Effectiveness of Digital Marketing Strategies and Political Brand Reinforcement

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ABSTRACT

This research explores the relationship between the effectiveness of digital marketing strategies and the strengthening of political brands in the context of political choices and public perceptions. Amidst the shifting political paradigm increasingly driven by digital media, a deeper understanding of how digital marketing strategies influence the image and impressions of political leaders becomes increasingly important.This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach supported by quantitative data on the level of digital media usage as a promotional tool for political party candidates. Data analysis is conducted by referring to the results of literature studies and political phenomenon studies to discover the relationships and implications between variables of digital marketing strategies and the strengthening of political brands.Findings indicate that the effectiveness of digital marketing strategies significantly contributes to the strengthening of political brands, with various elements such as content quality, social interaction, and online presence playing key roles in shaping public perceptions of a political leader. The results of this research provide valuable insights for political marketing practitioners in developing more effective strategies in optimizing the use of digital media to reinforce political identities and images. Practical implications of this research also pave the way for future researchers to further explore the dynamics of interaction between digital marketing strategies and the formation of political brands in the ever-changing context of modern politics.

Keywords: Marketing Strategy, Branding, Digital, Communication.

INTRODUCTION

In order to make progress in both theory and practice in the field of marketing, political marketing must actively incorporate new and sophisticated ideas from two foundational disciplines: marketing and political science. The examination of branding has gained significant importance and has been given high priority in marketing research (Keller & Lehmann, 2005; Keller, 2010). Brands are of utmost importance in the business world, and the study of branding, along with associated ideas, forms the foundation of research on customer value, market positioning, consumer experience, and management performance. In order to be competitive in the changing business environment, market participants must consistently develop strategies (Isti Fadah, et al., 2022). Contemporary political marketing has adopted a novel conceptual framework, specifically the examination of human branding. The recognition of human branding is a rational outcome of the expansion of contemporary digitalization. With the rise of digital technology in different domains, there is a growing concern over the potential loss of a core aspect of our existence, our 'humanity'. The inference made from this train of thought is that the notion of branding has practical significance in political management, and that political marketing, given the distinct role of individuals within party organizations, offers a very advantageous framework for examining human branding.Several recent research publications in the realm of political marketing highlight the prominent position and significant impact of the human/figure branding domain. This is recognized as a distinct academic field of study (Butler, Collins, & Fellenz, 2007), which draws on the knowledge and skills of scholars from different disciplines such as management, politics, economics, sociology, and journalism (Butler & Harris, 2009). It has also gained significant size and support (Harris & Lock, 2010), and is considered a well-established area of professional practice (Plasser & Plasser, 2002; Johnson, 2009). The expansion of brand concept application from its initial use in industry and commerce to diverse institutions such as churches, universities, and government departments also suggests the potential utilization of brand analysis, ideas, and applications in political entities. This study aims to analyze the relationship between digital marketing strategies, branding, and politics by examining how specialized branding studies may be used to politics. The focus will be on the consequences of these techniques for political events in Indonesia in 2024.

RESEARCH METHODS

This article is written with a qualitative approach, focusing on textual analysis and visual studies of digital news patterns regarding the political process in 2024. Visuals and texts sourced from various scholarly studies are elements used to construct the methodology in this topic. The political process, commencing with the presidential and legislative elections, has attracted attention for examination from a marketing perspective, particularly in the context of developing figure branding and its consequences on

marketing communication patterns. Several news reports and related documents during this political period will serve as the data sources discussed in this article. In addition to the 2024 context in Indonesia, this article also presents various findings from studies in previous political processes in different countries, which are interconnected in terms of content and narrative, serving as comparisons of branding activities at that time and efforts of rebranding as progressive data forms.

The primary sources of this writing are analyses of textual materials related to various digital marketing strategy activities, and efforts to build effective political branding, accompanied by information on the publication of political activity news from the perspective of digital media utilization and its effectiveness in achieving political performance. Textual sources can be obtained from various sources, for example, texts can be sourced from letters, manuscripts, documentations, and similar items referred to as content (Imran, 2015). After these textual sources are successfully gathered, the authors conduct content analysis of the sources. Content analysis focuses on exploring the content aspects of communication through the identification of specific characteristics of messages involved in the collected data (Brunnerová & Charvát, 2020).

