

# COMMODIFICATION OF CONTENT IN THE SOAP OPERA “SI DOEL ANAK SEKOLAHAN”

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## ABSTRACT

*Commodification is the process of transforming use value into exchange value. The soap opera Si Doel Anak Sekolah is the result of efforts to change from a use value that can entertain into an exchange value that brings financial benefits. These shows attract a large audience, which attractive to advertisers in various ways. This show is repeated every year from 2011 to 2023. This research uses a critical perspective by looking at the political economy of media. The concept of content commodification offered by Vincent Mosco became the scalpel for this research. Data for this study comes from the main source, namely the soap opera "Si Doel Anak Sekolah" on RCTI. Meanwhile, additional data such as observations and documentation were obtained from literature studies, literature and internet searches. The results of research show that the soap opera drama series Si Doel Anak Sekolah contains content commodification in the form of advertisements in the form of billboards, there are also advertisements in the form of squeeze frames. Media institutions have the power determine what programs will be made into new commodities on the television. Every program produced by media institution is a marriage between the economic system and the political system.*

**Keywords:** Content, Economics, Media, Politics, Television Shows

## INTRODUCTION

Currently, the existence of television media is increasing as digital television regulations in Indonesia progress. Because television is an audio-visual medium, it can present films, music, variety shows, reality shows, as well as soap operas and other programs. Involving actors or actresses is a strong attraction for the audience (Tynes, Giang, Williams, & Thompson, 2018) (Abdullah, Mahameruaji, & Rosfiantika, 2018). Soap operas are an industrial technology, soap operas themselves are dramas with an entertainment program format on television media (McQuail, 2016).

Producers, in order to attract the attention of the audience, compete to create interesting broadcast products. One type of television broadcast that is very common in Indonesia is soap operas. Until now, soap operas remain popular and favorite shows in Indonesia. According to the KBB, electronic cinema or what is usually called soap opera is a film made specifically for broadcast on electronic media, such as television (Muzayin, 2007).

Television has a strategy to make a profit by producing television programs that suit the wishes or according to market tastes in order to get high ratings. Rating can be a benchmark for advertisers who want to advertise their products in an event broadcast (Cremonesi, Pagano, & Aiello, 2018). Media institutions and the various things produced are the result of the marriage of the economic system and the political system, and the two have a mutually beneficial relationship (Surahman, 2016).

Commodification has spread to various groups, broadcasting which is often done repeatedly, is able to attract the nostalgia of the audience in a television program which is a show as an alternative entertainment at home (Livingstone, 2014) (Malik, 2019). Even today, the soap opera that was broadcast in the 1980s-2000s maintains simplicity, culture and traditional values, namely the soap opera "Si Doel Anak Sekolahan" and still exists and is liked by its loyal viewers. Apart from that, the soap opera program "Si Doel Anak Sekolahan" is never absent on television screens and has always been an object of the development of audiovisual culture (Cate & Dempsey, 2015). Even though it is simple, the soap opera "Si Doel Anak Sekolahan" can attract upper class audiences. One of the television shows that maintains simplicity, culture and traditional values that are experiencing commodification is the soap opera series "Si Doel Anak Sekolahan" which airs on RCTI. The soap opera Si Doel Anak Sekolahan was produced in the 1990s, but the current broadcast contains many products that only started to be marketed in the 2020s. So this becomes interesting as a commodification study, when compared with previous research. how this soap opera has a very strong appeal to the public.

Generally there are several approaches to understanding the political economy of the media, Mosco offers several approaches, one of which is three concepts, including commodification, which is everything that is commodified or can be considered a commodity, then spatialization, which is a process of overcoming distance barriers. and also time in social life, the latter has the meaning of equating ideology with structured (Vincen, 2009) (Danah, 2018). However, this research only focuses on one approach, namely commodification, in which there are also three forms of commodification, namely content commodification, audience commodification, and worker commodification, but in this research only uses one form of commodification, namely content commodification. In particular, this research focuses on the commodification of content from Moscow, this is inseparable from what has been broadcast on the soap opera Si Doel Anak Sekolahan. Where clearly commodifying content is carried out in terms of displaying advertisements which are deliberately attached to certain parts of the scene in a build-up manner and become part of the broadcast in the scene.

In the realm of communication, there are three forms of commodification. The first is The Commodification of Content, which is a change in messages from a collection of information into a system of meaning in the form of a marketable product. In another explanation, content commodification is referred to as a process of changing messages in a collection of data into a system of meaning in such a way that it becomes a marketable product. Second is Commodification of Audience, which is an object commodified by mass media. The audience here is important for selling to advertisers (Zuboff, 2019) (Dahlberg, 2021). Mass media is formed from a process where media companies produce audiences and convey them to advertisers (Baker & Smith, 2019). Audience commodification is a modification of the role of readers/audiences by media companies and advertisers, from their initial function as media consumers to consumers, especially realized through commercial advertisements (Blumler & Kavanagh, 2002).

