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APPROPRIATING TOLERANCE: STRATEGIES IN PUBLIC POLICY AND DIGITAL DISCOURSE YOGYAKARTA

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ABSTRACTS

Indonesia's religious and cultural plurality demands social management strategies that are not only normative but also structured through public policy and discourse. The Special Region of Yogyakarta is often positioned as a representation of a tolerant region, but this image construction is rarely critically examined from the perspective of symbolic appropriation and digital communication. This study aims to explain how symbolic appropriation and digital communication strategies are integrated in constructing the narrative of "Yogyakarta, a Tolerant Province." This study uses a qualitative approach with a Critical Discourse Analysis model modeled after Norman Fairclough. Data were obtained from policy documents, press releases, and official digital media content of the local government representing religious, cultural, and interfaith public communication activities. The analysis was conducted interpretively, combining James O. Young's theory of cultural appropriation with José van Dijck's concept of digital culture. The results show that the narrative of tolerance is constructed through the integration of five forms of appropriation: content, motif, object, style, and subject, which are systematically curated and circulated through digital platforms. Cultural and religious symbols are not merely represented as social facts but are also managed as symbolic capital to construct Yogyakarta's political cultural identity. Several public indicators, such as the high community participation in interfaith activities and the achievement of a tolerant city index that places Yogyakarta in the high category, also help strengthen the legitimacy of this narrative of tolerance. These findings suggest that tolerance operates as a result of hegemonic symbolic digital orchestration, functioning as a collective identity, policy legitimacy, and regional branding strategy. This study makes a theoretical contribution by expanding the study of tolerance from the normative realm to a critical analysis of power relations, symbols, and digital platforms in the context of public policy.

A. INTRODUCTION

Religious and cultural plurality is an inherent and unavoidable social reality within Indonesian society. This diversity not only reflects the richness of Indonesia's social fabric but also presents structural challenges that require deliberate and sustainable forms of social management. Consequently, diversity demands governance that goes beyond merely maintaining social stability, toward an approach that actively recognizes, accommodates, and respects differences among religious and cultural groups. In this context, religious and intercultural tolerance has evolved into a strategic issue that is no longer understood solely as an individual moral virtue, but rather as a broader social and political agenda constructed through public policy, institutional practices, and communication discourse. (Mawardi, 2024) emphasizes that religious plurality and multiculturalism in Indonesia constitute complex social realities that may either foster social harmony or trigger conflict, depending on how differences are negotiated and managed. Therefore, religious and cultural diversity in Indonesia does not automatically lead to social cohesion; instead, it requires conscious, inclusive, and dialogical management grounded in sustained interfaith engagement and mutual recognition.

As interactions between identity-based groups intensify, the role of the state and local governments in shaping and disseminating the discourse of tolerance becomes increasingly significant. The government functions not only as a regulatory authority but also as a key producer of meaning, actively constructing and framing tolerance through symbols, narratives, policies, and public representations. This process illustrates that tolerance is not a neutral or spontaneous outcome, but rather the result of discursive practices embedded in power relations, political interests, and carefully designed communication strategies. In this regard, religious moderation in Indonesia emerges as a multidimensional construct that integrates social, cultural, and policy-oriented practical dimensions. (Zaluchu et al., 2025). argue that local values and the role of institutions—particularly the state and educational institutions are central in cultivating tolerance, strengthening social resilience, and sustaining harmony within Indonesia's multicultural society.

The Special Region of Yogyakarta is often positioned as a region that represents the practice of tolerance and social harmony in Indonesia. This image is cemented through various cultural and religious symbols, such as sacred spaces, interfaith ritual traditions, and narratives of Yogyakarta's uniqueness that emphasize the value of diversity. These symbols serve as a communication medium that connects local identity with the universal value of tolerance. The use of cultural and religious symbols in public policy can be understood as a form of symbolic appropriation. Through appropriation, cultural elements are selected, adapted, and reinterpreted for the sake of image building and social legitimacy. Symbols of tolerance do not exist naturally but are curated and projected through various official activities, religious celebrations, and cultural narratives orchestrated by the local government. Religious pluralism in Indonesia's pluralistic society can serve as a source of social cohesion when managed through interfaith dialogue, daily interactions, and inclusive grassroots initiatives, which can build trust, reduce prejudice, and strengthen social solidarity (Fadillah & Nazarullah, 2025).

