

The Bandung and Braunschweig Twin City Campaign as a Diplomatic Communication Strategy from the Perspective of *Maqashid Syariah*

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Bandung has formed numerous international alliances. The city of Bandung promotes international cooperation with cities from other countries that share a common vision, namely the aspiration to advance the growth of both entities. This engagement is referred to as sister city collaboration.

Methods: This study use qualitative research with with case study analysis This research uses the theory of construction of reality and conceptualization of public diplomacy.

Results: The result of this study is during the 60 years of bilateral cooperation that have been carried out, there have been 7 aspects of development carried out in the sister city campaign between Bandung and Braunschweig as well as 17 programs that have been carried out as part of the communication diplomacy campaign between Bandung and Braunschweig.

Conclusion and suggestion: This study aims to explore the sister city campaign of Bandung and Braunschweig and analyze the diplomatic communication strategies carried out in the sister city campaign of Bandung and Braunschweig. This study does not examine the impact of the Bandung and Braunschweig twin city program on society and city development. This research provides benefits as a reference for institutions to develop collaborative city programs that have a greater impact on the community.

Keywords: Braunschweig, Diplomacy, Maqashid Syariah

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INTRODUCTION

Bandung has formed numerous international alliances. The city of Bandung promotes international cooperation with cities from other countries that share a common vision, namely the aspiration to advance the growth of both entities. This engagement is referred to as sister city collaboration (Sinaga, 2002). One such sister city affiliation is with the city of Braunschweig in Germany. Braunschweig is a popular city located between Hanover and Berlin, in the German state of Lower Saxony. The Bandung-Braunschweig Friendship Charter, signed by R. Priatnakusumah, then Mayor of Bandung, and Prof. Dr. George Eckert, Braunschweig's envoy to Bandung, marked the beginning of this partnership on June 2, 1960. The many similarities between Bandung and Braunschweig formed the basis for their sister city arrangement. Prof. Dr. George Eckert, a UNESCO official, proposed that Braunschweig and Bandung collaborate because both cities had teacher training institutions: the Padagogische Hochschule in Braunschweig and the Institute for Teacher Training and Education in Bandung. What is now the Indonesian University of Education was formerly known as the Teachers' College, now known as PTPG (Indonesian Teachers' College). Mr. Marjoenani, the cultural attaché of the Republic of Indonesia in Bonn, Germany, represented the Indonesian government on July 24, 1959, when the government stated its goal of promoting good relations between Bandung and Braunschweig. To formalize this relationship, Indonesian Ambassador Dr. Zairin Zain met with Professor Dr. George Eckert in September 1959. It was officially handed over to Hans Gunther Weber, Director of the City of Braunschweig, by Rochmat Hardjono, Cultural Attaché of the Republic of Indonesia, at Braunschweig City Hall on May 10, 1960.

The plan was approved by the Braunschweig City Government on May 18, 1960. At a solemn ceremony held at the Braunschweig City Museum on May 24, 1960, the friendship between the two cities was officially established. Hans Gunther Weber, Director of the City of Braunschweig, Mrs. Martha Fuchs, and Dr. Zairin Zain, Indonesian Ambassador, signed the Bandung-Braunschweig Friendship Agreement. Aa Tarmana, the mayor of Bandung, and Werner Steffens, then mayor of Braunschweig, Germany, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on June 19, 2000, in Braunschweig, Germany, to reaffirm their more than 40-year-old cooperative relationship, recognizing the need for a strong legal basis for international recognition. In 2010, Sinaga (2002). The ongoing Bandung-Braunschweig Sister City Collaboration, established through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed on June 2, 1960, marks a significant milestone in the development of sister cities in Indonesia. This partnership has facilitated various initiatives aimed at enhancing ties between the two cities in the areas of culture, education and training, sports programs, youth exchange programs, and economic initiatives. Seeing the potential for creative collaboration between Bandung and Braunschweig, the city of Bandung initiated the sister city program as a diplomatic strategy between the two countries. This program not only promotes culture and provides opportunities for young students in Bandung to learn about Braunschweig, but also provides a platform for promoting MSMEs and the creative industry in Bandung, which is expected to boost the economy at both the micro and macro levels. Marketing strategies have been shown to have an influence on consumer attitudes and purchase intentions (Sudjaniah et.al., 2025). To add to that, city branding has also been proven effective in positively shaping tourists' visiting decisions (Satria et.al., 2026).

