

## Dedi Mulyadi Political Branding In Identifying Sundanese Purwakarta Characters

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**Abstract.** *This study examines how the politics of branding conducted by the Regent of Purwakarta Dedi Mulyadi in organizing and actualizing Purwakarta as a city with Sundanese characters. This study uses a qualitative method with a case study approach, intending to map various political branding efforts undertaken by Dedi Mulyadi, both from policies in different sectors and implementation in the field. The qualitative data analysis steps such as data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion carried out simultaneously. The results of this research are Dedi Mulyadi has taken political branding strategies and has been carrying out Sundanese nuanced political activities consistently and intensively, both through policy and direct socialization to citizens practically in an interactive, consistent, active, and participatory manner. Sundanese culture in the vision and mission of the local government implemented in local government policies in various sectors; education, tourism, and spatial sector. Dedi Mulyadi internalized Sundanese culture through innovative and creative ideas by following the changing times. Dedi Mulyadi's has brought Purwakarta as a city of culture as "Purwakarta Istimewa."*

**Keywords:** *Political Communication, Local Wisdom, Political Branding, Culture, Sundanese*

### INTRODUCTION

Regional culture as identity is a culture that needs to be maintained and noticed to enrich national culture. It is reflected in Article 32 of the 1945 Constitution, "The government is advancing the culture of the Indonesian people." This article is clarified with the explanation, "Nation's culture is a culture that arises as a whole effort of the people of Indonesia". The existence of the statement above shows that culture is administered by the state.

As an implementation, a Regional Autonomy Law No. 32 of 2004 issued stated that regions have the right to make their regional regulations. Each region has the authority to issue policies to preserve local culture. The region is also

entitled and obliged to manage its local government affairs and the interests of the community as long as it does not violate the function of regional autonomy itself, to improve the welfare of the society.

During the leadership of Dedi Mulyadi, Purwakarta carried out the political branding strategy of Purwakarta with Sundanese culture. The purpose of this political branding is to make Purwakarta stronger in its image as a city with Sundanese cultural characteristics. Dedi Mulyadi made policies laden with Sundanese culture, both aspects of language and Sundanese local wisdom values.

According to Allan as quoted by Rosilawati (2018), a brand is not only a name for a product, organization, or place,

but the brand is a promise. Branding is an activity to create value, reputation, products, or services for anyone involved in the brand and create value for customers who want the product. Branding combines the elements of strategic planning, marketing communication, market research, and organizational development. Meanwhile, according to Scammel as quoted by Soetomo (2013), branding is the use of strategic steps in the art of building a political image. The step refers to tactics used by politicians to gain popularity.

There are several types of branding (Saputra, 2012); first, personal branding, is an image that is in the mind of a client about a person. Three crucial aspects of personal branding, namely the person, promises, and relationships. Second, product branding, is the managerial responsibility of the product manager, the functional responsibility of marketing, focus on products and consumers, and marketing communication as limited to the marketing mix. Third, corporate branding, the more extensive scope than product branding. Corporate branding is the managerial responsibility of the CEO. Fourth, city branding is the identity, symbol, logo, or brand attached to an area. The advantage of gaining city branding, the city should be widely known to everyone.

Fifth, destination branding is an effort to change a person's perception of a place or destination, including seeing the different places to be chosen as a destination to be visited. Sixth Political branding, it is required for political branding to increase the quality of vision and strengthen specific political figures or institutions rather than merely raising prestige or authority. The process of political branding includes understanding of image, character, performance, track record, and goals of institution or personal must achieve before other stages

of political branding. Seventh, state branding is an effort made to build and maintain a positive image of a country holistically.

Dedi Mulyadi political branding aims to socialize Sundanese culture not only in the social sphere, but also in the political culture of the "Inohong" and the Purwakarta community. Purwakarta community has a unique culture as a Sundanese ancestral heritage. Sundanese political culture believed that the socio-economic situation can be improved. Almond (1960) said that political culture as a concept that consists of several manner of beliefs, values, and skills that applied to the whole society. It also includes trends and patterns of habits that can found in a group and community. Culture is also a way of life and a whole pattern of community life, political, religious, social, and economic interests. Cultural elements that can bridge the individual in understanding a matter or politics in this study based on aspects of trust. In general, faith can be seen as subjective possibilities that individuals believe that an object or event has specific characteristics (Mulyana, 2015).

