

**A POSTCOLONIAL ANALYSIS OF  
ADVERTISEMENTS IN *THE BRITISH NORTH  
BORNEO HERALD***

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ADVERTISEMENTS IN *THE BRITISH NORTH  
BORNEO HERALD***

by

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BNBCC	The British North Borneo (Chartered) Company
GMP	General Mode of Production
LMP	Literary Mode of Production
GI	General Ideology
AuI	Authorial Ideology
AI	Aesthetic Ideology

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**ANALISIS PASCA KOLONIAL TERHADAP IKLAN DALAM *THE  
BRITISH NORTH BORNEO HERALD***

**ABSTRAK**

Sabah, atau dulunya dikenali sebagai Borneo Utara, merupakan sebuah negeri di bawah pemerintahan Inggeris dari tahun 1881 sehingga 1963. *The British North Borneo Herald* diterbitkan oleh Syarikat Berpiagam Borneo Utara British dan diedarkan dari 1883 sehingga 1941. Kajian ini mengkaji hubungan antara pengiklanan, konsumerisme dan penghasilan teks dengan menggunakan iklan-iklan yang diambil daripada *The British North Borneo Herald*. Objektif kajian ini adalah meneliti maksud teks dalam iklan kolonial yang dipilih daripada *The British North Borneo Herald*, mengenal pasti ideologi konsumerisme dalam iklan *The British North Borneo Herald*, dan mengkaji hubungan antara ideologi konsumerisme dan penghasilan teks melalui *Materialist Criticism* yang diperkenalkan oleh Eagleton (1978). Sebanyak 34 iklan yang diterbitkan dari tahun 1937 sehingga 1941 dipilih berdasarkan empat kriteria. Pertama, iklan berkenaan mestilah mengandungi visual dan isi iklan. Kedua, iklan berkenaan diambil daripada lima tahun terakhir penerbitan. Ketiga, produk yang diiklankan berasal dari Britain dan sekutunya. Keempat, iklan yang dipilih mempromosikan barangan keperluan dan barangan mewah. Dua kerangka teori digunakan untuk kajian ini iaitu semiotik sosial (*Grammar of Visual Design* (Kress dan van Leeuwen, 1996) dan Halliday (2004)) dan analisis Marxisme (*Materialism Criticism* (Eagleton, 1978)). Berdasarkan analisis semiotik pada 34 iklan, terdapat tiga kategori diperkenalkan iaitu kesihatan, gaya hidup dan hubungan. Perbincangan mengenai kategori-kategori ini mengambil kira kerangka Eagleton. Seterusnya, analisis Marxisme dilakukan untuk mengkaji

hubungan antara pengiklanan, konsumerisme dan penghasilan teks. Kajian ini juga mengambil kira perbincangan daripada pos-kolonialisme. Perbincangan mendapati bahawa komponen ideologi (*General Ideology*, *Authorial Ideology* dan *Aesthetic Ideology*) memainkan peranan dalam membentuk kandungan iklan. Selain itu, dapatan kajian juga mendedahkan ketidakseimbangan dalam hubungan antara penjajah dan orang yang dijajah apabila penduduk Borneo Utara ditindas dalam dan daripada iklan kolonial yang dihasilkan. Kajian ini diharap dapat menyumbang kepada pemahaman ideologi dan penghasilan teks pengiklanan kolonial melalui perspektif teori sastera Marxisme dan analisis semiotik sosial. Oleh itu, perbincangan mengenai pengiklanan, konsumerisme dan penghasilan teks menunjukkan bagaimana periklanan menyebarkan ideologi konsumerisme di kolonial Borneo Utara.



**A POSTCOLONIAL ANALYSIS OF ADVERTISEMENTS IN *THE BRITISH  
NORTH BORNEO HERALD***

**ABSTRACT**

Now known as Sabah, North Borneo was under the British administration from 1881 until 1963. *The British North Borneo Herald* was published by The British North Borneo (Chartered) Company and circulated from 1883 until 1941. This study discussed the relationship between advertising, consumerism, and text production by utilising *The British North Borneo Herald* advertisements. The objectives of this research are to examine the meanings of the text in the selected colonial advertisements found in *The British North Borneo Herald*; to ascertain the ideology of consumerism in the selected colonial advertisements found in *The British North Borneo Herald* in a colonial environment, and to study the relationship between the ideology of consumerism and the production of text through Eagleton's Materialist Criticism. Thirty-four advertisements, published between 1937-1941, were selected based on four criteria: the advertisements must have both visual and body copy; the advertisements were selected from the last five years of *The British North Borneo Herald* publication; the products advertised were originated from Britain and its allies, and the advertisements chosen promote essential and luxury products. Two types of analysis were utilised for this study: social semiotic analysis (Halliday's Transitivity Model (2004) and Kress and van Leeuwen's Grammar of Visual Design (1996/2006)) and Marxist analysis (Eagleton's Materialist Criticism (1978)). Based on the semiotic analysis on 34 advertisements, there are three categories of needs and desires: health, lifestyle, and relationship. The discussion on these categories considers Eagleton's framework for an in-depth analysis. Next, a

Marxist analysis was conducted to analyse the relationship between advertising, consumerism, and the production of text. The discussion also includes a discourse on postcolonialism. The discussion reveals that the components of ideology (General Ideology, Authorial Ideology, and Aesthetic Ideology) shape the content of advertisements. Besides that, the findings also expose the imbalance relationship between the coloniser and the colonised as the colonised were marginalised in and from the colonial advertisements. This research will contribute to the understanding of ideology and production of colonial advertisements from the perspective of Marxist literary theory and social semiotic analysis. Therefore, the discussion on advertising, consumerism and the production of text illustrates how advertising works in disseminating consumerist ideology in colonial North Borneo.

