UNVEILING POLITICAL PERSONA: VISUAL FRAMING ANALYSIS OF PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES' INSTAGRAM BRANDING FOR THE 2024 INDONESIAN ELECTION

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Abstract

Personal branding on Instagram is becoming increasingly relevant in the context of political campaigns. The adoption of political branding concept provides candidates with the opportunity to build and manage their brand identity as a key element in their campaign strategy. This research will adopt a visual framing analysis approach using Kapferer's Brand Identity Prism as a theoretical foundation. Within this framework, this research will explore the dimensions of personal branding of the 2024 Presidential Election's candidates in Indonesia, involving three main candidates, Anies Baswedan, Prabowo Subianto, and Ganjar Pranowo. This research employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive analysis method, collecting data from the visual Instagram feeds of each presidential candidate (@aniesbaswedan, @prabowo, and @ganjar_pranowo), taken between October 26th and December 11th, 2023. It was found that each of the candidates reflects dimensions such as physique, personality, relationship, culture, reflection, and self-image in their Instagram posts. Through a deeper understanding of these personal branding strategies, this research can uncover their impact on voter perceptions and the dynamics of competition in the Indonesian political arena. Furthermore, by comprehending the characteristics of effective personal branding through visual framing analysis, candidates can optimize their political marketing strategies on Instagram.

Keywords*: Brand identity; Brand identity prism; Political branding; Political marketing; Visual framing*

INTRODUCTION

Image or personal image has now become an integral element in the political arena, especially in the era of rampant globalization and digitization (Peng, 2021). This phenomenon has given rise to the concept of personal branding as an effective strategy for shaping and communicating a political candidate's self-image to voters, particularly through social media platforms (Asmarianaki, 2017). Personal branding on the Instagram platform is becoming increasingly relevant in the context of political campaigns as part of political marketing, where visualization and storytelling narratives are key to building an emotional connection with voters (Olof Larsson, 2021). Commonly, political marketing models identify marketing value in the political arena by demonstrating strategic synergy in connecting candidates, campaigns, communication, parties, and constituent organizations within the dynamics of the overall political landscape (Lees-Marshment, 2001; Newman & Sheth, 1987; Newman, 1994; O'Cass, 1996; Ormrod, 2007). Although political marketing models may vary according to their intended purposes, these models share similar conceptual characteristics (Milewicz & Milewicz, 2014). For example, Butler & Collins (1999) argue that political marketing essentially comprises structural characteristics and process characteristics. Structural characteristics include product, organization, and market, whereas process characteristics encompass value determination elements, value development, and value delivery in political marketing (Butler & Collins, 1999).

In previous studies, brands have been identified as a crucial strategic asset in achieving competitive advantage (Aaker, 1996), and this concept has been adopted in various sectors, including politics. The use of branding as a heuristic tool provides voters with the ability to make choices quickly and efficiently (Pich & Dean, 2015). Political branding has evolved into a distinct field of research within the discipline of political marketing (Scammell, 2015). Looking back, political branding can be simply defined as the critical application of traditional branding concepts, theories, and frameworks to politics in order to provide differentiation from political competitors and identification between citizens and political entities (Harris & Lock, 2010; Needham & Smith, 2015). Lock & Harris (1996) expanded the concept of political branding further, such as the understanding that political parties (local, regional, national, and international), interest groups, movements, politicians, candidates, and campaigns can be conceptualized as political brands (Ahmed, Lodhi, & Ahmad, 2015; Billard, 2018; Meyerrose, 2017; Nai & Martinez, 2019; Simons, 2016; Speed et al., 2015; Scammell, 2015; Smith, 2009). Political branding also addresses how a political brand is positioned by political actors and how that brand is perceived in the minds of citizens (Baines et al., 2014; Winther Nielsen, 2016). Understanding how political branding is employed for communication and interaction with voters is at the core of political marketing (Pich & Newman, 2020).

The adoption of the concept of political branding not only creates distinctions between political parties but also provides candidates with the opportunity to build and manage their brand identity as a key element in their campaign strategy (Pich & Newman, 2019). Shifts in the ideological foundations of political parties indicate that the brand identity held by candidates can serve as a mechanism supporting voter decision-making (Reeves, de Chernatony, & Carrigan, 2006). However, to comprehensively understand political branding, an analytical framework is needed that can capture the complexity of internal and external relationships that shape brand identity (Armannsdottir, Pich, & Spry, 2019).

