

## Dedi Mulyadi's personal branding through "barracks" viral content

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### ABSTRACT

**Background:** Social media has become a strategic medium for building political personal branding. Kang Dedi Mulyadi (KDM) utilizes platforms such as YouTube and TikTok to display a leadership style close to the community. One of his viral contents, "nantijemput ke barak (to be picked up to the barracks)", reflects a personal branding strategy based on local cultural values. **Purpose:** This research analyzes KDM's digital personal branding strategy against visual and verbal narratives in digital content and public responses. **Methods:** It uses a descriptive qualitative method with a cultural public relations approach, a communication approach that emphasizes aspects of West Javanese local culture in building and managing relationships. To collect the data, the study examined verbal and visual data on videos on KDM social media accounts. **Results:** Kang Dedi Mulyadi builds an image as a humanist leader, simple, and attached to Sundanese cultural values. The phrase 'picked up to the barracks' symbolizes the emotional closeness between the leader and the people. This strategy is effective because it combines populist approaches, local wisdom, and digital storytelling. **Conclusion:** KDM's personal branding represents local culture in a communicative and modern way. **Implications:** The theoretical implications show the importance of integration between political and cultural communication. Meanwhile, this strategy can be a model for other public figures in building an authentic and relevant image in the digital space.

**Keywords:** Public relations; digital personal branding; digital communication; local culture; viral content

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## INTRODUCTION

In the era of digital communication, social media has become one of the main tools for shaping public image, especially among political figures. The ability to deliver messages directly, without the intermediary of conventional media, makes digital platforms a strategic space in building personal branding (Nikhashemi et al., 2025; Trang et al., 2024). This phenomenon is evident in the way the Governor of West Java, Kang Dedi Mulyadi (KDM), utilizes social media, such as YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram, to display a distinctive leadership style close to the community. KDM, who once served as the Regent of Purwakarta and a member of the House of Representatives, through his social media, KDM displays a distinctive leadership style – populist, responsive, and full of local cultural values (Charina et al., 2022; Soffani & Nugroho, 2019).

This strategy not only shapes a positive image in the eyes of the public but also strengthens the emotional connection between leaders and the community amidst the swift flow of digital information (Mochla et al., 2025). This phenomenon is relevant to study from the perspective of cultural public relations, a communication approach that takes into account cultural values in shaping public perception (Nur'aeni et al., 2024). By utilizing local

narrative, regional language, and a humanist approach, KDM succeeded in building his image as a populist leader who is close to the values of Sundanese tradition (Nurlimah et al., 2020). This strategy shapes public opinion and organically expands the reach of his influence in the digital realm through virality (Prashar & Maity, 2024).

Dedi Mulyadi is a prominent example of the application of the cultural public relations approach. KDM consistently utilizes local narrative, regional languages, Sundanese cultural symbols, and gestures that reflect his closeness to grassroots communities (Nurlimah et al., 2020). His content on social media often features direct interaction with residents (Pazmino et al., 2023), respect for traditional leaders, and preservation of local traditions such as the use of traditional clothing or the mention of Sundanese terms. This strategy creates an image of him as a figure who not only understands local culture but also makes it the main foundation in building relationships with the public (Rosadi et al., 2022). With a humanist approach that prioritizes empathy and emotional closeness, he can present an authentic and down-to-earth leader.

The effectiveness of this strategy is evident in that KDM's content is widely spread on social media, frequently going viral without paid advertising intervention (Trang et al., 2024).

This phenomenon shows that culture-based communication has a strong appeal in creating resonance among the public. Such virality contributes to the organic formation of public opinion (Mashiah, 2025). Thus, the cultural public relations approach by KDM plays a role in branding and expanding political and social influence through digital communication mediums that are responsive to local values (Brown & Lewis, 2022).

One viral content that has caught the public's attention is a video with the narration "*nanti dijemput ke barak*", which has become a trend among children, teenagers, and even adults. The viral content is an effort to foster youth character through a semi-military approach, especially for students involved in juvenile delinquency or disciplinary offenses. The content contains the cultural value of "*teuneung*" (dare) in the frame of "*silih asih*" (mutual love) (Mulyani et al., 2024). Although it seems harsh, the invitation "will be picked up at the barracks" is not meant to punish, but to educate and shape the character of deviant teenagers. This effort is in line with local cultural values that emphasize guidance, not destruction, or in Sundanese, "*urang mah henteu hayang murka, tapi kudu aya nu ngajarkeun discipline.*" However, behind its virality, the content has a strategic dimension as part of KDM's digital campaign and personal branding that blends assertiveness

with the local cultural values of the Sundanese community. KDM's personal branding in the eyes of the public is generally viewed positively, especially due to its populist approach and consistent display of local Sundanese cultural values (Soffani & Nugroho, 2019).

The content is not just a symbolic invitation. It is also part of a communication strategy to strengthen his political position and image in the eyes of the public. The viral content on social media has generated different responses. Some see the approach as an innovative and educational solution, and others see it as a militarization of education that can negatively affect children's psychology. Therefore, it is essential to understand how the digital campaign strategy is constructed and accepted in the context of local cultural values (Hidayat et al., 2025). Sundanese cultural values such as *silih asah, silih asih, silih asuh* (live in harmony, respect each other, and build togetherness) (Alhafizh et al., 2021), as well as the principles of "*tatakrama*" (manners) and "*teuneung*" (dare), are often raised by KDM in its public rhetoric (Nurlimah et al., 2020). These values are integrated into KDM's personal branding strategy through social media.

The variety of public assessments of Dedi Mulyadi's personal branding, as described in the previous section, shows consistency with the results of a recent survey related to public

perceptions of his performance as Governor of West Java. The survey recorded an impressive figure of 94.7%, indicating that almost all respondents gave a positive assessment of his leadership performance. This figure reflects the public's satisfaction with Dedi Mulyadi's work and reinforces the relevance of the communication approach he has built so far through a culture-based personal branding strategy.