Finally, Commodification of Labor, what is commodified by workers are the skills they have in an effort to create content for mass media companies. This commodification of workers is a transformation of the work process in capitalism, where workers' skills and hours of work are made into commodities and rewarded with wages. Labor or worker is a unified concept of conception, or a force of invasion, imagination and work of design and implementation, or the power to carry it out (Surahman, Annisarizki, & Rully, 2019).

But currently the media industry is playing a profitable strategy, carried out by efforts to commodify all forms of broadcasts in order to gain a high rating advantage to reach many advertisers at high rates, that is what the mass media is currently doing in industrial competition (Hobbs & Coiro, 2018). Commodification is a process of transforming use value into exchange value (Bagdikian, 2014). Goods that are called commodities must meet two conditions, namely

use value and exchange value. The use value referred to here is that the goods are useful for fulfilling human life needs, and the exchange value itself is goods that have the selling power to be offered to other people (Edward, 2011). So the soap opera "Si Doel Anak Sekolah" which will be broadcast at the end of June 2023 is an effort to transform use values. The broadcast of the soap opera "Si Doel Anak Sekolah" is a transformation of use value, namely that the soap opera is very legendary and is able to entertain its loyal viewers even though it has often been broadcast repeatedly, thus generating an exchange value in the form of sponsorship and advertising which can bring in financial profits.

By airing the soap opera Si Doel Anak Sekolah again on the RCTI screen at the end of June 2023, there will be nothing different from the previous storyline, namely since its initial broadcast in 1994. The soap opera Si Doel is still packaged neatly and always makes the audience nostalgic and entertained. . Until now, RCTI still wants to re-air the soap opera "Si Doel Anak Sekolah" of course because of market demand, popularity and success of the soap opera Si Doel Anak Sekolah.

This show has a large fan base and always achieves high ratings during its broadcast. Therefore, television stations want to take advantage of its popularity by broadcasting reruns to continue to attract viewers and get high advertising revenues. Therefore, there is something slightly different since the start of broadcast in 1994 and broadcast in 2023, namely the increasing number of sponsors and advertisements who want to work together and both want to make a profit. By looking at this background, in the soap opera "Si Doel Anak Sekolah" there is commodification, which is based on the researchers' analysis that in the soap opera "Si Doel Anak Sekolah" in the past five years or from 2018-2022, even up to now in 2023, it has been broadcast. repeated every year.

Then the researcher wanted to know about commodification in the soap opera "Si Doel Anak Sekolah". This commodification is aimed at ensuring that the soap opera Si Doel is truly legendary and able to entertain its loyal viewers even though it has often been broadcast repeatedly, thereby generating exchange value in the form of sponsorship and advertising which can bring financial benefits, and is still trusted by advertisers. This is the background for the author to choose the soap opera "Si Doel Anak Sekolah" as the research subject, because there is commodification or a form of use value that becomes exchange value in order to gain profits in the broadcast of the soap opera "Si Doel Anak Sekolah".

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

This research uses a qualitative approach which aims to obtain complete information regarding the commodification process that occurs in the soap opera "Si Doel Anak Sekolah". The perspective used is a critical perspective from the political economy of media with the concept of content commodification as offered by Mosco being the scalpel in this research. This research focuses on the commodification of content in the soap opera "Si Doel Anak Sekolah" which will air in 2023 and be broadcast by RCTI. With data collection techniques using observation and documentation by collecting various necessary data and collecting references and literature related to this research. Data from observations, literature searches and observations were analyzed. Then, from the results of the analysis, further interpretation and study are carried out to obtain relevant research results. In the process, researchers carried out observations for 3 months starting from June - August 2023. From the pre-research, it was found that there were 3-4 scenes in each broadcast every day that contained build-up product advertisements. Then, from this data, researchers carried out an analysis based on Moscow's views regarding commodification. After further analysis, it becomes more narrow and specific to the commodification of content.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

The soap opera "Si Doel Anak Sekolah" is the only Indonesian soap opera that is truly phenomenal. His cinematographic work has really touched the hearts of the Indonesian people, even though it has been 29 years since its first production in 1994 until now, this soap opera is still popular, and it has been proven that the soap opera "Si Doel Anak Sekolah" has been re-aired many times by TV stations and its audience is still the same. loyal, in fact quite a few of the

generation who, when the soap opera "Si Doel Anak Sekolahan" started playing, were still toddlers, now love the soap opera.

