From Traditional to Digital: A Comparative Analysis of Political Branding Strategies in Indonesia's 2024 Presidential Election[*]

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Abstract

This research aims to 1) analyze and compare the political branding strategies employed by Indonesian presidential candidates during the 2024 election campaign through social media platforms, 2) examine the effectiveness of digital communication strategies in shaping voter perception and engagement during Indonesia's 2024 presidential election, and 3) identify emerging patterns and trends in political marketing approaches within Indonesia's contemporary democratic landscape. This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach with comparative case study design to analyze the political branding strategies of Prabowo Subianto, Anies Baswedan, and Ganjar Pranowo. Data collection was conducted through systematic content analysis of Instagram posts from official candidate accounts during the campaign period from October 2023 to February 2024. The study utilized Scammell's (2015) four-stage political branding framework comprising identity determination, role definition, positioning, and brand management. Primary data were collected through screenshot documentation, caption analysis, engagement metrics, and audience responses across three campaign phases: pre-campaign, active campaign, and post-debate periods. The research results found that: a) each candidate adopted distinctly different approaches to digital political branding with Prabowo Subianto successfully transforming his political image through a "gemoy" persona that resonated particularly with younger voters, ultimately securing victory with 58.6% of votes; Anies Baswedan positioned himself as an intellectual leader emphasizing policy achievements through his "Desak Anies" program; and Ganjar Pranowo adopted a populist approach focusing on grassroots connections through "Menginap di Rumah Warga" initiatives; b) digital political branding effectiveness depends on alignment between candidate characteristics, strategic positioning, and target audience expectations; c) Indonesia's digital landscape with 75.9% internet penetration created new dynamics where social media platforms

serve as primary battlegrounds for political brand construction. The study concludes that successful digital political branding requires integration of authentic character presentation, professional competence demonstration, and strategic brand management adapted to diverse demographic segments.

Introduction

Democracy has become one of the most widely adopted systems of governance worldwide, fundamentally built upon the principle of "government of the people, by the people, and for the people". This principle emphasizes the intricate relationship between government and its citizens, where democratic processes offer civil decision-making systems and social justice. In democratic societies, power originates from the people, granting citizens the right to create rules that benefit and protect their rights while ensuring equal rights and obligations for all members of society (Kaban, 2023).

The implementation of democratic principles requires constitutional frameworks to guarantee and protect citizens' rights. In Indonesia, the 1945 Constitution serves as the foundational law that reinforces people's sovereignty, explicitly mentioned twice in the document's preamble, particularly in the fourth paragraph, which states that independence is the right of all nations and should be structured under a constitution based on popular sovereignty (Kaban, 2023). The practical application of popular sovereignty in Indonesia operates through a two-tiered system: first, direct implementation by the people without representation, and second, indirect implementation through representative organizations or groups (Kaban, 2023).

As a manifestation of popular sovereignty, Indonesia established three major institutions governing democratic processes: the executive, legislative, and judiciary branches. These institutions serve as extensions of the people's voice, executing citizens' rights and authorities through representative mechaniesms. The executive branch, particularly the presidency, holds the highest position in the country's democratic structure, with presidential selection conducted through general elections (Xi, 2024).

In democratic nations, elections serve multiple critical functions: serving as formal procedures for transferring power or political positions according to predetermined timeframes; facilitating the selection process for choosing leaders who can represent people's interests; providing peaceful conflict resolution mechAniesms for leadership transitions while avoiding violent demonstrations; and creating channels that bring citizens' authority into the sphere of state power (Mardimin, 2002). The dynamics of electoral politics in Indonesia are governed by Law No. 7 of 2017 concerning Election Administration.

The contemporary political landscape has witnessed significant transformation in campaign strategies, particularly with the advent of digital technology and social

media platforms. Political marketing has emerged as a powerful tool with substantial potential to influence voter decisions (Gautama & Kusuma, 2023). The strategic utilization of political infrastructure combined with robust methodologies can yield effective results, with various approaches available for maximizing political marketing effectiveness depending on management strategies and emerging urgencies.