The development of information technology and digital media has transformed the way discourse on tolerance is produced and disseminated. Social media, official websites, and government digital channels have become new spaces for the representation of tolerance in visual formats, short narratives, and digital symbols. This digitalization allows the values of tolerance rooted in local traditions to reach a wider audience, transcending geographical and social boundaries. Social media algorithms oriented toward optimizing engagement indirectly shape public discourse by prioritizing dominant content, thereby limiting the visibility and

participation of marginalized groups and weakening the function of freedom of expression as an instrument of democracy (Williams, 2025).

Digital communication is not neutral, but rather operates within a platform logic that regulates the visibility, interaction, and circulation of messages. Algorithms, visual design, and content distribution strategies contribute to determining which narratives become dominant in the digital public sphere. Tolerance is produced as a systematically curated discourse to emerge as Yogyakarta's primary identity within the digital media landscape. Social media algorithms that appear neutral actually contain structural biases that can reinforce and normalize racist narratives in the digital public sphere, thus reproducing racial inequality and raising serious ethical implications for democracy and equitable digital governance (Solanes Corella & Hernández Moreno, 2025).

Various studies on tolerance in Yogyakarta generally emphasize social, historical, or normative aspects. However, studies that critically examine strategies of symbolic appropriation and digital communication as a unified analytical entity are still relatively limited. This approach is crucial for understanding how tolerance is not only practiced but also constructed, represented, and maintained as a hegemonic public narrative. Through bibliometric analysis of Scopus-indexed publications, previous research identified dominant themes such as the role of education in strengthening moderation, the relationship between local cultural values and moderate religious practices, and religious moderation as a strategy to counter radicalism and maintain social harmony. The concepts of tolerance, multiculturalism, and national commitment occupy a central position in the intellectual structure of religious moderation research in Indonesia (Zaluchu et al., 2025). Engagement-based curation systems tend to reinforce discriminatory narratives such as racism, xenophobia, sexism, homophobia, and religious intolerance, especially during times of social tension. This fragmentation not only increases ideological polarization but also weakens the shared understanding and collective rationality necessary for democratic life. Contemporary digital media structures have the potential to erode the moral foundations and social cohesion of online public spaces (Pratap & Pathak, 2020).

Indonesia's religious and cultural plurality demands social management strategies that are not merely normative but also structured through public policy, social education, and digital discourse (Kawangung, 2019). In the context of a multicultural society, tolerance is understood not only as a moral value but also as a social practice formed through communication processes, symbolic representation, and knowledge production in the public sphere. The Special Region of Yogyakarta is often positioned as a representative of a tolerant region due to its success in maintaining social harmony amidst religious and cultural diversity (Syamsuddin et al., 2025). However, the construction of this image has rarely been critically examined, particularly from the perspective of symbolic appropriation, digital communication, and its implications for moral-social education.

Islamic education, the narrative of tolerance holds significant relevance as part of strengthening moral pedagogy and forming moderate character in society. Values such as tasamuh (tolerance), ta'awun (cooperation), and ukhuwah insaniyah (human brotherhood) are not only taught through formal education but are also produced and disseminated through digital media and public policy (Tabroni et al., 2024). Therefore, the government's communication strategy in representing tolerance can be understood as part of a pedagogical practice that shapes society's social awareness regarding diversity, religious moderation, and social cohesion.

Thus, this study aims to explain how symbolic appropriation strategies and digital communication practices are systematically integrated in the construction and dissemination of the narrative of “Yogyakarta as a Tolerant Province.” This research examines how symbols,

cultural representations, religious imagery, and local wisdom are selectively appropriated and articulated through digital platforms to shape public meaning and legitimize tolerance as a regional identity. By situating tolerance within the dynamics of communication, power, and policy discourse, the study seeks to reveal that tolerance is not merely a normative ideal or spontaneous social condition, but a socially constructed narrative produced through deliberate symbolic and digital orchestration. Furthermore, this study is expected to contribute theoretically to religious studies and cross-cultural communication by expanding the understanding of tolerance as a discursive practice embedded in institutional strategies and mediated environments. At the same time, it offers a critical perspective on how digital communication functions as a strategic arena for public policy messaging, identity formation, and the negotiation of religious and cultural differences, particularly in a multicultural context such as Yogyakarta.

B. METHOD

This research employs a qualitative approach with a critical discourse analysis (CDA) design to examine the construction of tolerance narratives embedded in public policies and official discourses in the Special Region of Yogyakarta. A qualitative framework is considered appropriate because this study seeks to explore meanings, representations, and power relations that are produced and circulated through language and symbols, rather than to measure variables quantitatively. The focus of the analysis is not only on what is communicated about tolerance, but also on how such narratives are structured, framed, and institutionalized through governmental discourse in a multicultural and multireligious context.

Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis model serves as the primary analytical framework for interpreting the interconnections between textual features, discursive practices, and broader social practices in representations of tolerance. Fairclough's three-dimensional model enables the researcher to examine texts at the micro level (linguistic choices, symbols, and visual representations), analyze discursive practices at the meso level (production, distribution, and consumption of discourse), and situate these practices within macro-level social, cultural, and political contexts. Through this approach, tolerance is understood not as a neutral or self-evident concept, but as a discursively constructed phenomenon that is framed, produced, and legitimized through specific language choices, symbolic representations, and institutional strategies within public policy communication.



Figure 1 Diagram of Data Collection and Anaylisis Workflow

The data sources for this study consist of official policy documents, government press releases, and digital media content published by local government institutions in Yogyakarta. These materials include official social media posts, digital posters commemorating religious holidays, visual and textual documentation of cultural festivals, and records of interfaith and intercultural activities promoted by the government. In addition, symbolic representations of religious celebrations and cultural events disseminated through official government platforms are treated as important data, as they function as visual and symbolic texts that contribute to the construction of tolerance narratives. Data collection was conducted through systematic searches of digital archives, official websites, and verified government social media accounts. The selection of data was guided by clear criteria, namely its relevance to themes of tolerance,

diversity, interfaith relations, and cultural harmony, as well as its role in shaping public representations of Yogyakarta as a tolerant region.

Data analysis was conducted using an interpretive and critical strategy that integrates cultural appropriation theory and the concept of digital culture. Cultural appropriation theory is employed to identify how cultural and religious symbols are selectively adopted, recontextualized, and presented in public policy discourse and official communication. This theoretical lens helps to reveal how symbols of religious and cultural diversity are mobilized to convey inclusivity, legitimacy, and social harmony. Meanwhile, the concept of digital culture is used to interpret the role of digital platforms in the production, circulation, and amplification of tolerance discourse, highlighting how technological affordances influence visibility, engagement, and narrative formation. The analytical process involves data reduction, thematic coding, and critical interpretation to uncover recurring patterns, discursive strategies, and power relations underlying the integration of symbolic appropriation and digital communication. Through this process, the study aims to demonstrate how tolerance is constructed as both a political narrative and a cultural identity in Yogyakarta, shaped by deliberate symbolic choices and mediated through digital governance practices.

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. RESULTS

This results section presents empirical findings regarding the symbolic appropriation and digital communication strategies used by the Yogyakarta Special Region Government in constructing and strengthening the "Yogyakarta is a Tolerant Province" narrative. Data were obtained from an analysis of official regional government media posts representing policies, religious practices, cultural activities, and interfaith public communication. The findings are grouped into five interconnected forms of appropriation: appropriation of content, motif, object, style, and subject.

Table 2 Appropriation Strategy: Integration of Content Appropriation

No	Post Title/Media Figure	Type	Dialogue Function
1	Realizing Religious Moderation & Cultivating Tolerance	Press release	Strengthening interfaith tolerance
2	National Student Day Commemoration – Sharing in Limitations	News	Instilling collective social values in diversity
3	Civil Servant Study Group: Islam Amidst Modernity	News	Religious values are used to strengthen social solidarity
4	Evaluation of the Implementation of Religious Moderation in Islamic Boarding Schools	Press release	Institutionalization of Middle Values Prevents Radicalism
5	Audience with Hindu Community Guidance and Nyepi Committee	Press release	Adapting Ritual Activities in a Pluralistic Province System
6	Visit by Hindus from Gunungkidul	News	Preserving Nusantara Traditions in Diversity

Source: IG Birobinamentaldiy, Kemenag.DIY, Yogyakarta Regional Government Website

Table 1 shows that content appropriation serves to institutionalize the values of religious moderation and social solidarity. Religious messages are not presented as exclusive doctrines, but rather contextualized as public ethics that support social cohesion. This strategy positions religion as a source of moral legitimacy for interfaith tolerance policies.

Table 3 Appropriation Strategy: Integration of Motive Appropriation

No	Post Title/Media Figure	Type	Dialogue Function
1	Cultural Development with Core Values of Distinction	News	Cultural Values as the Basis for Policy
2	National Nuzulul Quran Commemoration 2023	News	Symbols of Islamic Nationality
3	Togetherness & Cooperation: Key to Preserving the Philosophical Axis	News	Local Values Counter Homogenization

Source: IG Birobinamentaldiy, Kemenag.DIY, Yogyakarta Regional Government Website

Table 2 explains that the appropriation of motifs serves to strengthen collective identity by linking tolerance to local values that are historically and culturally legitimated. The values of uniqueness and philosophical axes are positioned as the moral foundation of policy, so that tolerance is not merely a social norm but becomes part of Yogyakarta's political and cultural identity.