Given the significance of political branding in distinguishing and identifying political entities, this concept serves as a primary foundation for developing political brand identity. Political branding not only creates a unique image for political parties, interest groups, and candidates but also plays a crucial role in shaping the perceptions and associations that form brand identity (Harris & Lock, 2010; Christopher Pich, 2022). Therefore, understanding how political branding contributes to political brand identity is key to analyzing the psychological relationship and loyalty between voters and the political entities, paving the way for a deeper understanding of brand identity in a political context. Brand identity reflects how a brand should be perceived by its target consumers, emphasizing the psychological relationship and loyalty in the interactions between the brand and consumers (Alvarado-Karste & Guzmán, 2020). Brand identity communicates the brand's personality and uniqueness to consumers, earning their recognition, appreciation, and support (Barros et al., 2020). In the political context, political brand identity is a manifestation of the communicated identity combined with perceptions, associations, and attributions (Christopher Pich, 2022). Brand identity acknowledges the similarities and differences between the image held by external consumers and the image held by internal consumers (Schneider & Ferie, 2015). In the case of political parties, this perspective reflects the party members on one side and the voters on the other side. The concept of brand identity is highly applicable for analyzing brands and brand management in politics because internally organized groups within the party can shape the brand, for example, through voting behavior in party conferences (Schneider & Ferie, 2015).

According to de Chernatony (2006), Kapferer's Brand Identity Prism (2008) is a concept of brand identity that is both useful and powerful. For de Chernatony (2006), the Brand Identity Prism not only assesses competitive differentiation between competing brands but also provides an evaluation of brand coherence. According to Azoulay & Kapferer (2003), the Brand Identity Prism captures key aspects of brand identity and ultimately has the ability to generate a deeper understanding of a brand.
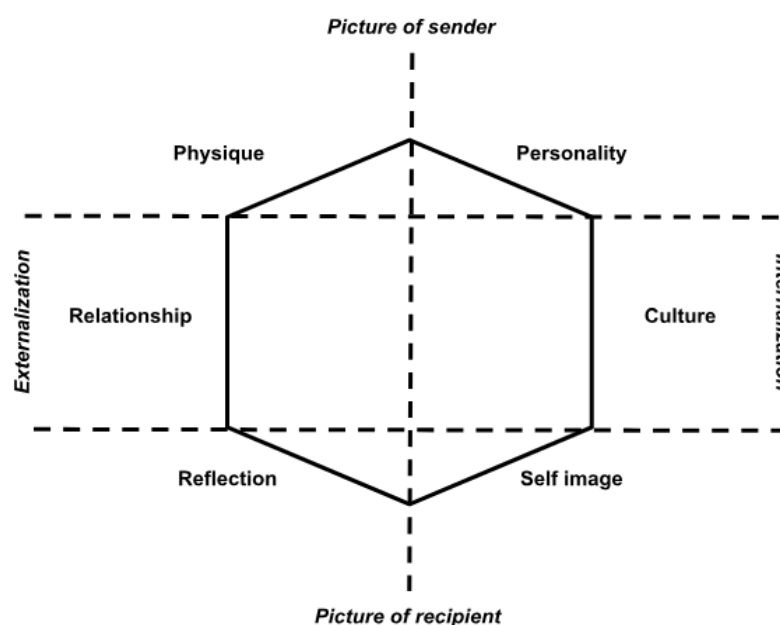

Figure 1. Kapferer's Brand Identity Prism

Source: Kapferer (2008)

Unveiling Political Persona: Visual Framing Analysis Of Presidential Candidates' Instagram Branding For The 2024 Indonesian Election
Komunika Vol. 6 No. 2 December 2023 Pp. 119-133

121

The Brand Identity Prism consists of physique, personality, culture, relationship, reflection, and self-image. These concepts collectively define a brand identity that can be communicated to consumers (Kapferer, 2008).