Based on the formulation of partnership activities between the cities of Bandung and Braunschweig, various activities to implement and support the Bandung City Branding campaign as a City of Culture and Education in an integrated, focused, and local, provincial, national, and international scale are being carried out, including the "Radio Lehrgang Editor Program," the Hotel and Gastronomy (Restaurant) Training Program, the Lecturer and Student Study Program, the Nursing Training Program, the Printing/Graphics Training Program, the Tourism Sector Improvement Program, the Sports Program, the Youth Exchange Program, the Visit Program, the Economic and Trade Program, and the Construction of the Bandung Youth Center Building located at Jl. Merdeka No. 64, Bandung. In addition, several cultural and economic activities were held, including a "Business Luncheon" with the DIG and the Braunschweig Senate in January 2011, a Batik Exhibition in

December 2011, and the "Braunschweig International Festival." Every June, the Indonesisches - Deutsch Kulturfest event is held to commemorate 60 years of diplomatic relations between Indonesia and Germany, and 52 years of sister city cooperation between Bandung and Braunschweig, which took place in June 2012.

The sister city program campaign between Bandung and Braunschweig is an initiative of the Bandung City government, reflecting its confidence as an autonomous city capable of developing its human resource potential for both the Indonesian community and the international community. This campaign aims to encourage the improvement of Bandung's human resource quality and promote Bandung's attractiveness on the international stage as a cultural tourism destination that celebrates the local wisdom, history, and creativity of its residents. In Public Relations, the concept of responsibility is crucial, as it encompasses not only the profits of an organization or company but also the well-being of the community and social accountability to the local population. The daily duties of a Public Relations professional involve engaging with community groups to foster positive relationships and gain their support. Therefore, a Public Relations professional must be adept at winning over the public, fostering sympathy, understanding, and maintaining good relationships with them by devising various strategies implemented through programs. The initiatives and programs implemented by the Public Relations division are crucial to the sustainability of an organization or company. Public Relations activities essentially encompass communication efforts using various verbal and nonverbal symbols. The term "communication" in English comes from the Latin word "communis," meaning "equal," and from "communico," "communicatio," or "communicare," meaning "to equalize." The term "communis" is often cited as the etymological source of the word "communication," which underlies several related Latin terms (Mulyana, 2013, p. 46). Communication implies the exchange of concepts, meanings, or messages. Contemporary definitions suggest that communication is concerned with the means by which these elements are conveyed. Bernard Berelson and Gary Steiner state that communication is the transmission of information (Mulyana, 2013).

Verbal communication activities primarily include tasks such as preparing proposals, articles, progress reports, and press releases. Verbal communication efforts include press conferences, guest presentations, open houses, and broadcasts. Nonverbal communication activities include organizing exhibitions, special events, and seminars. A campaign is a strategic technique used by PR to interact with their audience. Program design is a strategy used by PR to interact with them. Program management is an integral part of formulating a public relations strategy. Program planning is not the sole method of public relations; however, skill in its implementation is crucial for a Public Relations Officer. This study examines the implementation of the Sister Cities campaign in Bandung and Braunschweig, a common diplomatic strategy used to promote culture and provide a pathway for each city to introduce its industries, particularly the creative industries that are the focus of this program. Case study research focuses on specific and unique cases (Yin, 2006:49). Case specificity is an important element in research using case studies. The uniqueness of this campaign is largely based on the explanation provided by Oetomo (2010) that: If this program is solely managed, planned, organized, implemented, and regulated by the local government, it will fail to engage the communities it aims to reach. Although this program has been in existence for approximately 55 years, not all Bandung residents are aware of or benefit from this collaboration. Awareness is limited to the Bandung-Braunschweig Sister City monument, which sits serenely at the intersection of Wastukencana, Tamansari, and Purnawarman streets. Another distinctive feature is that Bandung and Braunschweig are pioneers in sister city collaboration in Indonesia, serving as a catalyst for the advancement of sister city initiatives across the country (Bashar, Akbarizal: 2012).