Purwakarta is the city of culture that is constructed by political branding through local government policy which is full of Sundanese cultural content, Purwakarta carries out the development and wheels of the local government of Sundanese people, by way of Sundanese, and for Sundanese people. Social construction is a social process described by Luckman & Berger (1966); through their actions and interactions, individuals create continuously a reality that is shared and experienced together subjectively. Peter L. Berger is a sociologist from the New School for Social Research, New York, while Thomas Luckman is a sociologist from the University of Frankfurt. The social construction theory formulated by two academics as

a theoretical and systematic study of the sociology of knowledge.

The term construction of social reality became famous since introduced by Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckman through their book entitled *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociological of Knowledge* (1966). They described the social process through actions and interactions, where individuals create continuously a reality that is shared and experienced together subjectively. The origin of social construction starts with the philosophy of constructionism that starts from cognitive construction ideas. According to Von Glaserfeld, cognitive construction notions emerged during this century in Mark Baldwin's writings that widely deepened and disseminated by Jean Piaget. However, when traced the main idea of constructivism have been started by Giambattista Vico, an Italian epistemologist, he is the forerunner of constructivism (Suparno in Bungin, 2008). Next, Berger and Luckman (Bungin, 2008) explained social reality by separating the understanding of reality and knowledge. Reality defined as the qualities found in the reality that recognized as a 'being' that does not depend on our own will. Knowledge defined as the certainty that reality is real and has specific characteristics.

The purpose of Purwakarta's political branding is not only to strengthen the identity and existence of Sundanese cities, but also to compare leaders with Sundanese identification, as revealed by Mitsikopoulou (2008), that the political branding process aims to shape the image and personality of leaders. Dedi Mulyadi has shown himself as a regional head who has a Sundanese character, both in physical appearance laden with Sundanese cultural symbols, which always used in both formal and informal forums. Dedi also expressed the Sundanese idea and behavior that implied the noble values of

Sundanese culture.

Furthermore, Downer (2011) said that political branding is also a strategy to identify, differentiate, and influence political offer with emotional and functional values for constituent's attractiveness and attachment. Downer also concluded: First, voters or the public can build "engagement" in a branding behavior; Second, voters/community engagement does not only arise from internal factors on the part of the voter/community, but can also occur from activities carried out by political parties or the public. Political branding explains how voters/communities view and respond to a political party or policy. They see a political party/community as they see other service brands, and use their knowledge of consumer brands into the political sphere. So, voters/community treat political brands the same way they treat commercial brands.

This study explores the political process of branding in several aspects of the Sundanese character, such as the social-cultural/educational, governance, and spatial aspect. The three aspects of this implementation increasingly developed during 2013 to 2018 or the second period of Dedi Mulyadi as Regent of Purwakarta.

## **METHOD**

According to Hasbiansyah (2004), the research aims to reveal what happened. This research uses a qualitative method with a case study approach. Creswell (2002) explains that research can be referred to case study research if the research process is carried out in-depth and thoroughly in the case under study.

One of the specifications of case study research as a research method is its purpose. Case study research best used in research aimed at answering the 'how' and 'why' questions of something being studied. Through such research

questions, the substance contained in the case study can be explored in-depth. The other specification of case study research is the nature of the object that studied. In the kind of research, the cases are contemporary related to the present. The contemporary cases mean that they are happening and have already happened but have an impact that can still felt at the time of the study.

Data collection techniques for this research used in-depth interviews with the concerned Regent Dedi Mulyadi. The interview conducted with the Secretary of Tourism & Culture Purwakarta Regency, Head of Disdik Purwakarta Regency, and Head of Spatial Planning for more complete data. The data validity test was conducted by the FGD, which was attended by officials of the Purwakarta Regency Government and Sundanese cultural figures.

The data analysis step of this study based on the qualitative data analysis model from Miles and Huberman (2007) that suggests the qualitative data analysis step consists of three activities that carried out simultaneously, namely data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion/verification. For further clarify, it can be seen in the FIGURE 1.

