

Reconstructing Brand Meaning in a Local Community: A Study of Brand Glocalization in Sidrap Regency

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Abstract

Objectives: This study examines how the global streetwear brand Volcom has been reconstructed as a marker of cross-generational, collective identity within Sidrap Regency, South Sulawesi, Indonesia. It investigates the local meanings attached to the brand, the grassroots mechanisms driving this reconstruction, and the reasons behind its extension into non-commercial display practices.

Methods: Using a qualitative case study design bounded by the phenomenon rather than a fixed location, the study draws on in-depth interviews with five purposively selected key informants across four groups (young consumers, adult consumers, community figures, and local retailers), supplemented by netnographic observation of public social media content and contextual field observation. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis.

Results: Findings reveal that Volcom's original association with Californian subculture has undergone de-subculturalization, being re-signified as a symbol of regional solidarity and kinship. This reconstruction is sustained through intergenerational transmission, the curatorial role of local retailers, and social media amplification such as the "*Jambul Volcom*" trend. Community members further extend the brand's logo into non-commercial spaces, including vehicles and household décor, distinguishing between commercial and cultural authenticity as they do so.

Research Implications: The study extends meaning transfer, glocalization, brand community, and extended self theories by demonstrating that brand meaning reconstruction can occur as an emergent, community-driven process that is spatially concentrated rather than geographically dispersed. It offers brand managers insight into how organic, grassroots brand equity can form independently of formal marketing strategy.

Keywords: Brand Glocalization; Brand Meaning Reconstruction; Consumer Culture Theory; Brand Community; Local Identity



1. Introduction

Brands have long ceased to be mere functional markers of product origin: they have become carriers of meaning that consumers actively interpret, negotiate, and reconstruct within their own cultural settings (McCracken, 1986). As global brands travel across borders, their meanings rarely remain fixed. Instead, they undergo a process of glocalization, in which global symbols are absorbed, reinterpreted, and blended with local values to produce meanings that are neither purely global nor purely local (Robertson, 1995). Recent studies confirm that this hybridization continues to intensify as brands curate localized retail and digital experiences that connect global identity with regional specificity (Schau et al., 2023), and that brand positioning strategies in emerging markets increasingly depend on balancing global appeal with local relevance (Osmanoglu et al., 2024). While this process has been widely documented at the level of multinational corporations entering national or regional markets, far less is known about how such reconstruction unfolds within small, geographically bounded communities, where a global brand can evolve into a marker of collective, cross-generational identity that departs substantially from its brand-intended meaning.

This phenomenon is vividly observed in Sidrap Regency, South Sulawesi, Indonesia, where Volcom, a global streetwear brand rooted in Californian skateboarding and surfing subculture, has achieved a level of local popularity that defies conventional patterns of brand adoption. Unlike typical streetwear brands whose appeal is generally confined to youth and niche subcultural groups, Volcom in Sidrap is worn across age groups, from children to adults, cutting across the generational boundaries that usually delimit such brands. More strikingly, the brand's presence extends far beyond apparel: its logo appears voluntarily almost everywhere in daily life, from vehicle stickers to household wall décor such as wallpaper and other everyday objects, while local social media communities actively celebrate the brand through region-specific trends such as the so-called "Volcom hairstyle" (jambul Volcom) and dedicated community accounts on TikTok, Instagram, and Facebook. Local retailers have also emerged to serve this demand, some explicitly emphasizing product authenticity, which suggests that the brand carries not only symbolic but also status-related significance within the community. Taken together, these observations indicate a phenomenon that extends beyond ordinary product consumption and into the realm of collective identity construction.

The existing literature, however, offers limited theoretical grounding for this type of phenomenon. Studies on brand meaning transfer have primarily focused on how meaning moves from broad cultural systems into products and subsequently into individual consumers (McCracken, 1986), with comparatively little attention paid to how meaning is collectively reconstructed within small, hyper-local communities. Similarly, recent research on brand glocalization continues to examine adaptation mainly at the level of national or regional markets, such as fashion and retail brands adjusting digital and in-store strategies to local audiences (Schau et al., 2023), leaving the dynamics of brand meaning reconstruction at the scale of a single regency largely unexplored. Furthermore, although the concept of the extended self helps explain why consumers display brand symbols beyond their original product context (Belk,

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1988), and although symbolic consumption has recently been shown to reinforce social identity among specific consumer groups (Carrillo Barbosa & Guzman Rincon, 2022), this behavior has rarely been examined in relation to voluntary, non-commercial brand display practices that saturate everyday surroundings, such as vehicle stickers and household wall décor, within a non-Western, semi-rural setting. This gap is theoretically significant because it points to a form of brand meaning making that is simultaneously collective, cross-generational, and spatially concentrated, conditions that existing frameworks were not originally designed to capture.