Indonesia's digital transformation has created unprecedented opportunities for political communication. According to the Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association (APJII), internet users in Indonesia reached 221,563,479 individuals in 2024, representing 75.9% of the total population of 278,696,200 people in 2023 (APJII, 2024). This represents a 1.4% increase from the previous period. Furthermore, We Are Social recorded approximately 139 million social media users in Indonesia as of January 2024, equivalent to 49.9% of the national population (Annur, 2024).

The high penetration of internet and social media usage has fundamentally transformed campaign strategies in Indonesia's 2024 presidential election. Candidates and political parties have increasingly relied on digital platforms to reach voters, create engaging content, and build political brands that resonate with diverse demographic segments. Political communication, as a strategic tool for candidate-voter interaction, plays a crucial role in shaping candidate image and public perception (Falah, 2024). This encompasses various elements including campaign advertisements, media interviews, public debates, and social media engagement.

However, the digital era also presents new challenges in designing effective and efficient political communication strategies. Campaign content must be attractive, relevant, and capable of triggering positive interactions from voters (Majid & Andrian, 2023). Understanding comprehensive patterns of political communication strategies in the digital era and their influence on voter perception and behavior is essential for political parties and candidates to achieve their electoral campaign objectives.

The 2024 Indonesian presidential election featured three prominent candidates, each bringing distinct backgrounds and political branding strategies to the campaign. Prabowo Subianto Djojohadikusumo, a former military general and current Defense Minister, emerged as the victor with 58.6% of the vote. His campaign marked a significant transformation from his previous electoral attempts, adopting a more relaxed, humorous persona that resonated particularly well with younger voters through social media platforms (Nindy, 2021). Anies Baswedan, former Governor of DKI Jakarta and education sector veteran, positioned himself as an intellectual leader with a track record in both education and governance, emphasizing his achievements in Jakarta's urban development and transportation innovations (Anies, 2024). Meanwhile, Ganjar Pranowo, former Governor of Central Java, built his campaign around a populist approach, focusing on grassroots connections through programs like "Menginap di Rumah Warga" (Staying at Citizens' Homes) and his support for small and medium enterprises through initiatives like #LapakGanjar (Dharma Putra et al., 2022).

Despite the growing importance of digital political branding in Indonesia's democratic processes, there remains a significant gap in comprehensive comparative analysis of how these three distinct candidates utilized social media platforms and digital strategies during the 2024 election. While previous studies have examined individual aspects of political communication or single-candidate approaches, limited research has provided systematic comparison of political branding strategies across all major candidates in Indonesia's most recent presidential election.

This study adopts Scammell (2015) political branding framework as its primary theoretical foundation, which conceptualizes political branding as a strategic process encompassing four interconnected stages: identity determination ("Determine who you are"), role definition ("Determine what you do"), positioning ("Position yourself"), and brand management ("Manage your brand"). This framework provides a comprehensive analytical lens for understanding how political actors construct and maintain their public personas in digital environments. Scammell's theory is particularly relevant for analyzing contemporary political communication as it acknowledges the shift from traditional mass media to personalized, interactive digital platforms where candidates must actively engage in continuous brand construction and maintenance. The framework's emphasis on identity consistency, role clarity, strategic positioning, and adaptive brand management aligns with the complex dynamics of social media political campaigning, where authenticity and relatability must be balanced with professional credibility and policy substance. By employing this theoretical approach, the study can systematically examine how each candidate's digital branding strategy reflects deliberate choices in self-presentation, role articulation, competitive positioning, and responsive brand management throughout the campaign period, thereby contributing to the broader understanding of political marketing theory in emerging democratic contexts.

Objectives

1. To analyze and compare the political branding strategies employed by Indonesian presidential candidates during the 2024 election campaign through social media platforms.

2. To examine the effectiveness of digital communication strategies in shaping voter perception and engagement during Indonesia's 2024 presidential election.

3. To identify emerging patterns and trends in political marketing approaches within Indonesia's contemporary democratic landscape and their implications for future electoral processes.

Literature Review

The concept of democracy has evolved significantly since its origins in ancient Greece, with substantial influence from concepts such as polis, political equality, and political participation. In contemporary times, most modern nations worldwide declare themselves as democratic states (Basuki, 2020), including Indonesia. Democracy serves as the foundation for social and state life, meaning that people determine matters

concerning their lives, including policies issued by the state, which ultimately determine their future quality of life.

