

Beyond Representation: Social Reconstruction of Traditional Fishermen and Coastal Reality in *Sang Punggawa Laut Sumbawa*

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the process of social reconstruction of traditional fishermen represented in the documentary film *Sang Punggawa Laut Sumbawa*. Rather than viewing the film solely as a medium of representation, this research positions it as a cultural text that constructs meanings about the social, economic, and cultural realities of coastal communities. The study employs a qualitative interpretive approach using Roland Barthes's semiotic analysis, encompassing the levels of denotation, connotation, and myth, to examine how the identities and lived experiences of fishermen are reconstructed through visual and narrative signs. To strengthen interpretation, the findings are further contextualized through literature review and in-depth interviews with the Head of the Traditional Fishermen Community, maritime academics, and traditional fishermen in the Riau Islands. The results show that the film reconstructs fishermen not merely as marginalized coastal actors, but as adaptive social agents capable of negotiating structural inequalities through technological innovation, collective solidarity, and shifting family roles. Economic vulnerability is portrayed alongside resilience, while traditional values coexist with modernization processes. The transformation of gender roles within fishermen's households also reflects changing social dynamics in coastal life. These findings demonstrate that documentary films can move beyond simple representation by articulating broader processes of social change and reconstruction within marginalized communities. This study offers an analytical perspective that links media texts to the reconstruction of social realities, while reaffirming documentary film as an important medium for understanding the collective experiences of Indonesian traditional fishermen.

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INTRODUCTION

Film, particularly documentary film, functions not only as entertainment but also as a medium for constructing, interpreting, and circulating social reality. Through visual narratives, documentaries shape how audiences understand communities, identities, and everyday struggles by transforming lived experiences into meaningful cultural texts (Coudry & Hepp, 2020; Hall, 1997). In this sense, documentary film is never a neutral mirror of reality;



rather, it actively selects, frames, and reconstructs reality through images, sounds, and storytelling. This role becomes especially important when film portrays marginalized groups whose voices are often underrepresented in mainstream discourse, such as traditional fishing communities.

Coastal communities possess distinctive social, economic, and cultural characteristics shaped by their close relationship with the sea. Their livelihoods are strongly dependent on marine ecosystems, seasonal uncertainty, market dynamics, and local traditions (Rukin, 2025). Yet media portrayals of fishermen are frequently simplified into repetitive stereotypes: poverty, backwardness, vulnerability, or romanticized resilience. Such representations often overlook the complexity of fishermen's adaptive capacities, social networks, ecological knowledge, and everyday negotiations with structural inequality (Saidah & Setiyoningsih, 2023). Therefore, examining how documentary films portray fishermen is essential not only for understanding media narratives but also for revealing how social meanings about coastal communities are constructed.

One documentary that offers a significant portrayal of maritime life is *Sang Punggawa Laut Sumbawa* (2022), directed by Harsa Perdana and Muhammad Farhan. The film presents the daily realities of coastal communities in Sumbawa, West Nusa Tenggara, with a particular focus on fishermen and their relationship with the sea as a source of livelihood, identity, and cultural continuity. Through scenes of preparing fishing gear, navigating uncertain waters, selling their catch, and sustaining family life, the documentary depicts the multidimensional world of traditional fishermen. It also addresses broader issues such as fluctuating fish prices, ecological pressures, changing technology, and maritime traditions that continue to shape community life.

More importantly, the film does not merely portray fishermen as passive victims of hardship. It also presents them as active social actors who continuously adapt to change through collective solidarity, practical knowledge, family labor, and technological adjustment. In this regard, *Sang Punggawa Laut Sumbawa* moves beyond representation by reconstructing fishermen as agents of resilience and transformation. This perspective is important because media texts often reduce coastal communities to static objects of observation rather than recognizing their capacity to negotiate social and economic challenges. The significance of the film is further reinforced by its Special Mention Award at Arctic Open, reflecting international recognition of its cinematic quality and social relevance (Pangestu, 2024).

The concept of representation in film refers to the production of meaning through signs, language, and cultural codes (Pascarina et al. 2024). However, documentary film also has the potential to participate in what may be called social reconstruction: the rearticulation of how a group is socially understood through narrative framing, symbolic emphasis, and ideological positioning. Through images and stories, film can challenge stereotypes, redefine identities, and reshape public consciousness regarding marginalized communities (Cuelenaere et al., 2019; Pandey & Gaur, 2025). Thus, analyzing documentary film requires attention not only to what is shown, but also to how social realities are reconstructed through cinematic discourse.