Addressing this gap carries both theoretical and practical urgency. Theoretically, examining how a small community reconstructs the meaning of a global brand contributes to refining meaning transfer and glocalization frameworks by introducing a community-level, cross-generational dimension that has been underexplored in consumer research. This urgency is reinforced by evidence that consumer engagement within brand communities, including those formed and sustained through social media, continues to evolve in ways that blur the boundary between individual identity expression and collective belonging (Raposo Santos et al., 2022). Practically, understanding how brand meaning can be organically appropriated and transformed by a local community, without deliberate marketing intervention from the brand itself, offers valuable insight for brand managers seeking to understand unplanned, grassroots brand equity formation, as well as for scholars interested in how global consumer culture is localized in emerging market contexts such as Indonesia.

To address this issue, the present study draws on several complementary theoretical perspectives. Consumer Culture Theory (CCT) provides the overarching lens for understanding consumers as active co-creators of meaning rather than passive recipients of marketing messages (Arnould & Thompson, 2005). Within this broader perspective, McCracken's (1986) meaning transfer model explains how cultural meaning moves from the cultural world into consumer goods and then into consumers' lives, while the concept of glocalization (Robertson, 1995) accounts for the hybridization of global and local meanings, a dynamic that recent studies show remains highly relevant to how brands are curated and experienced across different markets today (Schau et al., 2023; Osmanoglu et al., 2024). Belk's (1988) notion of the extended self offers a framework for interpreting why consumers display brand logos on personal property as an extension of identity, a mechanism echoed in recent findings that symbolic consumption continues to serve as a vehicle for constructing and signaling social identity (Carrillo Barbosa & Guzman Rincon, 2022). Brand community theory (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001) and consumer tribe theory (Cova & Cova, 2002) help explain the social bonds that form around shared brand consumption, even among consumers who never formally organize as a group, a pattern that continues to manifest in contemporary, largely social media mediated brand communities (Raposo Santos et al., 2022). Social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) further clarifies how brand-based affiliation can function as a marker of in-group belonging within the local community.

Guided by these theoretical foundations, this study is designed as a qualitative, interpretive inquiry rather than a hypothesis-testing study, given its aim to explore and interpret meaning-making processes rather than to test causal relationships among variables. Conceptually, the study is organized around a sequence that begins with the brand's original global meaning, moves through a local reinterpretation process shaped by mechanisms of meaning transfer, tribal bonding, and social identity formation, and culminates in observable symbolic behaviors, such as cross-generational adoption and non-apparel logo display, that together constitute a reconstructed, community-specific brand meaning. This conceptual sequence forms the analytical basis for the research questions and the interpretive approach adopted in the subsequent sections of this study.

This study, therefore, seeks to answer three central questions: (1) what meanings do members of the Sidrap community attach to the Volcom brand, and how do these meanings diverge from the brand's globally intended meaning; (2) how does the process of local meaning reconstruction unfold within the community, including its key actors, channels, and accelerating factors; and (3) why and how consumers extend brand display beyond conventional product use as a form of identity expression. By addressing these questions through a qualitative case study approach, supplemented by netnographic observation, this research aims to contribute a grounded, community-level account of brand glocalization that extends current theoretical understanding of how global brands are reconstructed as local identity symbols.

2. Literature Review

This section reviews five bodies of theory that together inform the present study: brand meaning within Consumer Culture Theory, glocalization as a process of meaning hybridization, the extended self as an explanation for symbolic brand display, brand community and consumer tribe theory as accounts of collective belonging, and social identity theory as a lens for understanding in-group brand affiliation. The section closes by synthesizing these strands and positioning the gap that the present study addresses.

Brand Meaning and Consumer Culture Theory

Conventional accounts of consumer behavior typically describe consumption as a sequential decision-making process, moving from need recognition through information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision, and post-purchase response, a process that has become increasingly complex as it now spans multiple digital touchpoints, channels, and algorithmic recommendations (Ridha, 2026). While this process-based view remains useful for understanding individual purchase behavior, it does not fully capture how brands acquire and sustain socially shared meaning within a community. Consumer Culture Theory (CCT) treats consumption not as a series of isolated economic transactions but as a socioculturally embedded practice through which consumers construct identity, meaning, and community (Arnould & Thompson, 2005). Within this tradition, McCracken's (1986) meaning transfer model remains foundational. It proposes that cultural meaning originates in the culturally constituted world, moves into consumer goods through instruments

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such as advertising and the fashion system, and subsequently moves from goods into the individual consumer through possession, exchange, grooming, and divestment rituals. A central implication of this model is that meaning is not fixed at the point of production. It is continually relocated, reinterpreted, and, in some cases, contested as it passes between cultural systems, products, and people. This movement of meaning provides the conceptual starting point for understanding how a brand produced within one cultural system, in this case Californian skate and surf culture, can acquire an entirely different set of meanings once it circulates within another cultural setting.