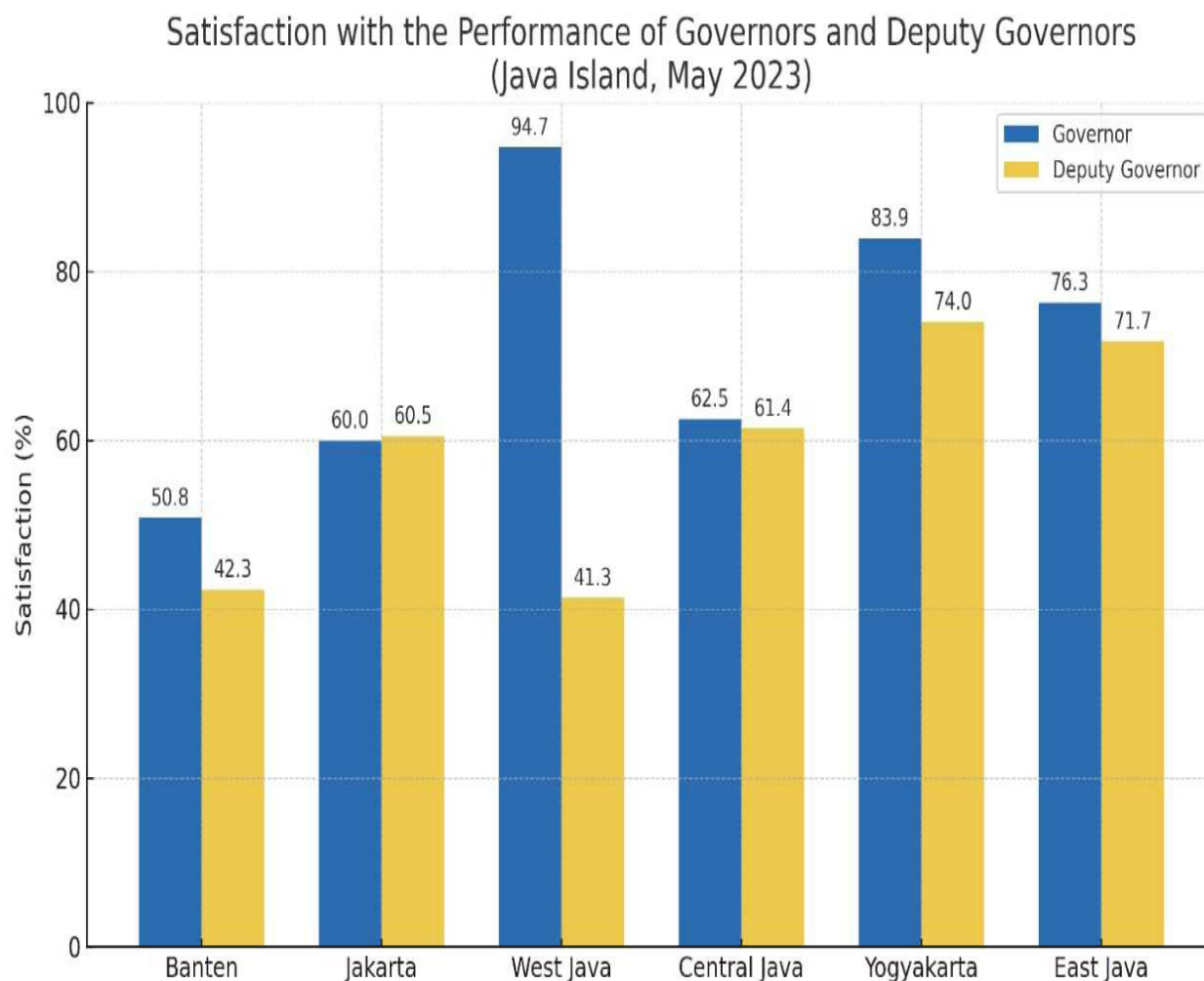
KDM's branding, which seems populist, close to the community, and rooted in Sundanese traditional values, has proven successful in creating a sustainable positive image (Nurlimah et al., 2020). The 94.7% survey result reflects the success of political communication rooted in local wisdom. In the context of mass communication and public opinion, people's perceptions are shaped not only by statistical data or performance reports but also by the way leaders appear to the public in their daily lives. KDM, with his ability to build a strong and authentic narrative through digital channels, has expanded his reach of influence beyond geographical and bureaucratic boundaries. His familiar face on social media, stories that touch on the human side, and consistent promotion of local cultural values create a strong impression of a leader who is present and real (Soffani & Nugroho, 2019).

KDM's superior performance in this survey

is also an indicator of the successful integration of cultural communication strategies and administrative achievements. People tend to judge the success of a leader by the ability to build warm and open social relations, besides policy or physical development. In the context of KDM, this relationship is constructed simultaneously between pro-people policies and an inclusive cultural approach (Bagaskara, 2025). For example, his policies in favor of farmers and UMKM, preservation of cultural sites, and promotion of local character-based education are all packaged in a narrative that is close to the community.

Compared to several other governors in Java, survey results rank KDM at the top in public satisfaction. This shows that successful personal branding is not just an image, but it is a strategic foundation in creating socio-political legitimacy in the eyes of the public. In a situation where public figures mostly rely on elitist or formal communication, KDM offers an alternative leadership model that is communicative, familiar, and responsive to the socio-cultural dynamics of local communities.

This phenomenon illustrates that KDM's culture-based public relations approach is effective in shaping a positive image with a real impact on public perception. Thus, the high level of public satisfaction with him in the survey is not coincidental, but the fruit of the consistency



Source: Bagaskara, 2025

**Figure 1** satisfaction with KDM performance

of a holistic, planned communication strategy rooted in local values in West Java. Figure 1 presents the survey results related to KDM's performance.