Table 4 Appropriation Strategy: Integration of Object Appropriation

No	Post Title/Media Figure	Type	Dialogue Function
1	Healthy Walk & Nyepi Ceremony in Gunung Kidul	News	Integration of Ritual & Public Values
2	Yogyakarta Hindu Community Guidance Receives a Visit from the Buleleng Ministry of Religious Affairs Office at Prambanan Temple	Press release	Integrasi institusional & simbol ruang publik
3	Coordination Meeting: Caring for & Transforming Confucian Services	Press release, Picture	Providing a Safe Space for the Community through Public Policy
4	Ortala & Interfaith Harmony – Welcoming Chinese New Year 2574	Press release	Minority religions given space in official policy
5	Houses of Worship Are Not Platforms for Practical Politics	Press release	Affirming the Neutral Function of Houses of Worship in Community Services
6	Facilitating the Melasti Ceremony as Part of the Nyepi Events	Picture, Press release	The State Facilitates Religious Celebrations, Reflecting Constitutional Pluralism

Source: IG Birobinamentaldiy, Kemenag.DIY, Yogyakarta Regional Government Website

Table 3 shows that the appropriation of objects occurs through state recognition and facilitation of both minority and majority religious practices. Rituals and worship spaces are positioned as legitimate public symbols, reflecting constitutional pluralism and the state's commitment to guaranteeing religious freedom and social harmony.

Table 5 Appropriation Strategy: Integration of Style Appropriation

No	Post Title/Media Figure	Type	Dialogue Function
1	Hindu Pasraman in Gunung Kidul	News	Evaluation of Pasraman learning based on Hindu culture
2	JCWF 2023 Promotes DIY Tourism	News	Local wisdom-based tourism
3	R20 Delegation Learns Cultural & Religious Acculturation from the Yogyakarta Palace	Press release	Cultural acculturation as international diplomacy
4	Capacity Building for Religious Moderation, DIY Christian Community Guidance	Press release, Picture	state strategy for internalizing moderation
5	Head of Penais Division Visits MTA Bantul Islamic Mass Organization	Press release	Mediation between the state and mass organizations within a framework of tolerance
6	Capacity Building for Religious Moderation	Press release	Internalizing the value of religious moderation by the state

7	Interfaith Dialogue & Religious Institutions	Press release	Reducing the potential for conflict through moderation
8	National Pesparawi XIII in DIY "Harmony in Diversity - Ayo Dolan Yogya"	Press release, News	Integration of culture, tourism, and the global tolerance campaign
9	Literacy Festival at Prambanan Temple Picture,	Picture, Press release	Bringing together interfaith values, traditions, and expressions
10	Ragapeksi: Commitment to Preserving Culture & Tourism	News, Teks	Traditional Texts as a Medium for Dialogue

Source: IG Birobinamentaldiy, Kemenag.DIY, Yogyakarta Regional Government Website

Table 4 explains that the appropriation of style demonstrates that tolerance is spread through a soft cultural approach (soft power). Festivals, religious education, tourism, and cultural diplomacy are used to expand the reach of the narrative of tolerance, both at the local, national, and international levels, so that the message of inclusivity is easily accepted by various levels of society.

Table 6 Appropriation Strategy: Integration of Subject Appropriation

No	Post Title/Media Figure	Type	Dialogue Function
1	Comparative Study of Islamic Religious	Press release	Adopting Community Experience for Dialogue
2	Pesparani DIY Contingent in Oepoi, Kupang	News	National-Level Minority Participation
3	Pesparani DIY Contingent at the 2nd National Catholic PESPARANI	News	Representation of Minorities
4	Pesparani DIY Contingent at the 2nd National Catholic PESPARANI	Press release, News	Strengthening Yogyakarta's Image as a Symbol of Social Peace
5	Pesparani DIY Contingent at the 2nd National Catholic PESPARANI	News	Strengthening Local Leadership as a Peace Facilitator
6	Pesparani DIY Contingent & Guests in Kupang, NTT	Picture, News	Affirming Participatory Rights in Public Space
7	12th National Church Choir Festival	Press release, News	Space for Minority Expression
8	Kuntowijoyo – "Tolerance Replaced by Cooperation"	Poster, Press release, News	Building Trust and Social Stability

Source: IG Birobinamentaldiy, Kemenag.DIY, Yogyakarta Regional Government Website

Table 5 illustrates that religious figures, local leaders, and minority communities are actively represented to strengthen the legitimacy of the tolerance narrative. These subjects are presented not merely as objects of policy, but as symbols of social participation and cooperation, thus projecting tolerance as a practice of living together, not merely a normative discourse.

