Inclusive Identity Construction in Documentary Film: A Brand Identity Prism Analysis of Tana Toraja

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ABSTRACT

Inclusivity has emerged as a strategic value in regional development and public sector communication. As place branding expands beyond tourism promotion, documentary films increasingly serve as tools to construct inclusive regional identities. This study analyzes how the "Inclusive Regency" identity is constructed in the documentary *Merangkai Makna Inklusivitas di Tana Toraja*. Tana Toraja serves as a critical case, as one of the first regions in Indonesia to institutionalize inclusivity through a specific legal framework.

Using Jean-Noël Kapferer's Brand Identity Prism (BIP), this qualitative study primarily employs textual analysis of the documentary's narrative and visual elements across six identity dimensions: physique, personality, culture, relationship, reflection, and self-image. The analysis is supported by contextual qualitative insights from interviews with filmmakers and community stakeholders to strengthen the interpretation of inclusive identity construction. The findings show that the documentary aligns governmental legal authority (personality) with the lived social realities of vulnerable groups (physique and relationship). Community perspectives further corroborate this construction, particularly in the reflection and self-image dimensions, which reposition citizens from passive policy recipients to active subjects of development.

The study concludes that documentary film functions as an effective medium for translating complex public policies into human-centered regional identity narratives and offers practical insights for local governments to develop more participatory and story-based communication strategies.

Keywords: Identity Construction, Documentary Film, Brand Identity Prism, Inclusive Regency, Tana Toraja.

INTRODUCTION

Inclusivity has become a central agenda in global development frameworks, particularly under the "leave no one behind" principle of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which emphasizes equitable access and participation for all social groups (United Nations, 2015). In Indonesia, this global commitment is reinforced through Law No. 8 of 2016 on Persons with Disabilities, which legally mandates public institutions to uphold inclusive practices. Despite these regulatory frameworks, translating normative commitments into lived, recognizable regional identities remains a persistent challenge in public sector communication.

Conventional government communication tends to prioritize procedural information and symbolic representations of policy, often relying on formal statements, visual displays, or promotional materials. Such approaches frequently fail to engage citizens' lived realities, creating a gap between legal commitments and public perceptions of inclusivity. Similarly, early place branding practices were dominated by image-centric strategies (logos, slogans, and campaigns) aimed primarily at external visibility rather than internal coherence and social legitimacy (Govers & Go, 2009). While effective for marketing purposes, these strategies are insufficient when inclusivity is intended to function not merely as a policy label, but as a shared regional identity.

Recent scholarship therefore calls for a shift toward identity-centered place branding that emphasizes values, participation, and narrative meaning-making. Rather than disseminating messages in a top-down manner, this approach highlights the co-construction of identity through participatory and narrative-oriented processes involving multiple stakeholders. Such a shift aligns with broader developments in communication studies that

foreground decentralized voices and plural authorship in identity formation (Björner & Aronsson, 2022). As Reynolds et al. (2024) further argue, effective place branding requires an "omni-temporal" orientation that connects historical context, present practices, and future aspirations within culturally grounded narratives.

Within this evolving context, documentary film emerges as a particularly powerful medium for identity construction in the public sector. Unlike conventional government communication, documentary film can combine narrative depth, emotional resonance, and diverse stakeholder perspectives (Nichols, 2017). Through audio-visual storytelling, documentaries are able to translate abstract policy commitments into human-centered narratives that reflect everyday social realities, making complex governance agendas more intelligible and relatable to the public.

Tana Toraja Regency provides a critical case for examining this process. As one of the first regions in Indonesia to formally institutionalize inclusivity through Regional Regulation No. 5 of 2023 on the Inclusive Regency, Tana Toraja represents a pioneering effort to embed inclusivity within regional governance. The documentary *Merangkai Makna Inklusivitas di Tana Toraja*, produced as part of the INKLUSI Program, was designed as a strategic communication initiative aligned with this legal framework. However, the extent to which such documentary media can effectively construct and legitimize inclusive values as part of a regional identity has not yet been systematically examined.