The high performance of KDM is inseparable from his success in building and managing personal branding. Some research portrayed KDM as a leader who is close to the community (Soffani & Nugroho, 2019). Through social media such as YouTube and Facebook, he often shares his activities that show concern for the grassroots (Rosadi et

al., 2022). His communication style, which uses everyday language, makes people feel closer and less awkward interacting with him (Fikri, 2024). Every time he appears in public, he consistently wears Sundanese traditional clothing such as *pangsi* clothes and headbands. This reinforces his image as a leader who loves and preserves local culture. His social media content also often features elements of Sundanese culture, which makes him easily recognizable and remembered by the public as a "*nyunda*" leader (Soffani & Nugroho, 2019).

KDM is widely known as a public figure who consistently carries Sundanese cultural values in his leadership style (Fikri, 2024). His digital personal branding emphasizes Sundanese culture through traditional clothing and cultural content and consistency in displaying cultural identity (Soffani & Nugroho, 2019). Through narratives that are assertive, humorous, and nuanced with local traditions, he has succeeded in building an image as a charismatic leader close to the people and firm on social issues (Rosadi et al., 2022).

The studies suggested that KDM's branding is formed through various social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, YouTube) with a visual, cultural, interactive, and populist approach. KDM relies on content consistency, strengthening local cultural identity (especially Sundanese), and building emotional closeness with the public through language and social actions that directly touch the community (Budiana et al., 2020). This is in line with the power of digital media that can penetrate borders across time and space (Hidayat et al., 2025). This phenomenon, that KDM's branding strategy is consistently built through his personal social media accounts, is evident in the importance of this research, as well as the research gap. The current research employs a cultural public relations approach. This communication approach takes into account

the local cultural values of West Java to make it easier to build or manage relationships. This research combines several multidisciplinary approaches that integrate various theories, including digital personal branding, which explores how public figures construct their self-image through digital media (Singh et al., 2023). In this context, KDM uses social media to build an image of a firm and populist leader. Political communication theory is used to analyze how political messages are packaged to influence public opinion (Mochla et al., 2025). Researchers also used the theory of local culture or local wisdom to analyze Sundanese cultural values implied in the content, such as "*silih asih*" (mutual love), "*teuneung*" (dare), and "*tatakrama*" (manners) (Budiana et al., 2020).

This research provides a complete picture of how KDM constructs his leadership image through digital campaigns that rely on West Java culture. The results of this research are expected to provide implications both theoretically and practically. The theoretical implications of this research are expected to strengthen personal branding theory, especially in the context of local cultural values. The findings show that personal branding does not have to be based on universal values, such as modernity or professionalism. It can be built from local cultural values or Sundanese local wisdom. Personal branding can also be managed through



symbols of regional identity, such as clothing, language, and traditions in West Java.

Theoretically, the results of this study can also contribute to the theoretical understanding of digital political communication integrated with local cultural values to shape public perception, bridging mass communication theory and cultural communication. In addition, through the virality of the phrase “*nanti dijemput ke barak*”, this research shows that locally charged content can have wide dissemination if it is packaged with empathy and strong storytelling. Practically, the results of this research are expected to guide political figures and public officials in using simple, localized content that touches the emotional side of the community. Through content, public officials can build consistent narratives relevant to the audience’s culture. Political figures can also make social media not only a promotional tool, but a space for social interaction.

## RESEARCH METHOD

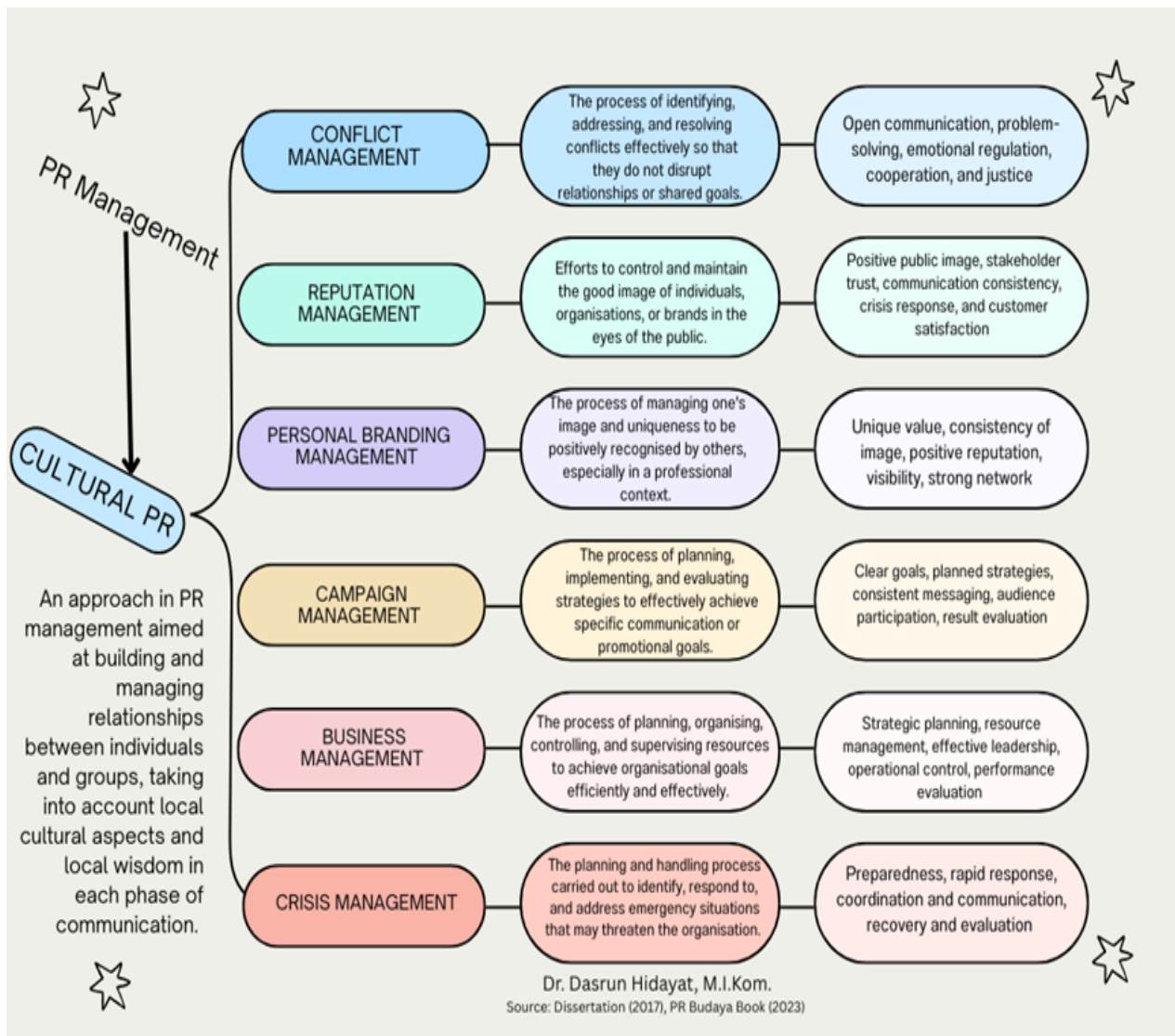
This research uses a qualitative method with a cultural public relations approach to examine KDM’s branding strategy from the perspective of West Java’s local cultural values (Hidayat et al., 2023). This approach allows researchers to explore in-depth the meanings of symbols, messages, and self-image construction