2. DISCUSSION

1) Appropriation Patterns in the Branding of "Yogyakarta, a Tolerant Province"

The branding of "Yogyakarta, a Tolerant Province" is constructed through a series of appropriation strategies that integrate cultural symbols, digital media, and narratives of inclusion within a single political-cultural communication framework. The Yogyakarta Special Region Government does not simply represent diversity as a social fact, but actively manages it as a collective identity through deliberate symbolic appropriation practices. From the perspective of James O. Young's theory of cultural appropriation, these strategies can be mapped into three main patterns: local symbol-based branding, digital media-based branding, and branding based on narratives of inclusion. (Rahmanto & Fariza, 2025) emphasize that city branding functions not only as a regional promotional strategy but also as a strategic communication process that shapes place identity through cultural storytelling.

Local symbol-based branding demonstrates how the local government articulates cultural and religious symbols into the realm of public communication as representations of tolerance. This practice primarily operates through the appropriation of objects and motifs. At the level of appropriation, objects, spaces, artifacts, and ritual practices that hold sacred value for certain communities are elevated into public symbols representing harmony. Activities such as the Healthy Walk and Nyepi Ceremony in Gunung Kidul, the Great Parisudha and Vesak procession at Prambanan Temple, the Melasti ceremony, and mutual cooperation at the Tamansiswa Hall demonstrate how religious spaces are projected as stages of diversity. These spaces are no longer positioned solely as the internal domain of a particular religious community, but rather are represented as shared spaces that emphasize Yogyakarta's openness to plurality. (Jamil et al., 2025) show that sacred spaces function not only as places of worship but also as social symbols that produce and represent multicultural identities. The production of sacred spaces is a discursive process involving ritual practices, building materiality, preservation policies, and public discourse, thus making sacred spaces an important medium in the formation of urban identity and social integration in a multiethnic society.

Local objects have undergone an expansion of meaning, transforming them from internal symbols of tradition into political-cultural symbols that reinforce Yogyakarta's identity as a tolerant province. Beyond objects, appropriation also occurs at the motif level, through the use of visual symbols and cultural icons from various religious traditions. This is evident in the production of posters celebrating religious holidays such as Nyepi, Chinese New Year, Christmas, Galungan, Ramadhan, Good Friday, and the Ascension of Jesus Christ, each featuring ornaments typical of a particular tradition. Cultural campaigns such as the Development of Culture with Core Values of Speciality, the designation of the Yogyakarta Philosophical Axis as a World Heritage Site, and the 13th National Pesparawi (Festivities of the 13th Century) with its theme of harmony in diversity reinforce collective motifs of tolerance. Shared identity can be built through uniform yet adaptive architectural symbols. Instruments of symbolic appropriation, spatial and aesthetic, strengthen cultural and political identities across regions (Recep et al., 2023). Through this motif appropriation, symbols of Yogyakarta's specialness are transformed into markers of political-cultural identity, presenting Yogyakarta as an inclusive living space.

The branding of "Yogyakarta, a Tolerant Province" is intensively implemented through digital media as the primary communication channel. The official social media of local governments and religious institutions serve not only as a means of information but also as a space for cultural representation in digital format. Within James O. Young's theoretical framework, this practice can be understood as stylistic appropriation, namely the transfer of styles of cultural and religious expression into modern visual media. Various cultural and interfaith activities such as the Pasraman Hindu Religious Activities in Gunung Kidul, the Jogja Cross Culture Festival, the R20 Delegation at the Yogyakarta Palace, interfaith dialogues, cultural parades, shadow puppetry, the Mubeng Beteng tradition, Grebeg Syawal, and the Pancasila Cultural Festival are represented through aesthetic and communicative visual posts. These posts not only document activities but also construct a specific visual style through artistic photography, modern graphic design, and short narratives that are easily consumed by the public. Through appropriation, styles of cultural expression that originally existed in offline spaces are reproduced online with digital aesthetic characteristics. Religious rituals and local traditions no longer function solely as internal community practices but become a style of public communication that emphasizes diversity and openness. Digital media thus plays a role as a strategic medium that allows local traditional heritage to be repackaged and disseminated massively within a political-cultural framework of tolerance.