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Introduction

The British Empire covered many parts of the world, including Tanah Melayu, Sabah, and Sarawak. The colonialization witnessed the raw resources of these colonies being plundered to the mother country. Some were then manufactured in the United Kingdom and brought back to the colonies as a lucrative business. On top of that, the products from the UK were also promoted, advertised, and sold in the colonies. Colonies were seen as marketplaces, which is the focus of this study.

The study of colonial advertisements, which many other researchers seem to overlook as postcolonial discourse, usually looks at things through the lens of anti-colonialism. This discourse focuses on how the colonialist view shaped, for example, the way the colonized lands, people, and culture were written and described in colonialist writing. Besides the description of the colonized, the colonisers pushed particular agendas in their writings, informing the world how backward, inferior, and primitive the natives were compared to the westerners.

This colonialist view does not only perpetuate in the form of travel writing and fiction but also advertisements. The advertisements help send the colonialist message to the audience besides promoting their products. Postcolonial criticism is used to discuss the colonialist message related to some postcolonial constructs such as mimicry, othering, and ambivalence, to name a few.

Therefore, other than briefly touched upon the discourse of colonialism, this study intends to study the ideology of consumerism and text production by analysing selected colonial advertisements published in *The British North Borneo Herald*. By bringing postcolonialism and Marxism, paired with a semiotic analysis, into the

discussion, this research provides an understanding of the production of advertising texts in the era of British colonization.

North Borneo is one of the states in Malaysia, located in East Malaysia, together with Sarawak and Labuan. It is currently known as Sabah and dubbed the Land Below the Wind. North Borneo gained its name as it is located in the northern part of Borneo Island. Before its independence in 1963, Sabah or North Borneo was under several administrations, memorably under The British North Borneo (Chartered) Company (henceforth BNBCC). The Chartered Company governed North Borneo for sixty years (see Tregonning, 1958/1965), starting from 1881 to 1941, and finally surrendered its control over North Borneo in 1946 to the British government shortly after the end of the Second World War (Lunkapis, 2013; Tregonning, 1965). During its administration, BNBCC published a government newspaper, *The British North Borneo Herald and Official Gazette* (henceforth *The British North Borneo Herald*), circulated from 1883 until 1941.

BNBCC, a chartered company, was a profit-making company aimed to satisfy the British's interests (Galbraith, 1965). The notion of generating profits is reflected in the Company's newspaper, *The British North Borneo Herald*, as the newspaper relied on subscription and advertisers. The information on the subscription and advertising in the newspaper is disclosed later in the chapter. The advertisements essentially paid for the newspaper to continue its publication. The advertisements in this newspaper may disclose the consumption patterns of the North Bornean readers. They also may show how the consumers were exploited by product manufacturers and advertisers in the era of British colonialism.

## **1.2 Background of the Study**

Western powers, the British included, were interested in the Far East and the South China Sea, mainly due to the flourishing commercial values of the China trade (Wright, 1970). The British's Far East policy was founded on two factors. The first one is the obligation in maintaining and protecting the trade route to East Asia. The second factor is the "evolution of imperial policy" (Wright, 1970, p. ix). These two factors are related because the presence of other Western powers in the South China Sea and the surrounding territories would jeopardise the position Britain had in China and the South China Sea. This era of rivalries between the great Western powers would cause the British to lose its commerce control, prestige and world power if it did not enter the rivalries of imperial expansion (Galbraith, 1965).

The usual route to travel to China from the Straits of Malacca or Sunda was through the South China Sea, between Borneo and the Malay Peninsula. However, the safety of the trading vessels passing this route was threatened by the Illanun and Balanini pirates (Wright, 1970). To counter this problem, the British searched for a naval station in Borneo and decided to annex Labuan in the 1840s. Besides becoming the British naval base, Labuan was also conquered to exploit its coal resources. Unfortunately, during the late 1850s, Britain lost its interest in northwest Borneo because Labuan was not profitable due to its underutilisation as a naval base. In addition, companies managing the coal mines on the island failed in generating profits (Galbraith, 1965; Wright, 1970).

The British's flame of interest to control the northern Borneo territory reignited from the pressure of other powers' interests towards Borneo (Galbraith, 1965; Wright, 1970). Countries such as Italy, Germany and the United States had taken an interest in Borneo in the 1870s, causing Britain to review its imperial

policy. British's focus on northern Borneo was heightened with the Dent-von Overbeck's syndicate, operating in the north of Borneo. The Germans were interested in the coalition, and the British's position in Borneo was threatened (Wright, 1970). The Dent-von Overbeck's association later became the basis of The British North Borneo (Chartered) Company.

The founding of BNBOCC was started not by the British but rather by Americans. An American Consul, Charles Lee Moses, who wanted immediate wealth, bought cessions from the Sultan of Brunei for the territory at the north of Borneo. Later, he sold the cession papers to two American merchants, Joseph W. Torrey and Thomas B. Harris. The latter two started a company called 'The American Trading Company of Borneo' with their Chinese partners (Tregonning, 1965). However, this company was not successful in obtaining financial support in the United States. The United States government did not agree with Moses's securing the cessions. It also did not support investments outside of the country; therefore, Torrey's effort to ensure capital from the United States was turned down. The company underwent several changes in administration and lastly passed to Baron von Overbeck and Alfred and Edward Dent (Black, 1983).

Realising that an enterprise can only be successful in North Borneo only with the support of the British, von Overbeck agreed to ally with a British administrator, William Hood Treacher. The enterprise was sold to the British because von Overbeck failed to sell the enterprise to Viennese businessmen. The agreement in the lease of a new cession with the Sultan of Sulu had a binding clause – the transfer of the area to another ownership needed the consent of the British government. Dent and von Overbeck decided to seek a royal charter from the British government to gain ample protection from the government (Wright, 1970).

