



Pepakem Baduy: Sustainable Marketing Architecture and Socio-Ecological Resilience in the Midst of the Current of Modernity

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Article Info

Article history:

Received August 20, 2025
Approved September 12, 2025

Keywords:

Baduy, Socio-Ecological
Resilience, Indigenous
Economy, Sustainable
Marketing, Ethnography

ABSTRACT

The Baduy indigenous people in Banten show a unique paradox: despite isolating themselves from modernity, they have strong socio-ecological resilience and economic adaptation. This ethnographic research aims to uncover their resilience architecture and sustainable marketing model rooted in the Pepakem or Pikukuh philosophy of life. Data were collected through participatory observations, interviews with traditional stakeholders, artisans, and the younger generation of Baduy Luar, as well as literature studies, and then analyzed thematically. As a result, Baduy resilience is a conscious system supported by: (1) leuit as a food security institution, and (2) huma as an ecological risk mitigation strategy. The study also found that the marketing transformation of tourism interactions towards the adoption of digital technology by the Baduy Luar reflects symbolic capitalism. Pepakem acts as an operating system that maintains conservation ethics while allowing economic involvement without abandoning cultural identity.

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How to cite: Wuryandari, N. E. R., Purwanto, S., & Damayanti, I. R. (2025). Papakem Baduy: Sustainable Marketing Architecture and Socio-Ecological Resilience in the Midst of the Current of Modernity. *Jurnal Ilmiah Global Education*, 6(3), 2157–2165. <https://doi.org/10.55681/jige.v6i3.4180>

INTRODUCTION

With globalization and modern civilization affecting almost every corner of the earth, indigenous population is increasingly struggling to protect their culture together with nature. The Baduy community is famously distinguished by its complex social structures and local wisdom, and thus serves as an interesting example of sustainable marketing management and socio-ecological resilience (A'la et al., 2023; Silalahi & Purwanto, 2025). Pepakem Baduy is an example of sustainable marketing architecture and illustrates how deeply rooted traditions can be harmoniously reconciled with contemporary marketing strategies without violation of the principles of sociobiological equilibrium, ecosystem resilience, and sustainability (Rahmanul Hakim et al., 2025a). This is an example worth looking into, as it shows how indigenous communities respond and cope with modernity which otherwise poses existential cultural and environmental challenges.

Within the context of Baduy communities situated in a particular region, promoting sustainability goes beyond mere profit-making. Baduy for instance, shows how marketing can be undertaken with profound respect for customs and sustains ecological balance, especially in the promotion of traditional crafts and local produce. We then can conclude that marketing does not have to be exploitative but can be used to enhance the socio-ecological system of the community, strengthening its resilience (Kardos et al., 2019; Majeed et al., 2022; Scheyvens et al., 2021; Shabbir et al., 2020).

Socio-ecological resilience explains how a social-ecological system functions on the capacity to withstand, adapt to, and prosper on external changes and pressures (Cinner & Barnes, 2019; Sharifi, 2023). For Baduy, this is evident in how the community practices resource conservation and sustains the cultural elements crucial to their daily survival. Empirical evidence exists to suggest that indigenous communities with systems of sustainable marketing are far better empowered to maintain their socio-ecological resilience than those adopting conventional marketing systems (Cinner & Barnes, 2019). Thus, the anthropology of socio-ecological sustainable marketing in the Baduy community is a valuable addition to the sustainable marketing theory and practice corpus. The tidal wave of technological and socio economic advancements brings forth both opportunities and challenges. Baduy's social structure as a so-called 'cultural island' is an indicator of modern times' tendency to bring social class disaggregation, and Pepakem Baduy is a form of adaptation and a social life sustaining element to protect cultural identity. It also brings forth an opportunity. As social and economic categories become incrementally disconnected, the modernity of a socio-ecosystem can be penetrated to understand how a marketing system can be positioned to retain socio-ecological and socio-resilient marketing opportunities (Budiaman et al., 2023; Praptika et al., 2024).

Moreover, the waves of innovation are drowning the Baduy people in socio-economic, technological consequence. Closing off the 'Cultural Gap', starkly defending all the attributes of one's culture is not always feasible. Cultural 'Environmental' optimism is focusing ones attention on the advancement of 'Development', improvement in 'Life's Employment' of a community. Pepakem Baduy as a hybrid form of innovation in 'Cultural' modernism practically can sustain 'Global' principles, while still ethically defending the native territory of the culture. Such types of research are crucial for socio-ecological resilience within the framework of advancement driven modernisation. Marketing, as such, contributes to the 'Development', advancement in the 'Life's Employment' of a community. The focus on Pepakem Baduy's sustainable marketing architecture and socio-ecological resilience is under researched, particularly on integrating traditional approaches with elements of the contemporary market. This study will bridge this gap and focus on the sustainable marketing practices of the Baduy people and its socio-ecological resilience workings within the modernity tide. This will advance the sustainable marketing discourse within the marketing management discipline, and propose practical sustainable marketing models which address the current socio-ecological market complexities (Asteria et al., 2024; Rahmanul Hakim et al., 2025b).