by KDM through social media. The focus of the research lies on how elements of local culture, particularly Sundanese culture (Charli et al., 2022), are integrated into digital narratives presented through platforms such as YouTube and TikTok.

Data collection was conducted through several techniques. First, social media observation was conducted by directly observing KDM video content, especially those containing the popular phrase “*Nanti dijemput ke barak*.” These contents were analyzed by visual and narrative to understand the cultural context, humanitarian messages, and communication styles used. The observation also included aspects of digital interaction, such as the number of likes, views, shares, and comments from users, as a form of public response to the content.

Second, data was collected in the form of video footage, captions, user comments, and screenshots from some official and KDM fanbase accounts. This documentation provides an overview of how personal branding strategies are constructed and perceived by the audience. Third is literature study, to strengthen the theoretical framework of the research by examining relevant references on personal branding, digital political communication, and Sundanese local culture.

Qualitative cultural public relations



Source: Hidayat et al., 2023

**Figure 2** context of cultural public relations study

approach emphasizes cultural values as a strategy to manage image and reputation in the eyes of the public (Gustini et al., 2023). This approach rests on the assumption that communication cannot be separated from the social and cultural context in which it takes place. Therefore, in cultural PR, an understanding of local symbols, traditions, languages, and norms becomes a crucial element in designing effective messages relevant to the target audience. A culturally

based communication strategy allows a figure or institution to build emotional closeness with the community, as the messages delivered feel more familiar, authentic, and reflective of the collective identity of the audience (Nur'aeni et al., 2024).

In this context, the cultural PR approach functions as not only a promotional or imaging tool but also a bridge to build trust between the communicator and the public. The image is more



sustainable because it is not created instantly, but through a consistent communication process sensitive to local values. A public figure who uses this approach tends to package messages in the form of evocative narratives, use local languages, or involve cultural symbols deeply embedded in people's daily lives. Figure 2 maps the study of cultural public relations as an approach to public relations management, including cultural public relations in the context of conflict management, reputation management, personal branding management, campaign management, business management, and crisis management (Hidayat et al., 2023).

The data was analyzed using the content analysis method with a focus on visual and verbal narratives (Trulsson et al., 2023), which form KDM's image. Local cultural symbols were used in the content, and public responses to the messages conveyed. The analysis was conducted by identifying patterns, themes, and cultural values that emerged, and was related to theories of personal branding and culture-based communication. To ensure data validity, source triangulation techniques (Christin et al., 2021).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The phenomenon of viral content in the digital era has become an integral part of public communication strategies, especially in building

the image and personal branding of public figures. In this context, KDM, who actively uses social media, is an interesting example to analyze, especially through the content of "*nanti dijemput ke barak*" which has received a wide response from the public. By combining elements of locality, a humanist approach, and narratives that are close to people's daily lives, the communication strategy represents a new form of PR that is adaptive to digital culture and local values (Nur'aeni et al., 2024; Pugel et al., 2022). This analysis outlines how the content shapes public perception and creates emotional attachment through potent cultural symbols and narratives, as seen in the video footage of students returning home from the military barracks in Figure 3.

The viral content of children being picked up by their parents from the military barracks in the video "*nanti dijemput ke barak*", does not simply show the moment of returning from training, but strategically shapes public perception of KDM as a caring, humanist figure who is close to family values and local culture, including "*silih asih*". The video footage showing students who have just finished training at the military barracks being welcomed by their parents touches the emotional aspects of the audience very strongly. In this moment, cultural symbols such as warm embraces, emotional expressions, and narratives of family



Source: Instagram,

**Figure 3** parents of students picking up their children at the military barracks

togetherness are built, which are very close to the values of Indonesian society, especially West Java.

KDM, the main actor in the content, indirectly positions himself as a facilitator of human values and family traditions, which strengthens his image not only as a political figure but also as a representation of a father figure or a nurturing leader (Nurlimah et al., 2020). The symbolization of the military barracks as a place of character building and discipline, as well as the momentum of homecoming as a phase of emotional reconciliation between children and parents, form a cultural narrative that touches and can be widely accepted by the public from various social layers. Thus, this

content went viral because of its uniqueness and ability to present a strong emotional appeal. This makes the communication strategy used by KDM an example of the application of culture-based public relations, which emphasizes emotional closeness, local values, and symbolic involvement in building personal branding digitally (Hidayat et al., 2025).