This study addresses this gap by analyzing how the inclusive identity of Tana Toraja is constructed through documentary film narratives and contextualized through stakeholder perspectives. Employing Jean-Noël Kapferer's (2012) Brand Identity Prism, the research examines how policy values, cultural contexts, and social relationships are articulated across six identity dimensions (physique, personality, culture, relationship, reflection, and self-image) to form a coherent regional identity. To strengthen the interpretation of the documentary text, the analysis is supported by qualitative insights from filmmakers and community members as contextual perspectives on inclusive identity construction. Although the Brand Identity Prism was originally developed for commercial branding, recent studies demonstrate its relevance in service-oriented and public sector contexts (Foroudi, 2020). Building on this scholarship, the present study offers a novel contribution by positioning documentary film not merely as a tool for policy dissemination, but as a strategic mechanism of identity governance. By extending the application of the Brand Identity Prism beyond its commercial origins, this research demonstrates how inclusivity can be symbolically constructed and legitimized through decentralized storytelling, highlighting the role of media in enabling the co-production of regional identity rather than its imposition through top-down promotional communication.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Place Branding in the Public Sector Context

Place branding has evolved into a strategic approach for shaping the meaning, reputation, and identity of a location (Anholt, 2007). In the public sector, branding extends beyond promotional objectives to function as a mechanism for building legitimacy, trust, and social cohesion among local communities (Eshuis & Klijn, 2012). Unlike commercial branding, regional identity is inherently dynamic and socially constructed, involving multiple actors such as governments, civil society organizations, and citizens.

Recent scholarship emphasizes that value-based approaches, particularly those grounded in social values such as inclusivity, are more sustainable than strategies focused solely on visual imagery or external reputation. As Wheeler (2013) argues, identity-driven branding prioritizes shared meaning and internal alignment rather than surface-level image creation. In this context, inclusivity functions not merely as a communicative theme but as a foundational value shaping how regions understand themselves and are understood by others. Consequently, place branding in the public sector increasingly shifts from image promotion toward identity construction rooted in social legitimacy and collective values. Within this participatory paradigm, the brand is no longer understood as a static asset owned solely by the government, but as a shared meaning co-produced through interaction between institutions and citizens. As Kavaratzis and Hatch (2013) suggest, understanding regional identity therefore requires attention not only to identities projected by governing actors, but also to how these identities are interpreted and grounded in citizens' lived social contexts.

Documentary Film as a Medium for Identity Construction

Documentary film is not a neutral reflection of reality but a form of meaning construction shaped by narrative structure, visual framing, and the perspectives of its creators (Nichols, 2017). Through selective representation, documentaries actively shape how social realities are interpreted and understood by audiences. This capacity makes documentary film a particularly effective medium for communicating complex social and policy issues.

In the context of regional development, documentary films offer a unique advantage by combining narrative coherence with emotional engagement. By presenting real-life experiences and social interactions, documentaries enable audiences to form affective connections with abstract policy agendas (Plantinga, 1997). Rather than transmitting information in a purely instructional manner, documentary storytelling situates policies within lived experiences, allowing identity-related values, such as inclusivity, to be communicated in a more accessible and human-centered way.

Brand Identity Prism as a Framework for Regional Identity Analysis

The Brand Identity Prism (BIP), developed by Kapferer (2012), provides a comprehensive framework for analyzing identity through six interconnected dimensions: physique, personality, culture, relationship, reflection, and self-image. While originally designed for commercial brands, the flexibility of the BIP framework allows it to be applied to non-commercial contexts, including geographic regions and public sector institutions.

In the context of place branding, the Brand Identity Prism enables a systematic examination of how values are internalized, communicated, and perceived. Inclusivity, for example, can be analyzed as a cultural value embedded within governance practices, projected through institutional personality, and reflected in citizen selfperception. By capturing both internal orientations and external expressions, BIP offers a structured analytical tool for understanding how regional identities are constructed and maintained beyond visual branding elements.