Political marketing has demonstrated significant potential for development as a field of study due to its substantial influence on voter decision-making processes. The application of political marketing requires solid methodology to achieve optimal results (Gautama & Kusuma, 2023). Strengthening positioning can enhance candidate character, making their advantages clearly visible as differentiating factors that become the focal point of consumer or voter choice (Sutarso, 2011). In elections, candidate parties or political parties frequently compete for votes, often through media advertisements designed to attract public sympathy, hoping these advertisements will influence people to vote for the political party or leader placing the advertisement.

Political communication serves as a strategic instrument for candidates to interact and communicate with voters, playing a vital role in shaping candidate image (Falah, 2024). Political communication media encompasses various aspects, from campaign advertisements, media interviews, public debates, to social media utilization. Each element of political communication contributes significantly to shaping public perception of candidates. Political communication is often associated with political discussion models or verbal and non-verbal political message delivery that can influence society and government within a political system. Simply stated, political communication is the delivery of political messages from source to recipient to create shared understanding of meaning (Susanto, 2017).

Marketing planning constitutes a management process that produces marketing strategies with the primary objective of achieving marketing goals through the implementation of systematic processes and coordination to reach planning, marketing, and innovation solutions (Nabila & Fadhilah, 2023). The marketing process conducted by candidates aims to gain additional votes beyond their existing supporter base. The series of activities undertaken cannot be separated from how each process generates advantageous progress.

Advertising is considered the most popular medium used by companies to send persuasive information to consumers, proven to influence emotions, knowledge, meaning, beliefs, attitudes, and consumer perceptions regarding products or brands (Kustiawa et al., 2022). Online media has become the most widely used and influential medium, evidenced by uploads and user engagement statistics.

Campaign activities in the current globalization era extensively utilize social media platforms. Beyond high internet user numbers in Indonesia, social media usage has also increased rapidly. One method used in political marketing is campaigning (Kusumawardhana & Rizkimawati, 2022). With high social media user numbers, this platform is certainly utilized to promote candidates in the 2024 presidential election.

The digital world also brings new challenges in designing effective and efficient political communication strategy patterns. Campaign content must be attractive, relevant, and capable of triggering positive voter interactions (Majid & Andrian, 2023). Comprehensive knowledge regarding political communication strategy patterns in the digital era influences voter perception and behavior, making it crucial for political parties and candidates to achieve their electoral campaign objectives. Understanding political communication strategies for elections in the digital era hopefully provides valuable guidance for candidates, political parties, and policymakers

to design more effective and impactful campaigns while contributing to knowledge development.

Understanding the dynamics and structure of political communication in elections during the digital era is expected to provide valuable strategic insights for candidates, political parties, and policymakers to design more effective and impactful campaigns while contributing to knowledge advancement in this field.

Methodology

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach with a comparative case study design to analyze the political branding strategies of three Indonesian presidential candidates in the 2024 general election. The research method was selected based on the characteristics of the phenomenon under investigation, namely the transformation of political communication strategies from traditional approaches toward digital ones, which requires an in-depth understanding of the context, meaning, and processes occurring in digital campaigns. The qualitative approach enables researchers to explore the complexity of political branding strategies within the context of social media, as well as to understand the nuances of visual and textual communication employed by each candidate. This research adopts an interpretive paradigm that emphasizes subjective understanding of social and political realities constructed through digital interactions between candidates and voters.

This study focuses on the digital campaigns conducted by each candidate pair on every post displayed on one social media platform, namely Instagram. The selection of Instagram as the main focus is based on the platform's penetration rate, which reaches 122 million users, equivalent to 47.3% of the total population in Indonesia, and its characteristics that support effective visual communication for political branding. Instagram is one of the most popular social media platforms, followed by social media such as Facebook, WhatsApp, and TikTok, according to databoks.katadata.co.id. (Panggabean, 2024)

Data collection techniques were conducted through systematic content analysis of social media posts, particularly on the Instagram platform, from the official accounts of the three candidates: @prabowo (Prabowo Subianto), @aniesbaswedan (Anies Baswedan), and @ganjar_pranowo (Ganjar Pranowo) during the official campaign period from October 2023 to February 2024. The selection of Instagram as the primary focus was based on this platform's penetration reaching 89.15 million users in Indonesia and its characteristics that support effective visual communication for political branding. Primary data were collected through screenshot documentation of posts, caption analysis, engagement metrics (likes, comments, shares), and audience responses. The observation period was divided into three phases: pre-campaign (October-November 2023), active campaign (December 2023-January 2024), and post-presidential debate (February 2024) to capture the dynamics of strategic changes throughout the campaign period.

