

RECONCEPTUALIZING THE COUNTRY FROM ITS PERIPHERIES: MEDIA TRANSFORMATION AND CULTURAL STRENGTH DEVELOPMENT IN INDONESIA'S BORDER AREAS

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the complex challenges and strategic possibilities of using media to strengthen nationalism in Indonesia's border regions. By employing agenda-setting theory, the study examines the impact of media on public awareness in remote areas. The uses and gratifications theory illustrates how individuals in border communities engage with media based on their personal and collective needs. Nationalism theory highlights the formation and expression of national identity in these areas. Adopting a qualitative, descriptive approach within the national interest framework, the research relies on both primary and secondary data to investigate communication practices, media accessibility, and identity dynamics. The findings indicate that broadcast media acts as an important "window to the world," offering perspectives beyond geographical limitations. However, the lack of local public and community media, along with the dominant presence of foreign broadcasts, has resulted in an imbalanced information environment. This imbalance threatens cultural preservation, fostering a disconnection from Indonesian values and potentially leading to fragmentation and weakened national unity. The implications underscore the need for reform in media policy and infrastructure enhancement, highlighting the critical need to support local broadcasting initiatives and improve media literacy. The study positions the media as a vital component in social regulation, civic education, and the cultivation of national values. Ultimately, this research emphasizes the urgent need for stakeholders, including policy makers media practitioners, and community leaders, to view media as custodians of information that can encourage resilience, unity, and cultural pride in Indonesia's most vulnerable geographical and social areas.

Keywords: Media Utilization, Border Communities, Border Areas, Public Media and Community Media.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia is an archipelago surrounded by oceans bordering other countries, therefore, the border area is a strategic and potential point (Arifin, R., & Nurkumalawati, I. 2022). Border areas are countries that are geographically and demographically directly adjacent to neighboring countries or the high seas (Xiao, C., Feng, Z., You, Z., & Zheng, F. 2022). The presence of mass media at the border as a means of communication and information for the community is also expected as a social control and promotional tool for the development of national values. Border communities should love the nation and state for the awareness of membership or citizens who potentially jointly achieve, maintain, and devote the identity, integrity, prosperity, and strength of their nation (Teverayi, M, 2023).

The swift progress of information technology today does not correspond with the insufficiency of media presence in border regions, posing a challenge to community nationalism and impeding community capacity development in these areas. Communities located along the borders of the Republic of Indonesia are often categorized as being neglected in terms of information,

development-related factors such as education and human resources (HR), and nationalism issues of the Indonesian nation in border regions (Wahyudi, W., Setyowati, R. N., Usmi, 2024)

Border communities are more familiar with the culture of neighboring countries because they, interact, communicate, and receive information and even basic needs from neighboring countries. The rapid flow of information received from foreign media has become an alternative media for people in border areas in accessing information, has become a problem for the Indonesian nation, because border communities are vulnerable to various issues and conflicts that tend to cause divisions, in a broader context can cause disintegration (Kaasa, A. 2015).

The vulnerability that poses a threat to the Indonesian nation requires an important role for the state. Externally the state must have a commitment to face all dangers and difficulties from outside. Internally, the state must be committed to facing the dangers that threaten each region (Chakraborty, S. 2018). Meanwhile, local media on the border have not been able to balance the information from media coming from neighboring countries (Chadwick, A. (2017). The contradicts the 1945 Constitution Article 28 F which says "Everyone has the right to communicate and obtain information to develop their personal and social environment, and has the right to seek, obtain, own, store, process, and convey information using all available channels" (Hantoro, 2022)

The presence of the media at the border should be a safety belt of information and become a show window for the progress of the nation, with all its advantages. The media functions as a conveyor of information that has a wide range and is able to cross the boundaries of territory (geographical), age groups, gender, socioeconomic status (demographic), and differences in understanding and orientation (psychographic). The ability to multiply the message (multiplier of message) is extraordinary. The media's editorial policy determines the appearance of news content, and the media that has an agenda setting function has a very broad opportunity (Hendershot, 1999).

The importance of maximum media use at the border can become a means of connecting the government and the people and vice versa between the people and their government. According to Law Number 32 Year 2002 Article 1 paragraph (9) on Broadcasting, there are four types of broadcasting stations for television and radio. The four types of broadcasting stations are public, private, community, and subscription broadcasting stations. Private and subscription broadcasting stations are profit -oriented, whereas public and community broadcasting stations are not (Kraus, 1963).