This issue becomes particularly relevant when film representation is compared with empirical realities in other maritime regions. The Riau Islands provide a compelling comparative context. As one of Indonesia's most maritime provinces, approximately 96 percent of its territory consists of ocean, making fisheries and marine-based livelihoods central to local society and economy (BPS, 2024). Coastal communities in the Riau Islands are socially diverse, including Malay, Bugis, and Suku Laut groups, with livelihoods ranging from traditional fishing and aquaculture to marine tourism. At the same time, these communities face various structural challenges, including illegal fishing, marine pollution, territorial competition, fluctuating fuel prices, limited market access, and climate-related uncertainty (Liandi & Andryawan, 2022; Septyati et al., 2025).

Although the ecological and cultural context of the Riau Islands differs from that of Sumbawa, many core experiences of fishermen remain comparable: economic vulnerability, dependence on middlemen, uncertainty about catches, collective survival strategies, and changing gender roles within households. This suggests that the meanings constructed in *Sang Punggawa Laut Sumbawa* may resonate beyond its local setting and reflect broader realities of Indonesian fishing communities.

Previous studies on documentary films have extensively employed semiotic approaches to examine how media texts construct meanings across political, environmental, and social issues. In the political sphere, research on *Dirty Vote* identified representations of electoral authoritarianism through visual and narrative strategies, exposing structural manipulation and challenging the false legitimacy of elections in Indonesia (Ilham & Jaya, 2025). In environmental discourse, studies on *Seaspiracy* highlight the destruction of marine ecosystems and criticize the collaboration between the fishing industry and commercial corporations in large-scale fish exploitation (Pertiwi et al., 2022). Meanwhile, in the social sphere, analysis of *The Unseen Words* portrayed persons with disabilities as marginalized groups living under conditions of poverty and alienation (Anggareni & Sukmono, 2019). These studies demonstrate the strength of semiotic analysis in revealing ideology, power relations, and symbolic meanings embedded within documentary films.

However, most previous studies have remained focused on textual interpretation without engaging the communities they represent in empirical research. As a result, representation is often discussed only at the symbolic level, while its relationship with lived social reality remains underexplored. This study addresses that gap by combining semiotic analysis of *Sang Punggawa Laut Sumbawa* with empirical verification through literature review and in-depth interviews with traditional fishermen, maritime academics, and the Head of the Traditional Fishermen Community in the Riau Islands. By doing so, the study moves beyond symbolic reading to examine how cinematic representations of traditional fishermen resonate with the actual conditions, struggles, and adaptive strategies of coastal communities.

Furthermore, using Roland Barthes's semiotic framework of denotation, connotation, and myth, this study investigates how the documentary constructs meanings about traditional fishermen and how those meanings correspond to the realities of coastal life in the Riau Islands. By linking media representation with empirical social conditions, the study advances an analytical model that moves beyond textual interpretation toward a deeper understanding of social reconstruction in documentary film. It is expected to contribute to the fields of visual communication, media sociology, documentary studies, and coastal community research by demonstrating how film can function not only as a medium of representation but also as a socially meaningful reconstruction of marginalized lives.

METHOD

This study employed an interpretive comparative qualitative design. This approach was selected because the research aims not only to interpret the meanings embedded in documentary film texts, but also to compare those meanings with the social realities of the communities represented (John & Cheryl, 2018). Comparative qualitative methods are particularly appropriate when researchers seek to understand why certain social conditions emerge in one context. Still, not another, to compare similar social processes across different cultural settings, or to evaluate whether previous explanations of a phenomenon remain relevant over time (Cresswell, 2014; Karyanta et al., 2020). In this study, the comparative framework enabled an examination of how the representation of traditional fishermen in *Sang Punggawa Laut Sumbawa* corresponds to the lived experiences of coastal communities in the Riau Islands.

Data were collected through three main sources. First, textual data were obtained from close observation of the documentary film, focusing on visual imagery, dialogue, narration,

sound, and other *mise-en-scène* elements that construct meanings about fishermen and coastal life. Second, secondary data were gathered from academic literature, government reports, and previous studies concerning the socio-economic conditions of fishermen in the Riau Islands. Third, primary empirical data were generated through in-depth interviews with triangulated informants, including the Head of the Traditional Fishermen Community, maritime academics, and traditional fishermen in the Riau Islands (Kelongs). The use of multiple data sources was intended to strengthen interpretive validity and allow comparison between cinematic representation and empirical reality.