Data analysis utilized a four-stage political branding framework adapted from Scammell's theory (2015), comprising: (1) determining political identity ("Determine who you are") through analysis of persona consistency and candidates' visual characteristics; (2) defining political role ("Determine what you do") by identifying programs, policies, and achievements communicated; (3) political positioning

("Position yourself") through analysis of differentiation and each candidate's unique selling proposition; and (4) brand management ("Manage your brand") by evaluating communication consistency and responses to emerging issues. Research limitations are acknowledged in terms of focus on a single social media platform and limited time period; however, the depth of qualitative analysis provides comprehensive insights into the evolution of political branding strategies in Indonesia's digital era.

Results

Prabowo Subianto's Political Branding Strategy

Brand Identity and Character Transformation Prabowo Subianto successfully transformed his political image from his previous electoral attempts, adopting a more relaxed, humorous persona that particularly resonated with younger voters through social media platforms (Nindy, 2021). His Instagram account @prabowo showcased a character that was casual, humorous, and approachable, earning him the nickname "gemoy" among netizens. This strategic shift from his previously known serious and sometimes temperamental image helped reduce political tensions and improved his political branding effectiveness.
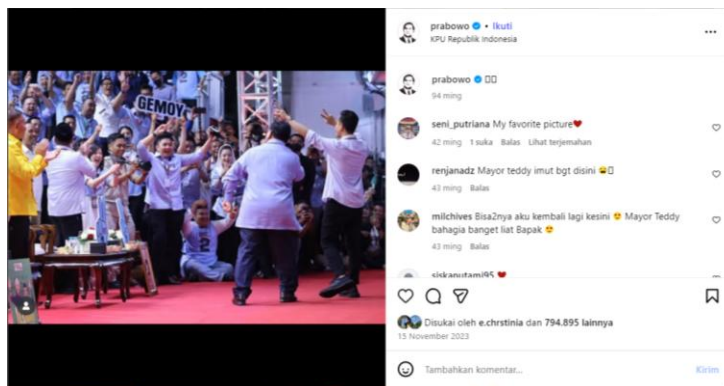

Figure 1 Political Branding Strategy of Prabowo Subianto on Instagram
Source: Instagram account @prabowo, 2024

The image above is one form of advertising before the campaign was carried out, namely in the October-November period. Prabowo's total Instagram posts during that month amounted to 96 posts with 15.1 million followers. Prabowo portrayed a humaniestic image with his supporters. Various posts about daily activities and interactions with community leaders and state guests, at a time when Prabowo was still active as defense minister. Prabowo undertook many activities to build closer ties with the coalition parties. Prabowo's communication style was different from the previous presidential election; this time, Prabowo was not as enthusiastic in his speeches.

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After the campaign ended, Prabowo's posts returned to normal, featuring visits from guests from friendly countries and a focus on expressing gratitude to his team and supporters for their cooperation and appreciation. His communication became calmer, more diplomatic, and emphasized symbols of unity. This was aimed at reducing political tensions while maintaining his authority as an inclusive leader. There were 40 posts during the February period.

Professional Positioning As the incumbent Defense Minister, Prabowo leveraged his military background and current governmental role to establish credibility. His social media content frequently highlighted his achievements in defense cooperation and bilateral relationships, demonstrating his leadership capabilities and work ethic (Junior & Hanif, 2024). Notable contributions included humanitarian aid to Palestine through health ships and various assistance programs, which garnered significant public sympathy, particularly on social media platforms.