Considering the demographic and geographic aspects, private and subscription media are hardly found in the border areas. The existence of public broadcasting media, in this case TVRI and RRI, as well as community broadcasting, is a hope for balancing the information received by people in the border. These two broadcasting institutions must have a wide and adequate broadcast coverage that reaches the border area (Qi, J., Zollner, J., Robert, J., Stadelmeier, L., & Loghin, N. (2015). However, both TVRI and RRI, well as community broadcast media, face various problems especially those constrained by infrastructure and human resources (HR). Community media, on the other hand, are independent, have a very limited coverage area, and the content of the program contains local information, processed and managed by the local community only to serve their community (Paranjape, N. 2007).

Media used as a means of public communication is an important element of an organization's effectiveness and is essential as a means of external and internal interaction. The communication itself is understood as a relationship that occurs between two or more people and is expected to produce changes toward a better life (Lanigan, R. L. 2015). The existence of the media in

presenting information through event programs and the content of media messages can trigger changes and bring many positive and negative influences(Hoffman and Novak, 2013)The issue of media and nationalism in border communities should receive more serious attention from various parties in Indonesia, both by the communities in the border areas themselves, the border governments and the central government in Jakarta and the Indonesian people in general as part of the international community (Wahyudi, W.,etal 2024). However, border management by the current government still focuses on security and economic aspects, as social aspects and information technology infrastructure are still not a priority for border management Support from every stakeholder is needed to optimize the border region's human resources, technology, and infrastructure.

The use of media at the border aligns with Law No. 40 of 1999, which grants every citizen the right to communicate and access information through all available means (Palupy, 2011). The significance of utilizing media corresponds with the law, stipulating that the media must perform its role as a channel for information, education, entertainment, and social oversight, adhering to relevant regulations in its operational practices. Considering the crucial role of mass media in fostering community nationalism at the border, this research aims to further investigate the challenges and obstacles facing media utilization and community nationalism in that area, as well as the strategies that can be employed to address these issues. Legislation aimed at strengthening the media is not unique to Indonesia; for instance, Ukraine has also enacted laws related to television and radio broadcasting, effective March 31, 2023, which defines mass media as a vehicle for disseminating information periodically under editorial oversight with distinct features as a recognized entity (Ikems, K. C., & Nwoziri, H. O. 2023). International media has also emphasized the significance of mass media's role in preparing for journalistic activities and broadcasting's adverse effects.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Agenda setting theory

In 1972, Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw, scholars from the University of Northern California, introduced the Agenda Setting Theory in 1972. They argue that mass media does not just report events, it deliberately guides public attention by shaping what issues people consider important. On this in 1988, outlining the agenda-setting process as a progression through three stages: the media agenda, which reflects what media prioritizes; the public agenda, which mirrors what citizens believe matters most; and the policy agenda, where those concerns influence government action (Alharbi, Kuhn, & Morphet, 2020).

Use and Gratification Theory

McQuail et al (1972) on opinion that individuals selectively choose media based on their needs and the fulfillment they seek. People are aware of their preferences, compare various content options, and determine the media that best meets their interests, be it keeping informed, finding entertainment, or acquiring new knowledge. Dutta-Bergman (2005) points out that media contend with alternative sources of gratification, with individuals carefully evaluating which content enhances their lives. Within this context, border communities are significant media players as media consumers, opting for programs that resonate with their requirements and addressing information voids through national, local, and community broadcasting outlets.

Theories of Nationalism

L. Stoddard describes nationalism as a shared belief in which individuals feel an emotional bond through a common national identity. Pancasila nationalism expands on this by situating Indonesian

patriotism within the philosophical tenets of Pancasila (Roberts, 2011; Seixas, Smith, & Mitton, 2017). According to Anderson (2017) and others, media consumption in border regions significantly shapes how communities understand and engage with national identity. When border communities access relevant and inclusive media content, they enhance their connection to the nation, reinforcing their role as citizens only as citizens but also as active contributors to the national storyline.

This study has two research questions.

- 1) How can strategic media development in Indonesia's border communities strengthen civic nationalism and bridge socio-political disparities in alignment with constitutional rights and national resilience goals?
- 2) How can broadcasting and community media be strategically utilized in Indonesia's border regions in Indonesia's border regions be strategically utilized to foster civic nationalism, bridge the information divide, and strengthen national identity during amid cross-border influences and infrastructural limitations?

The objective is to use mass media as a bridge of connection, empowerment, and inclusion. This approach seeks to strengthen nationalism and community resilience in Indonesia's border regions by closing the information gap, curbing foreign media influence, and ensuring that border communities are integrally woven into the nation's story, it is not just as distant spectators as co-authors of Indonesia's identity and future.