This article is a literature study supported by phenomenological quantitative data aimed at reaching a descriptive and applicative conclusion regarding the processes of political marketing strategies and the development of effective and efficient political branding models.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Role of Digital Marketing in General Election Contestation

While a marketing approach does not guarantee victory, it provides a concept for facilitating how parties, candidates, and political programs are offered similarly to commercial products (Cangara, 2009). By understanding this marketing function, political parties and candidates participating in general elections develop appropriate strategies tailored to comply with applicable regulations to legitimately win the general election. Several disciplines are applied to create campaign planning that is increasingly targeted, effective, and efficient in achieving victory in an election. One of them is the application of communication management concepts by utilizing available means and resources, which are expected to ensure the continuation of open, creative, educational, and democratic political communication. Outlines seven variables that determine whether someone is elected or not in an election, which influences the performance of a political elite (candidate):

1. Social Background: This factor relates to the influence of the socioeconomic status of the family in which a candidate is raised. Various research results indicate that a candidate born into a liberal-minded family will tend to be democratic. Conversely, a child raised in a conservative family will tend to be authoritarian.

2. Political Socialization: The political socialization that an individual receives has been proven to shape their political views. Through socialization, an individual will learn how to handle tasks and issues related to specific political duties. This socialization experience can provide input on various public positions, abilities, and skills required to attain certain public positions deemed suitable. With various knowledge, a candidate will be able to prepare a campaign well and win an election.

3. Initial Political Activity: This factor refers to the background of a person's political activities and experiences as a candidate. Organizational experience, for example, equips one with the skills to work together and negotiate within a team to push a political issue into policy.

4. Apprenticeship: Internship is the most effective way to introduce a candidate to the culture and work environment associated with the public office they will hold.

5. Occupational Variables: This factor indicates the need for a candidate to enhance their skills, capacity, and work experience so that they can perform tasks related to managing public aspirations.

6. Motivations: Political experts' assumption about someone's motivation to engage in politics is due to their hopes or expectations of personal rewards and their orientation towards collective goals. An elite usually combines both or even manipulates personal needs into public objectives.

7. Selection: This primarily concerns how someone is selected as a candidate. Since 2009, the public has desired candidates who are close to them, and the Election Law allows voters to choose names. With 204 million voters in 2024, managing appropriate political marketing strategies and maximizing the branding process of political candidates become crucial processes expected to have a significant impact on the voters' brand awareness. General election contestants must devise strategies and prioritize by identifying and classifying segments of potential voters.

Data-Driven Marketing-Based Political Growth Model

Political campaigns have utilized micro-targeting techniques that rely on diverse data sets and personalized marketing applications to manipulate individual behavior in recent election cycles. However, recent technological advancements and industrial progress have led to the development of a significantly more advanced and comprehensive system compared to previous iterations. Within the realm of American politics, political campaigns have gradually merged public voter data with commercial information to construct large and thorough voter profiles (Rubinstein, 2014). Thanks to advancements in advertising technology and the data sector, political actors can now leverage the growing infrastructure of specialized companies that offer enhanced resources for data collection and voter targeting. An example of one of these recently established entities is the data marketing cloud. Created by prominent companies including Adobe, Oracle, Salesforce, Nielsen, and IBM, these cloud platforms offer political data and significant quantities of confidential consumer information about potential targets. This information includes credit

card transactions, personal interests, purchasing behaviors, and television viewing preferences (Salesforce DMP, 2017). Certain prominent cloud services also oversee the Data Management Platform (DMP), which has become a vital and contemporary element for precise digital targeting (Chavez, 2017).

