

Gandrung Dance as Cultural Identity in Image Construction of Banyuwangi Regency, East Java

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Abstract. Nowadays many regions compete to attract tourism, investments, residents and others that could drive the region development. It is important for a region to have identity as differentiator from others that could become the direction of planning and implementing various actions to support the accomplishment of the region's vision. Banyuwangi Regency, East Java, form its identity by utilizing the notable regional cultural assets. The formation of *Gandrung* dance as Banyuwangi identity is not an easy process given that there are many other regions with similar potential and development. The research question is how Banyuwangi forms *Gandrung* dance as its regional identity. The aim is to reveal the representation form of the aesthetic orientation of *Gandrung* dance in the Banyuwangi image construction. This study uses qualitative paradigm with phenomenological approach. The data collecting was carried out through interview, participant observation, document search, and the matrix analysis model for data analysis. *Gandrung* dance has become Banyuwangi identity which was formed through the image communication activities by transforming *Gandrung* dance into visual identity that was applied to various visual communication media. The results are useful for regional planners and stakeholders in establishing their region image through the use of the regional cultural assets.

Keywords: Cultural identity, Image construction, *Gandrung* dance

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1 Introduction

“...*Apa salah dan dosaku, sayang, cinta suciku kau buang-buang lihat jurus yang kan ku berikan, jaran goyang, jaran goyang*
Sayang, janganlah kau waton serem, hubungan kita semula adem tapi sekarang kecut bagaikan asem, semar mesem, semar mesem...”.

The song lyrics entitled *Jaran Goyang* written by Andi Bendol which was popularized by the *dangdut* singer Nella Kharisma is very popular among the public currently. *Jaran Goyang* is the name of enchanting spell that becomes the part of oral literature owned by the *Osing* society from Banyuwangi Regency, East Java. *Jaran Goyang* spell is included in the category of shamanism that has developed since Blambangan Kingdom era. The existence of shamanism that was often used by the people of Banyuwangi made people outside Banyuwangi called Banyuwangi as ‘City of Shamanism’. The image is formed as the accumulation of knowledge, experience, and exposure to the phenomenon of shamanism practice in Banyuwangi. The association that emerges are important because it will accumulatively create the reputation that will significantly influence the public trust, especially at this time when Banyuwangi is faced with the competition between regions to be able to attract tourists, investments, and residents as well as many other purposes that could drive the development of the region, so it is considered important for Banyuwangi to carry out image construction with the objective of creating positive association for its region by utilizing its notable cultural art assets.

A positive image of a place could build trust, according to Anholt [1], that the trust towards certain place can be formed through direct experience. In line with that statement, Yananda and Salamah [2], stated that positive image owned by a place is a guarantee of the certainty and the development of the investments that have been made for the businessmen and the investors. The tourists that visit the place will feel safe and comfortable as well as feel that their needs will be fulfilled. The existence of a place that has strong positive image will be more taken into account in the context of the competition with the other place, and the most important, it could increase the enthusiasm of its people to contribute more in the development of their region.

Banyuwangi has *Gandrung* as one of traditional cultural treasures as a form of symbol and evidence of the remains of the development of culture during Blambangan kingdom era. Literally, the word *Gandrung* means mad. *Gandrung* is in the form of dance accompanied by percussions with at least 6 musicians and 1 to 5 dancers. Every *Gandrung* performance is always attended by its fans consisting from various ethnicities and religions who peacefully enjoy *Gandrung* performance together. The life of *Gandrung* that is rooted and supported by its people makes *Gandrung* becomes notable cultural assets of Banyuwangi in which its existence is then utilized as the cultural identity of the region.

The formation of Banyuwangi identity through the use of *Gandrung* as notable cultural asset is not an easy process given that there are many other regions that have similar potential and development direction, certain strategies are needed to have characteristics that serve as differentiator from the other regions so that it could become the direction of planning and implementing various actions to support the accomplishment of the vision of Banyuwangi. Based on those problems, thus the research question of this study is how Banyuwangi forms *Gandrung* dance as its regional identity. This aims to reveal the representation forms of the aesthetic orientation of *Gandrung* dance in the construction of the image of Banyuwangi.