RESEARCH METHOD

The study employs a qualitative or descriptive analysis approach, which involves gathering and examining written texts (literature review) from both secondary and primary data sources while using a national interest perspective. This research also adopts a qualitative descriptive type aimed at identifying issues, gathering information, making comparisons, conducting evaluations, outlining plans, and determining future actions. (B. V. Seixas, N. Smith, and C. Mitton. (2017). The applied theoretical framework includes agenda-setting, uses and gratification, and nationalism theories.

The study adopts a qualitative descriptive design to explore the nuanced realities of media use and national identity formation within the border regions of Indonesia (Wille, C., & Reckinger, R. (2015). Rather than relying on hypothesis testing, interpretive analysis that allows the voices, experiences, and perceptions of community members to come to the fore is performed. The framework is anchored in three theoretical pillars: 1) agenda setting theory, which helps uncover how media shapes public attention and issue salience; 2) uses and gratifications theory, which positions border residents as active media consumers driven by personal and communal motivations; and 3) nationalism theory, which provides insights into how identity is performed and expressed in peripheral spaces. Data were collected using rich, context-driven methods. In-depth interviews with residents, media practitioners, and local leaders reveal how media is perceived and consumed; focus group discussions capture shared narratives around media and its role in shaping national consciousness; and participant observation in communal media settings sheds light on everyday behavioral patterns. These primary data are complemented by policy document reviews, including broadcasting regulations and infrastructure development strategies, alongside media content analysis that contrasts the tone and cultural relevance of local and foreign broadcasts. Additionally, secondary sources such as demographic reports and communication access studies from institutions such as BPS, Kominfo, and BNPP help map media availability

and infrastructural disparities, enriching the understanding of how media acts as both a conduit and a barrier in fostering nationalism at Indonesia's geographical margins.ⁱ

Table 1. Media and Border Nationalism: Research Techniques and Their Purpose

Technique	Purpose
Thematic Analysis	To identify recurring patterns in interviews and FGDs related to nationalism and media use.
Discourse Analysis	To examine how media narratives construct or challenge national identity.
Comparative Mapping	To contrast media accessibility and influence across different border regions.
Triangulation	To confirm findings by cross-referencing primary and secondary data sources.

Source: Created by the author (2025)

The analytical framework employed in this study integrates four complementary techniques to explore the dynamics of nationalism and media use in Indonesia's border regions. Thematic analysis was used to distill patterns from qualitative data, particularly interviews and FGDs, allowing the identification of recurring themes related to media access, national sentiment, and community resilience. Discourse analysis complemented this by examining the linguistic and ideological construction of national identity within media narratives, highlighting the influence of framing and representation on public perception. Comparative mapping facilitates a spatial understanding of disparities in media infrastructure and accessibility across diverse border regions, revealing systemic inequalities in information flow. Triangulation was applied by cross-referencing insights from primary sources with secondary literature to ensure the validity and reliability of these findings, enhancing methodological rigor and supporting a multidimensional interpretation of the role of media in fostering nationalism.

II. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Strengthening Civic Nationalism through Strategic Media in Indonesia's Border Communities

Challenges and Barriers to Media Utilization and Nationalism in Border Communities to achieve Indonesia's national ideals of building a just and prosperous society, citizens must actively fulfill their rights and responsibilities by embracing the principles of nationalism, especially unity across politics, governance, philosophy, language, and culture. Individuals must freely express their thoughts, worship, and share ideas, individually or collectively, while equally accessing their rights and conducting civic duties. People can strengthen the nation's character and dignity by cultivating pride, preserving national history, contributing solutions to national and global challenges, and striving for excellence (Rose, 1985).

Stoddart emphasized that nationalism grows from a shared belief among individuals living within a nation (Carlsson, 2022). It does not naturally emerge; institutions must intentionally nurture it through structured social processes (Cansinos, 2021). Emotional bonds, such as common experiences and collective destiny, play a key role in fueling nationalism, especially for border communities facing everyday cross-cultural interactions (Jamshid, 2020).

Indonesia's border regions have immense potential. As symbolic "windows to the nation," they

showcase diversity and resilience. However, these regions also face serious challenges, including underdeveloped infrastructure, insufficient investment, low connectivity, and high poverty rates, which limit both natural and human resource development (Fung et al., 2011).

Media in border areas should help bridge the communication and information gap. It must act as a social watchdog while promoting national values and community awareness. Despite uneven realities across regions, local media have already begun to break isolation by connecting communities to broader social dynamics (Brekke & Thorbjørnsrud, 2020).