Then, the Dent-Overbeck association, with the help from Treacher, turned the company into a British company by securing a British Royal Charter, and this led to the formation of The British North Borneo (Chartered) Company (Galbraith, 1965; Lim, 2008; Tregonning, 1965; Wright, 1970). The British North Borneo Company was authorised therefore by the Charter:

1. To govern the territory based on the Sulu and Brunei cessions
2. To protect the religions and the customs of the locals
3. To stop slavery and abolish it gradually
4. To involve in commerce and agriculture

(Wright, 1970, p. 166)

BNBCC was formed to govern North Borneo and to “improve, develop, and cultivate any lands in the areas granted” and gain profits and revenues through the trading of commodities, merchandise and natural resources from North Borneo (Kahin, 1947, p. 44). The chartering of the British North Borneo Charter Company indicates that the Company was a profit-making, money-driven enterprise, generating income to the benefits of the home country.

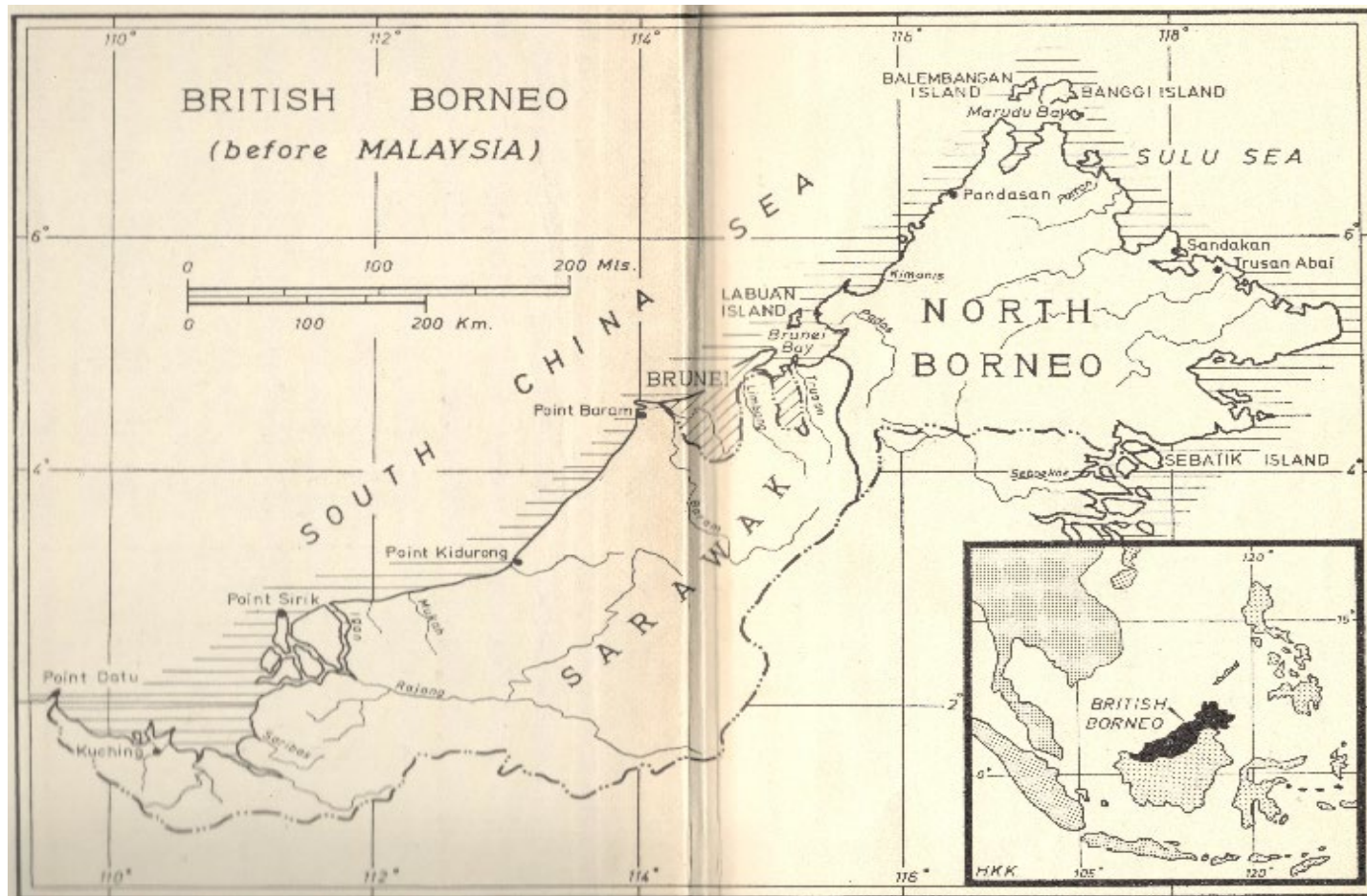


Figure 1.1: The Map of the British Borneo

(Source: Wright, 1970)



The North Borneo government set up a newspaper publication, the first newspaper published in North Borneo (Jabatan Cetak Kerajaan Sabah, 2006). BNBBCC's newspaper publication started as *The British North Borneo Herald and Official Gazette* circulated from 1883 until 1941. An excerpt from the *Editor's Notice*<sup>1</sup> section of the first newspaper edition explains the function of this newspaper:

...The paper is to be the Official Organ of the Government, and it will also contain, besides local news, information as to the progress of planting and other industries in the country, reports on exploration and scientific prospecting, notes on natural history, and every kind of information likely to be valuable to those who take an interest in the country, whether at home or abroad.

