, under the theme of game show. The representation of ASEAN member countries embedded in ASEAN together is construction from Thai point of view. They present the image of ASEAN member countries with the narrator of game show genre. It constructed with the concept of amazing, doubtful, myth, and exciting for Thai people by using some techniques, such as creation of binary opposition, and determination point of view, before conveying to audience.

From the result of the study, found that, in overview of ASEAN member countries, the maximums of information and content constructed as representation of ASEAN member countries is physical dimension, followed by information about socio-cultural dimension, information about historical and political dimension, and finally, information about economic dimension. Moreover, in term of constructionism, "ASEAN together" constructed the representation of ASEAN member countries in two characteristics: physical characteristics and social characteristics. Importantly, "ASEAN Together" used first-person narration from a Thai point of view and in a Thai context.

The values the readers can get from this research are learning about the pattern of presenting of ASEAN member countries in Thai media, and learning Thai point of view and Thai perception toward ASEAN member countries embedded in the content of the media and Thai media context.

SUGGESTION

For the next challenge, further studies should focus more on the audience's decoding and interpreting toward representation of ASEAN member countries by using Hall's decoding [15];

1. Preferred reading; audience can understand the message that match with intension of sender.
2. Negotiated reading; audience decodes the message with their cultural context, and change some meaning of message, because mismatches with their experience and some conditions.
3. Oppositional reading; audience denies and protest the message sent by sender, or they decode the message in the oppositional direction, since the message against their experience and some conditions.

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