Brand Management and Youth Engagement Prabowo's brand management strategy focused heavily on connecting with Generation Z through digital platforms. His transformation into a figure closer to young people represented a wise tactical approach (Mulyadi, 2023). The digitalization strategy utilized social media to create a more relaxed and friendly image, serving as a key to directly connecting with young voters. His posts featured interactions with various political figures, religious leaders, artists, and students, demonstrating broad coalition building.

Anies Baswedan's Political Branding Strategy

Intellectual Leadership Identity Anies Baswedan positioned himself as an intellectual leader, leveraging his extensive career in education and governance, from university professor to Jakarta Governor (Anies, 2024). His Instagram bio stated "Official account of Anies Baswedan, managed by team, personal posts marked #ABW," reflecting transparency in communication. He consistently presented himself as a humaniestic and nationalistic figure, often wearing traditional peci and maintaining courteous expressions in posts (Nurfadilah & Khoirotunnisa, 2023).

Figure 2 Political Branding Strategy of Anies Baswedan on Instagram
Source: Instagram account @aniesbaswedan, 2024

Similar to Prabowo's campaign, Anies' Instagram content before the campaign period consisted of 224 posts and 7.8 million followers. Anies' Instagram content tended to emphasize her personal image and leadership track record. It highlighted her visits to the community, daily activities, and participation in forums such as public lectures. This serves to reinforce Anies's track record with the public and strengthen her political identity without violating regulations. Then, during the campaign period in December-January, Anies's Instagram posts numbered 290, which was more than before. Anies carried out many activities during the campaign. The main focus of her posts during this period was, of course, more on her vision, mission, and work program. Many of Anies's vlog videos and speeches convey messages with an intellectual tone. The most popular caption used in Anies's posts is "Desak Anies" (Urge Anies), which means that Anies is urged to listen to the complaints and voices of the people when she visits various regions for her campaign. After the campaign, Anies's posts decreased dramatically from 99 to just a few. These posts naturally contained many expressions of gratitude to the team and the community that supported Anies. Then there were posts about the Constitutional Court's decision to highlight the election dispute. Anies's posts also highlighted his closeness to religious leaders and young people.

Policy Innovation Showcase Anies highlighted his governance achievements, particularly transportation innovations like JakLingko, Jakarta International Stadium (JIS), and Jakarta International E-Prix Circuit (JIEC). His social media strategy emphasized evidence-based leadership through sharing concrete accomplishments and policy implementations (Kurniasih & Setianti, 2024). He also demonstrated inclusive governance by providing operational support for all religious facilities, allocating 11 billion rupiah in 2022 for temples, mosques, churches, and other religious institutions.

Democratic Values and Engagement Through his "Desak Anies" program, he created innovative campaign forums across Indonesian cities, generating high public enthusiasm and creating academically substantial campaigns. This program served as a role model for future presidential elections due to its efficiency in gaining public support, particularly among youth interested in positive innovations.

Ganjar Pranowo's Political Branding Strategy

Populist Positioning Ganjar Pranowo, former Governor of Central Java, built his brand around populist appeal with his Instagram bio stating "Tuanku Ya Rakyat Jabatan Cuma Mandat" (Your Majesty the People, Position is Just a Mandate). With 6.7 million Instagram followers, he effectively positioned himself as a public servant (Syafruddin Pohan et al., 2023). His political career spanning from DPR RI member (2004-2014) to Central Java Governor provided substantial governance experience.

UMKM and Social Programs Ganjar's branding strategy heavily emphasized support for small and medium enterprises (UMKM) through various programs including affordable credit schemes for traditional market traders and housewives with a 2 million rupiah credit ceiling (Yudhistira, 2023). His #LapakGanjar initiative promoted over 3,000 UMKM products for free through his social media platforms (Dharma Putra et al., 2022). Additionally, he launched the Social Security Card (KJS) program to address poverty issues not covered by central government assistance.