The analysis was grounded in Roland Barthes's semiotic framework, which examines signs through the levels of denotation, connotation, and myth (Barthes, 1977; Haq & Yahdini, 2024). Denotation was used to identify the literal meanings of scenes, objects, and actions depicted in the film. Connotation was applied to uncover cultural values, ideological assumptions, and symbolic associations attached to those depictions. Myth was used to interpret broader narratives that naturalize particular understandings of fishermen, coastal identity, labor, and resilience. This semiotic approach was chosen because both representation theory and semiotics understand media as active constructors of social meaning (Wong, 2019; Batubara et al., 2024).

However, this research moves beyond a purely textual reading by verifying semiotic findings against empirical social conditions. Interpretations derived from the film were compared with interview results and documentary evidence from the Riau Islands to identify patterns of resonance, divergence, and contextual difference. Through this process, the study assessed whether the meanings constructed in the documentary reflect broader realities of Indonesian fishing communities or remain specific to the Sumbawa context.

To ensure trustworthiness, the study applied data reduction, data display, triangulation, and peer debriefing. The findings were then organized into comparative matrices between film representation and empirical reality. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing statements across informants, while peer debriefing was used to minimize subjective bias during interpretation. Through these procedures, the study aimed to produce a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between documentary representation and the social reconstruction of traditional fishermen

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Using Roland Barthes's framework of denotation, connotation, and myth, *Sang Punggawa Laut Sumbawa* is examined as a cultural text that not only depicts fishermen's lives but also constructs meanings about labor, family, identity, and survival in coastal communities. To move beyond textual interpretation, these meanings are contextualized through literature review and triangulated with insights from traditional fishermen, maritime academics, and the Head of the Traditional Fishermen Community in the Riau Islands. The findings show that the film strongly resonates with the broader realities of Indonesian small-scale fishermen, particularly regarding economic vulnerability, family transformation, technological adaptation, and unequal market structures. Rather than portraying fishermen as passive victims, the documentary reconstructs them as adaptive social actors who negotiate structural limitations through collective knowledge and everyday resilience.

Everyday Coastal Life, Community Solidarity, and Ecological Intimacy

One important sequence in the documentary portrays Haren, a *bagang* (trailer) captain, traveling to Sumbawa city to repair the battery used for fishing operations (Figure 1). He rides on a fish truck, cleans the coastal surroundings, chats with fellow fishermen, gives pocket money to his grandson, then returns home to bathe and rest. At the denotative level, the scene depicts everyday activities related to work preparation and family interactions. However, Barthes argues that denotation is only the first layer of meaning, because everyday objects and actions often carry deeper ideological significance (Barthes, 1977).



Figure 1. Scene of Haren's Daily Life on Land
Source: MetroTV YouTube Channel (2022)

At the connotative level, the scene in Figure 1 represents fishermen's lives as deeply embedded in communal rhythms rather than individualistic economic routines. Repairing equipment and sharing transport indicate not only material limitations but also mutual dependence within fishing networks. Cleaning the coast symbolizes ecological awareness rooted in lived experience rather than formal environmental campaigns. The interaction with neighbors suggests that coastal knowledge is socially circulated through informal conversation, observation, and collective memory. From a representational perspective (Hall, 1997), this reflects how shared meanings and community understanding are socially constructed within coastal communities. Giving money to a grandchild simultaneously reflects intergenerational responsibility, in which economic care and emotional attachment coexist within a single domestic sphere. These meanings are consistent with studies showing that documentary films often represent fishermen through symbols of solidarity, communal labor, and closeness to nature (Saidah & Setiyoningsih, 2023).

At the mythical level, the documentary naturalizes the image of fishermen as humble people living in harmony with nature and community. Barthes explains that myths work by normalizing social constructs, making them appear natural (Barthes, 1977). However, this myth can also hide structural hardship by romanticizing simplicity. The repeated visuals of modest daily routines, warm social interactions, and acceptance of hard labor reinforce the idea that fishermen's difficult lives are natural and culturally fixed. Through Haren's everyday life, the film presents fishermen as closely connected to hard work, social harmony, and nature. At the same time, it implies a latent patriarchal myth in which men are positioned as the main providers for the family. This representation is not only a visual narrative, but also a reproduction of social meanings about gender roles in coastal communities. As Eco (1976) explains, visual signs often carry hidden ideological meanings that are not immediately visible.