The data analysis used in this study refers to the technique introduced by Glasser & Strauss, Lincoln & Guba cited in Rachmat (2006). The stages of the data analysis are explained as follows: (1) Put events (data) into categories. Categories must be comparable to each other; (2) Expand the categories so that

data categories can be pure and do not overlap with each other; (3) Look for relationships between the categories.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Purwakarta Political Branding Policy with Sundanese Culture Characteristics

Purwakarta previously did not have the identity and character of Sundanese as we know it today. However, in some communities - especially in the elderly - awareness to maintain Sundanese cultural values is still firmly planted. While on the other hand, the potential of the region and its strategic geographical location allows Purwakarta to become a developed city and well known among other cities throughout Indonesia. It is what triggers Dedi Mulyadi's idea to build Purwakarta with the Sundanese concept. Purwakarta will be branding with Sundanese characters as its branding identity. And this great idea must be implemented through a significant breakthrough. Then Dedi began to realize this idea into regional policies that became his authority as the regional head.

Solichin Abdul Wahab (2012) states that policy consists of interrelated and patterned actions that lead to specific goals and are carried out by government officials consistently. The pol does not only include the decision to enact laws in practice, but has to be followed by a decision or technical guidance for implementation in more detail, related to the implementation process and the mechanism of the process. A policy has to be followed by actions taken in an institution to solve a problem. A political branding is a political act through political strategy, namely the interaction between the government and the community in the framework of the process of making and implementing binding decisions about the common good of people who live in an area (Surbakti: 1991).

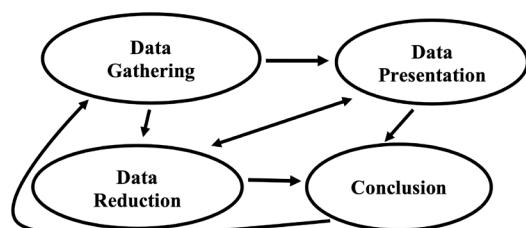


FIGURE 1. Step of Qualitative Data Analysis; Interactive Model

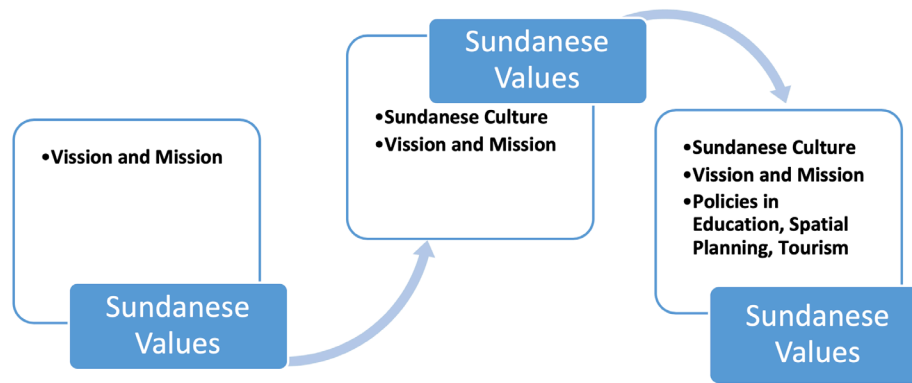


FIGURE 2. Stages of Purwakarta's Political Branding Policy with Sundanese Character

The policy with Sundanese culture is a realization of the politics of branding whose purpose is to give a brand to Purwakarta and market it to be better known as a Sundanese city. The application of Sundanese culture into the vision and mission of this regional policy is an effort to appreciate the local culture to get optimal support and participation from the people of Purwakarta. The application of Sundanese cultural to regional strategy policy can arouse a sense of community ownership of various local government programs and also the heads of their regions.

In its implementation, the branding process is not easy, but it requires a strategy and not a short time to fulfill the goals. Furthermore, Dedi Mulyadi carried out political branding since the first period and continued intensively in the second period consistently continue to strengthen the Sundanese culture in every development. This political branding policy strategy is carried out in 3 stages, namely: making a general vision and mission of regional development, continued with the vision and mission of the Sundanese culture inserted, then the vision and mission contained in policies in several sectors, which are the education sector, spatial planning, and tourism. The stages of the Purwakarta policy formation processed with Sundanese characters visualized in FIGURE 2.

