

## **GOVERNMENT MARKETING (Gov-Mark 9Ps): Adaptation of Public Sector Marketing Model to City Appearance Branding Policy**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study analyses the blending of marketing strategies into public sector policies, particularly looking at Depok City branding in West Java. The approach taken in this research is qualitative descriptive and involves interviews, observations and FGDs as data sources. The results showed that there was improper implementation of public sector marketing and this has caused a negative perception towards the image of the city. This research also emphasises the active role of citizens and political resolve for effective action in the blend of traditional 7Ps marketing mix governance. Community participation refers to “hands-on” contributions to the policymaking process, while political will encapsulates executive direction combined with authority including budget allocation. Thus, Gov-Mark 9Ps is introduced where community participation is joined with the 7Ps model, leading to more flexible strategies aimed at government needs from marketers. This model intends to strengthen trust among the residents and foster positive changes culminating in an enhanced image of the city.

**Keywords:** public sector marketing; government marketing; smart branding; city appearance branding; participation; political will.

### **INTRODUCTION**

This study examines how Depok, Indonesia, has first attempted to put its smart-city plan into practice, part of the worldwide shift toward digitized, modern urban spaces. Launched in 2019, Indonesia's flagship 100 Smart Cities Movement seeks to improve daily city life through six overlapping areas: smart governance, smart branding, smart economy, smart society, smart living, and smart environment. As an early pilot site, Depok has pushed particularly hard on the smart-branding track, working to polish its public image and visual identity. That focus on strategic branding mirrors efforts in other cities worldwide that aim to attract tourists and gain wider global recognition. However, the effectiveness of these policies is still under debate, as Depok's smart city performance has lagged behind other cities in Indonesia, such as Bandung and Cimahi, based on evaluations conducted by the Ministry of Communication and Information (Kominfo) in 2023. This discrepancy suggests that despite strategic initiatives, challenges in implementation and perception remain significant obstacles.

Studies on urban branding and smart cities have increasingly emphasized the role of digitalization and effective marketing strategies in transforming public perceptions and improving city competitiveness (Braun, 2012; Kavaratzis, 2008; Hospers, 2010; Moilanen & Rainisto, 2009). Kavaratzis and Ashworth (2005) argue that successful city branding must extend beyond bricks and mortar, capturing a city's intangible assets like residents' attitudes, media stories, and the strength of its networks. In Depok's case, however, the Friendly City program and similar campaigns have produced only modest visible changes yet have not shifted the prevailing narrative, which still highlights sanitation problems, traffic jams, and sporadic tensions between faith groups. Negative coverage in newspapers and social media therefore overshadows the government's promotional messages, as many citizens learn about their city primarily from headlines that map Depok onto meters of intolerance and poor livability.

Awards and external rankings, including the Setara Institute's annual tolerance survey, regularly position Depok near the bottom of Indonesia's urban league tables and thereby deepen the dissonance between officials' lofty policy statements and residents' everyday experiences. This widening gap not only discourages residents from engaging with local government initiatives but also creates openings for polarising actors who benefit from portraying the city as either a paragon of development or a cradle of conflict. Addressing the disconnect thus requires more than rephrasing the official slogan; it demands listening to under-heard neighbourhood voices, making policy implementation visible in recognisable sites, and systematically measuring social wellbeing alongside economic benchmarks to rebuild trust and renew shared ownership of Depok's urban future.

The central research problem examines the disconnect between the desired outcomes of Depok's smart branding policies and the public's actual response to them. Even with these initiatives in place, persistent portrayals of severe traffic jams, low civic patience, and sluggish infrastructure growth continue to eclipse the city's economic and social successes. Evidence gathered by Kominfo, the Setara Institute, and the Ikatan Ahli Perencana (IAP) reveals a steadily negative media tone and declining public ratings, thereby reinforcing the unfavorable image. A major shortcoming identified is the reliance on conventional, one-way offline campaigns, which have proven inadequate for meaningful audience reach and engagement. Furthermore, Depok's failure to couple these tactics with modern online tools—lately indispensable to public-sector marketing, especially under the smart city banner—deepens the problem.