The positive response by public, by either comments or engagement on social media (Maheux et al., 2024). Reflects KDM's success in making the "*nanti dijemput ke barak*" program part of his authentic self-image. He is not only known as a politician but also as an inspirational figure who brings social change with a cultural approach (Matsilele & Nkoala,

2023). From a personal branding perspective, the “*Nanti dijemput ke barak*” program initiated by KDM is not only positioned as a character training activity but also as a means to build a strong, positive self-image relevant to cultural values and community expectations. Behind the impression of discipline and strictness that is usually attached to the term “barracks”, another atmosphere in the video content is a picture of warmth, togetherness, and happiness of the students involved. Snippets of moments such as laughter, cooperation, and emotional encounters between children and parents become visual narratives that strategically strengthen KDM’s positioning as a caring and humanist leader. Positive support from the people of West Java through comments such as the following.

“Continue your struggle Kang Dedi for a better Indonesia. Always success with the Barak program. Touched and grateful to see the condition of the children at “barracks”.

Support for KDM can also be seen in Figure 2, who constantly provides support through best wishes for KDM, such as public comments taken from his social media.

“Always be healthy Mr Gubernur, keep up the spirit of advancing West Java. Governor “*aing*” top, cool anyway”.

The comments show that the public understands the message and is emotionally engaged. This response reflects the success

of KDM’s personal branding in building engagement with the audience through authentic and touching values. In this context, KDM’s branding strategy is effective because he presents himself not only as an authoritative figure but also as a protector, character builder, and symbol of hope for the future (Mochla et al., 2025). Branding using social media tends to be more attractive so that it can deepen relationships with the public (Cuevas-Molano et al., 2022). This response reflects the success of KDM’s personal branding in building engagement with the audience through authentic and touching values (Nikhashemi et al., 2025). The video content of the “*nanti dijemput ke barak*” program serves as a medium of communication that conveys its personal message indirectly, yet has a significant impact through social impressions, representation of local values, and public support that shapes a positive narrative towards its digital identity (Rawanoko et al., 2021).

The theory of digital personal branding emphasizes the importance of message consistency, emotional connection, and the value offered to the public (Ndhlovu & Maree, 2023). The program “*nanti dijemput ke barak*” strongly demonstrates all three. Through content regularly shared on social media, KDM builds a narrative about the importance of character education in a disciplined environment, yet

still humanistic and enjoyable. Visualization of a warm, familial, and communal atmosphere in the barracks, such as students helping each other, emotional reunions between children and parents, and expressions of gratitude from the community, represents the distinctive values of Sundanese culture like “*silih asih, silih asah, and silih asuh*.” (Charina et al., 2022).

By packaging content in a local cultural nuance, KDM creates a personal brand that is not only visually strong but also culturally relevant. KDM presents himself as a grounded leader, understanding local values, and committed to character building for the nation’s children through a cultural approach. This is the strength of the digital personal branding strategy based on locality, namely the ability to combine modern communication technology with cultural roots that are still alive and valued by the community (Wróblewski & Grzesiak, 2020). The results of this study align with research in China, which found that the preservation of the traditional craft of “weaving” integrated with technology can build a branding concept relevant to the contemporary context (Yu, 2023; Orphanidou et al., 2024).

The success of KDM program in building digital personal branding can also be reinforced through the theory of digital political communication, particularly in the context of how politicians use digital media to

build relationships, shape public opinion, and strengthen social legitimacy through an approach that is close to the daily lives of the community (Neglia et al., 2024). In this case, KDM can utilize digital platforms, especially social media, as effective channels to convey political messages packaged in the form of humanistic content with local cultural nuances. According to the theory of digital communication, the success of political communication in the digital space is determined by message authenticity, audience engagement, and the relevance of social and cultural context (Haßler et al., 2024; Singh et al., 2023).

The credibility of the message is an element of communication that plays an important role in building trust, which can influence consumer behavior (Abdulmajeed & El-Ibiary, 2020). Authentic communication is crucial to ensure that the audience perceives the message as genuine and trustworthy (Shamim & Azam, 2024). Engaging the public is another important aspect that can strengthen the effects of digital communication messages (Haumer et al., 2021; Abdulmajeed & El-Ibiary, 2020), as demonstrated by KDM.

KDM’s political communication through social media prominently highlights socio-cultural factors. This is reinforced by research that states that the social and cultural context also significantly influences how digital

political messages are perceived and followed up by the audience (Bigsby & Morrow, 2022). Additionally, campaign techniques that adjust communication strategies to the cultural and social norms of the target audience are also essential to ensure the relevance and acceptance of the message (Hidayat et al., 2025).

The video that went viral on the KDM social media account above did not escape positive responses from the public. They expressed feelings of sadness and emotion, with parents feeling as if their child had been reborn. KDM's success in shaping public opinion is inseparable from its expertise in managing digital political communication strategies. A strategy that integrates local cultural values into its digital communication strategy (Haumer et al., 2021; Abdulmajeed & El-Ibiary, 2020). KDM not only conveys political programs but also revitalizes local identity as the foundation of its political narrative. This strategy demonstrates how digitalization in political communication can go hand in hand with the preservation and actualization of local cultural values, creating a model of political communication that is contextual, inclusive, and highly valuable socially (Neglia et al., 2024).

The "barracks" program by KDM, which is capable of attracting public attention, can also be analyzed through the theory of digital mass communication and cultural

communication (Khan et al., 2024). In the digital era, mass communication is no longer limited to conventional media such as television or newspapers, but has shifted to social media and digital platforms that allow for the wide, fast, and interactive distribution of messages (Hidayat et al., 2025). KDM leverages the power of digital media to spread narratives about the program through visual content that is touching, authentic, and cultural.