A Data Management Platform (DMP) allows advertisers to have centralized management over their audience and campaign data (BlueKai, 2011). They achieve this by gathering and examining data about individuals from diverse online and offline sources. This includes first-party data from their own customer records, like data from supermarket loyalty card usage or recorded activities on websites, mobile phones, or wearable devices. They also utilize second-party data obtained from other companies, such as online publishers, who collect information about individuals and sell it to others. Additionally, they acquire third-party data from numerous sources, which encompasses demographic information, financial data, and other intermediary data, such as race, ethnicity, and the presence of children (O'Hara, 2016). The combination of all this data enables the creation of highly targeted audience segments, as well as the identification and engagement of individuals across various networks and third-party advertising exchanges. DMPs have rapidly become essential tools in political campaigns (Bennett, 2016; Kaye, 2016, July; Regan, J., 2016). Facebook and Google have become essential for political activities, offering a diverse array of commercial digital marketing methods and specialized advertising solutions specifically designed for political purposes (Bond, 2017). Not surprisingly, these firms receive funds from political campaigns as a significant sector in their advertising business (Facebook IQ; Stanford, 2016). The significance of Facebook's role in the 2024 elections cannot be overstated. Facebook's requirement for users to provide their authentic names during registration has enabled the establishment of a robust identity-focused targeting system. This system allows political campaigns to effectively reach a staggering number of over 162 million users in the United States. Moreover, it enables the campaigns to individually target these users based on factors such as age, gender, congressional district, and interests.

The online manual for political campaign marketing advises political campaigns to utilize all available elements of social media platforms, such as Instagram and other websites, to track individuals and gather data through many channels. Companies also employ in-house teams affiliated with major political parties to offer technology assistance and other services to candidates and campaigns (Chester, 2017; Kreiss& McGregor, 2017). In the 2016 US elections, Google strongly promoted the use of YouTube and other digital marketing resources, engaging with both major political parties (YouTube, 2017). The proliferation and advancement of the online market have enhanced political campaigns' capacity to identify, target, and engage with individual voters.

The significance of digital media usage in the 2024 presidential election political process lies in its high effectiveness level. Kompas's periodic survey in May 2023 indicated that social media channels were the most frequently consumed channels by respondents for obtaining various information, including