LITERATURE REVIEW

The researcher used social construction theory in analyzing this research, as outlined by Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, to explain the social process in which individuals, through their actions and interactions, continuously construct a collectively shared and

subjectively experienced reality. According to Suparno, (1997), there are three levels of constructivism: radical, hypothetical realism, and conventionalism. Only anything created by humans can be recognized in radical constructivism. The relationship between information and reality as the criterion of objective truth is a central tenet of radical constructivism. Knowledge and reality serve as standards of truth. Radical constructivism asserts that knowledge does not reflect objective ontological reality but is instead shaped by individual experience. Knowledge is fundamentally a creation of the human possessor and not simply transmitted to passive recipients. Consequently, individuals must construct it personally, while the environment serves as the medium through which this creation occurs. Hypothetical realism states that knowledge is a hypothesis about the structure of reality, progressively aligning with reality and culminating in true understanding. Concurrently, conventional constructivism recognizes the implications of constructivism and views knowledge as a representation of reality. Individual knowledge is understood as a representation derived from the intrinsic reality of objects (Suparno, 1997).

The varieties of constructivism mentioned above share the common idea that constructivism is understood as an individual's cognitive effort to understand prevailing reality, influenced by social interactions with the environment and the people around them. Individuals create their understanding of reality based on pre-existing cognitive frameworks, which Piaget called schemas. This form of constructivism is referred to as social construction by (Berger & Luckmann, (1990).The Bandung City Government (subject) carries out the process of transmitting knowledge to the parties involved in this campaign (objects). In the minds of the individuals who are members of the city's stakeholders, knowledge is understood according to their own scope of knowledge, thus forming the construction of Bandung as a city of culture and education. According to Berridge (2010), the concept of diplomacy refers to political activities undertaken by actors to pursue their goals and defend their interests through negotiation, without resorting to violence, propaganda, or the law. Diplomacy is a crucial instrument in pursuing a country's national interests. It serves as the primary tool for achieving national interests in relationships with other countries or international organizations. Through diplomacy, a country can build its image. In international relations, diplomacy is generally implemented from the earliest stages, when a country seeks to establish bilateral relations with another country, until the two countries develop further relations (Nurika, 2017).

The practice of public diplomacy has likely been ongoing since the dawn of international relations, even before the term "public diplomacy" itself emerged. It wasn't until 1965 that Edmund Gullion, a former United States diplomat, coined the term "public diplomacy" (Cull, 2019) to describe activities undertaken to reach the public. In this study, the researcher also uses the concept of public diplomacy. Berridge (2015) states that "Diplomacy as a Communication Process Between Nations." It can be used as a basis for diplomacy as a collaborative communication process. (Caballero Anthony, 2022) defines diplomacy not as policy, but as an essential organized communication process between state and non-state actors. The main goal of diplomacy is to reach agreement and policy coordination without direct confrontation. Diplomacy is an instrument used in negotiations by a country to achieve a foreign policy goal. Public diplomacy aims to influence the public in a country with various non-militaristic approaches with the aim of influencing and providing new perspectives to the people of the target country. This public diplomacy has the function of exerting influence, promotion, and using related activities to develop the interests of the country of origin to the destination country with various societal functions such as economic, social, and sports. In applying public diplomacy, Joseph Nye outlined three common approaches: everyday public communication, strategic communication with the general public, and long-term engagement with specific public figures. The term "Public Diplomacy" was first introduced in 1965 by Edmond Gullion, an American diplomat who discussed the impact of public opinion on the development and implementation of foreign policy decisions (Charles Nattier dalam Seto et al. (2025))

Craig Hayden argues that public diplomacy activities can include exchange programs, international broadcasting, cultural diplomacy, and messaging campaigns (Hayden, 2017). Furthermore, Van Ham notes that public diplomacy activities include information activities

(Van, 2005). Additionally, Hall notes that the media used in public diplomacy can include television and radio stations, as well as state-sponsored but editorially independent media outlets such as the BBC (Hall, 2012). Furthermore, public diplomacy can encourage the adoption of norms or cultural imitation by building positive public opinion (Rachmawati, 2016). This makes it easier for a country to achieve its interests when foreign audiences share similar norms or cultures. Positive public opinion also benefits the country, and this is the goal of public diplomacy. Public diplomacy is an activity that involves many actors, from the government and the private sector to the general public. Government actors range from the central government to regional governments. At the central level, these actors can include state leaders, ministers and officials in ministries, diplomatic missions, military representatives, members of royal families, and trade and tourism promotion offices (d' Hooghe, 2015). At the regional level, these actors can include representatives of regional, provincial, and city governments, as well as port authorities (d' Hooghe, 2015). Meanwhile, non-state actors consist of 1) the academic world: representatives of universities and schools, research institutes, think tanks, and student organizations; 2) NGOs and lobby groups: national and international advocacy groups; 3) business: representatives of business organizations, large companies, and chambers of commerce; 4) cultural organizations: representatives of museums, galleries, theaters, cultural institutes, performing groups, festivals, and individual artists. 5) Citizen: citizen representatives of exchange organizations and friendship associations, diasporas, and individual citizens (d' Hooghe, 2015).