In practice, the realization of policies in several sectors not carried out at the same time, in the education sector starts with the socialization of several teaching staff firstly and then proceed to parents/guardians or directly to students. Likewise, for the tourism sector and spatial planning, socialization was carried out first, both to relevant agencies and the entire community. This stage of the socialization carried out so that the related offices and the whole society are more prepared and understand their values, not merely implementing policies.

### **Purwakarta's Political Branding Sectors Characterized by Sundanese Culture**

According to Syamsul Bachri Day (2005), the characteristics of high-level politics are: amanah (trust), mas uliyah (responsibility), and ukhuwah (brotherhood). Political branding is a political implementation strategy of Dedi Mulyadi at a high level.

The Regent of Purwakarta Regency perceived the authority to lead Purwakarta as a mandate from his constituents to bring Purwakarta into an advanced Sundanese city that well-known among the regions in the province of West Java. Branding Purwakarta as a Sundanese city supports the achievement of regional vision and mission with the support of all Purwakarta residents. The political



branding implemented into three main sectors, which are: the education sector, the spatial sector, and the tourism sector.

The education sector is the most crucial among the others because it is a pillar of character building. Dedi Mulyadi revealed, "The context of character education was born in the 18th century... its characteristic is that there is an internal order based on a hierarchy of values, coherence, autonomy, firm, and loyal ... This is what the Purwakarta people who are firmly adhering with Sundanese customs want to absorb. ... "

In the education sector, the policy that rolled out 7 Poe Atikan Istimewa, that is a concrete form of education policy with Sundanese character. In the application, the local government implements thematic elements and create a philosophical value in every learning. The type of 7 Poe Atikan Istimewa policy, first, it consists of Senin<sup>1</sup>Ajeg Nusantara. Monday is the beginning of the process of internalizing character values in learning. Ajeg means upright. If it uses as a phrase with the word archipelago, it means sturdiness of the entire landscape of archipelago with all the traditions and culture of each region. So, during Monday, all lessons delivered to students must be synergized with patriotic values, potential, and all phases of history that have occurred in Indonesia/the archipelago.

Second, Salasa Mapag Buana is the theme for Tuesday. Mapag means pick up, while Buana means the world. In this case, in the implementation order, all types of world civilizations were introduced on Tuesday to all students. Third, Rebo Maneuh di Sunda, is a theme for learning on Wednesday. Maneuh means stay. So, it felt Maneuh di Sunda semantically emphasizing the meaning related to the provisions of students living in Sunda. Fourth, Kemis Nyanding Wawangi is the theme of learning every

Thursday. That is, in practice, students required to be more creative, especially from the side of social sensitivity. Fifth is Jum'at Nyucikeun Diri. It means Friday is a time to hone the spirit so that purity of heart is maintained and always draws closer to God.

Sixth and Seventh is Sabtu Minggu Betah di Imah, Saturday-Sunday is the closing of student learning activities. Students opted out of teaching and learning activities. The theme Betah di Imah (Saturday-Sunday enjoy at home) does not mean there are no lessons for these students. They still have to learn from their parents. For example, to do their homework and so on.

In the spatial sector, the spotlight is the construction of infrastructure and building layout in the Purwakarta city area. The policy that rolled out is 9 Steps of Purwakarta Love Ladder. The realization of this policy implemented in the schools, offices, and government buildings that enrich the Gapura (gates) and the provision of parks that use the Sundanese icon. The gates, fences, and office roofs in the Purwakarta area of government called Julang Ngapak, the virtue of wings of the bird at the building means the air can directly felt where the roof of Julang Ngapak has inflow air circulation. The meaning of Julang Ngapak is that humans must live together with or unite with the nature of the air. The structure of the city aims not only to strengthen the character of Sundanese in Purwakarta, but also to attract local, national and international tourist.

In the tourism sector, Dedi Mulyadi encourages artists to be more creative in producing many artwork with Sundanese cultural values and referring to the universe. Genye art is a Purwakarta Regency typical performance art. It is an abbreviation of Gerakan Nyere, the performance art is a dance using Nyere that means broomstick.