Research Gap

Despite the growing body of literature on place branding, most existing studies continue to focus on tourism promotion and destination marketing. Research that examines documentary film as a primary medium for constructing inclusivity-based regional identity remains limited. Furthermore, the application of the Brand Identity Prism within public sector communication and development-oriented place branding is still underexplored. Existing studies often conceptualize place branding as a predominantly top-down managerial process, paying insufficient attention to how regional identities are socially negotiated and grounded in community experience.

This study addresses these gaps by employing the Brand Identity Prism to examine how the inclusive identity of Tana Toraja Regency is constructed through documentary film and contextualized through stakeholder perspectives. By positioning documentary media as a strategic instrument of identity construction rather than promotional communication, this research extends the application of the Brand Identity Prism within the public sector and contributes to broader discussions on inclusive place branding and governance-oriented storytelling.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study is grounded in the constructivist paradigm, which views social reality, including inclusive identity, as the outcome of meaning-making processes shaped through communication and representation (Creswell & Poth, 2018). From this perspective, identity is understood as a socially constructed phenomenon produced through symbolic practices mediated by media texts. Documentary film is therefore positioned as a social text that actively encodes meanings related to inclusivity and regional identity through narrative structure, visual composition, and representational choices. This constructivist orientation directs the analysis toward examining how meanings are produced and articulated within the media text, rather than toward measuring audience response or verifying empirical reality outside the text.

To examine this process of identity construction, the study adopts a qualitative approach using textual analysis as the primary method (McKee, 2003). Textual analysis enables the interpretation of visual and narrative elements of the documentary as part of a structured system of meaning, allowing the researcher to explore how inclusivity is symbolically constructed through audio-visual storytelling. To enrich the interpretation of the textual analysis, the study incorporates supplementary qualitative insights from interviews with filmmakers and community stakeholders. These insights are not treated as evaluative or confirmatory data, but serve to situate the constructed identity within its broader social and institutional context.

The primary data source of this research is the documentary film *Merangkai Makna Inklusivitas di Tana Toraja*. The film was selected because it functions as a strategic public communication artifact related to Tana Toraja's "Inclusive Regency" agenda and presents narratives on policy implementation, social practices, and the experiences of actors involved in inclusive development. The documentary is analyzed as a unified media text, with particular attention to narrative flow, visual composition, and representations of values and social relations. In addition, contextual qualitative insights were drawn from interviews with six informants, consisting of members of the documentary production team and community stakeholders, including representatives of disability groups and inclusive education initiatives. These interviews provide reflective perspectives that support the contextual understanding of inclusivity narratives presented in the film.

Data analysis was guided by Jean-Noël Kapferer's Brand Identity Prism (BIP) as the primary analytical framework (Kapferer, 2012). The six dimensions of the prism (physique, personality, culture, relationship, reflection, and self-image) were employed as analytical categories to organize and interpret the findings. The analytical process proceeded in stages, beginning with the identification of key visual and narrative cues within the documentary, followed by the categorization of these cues into the respective BIP dimensions. Contextual interview insights were used selectively to enrich and clarify the interpretation of selected dimensions, particularly those related to participatory relationships and self-perception, while maintaining the primacy of textual analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The construction of Tana Toraja's identity as an Inclusive Regency in the documentary *Merangkai Makna Inklusivitas di Tana Toraja* is analyzed using Jean-Noël Kapferer's Brand Identity Prism (BIP), which consists of six interrelated dimensions: physique, personality, culture, relationship, reflection, and self-image. The findings demonstrate that inclusivity is communicated not merely as a regulatory commitment, but as a socially grounded identity articulated through visual narration, institutional representation, and testimonial accounts. The documentary translates policy frameworks into recognizable social meanings by embedding inclusivity within everyday practices, governance processes, and collective narratives.

Physique

The *physique* dimension refers to the tangible and visible manifestations of inclusivity. In the documentary, this dimension is articulated through scenes that depict both productive activities and institutional service environments. One sequence shows a person with physical disability engaged in sewing activities, emphasizing capability and productivity rather than dependency. This portrayal situates inclusivity within ordinary social practices and challenges stereotypical representations of persons with disabilities.

