

Political Communication Strategy of Dedi Mulyadi in the West Java Gubernatorial Election: An Aristotelian Rhetorical Perspective within Sundanese Cultural Context

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Abstract. This research explores the political communication approach utilized by Dedi Mulyadi in the West Java Gubernatorial Election through the lens of Aristotle's rhetorical theory—*ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos*—interpreted within Sundanese cultural traditions. Adopting a qualitative design, the study applies rhetorical discourse analysis to campaign artifacts such as speeches, online postings, promotional videos, and semi-structured interviews with observers and community members. The analytical framework includes the classification of rhetorical devices, identification of recurring themes, contextual interpretation based on local wisdom, and triangulation to strengthen data validity.

Findings indicate that *pathos* was the most prevalent rhetorical mode, expressed through emotionally charged messages emphasizing *someah hade ka semah* (hospitality) and *silih asih, silih asah, silih asuh* (mutual affection, mutual learning, and mutual care). *Ethos* was constructed by projecting himself as an authentic Sundanese leader with a consistent track record of promoting cultural values. Meanwhile, *logos* appeared in fact-based arguments related to irrigation projects and rural economic empowerment programs tailored to citizens' needs. The fusion of Aristotelian rhetoric with Sundanese cultural identity, mediated through digital platforms, effectively reinforced political credibility and emotional closeness with constituents.

The study concludes that political communication strategies rooted in cultural heritage may function as adaptive models for campaigns in the digital age, particularly in regions with strong cultural orientations. These findings highlight the broader significance of integrating cultural traditions into persuasive political communication.

Keywords: political communication, rhetorical analysis, Sundanese values, campaign model, West Java election

1. Introduction

In electoral contests, political communication serves as a decisive factor in shaping voter perceptions, where candidates' success depends on their capacity to manage messages, employ channels effectively, and construct a persuasive image (McNair, 2021). The gubernatorial race in West Java—one of Indonesia's most competitive regional elections—is heavily influenced by socio-cultural and demographic dynamics (Fadillah, 2022). Against this backdrop, Dedi Mulyadi, a politician closely associated with Sundanese traditions, developed a communication strategy that blends Aristotelian rhetorical principles with indigenous cultural wisdom.

Aristotle's rhetorical framework encompasses three central pillars: *ethos* (character and credibility), *pathos* (emotional resonance), and *logos* (reasoned argumentation) (Herrick, 2020).

Integrating these classical concepts with Sundanese values—such as courtesy (*someah*), harmony (*silih asih, silih asah, silih asuh*), and culturally grounded leadership—produces a distinctive communication pattern. This study systematically analyzes the deployment of these rhetorical elements in Mulyadi’s campaign discourse through a cultural perspective.

2. Methodology

The study adopts a **qualitative method** with **rhetorical discourse analysis** as the primary approach. Data were obtained through three techniques:

1. **Document Review** - covering campaign materials, speeches, interviews, and news reports.
2. **Literature Study** - engaging with academic works on rhetoric, political communication, and Sundanese traditions.
3. **Digital Observation** - analyzing audience interactions with campaign content across social media platforms.

Data were analyzed by mapping rhetorical elements (*ethos, pathos, and logos*) and aligning them with cultural constructs. Credibility of results was ensured through triangulation involving multiple sources and theoretical cross-checking.

3. Findings and Discussion

3.1 Ethos: Legitimacy Built on Cultural Identity

Mulyadi cultivated *ethos* by portraying himself as a genuine representative of Sundanese society. This was evident in his consistent use of traditional attire, local language, and emphasis on preserving cultural practices. His leadership record in Purwakarta, recognized for policies supportive of cultural revitalization, further consolidated his credibility. This aligns with Aristotle’s argument that *ethos* is persuasive when congruent with communal values and expectations.

3.2 Pathos: Emotional Persuasion and Cultural Symbolism

The emotional strength of his rhetoric was reflected in narratives of modest living, solidarity, and togetherness, which resonated with voters’ everyday realities. By incorporating cultural principles such as *silih asih* (mutual compassion), Mulyadi generated strong emotional

identification with his audience. In line with Aristotelian theory, this *pathos*-based appeal amplified the persuasive force of his communication.

3.3 Logos: Rational Discourse and Policy Solutions

Complementing emotional appeals, he advanced reasoned arguments supported by evidence and policy initiatives. Initiatives such as rural infrastructure, sustainable agriculture, and community-based economic development were framed as concrete solutions. These logical arguments enhanced the plausibility of his political agenda and strengthened his credibility.

3.4 Synergy of Rhetoric and Sundanese Heritage

The strategic combination of *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos*, contextualized within Sundanese traditions, created a communicative model adaptive to the preferences of West Java voters. This integration not only fostered trust and emotional closeness but also reinforced a political identity deeply rooted in cultural authenticity.

Table 1. Rhetorical Dimensions in Dedi Mulyadi’s Campaign

Rhetorical Element	Frequency	Illustrative Quotation
Ethos	35	“I come as a son of this land...”
Pathos	50	“Mothers, I understand the hardship of being left behind...”
Logos	25	“With irrigation, our rice fields will not dry up...”

Source: Authors’ Analysis, 2025

4. Conclusion

The findings demonstrate that Dedi Mulyadi’s communication style—by fusing Aristotelian rhetoric with Sundanese cultural expressions—proved effective in engaging voters. Through cultural *ethos*, emotional *pathos*, and rational *logos*, he managed to construct a credible and culturally resonant political image suited to the West Java electorate.

This study enriches discourse on the intersection of political communication and local wisdom, underscoring the relevance of cultural integration in campaign strategies during the digital era.

5. Implications and Recommendations

1. **For Practitioners:** Campaign strategies anchored in local culture can enhance authenticity and resonance with voters.
2. **For Academics:** Future studies should further explore how digital political rhetoric intersects with local cultural systems.
3. **For Citizens:** Voters are encouraged to engage critically with campaign content to avoid being swayed solely by emotional or symbolic appeals.

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