1. Physique: The concept of physique focuses on the tangible and physical qualities of the brand that go beyond the brand's logo and colors. This concept is characterized by the attributes that immediately come to mind when thinking about a brand. Additionally, physique encompasses the human qualities of the brand that can be represented by figures or spokespersons.
2. Personality: Personality is how the brand communicates its products. Gradually communicating with consumers in a certain way can build the brand's character.
3. Relationship: Every brand should maintain a good relationship with its customers, which is the goal of marketing measurement. A common question asked is: how does the brand want to be perceived by customers in marketing communication?
4. Culture: Culture is a set of values that inspire the brand. It is the source of a brand's core values. Culture connects the brand to the values it wants to convey and plays a crucial role in differentiating the brand.
5. Reflection: Reflection describes how consumers want to see themselves when they interact with or use a brand, not who they are now, but who they will become after interacting with the brand. In building a brand, there is already a target consumer audience in mind; this group of consumers is most likely to enjoy or find utility in their interaction with the brand.
6. Self Image: If reflection is how consumers want to see themselves after interacting with the brand, then self-image is how consumers see themselves currently.

According to Kapferer (2008), these six aspects are divided into two dimensions:

1. The constructed source (construction by the message sender) vs. the constructed receiver (construction by the message recipient). The message sender portrays the message with two aspects, namely physique and personality. Meanwhile, the result is depicted by the message recipient's construction with two aspects, which are reflection and self-image.
2. Externalisation vs internalisation, Where the brand has social aspects that determine external expression (externalization) in the form of physique, relationship, and reflection. Then the second aspect is what is incorporated into the brand itself (internalization), consisting of personality, culture, and self-image.

Kapferer (2008) asserts that these aspects can only come to fruition when the brand communicates with consumers. A strong brand, according to Kapferer (2008), is capable of integrating all these aspects into an effective unity, as a means to achieve a concise, clear, and appealing brand identity.

Therefore, this research will adopt a visual framing analysis approach using Kapferer's Brand Identity Prism (2008) as the theoretical foundation. Visual framing can be defined as the process of selecting specific aspects of perceived reality and emphasizing them more than others through visual communication modes, thereby enhancing their meaning (Parveen & Showkat, 2020). It visually promotes specific attributions, interpretations, or evaluations of the issue or item being depicted (Geise, 2017). Visual framing is the representation of visual elements present in an image and how these elements relate to each other within the image

(Parveen & Showkat, 2020). These frames are the result of selections made by the creators and editors during the image's production (Hansen & Machin, 2013).

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Within visual framing approach using Kapferer's Brand Identity Prism (2008) framework, the research will explore the dimensions of personal branding of the presidential candidates for the 2024 Presidential Election in Indonesia, involving three main candidates: Anies Baswedan, Prabowo Subianto, and Ganjar Pranowo. However, it is important to note that political branding encompasses complex and interrelated components, both institutionally and ideologically, and is reflected in the personal characteristics of the candidates and their leadership. By delving into the analysis within the Instagram platform, it is expected that we can uncover how the three presidential candidates in Indonesia build and communicate their personal brand identities to the voters. This visual framing analysis will also provide deeper insights into how essential components of the Brand Identity Prism, such as physique, personality, relationship, culture, reflection, and self-image, are reflected in the visual content they share. Through a deeper understanding of these personal branding strategies, this research can explore their impact on voter perceptions and the dynamics of competition in the Indonesian political arena leading up to the 2024 presidential election.

METHOD

This research employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive analysis method. Qualitative research is a scientific research process primarily intended to understand human issues within a social context by creating a comprehensive and complex depiction and reporting detailed perspectives from information sources (Creswell, 1998). This research utilizes a qualitative research approach because it aims to create a comprehensive and complex depiction of what political branding is like, as demonstrated by the three presidential candidates of the Republic of Indonesia in 2024 on their Instagram social media accounts, which will be explored through Kapferer's Brand Identity Prism (2008). Furthermore, the descriptive analysis method was chosen because this research will analyze, describe, and summarize various conditions and situations from the collected data (Winartha, 2006).