To tackle these challenges, public-sector marketing needs to evolve into a more flexible and organized strategy. Researchers have repeatedly suggested borrowing private-sector marketing ideas to make public administration clearer and more effective (Kotler & Lee, 2007; Lee & Kotler, 2011; Osborne & Brown, 2005; Dann, 2010). Concepts such as the marketing mix, whether the 4Ps or the extended 7Ps, have already helped European and North American cities involve residents and refresh local images. Still, testing has been sparse in developing nations, and Indonesian agencies in particular have yet to fully embrace these frameworks. Indonesia's traditional, top-down bureaucracy slows adoption

because the way leaders relate to each other and the strength of political backing ultimately shape whether a given strategy succeeds or fails.

The limited application of private sector marketing principles in the Indonesian public administration context can be attributed to its strongly hierarchical and paternalistic bureaucratic structure, which restricts operational flexibility and innovation (World Bank, 2011). In many emerging cities, political patronage and established hierarchies shape leadership patterns, often placing long-standing authority ahead of proposed reforms (Aspinall & Mietzner, 2010). For this reason, borrowing Western marketing models still demands a methodical adjustment process that respects local culture, institutions, and infrastructure (Hingley & Lindgreen, 2010; Kotler & Lee, 2007).

Literature on smart-city programmes offers a range of options for closing the marketing gap in public-sector projects. A central recommendation is to bolster digital dialogue with residents, a lesson drawn from several European cases (Ashworth & Voogd, 2010). For example, Poznan and Kutaisi used social media to invite citizens into the branding conversation, yielding measurable gains in public input. In the same vein, Maziashvili and colleagues (2023) demonstrate that digital engagement can flip branding from a top-down message to a more open, participatory exchange. Collectively, these studies point to online tools as essential assets for the public-sector marketing of smart cities, where digital capability underpins nearly every service and strategy.

Although digital marketing has achieved worldwide acclaim, Depok has yet to embrace these techniques on a meaningful scale (Westlund, 2013; Evans, 2003; Zenker & Beckmann, 2013; Hajli, 2014). Assessments reveal that the city's promotional activities still lean almost entirely on traditional, offline channels—printed banners, state-organized events, and static displays—while online venues receive only sporadic attention. This imbalance points to an urgent need for home-grown plans that borrow proven Western models but are fine-tuned to Indonesia's layered bureaucracy. Lucarelli and Heldt Cassel (2020) demonstrate in their research on spatial planning and place branding how effective branding hinges on locally informed, adaptable tactics. They warn that in regions still developing the political climate and institutional capacity will shape, for better or worse, the success of any city-branding effort.

The present study builds on past research by tackling the marketing shortfall seen in Depok's smart branding policy. It pinpoints three distinct weaknesses: (1) a perception gap in which negative public attitudes mask the city's positive achievements; (2) a methodological gap caused by a heavy reliance on offline campaigns that overlook digital options; and (3) a theoretical gap arising because Western marketing models have yet to be tailored to Indonesia's hierarchical and paternalistic governance. Closing these gaps is vital for making smart branding efforts more effective and for bringing them in line with the city's goals and the public's hopes.

This study investigates how well public-sector marketing supports the rollout of smart-branding policies in Depok, concentrating chiefly on enhancing the city's visual identity. It puts forward a homegrown marketing model that fits Indonesian government

practices and blends Kotler and Lees 2007 public-sector framework with elements that reflect local leadership styles and the uneven political will that often guide them. By adapting an internationally respected theory to a bureaucracy marked by clear hierarchies and sporadic citizen involvement, the research offers a fresh contribution to the literature on administrative branding. The authors expect their work to yield a detailed blueprint that closes the identified gaps and gives practical guidance to officials seeking to strengthen marketing within larger smart-city efforts.

The projects scope includes a review of current public-sector marketing in Depok, the design of the custom framework, and an empirical test of that framework against the citys ongoing smart-branding campaigns. In particular, and because visual appeal shapes first impressions, the authors emphasize city-appearance branding as a key thread for study. They argue that success requires stitching together digital channels Twitter feeds, city apps, virtual tours with face-to-face outreach such as town-hall meetings, flyers, and posters so that a seamless message reaches all residents, whether online or offline.