The soap opera "Si Doel Anak Sekolahan" first aired on the private television station in Indonesia RCTI in 1994-2000, then aired on INDOSIAR only in 2002-2004, then aired again on RCTI in 2011 until now, precisely at the end of June 2023.



Figure 1 Photo of the cast of the soap opera Si Doel Anak Sekolahan (Source: <https://www.dream.co.id/showbiz/12-foto-dulu>), accessed in 2023

Repeated broadcasts, and still very entertaining for loyal fans to this day, it is not surprising that the soap opera "Si Doel Anak Sekolahan" is made into a television program that can be used as a commodity and is oriented towards achieving high ratings, so that advertisers are interested in advertising their products.

The broadcast of the soap opera "Si Doel Anak Sekolahan" which will return at the end of June 2023 certainly cannot be separated from what Mc Cavitt, Pringle, and Starr Nuraeni & Mentari (2013) said that there are four main factors that can influence whether it is produced or not. producing and broadcasting a program, including the audience, TV station managers and owners, advertisers and sponsors, as well as regulators, including the soap opera "Si Doel Anak Sekolahan" which often experiences repeated broadcasts every year, even now in 2023, and this proves that This soap opera has become a tempting commodity or selling item on the television screen and is still very attached and has its own place in the hearts of loyal fans of the soap opera "Si Doel Anak Sekolahan".



Figure 2 Shows on the soap opera "Si Doel Anak Sekolahan" (Source: Researcher's Findings), accessed in 2023)

The image is a re-airing of the soap opera drama series "Si Doel Anak Sekolahan" on the private television screen RCTI. The picture above was actually taken on June 26, 2023. The soap opera series "Si Doel Anak Sekolahan" has always been a favorite show among Indonesian people. Even though it was screened repeatedly, the soap opera "Si Doel Anak Sekolahan" managed to attract and captivate the audience. Not just nostalgia, the soap opera "Si Doel Anak Sekolahan" seems to be a portrait of the social life of Indonesian society. The soap opera show "Si Doel Anak Sekolahan" is very full of the warmth of a Betawi family, the cuteness that is seen looks so natural that the strong principles of life are presented by the soap opera show "Si Doel Anak Sekolahan".

Based on several similar studies, there are several things that can strengthen the results of the research on Commodification in the soap opera "Si Doel Anak Sekolahan," including, Sigit Surahman, Annisarizki, Rully (2019) focusing on the commodification of content, audiences and workers on the Instagram account @salman\_al\_jugjawy, then Made et al., (2021) focuses on commodification in the Indonesian Idol Season 10 television program, and Rahayu et al (2020) focuses on the commodification of teenage marriage in the soap opera Pengantin Dini on ANTV. By looking at similar research and that which has been carried out by several previous related researchers, namely previous research is broader in scope, and it can also be seen that the research that has been carried out provides results in scientific fields related to analyzing the commodification process. This research makes a difference/renewal, in which the researcher carries out the process of commodifying content with a different object, namely by taking the object from the soap opera "Si Doel Anak Sekolahan", using the political economy theory of media according to Vincent Mosco.

Each television soap opera program has its own characteristics, and also has use value and exchange value. Like the research explained by Rahayu et al (2020), which explains the commodification that occurs in teenage marriages in the soap opera early brides on ANTV. This research also explains that teenage marriages are filled with conflict and drama, so they are much sought after by the public and have selling points in the form of advertisements embedded in the soap opera Pengantin Dini on ANTV in the form of running text and squeeze frames. Meanwhile, the soap opera Si Doel can provide use value to the audience, namely being able to entertain, and there are often continuous productions every year. The soap opera "Si Doel Anak Sekolahan" has exchange value in it, in the form of advertising revenue in the form of billboards and squeeze frames.

In this case, of course there are differences and slight similarities in an advertising broadcast, but the difference between the soap opera "Si Doel Anak Sekolahan" and the soap opera Pengantin Dini on ANTV, the difference is that the soap opera Si Doel is legendary and always undergoes continuous production and is in the genre of drama, comedy, family and also romance, as well as highlighting elements of typical Betawi culture, while the soap opera Early Marriage is a youth drama genre which tells the story of a husband and wife who have been married since they were teenagers as a couple who easily quarrel, are mentally immature, and are not economically ready, and students High school seniors can get married and still pursue formal education.