Unfortunately, media scarcity has negatively impacted border communities. With few domestic options available, people often rely on the broadcasts of neighboring countries, especially television and radio, to satisfy their curiosity for news and information (Williams, 2020). Without strong local alternatives, communities become grow more familiar with foreign cultures than their own (Suvorkov, 2020). Radio listeners, whether active or passive, navigate this imbalance without reliable coverage from Indonesian broadcasters (Ziegler, 2016).

In December 2023, LEMHANAS RI conducted a visit to Miangas Island, revealing deficiencies in RRI broadcasting infrastructure and internet connectivity. These shortcomings not only restricted the flow of information but also increased the prices of essential goods such as food and clothing, thereby contributing to greater economic inequality (Shirakawa, 2024). The absence of local media can undermine national pride in border regions, particularly when foreign news outlets promote their own narratives. Daily interactions with mass media through viewing, listening, reading, and reflecting significantly influence residents' viewpoints (Mohsenian-Rad, 2015).

Many studies have shown that broadcast media often present imbalanced narratives due to internal biases and selective gatekeeping. These filtered messages can unintentionally alter public opinion and influence policy (Adesola & Oluwatoyin, 2020). According to agenda setting theory, the media decides what is important, and the public tends to follow that lead. News representation and persuasion shape what society deems meaningful, turning media agendas into public priorities (Wanta, 2023). However, limited infrastructure prevents media from fulfilling its full potential as a learning and civic engagement tool (Ahmed, 2021). Today, border media outlets operate only 4–6 hours per day due to electricity constraints, preventing regular access to reliable news (Cazzamatta, 2025).

The theory suggests that people actively choose media based on their needs, goals, and interests (Simpson, 2017). Border communities should be free to select media content that serves their curiosity and daily information needs. However, when access is restricted, they lose that freedom, despite its vital role in promoting nationalism, economic opportunity, and civic participation. Information empowers communities by opening communication channels and helping them market their local products (Kowala, 2025).

The media gap starkly contradicts Article 28F of the 1945 Constitution, which affirms the right of every citizen to seek, obtain, and share information using any available means. Strengthening border media is not just a policy necessity, but a constitutional mandate and a democratic imperative.

Table 3. Nationalism Citizenship, and Border Media

Dimension	Key Insight	Source(s)
Nationalism Construction	Nationalism is built through institutions and emotional unity, which is not naturally.	Carlsson(2022),Cansinos (2021).
Citizenship	Unity, freedom, and equal obligations are	Rose (1985)

Ideals	essential for national prosperity.	
Border Identity	Border areas are symbolic and strategic, yet underdeveloped	Fung et al. (2011)
The Border Media Role	Media bridges gaps, fosters nationalism, and provides social oversight	Brekke&Thorbjørnsrud (2020)
Impact of Media Deficit	Lack of local media leads to reliance on foreign media, distorts national narratives	Williams(2020), Suvorkov (2020)
Infrastructure Challenges	Limited electricity and connectivity restrict media operations to 4–6 h per day.	Cazzamatta (2025) and Shirakawa (2024)
Agenda Setting	Media priorities shape public agendas through framing and gatekeeping	Wanta.2023; Adesola and Oluwatoyin, 2020)
Media Agency	Citizens actively seek media that meets their needs and goals	Simpson(2017), Kowala (2025)
Constitutional Mandate	Media access is a constitutional right under Article 28F of the 1945 Constitution.	Indonesia Constitution (1945)

Source: Created by Author 2025)

Nationalism in border areas is not naturally occurring but rather deliberately shaped through institutional systems and emotional bonds (Carlsson, 2022; Cansinos, 2021; Jamshid, 2020). Citizenship ideals such as unity, freedom, and equal responsibilities act as essential foundations for national success (Rose, 1985) However, identities at borders appear strategically symbolic and materially underdeveloped (Fung et al., 2011). Within this framework, media acts as both a link and a monitor, fostering a collective narrative while improving social accountability (Brekke & Thorbjørnsrud, 2020). Nevertheless, the lack of strong local media creates reliance on external sources, distorting national viewpoints and undermining collective identity (Williams, 2020; Suvorkov, 2020). Infrastructural shortcomings, such as limited electricity and connectivity, which confine media availability to just a few hours each day, worsen this situation (Cazzamatta, 2025; Shirakawa, 2024). Despite these challenges, the power of agenda-setting enables the media to shape public awareness and underscore strategic concerns (Wanta, 2023; Adesola & Oluwatoyin, 2020). Citizens are not merely observers; they actively seek content that resonates with their sociopolitical realities (Simpson, 2017; Kowala, 2025). Importantly, Article 28F of Indonesia's 1945 Constitution recognizes media access as a constitutional right, reinforcing its importance in promoting democratic participation and national unity.