Furthermore, Huijgh argues that non-state actors can include religious actors, sub-state units, international, multinational and non-governmental organizations, multinational corporations, and individuals (Huijgh, 2016). Furthermore, Snow argues that public diplomacy actors include traditional public diplomacy actors such as government public affairs and public information officers, government broadcasters, and cultural mediators such as sponsored exchange students and field workers, as well as new public diplomacy actors, which include anyone who challenges dominant assumptions in international relations and a state's foreign policy (Snow, 2009, 2020). Broadly speaking, public diplomacy actors can be divided into state actors and non-state actors. State actors can include both the central government and local governments. Meanwhile, parties other than states can also be recognized as public diplomacy actors today, although some experts establish criteria for non-state actors to be considered public diplomacy actors (Ayhan, 2019). The communication diplomacy strategy applied in this study utilizes public diplomacy, involving the public and MSMEs in every program, such as student involvement in art exhibitions, student exchanges, and MSME exhibitions.

"Public Diplomacy and Soft Power" supports the argument for a shift from interstate to public communication. Melissen (2005) emphasizes the shift from intergovernmental communication (State-to-State) to communication with foreign publics (State-to-People) to build a positive image and support for foreign policy. Meanwhile, Hall (2013) expand on this concept by showing that public diplomacy in Asia has also become an arena for soft power competition between states. Various activities are used in the application of public diplomacy. d'Hooghe argues that public diplomacy activities include citizen diplomacy, cultural diplomacy, strategic communication, and sometimes nation-branding. Citizen diplomacy itself can include academic grants, student exchange programs, visitor programs, twinning activities, business activities for public diplomacy, sports and cultural activities. Meanwhile, cultural diplomacy can include cultural performances, exhibitions, cultural and film festivals, language promotion, and participation in World Expos (d' Hooghe, 2015). Soft power is a term coined by Joseph Nye, who illustrates that power essentially has its own forms. These forms vary, from hard power, soft power, smart power, and others. Hard power is power that some view as having negative connotations, because its implementation sometimes involves coercion or violence, such as the use of military force. In Nye's words, hard power is a push, carried out like brandishing a carrot or stick (Nye, 2021). Meanwhile, soft power is essentially power achieved through a soft approach, so there is no coercion in its implementation. Soft power is a pull, more like a magnet (Nye, 2019, 2021).

Furthermore, there is also a working method for soft power proposed by Kroenig (2020) and Rotham. According to Kroenig (2020) there are at least three stages: first, the communication of ideas from the country using soft power to its target. Second, acceptance by the target, which eliminates competing ideas. At this stage, the target's attitude changes. Finally, the target adopts the behavior desired by the soft power country, creating environmental changes that benefit the soft power country (Kroenig, in Bakalov (2019)). Meanwhile, Rotham et al. explain the steps through the process of norm diffusion. In the initial stage, a country implements a successful domestic or foreign policy. This successful policy is recognized by other countries, gaining credibility in the eyes of others, leading to the perception that the country's policies are normal and therefore uncontested. The resulting norms then spread through epistemic communities and transnational advocacy networks. Then finally, the adoption of norms will occur (Rotham in Bakalov (2019)). The concept of soft power has become very popular to this day, with countries competing to strengthen their soft power. In reality, this concept is not without flaws. Several soft power scholars have stated that the concept remains unclear, both regarding its operational mechanisms and the precise components that comprise it (see (Bakalov, 2019; d' Hooghe, 2015; Hayden, 2017) Rothman, 2011). However, this article will not delve into the debate regarding the operationalization of soft power, but will instead focus on the relationship between public diplomacy and soft power.

"Characteristics of the ASEAN Way." It can serve as the foundation for an ASEAN communication culture based on consensus, dialogue, and non-intervention. Tekunan (2014) explains that ASEAN diplomacy is built on the values of consensus, non-intervention, and dialogue. The "ASEAN Way" serves as a unique communication mechanism for building regional stability and peace. "The ASEAN Way enables member states to engage in multilateral diplomacy without escalating conflict, ensuring inclusive participation and respecting national sensitivities." (Caballero Anthony, 2022) Indonesia, as an ASEAN member, has established the characteristics of diplomacy as the "ASEAN Way" by adopting an inclusive, participatory, and dialogical approach, thereby enhancing bilateral cooperation without escalating conflict and respecting each country's national values.