Education as Mobility, Sacrifice, and Intergenerational Hope

Another significant scene depicts Haren accompanying his children as they seek information about university majors and admission requirements (Figure 2). After returning home, the family discusses plans, and Haren states that he will finance their education as long as they are serious. Denotatively, the sequence portrays a father supporting his children's academic aspirations. Yet in semiotic terms, the scene also transforms education into a symbolic site of class mobility.



Figure 2. Scene of Haren's Child Education Consultation
Source: MetroTV YouTube Channel (2022)

At the connotative level, higher education is framed as hope for social advancement beyond the uncertainties of fishing labor. Haren's promise to fund his children's studies communicates parental sacrifice despite limited income. Education is represented not merely as schooling, but as a moral investment through which children may improve the family's future. From a representational perspective (Hall, 1997), education becomes a symbol of hope for marginalized communities seeking a better life. The emotional tone of the dialogue suggests that educational success is expected to uplift not only the student but also the entire family. It also reflects the moral expectation that children will repay their parents' sacrifices, a common affective-economic relationship in coastal families. This aligns with Afandi (2023), who notes that documentaries often frame education as an emancipatory path for lower-income communities.

At the mythical level, the scene in Figure 2 reflects the widely held belief that formal education is the primary path out of poverty. Barthes explains that myths work by making social beliefs appear natural and unquestionable (Barthes, 1977). Through Haren's dialogue, the film normalizes the idea that a fishing family's future depends on their children's educational success. It also implies the myth of the masculine breadwinner, in which the father is positioned as the primary provider for educational expenses. This shows how visual and verbal signs in the film reproduce gender role ideology. As Eco (1976) argues, signs often carry hidden ideological meanings that operate within culture.

Technology, Maritime Knowledge, and Adaptive Modernization

A central fishing sequence shows Haren and his crew departing for the *bagang*, using a fish finder to locate potential catch areas (Figure 3). At night, the lights are activated, the nets are lowered, and Haren directs the crew throughout the operation. Denotatively, the scene presents technical fishing procedures and hierarchical coordination aboard a working vessel.

At the connotative level, the fish finder symbolizes adaptive modernization rather than the abandonment of tradition. In McQuail's framework, technology does not replace tradition but rather integrates with local practices as a strategy to improve work efficiency (McQuail, 2010). In this scene, technology is represented as a practical tool that complements inherited maritime knowledge and supports fishermen's daily work. Haren's leadership reflects authority grounded in experience, skill, and familiarity with sea conditions rather than formal institutional power. The coordination of labor also highlights collective dependence, where success relies on trust and synchronized roles. Night fishing scenes further suggest that fishermen's identities are inseparable from natural rhythms, uncertainty,

and endurance. This corresponds with findings that documentaries often portray fishing techniques as embodied ecological intelligence passed across generations (Saidah & Setiyoningsih, 2023).



Figure 3. Scene of Haren's Using a Fish Finder
Source: MetroTV YouTube Channel (2022)

At the mythical level, this scene also presents the sea as a source of sustenance, despite its uncertainty. Barthes explains that myths work by making social conditions appear natural and unquestioned (Barthes, 1977). The reliance on the experience of older generations as the main guide for decision-making reflects the myth of traditional authority in coastal communities. Meanwhile, the use of technology becomes a sign of adaptive modernization rather than destructive change. This representation depicts a negotiation between tradition and progress, in which society seeks modernization without losing its ecological identity. As Eco (1976) notes, visual signs often carry ideological meanings about how communities understand social change.

Women's Migration, Market Dependency, and Hidden Power Relations

One of the most socially revealing scenes shows Haren conducting a video call with his wife, who is working abroad. They discuss household finances, and Haren explains that fishing yields have improved enough for her to return home, resume selling fish, and care for the children. The scene then shifts to the sale and payment process involving middlemen (Figure 4). Denotatively, the sequence depicts family communication, labor migration, and fish distribution.

At the connotative level, women's economic migration represents the structural pressures faced by small-scale fishing households when local income is insufficient. The long-distance video call conveys the emotional burden of family separation and shows that household stability often depends on women's financial contributions. In this context, women are portrayed not as peripheral dependents, but as central actors sustaining family resilience, even though their role is often less publicly recognized. At the same time, the expectation that the wife should return home once economic conditions improve suggests that women's paid labor is still viewed as conditional and secondary to domestic responsibilities.