news about presidential candidates. As many as 42.3 percent of respondents acknowledged this. In second place, there were 41.1 percent of respondents who relied on television broadcasts as their main reference. Other information channels ranked lower with relatively fewer audience proportions. Online news channels accounted for only about 9 percent, while print media and radio each accounted for less than 2 percent.
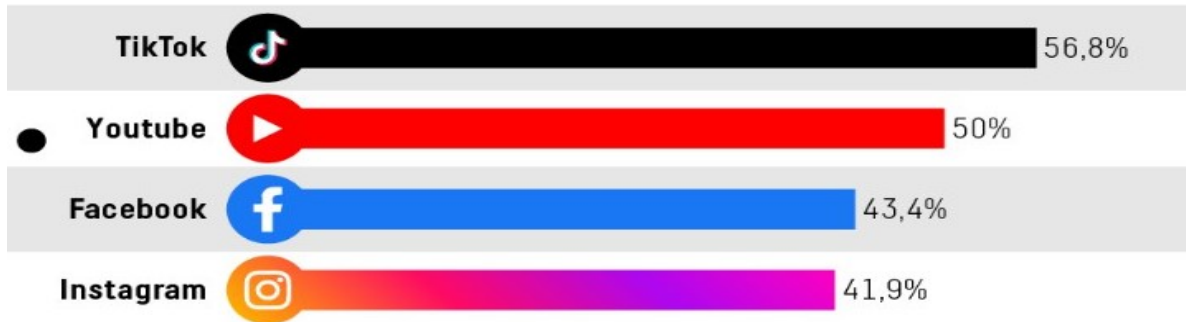
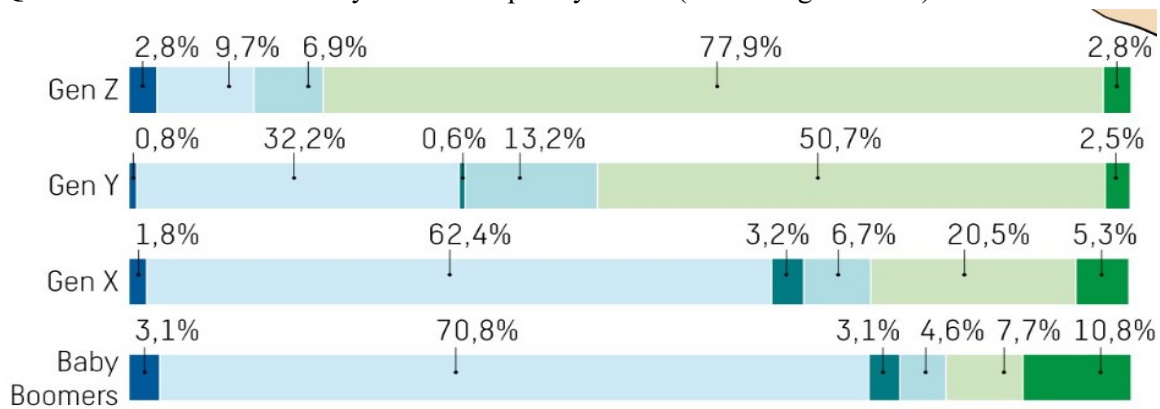**Question 1:** "What media do you most frequently access?"
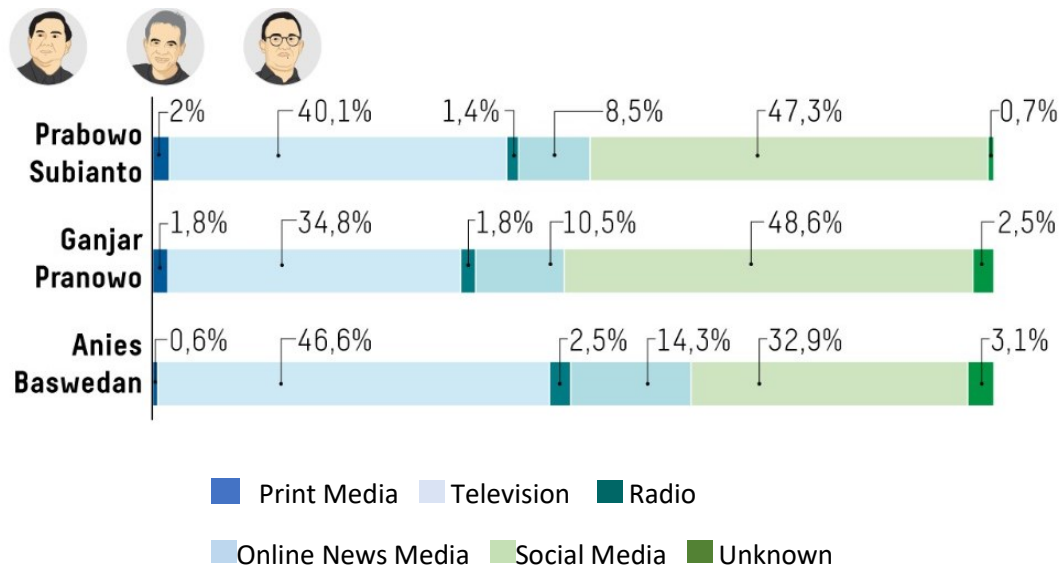
Question 2: "What media do you most frequently access? (Based on region)"
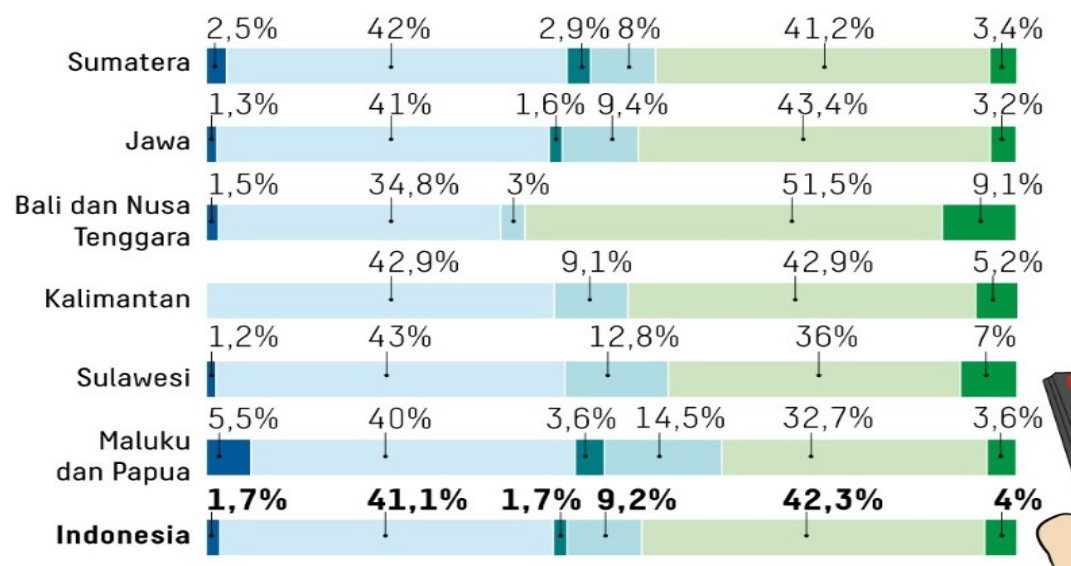
Question 3: "The Advertising Reach of Several Social Media Platforms in Indonesia?"