METHOD

Researchers conducting qualitative studies often put themselves in the shoes of respondents to better understand their daily lives. Fieldwork is an integral part of qualitative research. Because there is no need to measure anything quantitatively, the data produced is qualitative, not quantitative. Therefore, in qualitative research, no single fact can be considered definitive. "Qualitative researchers are not seeking absolute truth." (Nasution, 2002). According to Cresswell, qualitative research is a way to study and understand how people, groups, and institutions perceive and react to humanitarian and social issues. Essential steps in qualitative research methodology include formulating questions, implementing the process, collecting data from participants (both specific and general), developing data inductively from specific themes to general themes, and interpreting significance. A versatile framework or structure underpins the final report of the study. Participating researchers are required to use inductive research strategies, focus on what is personally important, and analyze the complexities of each individual (Cresswell, 2012). Qualitative research uses the researcher as the primary investigative tool. The sample studied is not the object of the investigation, but rather the subjects who share an equal footing with the researcher. Consequently, in qualitative research, the researcher must immerse themselves in the natural environment of the study and integrate with the research subjects. Qualitative research emphasizes an emic perspective, which values the perspectives of the study participants. Although an ethical perspective is held by the researcher, this perspective is not prioritized by the researcher.

This study uses a qualitative research methodology to examine the program, focusing on stakeholders involved in branding Bandung City as a City of Culture and Education through its sister city relationship with Braunschweig, and analyzing their interactions and discourses.

Branding was chosen as it is a form of soft power instrument. Branding shapes a product image and makes the product recognizable by the consumer (Wijayanti & Swasti, 2023). It raises consumer awareness, makes the product distinguishable from its competitors, and shapes a positive perception of products' value and quality (Oktaviani et.al., 2024). As Satria et. al. (2026) showed, city branding particularly has significant positive effects on the city image and people's preference towards it. City branding is also related to city competitiveness; it positively affects the latter (Roni, 2026). This phenomenon links to how branding manipulates symbols –in this case, symbols of the city-, where city symbols carry the face of the city remembered by visitors, and are closely tied to the emotions of its citizens (Nas, 2011). The campaign aims to develop the meaning of branding Bandung City as a center of culture and education based on the interactions of its participants. Descriptive data in this study were generated through interviews or observations of participants and their actions; this data is emic, meaning derived from the perspective of the subjects, and etic, meaning based on the perspective of the researcher.

This study uses a constructivist framework. A research paradigm is a comprehensive framework or specific perspective that guides researchers in their investigative efforts. This study employs a constructivist paradigm, employing qualitative research methodology, along with George Herbert Mead's Symbolic Interaction theory and Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann's Construction of Reality theory. Constructivists assert that we can never understand reality ontologically, meaning based on our perceptions and the structure of things. Constructivist thought upholds constructivism, a philosophical framework that asserts that human knowledge is a product of individual fabrication. (von Glasersfeld in Bettencourt, 1989 and Matthews, 1994, as cited by Suparno (1997). Case study methodology was employed in this research. Case study research is the method employed in this investigation. As John W. Cresswell (1998). A case study is an exploration of a bounded system or a case (multiple cases) over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information rich in context. This study attempts to explore a case over a specific period of time through various sources of information, including primary data using observation and interviews, and secondary data using literature studies. The purpose of non-probability sampling is to ensure that not every segment of the population has an equal chance of being selected. Purposive sampling and snowball sampling are two of the most popular sampling procedures used in qualitative research (Sugiyono, 2011, p. 218). This study employed purposive sampling as its approach. Sugiyono (2011, p. 300) defines purposive sampling as a method of collecting data sources based on specific criteria. The researcher selected five informants: civil servants from the Bandung city government's planning office, community members, and representatives from the German DAAD, who supported this campaign initiative.

RESULT AND ANALYSIS

Bandung–Braunschweig Sister City Campaign as a Diplomatic Communication Strategy

The Bandung–Braunschweig sister city relationship represents one of Indonesia's longest-standing subnational diplomacy initiatives, emphasizing cultural exchange, educational collaboration, technological innovation, and sustainable urban development. Established in 1960, this partnership has evolved from ceremonial exchanges into a multidimensional platform that strengthens people-to-people diplomacy while simultaneously promoting local economic development. In recent years, digital communication technologies have transformed the campaign into a more participatory and globally visible diplomatic instrument, enabling broader engagement among government institutions, universities, businesses, and civil society organizations. From the perspective of diplomatic communication, the campaign functions not merely as an information dissemination mechanism but as a strategic process of constructing mutual understanding, trust, and long-term cooperation. The Bandung municipal government actively utilizes digital platforms, international forums, academic collaborations, and public diplomacy events to reinforce

Bandung's international reputation as an innovative, creative, and globally connected city. Such communication practices reflect the transition from traditional diplomacy toward network diplomacy, where multiple stakeholders collectively participate in international relations (Melissen, 2022).