Additional scenes set within the UPTD PPA office highlight structured service processes such as documentation, assessment, mediation, and referral. These visual elements present inclusivity as operationalized through institutional mechanisms rather than as symbolic rhetoric. Scenes of inclusive learning activities further extend this material visibility into the educational sphere. Collectively, these depictions construct inclusivity as a visible, functional, and institutionalized condition, reinforcing the credibility of the Inclusive Regency identity.

Personality

The *personality* dimension reflects the character projected by governing institutions. This dimension is constructed through authoritative narration and formal institutional settings. The documentary opens with an

introduction to the INKLUSI Program and its implementing partners, establishing legitimacy and institutional seriousness. This is reinforced by interviews with program managers and policymakers who articulate the objectives and governance logic underpinning inclusive development.

The closing sequence, featuring a statement by the Regent of Tana Toraja, reiterates political commitment to the protection of women, children, and vulnerable groups. The consistent use of formal settings, measured narrative tone, and legal references projects a governmental personality characterized by responsibility, authority, and moral accountability. Within the Brand Identity Prism, this personality dimension legitimizes the inclusive identity by anchoring it in institutional resolve rather than promotional symbolism.

Culture

Inclusivity is positioned as a core cultural value that underlies both governance practices and social interaction. This cultural dimension is articulated through testimonial scenes involving representatives of disability organizations and community leaders, who frame inclusivity as a matter of rights, dignity, and collective responsibility. Rather than presenting inclusivity as an externally imposed agenda, the documentary emphasizes local ownership and normative alignment.

Scenes featuring community representatives from Lembang Tumbang Datu further reinforce inclusivity as a locally embedded value. Through repeated references to collaboration, mutual respect, and protection of vulnerable groups, the documentary constructs inclusivity as part of a shared moral framework. In this sense, culture functions as the internal value system that sustains the inclusive identity across institutional and societal domains.

Relationship

The *relationship* dimension highlights how inclusivity is enacted through interactions between government institutions, civil society organizations, and community members. Scenes involving DP3A P2KB representatives and service activities at the UPTD PPA illustrate governance as a relational process characterized by accompaniment, coordination, and institutional responsiveness. Inclusivity is framed not as a one-way delivery of services, but as an ongoing interaction between duty bearers and rights holders.

At the grassroots level, the documentary highlights the role of constituent groups in Lembang Tumbang Datu, demonstrating community engagement in inclusive development processes. These representations construct an image of governance based on partnership rather than hierarchy. Within the Brand Identity Prism, the relationship dimension reinforces inclusivity as a lived identity sustained through continuous social interaction rather than a static policy outcome.

Reflection

The *reflection* dimension captures how the region wishes to be perceived by its members and external audiences. Through testimonial segments and narrative emphasis, the documentary reflects an image of Tana Toraja as a society that values participation, recognition, and social inclusion. Persons with disabilities are presented as legitimate members of the community, actively participating in social and institutional spaces.

Scenes depicting inclusive educational environments and community involvement reinforce an image of diversity as normalized rather than exceptional. This reflection constructs a collective social image aligned with dignity and equal citizenship, positioning inclusivity as a defining characteristic of the region's identity.

Self-Image: Internalization of Inclusive Regional Identity

The *self-image* dimension relates to how stakeholders are encouraged to perceive themselves within the inclusive regional identity. Through narratives emphasizing local leadership, community participation, and policy commitment, the documentary fosters a sense of belonging to an Inclusive Regency. Inclusivity is framed as an ongoing collective effort rather than a completed achievement.

The concluding narrative underscores inclusivity as part of Tana Toraja's evolving self-understanding. Policymakers, community actors, and citizens are positioned as contributors to an inclusive future,

encouraging the internalization of inclusivity as an element of regional identity rather than an externally imposed label.

Integrated Brand Identity Prism of Tana Toraja as an Inclusive Regency

Taken together, the six dimensions of the Brand Identity Prism operate as an integrated system through which the inclusive identity of Tana Toraja is constructed. Rather than functioning as isolated attributes, these dimensions interact to translate governance values into socially recognizable meanings.