The third pattern in the branding of "Yogyakarta, a Tolerant Province" is the construction of an inclusive narrative that is systematically transmitted through public spaces. This narrative is constructed through two main mechanisms: content appropriation and subject appropriation. In the realm of content appropriation, local governments and religious institutions utilize the ideas of religious figures, intellectuals, and public figures as sources of normative legitimacy for the tolerance narrative. Posters and digital posts containing religious and philosophical reflections, such as messages about religious moderation, harmony in diversity, and respect for plurality, reproduce the ideas of figures such as Quraish Shihab, KH. Abdul Muhaimin, and M. Amin Abdullah into public messages. Thoughts that were originally theological and academic are positioned as political-cultural markers that strengthen Yogyakarta's image as an inclusive space. (Chen et al., 2025) The transformation of urban red cultural heritage in the era of digital intelligence demands a shift from static preservation patterns to dynamic inheritance based on social terrain reconstruction. Digitalization alone is insufficient without collaborative, multi-stakeholder governance involving the state, academia, industry, and the public to avoid fragmentation of meaning, social exclusion, and technological determinism in the formation of the city's collective identity.

The narrative of inclusion is also constructed through the appropriation of subjects, namely representations of the experiences of interfaith communities. Activities such as the National Catholic Pesparani (Catholic Pesparani), the Church Choir Festival, the Kenduri Ageng (local community celebration), and various interfaith dialogue forums are presented as concrete evidence of vibrant diversity. These community experiences are reinforced by statements by central figures such as Sri Sultan Hamengku Buwono X, who affirmed Yogyakarta as a region of peace and non-violence. Social subjects are appropriated as branding materials that reinforce the narrative of harmony. Overall, these three patterns of appropriation demonstrate that the "Yogyakarta, a Tolerant Province" branding does not stop at a communication function but rather operates as a political-cultural strategy. Local symbols, digital media, and the narrative of inclusion are orchestrated simultaneously to build Yogyakarta's image as a harmonious multicultural region while simultaneously strengthening the legitimacy of its uniqueness within the national context. (Surahman & Rully, 2025) shows that communication practices in the traditional leadership of the Yogyakarta Sultanate function as the main mechanism for forming symbolic legitimacy and social influence.

The branding of Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta as “Yogyakarta, a Tolerant Province” demonstrates how symbolic appropriation operates through the selective representation of religious rituals, cultural festivals, and interfaith interactions within official government discourse and digital communication. Cultural and religious symbols are strategically curated to construct an image of harmony, inclusivity, and multicultural coexistence that supports the region’s political-cultural identity. This process reflects not only a communication strategy but also a form of moral-social pedagogy, as the continuous dissemination of tolerance narratives through digital platforms contributes to shaping public attitudes toward diversity and social cohesion. In the context of Islamic education, these representations align with the principles of tasamuh (tolerance), ta’awun (mutual cooperation), and ukhuwah insaniyah (human brotherhood), which are central to the formation of moderate Islamic character and multicultural awareness in society (Velly et al., 2025). Previous studies emphasize that Islamic education institutions, including pesantren and madrasah, play an important role in internalizing inclusive and multicultural values through dialogical learning, interfaith interaction, and contextual pedagogy that encourage empathy and coexistence among students (Lestari, 2024). Moreover, the increasing integration of digital pedagogy in Islamic education has transformed tolerance from merely a doctrinal concept into an interactive social practice

mediated through digital communication and public discourse (Intania et al., 2026). In this regard, the symbolic branding of tolerance in Yogyakarta can be interpreted not only as a political-cultural project but also as an educational strategy that reinforces moral literacy, religious moderation, and social resilience within multicultural communities (Santika & Shohib, 2025).

2) Analytical Synthesis

Within Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework, the branding strategy of "Yogyakarta, a Tolerant Province" can be understood through three analytical dimensions: text, discourse practice, and social practice. These three dimensions allow for an understanding of the relationship between symbol production, message distribution, and the ideological function of tolerance discourse within the context of public policy and local government communication. In the CDA, various public communication content, such as posters, social media captions, and press releases, displays symbols of tolerance, multiculturalism, and harmony. Quotes from religious figures and intellectuals serve as discursive constructs that emphasize that plurality is not a threat but rather social capital. Posters commemorating religious holidays and global events such as International Day of Tolerance demonstrate how the value of interfaith brotherhood is represented visually and verbally. These texts are not merely informative but also serve as instruments for building public awareness of Yogyakarta as an inclusive space. (Samsulhadi et al., 2025) using Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis model, the study shows that linguistic cohesion such as populist diction, repetition, collective pronouns, and causal conjunctions are used to frame power relations, target voter segments, and produce persuasive meaning in the visual public sphere.