Recent studies indicate that city diplomacy increasingly contributes to national foreign policy objectives through localized international cooperation. Sister city programs facilitate knowledge exchange in urban governance, environmental sustainability, education, tourism, and economic development, thereby expanding diplomatic engagement beyond state-centric approaches (Acuto & Leffel, 2021). Bandung's collaboration with Braunschweig demonstrates how local governments can serve as influential diplomatic actors capable of fostering international partnerships based on shared interests and mutual benefits. Furthermore, digital diplomacy has significantly strengthened the effectiveness of the Bandung–Braunschweig campaign. Social media platforms, virtual conferences, online exhibitions, and collaborative innovation programs have enabled continuous interaction despite geographical barriers, particularly during the post-pandemic recovery period. Digital communication enhances transparency, public participation, and institutional responsiveness while reducing communication costs and expanding international outreach (Bjola & Manor, 2023). The campaign also contributes to strengthening Indonesia's international image by showcasing Bandung's achievements in education, creative industries, technological innovation, and sustainable urban management. This aligns with contemporary public diplomacy theories emphasizing reputation building through soft power rather than coercive political influence (Nye, 2021). Consequently, the sister city initiative becomes an effective communication channel for promoting local identity while simultaneously supporting Indonesia's broader diplomatic objectives.

Braunschweig is noted as a symbol of the longest-standing partnership for the city of Bandung. According to historical records cited on bandung.go.id, the signing of the agreement between the two cities took place in 1960. The sister city agreement between "Bandung and Braunschweig, two cities more than 11,000 kilometers apart, was inaugurated on May 24, 1960, at the Braunschweig city museum. The signatories were the Consul General of the Indonesian Embassy in Bonn, Baisr Isa, and the Cultural Attaché for Bandung, R. Rochmat Hardjono, as well as Mayor Martha Fuchs and Senior City Director Hans-Gunter Weber. Braunschweig is a city in the state of Lower Saxony. Geographically, Lower Saxony is a state in northwestern Germany. Within Lower Saxony, Braunschweig is the second-largest city, with a population of over 250,000. Despite being a large city, Braunschweig actually has a relatively small area, at 192.13 square kilometers. Its area is not much different from that of its sister city, Bandung. Currently, Bandung covers 167.31 square kilometers and has a population of nearly 2.5 million. The Bandung-Braunschweig cooperation encompasses many aspects across various fields. The official website of the Bandung City Government lists, among other things, economics, trade, industry, and tourism. Other areas of cooperation include science, education, culture, social issues, welfare, the environment, youth, and sports. During 60 years of cooperation, the two cities have continued to strengthen their relationship through various positive activities.

Analysis of the Sister City Campaign through the Perspective of Maqashid Shariah

Viewed through the framework of **Maqashid Shariah**, the Bandung–Braunschweig sister city campaign reflects values that extend beyond diplomatic effectiveness toward the realization of public welfare (*maslahah*). Maqashid Shariah emphasizes the preservation of religion (*hifz al-din*), life (*hifz al-nafs*), intellect (*hifz al-'aql*), lineage (*hifz al-nasl*), and wealth (*hifz al-mal*). Contemporary Islamic scholars further expand these objectives to include sustainable development, social justice, human dignity, and international cooperation (Auda, 2021). The educational cooperation between Bandung and Braunschweig contributes significantly to the protection and development of human intellect (*hifz al-'aql*). Student exchange programs, joint academic research, professional training, and university collaborations facilitate knowledge transfer while encouraging innovation and intercultural understanding. Such initiatives promote intellectual development consistent with Islamic

principles encouraging lifelong learning and scientific advancement (Kamali, 2022). Similarly, environmental cooperation and sustainable urban planning support the objective of protecting life (*hifz al-nafs*). Joint initiatives addressing climate resilience, green infrastructure, smart city development, and public health contribute to improving citizens' quality of life. These activities correspond with Islamic environmental ethics, which emphasize responsible stewardship (*khilafah*) and ecological balance (*mizan*) (Chapra, 2023). The campaign also reflects the protection of wealth (*hifz al-mal*) by encouraging responsible economic collaboration. Partnerships involving creative industries, tourism, small and medium enterprises, and investment opportunities generate inclusive economic growth while respecting ethical business practices. In Islamic economics, wealth should circulate productively to benefit society rather than serving narrow private interests (Ahmed, 2022). Consequently, diplomatic communication becomes an instrument for promoting equitable economic cooperation.