Figure 3 Political Branding Strategy of Ganjar Pranowo on Instagram
Source: Instagram account @ganjar_pranowo, 2024

Ganjar's Instagram posts before the campaign period numbered 202. Before the active campaign, Ganjar posted more frequently about his daily activities, such as interactions with the community. The posts that appeared frequently were about social activities, sports, and moments with his family. The social activities that Ganjar did, such as cycling and meeting young people, appeared natural but still built emotional closeness. He was portrayed as a father figure and a friend who could be discussed with by all circles. During the campaign period, Ganjar's Instagram posts totaled 272. The content became more structured and intense to gain support. Posts about large-scale campaigns held in various regions began to appear. The posts were designed to explain programs concisely for easy understanding. Many documents showed large crowds at campaign events, which could be used as symbols of Ganjar's electability as a presidential candidate. Connection with the Community His flagship program, "Staying at Residents' Homes" (Menginap di Rumah Warga), became a key element in his political branding, demonstrating direct engagement with the community and removing barriers between leaders and citizens (Mubarrod & Syarwi, 2024). This approach created an image of openness and genuine concern for the welfare of ordinary people. Finally, Ganjar's posts after the campaign, numbering 70, decreased significantly, but the content on Instagram remained the same as before the campaign period, namely togetherness with the community and moments with family. There were many moments of togetherness during the campaign posted even though the campaign momentum had ended. There were many motivational narratives and content emphasizing the integrity of the election, as well as expressions of gratitude to the team and supporters.

Grassroots Connection His signature "Menginap di Rumah Warga" (Staying at Citizens' Homes) program became a central element of his political branding, demonstrating direct engagement with communities and eliminating barriers between leaders and citizens (Mubarrod & Syarwi, 2024). This approach created an image of accessibility and genuine concern for ordinary people's welfare.

Discussion

Table 1 Comparison of Political Branding Strategies of Three Presidential Candidates 2024 on Instagram

Appearance	Prabowo Subianto	Anies Rasyid Baswedan	Ganjar Pranowo
Personal image	Posts with a firm and authoritative style as a leader.	An intellectual image, simple and close to the people, a narrative of intelligent, populist leaders.	Relaxed, humaniestic content that captures moments with family. Narratives that are relatable and authentic.
Engagment digital	The caption is formal and uses the hashtag #IndonesiaMaju.	Active interaction on Instagram, both in posts and stories, and use of the hashtags #IndonesiaAdilMakmuru and #perubahan.	Reels content, hashtags #Ganjar Pranowo, #sahabatGanjar.
Pre-campaign	A typical post as an active minister and activities in preparation for the elections.	As usual, many posts containing narratives and motivational messages are shared on Instagram.	A typical post from someone who is close to the people.
Active campaign	The slogan gemoy became the most widely used.	The slogans or hashtags "Desak Anies" (Press Anies) and "change" became the most popular.	The slogan or hashtag "ganjarnginap" (stay overnight) for Ganjar to stay overnight at residents' homes was the most popular.
Post-campaign	Thank you to the team and supporters. Posting activities as before.	Thank you to the team and supporters. Post narratives, motivational messages, and captions in the comments section.	Expressing gratitude to the team and supporters. Posting activities with the community and moments with family, as before, staying close to the people.

Source: Content analysis of Instagram accounts @prabowo, @aniesbaswedan, and @ganjar_pranowo (October 2023 - February 2024)

The comparative analysis reveals distinct strategic approaches employed by each candidate in their digital political branding efforts. Prabowo Subianto's transformation strategy proved most effective, as evidenced by his electoral victory with 58.6% of the vote. His ability to reinvent his political persona while maintaining

his core strength as a defense expert demonstrates sophisticated brand management. The success of his "gemoy" character transformation illustrates the importance of authenticity perception in digital political communication, supporting theories about political marketing effectiveness (Gautama & Kusuma, 2023).

Anies Baswedan's intellectual positioning strategy, while consistent with his background, faced challenges in broader populist appeal. His emphasis on policy achievements and academic discourse resonated well with educated urban demographics but may have limited reach among rural and less educated populations. However, his innovative campaign approaches, particularly the "Desak Anies" program, introduced new standards for political engagement that prioritize substance over spectacle.

Ganjar Pranowo's populist approach, emphasizing grassroots connection and UMKM support, demonstrated strong theoretical alignment with democratic principles. His consistent messaging about serving the people and his practical programs showed authentic commitment to social welfare. However, the limitations of populist branding in a highly competitive political environment became apparent when faced with more resource-intensive and professionally managed campaigns.