Besides containing news and information on various industries and fields, the newspaper also had one advertisement section. According to the *Editor's Notice*, the newspaper required subscribers to sustain the newspaper and to have at least a monthly publication. The production of a newspaper or government gazette is essential to the colonial government because there was a need to "propagate and document [the government's] administrative regulations and decisions" (Spennemann, 2017, p. 68). The advancement of technology in the press made it possible for the British settlements to publish newspapers, and the British published the most imperial newspapers among other colonial powers such as French, Portuguese, Dutch, Spanish and Belgium, as illustrated in the figure below:

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<sup>1</sup>*Editor's Notice, The British North Borneo Herald, 1<sup>st</sup> March 1883*

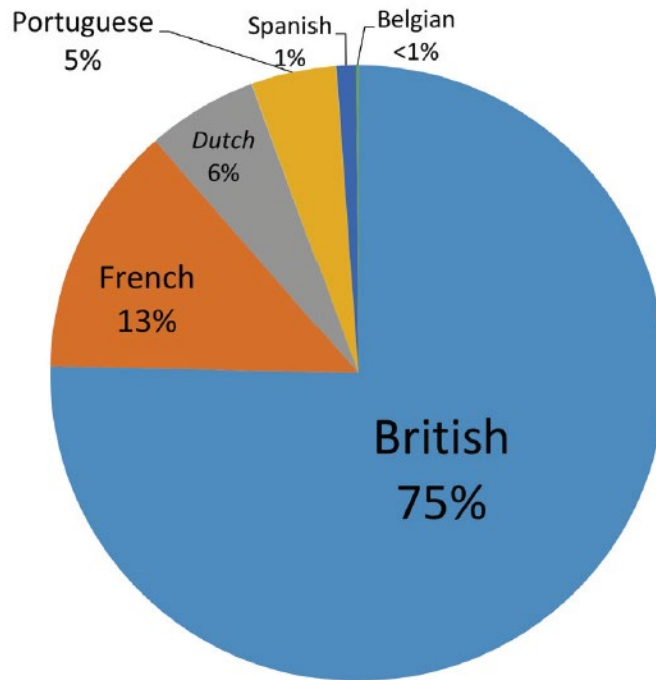


Figure 1.2: European imperial settlements with at least one newspaper in the 1930s  
(Source: McCracken, 2015)

Every settlement of the British Empire had its newspaper. The advancement of technology and the British’s liberal approach to a free press facilitated this thriving newspaper industry in newspaper production and news-gathering. The government gazettes could also become commercial newspapers if the population were too small. This could be done by including non-official content such as advertisements to generate income. (Spennemann, 2017).

For this study, the data used are The British North Borneo Herald advertisements. The advertisements in this newspaper cover product and service promotion and notices from the government offices and departments. But, before discussing the path of this thesis, it is crucial to be aware of the North Borneo population and the level of education to understand *The British North Borneo Herald* readership.

The Government made several attempts to hold a proper census of the North Borneo population (Tregonning, 1965, p. 71-72). The first attempt to have a census was in 1891; however, it was not successful for several reasons, such as the lack of administrators in large areas and the failure of estates to respond to the government's hasty efforts. In 1891, there were around twenty estates available on North Borneo (Tregonning, 1965, p. 136). From the second census in 1911, it was estimated that the North Borneo population was 208,183; however, it was incomplete because of the difficulties in estimating the number of people in the interior area such as the Muruts'. A thorough census in 1921 approximated that the population was 263,252, with the Europeans being 665 people out of the total population. In 1931, the North Borneo population was estimated to be 277,476. The plan for a census was cancelled in 1940, probably because of the ongoing World War II; however, it was estimated that the population of North Borneo was 310,000, and 400 people out of the total population are estimated to be Europeans. Based on the censuses, it can be inferred that the number of people in North Borneo who could speak, read, and understand English was not significant — assuming that the Europeans located in North Borneo were all able to read and understand English.

To further infer the newspaper's readership, it is wise to look at the education system in North Borneo. Unfortunately, the enthusiasm for education in North Borneo was challenging to maintain (Tregonning, 1965). There were several types of schools in North Borneo, such as missionary, vernacular, Chinese and Japanese schools as of 1940. Vernacular schools were built by the government, and the schools primarily used Malay as the medium of education. Besides that, vernacular schools offered a primary level of education while the secondary level of education was taken over by missionary education. Missionary schools provided English

education, and they received grants from the government. By 1927, the Christian societies had established 39 schools with 1,983 students, and in 1940, there were 52 missionary schools with 3,922 students (Tregonning, 1965, p. 182).

The newspaper is in English; therefore, it can be inferred that it targeted the English readership from the Europeans and the people who underwent English education. The newspaper was published to provide information to people at home and abroad, indicating the newspaper was also circulated outside of North Borneo. The *Publisher's Note* from *The British North Borneo Herald* strengthens this assumption.