The nature of nationalism is not something we simply inherit; it is something we construct together. Institutions have significantly influenced the development of this identity by weaving emotional connections of togetherness, pride, and historical awareness. Nationalism takes on greater significance when it is fostered through inclusive social interactions and relatable symbols for communities situated along borders, who often face a feeling of marginalization.

Citizenship is at the core of this national endeavor, understood not just as a legal designation but as active involvement in shared objectives. Citizens flourish in societies that allow them to voice their opinions, openly practice their faith, and contribute to national progress in meaningful ways. Individuals are more inclined to take pride in their country and feel motivated to address community challenges when rights and responsibilities are in harmony (Sacks, J. 2025).

Border areas present both significant opportunities and critical. These regions represent Indonesia's strategic assets, acting as conduits to the world and reflecting its cultural essence. However, they often lag in terms of infrastructure, economic possibilities, and access to vital services. This disparity threatens national unity and hampers the overall commitment to justice and prosperity.

The media plays a crucial in bridging this gap. In border communities, local broadcasting can connect individuals to national stories, reinforce common values, and ensure policy accountability. It serves as a social adhesive, fostering a sense of belonging and civic consciousness. Conversely, individuals seek information from sources outside their borders when media representation is lacking or inadequate foreign broadcasts may be accessible, they could promote agendas that do not reflect Indonesia's interests, thereby endangering national identity.

Strategic Use of Broadcasting and Community Media to Foster Civic Nationalism in Indonesia's Border Regions

The limitations are not merely symbolic they are also technical and deeply structural. In many border areas, media outlets operate under unreliable electricity and weak internet infrastructure. This restricts access to timely information and diminishes the potential of the media as a channel for education, civic dialogue, and economic engagement. It is a challenge that directly impacts people's ability to make informed choices and actively participate in society. This issue is in media's influence over public opinion. According to agenda setting theory, media organizations can shape what issues are considered important. In border areas, where local voices are scarce and alternative narratives dominate, lack of balanced representation can distort public perception and community priorities (Foreman, 2024).

Despite these limitations, communities remain resilient and intentional in their media use. Through the lens of the Uses and Gratifications Theory, individuals are seen not as passive recipients but as active seekers, choosing media based on personal needs and motivations. Unfortunately, in border regions, that choice is often unavailable, reinforcing inequality and silencing critical engagement.

This absence contradicts the constitutional promise set forth in Article 28F of Indonesia's 1945 Constitution, which guarantees every citizen the right to seek and disseminate information. Denying this right not only weakens democratic values but also neglects the economic potential and cultural pride of those living in the edge of the nation.

In general, the media in border areas is very weak, and the lack of infrastructure results in very limited information received. According to McQuail in his book *Mass Communication Theories*, the media has six perspectives (Burton, H., & McQuail, D. (2021).

First, the media is seen as a window so that people can see what is happening out there and know all the events. Second, the media as a mirror of events in society and the world, implying a faithful reflection as a mirror that reflects various events in society and in the world, has resulted in some media managers often airing news about violence, pornography, conflict, and various bad things that happen in society. On the other hand, the content of media content is the authority of media leaders who are authorized to provide angles and framing of news to the public, while the public may not know the hidden agenda being carried out by the media in the case of communities on the border with limited human resources there. Third, the media selects information or content based on the owner's wishes. The media functions as a gatekeeper or filter. In agenda setting theory, the media owner gives the public the choice to know what is worth knowing or not based on the wishes of the media owner. Fourth, the media is used as a guide in interpreting and providing guidance

on the uncertainty of diverse alternatives in society. Fifth, mass media is a means to present various ideas or information to the public, thereby allowing feedback. Sixth, mass media as an interlocutor is a means of conducting two-way communication or interactive communication. From Mc Quail's six perspectives, how this media content becomes the basis for changes in public responses and attitudes. If the information received by the public is false and comes from neighboring media, then this will cause social reactions that disturb the peace of community life. In a broader context, can be a threat in the form of disintegration and loss of a sense of community nationalism (James, S. 2021). Therefore, the use of public and community media should be maximized because of the demand for the media to always provide accurate and quality information.