The digital transformation of political communication in Indonesia, supported by 75.9% internet penetration and 49.9% social media usage (APJII, 2024; Annur, 2024), has fundamentally altered campaign dynamics. Social media platforms have become primary battlegrounds for political branding, requiring candidates to balance authenticity with professional presentation. The success factors identified include character relatability, consistent messaging, evidence-based claims, and direct voter engagement.

The findings support political communication theory emphasizing the importance of strategic image management and voter perception (Falah, 2024). The role of social media in political branding has evolved beyond simple information dissemination to sophisticated brand building and emotional connection establishment. The study confirms that effective political branding requires integration of personal character, professional competence, and strategic communication management (Majid & Andrian, 2023).

Conclusion

This comparative analysis suggests that Indonesia's 2024 presidential election marked a significant transformation in political communication strategies, with digital platforms fundamentally reshaping how candidates construct and manage their political brands. The findings indicate that Prabowo Subianto's strategic character transformation from a serious military figure to a relatable "gemoy" persona appears to have been particularly effective in resonating with younger demographics, contributing to his electoral victory with 58.6% of votes. This transformation suggests a potential link between authenticity perception in digital spaces and electoral success, though the relationship between image makeover and voter choice remains complex.

The study reveals that each candidate adopted distinctly different approaches to digital political branding: Anies Baswedan's intellectual positioning emphasized policy achievements and governance innovations, while Ganjar Pranowo's populist strategy focused on grassroots connections through programs like "Menginap di Rumah Warga"

and UMKM support initiatives. These varied strategies suggest that there may not be a single formula for successful digital political branding, but rather that effectiveness appears to depend on the alignment between candidate characteristics, strategic positioning, and target audience expectations.

The research indicates that Indonesia's digital landscape, with 75.9% internet penetration and 49.9% social media usage, has created new dynamics where social media platforms serve as primary battlegrounds for political brand construction. The findings suggest that successful digital political branding may require integration of authentic character presentation, professional competence demonstration, and strategic brand management adapted to diverse demographic segments. However, the study's focus on a single social media platform and limited timeframe suggests caution in generalizing these conclusions to broader political communication contexts.

Recommendation

1. Practical and Policy Recommendations

Political practitioners and campaign strategists should consider developing more nuanced digital communication strategies that balance authenticity with professional credibility. The findings suggest that character transformation, when executed strategically, may enhance voter engagement, particularly among younger demographics. Campaign teams might benefit from investing in comprehensive social media analytics to better understand audience responses and optimize content accordingly. Electoral institutions could explore developing guidelines for digital campaign practices to ensure fair competition while preserving the democratic benefits of increased political engagement through social media.

Political parties should consider diversifying their digital strategies across multiple platforms rather than concentrating efforts on single channels. The study suggests that different demographic segments may respond differently to various branding approaches, indicating a need for targeted messaging strategies. Furthermore, the apparent success of programs that demonstrate direct community engagement, such as Ganjar's "Menginap di Rumah Warga," suggests that offline activities integrated with digital storytelling may enhance political brand effectiveness.

2. Recommendations for Future Research

This study's limitations in scope and methodology suggest several directions for future investigation. Longitudinal research tracking political brand evolution across multiple election cycles would provide valuable insights into the sustainability and long-term effectiveness of digital transformation strategies. Cross-national comparative studies examining digital political branding in different democratic contexts could help identify universal principles versus culturally specific practices in political communication.

Future research would benefit from employing mixed-method approaches that combine quantitative analysis of engagement metrics with qualitative assessment of content effectiveness. Studies incorporating voter perception surveys alongside content analysis could provide deeper understanding of how digital branding strategies actually influence voting behavior. Additionally, research examining the role of emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence in political brand management could offer insights into the future evolution of digital political communication.

Investigating the effectiveness of different social media platforms for political branding would address this study's single-platform limitation. Furthermore, research exploring the relationship between digital political branding and democratic participation quality could contribute to broader discussions about technology's role in democratic processes. Studies examining how political branding strategies adapt to changing media consumption patterns among different generational cohorts would also provide valuable insights for both academic understanding and practical application.

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