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## Constructing Regional Image through Local Media: The Role of Ajatappareng Television Image Partners in Sidrap Regency

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**Abstract:** This study investigates how a local media outlet constructs the public image of Sidenreng Rappang Regency through its broadcasting practices, narrative choices, and representations of local identity. The research aims to explain the ways in which MCTV Ajatappareng frames regional development, cultural values, and tourism potential, while also examining the dynamics of media-government interaction in shaping these narratives. Employing a qualitative single case study design, data were gathered through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation of broadcast archives and news reports, then analysed using thematic procedures. The findings show that regional image construction emerges through development-oriented storytelling, the reinforcement of cultural representation, and the promotion of local potential. Media-government relations take the form of semi-institutional collaboration that influences information flow and content production. The construction of regional image is strengthened by access to information and media proximity to the audience, yet constrained by limited human resources and the absence of a structured regional communication roadmap. The study introduces the Media-Governance-Image Nexus as a conceptual model that illustrates the interdependent roles of media, government, and public perception. The results contribute to theoretical discussions on communication governance and provide practical insights for enhancing collaborative public communication strategies.

**Keywords:** Local Media, Regional Image, Public Communication, Governance of Image, Sidenreng Rappang.

### INTRODUCTION

Local media plays a strategic role as a public communication actor that functions not only as an information channel but also as a producer of symbolic representations that shape regional image in the digital era (Nurkholis, 2024). In contemporary governance that emphasises transparency, participation, and legitimacy, local media becomes an important instrument for framing regional identity, development performance, and socio-cultural values (Indirwan et al., 2025; Parindingan et al., 2024). Sidenreng Rappang Regency (Sidrap), despite its considerable socio-economic and cultural potential, continues to face challenges in

constructing a coherent and positive public image. Existing media portrayals are often partial, dominated by political events or ceremonial reporting, which limits a more holistic representation of regional identity (Gustin et al., 2025). In this context, Mitra Citra Televisi (MCTV) Ajatappareng holds a strategic position as a local broadcaster capable of bridging governmental narratives and public perception through locally rooted storytelling (Nirma, 2020)

Although the role of local media is widely acknowledged, the integration between local governments and broadcasting institutions in constructing regional image remains suboptimal. Existing collaboration tends to be administrative and event-driven, lacking a planned and systematic communication strategy based on local values (Aji et al., 2023; Malik et al., 2025; Ningrum & Priyatna, 2023). As a result, the construction of regional image becomes fragmented and highly dependent on political cycles rather than long-term communication planning (Sarwani, 2021). Furthermore, empirical studies on the role of local television within the governance of image are still limited, particularly in non-metropolitan contexts such as Sidenreng Rappang (Lukas, 2023; Rianto et al., 2024). This limited body of research leaves important questions regarding how local media contribute to shaping public perceptions of local government and how collaborative mechanisms can function effectively in reinforcing regional legitimacy and identity (Herie, 2020; Priyambodo et al., 2025).

Previous studies have examined local media in relation to identity strengthening (Syam, 2020), legitimacy building (Hasrullah & Akib, 2018), place branding (Anholt, 2020), and media influence on public opinion (McQuail & Mark Deuze, 2020). However, much of this literature conceptualises media as a passive communication channel that merely conveys governmental or cultural messages. The active role of media as a governance actor as an institution that negotiates, interprets, and co-produces regional meaning, receives far less attention. This constitutes the core research gap of the present study. There is still limited scholarly work that situates local television within a governance network that collaboratively produces, manages, and directs the public image of a region (Haryono et al., 2024; Hutagalung et al., 2023; Rianto et al., 2024). Therefore, a more critical, actor-centred approach is needed to explain how local media exercise interpretive and political agency within regional public communication.

Grounded in this research gap, this study introduces the concept of the **Media-Governance-Image-Nexus**, which serves as the novelty of this research. The model conceptualizes the dynamic and interdependent relationship between local media, local government, and the community in constructing an integrated, participatory, and culturally grounded regional image. This framework positions local media, specifically MCTV Ajatappareng not merely as a disseminator of information but as an active governance actor that mediates symbolic representation, legitimises governmental narratives, and reinforces local identity through content production (Lopulalan & Salakay, 2022; Ragan et al., 2024).

To frame this model, several theoretical perspectives are relevant. Governance theory emphasizes the interaction and coordination among government, society, and non-governmental actors in managing public affairs (Kooiman, 2019). In the context of regional imagery, governance of image highlights cross-actor collaboration in shaping public perceptions (Handrian et al., 2025; Susilo & Fsm, 2025). Public communication theory explains how government-media-society interactions influence public opinion and policy legitimacy (Hutagalung et al., 2023; Syamsuadi, 2025). Meanwhile, place branding theory stresses the construction of regional identity through strategic communication that reflects local values (Anholt, 2020; Kavartzis & Hatch, 2013). Media and identity theory further underscores the media's role as a space where cultural meanings are produced and negotiated (Gustin et al., 2025; McQuail & Mark Deuze, 2020). These theoretical foundations collectively support the development of the Media-Governance-Image Nexus proposed in this study.