Moreover, the emphasis on dialogue, cultural respect, transparency, and mutual trust aligns closely with Islamic ethical principles such as justice (*'adl*), cooperation (*ta'awun*), consultation (*shura*), and honesty (*amanah*). These values strengthen diplomatic legitimacy while reducing misunderstanding and fostering peaceful international relations. Rather than emphasizing political competition, Maqashid-oriented diplomacy prioritizes collective welfare and sustainable partnerships that benefit all stakeholders (Dusuki & Bouheraoua, 2024). Therefore, the Bandung–Braunschweig campaign illustrates that diplomatic communication can simultaneously fulfill international strategic interests while advancing ethical objectives grounded in Islamic values. This integration broadens the conceptual scope of public diplomacy by incorporating moral responsibility alongside political and economic considerations.

Diplomatic Communication as a Driver of Sustainable Economic Cooperation within Maqashid Shariah

Beyond cultural diplomacy, the Bandung–Braunschweig partnership possesses considerable potential for promoting sustainable economic cooperation consistent with the principles of Islamic economics. Contemporary diplomatic communication increasingly integrates economic objectives through investment promotion, innovation partnerships, technology transfer, halal industry development, and sustainable entrepreneurship. These dimensions resonate with Maqashid Shariah because economic growth is expected to generate comprehensive social welfare rather than merely increasing financial returns (Hassan & Aliyu, 2022). Bandung's expanding creative economy, digital entrepreneurship ecosystem, and halal industry provide strategic opportunities for collaboration with Braunschweig's advanced technological and industrial capabilities. Diplomatic communication facilitates business networking, joint innovation projects, academic commercialization, and sustainable investment. Such cooperation contributes to productive wealth creation while encouraging ethical governance and social responsibility. The principles of Islamic economics emphasize justice, transparency, risk sharing, and social inclusion. Consequently, economic diplomacy should avoid exploitative practices and instead encourage mutually beneficial partnerships that support local communities. The Bandung–Braunschweig campaign demonstrates how communication strategies can cultivate long-term trust among investors, universities, government agencies, and private enterprises. Trust remains a fundamental component of both effective diplomacy and Islamic commercial ethics (Iqbal & Mirakhor, 2021).

Furthermore, digital diplomacy supports inclusive participation by allowing broader involvement of SMEs, youth entrepreneurs, academic institutions, and civil society organizations. This participatory approach reflects the Islamic concept of *shura*, where collective decision-making enhances accountability and public benefit. By integrating digital communication with ethical governance, sister city diplomacy becomes more adaptive, transparent, and sustainable in addressing global challenges (United Nations, 2023). The findings suggest that the Bandung–Braunschweig campaign should not be viewed solely as symbolic international cooperation but as an evolving model of ethical diplomatic communication capable of advancing sustainable development, intercultural dialogue, and

equitable economic collaboration. Through the lens of Maqashid Shariah, diplomatic success is measured not only by international visibility but also by its contribution to human welfare, knowledge development, environmental sustainability, social justice, and inclusive prosperity.

To commemorate the six decades of cooperation, the Braunschweig City Government built a bridge named the Bandung Bridge. The Braunschweig City Government built it in Braunschweig City Park and inaugurated it on Friday, June 18, 2021. Bandung–Braunschweig Sister City Monument can be found on Jalan Wastukencana, not far from Bandung City Hall. This prism-shaped monument, painted white, symbolizes the Bandung–Braunschweig partnership. The monument, adorned with a colorful park, features the coats of arms of both cities and the words "Mitra Kota Sister City." The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed on June 2, 1960, and renewed on June 19, 2000. However, there are several shortcomings in the implementation of the Sister City campaign program between Bandung and Braunschweig, namely the lack of sufficient publicity regarding this activity and follow-up to date. The activity stopped in the 2000s, even though it could have continued until now with innovative programs that prioritize the creative economy as a main program in line with the vision and mission of the city of Bandung. In public relations, media publicity is necessary to inform the public so that the programs that have been implemented can be recognized, and not just a few people who know about it. This especially works in the digitalized era, where social media marketing and publicity improve people's interest in a city (Nugraha & Adialita, 2021).