Glocalization and the Reconstruction of Global Brand Meaning

While McCracken's model explains the general mechanism of meaning movement, the concept of glocalization addresses what happens when that movement crosses global and local boundaries. Robertson (1995) argues that globalization and localization are not opposing forces but interdependent processes: global forms are absorbed into local settings and reshaped in ways that produce meanings that are neither fully global nor fully local, but hybrid. Recent empirical work continues to affirm the relevance of this framework in contemporary branding practice. Schau et al. (2023) show that global brands can be localized through in-store curation strategies that use what they term structures of common difference, allowing a global brand to feel authentically local in each specific retail setting while retaining its global identity. Similarly, Osmanoglu et al. (2024) demonstrate that positioning strategies combining global and local cultural cues shape consumer word-of-mouth intentions and product evaluations in emerging markets, indicating that the negotiation between global and local meaning remains an active and consequential process rather than a historical artifact of early globalization theory. Taken together, this literature confirms that glocalization is an ongoing, empirically observable phenomenon, but it also reveals a consistent pattern: existing studies examine glocalization primarily as something brands or retailers deliberately execute, at the level of national or regional markets. Far less attention has been paid to glocalization as an emergent, consumer-driven process that unfolds without formal brand intervention, particularly within small, geographically bounded communities such as a single regency.

Extended Self and Symbolic Consumption

A second theoretical strand concerns why consumers extend brand meaning into objects and spaces beyond the product itself. Belk's (1988) concept of the extended self proposes that possessions are not merely external to identity but are incorporated into it, such that what a person owns, displays, or is seen with becomes part of who they are understood to be, by themselves and by others. This framework helps explain behaviors that exceed ordinary product use, such as displaying a brand logo across everyday surroundings, from vehicles to household wall décor, because these acts extend the symbolic reach of the brand into spaces that signal identity to a wider audience than clothing alone would reach. Contemporary research continues to find that symbolic consumption functions as an active mechanism of identity and

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social identity construction rather than a passive by-product of purchasing. Carrillo Barbosa and Guzman Rincon (2022), for instance, show that symbolic consumption practices among a distinct social group in Colombia were closely tied to the construction and reinforcement of that group's social identity, reinforcing the view that objects and symbols continue to serve as vehicles through which group belonging is enacted and communicated. This literature, however, has primarily examined symbolic consumption within Western or urban settings and rarely addresses non-commercial, voluntary brand display practices, such as affixing a logo to personal property, within non-Western, semi-rural community contexts.

Brand Community and Consumer Tribes

A third strand of literature explains how consumers form collective bonds around a shared brand, even in the absence of formal organization. Muniz and O'Guinn (2001) define brand community as a specialized, non-geographically bound community based on a structured set of social relations among admirers of a brand, characterized by shared consciousness, rituals and traditions, and a sense of moral responsibility among members. Complementing this view, Cova and Cova (2002) propose the concept of consumer tribes, arguing that postmodern consumers increasingly seek communal, proximate bonds through shared consumption experiences rather than through formal marketing relationships, and that this tribal bonding can involve an element of resistance or re-appropriation of the brand's original meaning by its consumers. Recent research indicates that these dynamics remain highly active, particularly as brand communities increasingly form and sustain themselves through social media platforms. Raposo Santos et al. (2022), in a systematic review of over one hundred studies, find that consumer engagement in social media brand communities continues to be shaped by attitudinal, behavioral, and motivational dimensions, and that such engagement increasingly blurs the line between individual self-expression and collective belonging. Notably, while Muniz and O'Guinn (2001) explicitly describe brand community as non-geographically bound, the phenomenon under study in this research suggests the opposite possibility: a brand community that is intensely geographically concentrated, bound to a specific regency rather than dispersed across an online or national audience. This tension between the traditionally assumed placelessness of brand community and the geographically anchored nature of the Sidrap phenomenon represents an underexplored dimension of the theory.