Having such a focus will help not just construct the tangible elements of the marketing management science but will also address the protective needs of historically rooted peoples and their cultures and environments (Dyck & Manchanda, n.d.; Kardos et al., 2019). The Pepakem Baduy case requires intricate marketing and ecology and social anthropology to achieve greater socio-ecological resilience and understand the socio-ecological complex. It is believed that the deep knowledge of the adaptive sustainable marketing system will contribute to the development of innovative applicable solutions not just for the Baduy people but for other traditional communities grappling with challenges imposed by modernity.

To prove this research, this article was compiled systematically. The first part presents a literature review and theoretical framework that is the basis of the analysis. The second part explains the qualitative research methodology used. The third part, as the core of the findings and discussion, will dissect (a) *Pikukuh* as a philosophical matrix; (b) *Leuit* and *huma* as resilient economic architecture; (c) The evolution of adaptive marketing from traditional interaction to

digital symbolic capitalism; and (d) A test of resilience in the face of crises and the paradox of modernization. This article closes with a conclusion that formulates the "Pepakem-Based Marketing" model and its implications for indigenous peoples studies and sustainable development.

METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach with an ethnographic case study design. This approach was chosen because of its ability to deeply and holistically understand the complexity of socio-cultural phenomena in their natural context, (JW Creswell, 2016). The research location is centred in Kanekes Village, Leuwidamar District, Lebak Regency, Banten, with a focus on the interaction between the Baduy Dalam and Baduy Luar communities.

Data collection was carried out over a period of 3 months through three main techniques:

1. **Participatory Observation:** The researcher lived with the Baduy Luar community and made a limited visit to Baduy Dalam to observe firsthand the practices of daily life, agricultural rituals (*ngahuma*), the process of making handicrafts, and the interaction of buying and selling both directly with tourists and through digital intermediaries.
2. **In-Depth Interviews:** Semi-structured interviews are conducted with purposively selected key informants. The informants include traditional stakeholders (*Jaro and Pu'un representatives*), weaving and *koja bag* artisans, farmers, and the younger generation of the Baduy Luar who are active in digital marketing.
3. **Documentation Studies:** Analysis was conducted on a variety of secondary sources, including scientific journal articles, government reports, and media coverage to complement and triangulate field data.

Data analysis is carried out in an interactive and continuous manner, following a qualitative analysis model consisting of three streams of activity: data reduction (selecting, focusing, and simplifying raw data from field records), data presentation (organizing information in the form of narratives, matrices, and tables for ease of understanding), and drawing conclusions/verifications. Thematic analysis is used to identify key patterns and themes that emerge from the data, which are then interpreted through a pre-constructed theoretical framework, (JW Creswell, 2016).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Pikukuh as a Socio-Cosmological Matrix

Field findings confirm that Pikukuh is the foundation of Baduy's resilience. It is not just a list of prohibitions, but a matrix that integrates ethics, cosmology, and social institutions, (Siti Widiati, 2022a). The principle of "*lojor teu meunang dipotong, pondok teu meunang disambung*" becomes an ethical justification for organic farming practices without chemical inputs and vernacular architecture that doesn't change the contours of the soil. Functionally, *Pikukuh* gave birth to a layered social architecture that functions as **a cultural immune system**, (Rahmanul Hakim et al., 2025c). The Baduy Dalam acts as a "buffer zone" that absorbs and filters the shocks of modernization, allowing the Baduy Dalam to maintain the purity of the customs (*purity*). The social sanction mechanism, whereby severe customary violators in the Baduy Dalam are "downgraded" to the Baduy Luar, dynamically ensuring that this buffer zone is inhabited by individuals who are more open to change, (Sa'diyah, n.d.; Siti Widiati, 2022b). This structure allows for the negotiation and selective adoption of modernity, including marketing technologies, without undermining the core of the culture.