This research was conducted in four stages. The first stage began with collecting data from the visual Instagram feeds of each Presidential Candidate (@aniesbaswedan, @prabowo, & @ganjar_pranowo) taken from October 26th to December 11th, 2023. October 26th marks one day after the Presidential and Vice-Presidential Candidate registration deadline with the Election Commission (KPU), while December 11th is one day before the first Presidential Candidate debate. These dates are considered fair and balanced starting and ending points

for assessing the political branding of each candidate. The research then proceeded with data processing, including categorization and mapping, followed by an analysis using the Brand Identity Prism as its operational tool. Finally, it culminated in the outcomes and conclusions related to the political branding of each Presidential Candidate.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Results

Anies R. Baswedan, Religious and Intellectual Politician

There were 167 posts on Anies Baswedan's Instagram feed during the period from October 26th to December 11th, 2023, covering various topics including communication with the public and the wider community, visits to various regions in Indonesia, campaign activities, moments with family members such as his wife, children, and mother, visits to religious figures, and participation as a speaker in various events.
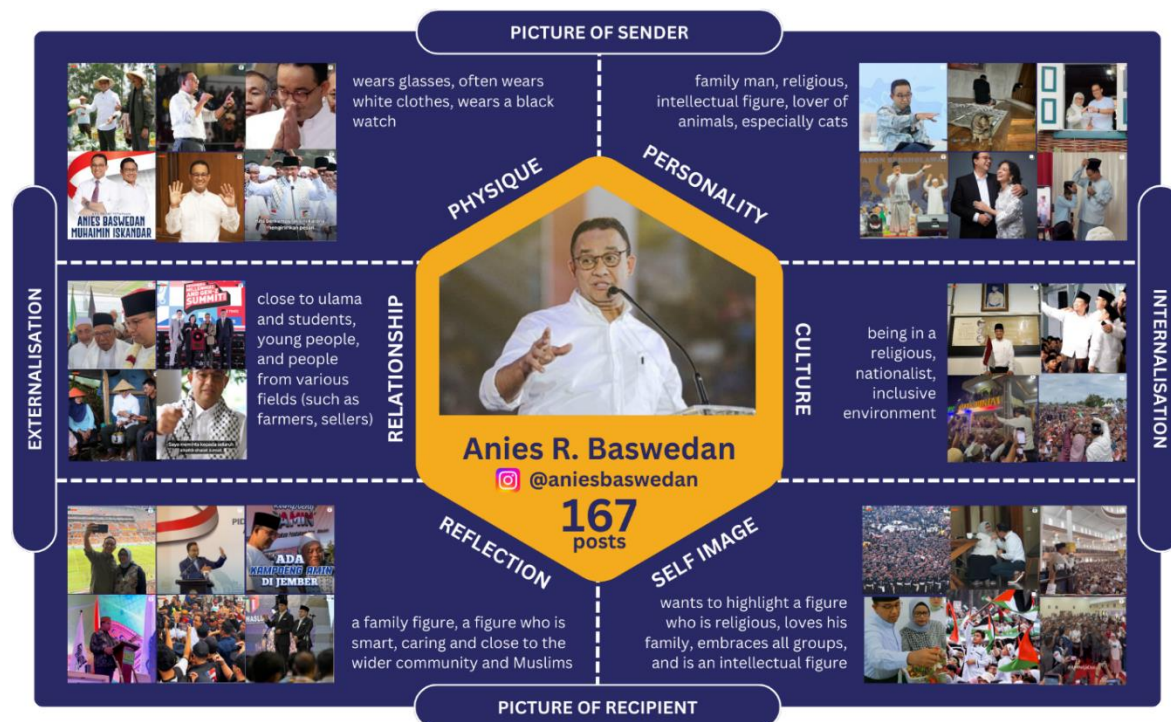

Figure 2. Anies Baswedan's Brand Identity Prism

The Brand Identity Prism possessed by Anies Baswedan, based on the uniqueness and values reflected in his Instagram feed, is as follows: from the physical aspect, Anies Baswedan is consistently portrayed as an individual who always wears glasses, often dons white attire during various activities, and also wears a black wristwatch. From a personality perspective, Anies Baswedan is consistently portrayed as a family man (in several posts highlighting his closeness with his family), a religious individual (in various posts where he is seen wearing Islamic attire such as a skullcap, sarong, and prayer rug), an intellectual figure (in various posts showcasing him as a speaker), and also an animal lover, especially towards cats (in some posts featuring cats on his Instagram). From a relationship perspective, he is

consistently portrayed as someone who is close to religious scholars and Islamic students (as seen in posts showing his visits to mosques and Islamic boarding schools), also close to the younger generation (through various posts about dialogues with young people), and close to people from various professions such as farmers and traders (evident from several campaign-related posts). In terms of culture, he is consistently presented as an individual within religious, nationalist, and inclusive circles. In terms of reflection, based on his posts, the intended target consumers for Anies Baswedan are expected to be individuals who value familial bonds, those who are intelligent and knowledgeable, and those who care about and are close to the broader community, especially the Muslim community. In terms of self-image, the values reflected in Anies Baswedan's posts, which can also be perceived by his consumers, include religious values, familial values, inclusivity or embracing all groups and demographics, as well as the image of an intellectual figure.