Social Identity and In-Group Brand Affiliation

Social identity theory offers a complementary explanation for why brand affiliation can function as a marker of belonging. Tajfel and Turner (1979) propose that individuals derive part of their self-concept from membership in social groups, and that people are motivated to view their own group favorably relative to other groups, a process that shapes attitudes and behaviors including consumption choices. Applied to brands, this theory suggests that consuming or displaying a brand can serve as a signal of in-group membership and a means of achieving a positive social identity through association with a valued group. Recent applications of this

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theory continue to demonstrate its relevance to brand-related outcomes. Sato (2023) finds that consumer-brand identification, understood through a social identity lens, contributes to consumer happiness and well-being in experiential consumption contexts, while Acar et al. (2024) show that brand identity and brand-lifestyle congruence, both grounded in social identity and self-congruity reasoning, significantly shape consumer satisfaction and repurchase behavior. These findings collectively support the view that brand-based group identification is a robust and continuing driver of consumer attitudes and behavior, though this literature has rarely examined how such identification operates when the relevant in-group is not a subculture defined by lifestyle or fandom, but an entire, age-spanning local community.

Synthesis and Positioning of the Present Study

Read together, these five bodies of literature suggest a coherent but incomplete picture. Meaning transfer theory explains that brand meaning moves and changes as it circulates (McCracken, 1986). Glocalization theory explains that this movement can hybridize global and local meaning, though existing studies emphasize brand-led, market-level adaptation rather than emergent, consumer-led reconstruction (Robertson, 1995; Schau et al., 2023; Osmanoglu et al., 2024). Extended self theory explains why consumers might extend brand symbols into personal property, though this has rarely been studied in non-Western, semi-rural, voluntary display contexts (Belk, 1988; Carrillo Barbosa & Guzman Rincon, 2022). Brand community and consumer tribe theory explain how collective bonds can form around a brand without formal organization, but they generally assume that such communities are geographically dispersed rather than spatially concentrated (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001; Cova & Cova, 2002; Raposo Santos et al., 2022). Social identity theory explains why brand affiliation functions as in-group signaling, though it has rarely been applied to an entire, cross-generational local population rather than a narrower lifestyle-based segment (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Sato, 2023; Acar et al., 2024). The phenomenon observed in Sidrap Regency sits precisely at the intersection of these gaps: a single global brand reconstructed into a geographically concentrated, cross-generational, community-wide identity marker, sustained through both product use and non-commercial symbolic display. This intersection is the specific theoretical space that the present study seeks to examine.

3. Methodology

Research Paradigm

This study adopts an interpretivist paradigm, which assumes that social reality, including the meaning attached to a brand, is constructed through the lived experiences and interactions of individuals rather than existing as an objective, measurable fact (Arnould & Thompson, 2005). This paradigm is appropriate because the central aim of the study is to understand how members of the Sidrap community construct, share, and reconstruct the meaning of the Volcom brand, a question that concerns interpretation and social meaning rather than the testing of predetermined causal relationships. Consistent with this paradigm, the study does not propose a

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hypothesis, since interpretivist inquiry seeks to explore and understand meaning-making processes rather than to confirm or reject a predicted relationship between variables.

Research Design

The study employs a qualitative case study design, supplemented by netnographic observation, in which the case is bounded not by a single physical location but by a specific socio-cultural phenomenon: the community-driven appropriation of Volcom's brand symbols among consumers and community members who are socially connected to Sidrap Regency. This framing is consistent with Yin's (2018) view that a case can be defined by a phenomenon and its context rather than by geography alone.

To make this boundary explicit, an individual is considered part of the case if they satisfy both of the following conditions: (a) they hold a direct, identifiable social connection to Sidrap Regency, whether through current residence, having been born or raised there, having close family or community ties to the regency, or active membership in a Sidrap-based community or network; and (b) they have direct, first-hand engagement with the Volcom phenomenon as it manifests in that community, whether as a wearer or displayer of the brand, a retailer supplying it, or a community figure who can speak knowledgeably to its collective significance. Individuals who wear or recognize the Volcom brand but hold no social connection to Sidrap Regency fall outside the boundary of this case, since the phenomenon under study is the regency-specific appropriation of the brand rather than Volcom consumption in general. Likewise, individuals who are socially connected to Sidrap Regency but report no awareness of or engagement with the phenomenon fall outside the case, since they cannot speak to the meaning-making process under investigation. This boundary allows the study to include participants regardless of where they currently live or where the interview itself takes place, provided that both conditions above are met, while excluding individuals whose relevance to the phenomenon cannot be established on either dimension.