Anchored in this conceptual background, the present study examines how MCTV Ajatappareng constructs the image of Sidenreng Rappang Regency, what factors support or hinder this process, and how these dynamics contribute to a broader model of regional public communication governance. Through a qualitative case study design, this research aims to provide theoretical contributions to the field of government communication while offering practical insights for strengthening regional communication strategies that are sustainable and culturally grounded

## **METHOD**

This study employed a qualitative approach with a single-case study design focusing on Mitra Citra Televisi (MCTV) Ajatappareng, the only local broadcasting institution operating in Sidenreng Rappang Regency (Creswell, 2018). The research began by mapping the institutional context of MCTV using stakeholder analysis and actor mapping to identify key actors and their positions within regional public communication governance (Lopulalan & Salakay, 2022; Rianto et al., 2024). 5 informants were selected through purposive sampling based on their relevance to the research objectives: one MCTV news editor, one MCTV viewer from a university student, one community leader representing local audiences, one head of division from the Communication and Information Agency, and one head of division from the Tourism Agency. Interviews explored editorial policy, content production, and government–media coordination patterns (Ade, 2024; Malik et al., 2025). Observations of broadcast activities and documentation of news archives complemented the interview data. The coding process followed open, axial, and selective procedures (Nowell et al., 2017). operationalized through a codebook that included categories such as “development narrative,” “cultural representation,” “government coordination,” and “identity framing.” These initial codes were later refined into pattern codes to identify cross-cutting themes. NVivo software was used to manage, cluster, and visualize the codes through thematic matrices and word clouds to enhance analytical transparency (Miles et al., 2014).

Data validity was strengthened through triangulation of sources, methods, and documents, as well as member checking, in which preliminary findings were returned to key informants for verification and clarification. The analysis followed (Miles et al., 2014). interactive model involving data condensation, display, and conclusion verification. The selection of MCTV as the sole case is methodologically justified because it is the only local television station in Sidenreng Rappang; therefore, no comparative local broadcasting unit exists in the region. To minimize potential single-case bias, data interpretation relied on triangulated sources, cross-verification with government documents, and comparison with established theoretical frameworks (Creswell, 2018). The combination of thematic analysis and actor-based analysis provides a robust basis for examining how MCTV participates in constructing the regional image as part of collaborative public communication governance (Ade, 2024; Malik et al., 2025; Rianto et al., 2024) .

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Form of Regional Image Construction by MCTV Ajatappareng**

The pattern coding displayed in Figure 1 shows that place branding emerged as the most prominent thematic category, appearing with a coverage of approximately four percent. Although numerically modest, this category became analytically dominant because the codes associated with regional potential, identity, and narrative framing repeatedly appeared across interviews, observation notes, and broadcast documents. This density indicates that MCTV Ajatappareng places consistent emphasis on constructing Sidrap’s public image through development-oriented and culturally embedded narratives. As articulated by the MCTV news editor, “Kami memang diarahkan untuk menonjolkan pembangunan dan kegiatan masyarakat



officer from the Communication and Information Agency, “Setiap kegiatan pemerintah, MCTV harus siapkan satu orang peliput agar informasi bisa disiarkan ke masyarakat” (Informan Kominfo). This indicates a semi-institutionalised interdependence in which authorities supply informational input, while the media translate these inputs into broadcast narratives. The MCTV editor confirmed this dynamic, noting, “Prioritas liputan kami mengikuti agenda resmi pemerintah, terutama jika ada kegiatan bupati atau dinas” (Informan MCTV). Theoretically, such patterns correspond with governance-of-image frameworks, where media function as mediating actors that legitimize governmental narratives while simultaneously shaping public perception (Kooiman, 2019; Malik et al., 2025). However, this relationship also introduces editorial risk, particularly concerning autonomy: the editor acknowledged that the station’s coverage tends to be “informational rather than critical,” which echoes concerns in the literature regarding co-optation of local media in non-metropolitan contexts (Haryono et al., 2024). This duality collaboration and constraint reflects the inherent tension within communication governance, where public interest, political agendas, and media routines intersect.