Based on the researcher’s investigation, there are other researchers who used *Gandrung* dance as the object of the study, such as the research conducted by Alfia Puji Yuanita on

2010, entitled ‘Local Wisdom Values in *Gandrung* Dance and Its Preservation Efforts in Kemiren Village, Glagah District, Banyuwangi Regency’. The results revealed the value of local wisdom contained *Gandrung* dance, namely: the value of struggle, beauty, views of life, symbolization, culture, and responsibility. The government of Banyuwangi requires school students from elementary to senior high school to take parts in Banyuwangi local arts extracurricular activities; Dewi Atma Negara’s research, entitled ‘The Meaning of the Banyuwangi *Gandrung* Dance Costume’. The results showed the structure in the form of the variety of the ornament on *Gandrung* dance costume as the expression of Banyuwangi people’s inner feeling during the colonial era. *Omprog* (crowns) depicts majesty, *antareja* (human with snake-shaped body) symbolizes the simple life of Banyuwangi people, glass ornament has meaning to avert evil from sorcery; *pilisan* symbolizes the norm limit in the social life, the red and white flag symbolizes struggle, *kelat bahu* (arm ring) symbolizes the dancer who dances at night, and *gajah oling* symbolizes fertility and sufficiency. The use of color in the ornaments contain the elements of luxury and beauty as the emphasis of *Gandrung* dancer’s character; Mamiék Suharti’s research (2012), entitled ‘*Gandrung* Dance as Banyuwangi’s Mainstay Tourism Object’, the results were that since 2007 *Gandrung* dance has been used as Banyuwangi tourism mascot, *Gandrung* dance was arranged in compact, concise manner and removed the sacred elements to support tourism to increase regional revenue; Nurul Aisyah Rochmadhani’s research (2015), entitled ‘*Gandrung* Dance in Banyuwangi 1950-1976’, the results showed the existence of *Gandrung* dance in 1950 as one of Banyuwangi traditional dance, the political atmosphere in Indonesia in 1960 resulted in the decrease of *Gandrung* dance existence, in 1976 through *Jejer Gandrung* dance, this art revived and was used as welcoming dance.

From the studies that have been conducted above, it can be seen that there is no research that studies *Gandrung* dance as cultural identity in the construction of regional image yet. The results of this study are useful to provide an overview or reference for regional planners and regional stakeholders in establishing their regional image through the use of notable cultural assets, especially in the form of dance.

2 Theoretical Review and Method

2.1 Theoretical Review

This study used cultural identity approach. According to Stuard Hall [3], identity is not something that is rigid because identity is always formed continuously in the historical and cultural framework that is positioned in place and time according to the context. Cultural identity can be seen from two perspectives, namely cultural identity as a form and cultural identity as the process of becoming. Cultural identity as a form is when a group of individuals has unity and similarity that allow the existence of similar culture at different region. The cultural identity as a process of becoming happens when a culture undergoes its own process so that it will form a new cultural identity.

Image communication theory is used to reveal the representation forms of the aesthetic orientation of *Gandrung* dance in the image construction of Banyuwangi Regency. According to Kavaratzis [4], image communication is carried out through three types of communication, namely: primary, secondary and tertiary. Primary communication emphasizes the potential influences and actions taken by the region that include landscape strategies, infrastructure projects, organizational and administrative structures, and city behaviour. Secondary communication is related to deliberate and planned regional marketing activities by using promotional and advertising components using various communication media.

Tertiary communication refers to *word of mouth* marketing, which is strengthened by competitor media and communication.

Symbolic interaction theory is used to reveal the symbolic meaning of the representation manifestation of the aesthetic orientation of *Gandrung* dance in the image communication activities of Banyuwangi Regency. Blumer [5], stated that symbolic interaction is an action carried out by human based on the interpretation of meaning of the actions by using symbols in order to form identity. The theory of social reality construction is used to reveal the role of communication media as the agent of the image communication construction of Banyuwangi Regency. Referring to Peter L. Berger dan Thomas Luckmann's point of view [6], reality is built socially through simultaneous dialectical moments, namely: externalization, objectivity, and internalization.

By referring to Stuard Hall, Kavaratzis, Blumer, Berger and Luckmann's thoughts above, it can be assumed that *Gandrung* dance as cultural identity undergoes a process that is formed continuously in the cultural framework of Banyuwangi society through the image communication construction by using visual symbols of *Gandrung* dance which are applied to various communication media as form of the aesthetic representation and pride of the individuals as the part of Banyuwangi society.

2.2 Method

This study used descriptive analytic qualitative paradigm by revealing events or facts, phenomena, variable, and circumstances that occur in *Gandrung* art as cultural identity in the image construction of Banyuwangi. According to Denzin and Lincoln [7], qualitative research is a multidisciplinary field of independent investigation that is linked to cultural studies and has interpretative characteristic through extensive and deep data investigation. Using phenomenological approach that refers to Van Manen [8] that focuses the research on the life experience and is intended to interpret the "text" of life. According to Creswell [9], the main purpose of phenomenological research is to reduce individual experiences on phenomena into a description of the universal core as the peak aspect of phenomenological study. The data collection was conducted through in-depth interviews with the aim of describing the meaning of the phenomenon for several individuals who have experienced it. The data collection was conducted by using participant observation and document search so that the results could complement each other. The research data collected was analysed using matrix analysis model.