From the perspective of digital mass communication, video content and documentation of "barracks" activities disseminated through platforms like YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram serve as the main media reaching a wide audience, especially the younger generation (Whitley et al., 2021). The characteristics of digital media that are participatory, decentralized, and easily shareable (Farid, 2023), making the message conveyed in the barrack program go viral and widely discussed. This dissemination is not merely a one-way conveyance of information, but rather forms an emotional dialogue with the public through comments, reactions, and symbolic participation from the community (Zhang et al., 2020). This phenomenon is a hallmark of digital mass communication that distinguishes it from traditional mass communication (Hidayat et al., 2025).

Meanwhile, from a cultural communication



perspective, the program represents an effort to build communication based on local values (Yayu et al., 2019). In Sundanese culture, the dominant culture in West Java, there are life principles such as “*someah, silih asih, silih asah, silih asuh*,” and an appreciation for social harmony as well as the formation of polite and responsible character (Alhafizh et al., 2021; Hidayat & Hafiar, 2019).

The “barracks” program visualizes these values through activities full of discipline while still prioritizing love, family, and warmth among individuals (Budiana et al., 2020). The integration of both digital mass communication theory and cultural communication can create a strong communication effect (Khan et al., 2024). The message conveyed is not only understood rationally but also accepted emotionally and culturally. Thus, KDM successfully built a narrative that the program is not merely a policy, but an embodiment of living cultural values that are relevant to the people of West Java. This strategy shows that digital mass communication combined with a local cultural approach can be an effective means of shaping public opinion, building trust, and strengthening a figure’s position in the digital social and political landscape (Nguyen et al., 2021).

Public perception of the narrative “*nanti dijemput ke barak*” can also be analyzed through the cultural public relations (PR) approach,

which is a strategic communication practice that considers and utilizes local cultural values in building harmonious relationships between public figures and the community (Hidayat et al., 2023). In the framework of this research, KDM does not only engage in PR in the conventional sense as an information disseminator or image builder, but also as a cultural agent who elevates, represents, and internalizes local wisdom values into every narrative and visual of his program.

In Sundanese culture, which dominates the West Java region, values such as “*silih asah, silih asih, silih asuh*”, and the principle of “*someah hade ka semah*” (polite and friendly to guests), are important foundations in building social relationships (Mulyani et al., 2024). The barrack program presents a communication approach that reflects these values through the nurturing of children in the spirit of togetherness, discipline, and affection, while positioning the KDM figure as a leader who “*ngabagéa*” (welcoming), “*ngamumule budaya*” (preserves culture), and “*ngabdi ka rakyat*” (serves the people) (Soffani & Nugroho, 2019). From the perspective of cultural PR, KDM’s communication strategy is successful because it understands the socio-cultural context of its society and adjusts its messages with symbolic language that is easily accepted by the public. The video content of the program, which shows children interacting warmly, helping each other, and eventually