This blend ensures broad reach and inclusivity across diverse population segments, fostering public engagement and aligning perceptions with smart city goals. This research also contributes empirical and theoretical insights to public administration and urban planning in developing countries, particularly within Southeast Asia, addressing critical challenges in implementing smart branding in Indonesia.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This study utilizes a qualitative approach to explore public sector marketing in the context of smart branding policies in Depok. The research methods focus on how the investigation is conducted to achieve the objectives, employing various data collection techniques such as semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders (government officials, business representatives, community leaders, and media personnel), focus group discussions for gathering diverse community insights, non-participant observations to document city branding activities objectively, and document analysis of relevant government and media materials. These methods are chosen to capture different perspectives and ensure a comprehensive understanding of the implementation and perception of Depok's smart branding initiatives.

Data sampling follows purposive and snowball strategies to select informants with relevant knowledge and ensure rich data collection. For data analysis, thematic coding supported by NVivo software is applied to identify patterns aligned with marketing theories. To enhance the credibility of findings, triangulation across data sources, member checking with participants, and peer debriefing among researchers are conducted to validate interpretations and maintain rigor throughout the research process.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

This chapter presents the findings of the study and discusses them in light of the theoretical frameworks and literature reviewed. The results are structured to address the

primary research question on the effectiveness of public sector marketing in Depok's smart branding policy, with a focus on the city's appearance branding. The discussion integrates thematic analysis from the data collected and aligns the findings with existing theories to provide a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities faced by the city.

The analysis opens by examining how Depok currently presents itself to residents and visitors. Although the city runs the Depok Friendly City campaign, public sentiment is still mostly unflattering. Media tracking from January to June 2023 shows that most articles about Depok leaned negative, with complaints about traffic jams, patchy infrastructure, and claims of resident intolerance topping the list. This gloomy coverage stands in stark contrast to the city's strong economic statistics, including a low poverty rate and a high Human Development Index, hinting that Depok's image targets and the public's everyday experience are badly out of sync.

These observations are backed up by interviews and focus group discussions, which show that many local leaders see the city's branding drive as stale and uninspiring. Government officials and business representatives we spoke with pointed out that most smart city promotions still depend on old-fashioned tools-loud banners, ribbon-cutting ceremonies, and events run solely by the local administration-which do not speak to younger, web-fuelled residents. Because of this heavy reliance on yesterday's methods, the gap between Depok's smart brand ambitions and the modern marketing habits of its people only grows wider.

Analysis of official documents indicates that Depok's branding effort currently lacks cohesion. Policy reports and strategic outlines reveal a consistent focus on highlighting the city's strengths, yet no unified digital plan guides these communications. Without active online channels or interactive tools that invite public participation, the campaigns reach only a fraction of the possible audience. This shortfall echoes Kotler and Lees (2007) observation that successful public-sector marketing today relies on a blend of offline and digital touch points.

Thematic coding uncovers three persistent obstacles in Depok's public-sector marketing. The first stems from a gap between stated goals and how residents actually perceive them. Despite positive messaging, negative media stories and lingering public skepticism continue to weaken the official narrative. The second challenge is methodological; the city's outreach remains largely one-way and fails to invite feedback from its diverse population. Finally, applying Western marketing frameworks to Indonesia's structured bureaucracy creates a theoretical mismatch, as rigid hierarchies stifle the experimentation and agility those models typically require.

To tackle the local challenges, the study offers a public-sector marketing model that bends global ideas to fit the neighbourhoods day-to-day realities. Drawing on Ahmadjayadis (2016) work in city branding and blending it with Kavaratzis (2004) guide to communicating a city's image, the model recommends a hybrid strategy. This mix pairs traditional outreach-newspaper ads, community meetings-with digital tools-social media posts and interactive websites-so younger residents feel included and older ones do not get lost. By inviting citizens

to share stories and give feedback, the city creates a living identity that people help build and keep rich for years to come.