Question 4: "What media do you most frequently access (based on generation)?"

The survey findings clearly demonstrate that social media possesses a significant inherent capacity to link and facilitate the growth of social data, as well as its potential utilization. Social media, specifically, has a significant impact on providing options for democratizing digital political communication. Hultman et al. (2019) validate the significance of social media and the influence of a political candidate's image in promoting a fair and balanced relationship between voters and candidates. Social media seems to have a positive impact on candidates' public perception. This study examines the influence of candidate image on the relationship between social media and voter-candidate equality, using insights from branding literature and social identity theory. It also investigates how political ideology affects this relationship. The survey findings from 235 young British voters indicate that social media seems to have a positive impact on candidates' public perception. However, it is important to note that not all aspects of social media are directly linked to the fairness of relationships. Social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube have vast possibilities for reaching and connecting with people worldwide.

Consequences on The Enhancement of Political Communication and Brand

Political marketing employs many strategies, material, and methods for analyzing and implementing marketing communication. Nimmo (1970) classified several manifestations of political marketing, such as election campaigns that prioritize themes over "subject," aiming to condense complex public issues into concise and clear statements that can be advantageous to the public as prospective consumers. Symbolism, rituals, and clear communication may be more crucial than the development and clarification of policies. Numerous political 'debates' televised are merely contrived scenarios including prearranged answers, irrespective of the subjects being discussed. Irrelevant statements also appear in print media, but only proficient newspaper editors deliver comprehensive political text reports instead of just "sound bites." Enoch Powell's 1959 analysis of the British Labour Party's third election defeat emphasized the importance of having a central theme in political marketing communication. This theme should be significant, straightforward, and applicable to all aspects of debate. It should also be easily comprehensible and evident in both words and actions during successful campaigns (Seawright, 2005). After fifty years, Obama's 'Change' theme effectively tackled this challenge, revitalizing the significance of having a clear and consistent position and communication.