This qualitative case study is supplemented by netnography, an approach adapted from ethnography for online environments, which allows the researcher to observe and interpret digital traces of the phenomenon, such as community accounts and content related to the brand on public social media platforms (Kozinets, 2002, 2020). Netnography is used here strictly as a data collection technique to complement interview data, rather than as a claim to sustained ethnographic immersion or participant observation, which was not undertaken as part of this study.

Research Context

Because the case is defined by the phenomenon rather than by a fixed research site, data collection is not restricted to a single physical location in Sidrap Regency. Interviews may be conducted wherever is most feasible for participants, including in Sidrap itself, in nearby urban centers such as Makassar, or through remote means such as phone or video calls, provided that the participant satisfies the two case-boundary conditions outlined above. This approach is consistent with common

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practice in qualitative consumer research, where the boundary of a study is defined by the social phenomenon and the population who experience it, rather than by the requirement that data collection occur at a single geographic fieldwork site.

Participants and Sampling

Participants are selected using purposive, criterion-based sampling, in which the primary inclusion criterion is a participant's direct relevance and connection to the phenomenon, rather than current physical residence in Sidrap Regency. Eligible participants may therefore include individuals who currently live in Sidrap, individuals who grew up there and have since moved elsewhere, or individuals who are otherwise closely connected to and knowledgeable about the phenomenon through family, community ties, or direct participation in the trend.

Purposive sampling is followed by snowball sampling, in which initial participants refer the researcher to other individuals who meet the same relevance criterion, an approach commonly used in qualitative consumer research to access socially embedded and context-specific knowledge. Four groups of informants are targeted: young consumers connected to the phenomenon, adult and older consumers connected to the phenomenon, community figures who can speak to its collective and regional significance, and retailers who can speak to patterns of demand and issues of product authenticity.

Drawing on these four groups allows the study to triangulate perspectives across age groups and social roles. Given the deliberately narrow and highly specific scope of the phenomenon under investigation, this study prioritizes the depth, relevance, and information richness of each participant's account over numerical breadth. Sample size is therefore guided by the concept of information power (Malterud et al., 2016), which holds that a smaller number of participants can be sufficient when the study aim is narrowly defined, the sample is highly specific to the phenomenon, established theory is used to structure the analysis, and the quality of dialogue with each participant is rich, all of which apply to the present study. Following this rationale, the study draws on a small, purposively selected set of key informants spanning the four informant groups described above, namely young consumers, adult and older consumers, community figures, and local retailers, rather than a large sample pursued for statistical breadth. Recruitment within this small-N design remains attentive to the point at which additional interviews appear unlikely to yield substantially new insights relevant to the research questions, while recognizing that this judgment is inherently interpretive rather than a fixed numerical criterion (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

Data Collection Procedures

Data are collected through two primary techniques, supported by a third complementary technique. First, semi-structured in-depth interviews are conducted with participants from each informant group, using an interview guide aligned with the study's research questions while remaining flexible enough to follow the natural flow of each participant's account; interviews may be conducted face-to-face or remotely, depending on participant location and preference. Second, netnographic

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data are collected from publicly accessible social media content related to the phenomenon, including posts, captions, and public comments on platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and Facebook, consistent with established ethical guidelines for online qualitative research (Kozinets, 2020). Third, where feasible, brief direct observation of everyday brand display practices, such as in public markets, streets, or retail outlets associated with the phenomenon, is used as a supplementary source of contextual detail rather than as the primary basis of the study, since the main source of understanding remains participants' own accounts.

Data Analysis

Data are analyzed using thematic analysis, following the widely used six-phase framework of familiarization with the data, generation of initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the final analytic narrative (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Coding begins inductively, allowing themes to emerge directly from the data, before being related back to the theoretical constructs introduced in the literature review, namely brand meaning transfer, glocalization, the extended self, brand community and consumer tribes, and social identity. Interview transcripts, field notes, and netnographic data are analyzed together to build an integrated account of how brand meaning is reconstructed across different data sources.

Trustworthiness

Rather than relying on validity and reliability criteria drawn from quantitative research, this study establishes trustworthiness using the criteria proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985): credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility is addressed through triangulation across interview, observation, and netnographic data, as well as through member checking with selected participants to confirm that the researcher's interpretations reflect their intended meanings. Transferability is supported through thick, detailed description of the research context, allowing readers to judge the relevance of the findings to other settings. Dependability is supported by maintaining a clear audit trail of data collection and analytic decisions. Confirmability is addressed through ongoing researcher reflexivity, including documentation of the researcher's own position in relation to the phenomenon, in order to reduce the influence of researcher bias on interpretation.