The other arts are music and fine arts, which are the tradition of children who bath in mud. This tradition reflects a philosophy of human beings who come from the soil and will return to become soil, as often expressed in the Sundanese philosophy Papat Kalimah Pancer. All of these artistic activities and cultural traditions are always routinely held in cultural festivals during the Purwakarta City anniversary.

### **Analysis of Purwakarta's Political Branding Process with Sundanese Culture Characteristics**

Haroen (2014) suggests that branding is an activity intended to build the perceptions and beliefs of others. For political purposes, branding has to be programmed. Through more interactive and constructive communication, branding can have the potential to build closer emotional relationships with constituents. Political branding is a strategic way to manage political perceptions of political products (political strategies/ policies, at so on), where these perceptions differentiate the product/policy in competition with other similar products/policies.

Dedi Mulyadi leadership carried out the vision and mission of building the city of Purwakarta using Sundanese characteristics has raised Sundanese values in various aspects and sectors of the regional government. It is the political branding as a strategy to advance the city of Purwakarta with Sundanese character. Sundanese character branding is done massively and programmed. Through this effort, Purwakarta will be known not only as a developed city but also as a city that has a Sundanese identity, both mentally and character, and physical spatial order. Furthermore, this program is socialized intensively to the public through vertical, horizontal, and participatory communication. Intensive

communication ultimately resulted in the support and participation of people who are proud of the Sundanese ancestral cultural heritage.

According to Wasesa (2011), there are several stages in branding a political brand, including 1) Consistent. The consistency of political attitudes shown by politicians will have a positive impact in the eyes of society. In turn, it will be able to cause positive word of mouth effects. 2) Activation. Do the brand activation as often as possible. 3) Participation. Political leaders must dare to jump down and directly interact with the community on an ongoing basis.

The practice of the three principles was carried out by Dedi Mulyadi in several sectors. First is the education sector. With the "7 Poe Atikan Istimewa" policy, "Budak Angon" program, and big harvest, it has shown that Sundanese values are applied consistently in education among formal schools. Likewise, in the tourism and urban planning sector, this consistency can be seen from how tourism and urban planning in Purwakarta are inseparable from the Sundanese values that always highlighted, and in every policy, they carry Sundanese values. It shows the determination to return to emerge and strengthen the value of Sundanese in Purwakarta, proven by an annual culture festival that takes Sundanese cultural themes. For example, "Genye" art, an original art from Purwakarta which has Sundanese philosophical value in it, then the construction of city gates, theme parks, and the roofs of several buildings with "Julang Ngapak" construction. They also change of school names by using hero figures of Sundanese name, and there are many more forms of political branding that are all carried out to unify Purwakarta with Sundanese character in concrete.