There is content commodification that occurs in the soap opera "Si Doel Anak Sekolahan" which will be broadcast in 2023. Mosco (2009) (Anwar, 2014) explains that commodification is the process of the use value of a good or service becoming an exchange value that can produce a profit. Use value itself refers more to the benefits or uses derived from watching the soap opera. The soap opera Si Doel can provide useful value to the audience, namely that it can be entertaining, because of the soap opera's presents an interesting story and does not make the audience bored, while the exchange rate itself focuses more on the exchange or economic value generated from soap operas in the media industry. The soap opera "Si Doel Anak Sekolahan" has exchange value in it, in the form of advertising revenue. This legendary soap opera usually attracts a lot of viewers, which is an attraction for advertising companies to broadcast advertisements during the show. From this, it can generate income for television stations that broadcast the soap opera "Si Doel Anak Sekolahan". This reflects how the soap opera Si Doel was able to become a profitable commodity for media industry stakeholders.

It has been explained that in the soap opera "Si Doel Anak Sekolahan" which will be broadcast again at the end of June 2023, there is content commodification in the form of

advertisements in the form of billboards, and there are also advertisements in the form of squeeze frames. Advertisements in the form of billboards and squeeze frames on the Si Doel show usually last 5-10 seconds.

Billboard advertisements themselves are advertising images on the shoulders of the road when soap operas are in progress. Not only does it show a product, but it can also promote a certain event which is usually incidental and not related to deadlines, while advertising in the form of a squeeze frame is usually with the condition of the TV screen containing the program shrinking proportionally and advertisements appearing around it, and it depends on forms and standards applied by each TV. There are also squeeze frame advertisements in the L shape, some are rectangular. However, in the soap opera "Si Doel Anak Sekolahan" the squeeze frame advertisement is shown in an L shape.



Figure 3 Photo of advertisements in the form of billboards and squeeze frames on the soap opera "Si Doel Anak Sekolahan" (Source: Researcher's Findings), accessed in 2023)

Commodification of content in the context of soap operas occurs when the television program is not only presented for entertainment, but also to generate profits from advertising. The billboard and squeeze frame advertising in the soap opera Si Doel reflects how media content such as soap operas is exploited for commercial purposes. Soap opera producers and television stations try to take advantage of the popularity of soap operas to attract more advertisements and promote other products, which ultimately can influence the original purpose of the soap opera. From this, it shows that the political economy of the media plays an important role in the way media content is presented, then packaged and ultimately used to gain profit.

The choice of product or advertising brand in the soap opera Si Doel definitely includes a decision between the parties involved. In the soap opera Si Doel the advertisements appear in the form of billboards and squeeze frames like the picture above showing that the product or brand advertisement being broadcast is in the form of food and drink products. RCTI and the production team for the soap opera Si Doel may consider the suitability between the food advertisements chosen and the profile of the soap opera's target audience. The food products chosen to be advertised can also be in accordance with the preferences and food habits of the audience that soap operas generally target, so why do food products or brands such as (Mie Sedap or Ale-Ale) that want to show their products appear and appear on the soap opera Si Doel because of the product? The company wants to promote its brand through Si Doel broadcasts with the aim of generating profits.

Because the soap opera "Si Doel Anak Sekolahan" is an old soap opera and is not like today's soap operas where in between scenes there are promotional scenes which are done unnaturally, and suddenly a scene appears where there are two employees who have nothing to do with the storyline. soap opera, is eating a snack (the advertised product), and that is quite disturbing to the comfort of the audience, while the soap opera "Si Doel Anak Sekolahan" is a soap opera from the 90s and there are no scenes like that scene, but just limited to promoting

advertising products through rearranging scenes. In this study, researchers succeeded in identifying the existence of 3 to 4 scenes that included build-up product advertisements in each daily broadcast. Through the data collected, this research then carried out an in-depth analysis referring to Moscow's perspective regarding the concept of commodification. At a further stage of analysis, the research focus becomes increasingly focused and specific, especially in the context of content commodification. This analysis provides a deeper understanding of how content in mass media is not only produced and presented as information alone, but is also directed at the economic dimension involving product marketing. By narrowing the focus to the commodification of content, this research is able to highlight how content becomes a tradable object, illustrating the transformation of value from information to commodity in the modern media world.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings and discussion of commodification in the soap opera "Si Doel Anak Sekolah", it can be concluded that the soap opera broadcast program "Si Doel Anak Sekolah" is part of the commodification process which was formed to maximize the profits of the broadcasting media, namely RCTI. Every television broadcast program cannot simply be seen as a broadcast product which is what it is, because everything created by a media institution is the result of a combination of various factors, namely the audience, station managers and owners, advertisers and sponsors, and regulators. It can be seen from the soap opera "Si Doel Anak Sekolah" that there is commodification of the content in it, namely in the form of advertisements in the form of billboards, and there are also advertisements in the form of squeeze frames. Advertisements that appear in the soap opera drama series "Si Doel Anak Sekolah" often appear in the form of billboards and advertisements in the form of squeeze frames, and display product advertisements in the form of food and drink products.

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