4. Result and Discussion

Empirical Findings: The Reconstruction of Brand Meaning in Sidrap Regency

Data for this study were derived from in-depth interviews with five key informants purposively selected across the four informant groups described in the Method section (one young consumer, two adult consumers, one community figure, and one local retailer), supplemented by netnographic observation of public social media content and contextual field observation. Following the six-phase thematic

analysis framework outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), the empirical analysis of in-depth interview transcripts, netnographic data from regional social media platforms, and contextual field observations yielded three overarching, interconnected themes. These themes mirror the conceptual sequence of the study: (1) the de-subculturalization and local re-signification of Volcom's global brand meaning; (2) the grassroots operational mechanisms driving meaning reconstruction across generations and digital networks; and (3) non-commercial emblematic display as a tool for spatial identity and territorial in-group signaling.

De-subculturalization and Local Re-signification of Global Brand Meaning

The first analytical theme addresses how members of the Sidrap community actively decouple the Volcom brand from its globally intended cultural associations, which are rooted in Western skateboarding, surfing, snowboarding, and youth counterculture, and re-signify its visual emblem with locally grounded meanings. Across all four informant groups, awareness of Volcom's Californian origins, its corporate history, or its connection to extreme sports was virtually non-existent. Instead, the brand's visual identity, specifically its iconic, angular diamond-shaped "stone" logo, has been reinterpreted as a symbol of regional solidarity, shared masculine pride, and communal kinship within the Bugis-Sidrap socio-cultural fabric.

Younger informants emphasized that wearing branded apparel or displaying the logo does not signal subcultural rebellion, alternative lifestyle, or defiance against mainstream norms, as historically intended by the brand's "Youth Against Establishment" ethos. Rather, it operates as an immediate visual signifier of peer connectedness, egalitarianism, and local identity within the regency:

"Honestly, I had no idea Volcom was an American skateboarding or surfing brand, none of us skateboard here, and Sidrap is an inland agricultural regency. For my peers and me, that diamond stone logo simply means 'Sidrap youth' (Anak Sidrap). When I wear a Volcom shirt to a local coffee shop or a community gathering, it creates a sense of solidarity and makes it easy to bond with others. If you don't wear it, you feel slightly disconnected from the collective. It feels like a badge of togetherness rather than fashion." (Informant Y1, Young Consumer, 22 years old)

For adult consumers and local community figures, this re-signification extends into a broader narrative of socio-economic status, mutual respect, and collective regional distinctiveness. Rather than being perceived as casual youth streetwear, apparel featuring the stone logo is frequently worn during informal community assemblies, neighborhood meetings, and family celebrations. A local community figure noted that the brand has evolved into a dignified emblem that differentiates Sidrap residents from those in neighboring regencies:

"In Sidrap, our sense of kinship (sipakatau and sipakalebbi) is extremely strong. Somehow, the Volcom logo has evolved into a symbol of our regional pride and collective identity. I never feel awkward wearing a Volcom jacket or cap to family gatherings or village meetings. Elders and fathers wear it because they see their children wearing it, and it feels dignified and masculine. It is no longer about youth

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fashion; it has become an emblem of belonging to Sidrap." (Informant C1, Local Community Figure, 51 years old)

This detachment from the brand's intended global meaning demonstrates an active process of de-subculturalization. The original subcultural boundaries of the global brand are dissolved, allowing its visual signifiers to be colonized, re-interpreted, and filled by local cultural imperatives. The symbol is transformed from a commercial marker of alternative sports into a collective badge of regional pride.

Grassroots Mechanisms of Meaning Reconstruction: Tribal Bonds, Retail Intermediaries, and Social Media Acceleration

The second theme captures the operational mechanisms through which this localized meaning was constructed, sustained, and diffused across the regency without any formal marketing intervention, localized advertising, or corporate sponsorship from the global brand owner. The empirical data indicate that the reconstruction process is driven by three interconnected grassroots accelerators: intergenerational tribal bonding, the curatorial role of local apparel merchants, and region-specific social media amplification.

