

Media Framing of Women with Tattoos on Indonesian Online News Portals

Anita Rosana – Prodi Ilmu Komunikasi FISIP Universitas Nasional, anita.rosana@civitas.unas.ac.id
Lestari Nurhajati – FIKOM Institut Komunikasi dan Bisnis LSPR, lestari.n@lspr.edu

Abstract

Tattooing in Indonesia has been practiced since prehistoric times, and it is a part of local culture that has been widely practiced by rural tribes in various parts of the country. For local people, such as the Mentawai, Kalimantan, and Papuans, tattoos are related to their traditional beliefs. Tattoos then became a contemporary cultural art where tattoos are now seen as part of a modern lifestyle. In its development, the meaning of tattoos has changed, including the assumption that modern tattoo users are dominated by men and groups of “thugs.” This assumption raises various perceptions and prejudices, especially among women who use tattoos as part of their body art. These various perceptions certainly cannot be separated from various media reports related to the issue of tattoos on women’s bodies. The purpose of this study was to find out how the media actually framed the issue of tattooed women on online news portals in Indonesia.

The tribes in Indonesia that are known to carry out the body tattoo tradition include the Dayak tribe in Kalimantan, the Mentawai tribe in West Sumatra, the Moi tribe in Papua, the tribe in Bali, and several other areas. This *raja* tradition is closely related to the beliefs and symbols of the identity of each tribe which has a specific meaning for those who practice it. Olong (2006) stated that tattoos are a ‘biological children’ of Indonesian culture. This is reinforced by Rosa (1994) who stated that traditional tattoos should be included in the traditional ritual art family because of the relationship between tattoos and the beliefs of the people of each tribe. Furthermore, Rosa (1994) also emphasized that traditional Indonesian people have been tattooing since prehistoric (neolithic) times, which were then passed down from generation to generation.

After entering the realm of popular culture, tattoos are no longer just male domination. Apart from the controversial views on tattoos, tattoo enthusiasts are

also now in demand by women in Indonesia. For example, female celebrities in

Indonesia who openly display photos of their tattoo motifs on social media, such as Sheila Marcia, Adhistry Zara, Alexandra Gottardo, and others. Tattoos are now a form of body modification that is aesthetic and a part of lifestyle.

Women are known to be associated with beauty and life style. The desire to beautify themselves and have an ideal body is the dream of most women. Many things are done to be able to have an ideal face and body, from dieting, exercising, even having plastic surgery. Likewise with tattoos. Tattoo technology has even now been used for beauty purposes, such as tattooing eyebrows, where it is no longer necessary to make eyebrows manually using cosmetic tools. Eyebrows are tattooed permanently and formed according to consumer taste.

Mass media, including online news media, is a means of building public opinion in people's lives. Therefore, the study of media framing becomes significant to be studied more deeply. Theoretically and practically, the relationship between culture, media, and behavior, as well as social change in a society, cannot be separated. Including when the media frame an event massively with a discriminatory approach, it is not impossible that this will affect the reading community. This study uses Entman's framing analysis technique on the top 5 coverages from news portals in Indonesia in early August and late/mid July 2022 (Liputan6.com, Yahoo Berita, Intisari Online, Suara.com, and Intipseleb.com). Robert Entman's framing analysis looks at how the media frame and construct reality through news and emphasizes how the media describes the selection process and highlights certain aspects of reality.

The study results show that some media generally take a different point of view. Two media outlets, Liputan6.com trying to write about tattoos as part of art, and Suara.com, taking news from abroad. In comparison, the other three media emphasized more that Tattoos are something that is not good for women. Two media outlets, Yahoo News and Intipseleb.com, highlighted that women who are kind and innocent do not like to open clothes and are not worthy of using tattoos. Alternatively, the tattoo is something that "needs" to be hidden from the female body. Such prejudices are strengthened in the writing of both news stories. Meanwhile, in the case of Intisari Online, it is depicted why the women of the Apatani hinterland should be tattooed and clamped on their noses so that they look ugly and not be kidnapped by other tribes. Again the tattoo represents something that is considered flawed. The difference in media framing is clearly visible, especially closely related to the policies and vision, and mission of the media.

In the end, we can see below that the news framing that describes the relationship between tattoos and women is still very biased. Women are reported

as mere objects. Of the five news stories, only one news story quoted a source from his female side (even if it was a quote from a foreign media from the UK, Mirror Daily). Meanwhile, the other four news stories did not conduct direct or indirect interviews with the women reported.

Keywords: media online framing, women with tattoos