Social Structure and Indigenous Leadership

The implementation of Pikukuh is concretely manifested in a hierarchical and functional social structure and customary leadership system. The Baduy people are generally classified into three main groups based on the level of obedience to Pikukuh and the location of the settlement:

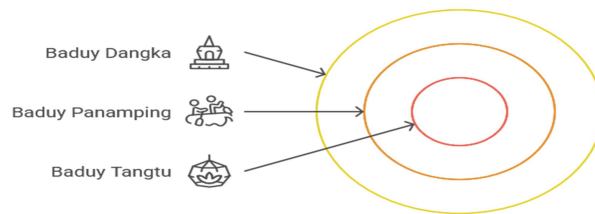


Figure 1. Three Main Groups Based on the Level of Obedience to Pikukuh and Settlement Locations

Source: Accompanying Citizen live interviews, 2025

1. **Baduy Tangtu (Baduy Dalam):** This group is the core or "forerunner" of the Baduy people, which is considered the centre of traditional sanctity, (Gabriel et al., 2025). They lived in three sacred villages (Cibeo, Cikartawana, and Cikeusik) and were the purest *guardians of Pikukuh*. Their signature is natural all-white clothing that symbolizes purity, as well as an absolute rejection of modern technology, footwear and vehicles.
2. **Baduy Pandamping (Baduy Luar):** Derived from the word "companion" or "companion", this group functions as a buffer zone that surrounds the Baduy Dalam area, (Gabriel et al., 2025). Customary rules for them are looser, allowing for more intense interaction with the outside world and limited adoption of technology for economic and communication purposes. They wore all-black or dark blue clothes, (Tim PRMN 12, 2022). This group is often formed from Baduy Dalam residents who violate customs or voluntarily choose to live with more flexible rules.
3. **Baduy Dangka:** This is the outermost group that definitively no longer lives in the customary land of Kanekes Village. Their lives tend to be looser than those of the Baduy Luar and are no longer fully bound by customary provisions and beliefs. They have received an education, understand technology, and many are involved in modern economic activities such as becoming tour guides or traders. Despite this, they are still recognized as part of the larger Baduy community and have their own traditional leader called *Jaro Dangka*. This social structure is governed by a clear customary institutional system, where each leader has specific duties and authorities to ensure that *Pikukuh* is properly executed.

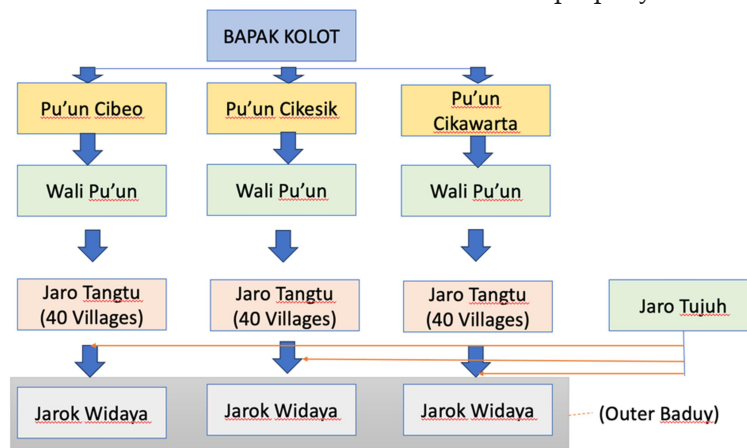


Figure 2. A Glimpse of the Hierarchy of Authority

Source: A Brief Interview with Al Jazeera: A Tribute to the Late Sir John O'Neill, 2025

From Figure 1 above, it shows the multi-layered structure of Baduy customary authority. To maintain and ensure that the transmission and enforcement of Pikukuh runs effectively, starting from the highest spiritual level (Pu'un) to Jaro Widaya. This system is a crucial component in the Baduy resilience architecture, allowing them to maintain a balance between cultural isolation and the inevitable interaction with the outside world.

Table 1. Customary Positions, Duties and Authorities

Customary Department	Description of Duties and Authorities
Bapa Kolot	As a SPIRITUAL HEAD to master the 3 Pu'un which ENSURES Pu'un 2 in UNDERGO FUNGGSI YES AS A King. Parents can replace Pu'un 2 and ranks that are not in accordance with customs. Parents can't get out of the house so to get information about the outside of the house you can get input from Jaro Seven
Pu'un	Pu'un is symbolic of the King (Wali Pu'un) who acts as a spiritual leader, determines and maintains the purity of Pikukuh, and leads all traditional activities of the community. Pu'un is a symbolic power.
Wali Pu'un	As the prime minister from Pu'un, he was tasked with carrying out all governments. Each Wali Pu'un leads 40 villages (a total of 120 villages) each and oversees the government structure under them
Jaro Tujuh	As a customary supervisor and coordinator between the work of Jaro Tangtu, and he as an inspectorate and reported to Bapa Kolot
Jaro Tangtu	This is the first time that the Guardian has been able to communicate with the Guardian and the Guardian Like the Inner Circle of Brothers, the Inner Circle of the Inner Circle.
Jaro Widaya (Baduy Luar)	Responsible as the village head. His task is to ensure that the customs in the villages under power run as planned.

Source: A Brief Interview with the Associated Press: The Guardian of the Outside, the Son of Raden Prabu Nata Sastra Nagara Jaya Diningrat, 2025

Resilient Economic Architecture: Leuit and Huma

The economic resilience of Baduy is supported by two customary institutions rooted in Pikukuh.