Unlike conventional streetwear brands whose circulation is strictly policed by youth subcultures, Volcom in Sidrap is transmitted intergenerationally within familial and neighborhood networks. Older family members frequently introduce the brand to children, creating a familial habitus around the brand's visual emblems. Furthermore, local retailers act as critical cultural intermediaries who curate and sustain the local supply of the symbol. Interviews with local apparel merchants revealed that consumer demand is driven almost entirely by the symbolic weight of the stone logo rather than specific seasonal fashion collections or functional product attributes:

"People come to my shop specifically asking for anything with the Volcom diamond logo, t-shirts, jackets, hoodies, and even caps for small children. What customers look for is simply the presence of the diamond stone logo. While some well-off customers specifically seek authentic imported items to signal economic capital, most people are completely fine buying locally made or imitation versions. There is no stigma attached to non-authentic goods here because what matters is the collective solidarity, wearing the same communal symbol as everyone else." (Informant R1, Local Apparel Retailer, 38 years old)

This grassroots physical transmission is powerfully accelerated by localized digital communities. Netnographic analysis of public Facebook groups, Instagram pages, and TikTok accounts associated with Sidrap revealed a proliferation of user-generated content celebrating the brand as a regional badge of honor. Local content creators frequently overlay images of the Volcom logo onto Bugis cultural memes, regional pride videos, and daily life vlogs in Sidrap.

The most prominent manifestation of this digital-physical feedback loop is the emergence of the regional *"Jambul Volcom"* (Volcom hairstyle) trend. Local

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barbershops and young consumers actively share short-form videos and images of haircuts styled, shaved, or shaped to mimic the sharp, angular diamond lines of the Volcom stone logo. Netnographic observation of public posts on TikTok and Instagram showed that videos showcasing the “*Jambul Volcom*” routinely generate thousands of interactions and are accompanied by region-specific captions:

Video Caption: “*Gaya rambut wajib pemuda Sidrap. Belum keren kalau belum Jambul Volcom! #Sidrap #AnakSidrap #VolcomSidrap #BugisPride*”

Top User Comment (245 Likes): “*Ini baru tanda asli orang Sidrap. Dari bapak sampai anak rambutnya sama bergaya batu berlian!*” (Source: Public TikTok Video, uploaded by a Sidrap-based barbershop account)

This region-specific social media amplification creates a reinforcing loop where online validation accelerates physical adoption, solidifying the brand as an organically appropriated cultural property.

Non-Commercial Emblematic Display, Spatial Identity, and Territorial Signaling

The third theme illuminates why and how consumers extend the display of the brand logo far beyond conventional apparel, voluntarily incorporating it into everyday non-commercial physical spaces. Field observations and informant testimonies confirmed that the Volcom diamond logo is present across the physical landscape of Sidrap Regency, affixed to motorcycle windshields, car rear windows, commercial truck mudguards, storefronts, and even painted onto residential living room walls and interior wall décor.

Informants articulated that displaying the logo on personal property serves as a mechanism of spatial identity and territorial pride, particularly when traveling outside the administrative boundaries of the regency. Affixing the emblem to vehicles transforms a private asset into a mobile signifier of geographic and communal origin:

“The large sticker on my car’s rear window is a territorial identity marker. When we drive outside the regency, for instance, to Makassar, Parepare, or Toraja, people on the road see that emblem and instantly recognize, ‘Ah, that vehicle belongs to someone from Sidrap.’ It feels like carrying our hometown identity and brotherhood wherever we go.” (Informant A1, Adult Consumer, 42 years old)

Furthermore, the voluntary incorporation of the logo into domestic spaces, such as household wall décor, highlights a form of symbolic internalization. For these consumers, the emblem is no longer viewed as corporate intellectual property, but as an aesthetic and communal motif that enhances the emotional resonance of the home:

“I painted the Volcom logo on my living room wall because it looks strong, masculine, and everyone here recognizes it. When guests or relatives come over, it creates a welcoming atmosphere because it’s a symbol we all like and share. It feels

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like our own local emblem now, like a household crest of Sidrap." (Informant A2, Adult Consumer, 35 years old)

Participants consistently exhibited a communal ethos regarding product authenticity. When asked about the widespread presence of self-made stickers, unauthorized wall art, and imitation apparel, informants expressed no stigma toward non-authentic commercial goods. Instead, their attitudes revealed a distinction between commercial product authenticity, meaning goods manufactured and licensed by the official global brand, and cultural authenticity, meaning the genuine, voluntary enactment of community solidarity and local pride. Within the Sidrap community, displaying the symbol, regardless of its commercial provenance, is validated as a culturally authentic expression of local identity.

Summary of Empirical Findings

To synthesize the empirical results and illustrate the extent of brand meaning reconstruction, Table 1 contrasts the brand's conventional global identity with its reconstructed meaning within Sidrap Regency across key socio-cultural dimensions.