Elections are fundamental to civil society, and as such, their conduct should align with the significance of legal obligations, governmental institutions, and the mandate of democracy. The perplexing nature of the enthusiasm for elections continues to puzzle. A significant portion of political reporting, especially during elections when public interest is naturally heightened, is deliberately exaggerated and made to seem unimportant. The use of negative advertising is a crucial characteristic that sets apart the political and commercial arenas (Kamber, 1997; Rothschild, 1978). The brevity of television broadcasts and news coverage, which lacks the opportunity for clarification or justification, intensifies the capacity to provoke anxiety, uncertainty, and fear (Butler and Collins, 1994). Klein and Ahluwalia (2005) conducted a comprehensive examination of previous research in this area, which further advances this concept. They critically evaluate the present comprehension within the field and ascertain that the adverse effects in this particular context are limited to voters who already have a strong aversion towards the candidate. The results of this study can be utilized to explore the potential for brand equity in the political arena, which could shield politicians or parties from the negative effects of unfavorable information, similar to how positive corporate images have been shown to provide protection.

One notable characteristic of the political business is the unparalleled prevalence of news and media coverage, surpassing that of any other industry. According to Wring (1997), advertising is becoming less important in producing free media publicity. Instead, it is often combined with public relations initiatives that try to gain favorable media attention. Both voters and media strategists acknowledge the significance of media coverage and its impact. Public relations strategies in the political

market are considered extremely sophisticated in both strategic and tactical aspects. They are the subject of substantial research, including specialists from diverse backgrounds. According to Brissenden and Moloney (2005), political coverage is characterized by its nature and extent, which leads to public relations being used as a defensive strategy by political parties to counter critical media, while also being employed as an offensive tactic to promote their own interests. In an age characterized by excessive manipulation of information, the field of news management stands out as the most apparent point of divergence between mainstream marketing and political marketing.

An in-depth examination of the use of information and communication technology in political marketing is crucial. It requires thorough analysis and substantial research that adds valuable insights to both the theory and practice of political marketing. Newspapers, films, radio, and television were all judiciously employed as emerging technologies during that period. The proliferation of the World Wide Web, along with the expansion of websites, email, blogs, and social networking technologies, has resulted in significant transformations in communication methods. The Obama campaign in the United States showcases political strategies that heavily rely on technology. For instance, Obama's official campaign materials were viewed for a total of 14.5 million hours and were estimated to be worth $47 million when utilizing YouTube as a means of free communication with viewers via cable (The New York Times, 2008). In accordance with his campaign's central message, Obama established the website www.Change.gov to facilitate ongoing citizen involvement throughout his transition and presidency. The internet played a crucial role in this campaign by effectively spreading information, convincing people, reinforcing messages, providing financial support, connecting individuals, and securing votes, among other functions.

However, e-Democracy encompasses more than just political campaign rhetoric; it entails establishing community connections with politicians, governments, and organizations. The process involves prioritizing 'engagement,' 'informing them,' facilitating prompt responses, and other related activities. The idea of actively engaging with public institutions and exerting influence on policy-making processes, as well as implementation and response, is rooted in the principles of being responsive, advocating for consumers, and adopting marketing approaches commonly found in the private sector. Nevertheless, assuming that what is technically possible and politically or democratically preferable is hazardous and imprudent (Collins and Butler, 2002). The problems of e-Democracy and e-Government are fervently championed by determined proponents with a penchant for persuasive rhetoric. Political institutions have implemented "checks and balances" to mitigate hasty decision-making caused by impulsive responses to political events; transient public opinions contribute to suboptimal political choices.

Generally, a society that acquires and has a greater amount of information and acts as knowledgeable consumers would lead to an improved democracy. Researchers are captivated by the potential of emerging communication technologies. Flimsy conceptual ideas formed hastily due to an idealistic enthusiasm for technology should not hinder future chances to gain broad understanding of social and political connections. Identifying propaganda is inevitable due to the utilization of state-of-the-art communication technology in the realm of politics. O'Shaughnessy (1996, 2004, 2008) asserts that propaganda has regained prominence, supported by an extensive range of literature. Modern media platforms enable political entities to communicate through several channels, including text, video, audio, and web.