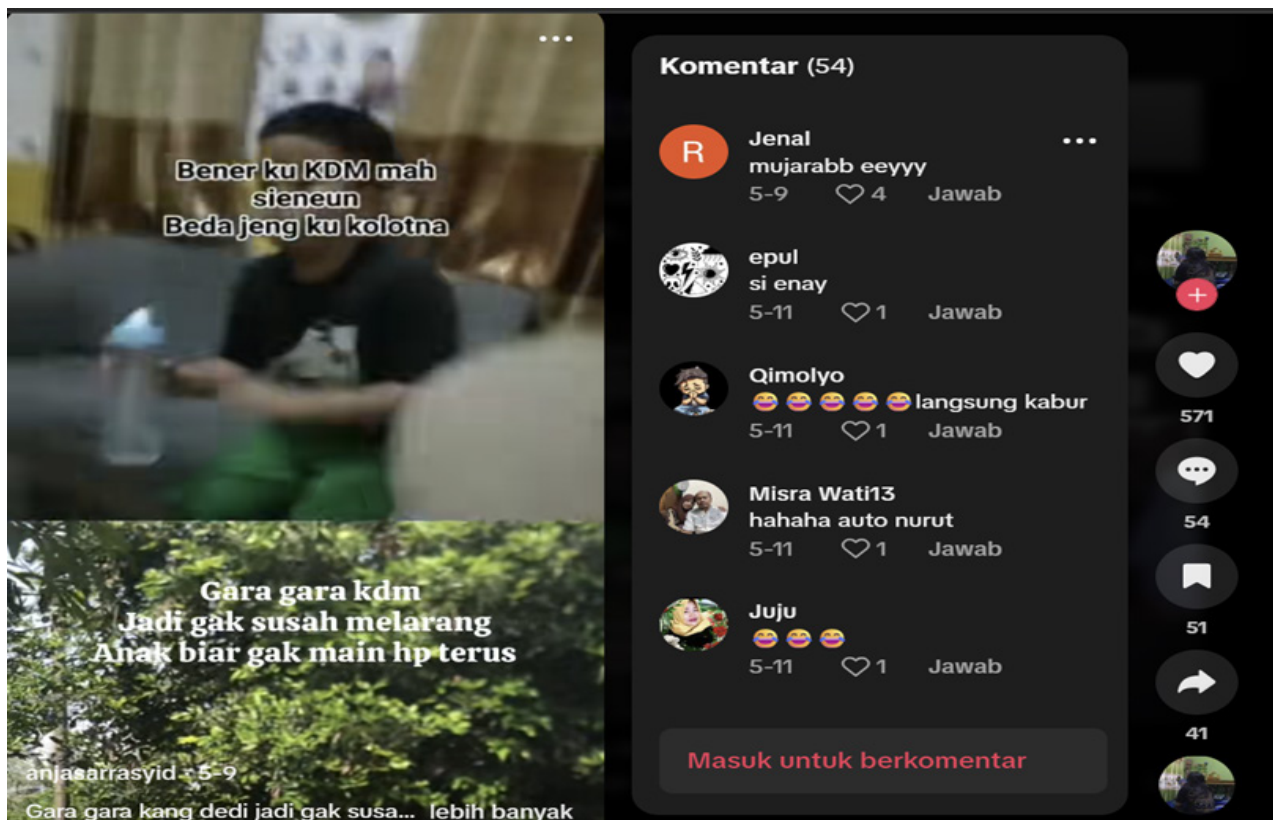
Source: Instagram

**Figure 4** narrative "Come Pick Me Up at the Barracks" child version for parents

being reunited with their families, is a form of strong emotional communication (Whitley et al., 2021). This condition not only builds a positive perception of the program but also creates an emotional bond between the public and the figures who voice those values. This interest is not age-restricted, and the forms of interest are also diverse, as demonstrated by a child creating content in the KDM style in Figure 4.

The video content from the Instagram account @ryu\_kintaro emphasizes his support for the narrative "*nanti dijemput ke barak*," a children's version aimed at lazy parents who do not give their full attention to their children. This content has received support from over 100 thousand of its followers. The content can

be considered as one of the pieces of evidence of a positive public response, such as supportive comments and the widespread sharing of the relevant videos. It demonstrates the success of cultural public relations in building cultural resonance, which is the alignment between the conveyed message and the cultural values embraced by the audience (Cinelli et al., 2022). This strengthens KDM's position as a politician and a cultural figure considered capable of preserving traditional roots while promoting the idea of character development for the nation's children (Kearns et al., 2021). Thus, the integration of public relations and local cultural approaches becomes the key to attracting public attention authentically and sustainably. The program serves as an example of how culturally



Source: TikTok

**Figure 5** narrative "Come Pick Me Up at the Barracks" version for parents

rooted PR practices based on local values can shape public opinion, enhance social trust, and strengthen an individual's political identity in both digital and conventional public spaces.

Support for the KDM program through the narrative "nant dijemput ke barak" has also been positively received by parents. This was proven by many parents creating content with the narrative "Kang Dedi" intended for their children. The result is that the content produced by the parents can help children avoid adopting bad habits, such as excessive gadget use. Figure 5 below is one of the video content clips that successfully captured public attention.

Figure 5 shows that parents feel that the narrative popularized by KDM has successfully

helped them influence their children to reduce gadget usage. From the perspective of cultural public relations, the positive response from the community to the program, especially from parents, indicates the success of a communication strategy rooted in local values and emphasizing a cultural approach. The enthusiasm of parents who voluntarily create similar content with the KDM narrative as a form of moral message for their children shows the internalization of values and active participation in the conveyed message. In the framework of cultural public relations, this participation reflects two important aspects: first, the cultural alignment between the program's message and the values believed by the community; second,

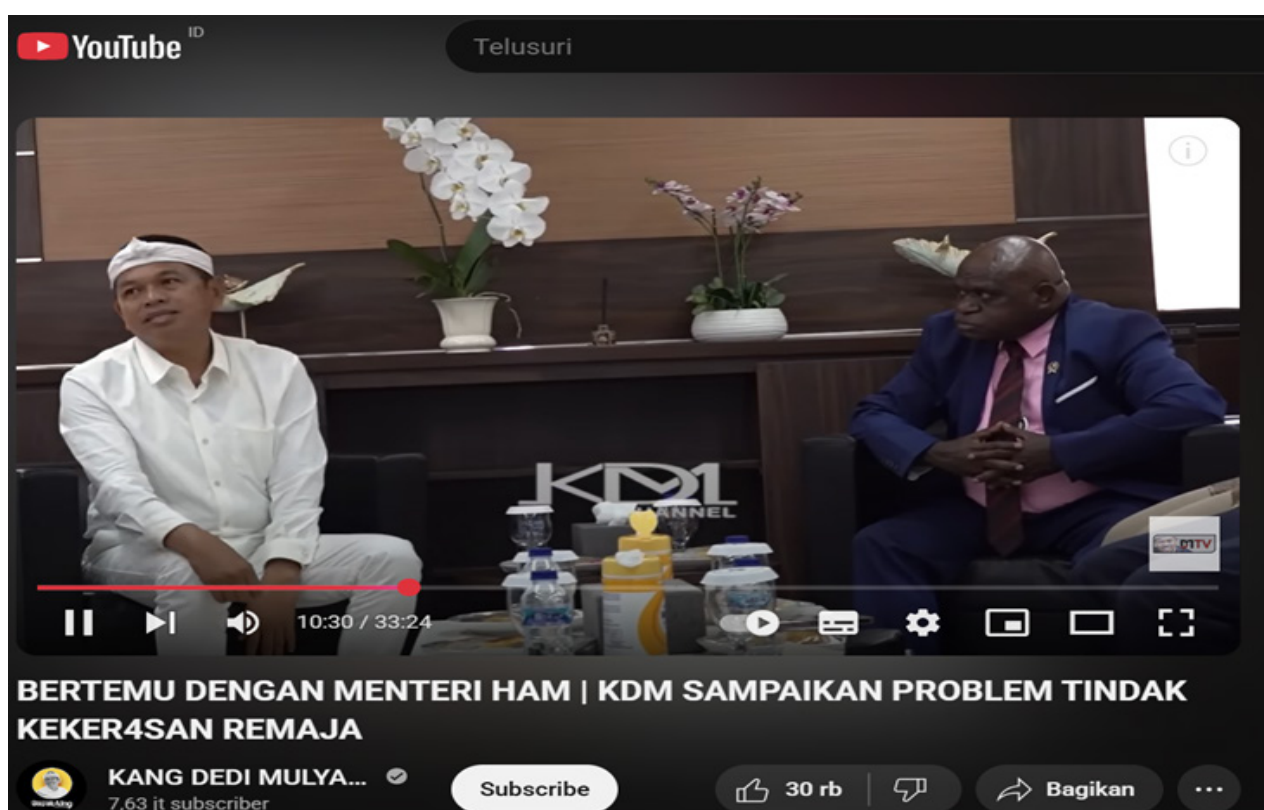
the success in building emotional identification between the public and the figure of KDM as a change agent considered authentic and relevant (Aghazadeh, 2022). Content created by parents as a form of user-generated content (Nur'aeni et al., 2024), also indicates that the message from the “barracks” program has successfully transcended the boundaries of one-way communication and evolved into a small participatory social movement. This aligns with the cultural values of West Java, where the family is an important social unit, and the moral education of children is a shared responsibility between parents and the community (Charina et al., 2022b).