1. **Leuit as an Anti-Fragile Food Security Institution:** *Leuit* (rice barns) is more than just a storage facility; it is a complex socio-economic institution. The customary prohibition on the sale of rice (*pare huma*) effectively excludes the main food commodity from market mechanisms, isolating the community from price volatility and speculation. The rice inside *the leuit*, which can last for decades, serves as a food safety net, a communal "seed bank," and social capital for rituals and celebrations. Its placement separate from settlements is a sophisticated fire risk mitigation strategy. Thus, *leuit* creates a decentralized and anti-fragile food security system.

2. **Huma as a Strategy for Diversifying Ecological Risks:** The shifting farming system (*ngahuma*) is a manifestation of Pikukuh's ecological ethics. This practice applies a **polyculture** model, in which dozens of local rice varieties are planted in one field along with various other non-rice crops. The system serves as a diversified investment portfolio: if one variety fails due to pests or drought, another variety or non-rice crop will survive. It is a risk management strategy that has proven to be effective, especially when dealing with climate anomalies such as El Nino. A total rejection of chemical fertilizers and pesticides not only preserves the environment, but also provides absolute independence from external inputs whose prices fluctuate.



Figure 3. The ‘Leuit’ granary system and ‘Huma’ farming in Baduy

The Evolution of Adaptive Marketing: From Face-to-Face Interaction to Digital Symbolic Capitalism

The marketing architecture of Baduy shows a remarkable adaptive evolution, especially in Baduy Luar.

1. **Traditional Marketing:** Initially, marketing relied on direct interaction with tourists who came to Kanekes Village. In this model, cultural tourism itself is the main marketing channel, where the uniqueness and authenticity of the lifestyle becomes a "product" that attracts visitors.
2. **Digital Leap:** Driven by the need to expand the market and facilitated by mentoring programs, the young generation of Baduy Luar is massively adopting digital technology. They actively sell on various *marketplaces* (Shopee, Tokopedia), social media (Instagram, TikTok, Facebook), and even accept digital payments through QRIS. This adoption dramatically increased turnover and expanded market reach to national and international levels.



Figure 4. ‘Baduy Weaving’, which is a cultural heritage and important to the Baduy community, is marketed both directly and through online platforms.

This phenomenon can be analysed as the practice of symbolic capitalism. Consumers not only buy physical products (woven fabrics, honey, koja bags), but also buy the narrative, authenticity, and cultural values inherent in them. The process of making weaving takes months. For example, it is no longer seen as a production inefficiency, but as a marker of authenticity that increases the symbolic value and selling price of the product. Baduy Luar intelligently leverages their "cultural capital" to participate in the digital economy.

Resilience and the Paradox of Modernization

The resilience of the Baduy system has been tested in the face of a crisis. During the economic and climate crisis of 1997-2002, the polyculture and *leuit huma* systems made them immune to crop failures and spikes in agricultural input prices. During the COVID-19 pandemic, when the tourism sector was paralyzed, their food sovereignty remained secured, and digital marketing capabilities became a vital economic safety valve.

However, the interaction with modernity also gives birth to a paradox. On the one hand, tourism and digital technology bring economic empowerment, capacity building, and cultural appreciation. On the other hand, it carries the risk of erosion of *Pikukuh's values*, such as the emergence of a consumptive lifestyle, internal economic disparities, and the problem of plastic waste. Managing the dialectic between economic gain and the risk of cultural degradation is a major challenge for the sustainability of the Baduy community in the future.



Figure 5. The Environmental Situation of the Baduy Community

CONCLUSION

This research shows that the resilience and sustainability of the socio-economic model of the Baduy community is not a product of passive isolation, but the result of an architecture that is consciously designed and rooted in *the philosophy of Pepakem*. *Pepakem* serves as a matrix that gives birth to (1) layered social structures as cultural immune systems, (2) economic institutions (*leuit* and *huma*) as fortresses of food security and ecological risk management, and (3) adaptive marketing models that are able to utilize symbolic capitalism in the digital arena without having to sacrifice their subsistence pillars.

The theoretical implication of this study is to strengthen the argument that local wisdom is not a static system, but a dynamic and adaptive framework for managing change. The Baduy case

study contributes to the theory of socio-ecological resilience by demonstrating the importance of non-market customary institutions in the face of external shocks.

The practical implication for policymakers is that a successful development model does not always have to be a *top-down* intervention. Supporting and strengthening existing local institutions, as we are trying to do through the *Triple Helix* collaboration model, can be a more effective and sustainable strategy.

The next direction of research can be focused on longitudinal studies to measure the long-term impact of the digital economy on social cohesion and customary adherence in Baduy Luar. In addition, a quantitative analysis of the contribution of subsistence economics versus market economics to total household income can provide a more detailed picture of their hybrid economic models.

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