Critical discourse analysis of discourse practices demonstrates that local governments act as producers of meaning and gatekeepers, managing cultural and religious symbols. The process of symbol selection, message formulation, and content distribution through official channels such as local government Instagram accounts or press releases from religious institutions demonstrates a planned orchestration of discourse. Posters for interfaith celebrations are packaged according to the logic of digital platforms through engaging visual designs, concise narratives, and the use of specific hashtags. Ritual symbols possess integrative power, capable of bridging social, ethnic, and religious differences through shared emotional and spiritual experiences. The rituals and symbols within them operate as social practices that transmit the values of harmony, solidarity, and religious moderation, while simultaneously strengthening social structures and collective consciousness in the cultural public sphere (Woho Atasoge et al., 2025). The platform logic, as proposed by Van Dijck, operates significantly, determining what is displayed, how interactions are directed, and when messages are released according to the religious symbolic calendar. At the level of social practice, these symbolic and digital representations are directed towards building the collective branding of "Yogyakarta, a Tolerant Province." Interfaith activities, cultural festivals, and religious celebrations not only affirm diversity as a social reality but also strengthen Yogyakarta's legitimacy as a center of harmony. This branding serves a dual function: at the local level, it strengthens residents' sense of security and solidarity; while at the national and international levels, it presents Yogyakarta as a model of harmony that can be used as a reference. The discourse of tolerance operates as a symbolic hegemonic practice that ties Yogyakarta's unique identity to the values of peace and plurality.

This analytical synthesis is supported by three main, complementary theoretical frameworks. First, Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis serves to uncover how narratives of

tolerance are constructed, produced, and institutionalized in government communication practices. Through this approach, tolerance is understood not as a neutral discourse, but rather as the result of the construction of meaning that has a political and hegemonic function in shaping regional identity. Second, James O. Young's theory of cultural appropriation provides a categorical tool for understanding how cultural and religious symbols are strategically utilized. Five forms of appropriation object, content, style, motif, and subject are evident in the practices of the Yogyakarta Regional Government. Religious rituals and houses of worship are positioned as public symbols (object appropriation), the ideas of religious figures are used as collective narratives (content appropriation), cultural festivals and cultural diplomacy function as stylistic appropriation, the value of "Special Yogyakarta" is promoted as an ideological motif, and minority communities are represented as subjects of inclusivity. With this theory, branding strategy is read as a process of borrowing and managing symbols to build an inclusive regional image. Third, Van Dijck's digital culture theory explains how narratives of tolerance are produced and circulated within digital platform spaces. (Nadeem & Khan, 2025) reconceptualizes multilingualism as a dynamic and fluid sociolinguistic practice shaped by globalization, transnational mobility, and digital communication, emphasizing the perspectives of translanguaging and plurilingualism. This gap exists between everyday multilingual practices including translanguaging in educational spaces and official policy discourse.

The concepts of digitalization, platformization, connectivity, and narrative circulation demonstrate that representations of tolerance are subject to algorithmic logic. Social media platforms become not only a medium for disseminating messages but also an instrument of control over meaning, determining which narratives are dominant and which are marginalized. The communication of tolerance takes place within the framework of digital governmentality. These three theories collectively demonstrate that the Yogyakarta Regional Government's strategy not only displays tolerance but also regulates how tolerance is understood and remembered by the public through the orchestration of physical symbols and digital infrastructure. Natural language generation, computational semantics, and cross-language adaptation have significant influences on the transformation of digital narratives, with the mediation of cultural context strengthening this relationship. These findings indicate that algorithms now function as co-creators of meaning, contributing to the evolution of language and the circulation of culture in digital spaces (Abdulameer et al., 2025). Theoretically, this study extends Linguistic Relativity Theory by incorporating the dimension of algorithmic linguistic intelligence and emphasizes the urgency of multilingual AI policies, ethical governance, and inclusive data architecture to maintain the diversity of meanings and cultural sensitivity in global digital communication.