3. Result and Discussion

3.1 *Gandrung* Dance as Cultural Identity of Banyuwangi Regency

Gandrung is a traditional dance that grows rapidly in Banyuwangi. According to Abdulah Fauzi (53 years old), the emergence of *Gandrung* dance cannot be separated from the history of Blambangan people's movement during the war against Dutch East India Company (*Vereengde Oostindische Compagnie*, VOC) forces in 1772. The journey of *Gandrung* performance began as guerrilla means through the codes in the song lyrics that tried to remind the VOC's atrocity during the war that occurred in 1772 where many Blambangan people became the victims. If there was any crying audience, it indicated that he was a fellow Blambangan soldier. During the day the *Gandrung* group travelled around the villages to busk and got a pinch of rice in return which was then distributed to the people who did

not dare to come down that were scattered in the forests around Blambangan area. Along with the safer situation development, *Gandrung* changed from the art group that was first danced by men dressed like women, into *Gandrung* danced by female dancers with the result that made *Gandrung* increasingly favoured by the public, the peak was when the regional government of Banyuwangi issued a regulation contained in the Regent Decree No. 173 year 2002 which stipulates that *Gandrung* dance is used as the icon of Banyuwangi tourism and the Regent Decree no. 147 year 2003 that stipulates *Jejer Gandrung* dance as the welcoming dance in Banyuwangi.

According to Dariharto [10] the life of *Gandrung* which is deeply rooted and supported by the people has a very important role in the social life of the community especially in Banyuwangi, *Gandrung* performance is always attended by the presence of the audiences who come from various ethnicities and religions, this becomes the medium to interact with each other and unite the people from various background peacefully. The dynamic performance of *Gandrung* also influences the form and the performance of the other types of art, this shows that *Gandrung* is accepted by the people and easily acculturated with the other arts so that its existence enriches the cultural art treasure in Banyuwangi.

According to Tamami (42 years old) the students of elementary school (SD), middle school (SMP) and high school (SMA) in Banyuwangi are required to take part in the extracurricular activities of local Banyuwangi traditional arts, one of the arts is *Gandrung* that becomes the characteristic and pride of Banyuwangi people.

The further development, according to Erwin (27 years old) is the existence of *Gandrung* dance which is often performed as the welcoming dance and entertainment at various events held by the government and the public. *Gandrung* dance is also used as visual communication material in various advertising activities conducted by the government and the public by using various print and digital-based visual communication media channel that are delivered offline and online.



Fig. 1. The dance performance of *Jejer Gandrung* at Merah Island Beach to welcome and entertain the tourists (Source: the documentation of Culture and Tourism office of Banyuwangi Regency, 2017)

3.2 The Image Communication Construction of Banyuwangi Regency

A place should be able to emphasize its identity, if identity is analogized to an object therefore image is the shadow of the object. Banyuwangi image is formed by the perception of the public that is constructed through various activities of image construction which were carried out through three types of communication, namely primary, secondary, and tertiary communication.

Primary communication activities are carried out through infrastructure development to support *Gandrung* performance such as open-air stage, construction of *landmark* in the form of the iconic statues of *Gandrung* dancer at several strategic spots such as at the regional borders, gates, crossroads, tourist destination, and making *Gandrung* as architectural aesthetic element in various buildings like sport stadiums, government offices, and hotels. *Gandrung* dance events are held as annual and temporary agendas, for example, serve as the

opening of various official and public events, as well as making *Gandrung* dance as extra-curricular that must be taught at schools. Secondary communication activities are implemented through advertisements and promotions using various printed and electronic visual communication media which are presented offline and online, such as using social media (Youtube, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Banyuwangi in your hand application) which are free but have very wide range. Tertier communication type is done by the publics using word of mouth about the satisfying and pleasant experiences that they enjoyed directly when they were in Banyuwangi which was then told to the others, and thus create positive perception towards Banyuwangi.

The illustration of image construction of Banyuwangi that uses *Gandrung* dance as the regional notable art can be seen in the following matrix analysis (see table 1).