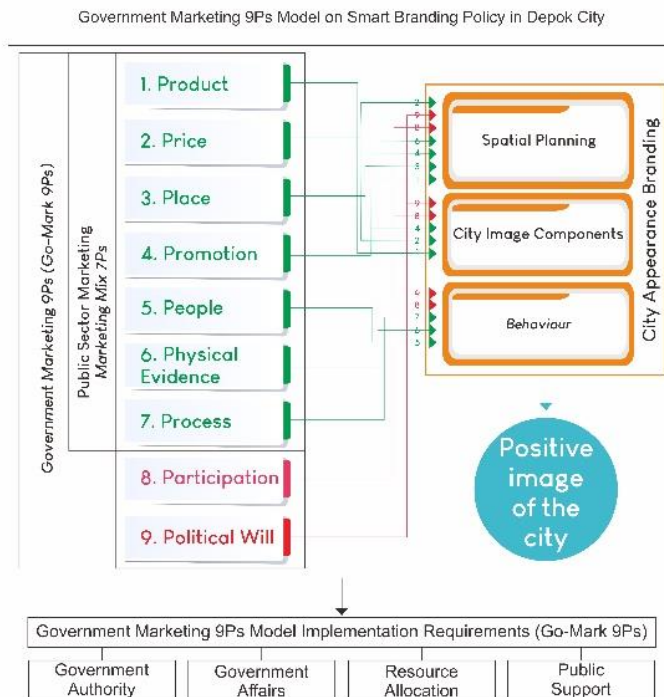
The findings show that smart branding in Depok will only improve when everyone acts together. As things stand, the city government, local businesses, and community groups rarely talk, so projects end up scattered instead of joined. A clearer policy agenda should build partnerships that use what each side does best. Local firms can provide funding and tech know-how for online campaigns, while neighbourhood organisations bring everyday perspectives that keep the message meaningful. This cooperative approach mirrors the framework of Lucarelli and Heldt Cassel (2020), who argue that open dialogue and shared power are vital for strong urban brands.

The analysis does not stay inward; it also looks outward, borrowing ideas from cities that have walked the same path. Poznan, in Poland, created a co-creation platform where residents helped write the brand story, and public pride in the message shot up. In Kutaisi, Georgia, organisers combined digital posts with street fairs and pop-up events, pulling in people who usually dodge apps and laptops. These examples suggest that Depok could gain the same ground by mixing online tools with face-to-face activities in its smart branding plan.

All things considered, Depok has made headway with its smart branding push, but it still battles patchy execution, mixed levels of community and partner buy-in, and a clumsy mismatch between national marketing playbooks and the local context. That said, the evidence points to a fresh public-marketing playbook that stitches together classic outreach, social media, and mobile channels in a way that sits comfortably inside Depoks customary working style. If adopted, this blended tactic could bring city goals and residents impressions into closer alignment, giving Depok a stronger public image and sharper edge over neighboring towns. Backed by clear data and practical steps, these findings not only feed the broader debate on city management, they also serve as real-world tips for other emerging urban centers facing the same growing pains.

### **Public Sector Marketing Model for Smart Branding Policy in Depok**

The research offers an updated public-sector marketing framework designed to enhance the visual identity of Depoks smart-branding drive. To construct the model, the authors used NVivo software, systematically coding qualitative data and mapping out strategic factors that shape a favourable urban image. Although the framework draws on the well-known 7Ps mix proposed by Kotler and Lee, it goes further by adding participation and political will as two extra Ps. In Indonesias predominantly bureaucratic setting, these components are seen as essential for any city-branding effort to gain traction and endure.

**Core Elements of the Public Sector Marketing Model (9Ps):**

1. **Product:** Depok offers products not limited to physical objects but also policies and programs that aim to enhance the city's appeal. The "Depok Friendly City" initiative and thematic villages serve as central branding elements. However, the study indicates that these efforts need better institutionalization and clarity for greater impact.
2. **Price:** In public sector marketing, price refers to the investment made by the government rather than direct costs. Depok's investment in infrastructure for branding purposes is significant, emphasizing the role of strategic financial allocation.
3. **Place:** Strategic public spaces, such as parks and city squares, are vital for enhancing city appearance. Depok's efforts in improving these spaces align with the city's branding goals, though consistent planning and integration are needed.
4. **Promotion:** Promotion is essential for disseminating the city's branding message. In Depok, efforts include digital campaigns and community engagement activities, although more effective social media use and collaboration with local influencers are recommended.
5. **People:** Residents and stakeholders play a critical role. Involving communities ensures their behavior aligns with the city's friendly image. Government efforts must focus on making residents active participants in the branding process.