Figure 4. Scene of Women as Middlemen in Fisheries Distribution
Source: MetroTV YouTube Channel (2022)

The subsequent payment scene in Figure 4 reveals unequal power relations within the fisheries distribution chain, where middlemen often control prices, access to credit, and cash flow. This finding aligns with research by Kemalasari et al. (2021) and Nahda et al. (2024), which shows that coastal women play important roles in the post-harvest economy while fishermen remain in weak bargaining positions. From Bourdieu's perspective, such relations reflect hidden forms of domination shaped by capital ownership and social structures, in which inequality becomes normalized in everyday practice (Murti & Susanti, 2021).

At the mythical level, this scene constructs the idea that becoming a migrant worker is a normal solution for poor coastal families. Barthes explains that myths work by naturalizing certain social practices, making them appear ordinary and unquestioned (Barthes, 1977). The film also reproduces the belief that women should return to the domestic sphere once economic conditions improve, reflecting a latent gender-role ideology. In addition, the depiction of middlemen paying for the catch reinforces the myth that unequal economic relations are normal for small-scale fishermen (Bennett, 2019). From a critical discourse perspective, this visual illustrates how media can present structural inequality as an accepted reality rather than a system open to challenge (Fairclough, 1995).

The Relationship between Film Representation and the Reality of Riau Islands Fishermen

The semiotic findings from *Sang Punggawa Laut Sumbawa* were further verified through interviews with key informants to examine the extent to which the film's representation corresponds with the lived realities of traditional fishermen in the Riau Islands. This stage is important because the meaning of signs does not end within the visual text, but is always shaped and completed through the social context in which those signs are understood (Eco, 1976). Therefore, the documentary was not treated merely as an artistic narrative, but as a representational text whose meanings could be tested against empirical conditions.

Interviews with Kaharuddin, Head of the Traditional Fishermen Community in the Riau Islands, confirmed that many issues portrayed in the film strongly resonate with local realities. Dependence on middlemen remains a major structural problem due to weak cooperatives and limited direct market access. From Hall's perspective, this demonstrates that the film successfully represents fishermen as a social group positioned within unequal economic relations and weak bargaining structures (Hall, 1997). Kaharuddin also explained that economic pressures frequently encourage family members, especially women, to seek

work in Batam or Malaysia, reflecting patterns similar to the women's migration depicted in the film. This confirms that the documentary's portrayal of household survival strategies is grounded in broader realities of coastal life rather than isolated local circumstances.

The informant further emphasized that adaptive technology has become increasingly common among fishermen in the Riau Islands. GPS devices, fish finders, and modified fishing gear are now used to improve efficiency and reduce uncertainty at sea. This indicates that the modernization of fishing tools shown in the documentary is not merely cinematic symbolism, but reflects concrete practices of technological adaptation. At the same time, community solidarity remains a crucial social resource. Fishermen continue to help one another in repairing boats, sharing fuel, and assisting during maritime accidents. These findings reinforce the connotative reading of the film, which holds that collective relations and mutual support serve as key survival mechanisms within coastal communities.

This perspective was reinforced by Benny Manullang of the Marine Studies Program, who argued that the vulnerability of fishermen depicted in the documentary should be understood not as a local issue specific to Sumbawa, but as a national structural condition. Extreme weather, limited access to capital, technological inequality, and market monopolies remain systemic challenges for traditional fishermen across Indonesia. He also noted that the low-cost technologies shown in the film are appropriate, socially accessible, and contextually relevant, aligning with the Food and Agriculture Organization's position on fisheries innovation (FAO & INFOFISH, 2022). In addition, Benny emphasized that the film's focus on children's education and women's labor migration closely reflects realities in the Riau Islands, where many fishing families view education as a path to mobility. In contrast, women play strategic roles in post-harvest work, informal trade, and household income generation. This supports the findings of Elmhrst et al. (2017) and Susant et al. (2024), who argue that women in coastal communities are often misrecognized as passive victims despite being active agents of adaptation and resource management.