Television and radio are broadcast media that manage space rather than time. The media serve to meet societal needs and carries out its role as a means of communication (Hayes, J. E., 2023). Surveillance involves distributing and gathering information about occurrences in both the surrounding environment and within a specific society. Correlation entails events occurring in the environment, which are assessed, chosen, and interpreted by mass media, usually reflected in media editorials. Cultural transmission includes educational endeavors. This function conveys values and social norms from established members of a group to newcomers, emphasizing knowledge sharing. Entertainment refers to the media's capability to deliver information aimed at amusing the public. Mobilization refers to the way media encourages individuals to act or behave in accordance with the content presented.

The presence of broadcasting media in border regions plays a crucial role in promoting nationalism for several reasons: 1) Broadcasting media is seen as a source of information for individuals living in border areas, acting as a counterbalance to the influx of foreign media; 2) It has the potential to foster a sense of national defense within border communities through the information shared about Indonesia, helping these communities feel a connection; 3) Broadcasting media serves as an information safety net for border residents who face challenges accessing information due to numerous areas lacking coverage; 4) Media facilitates cross-border diplomacy, functioning as a tool for social diplomacy among countries; 5) It acts as a soft defense mechanism, empowering communities through information (Murtadha, A. 2019).

The media's impact on socio-cultural transformation lies in its capacity to shape our perceptions, influencing audience reactions and attitudes toward various social subjects. The role of the media in society extends beyond mere entertainment, as its content and information significantly contribute to the dynamics of social change. For instance, mass media content engages the audience intellectually, affecting the personal realities of social interactions.

A strategy that maximizes the potential of existing outlets such as public media like TVRI and RRI, as well as community media, is required to effectively utilize media for promoting nationalism within border communities. RRI and TVRI, both public broadcasting institutions, are tasked with delivering education, information, and entertainment to the public, including broadcasting services to border regions. Community radio, as a component of the Indonesian broadcasting landscape, plays a vital role in disseminating essential information to local audiences, encompassing citizen aspirations and governmental initiatives aimed at collaboratively addressing issues and enhancing local potential (King and Mele, 1999).

Certain strategies can be adopted to ensure that the effective use of media and community nationalism thrives in border areas (Quail, C. (2014). First, there is a need to bolster alternative media, such as community media, to compensate for the scarcity of private media in border zones, as these areas are less attractive for media industry investments due to geographical and

demographic characteristics. Community media can provide vital border communities with vital information, facilitate interaction, foster community values, and promote local culture. The government should support infrastructure development and assist in the management of community media to ensure that they continue to offer educational and culturally relevant content aligned with Indonesian values. Second, the government should facilitate initiatives aimed at enhancing the professionalism of media personnel, such as training in journalism and ethics, covering reportage, and news writing techniques. Media professionals must recognize that while broadcasting news content involves reporting, it also carries a social responsibility and adheres to ethical journalistic standards.

Table. 2: Media Perspectives, Functions, and Strategic Roles in Border Nationalism

Category	Key Insight	Source(s)
Media as a Window	Enables border communities to observe national and global events; however, this view is restricted by limited infrastructure.	McQuail, 2021; James, 2021
Media as a Mirror	Framing may distort perceptions in border areas with low media literacy	McQuail, 2021; James, 2021
Media as Gatekeeper	Filters content based on ownership interests; border communities may unknowingly absorb biased narratives.	McQuail (2021): Agenda setting theory.
Media as a guide	Helps interpret complex realities; absence of local media leaves border communities without orientation	McQuail, 2021; Hayes, 2023
Media as a Platform	Facilitates exchange of ideas excchages and feedback; community media can empower local voices	McQuail _2021 King &Mele, 1999
Media as an Interlocutor	Enables two-way communication, which is; essential for participatory development in border areas	McQuail (2021) and Quail (2014)
Surveillance Function	Distributes information about local and external events; blank-spot areas hinder this function	Hayes, 2023; Murtadha, 2019
Correlation Function	Interprets and critiques events; editorial bias may mislead border audiences	Hayes, 2023; James, 2021
Cultural Transmission	Educates and passes down values; media absence weakens cultural continuity in border communities	Hayes, 2023 McFadyen & Laing 1996
Entertainment Function	Provides relief and engagement; foreign media may dominate entertainment narratives	Hayes, 2023; Suvorkov, 2020
Mobilization Function	Inspires action; media can foster national pride and civic participation in border areas	Hayes, 2023; Murtadha, 2019
Strategic Role	Counterbalances the influence of foreign media by promoting Indonesian identity	Murtadha (2019) McFadyen Laing (1996)
Strategic Role	National defense sentiment is built through culturally relevant content	Murtadha (2019) And King and

Strategic Role	Acts as an information safety belt in the blankspot zone	Mele (1999) Murtadha (2019) and Shirakawa (2024)
Strategic Role	Facilitates cross-border diplomacy and soft power	Murtadha (2019) and Quail (2014)
Strategic Role	Empowering communities through media literacy and infrastructure development	Quail, 2014; Hayes, 2023

Source: Created by the author 2025)

The table illustrates that media functions not only as an instrument for disseminating information but also as a significant aspect of how individuals in border regions perceive the world and comprehend their role within the nation. When media serves as a window, it enables communities to witness events occurring elsewhere and to feel connected to national and global happenings. However, this perspective is often restricted in many border regions insufficient infrastructure means that individuals may not always have access to the same sights and sounds as others.