Table 1. Matrix of Banyuwangi’s image communication activities.
Source: researcher

image construction	Representation	Aesthetic Orientation	Symbolic Meaning
	Primary communication: infrastructure, stadium.	Panels of <i>Gandrung</i> dancers’ pose icon on the outer wall of the stadium	The dynamic dance movements as the character of Banyuwangi’s cultural arts
	Primary communication: infrastructure, Banyuwangi’s souvenirs center	Crown-shaped ornament (<i>omprog</i>) of <i>Gandrung</i> dancer on the building.	The majesty and the beauty of <i>Gandrung</i> dancer as Banyuwangi’s unique art.
	Primary communication: infrastructure, village gate	Reliefs that adorn the pillars of the village’s entrance gate.	The existence of <i>Gandrung</i> as Banyuwangi’s distinctive art.
	Primary communication: infrastructure, school gate.	The crown (<i>omprog</i>) is transformed into a school gate.	Intellectuals who are aware of local values.
	Primary communication: infrastructure, hotel.	Aesthetic element of <i>Gandrung</i> dancer icon on the hotel’s wall	Presenting harmony and distinctive character of Banyuwangi cultural art.
	Primary communication: <i>Gandrung</i> sewu event.	<i>Gandrung</i> mass dance as annual event	The popularity and the existence of <i>Gandrung</i> dance as Banyuwangi’s notable cultural art asset
	Primary communication: event of students’ art performances	Students’ art performances as daily event	The regeneration and the existence of <i>Gandrung</i> art in Banyuwangi

Representation image construction	Aesthetic Orientation	Symbolic Meaning
 <p>secondary communication: Ladscape, name board.</p>	The icon of <i>Gandrung</i> dance on the urban village's name board.	Public property and become Banyuwangi's notable cultural art asset.
 <p>Secondary communication: tourism promotion media, billboards.</p>	Visual identity of <i>Gandrung</i> dance in Banyuwangi's tourism promotion media.	Notable cultural asset that are feasible to be marketed.
 <p>Secondary communication: tourism promotional media.</p>	Icon of <i>Gandrung</i> dancers with vector technique and pop art style on Banyuwangi's tourism promotional media.	<i>Gandrung</i> art is accepted by all ages and society.
 <p>Secondary communication: tourism promotional media, mobile ad</p>	Icon of <i>Gandrung</i> dancers on the bus as media at the World Cup event, Russia, 2018.	The attractiveness of Banyuwangi's cultural identity
 <p>Secondary communication: media of regional regulations socialization</p>	Icon of <i>Gandrung</i> dancer on the media of Banyuwangi's regional regulations socialization.	An integral part of Banyuwangi.

The analysis matrix from the assumption that *Gandrung* is the eminent cultural asset of Banyuwangi Regency. It is often performed in various events and its existence is utilized as visual identity in various Banyuwangi's tourism promotional media which then creates impressions and experiences for the people who visit Banyuwangi.

4 Conclusion

From this study, it can be found that *Gandrung* has strong roots so that its existence in Banyuwangi's people is not easily vanished. This power allows *Gandrung* to become the regional eminent cultural asset and its existence is used in the image construction of Banyuwangi Regency through communication activities by transforming the from of *Gandrung* art from its dance form into visual identity applied to various media as the agent of the communication of the image construction to the publics.

The use of *Gandrung* as regional eminent dance for image communication strategy is very interesting because *Gandrung* dance consists of sound, move, and expression elements so that when it is visualized into communication media for the construction of image communication the results look more flexible and humanist. The form of identity description of *Gandrung* in Banyuwangi's communication media of image construction cannot be sepa-

rated from aesthetic orientation carried out by Banyuwangi regional government and the citizens. The representation of aesthetic orientation presented on consistent, integrated, and sustainable visual communication media which are combined with image communication activities through various *Gandrung* dance events that are performed routinely could construct the positive perspective for the public, especially for those who have experiences of interacting directly with Banyuwangi.

Banyuwangi appreciates what it has by empowering the existing cultural roots. Various activities of image communication conducted by Banyuwangi by using *Gandrung* as its eminent cultural asset then form the public's perspective that *Gandrung* is not merely Banyuwangi's, but Banyuwangi is *Gandrung*. This predicate is attached and becomes the image of Banyuwangi.

Shamanism at first had negative connotation as the black magic which was used to create attractiveness and make (force) a person mad. By Banyuwangi, that negative connotation was changed. Shamanism is still used but in the form of activities that could create attractiveness that embellish Banyuwangi's festivals and other tourist destinations to make many people *gandrung* (mad about) towards Banyuwangi. This is seen significantly through the increasing number of tourists visit to Banyuwangi that contributes to the development of economy and regional revenue.

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