Empirical confirmation also came from traditional fishermen Rudi and Ryan, who described everyday realities closely aligned with the film's scenes. They emphasized the uncertainty of catches, fluctuating weather, dependence on equipment, and the ongoing negotiation of family roles in response to economic necessity. Although technology has made fishing activities easier, high fuel prices and maintenance costs remain serious burdens. Their testimonies demonstrate that the documentary's visual signs are not detached symbolic constructions, but closely connected to the actual experiences of fishermen in the Riau Islands.

Overall, these triangulated findings show that *Sang Punggawa Laut Sumbawa* possesses strong representational validity. The documentary does not simply narrate the life of one coastal community in Sumbawa, but captures structural patterns shared by many Indonesian fishermen. In this sense, the film operates as a socially meaningful text whose representations resonate across geographic contexts, linking cinematic narrative with the broader realities of maritime livelihoods.

Models of Representation and Social Reconstruction of Fishermen in the Riau Islands

Based on a combination of film semiotic analysis and empirical verification, this study develops an analytical model that explains how media representation connects to the social reconstruction of traditional fishermen in the Riau Islands. The findings show that documentary film does not merely reflect reality, but can also articulate existing social structures, identities, and processes of change within coastal communities. At the representational level, *Sang Punggawa Laut Sumbawa* constructs traditional fishermen as a community marked by economic vulnerability, ecological dependence, collective solidarity, adaptive capacity, and shifting gender relations. In Hall's framework, these depictions are not neutral descriptions, but forms of meaning production through which

fishermen are socially understood (Hall, 1997). The film positions fishermen as groups living under structural pressure while simultaneously possessing internal resources for survival, such as cooperation, practical knowledge, and moral commitment to family.

When these meanings are compared with the realities of fishermen in the Riau Islands, a parallel process of social reconstruction becomes visible. Interviews indicate that fishing communities are actively transforming their social conditions through the adoption of GPS, fish finders, and modified *bagang* systems; the strengthening of solidarity networks; changes in gender roles within household economies; and efforts to improve bargaining positions within unequal market systems. They also continue to defend their identity as traditional fishermen and guardians of maritime space. This demonstrates that what appears in the film as representation is closely connected to real social practices taking place in coastal communities.

The relationship between representation and reconstruction can be understood as a dialectical process. Media representation provides a symbolic articulation of fishermen's identities, while lived social experience gives those representations empirical grounding. In this sense, the documentary becomes a cultural text that reflects and circulates social meanings already embedded in society (Wicaksana, 2024; Pink et al., 2016). The film's meanings resonate because they emerge from recognizable structures of labor, inequality, kinship, and adaptation that fishing communities themselves experience. The strong parallels between the documentary's representation of Sumbawa and the realities of fishermen in the Riau Islands position *Sang Punggawa Laut Sumbawa* as more than a cinematic narrative. It can be understood as a text of truth that captures the collective experiences, struggles, and adaptive transformations of Indonesian traditional fishermen.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the representation of traditional fishermen in *Sang Punggawa Laut Sumbawa* goes beyond visual depiction and reflects broader structural realities experienced by coastal communities in Indonesia, including those in the Riau Islands. Through Roland Barthes's semiotic framework of denotation, connotation, and myth, the film reveals meanings related to economic vulnerability, unequal market relations, shifting family roles, ecological dependence, and technology as a form of cultural adaptation. Empirical verification with fishermen, maritime academics, and community leaders in the Riau Islands confirms that these representations strongly correspond with lived realities. Fishermen continue to face uncertainty stemming from climate change, fluctuating catches, dependence on middlemen, and limited access to capital, while simultaneously developing survival strategies through solidarity, adaptive technologies, and flexible household roles.

Theoretically, his study enriches media representation scholarship by proposing a comparative semiotic-empirical model that connects textual meaning with lived social reality. It extends documentary film analysis beyond symbolic interpretation by integrating Barthes's semiotics, Hall's representation theory, and broader perspectives on social reconstruction. The findings show that media texts should be understood not only as sites of meaning production but also as spaces where social identities, inequalities, and adaptive practices are articulated. Practically, these findings emphasize the need for documentary filmmakers to consider social accuracy, cultural context, and structural conditions when representing marginalized groups, to avoid oversimplification or stereotyping. For communication and media researchers, this study offers a methodological reference for connecting media texts with empirical realities. For policymakers, it highlights that fishermen's challenges are multidimensional, thereby requiring more integrated coastal policies. Future research is encouraged to analyze multiple documentaries across different regions or compare other marginalized communities to identify broader patterns of media representation and social construction.

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