Media functioning as a mirror is intended to accurately reflect society. It should depict our identity. Nevertheless, in regions lacking media literacy, particularly in border areas, the reflection may be misinterpreted or even detrimental, resulting in confusion or distrust. The gatekeeper role emphasizes the influence of media proprietors on what is disseminated. A significant issue arises when people have limited options; they may unknowingly receive information solely through another 's biases.

As a guide, the media is expected to help communities understand complex issues. However, in the absence of local outlets, residents in border areas may struggle to navigate social and political changes. When media operate as a platform, it provides individuals with a venue to express themselves, exchange ideas, and have their voices recognized. In particular, community media can fulfill this role empowering local perspectives. Likewise, the media as an interlocutor promotes a two-way conversation. This is crucial in border areas for facilitating genuine engagement, ensuring that individuals actively participate rather than passively listening.

Beyond these functions, the media plays vital roles. It supports surveillance, monitoring the surroundings, and keeping individuals informed about relevant events. However, areas with minimal coverage render this task nearly impossible. The correlation function aims to help people accurately and fairly interpret events.

Editorial bias can mislead audiences, especially those with few alternatives. Cultural transmission represents one of the fundamental responsibilities of the media conveying values and traditions. Without this, the cultural identity in border areas may diminish, leading younger generations to feel a stronger connection to external influences than to their own heritage.

The entertainment function provides enjoyment and respite however, but often foreign media can dominate the way individuals unwind and dream. The mobilization function is effectively generates action, motivating people to participate and fostering a belief in their nation. Border regions have the potential to rekindle a sense of pride.

The concluding section of the table explores the media's strategic influence. Acting as a soft defensive barrier, media can counteract foreign influences and bolster national identity. It can cultivate a sense of readiness for defense by making local content relevant and culturally significant. Additionally, it serves as an information safety net, especially where there are few

news sources. The media can also facilitate cross-border diplomacy by promoting connections rather than merely enforcing separations. With enhanced infrastructure and training, communities can be empowered, enabling individuals to interact with media in a critical, confident, and innovative manner.

DISCUSSION

The media plays a profound and multifaceted role in cultivating nationalism among border communities, where media access remains structurally limited and socio-politically consequential. McQuail's theoretical perspectives frame media as a cognitive and social architecture, not just a delivery system. As a window, media open border communities to broader national and global experiences, yet underdeveloped infrastructure reduces visibility and fosters isolation. The mirror metaphor reminds us that media can reflect society's image, but in contexts of low media literacy and uneven framing, these reflections may appear distorted, shaping how people see themselves and their nation. As a gatekeeper, media filters content based on institutional and ownership priorities, making border audiences vulnerable to external biases and curated narratives, especially when local alternatives are absent. The media's guiding role in helping interpret uncertainty loses its efficacy when local broadcasts are limited, leaving residents without direction in navigating complex national discourses. However, when community-based and participatory, media also serves as a platform that empowers local voices and fosters dialogue, though such potential remains untapped in many border zones.

The functional aspects reinforce this blank spot regions hinder the surveillance function critical for disseminating information, reducing real-time engagement with national events. The correlation function, ideally used for editorial interpretation and critique, may unintentionally mislead when it is biased or unbalanced. The absence of consistent cultural transmission threatens to weaken intergenerational continuity and disrupt shared national values, while the dominance of foreign content in entertainment highlights the urgency of reclaiming narrative space through culturally resonant programming. Importantly, the mobilization function positions the media as an agent of empowerment, capable of igniting civic engagement and patriotic pride.

At a strategic level, the media become a soft power instrument. It can counter balance foreign influence, build defense-oriented sentiment, and serve as an informational safety belt, especially in disconnected or blank-spot areas. Its diplomatic capacity to mediate cross-border dialogue and its potential to educate and empower communities through infrastructure and media literacy underscore the need to invest in border media ecosystems. Ultimately, the table highlights a call for responsive governance that integrates media development into national resilience strategies, where media is not a peripheral concern but a cornerstone of inclusive nation-building and cultural preservation.