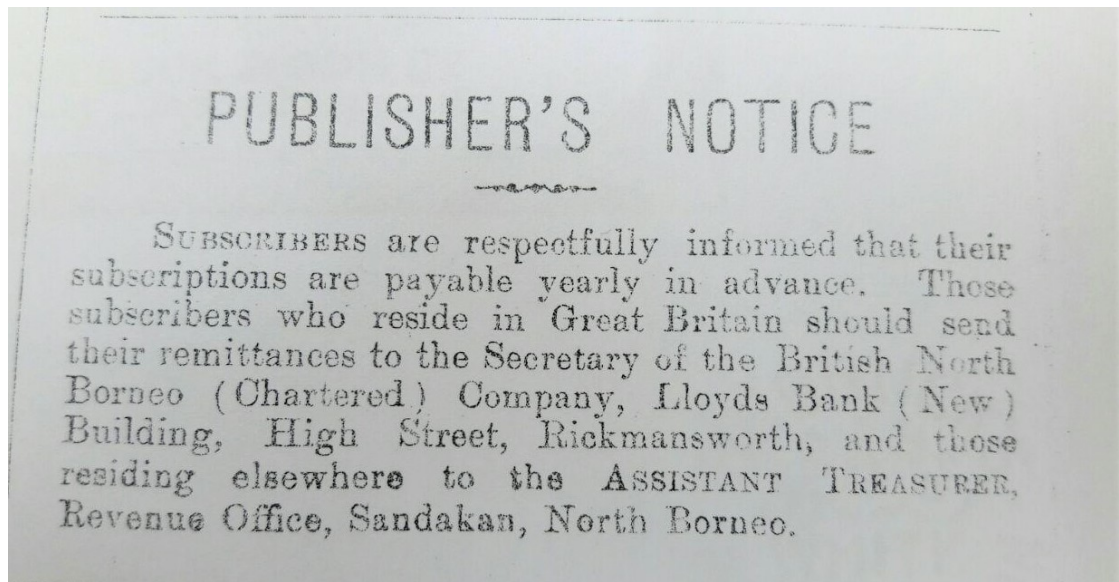


Figure 1.3: Publisher's Notice

(Source: *The British North Borneo Herald*, May 1940)

Based on the *Publisher's Notice* above, it is indicated that there were subscribers of the newspaper outside of North Borneo, such as Great Britain. This means that the newspaper did not only generate income through the subscription of the foreigners and locals residing in North Borneo, but it also generated profits through the subscription of non-North Bornean residents.

The newspaper managed to sustain its longevity until 1941. In the *Editor's Notice* of March 1883, as described previously, the newspaper relied on subscriptions for its continuance. However, it is also important to note that the newspaper also charged the advertisers to promote their products and services. Below is the subscription and advertising rates of *The British North Borneo Herald*:

<b>SUBSCRIPTION.</b>	
Annual Subscription (including postage)	\$1.50
Price of each number	0.10
<b>ADVERTISING.</b>	
For 15 lines and under--	1.00
Subsequent insertions, each	0.50
For more than 15 lines and under half a column, for each insertion	2.00
Subsequent insertions, each	1.00
For over half a column and up to a whole column, first insertion	4.00
Subsequent insertions, each	2.00
Special arrangements may be made for standing advertisements.	

Figure 1.4: Subscription and advertising rates in 1883

(Source: *The British North Borneo Herald*, March 1883)

The rate of advertising and subscription and the number of advertisements per publication published increased over time. For example, in 1883, less than ten advertisements were published per month. In comparison, in 1915, the number of advertisements published per month was about 20 advertisements. The rates of subscription and advertising have also increased in 1915, as shown below:

**THE  
"BRITISH NORTH BORNEO HERALD."**

**SUBSCRIPTIONS PAYABLE IN ADVANCE.**  
Subscriptions to the "Herald" payable at the London Office 6s.  
in Sandakan and at any of the Company's Agencies in the Far East as follows:—

Annual	...	...	\$3.50
Half-yearly	...	...	2.00
Annual bound Copies each	...	...	7.00

**Subscriptions to the "British North Borneo Official Gazette" are as follows:—**

Annual	...	...	\$3.00
Half-yearly	...	...	2.00
Single Number	...	...	25

**ADVERTISING.**

For 15 lines and under—	...	...	\$2.00
Subsequent insertions, each	...	...	1.00
For more than 15 lines and under half a column,	...	...	...
First insertion	...	...	3.00
Subsequent insertions, each	...	...	1.50
For over half a column and up to a whole column,	...	...	...
First insertion	...	...	5.00
Subsequent insertions, each	...	...	2.50
For every Domestic Occurrence	...	...	1.00

**Special arrangements may be made for Standing Advertisements. All Advertisements must be paid for in Advance.**

Figure 1.5: Subscription and advertising rates in 1915

(Source: *The British North Borneo Herald*, September 1915)

The subscription and advertising rates have increased again towards the end of the newspaper publication, shown in the example below:

vi THE BRITISH NORTH BORNEO HERALD. [1st APRIL, 1937.]

**THE BRITISH NORTH BORNEO HERALD.**

**SUBSCRIPTIONS PAYABLE IN ADVANCE.**

Subscriptions to the "Herald" payable at the London Office, Staple Hall, Stone House Court, Bishopsgate, London, E. C. 2—8s. per annum.  
At Sandakan and at any of the company's Agencies in the Far East as follows:—

For 12 months	...	...	\$3.50
For 6 months	...	...	2.00
Annual bound copies, each	...	...	6.00

Subscriptions to the "Official Gazette" are as follows:—

For 12 months	...	...	\$3.00
For 6 months	...	...	2.00
Single copy	...	...	.25

**RATES FOR ADVERTISEMENTS.**

	1 Insertion.	1 MONTH 2 Insertions.	1½ MONTHS 3 Insertions.	2 MONTHS 4 Insertions.	3 MONTHS 6 Insertions.	6 MONTHS 12 Insertions.	12 MONTHS 24 Insertions.
For quarter column or under	\$2.00	\$3.00	\$3.75	\$4.50	\$5.25	\$9.00	\$16.00
For more than quarter column and up to half a column (or quarter page)	4.00	6.00	7.50	9.00	10.50	18.00	32.00
For over half a column (or quarter page) and up to a whole column (or half page)	8.00	12.00	15.00	18.00	21.00	36.00	64.00
For a full page	16.00	24.00	30.00	36.00	42.00	72.00	128.00

For every Domestic Occurrence \$1.00.  
Where special display or composition which necessitates extra work is required, the above charge may be increased by a maximum of 50 per cent.