6. **Physical Evidence:** Infrastructure improvements, like pedestrian-friendly sidewalks and inclusive public spaces, contribute to a tangible representation of the city's branding. These elements support the city's image as modern and inclusive.
7. **Process:** The branding process in Depok includes planning, execution, monitoring, and evaluation. A structured and responsive process is essential for ensuring these initiatives align with city goals and adapt to evolving circumstances.
8. **Participation:** Active community participation is crucial for creating a sense of ownership and alignment with branding initiatives. Depok has engaged residents through various platforms, but further integration is needed to sustain these efforts.
9. **Political Will:** Strong leadership and consistent political support are fundamental. The success of smart branding relies heavily on political commitment to allocate resources, manage public spaces, and drive public engagement efforts (Govers & Go, 2009; Anholt, 2006; Bell & Jayne, 2003; Castells, 2010).

Government marketing can be carried out with the requirements of government authority, government affairs, resource allocation, and public support.

ADAPTATION OF THE PUBLIC SECTOR MARKETING 9Ps CONCEPT  
TO GOVERNMENT MARKETING (Gov-Mark 9Ps)

Marketing Mix	(Marketing Mix 9Ps)							2Ps findings	
	Product	Price	Place	Promotion	People	Physical Evidence	Process	Participation	Political Will
Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Policy Product</li> <li>Product Design</li> <li>Product Name</li> <li>Symbol</li> <li>Logo</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Service Price</li> <li>Insertive</li> <li>Disinsertive</li> <li>Service Time</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Service Access</li> <li>Distribution Channels</li> <li>Convenience</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public Relations</li> <li>Advertising</li> <li>Direct and Online Marketing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Customer Position</li> <li>Service Actor</li> <li>Friendliness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How to market products</li> <li>Provider Friendliness</li> <li>Resident Friendliness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Service Procedure</li> <li>Online /Offline service</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Voice heard</li> <li>Access opened</li> <li>Involved in planning and implementation</li> <li>Communication</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Authority</li> <li>Actor Commitment</li> <li>Leadership</li> <li>Resource allocations</li> <li>Stakeholder mobilisation</li> </ul>
Object of Government Science	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Authority</li> <li>Service</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Authority</li> <li>Service</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Service</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Government Relations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Service</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Service</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Service</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Service</li> <li>Government Relations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Government relations</li> <li>Authority</li> <li>Service</li> </ul>

Government Marketing (Gov-Mark 9Ps)

The refined framework, labelled Gov-Mark 9Ps, merges public marketing principles with Indone-sian governance and bureaucracy, producing a hybrid model tailored to local context. By mapping how the nine parts work together, the model offers a clear pathway for cities to present their image, stressing public trust and grassroots involvement as end goals. Results also show that adding political will and genuine participation to standard marketing logic can make public campaigns far more powerful in fast-growing areas such as Depok.

This blueprint now acts as a hands-on tool for decision-makers, guiding the step-by-step rollout of branding programmes that connect citizens and government. Scholars are encouraged to test it in other Indonesian cities or in similar developing settings, confirming whether its logic holds across varied urban cultures. In doing so, evidence can show how



global marketing theories must be bent, not borrowed, to match local power arrangements and community rhythms.

## CONCLUSION

The research indicates that marketing strategies linked to Depok smart branding policy remain far from optimised. While campaigns like the Depok Friendly City program and a series of themed village projects have been launched, they operate in isolation and are seldom evaluated. A shallow grasp of smart branding among officials and residents, tight budget constraints, and weak cross-agency cooperation continue to impede meaningful progress.

The research highlights the significant roles of participation and political will in determining the success of public sector marketing. Strong leadership support and resource allocation from local authorities are critical in building a positive city image and achieving smart branding goals. Equally, community involvement is vital, as local residents are the main stakeholders in city development.

This research contributes to the existing body of knowledge by developing a localized public sector marketing model tailored to the Indonesian governance context. The findings suggest a hybrid marketing approach that integrates traditional and digital strategies for enhanced effectiveness. Future research could further explore the integration of digital tools and collaborative governance models to test the proposed framework's adaptability in other urban settings.

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