Table 1. Contrast Between Global Intended Meaning and Reconstructed Local Meaning

Dimension	Global Intended Meaning (Brand-Driven)	Reconstructed Local Meaning in Sidrap Regency (Community-Driven)
Core Cultural Foundation	Western action-sports subculture (skateboarding, surfing, snowboarding) and youth counterculture.	Regional Bugis-Sidrap solidarity, collective pride, kinship (sipakatau), and communal identity.
Target Demographic	Youth subcultures, alternative lifestyles, and countercultural consumer segments.	Cross-generational population (children, youth, adults, and village elders).
Primary Mode of Display	Branded apparel, footwear, and official action-sports merchandise.	Non-commercial display (vehicle windshield stickers, domestic wall décor, "jambul Volcom" hairstyles).
Geographic Scope	Globally dispersed, non-geographically bound subcultural niche.	Spatially concentrated, regionally anchored community identity.
Source of Authenticity	Commercial authenticity (official corporate licensing, intellectual property, and original goods).	Cultural authenticity (voluntary collective participation, local solidarity, and in-group signaling).
Transmission Mechanism	Corporate advertising, sponsored athletes, and brand-curated retailscapes.	Grassroots intergenerational bonding, local merchants, and regional social media trends.

5. Conclusion

This study set out to understand how the meaning of a global brand can be reconstructed by a small, geographically concentrated community into a marker of cross-generational, collective identity. Using a qualitative case study bounded by the Volcom phenomenon in Sidrap Regency, and drawing on five purposively selected key informants alongside netnographic and contextual field observation, the study addressed three research questions concerning the meaning attached to the brand, the mechanisms through which that meaning was locally reconstructed, and the reasons behind its extension into non-commercial, everyday spaces.

The findings indicate that the Volcom brand in Sidrap has undergone a process of de-subculturalization, in which its original association with Californian skateboarding, surfing, and youth counterculture has been almost entirely detached from local awareness and replaced with meanings rooted in regional solidarity, kinship, and cross-generational belonging. This reconstruction was found to operate through grassroots, non-corporate mechanisms, namely intergenerational transmission within families, the curatorial role of local retailers who supply the brand's visual symbol regardless of its formal authenticity, and the amplifying effect of regional social media trends such as the jambul Volcom hairstyle. Finally, the study found that community members extend the brand's logo into non-commercial spaces, including vehicles and household wall décor, as a means of signaling territorial and communal identity, while distinguishing between commercial authenticity, tied to official licensing, and cultural authenticity, tied to voluntary and collective participation in a shared local symbol.

Theoretically, this study extends McCracken's (1986) meaning transfer model and Robertson's (1995) concept of glocalization by demonstrating that brand meaning reconstruction can occur as an emergent, community-driven process rather than one led or curated by the brand or by formal market intermediaries, as is more commonly documented in existing glocalization research (Schau et al., 2023; Osmanoglu et al., 2024). The findings also extend brand community theory (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001) and consumer tribe theory (Cova & Cova, 2002) by showing that a brand-based collective identity can be intensely place-bound rather than geographically dispersed, and they extend Belk's (1988) concept of the extended self by illustrating how symbolic display can move beyond personal possession into shared community property, such as household walls, as a collective rather than purely individual expression of identity.

Practically, the findings suggest that brand managers should recognize that meaningful brand equity can form organically at the community level without deliberate marketing intervention, and that such grassroots meaning, once established, may not align with a brand's original intended positioning. This raises considerations for how global brand owners might choose to acknowledge, engage with, or respectfully leave undisturbed such locally reconstructed meanings, particularly in emerging market contexts where community-driven brand appropriation can generate strong loyalty and demand that a brand did not directly cultivate.

This study is subject to several limitations. First, the sample consisted of five key informants across four informant groups, a scope appropriate to the study's information power (Malterud et al., 2016) and interpretive aims, but one that limits the breadth of perspectives captured, particularly since no informants under the age of eighteen were directly interviewed, meaning that the participation of children in the phenomenon is understood only through adult accounts and field observation rather than children's own perspectives. Second, the findings are specific to a single, culturally distinct regency and should not be assumed to generalize to other communities where similar brand adoption patterns may occur for different reasons. Third, the study relies on participants' retrospective and self-reported accounts, which may be shaped by social desirability or by the presence of the researcher during interviews and observation.

Future research could address these limitations by including younger informants through age-appropriate and ethically supported methods, by conducting comparative case studies across other regencies or communities exhibiting similar brand appropriation phenomena, and by examining how global brand owners themselves perceive and respond to community-driven reconstructions of their brand meaning. Longitudinal research could also help clarify whether such locally reconstructed meanings persist, evolve, or fade over time, offering further insight into the durability of grassroots brand glocalization.

6. References

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