Culture and personality function as internal value anchors that orient inclusive governance, articulating shared norms and institutional commitment. These values are externalized through physique and relationship, which make inclusivity visible through accessible infrastructure and participatory governance practices. Conversely, reflection and self-image represent the internalization process, through which public representations and lived interactions are absorbed into collective perception and regional self-understanding.

Through this dynamic interplay, the documentary facilitates a transition from formal policy commitment to lived regional identity. The Brand Identity Prism thus serves as a lens for understanding how documentary film functions as a narrative instrument of identity construction in the public sector, enabling inclusivity to be communicated as a human-centered and socially grounded regional identity.

FINAL DISCUSSION

Overall, the findings demonstrate that the six dimensions of the Brand Identity Prism function as an integrated and processual system of regional identity construction. Rather than operating as independent attributes, these dimensions interact dynamically to translate legal frameworks and governance orientations into socially recognizable meanings. The documentary medium plays a central role in this process by integrating institutional narration, visual representation, and contextual testimonial elements, enabling inclusivity to be articulated not merely as a regulatory commitment but as a human-centered regional identity embedded in everyday social and governance practices.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that documentary film functions not as a supplementary medium in public policy communication, but as a strategic instrument for constructing and governing regional identity. Through the analysis of *Merangkai Makna Inklusivitas di Tana Toraja*, the findings show that the "Inclusive Regency" identity is articulated through the systematic integration of legal commitment, shared cultural values, and socially grounded representations of vulnerable groups. Rather than framing inclusivity as a rhetorical or symbolic slogan, the documentary embeds it within everyday social relations and participatory governance practices, enabling policy frameworks to be translated into intelligible and human-centered identity narratives.

The application of the Brand Identity Prism proves effective in mapping this identity construction process within a public sector context. The analysis reveals that culture and relationship operate as key anchors of the inclusive identity, while personality provides institutional legitimacy, and reflection and self-image support the repositioning of citizens as active subjects within inclusive development. This configuration challenges the assumption that public sector place branding is inherently top-down, demonstrating instead that regional identity can be co-constructed through narrative processes mediated by audio-visual communication.

Theoretically, this research extends place branding scholarship by demonstrating the relevance of the Brand Identity Prism beyond its commercial origins, particularly within development-oriented governance and public sector communication. Practically, the findings suggest that local governments seeking to institutionalize inclusivity should move beyond regulatory formalism and visual promotion, and prioritize participatory, narrative-based communication strategies that align policy intentions with social contexts. Such approaches are essential for building legitimacy and sustaining inclusive regional identities over time.

Research Limitation

This study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting its findings. First, the analysis focuses on a single media object, namely the documentary film *Merangkai Makna Inklusivitas di Tana Toraja*. While this single-case approach allows for an in-depth and context-sensitive examination of inclusive identity construction, it limits the scope for broader generalization across different regional contexts or place branding initiatives. Accordingly, the findings are intended to offer analytical and conceptual insights rather than universal claims about inclusive regional branding practices.

Second, the study prioritizes textual analysis by positioning the documentary film as the primary social text. As a result, the research does not examine the production process in detail nor does it conduct a systematic analysis of audience reception. Although contextual insights from interviews were used to situate the interpretation, this study does not assess how the constructed inclusive identity is interpreted or negotiated by wider audiences or stakeholder groups. Such dimensions remain beyond the analytical focus of the present research.

Third, the use of the Brand Identity Prism as the main analytical framework narrows the theoretical lens to brand identity dimensions. While this framework provides a coherent and structured approach to analyzing identity construction, other perspectives, such as power relations, ideological contestation, or forms of social resistance in media representation, were not examined in depth. In addition, as a qualitative study based on textual interpretation, the analysis inevitably involves a degree of interpretive subjectivity. Although the analysis was conducted systematically and grounded in established theoretical concepts, this subjectivity cannot be entirely eliminated.

These limitations point to several directions for future research. Subsequent studies could integrate textual analysis with audience-oriented approaches, such as reception studies or focus group discussions, to further explore how inclusive identities are interpreted in practice. Comparative studies across regions or the inclusion of production-oriented and political–economic perspectives would also contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of inclusive identity construction within public sector place branding.

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