**ALL CHARGES ARE PAYABLE IN ADVANCE.**

CURRENCY — \$1 = 2s. 4d.

Figure 1.6: Subscription and advertising rates in 1937

(Source: *The British North Borneo Herald*, April 1937)

In 1939, the number of advertisements published in the newspaper was around 20 to 30 advertisements per month. Therefore, throughout the entire newspaper publication from 1883 to 1941, the subscription and advertising rates have increased until it ceased its operation due to World War II.

Although *The British North Borneo Herald* is a government newspaper, it requires subscribers and advertisers' money for sustainability. This reflects how the North Borneo government functioned without seeking anything from the Imperial Government, such as governing North Borneo at no expense to the British taxpayers (Galbraith, 1965). Interestingly, its neighbour's government newspaper, *Sarawak Gazette*, did not depend on subscribers and advertisers' funds for its continuity. *Sarawak Gazette* was financially supported by the various Sarawak governments, starting from the Brooke government to the State of Sarawak (Cotter, 1966). This reflects the difference in the administration of both governments, although these two governments operated on the same Borneo Island.

As discussed earlier, BNBCC was a profit-driven enterprise, serving as a chartered company to the British. The Company relied on commerce and trading, where the advertising came into place.

Advertising, in general, functions to create a message and send the message to someone, and it began as a method to identify the products' makers and service providers (Wells, Moriarty, & Burnett, 2006). However, advertising is complex and does not simply promote goods and services. Advertising text, according to Goddard (2002), involves "complex notions of audience, where readers have to work hard to decode messages and understand different address relationships" (p. 8). Advertisements may contain messages with an indirect meaning, and this causes the readers to have difficulty understanding the meaning behind them. Text, or in this

case, advertisement, is a production of ideology and not the expression of ideology (Eagleton, 1978).

It is necessary to study the ideologies disseminated in the advertisements when discussing BNBCC and *The British North Borneo Herald* advertisements. As Dyer (1982) argues, “advertising is the ‘official art’ of the advanced industrial nations of the west” (p. 1). Advertising perpetuates certain ideas and messages to the masses, guiding and controlling the consumers into purchasing things they ‘need’. Dyer further (1982) explains that “varied consumer goods, especially foodstuffs, were flowing into the country from abroad” (p. 35), and in this sense, from the colonies. Due to the increased industrialism, there was an urgent need to expand the market to reach a wider audience, which was carried out through advertising (Dyer, 1982; Fennis & Stroebe, 2021). Advertising needs to be studied because it can potentially “create consumer *desires* and cultivate a sense of materialism” (Fennis & Stroebe, 2021, p.16), where material items have specific values attached to them. It is beneficial to look at advertising in this research to study the messages, ideologies, and even values perpetuated in advertisements.

Capitalism begets the mass consumption of products. The era of the 1800s saw an expansion in trading and an increase in product manufacturing (Dyer, 1982). Companies profited from the consumption and the increase in demands of products due to the contentment of “*nesires*” (needs and desires) (Pereira da Silva & Dantas de Maio, 2018). To realise the “*nesires*”, consumers acquire certain products, and the products might directly fulfil the needs and desires of the consumers. Consumerism should be studied because it influences people’s social lives in advanced capitalist societies and offers the illusion of consumer freedom as the consumers are exploited to consume things they need, but also something they want (Miles, 1998).



Advertising is interrelated with consumerism because advertising functions to increase the consumption of promoted products (MacRury, 2009). The expansion of manufacturing industries saw the necessity for more consumers to purchase the products manufactured. The continuous cycle of consuming new things for their values is assisted by advertising (Dyer, 1982; MacRury, 2009; Fennis & Stroebe, 2021). This relation indicates the importance of studying consumerism and advertising. Therefore, analysing *The British North Borneo Herald* advertisements may unearth any pattern of consumption exploitation by the manufacturers and advertisers to the consumers residing in North Borneo.

By looking at the colonial advertisements in *The British North Borneo Herald*, it is possible to study consumerism and discuss this from the perspective of the Marxist theory. Eagleton's Materialist Criticism focuses on the production of text and the ideologies and processes behind text production. According to Eagleton (1978), there are six components involved in text production. Applying semiotic and Marxist analyses with postcolonial discourse to analyse the advertisement texts will be able to discover the message and ideology regarding consumerism in the colonial advertisements in North Borneo.

### **1.3 Statement of the Problem**

This study aims to analyse the ideology of consumerism in colonial newspaper advertisements. Several issues in colonial advertisements and North Borneo prompted this research to be conducted.

This study is concerned with the colonial period because the colonial era in Sabah provides a glimpse of the history of colonisation in Malaysia, which includes the history "of the appropriation of territories and of land, ... of the destruction of

cultures and the superimposition of other cultures” (Young, 2016, p. 4) among others. Hence, it is important to conduct studies in this area to examine the power imbalance between the colonisers and the colonised. Even though it has been almost 60 years since North Borneo was granted its independence from the British and became a part of Malaysia, it does not mean that there is no need for colonial and postcolonial studies on colonial Malaysia, as Young (2012) argues that postcolonial studies have not come to an end because postcolonialism intends to “to reconstruct Western knowledge formations, reorient ethical norms, turn the power structures of the world upside down, refashion the world from below” (p. 20). In addition, Robert (2021) asserts that there is a need for studies on North Bornean colonial texts because more interpretations and understanding of North Borneo can be derived from modern perspectives. Therefore, this study intends to address the issues within colonial advertisements to unearth ideologies related to colonialism in North Borneo.