Based on theoretical synthesis and empirical findings, Yogyakarta's appropriation strategy can be understood as a combination of symbolic orchestration, the use of digital channels, and the strengthening of discursive hegemony. From a symbolic perspective, the government actively presents religious rituals, cultural festivals, and local traditions as representations of harmony. This practice constitutes a form of appropriation of objects and motifs that connects communication texts with social practices of interfaith harmony. This cultural adaptation aligns with halal principles and Islamic expressions. Research findings confirm that communal practices function not only as a medium for transmitting traditions and collective identity but also as an effective means of intercultural communication in maintaining social cohesion and religious tolerance amidst the pressures of modernization and tourism (Agung & Suryawati, 2025). Through digital channels, these symbols are repackaged

in modern visual formats and disseminated widely. This process reflects stylistic appropriation, where traditional expressions are adapted to the logic of social media to reach a wider audience.

Digital channels function as cultural infrastructure that allows narratives of tolerance to circulate beyond local boundaries into national and global spaces. At the level of discourse hegemony, the appropriation of the thoughts of religious figures, intellectuals, and political-cultural figures strengthens the legitimacy of the tolerance narrative. Statements by central figures are reproduced as official content, so that tolerance appears not only as a moral value but also as Yogyakarta's political-cultural identity. This strategy demonstrates an effort to establish a horizon of meaning that tolerance is a core value of Yogyakarta's uniqueness. Overall, Yogyakarta's appropriation strategy can be synthesized as an orchestration of symbols with digital channels and discourse hegemony. The narrative of "Yogyakarta, a Tolerant Province" is not merely a normative discourse, but rather the result of structured and curated cultural-digital diversity management. Tolerance thus functions as a political identity, symbolic capital, and cultural branding that is produced, circulated, and institutionalized in public memory. Soft power by including digital religious communication as a crucial domain in global symbolic politics and offers an analytical framework for understanding the relationship between religion, digital technology, and symbolic power (Khairiyah et al., 2025).

From an Islamic education perspective, this three-dimensional CDA synthesis implies that tolerance discourse embedded in public policy should be critically engaged within school and pesantren-based learning as part of tarbiyah (value education) and character formation. Islamic educational institutions are encouraged to utilize governmental communication artifacts such as posters, social media captions, and digital campaigns as pedagogical resources for developing students' critical literacy, enabling them to differentiate between normative Islamic moral values and their symbolic or politically constructed representations in public discourse. This approach aligns with contemporary Islamic education scholarship which emphasizes that Islamic pedagogy must move beyond doctrinal transmission toward critical-reflective learning that integrates social context and media literacy (Umar & Kartikasari, 2025). Furthermore, studies on pesantren-based education highlight that character formation is most effective when tasamuh (tolerance) and wasatiyyah (moderation) are internalized through contextual learning, dialogue, and engagement with real socio-political narratives rather than abstract teaching alone (Kuswara, 2025). In this way, Islamic education not only strengthens moral understanding but also develops analytical awareness of how religious and social values are constructed, communicated, and institutionalized within contemporary digital society, thereby fostering students' capacity for critical engagement with public discourse and governance narratives (Hidayatulloh & Afiyah, 2025).

D. CONCLUSION

This research shows that the narrative of "Yogyakarta, a Tolerant Province" did not emerge naturally, but rather resulted from a planned and integrated strategy of symbolic appropriation and digital communication. The Yogyakarta Special Region Government plays an active role as a producer of meaning, managing cultural symbols, religion, and social figures to build a collective identity based on tolerance. Through the appropriation of content, motifs, objects, styles, and subjects, diversity is not only recognized as a social reality but also projected as symbolic capital and political-cultural legitimacy. Within Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis framework, this strategy operates at three levels simultaneously: public communication texts imbued with symbols of tolerance, discursive practices curated through official digital channels, and social practices that link tolerance to Yogyakarta's uniqueness. The integration of James O. Young's theory of cultural appropriation demonstrates how

religious and cultural symbols are borrowed, reinterpreted, and managed for the sake of regional branding. Meanwhile, Van Dijck's digital culture perspective asserts that narratives of tolerance are produced and circulated within the algorithmic logic of platforms, thus enabling tolerance to operate within the framework of digital governmentality. Thus, tolerance in Yogyakarta functions not only as a moral value or social ethic, but also as a political identity and cultural branding institutionalized through digital-symbolic orchestration. These findings open up space for further research to examine public responses, the potential for discursive resistance, and the long-term implications of platform-based constructions of tolerance within the dynamics of democracy and diversity in Indonesia. Implication For Islamic educators, this study emphasizes integrating digital literacy and critical awareness into moral education so students can understand how tolerance is constructed in public discourse. For policymakers, it suggests strengthening Islamic moderation (wasatiyyah) through curriculum, teacher training, and community-based programs beyond symbolic narratives of tolerance.

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