Strengthening media infrastructure and programming in Indonesia's border areas is critical not only to ensure access to balanced and culturally rooted information but also to fortify national resilience. Media in border regions performs far more than an informative function; it becomes a vehicle for cultural continuity, civic engagement, and soft diplomacy. As local broadcasting is weak or absent, border communities are not only cut off from national narratives and policy discussions but also risk becoming culturally disconnected through foreign media's unfiltered influence. Each media perspective and function from acting as a window into the world to serving as a platform for dialogue and empowerment demonstrates how strategic media engagement can help reclaim identity, guide social orientation, and promote a sense of belonging. Thus,

empowering communities and public media in these regions is not a peripheral task but a foundational necessity for inclusive nation-building and long-term social stability.

Despite its comprehensive conceptual exploration, the study is primarily descriptive and theoretical, relying extensively on established frameworks such as McQuail's media perspectives, agenda setting theory agenda, and general functional roles of media. As such, empirical field data from specific border regions, which could provide grounded insights into lived experiences and local media engagement, have not yet been incorporated. The analysis also explains a generalized media vacuum across border communities without differentiating between geographic, socio-economic, or technological variances among regions. Moreover, while the strategic potential of media has been extensively explored, the institutional dynamics, regulatory barriers, and market constraints that shape media operations in border contexts remain underexplored. Finally, although the study highlights the risks of foreign media influence and the urgency of reclaiming narrative sovereignty, it does not fully capture border audiences' nuanced content preferences or their actual patterns of media consumption. Addressing these limitations through ethnographic approaches, comparative case studies, and stakeholder interviews would enrich the findings and help tailor media strategies to the diverse realities of Indonesia's border communities.

5. CONCLUSION

The strategic use of media in Indonesia's border regions is not solely logistical concern, it is an urgent national interest matter anchored in the constitutional pursuit of unity, dignity, and cultural integrity. In this context, the national interest extends beyond geopolitical considerations and encompasses the safeguarding of the nation's physical, political, and cultural identity. The current deficit in operational local, community, and public broadcasting platforms across border areas has resulted in a lopsided information environment, depriving residents of balanced, educational, and culturally grounded content. Consequently, the unchecked influx of foreign media narratives risks cultivating cultural unfamiliarity among border communities, gradually weakening their emotional and intellectual connection to Indonesian values. If left unaddressed, this erosion of national sentiment may manifest as social disintegration, political discord, and cultural displacement. To mitigate these risks, the government must proactively reinforce media resilience in these vulnerable zones, ensuring access to content that not only educates and informs but, also cultivates pride, morality, and a shared sense of belonging. Legal instruments and inclusive media strategies that align with national resilience goals must underpin such efforts, thereby transforming border media into a conduit for unity, empowerment, and enduring nationhood.

In general, the influence of the strategic environment brings changes in the border areas. While border communities may have access to various sources of information, a pressing challenge lies in their limited capacity to critically interpret and use that information to advance collective welfare. Broadcasting media, often described as a "window to the world," serves as a conduit through which external realities are transmitted, illuminating global dynamics in the middle of these communities, socio-economic marginalization.

From a socio-cultural perspective, the influx of global content, readily visible and audible through modern media, has introduced a diverse array of cultural expressions. However, many of these imported influences significantly diverge from Indonesia's indigenous values and traditions. When such external cultural practices are uncritically adopted, the foundational norms and ethical principles that define the Indonesian national identity may erode over time.

To truly address the limitations of media access and its impact on nationalism in Indonesia's border communities, future efforts must go beyond infrastructure and embrace a more human-

centered, inclusive approach. First and foremost, there is a need to expand broadcasting and digital infrastructure that is sensitive to the geographic and cultural realities of each border area, not just building towers, but ensuring that people have access to electricity, stable signals, and locally relevant content. It is also essential to support community media platforms, such as local radio and citizen journalism, to provide space for people to tell their own stories in their own words. Alongside this, empowering residents through media literacy is crucial in helping them not only critically consume content but also create and shape it. Policies must be designed with participation in mind, involving border communities in decisions about the kind of media they need, and ensuring they are not just passive recipients but active agents of their own narratives. Cross-border media engagement could also be used strategically, not as a threat but as an opportunity for cultural diplomacy and mutual understanding. Above all, future solutions must be guided by ongoing research and listening, responding to local voices, tracking changes, and adapting strategies to ensure that media truly serves as a force for unity, identity, and resilience.

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