DISCUSSION

Berger and Luckmann (1990, p. 1) state that social construction begins with an explanation of social reality by distinguishing between "reality" and "knowledge." Entities recognized as existing independently of human will are part of reality, demonstrated through cause and effect. Knowledge, which can be described as the degree of authenticity of these realities, has several characteristics. Institutions are the product of human actions and interactions, according to (Berger & Luckmann, 1990, p. 60). Society and social institutions may appear to exist objectively, but they are actually the product of people's subjective ideas and experiences with each other. This program encourages the involvement of relevant stakeholders in the Bandung City Branding Program as a City of Culture and Education through the Sister Cities of Bandung and Braunschweig. These parties are expected to formulate subjective definitions of information regarding Bandung as a City of Culture. Continuous contact between these parties will foster objectivity in their perspectives. This new objectivity can be achieved through consistent confirmation from the Bandung City Government to relevant parties who share the same subjective meaning. At a more abstract level, people construct universal symbolic frameworks, encompassing holistic worldviews that legitimize and organize social structures while imparting meaning to their diverse lives. Berger and Luckmann (1990, p. 61) argue that there is a dialectic between individuals constructing society and society shaping individuals. This dialectical process occurs through externalization, objectivation, and internalization.

According to Berger, ideas, collective consciousness, and public discourse are all part of a social reality that is constantly evolving and shaped by society. The three stages of internalization, objectivation, and externalization are what ultimately shape social reality. Objective, symbolic, and subjective realities are all part of social reality, according to Berger and Luckmann. What we perceive as reality in the external world is actually a construction of our own subjective reality; this is called objective reality. Various forms of actual reality are embodied in symbolic reality. When individuals internalize factual and symbolic realities, they construct their own subjective world. Berger and Luckmann (1990, p. 20) explain that dialectics occurs through a three-part process consisting of: (1) externalization, which refers to adaptation to the sociocultural environment as a human construction; (2) objectivation, which maintains social interactions within the institutional realm; and (3) internalization, which indicates the process by which individuals align their identities with social institutions or organizations. The interaction of these three events gives rise to the process of social

construction, which from the beginning was seen as human engineering, especially the formation of intersubjective relationships.

The externalization phase begins with interactions between stakeholders involved in the campaign to promote Bandung as a City of Culture and Education through the Sister Cities with Braunschweig initiative, including government entities, business representatives, community members, the general public, and external campaign supporters. Once the externalization phase is complete, the next step is the objectivation phase. During the objectivation phase, the campaign initiators promoting Bandung as a City of Culture and Education interacted with relevant stakeholders through the Sister Cities with Braunschweig partnership. These encounters can occur through face-to-face meetings, document submissions to relevant authorities, the Braunschweig city administration, and social media for non-face-to-face objectivation. Once the internationalization process is established, the parties involved not only understand the characterization of Bandung as a City of Culture and Education through their shared experiences with the Sister Cities of Bandung and Braunschweig, but each individual also reciprocally characterizes this reality. In this study, the researchers used the concepts of soft diplomacy and public diplomacy. The three most common approaches are: everyday public communication, strategic communication with the general public, and long-term engagement with specific public figures. The strategic approach taken in the sister city campaign between Bandung and Braunschweig involves active participation and collaboration between the government and the community in implementing the program. The community is involved in various cultural and arts exhibitions and student exchanges. Furthermore, a soft diplomacy approach is used, prioritizing active dialogue without any tendency towards conflict. Mutual understanding of each country's cultural values and norms also informs the sister city campaign, in line with the ASEAN ways implemented in this diplomatic communication strategy

CONCLUSION

Based on the research results and discussion above, several conclusions can be drawn the sister city campaign program between Bandung and Braunschweig encompasses various sectors, including economics, culture, tourism, education, and sports development. In addition, the sister city branding campaign between Bandung and Braunschweig encompasses 16 programs, covering five main sectors: economics, culture, tourism, education, and sports development. The sister city program between Bandung and Braunschweig lacks continuity, ending in 2000. The program should be continued with innovative programs that prioritize the creative economy as a key focus, aligned with Bandung's vision and mission. This study does not examine the impact of the Bandung and Braunschweig twin city program on society and city development

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