Studies have been conducted on colonial newspapers and advertisements in other British Empire’s colonies such as Africa and India. However, there is not much research on colonial newspapers and advertisements in North Borneo. For example, McCracken (2015), in his paper *The Imperial British Newspaper, with Special Reference to South Africa, India and the ‘Irish’ Model*, studies the development of British colonial newspapers, but the focus of his paper is on the colonial newspapers published in South Africa, India and Ireland. Similarly, Okonkwo (2018) examines the colonial and postcolonial advertisements in Southern Nigeria.

Besides that, studies are also conducted in Malaya focusing on the Malayan newspapers such as by *Malaysian Press: A Brief Account of Newspapers Published in British Malaya* by Mohd. Dhari Othman (1992) and *A Design Analysis on Newspaper Front Page in Three Selected Malay Newspaper: Jawi Peranakan,*

*Cahaya Pulau Pinang and Saudara* by Elizabeth Joanny Openg and Sarena Abdullah (2015). However, based on the studies mentioned above, it is indicated that there is a lack of studies on colonial newspapers and advertisements in North Borneo.

Studies conducted on Sabah or North Borneo focus on other areas such as Sabah's land and resources and not on colonial advertisements in North Borneo. This can be observed through Johnny, Mohamad Shaukhi Mohd. Radzi and Mosli Tarsat's (2015) research on the local leaders' opposition to the implementation of the land policy by BNBCC, Lunkapis's (2013) study on land rights issues in Sabah, and Doolittle's (2004) analysis of the discourse and power particularly in regards to natural resources in Sabah. Besides that, studies on newspapers in North Borneo are concerned with the historical aspect of newspaper production, as observed through the studies by Sabihah Osman and Nordi Achie (2011) and Mat Zin Mat Kib (2011). Therefore, there is a need to study the newspaper advertisements in North Borneo, especially in examining ideologies such as consumerism and capitalism in the era of British colonialism.

The publication of newspapers in the colonial era is important as it "provide[s] a substantial and unique resource for research into reader reception, cultural production and political agency in the colonial period" (Newell, 2011, p. 26). Through newspapers, aspects of colonial power and its administration and its impact on the society, both colonies and locals can be analysed. Similar ideologies may also be disseminated in the advertisements regarding the newspaper advertisements produced by the colonial government. *The British North Borneo Herald* advertisements can be categorised into advertisements promoting land and resources, jobs and services, products for land and resources, basic products, luxury products, and notices. These advertisements become a rich corpus to study consumerism

through advertisements in a colonial setting. Besides that, the types of advertisements in the newspaper will be able to unearth the consumerist patterns of the residents of North Borneo in a colonial setting. Therefore, it is crucial to study the colonial advertisements found in the colonial newspapers to unearth the ideologies disseminated in the advertisements.

BNBCC was responsible for promoting North Borneo as a “moneymaking enterprise” to its shareholders in Britain (Lim, 2008, p. 21). With the idea of making a profit in mind, BNBCC sought to gain profits through trading and commerce by involving foreign capital investment in North Borneo (Lim, 2008) and the trading of various natural resources such as birds’ nests and timbers, and resources which were brought in from outside to be cultivated in North Borneo such as tobacco and rubber (Tregonning, 1965). Hence, the advertisements in the newspaper managed by this Company need to be analysed to find the idea of profit-making by manipulating consumers and their “desires”.

Analysing advertisements means that there is always room for a Marxist discourse. Marxism is concerned with the ideology of capitalism (Fuchs, 2020; Kellner, 1993) embedded in the text (Eagleton, 1978). This theory sheds some light on the process behind the production of text and how text reveals the ideology and the society behind its production. The growing capitalist society created a need for the British to find cheap materials, thus influencing the “colonial plunder” in the colonised lands (Pradella, 2021). This colonisation also promoted the significant import of goods back to the colonies (Razan Rosman & Sarena Abdullah, 2018), where some products, if not most, were advertised for the colonisers only (Sharma, 2009). It is necessary to utilise a Marxist analysis in discussing advertisements

published in colonial North Borneo to look for the connection between consumerism and the text of production.

#### **1.4 Research Objectives**

This study aims to examine the relationship between advertising consumerism and the production of text in the colonial advertisements of *The British North Borneo Herald*.

##### **1.4.1 Objective 1**

To examine the meanings of the text in the selected colonial advertisements found in *The British North Borneo Herald*.

##### **1.4.2 Objective 2**

To ascertain the ideology of consumerism in the selected colonial advertisements found in *The British North Borneo Herald*.

##### **1.4.3 Objective 3**

To study the relationship between the ideology of consumerism and the production of text through Eagleton's Materialist Criticism (1978).

#### **1.5 Research Questions**

##### **1.5.1 Question 1**

What are the meanings of the text in the colonial advertisements found in *The British North Borneo Herald*?

##### **1.5.2 Question 2**

How is the ideology of consumerism disseminated in the colonial advertisements found in *The British North Borneo Herald*?

### **1.5.3 Question 3**

What is the relationship between the ideology of consumerism and the production of text through Eagleton's Materialist Criticism?

### **1.6 Significance of the Study**

The study will contribute to understanding the ideology and production of colonial advertisements from literary theory and social semiotic analysis. This study will also contribute to the study of British colonial ideology and production as it explores the ideology of consumerism transmitted through the production of colonial advertisements.

Besides that, this study will contribute to the Malaysian and Asian study of advertisements and consumerism as it utilises advertisements from the British colonial era in North Borneo or its present name, Sabah.