Harold Laswell formulated a formal concept on the influence of models on the field of communication and the consequences of media by posing the following questions: "Who is the source of the message, what is being said, who is the intended recipient, through which medium is the message being sent, and what is the resulting impact?" Laswell's initial investigation examined the impact of propaganda on Germany, France, England, and America during World War I. The phrase 'political communication' was coined during the 1940s in the United States as a result of studies on propaganda and public opinion conducted during the war years. This term then evolved into a systematic discipline of study and training in the subsequent decades. Political marketing researchers are interested in studying the evolutionary pattern that involves a transition from fragmented mass communication models to individual communication partnerships. Researchers that prioritize the connection between individual-level research and political issues are those who have shared normative values for the achievement of a well-functioning democracy. In this context, political parties and politicians should not only utilize mass and digital media, but also prioritize personal communication as a crucial element of political product branding and political brand to significantly influence society's comprehension and acceptance of the political products being presented.

Political branding highlights the emerging trend of parties, politicians, and political leaders being perceived and recognized as brands with great effectiveness. Political players employ branding as a means to enhance public awareness or exert influence on voters. Political branding refers to the concept, philosophy, and framework employed in politics to distinguish oneself from competitors and to recognize citizens and political entities (Harris and Lock, 2010; Needham & Smith, 2015). This branding concept aims to enhance the visibility and distinctiveness of leaders, parties, and policies within a highly competitive environment. This branding will enhance credibility, hence influencing political participation. Politicians are progressively employing branding strategies to integrate symbols, philosophy, values, and policy commitments into their political parties and candidates. Consequently, political actors and parties employ this branding strategy by promoting a specific set of values, beliefs, and promises (Susila, I.,

Dean, et al., 2019). Prior research on Indonesian elections has additionally discovered that young voters acquire political consciousness and knowledge of political parties through "narratives" and symbolic depictions of political candidates (Susila, Dean, and Harness, 2015). Pich and Dean (2015) argue that politicians, political leaders, and parties are actively developing brands that are built on their skills, character, and trustworthiness. This strategic approach aims to gain the trust and support of the people. Democracy relies on the presence of reliable candidates and parties. Political branding serves as a crucial tool for political actors to strategically shape and convey a certain image in order to appear appealing, influential, and memorable to the general public (Mensah 2016). Political branding is a form of reasoning that is strongly linked to branding. It cannot be separated from emotional elements, as it serves as a determinant of why a voter favors a particular political actor, politician, or candidate (Farhan et al., 2020).

CONCLUSION

In this research, we explored how the application of digital marketing and branding strategies, particularly human branding, in politics has implications for the political landscape in Indonesia in 2024. We highlight that the concept of branding holds functional value for political management, and political marketing strategies provide a useful context for studying human branding.

The approach of political marketing plays a significant role in electoral contests by providing a conceptual framework for political parties and candidates to plan effective and efficient campaign strategies. We emphasize the importance of diverse marketing communication strategies in approach, content, and analytical techniques, while underscoring the significance of themes that can build a strong and consistent brand position.

Additionally, we emphasize the creation of data-driven political growth models that utilize developments in information and communication technologies. We highlight the integration of public voter data with commercial information in modern political campaigns to create full voter profiles. Technological innovations like data marketing clouds and data management systems empower political campaigns to identify, target, and engage individual voters.

The impact of political leader endorsement on social media has been associated with brand perception or credibility. In addition, political leaders on social media must engage with their followers. Due to its interactive and collaborative nature, social media is valuable for collecting public preferences.

In conclusion, this research demonstrates that political marketing has become a highly important and evolving field, with branding concepts and technology implementation being key in modern political campaign strategies. The role of political marketing in influencing individual actions and strengthening political brand positions is further reinforced by technological advancements and data analysis. Therefore, a deep understanding of branding concepts and the application of information and communication technology are crucial for the success of political campaigns in the contemporary era.

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Daniel Manek: Conceptualization, Supervision, Data Curation, Formal Analysis, Project Administration, Writing-original Draft, and Writing-review Editing. **Isti Fadah**: Conceptualization, Resources, Software, Validation, Visualization, Funding Acquisition, Investigation, Writing-original Draft, and Writing-review Editing.

DECLARATION OF COMPETING INTEREST

The author declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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DATA AVAILABILITY

Data will be made available in request.

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