Support for the program not only comes from the general public but also receives attention and appreciation from state officials, including the Minister of Law and Human Rights of the Republic of Indonesia. The appreciation from the Minister of Law and Human Rights serves to strengthen the moral and institutional legitimacy of the program, which promotes a character education approach and a culture of discipline in the development of the younger generation. The form of support was conveyed when KDM met with the Minister of Human Rights, as shown in figure 6.

From the perspective of political and cultural public relations, support from a minister is a form of validation for the values promoted

in the program. This program is considered in line with human rights principles, especially in terms of protecting children’s rights to grow in a healthy, guided, and ethical environment (Suriyankietkaew et al., 2022). Unlike the repressive approach, the program instead presents a humane coaching atmosphere that prioritizes discipline without violence, affection, character building, and moral strengthening (Buffarini et al., 2021). The Minister of Human Rights believes the program makes a positive contribution to creating a younger generation. This not only enhances KDM’s credibility as a visionary public figure but also strengthens the position of this program as an alternative model for youth development based on local culture yet having national appeal (Feng et al., 2024) communicate, and engage with each other, and is an important place for the sustainable development of rural areas. However, previous studies have neglected to understand the intrinsic connection between rural public space and community participation from the perspective of community communication ecology. Based on the concept of age-friendly communities, this study’s fieldwork in rural Shanghai, China, using the methodology of grounded theory, found that physical, social, and psychological factors all have an impact on community engagement among rural residents. Specifically, environmental quality, facility support,





Source: Youtube

**Figure 6** support from the minister of human rights for the KDM barrack program

community networks, social participation, call to action, place attachment, spatial perception, and self-transformation are identified as the core elements that significantly influence community engagement among rural residents. This study further reveals that the multiple factors influencing community engagement among rural residents are complex and interdependent rather than operating independently. Spatial support, communicative triggers, and symbolic identification, respectively, operate at the technological level (physical–social factors).

Support for the program is not limited to West Java, which serves as the local cultural backdrop for the program. Enthusiasm also comes from various other regions in Indonesia,

such as Palembang, which shows that the moral, educational, and cultural messages contained in this program have cross-regional and cross-cultural resonance.

This phenomenon shows that although the program is designed with a Sundanese local wisdom-based approach, the universal values it brings, such as discipline, togetherness, respect for parents, and character building for children, are inclusive and relevant in various regions (Nurlimah et al., 2020). The community in Palembang, for example, expressed their appreciation through social media, shared the content, and even expressed their hope that a similar program could be implemented in their region. From the perspective of digital mass



communication, this demonstrates the success of effective message distribution through social media.

## CONCLUSION

This research found that the viral content “*nanti dijemput ke barak*” initiated by KDM is a manifestation of a political communication strategy and digital personal branding designed culturally, emotionally, and strategically. This content successfully shaped a positive public perception of KDM as a humanistic politician oriented towards character education values. The content also managed to create emotional engagement among the community through strong cultural symbols.

Through the content, KDM consistently raises social themes related to character education, morality, and human values. The narratives that KDM built always touch on emotional aspects, such as parenting, social justice, and future hopes for children. Local cultural symbols, such as the use of Sundanese language, traditional clothing, or regional greetings, also strengthen the authentic impression in every communication. This shows how the local culture approach can be an effective instrument in strengthening the appeal and credibility of a public figure’s personal branding.

Furthermore, this content also managed to create high emotional engagement from the public. This is evident from the many positive comments, moral support, and massive dissemination of the content by netizens. This virality occurred organically, showing that Dedi Mulyadi’s strategy could touch the collective consciousness of the community and build a strong reputation as a leader who not only speaks but also acts based on human values and culture that live in the local community.

From the perspective of digital personal branding, KDM builds his image as an authentic and down-to-earth leader by integrating local Sundanese values such as “*silih asah, silih asih, silih asuh*” into a warm and inspiring visual narrative. This strategy strengthens the connection between KDM’s personal brand and the cultural identity of the West Java community. In the context of digital mass communication, the dissemination of content through social media significantly contributes to the virality of the message.

Digital media is effectively used to reach a wide audience, create emotional responses, and encourage public participation through user-generated content, including videos created by parents who also support the program through similar content. KDM successfully transformed one-way communication into participatory communication. Meanwhile, through digital

political communication, KDM could package character education programs as a cultural political strategy that not only conveys the program but also strengthens its political identity in a way that is relevant and accepted by the public. This approach reflects how politics can be communicated through empathy, culture, and social practices that are familiar to the people of West Java.

From the perspective of cultural public relations and cultural communication, the program's success is greatly determined by KDM's ability to resonate with local cultural messages that are alive and valued by the community. KDM serves as not only a political communicator but also a cultural agent that builds harmonious relationships between leaders and the community through shared values.

Therefore, the cultural public relations approach, beyond its application in the context of digital personal branding management, can also be developed in different contexts, including cultural public relations in conflict management, crisis management, product branding management, digital campaign management, and business management.

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nal draft preparation, D.H.; writing—review and editing, D.H.; visualization, D.H.; supervision, H.M; project administration, D.H.; funding acquisition, N.A.L. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.”

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