### **1.7 Scope and Limitations of the Study**

The advertisements used for this study are colonial advertisements taken from *The British North Borneo Herald*. These advertisements are chosen because they were published by The British North Borneo (Chartered) Company, which was set up to govern North Borneo with profit-making in mind. Therefore, besides providing general information and news on what was happening in North Borneo, *The British North Borneo Herald* was used to generate income for the government by providing an advertising platform for business owners. Every advertisement that appeared in this newspaper was charged with specific rates.

### **1.7.1 Limitation 1**

The study focuses on selected advertisements taken from a specific period of *The British North Borneo Herald* publication. *The British North Borneo Herald* was published for 58 years, from 1883 until 1946. There were many copies of the newspaper which were circulated during the period. Due to the extensive number of advertisements available in this newspaper, this study only focuses on selected advertisements taken from a specific period of *The British North Borneo Herald* publication to study the relationship between ideology and production.

### **1.7.2 Limitation 2**

This study adapts Kress and van Leeuwen, Halliday and Eagleton's frameworks whenever appropriate. Three frameworks are used to study the ideology of consumerism and text: Kress and van Leeuwen's Grammar of Visual Design (1996/2006), Halliday's transitivity model (2004) and Eagleton's Materialist Criticism (1978). Kress and van Leeuwen introduce an extensive framework to study the visual design, incorporating three metafunctions: ideational, interpersonal, and compositional. Halliday (2004) explores six processes of transitivity model. Meanwhile, Eagleton provides a systematic method to explore text production and the ideology involved. Although Kress and van Leeuwen, Halliday and Eagleton provide comprehensive frameworks and methods of analysis, the study may not fully utilise the techniques introduced by these scholars due to the limited corpus taken from the newspaper for this study, as explained in the previous limitation.

## **1.8 Definitions of Terms**

### **1.8.1 Ideology**

Althusser (1968/2004) describes ideology as a group of “practices and institutions”, and this set maintains a person’s “imaginary relationship to his or her material conditions of existence” (p. 693). In other words, an individual’s existence is represented in an imaginary form and strengthened through a set of practices and institutions such as through media. Simpson and Mayr (2010) define the term ‘ideology’ as “the ways in which a person’s beliefs, opinions and value-systems intersect with the broader social and political structure of the society in which they live” (4). One’s own opinions and thoughts on how society and the world work reflect that person’s ideological beliefs. Ideology, an organised system, can also describe, justify and interpret a group or society’s position and take on certain matters (Jansiz, 2014).

### **1.8.2 Postcolonialism**

Post-colonialism or postcolonialism has been used to discuss the cultural repercussions of colonialism (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 2007). According to McLeod (2000), postcolonialism challenges colonial views by writing against such views (p. 32). Postcolonialism involves one or more situations, as stated below:

1. Reading texts produced by writers from countries with a history of colonialism, primarily those texts concerned with the workings and legacy of colonialism in either the past or the present.
2. Reading texts produced by those that have migrated from countries with a history of colonialism, or those descended from migrant families, which deal in the main diaspora experience and its many consequences.
3. In the light of theories of colonial discourses, re-reading texts produced during colonialism; both those that directly address the experiences of Empire, and those that seem not to.

(McLeod, 2000, p. 33)



Postcolonialism, as a “dialectical concept” (Young, 2016, p. 57), concerns with the history of decolonization, sovereignty, and the transformation of history and culture due to the change in the political state of affairs. In a more straightforward explanation, Young (2003) describes postcolonialism as a way people can see things differently, such as in language and politics, in which their interests came first.

### **1.8.3 Consumerism**

Consumerism is the use of products to fulfil one’s wants and needs (Jansiz, 2014). This can be seen through the purchase of products that would somehow define the worth of the consumers. Consumerism has become the basis of the growing society of consumers, and this has seen the commodification of human values (Lister, 2015). Certain feelings and emotions are associated with the products, and they are promoted by this association rather than the products themselves. Miles (1998) argues that consumerism is “a way of life” (p. 4). Consumerism and the act of consumption have interwoven into individual and society’s life and are ubiquitous.

### **1.8.4 Advertising**

Advertising promotes products and services by sending information on the products and services to the masses. Wells et al. (2006) define modern advertising as “paid persuasive communication that uses nonpersonal mass media – as well as other forms of interactive communication – to reach broad audiences to connect an identified sponsor with a target audience” (5). Similarly, Okonkwo (2018) also defines advertising as a type of communication containing information about products, services and ideas transmitted through media and is paid by a sponsor that has been identified. In other words, the sponsors, who can be the business owners, pay the medium where the advertisement is placed on, to promote their products and

services to a specific audience in mind. Promoting products and services through advertising enables the message of promotion to be sent to a larger audience.

### **1.8.5 Textual Analysis**

Textual analysis refers to “a variety of primarily qualitative methodologies or models” (Lockyer, 2008, p. 865), such as semiotics (Berger, 2015). This method is “a method of data analysis that closely examines either the content and meaning of texts or their structure and discourse” (Lockyer, 2008, p. 865). Textual analysis is a data-gathering method involving the process of understanding symbols, language, or pictures in texts to comprehend the ways people understand, communicate and interact in their lives and understand the culture, subculture, or co-culture of people in the societies (Hawkins, 2017; McKee, 2003). Textual analysis is applied to multiple texts, such as visual and written texts. Lockyer (2008) defines textual analysis as a method of data analysis, and this method closely looks at either the texts’ content and meaning or their discourse and structure. This methodology is fruitful as it increases the comprehension of “the construction of textual meaning” (Lockyer, 2008, p. 865) in various cultural texts.

## **1.9 Conclusion**

This introductory chapter discusses the background and the statement of the problem in the study of consumerism and the production of advertising based on the colonial advertisements taken from *The British North Borneo Herald*. Besides that, this chapter also discusses the research objectives and the research questions, the significance of the study, scope and limitations, and the definitions of terms used in this study.