### **Supporting and Hindering Factors**

Supporting and hindering factors observed in the data illuminate the structural conditions underpinning MCTV’s representational practices. Government support through open access to events and informational material streamlines the production process, while the station’s unique position as Sidrap’s only local broadcaster enhances its proximity to the community. A community informant remarked, “Konten MCTV itu dekat dengan kita karena yang ditampilkan memang kehidupan Sidrap” (Informan Tokoh Masyarakat). This emotional and geographic closeness strengthens MCTV’s capacity to cultivate a shared sense of place, consistent with (McQuail & Mark Deuze, 2020) notion of media as identity-building institutions. However, limitations such as restricted newsroom resources and the dominance of ceremonial coverage hinder content diversity. The editor acknowledged this by stating, “Kami kekurangan tim sehingga liputan kadang bersifat repetitif” (Informan MCTV). These constraints mirror structural challenges identified in prior studies of regional broadcasting institutions (Rianto et al., 2024). Moreover, the absence of a formal communication roadmap results in fluctuating narrative coherence, which is heavily influenced by changes in political priorities, a problem also documented in literature on local communication governance (Galih & Ariwibowo Rinto, 2023).

### **The Role of Local Media in Strengthening Regional Identity**

The identity-building function of MCTV becomes particularly visible through its cultural representations. Informants consistently highlighted that the station frequently incorporates Bugis cultural practices, traditional rituals, and local community events into its broadcasts. As one viewer observed, “Saya lihat liputan adat Mappadandang di channel mereka, itu sangat mewakili budaya Sidrap” (Informan Mahasiswa). Such representations serve not only to inform but also to affirm shared cultural identity, demonstrating the media’s role as a symbolic space where meaning is produced and negotiated (McQuail & Mark Deuze, 2020). Similarly, a community leader emphasized the need for consistent cultural programming: “Kalau bisa ada satu hari khusus untuk berita budaya Sidrap supaya identitasnya makin kuat” (Informan Tokoh Masyarakat). These narratives underscore how media content can reinforce belonging, local pride, and collective memory aligning with theories of media-driven identity formation (Haryono et al., 2024). The thematic consistency across sources indicates that cultural representation at MCTV is not incidental but an intentional editorial practice grounded in the station’s mission to reflect Sidrap’s cultural lifeworld.

### **Theoretical Analysis: Media-Governance-Image Nexus**

Synthesizing these empirical findings, the study delineates the conceptual model of the Media-Governance-Image Nexus, which illustrates an interconnected relationship between media institutions, governmental actors, and the public's formation of regional image. In this framework, media function as interpretive agents that transform governmental information, community events, and cultural symbols into cohesive narratives (Lopulalan & Salakay, 2022). Governance constitutes the institutional environment that informs and constrains media practices through coordination structures, dissemination strategies, and collaborative norms (Susilo & Fsm, 2025). Image represents the outcome of mediated perception shaped within the public sphere through the consumption, interpretation, and re-articulation of media content (Anholt, 2020; Mariutti, 2025). The relational mechanism involves a recursive process in which government inputs are mediated by MCTV, then received by the public, generating feedback that can influence subsequent communication flows. This model contributes theoretically by extending governance theory to incorporate media as co-governing actors; by enriching place branding literature through integration of identity and political communication processes; and by strengthening communication governance theory through an empirical account of how local broadcasters operate as nodes within a regional information ecosystem. Consequently, MCTV Ajatappareng emerges not merely as a broadcaster but as a cultural, political, and communicative actor that shapes how Sidrap is imagined, narrated, and legitimized in its public sphere.

### **CONCLUSION**

This study concludes that Mitra Citra Televisi (MCTV) Ajatappareng plays a pivotal role in constructing the image of Sidenreng Rappang Regency by framing development achievements, cultural identity, and regional potential into coherent public narratives. The collaboration between MCTV and local government reflects a semi-institutionalised governance of image mechanism, where information exchange and agenda alignment shape the direction of public communication. At the same time, structural challenges such as limited editorial resources, the dominance of ceremonial reporting, and the absence of a regional communication roadmap constrain the media's capacity to diversify representation. Theoretically, the study contributes to the development of governance of image literature by proposing the Media-Governance-Image Nexus, a conceptual model that positions local media as interpretive and co-governing actors that mediate policy signals, cultural symbols, and public perception in non-metropolitan contexts.

Practically, the findings imply the need for the Sidenreng Rappang government to strengthen institutionalized public communication strategies, including developing a regional communication roadmap, enhancing routine coordination with media, and supporting local broadcasters through capacity-building initiatives. MCTV is encouraged to diversify content beyond ceremonial events, expand its digital presence, and integrate more culturally-anchored narratives to reinforce local identity and improve audience engagement. Future research should examine how digital platforms particularly short-form video ecosystems reshape regional image construction, and should include comparative analyses across local media institutions, audience reception studies, and digital media analytics to capture the evolving dynamics of public communication in the digital era.

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