Second is activation. The activation in the education sector will be able to be

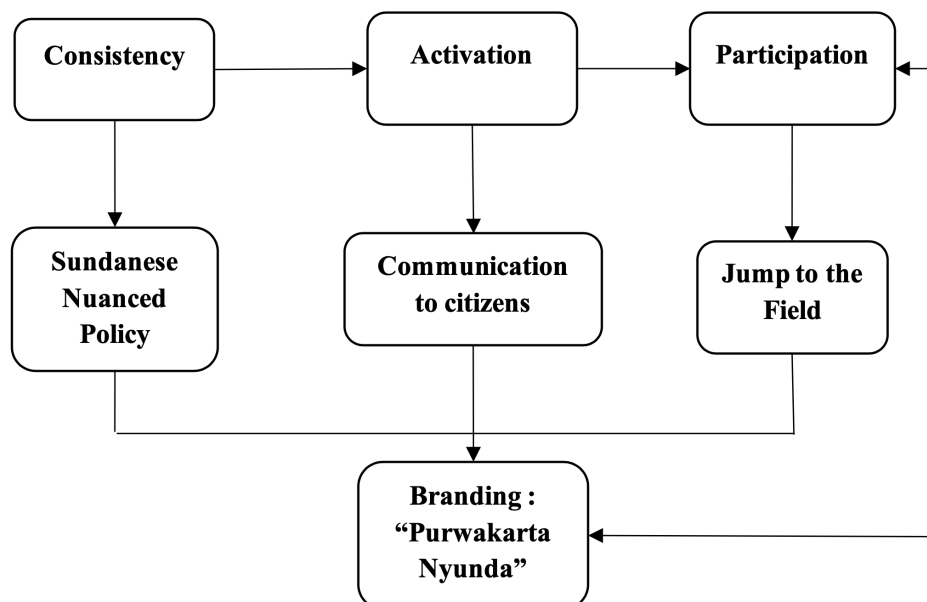


FIGURE 3. The Political Branding Process of Purwakarta with Sundanese Character

seen when it continues to socialized to students by the teachers and regulations that applied in school. Activation of a brand can not only be seen in the regulation or policy but continues to apply and encouraged so often. In the tourism sector and city planning, this activation also looks so massive and can be seen from a variety of tourism activity events that always use the Sundanese theme and value so that people will see and understand them in a real and periodic manner. In turn, Sundanese values will be embedded automatically. Likewise, in the urban planning sector, the construction of several gates, theme parks, the names of schools that are replaced by Sundanese heroes figures are carried out and activated periodically, gradually, and continuously, so that the Sundanese values will be able to be understood by the whole community.

Third is participation that relates to the Dedi Mulyadi as the regional head officer participated in the implementation of Sundanese values in several sectors. In practice, Dedi Mulyadi massively plays a direct role in the community to provide an understanding of the policies that he issued. It is easier for the public

to understand and believe that the policy issued is not only artificial. The regent visits the school and directly practicing the delivery of Sundanese character education materials. He also participates in the harvesting activities mingle with school children in rice fields and plant rice together by interacting directly with them. In the tourism and urban planning sector Dedi Mulyadi often goes to every cultural event and the construction of several facilities that replaced with Sundanese themes directly. The presence of the head of the region directly on the implementation of various Sundanese cultural-political branding programs certainly has a great potential to arouse the spirit of the Purwakarta community to support and participate with full awareness. His presence has fostered togetherness spirit and proudness to be a Sundanese in the land of Sundanese. It makes them ready to advance towards the glory of Sundanese together. Furthermore, this political branding process visualized in the FIGURE 3.

## CONCLUSIONS

Dedi Mulyadi's political branding



aims to form the city of Purwakarta with Sundanese character carried out through the implementation of policies in various sectors following the vision and mission of the regional government of Purwakarta Regency which prioritizes Sundanese cultural values. This policy of political branding applied in the socio-cultural, education, and indoor and outdoor spatial sectors in the local government of Purwakarta Regency. The politics of local cultural branding received a positive response and support from the Purwakarta community because the Sundanese culture is the identity of the Purwakarta people that have entrenched as Sundanese heritage for a long time.

The political branding of Purwakarta with Sundanese character is the original idea of Dedi Mulyadi was able to make the Purwakarta community aware of the revival of Sundanese ancestral heritage, to organized Purwakarta with Sundanese characteristic. There is a strong correlation between political power as the head of the region with the love of the people for Sundanese cultural wisdom. It makes Purwakarta's branding modern but still maintain Sundanese characters.

The political branding of local culture can sometimes be inseparable from a position or political power of a regional head. Political branding can also be used as a vehicle to form a regulation following the ideas of the regent. Dedi Mulyadi original idea in shaping Purwakarta into a modern city with a Sundanese cultural spirit implemented through local government policies is an example.

### **Suggestions**

(1) The study of the political branding of local culture needs to be developed further, both in a qualitative and quantitative approach. The qualitative approach used to explore how the local community's understanding of cultural wisdom is

used as political branding by the relevant local government. How the resilience of the Purwakarta community to maintain the discernment of local culture during huge exposure of modern culture, how to optimize communication technology in strengthening local wisdom, and how millennials respond to local wisdom. All of these phenomena need to explored qualitatively; (2) Quantitative studies suggested to look at the correlation between local cultural values compared with community participation in supporting local government programs. Relation between local wisdom compared with the millennial generation's attitude as a generation that is vulnerable to exposure to new media and social media has to explore. Also, how far the extent of awareness and responsibility of millennial generation towards the culture of their ancestors. Quantitative approaches still need to used to understand the correlation of several variables, especially between community and local government variables.

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