Prabowo Subianto D., Former Military Figure with a Lively Disposition aka 'Gemoy'

There are 84 posts on Prabowo Subianto's Instagram feed from October 26 to December 11, 2023, covering various topics. These include his activities as the Minister of Defence, campaign activities as a Presidential Candidate, meetings and discussions with international representatives, dialogues with the community, and his proximity to the military world.

Figure 3. Prabowo Subianto's Brand Identity Prism

The Brand Identity Prism owned by Prabowo Subianto, based on the uniqueness and values reflected in his Instagram feed, can be outlined as follows. In terms of the physique aspect, Prabowo Subianto is consistently presented wearing light blue attire for the 2024 Presidential campaign, frequently donning military-style safari clothing for non-campaign activities. Additionally, he is the most senior politician compared to other presidential candidates. Prabowo Subianto is consistently portrayed as a resolute, tough, nationalist,

authoritative, and disciplined individual. This is evident from posts showcasing his leadership in discussions and military-related activities. Additionally, he is depicted as a lively or endearing figure, as seen in various posts related to his campaign activities. In terms of relationships, he is consistently portrayed as someone who is close and relatable to young people (evident from various posts engaging in dialogue with young individuals and participating in trendy dance movements), maintaining good relations with the international community (as seen in his posts welcoming foreign representatives during various state activities), and having a close connection with the military (as depicted in various posts showcasing his activities with members of the Indonesian National Armed Forces and others). In terms of culture, he is consistently portrayed as an intellectual figure, still surrounded by military culture, and also as a nationalist. In terms of reflection, based on his posts, the intended target consumers for Prabowo Subianto are expected to be young individuals who are familiar with trends, intelligent consumers, particularly those who follow international affairs, and consumers who still have a familiarity with the military world. In terms of self-image, the values reflected in Prabowo Subianto's posts, which can also be sensed by his consumers, include leadership values, inclusivity or closeness to the community, firmness, and experience.

Ganjar Pranowo, a Polite and Inclusive Politician

There are 151 posts on Ganjar Pranowo's Instagram feed from October 26 to December 11, 2023, covering various topics. These include his visits to various regions in Indonesia for campaign activities, moments spent with his wife and children, meetings with national figures, visits to religious leaders, and dialogues with various groups, such as young people, children, and his supporters.

Figure 4. Ganjar Pranowo's Brand Identity Prism

The Brand Identity Prism owned by Ganjar Pranowo, based on the uniqueness and values reflected in his Instagram feed, can be described as follows in terms of the physique aspect: Ganjar Pranowo is consistently portrayed as an individual with white hair, tall and upright body posture, and often dressed in black attire for campaign activities. In terms of personality, Ganjar Pranowo is consistently portrayed as a friendly, polite, and courteous individual. This is evident from his posts where he consistently greets and embraces the community in a friendly manner. Moreover, he is depicted as religious, as seen in his uploads visiting religious figures. He is also portrayed as a family man and romantic through posts about his wife and children, demonstrating loyalty. In terms of relationships, he is consistently portrayed as an inclusive individual towards all layers of society, as evident from posts depicting dialogues during each community visit. Additionally, he is depicted as close to national figures, reflected in his posts during numerous visits to senior Indonesian politicians. Culturally, he is consistently presented as a prominent figure in the polite and refined Javanese culture, surrounded by religious figures and nationalists. In terms of reflection, based on his posts, the target consumers expected for Ganjar Pranowo are those who care for others, have a loving family, are active and enjoy sports, possess a youthful spirit, and are nationalists. Regarding self-image, values reflected in Ganjar Pranowo's posts that can also be felt by consumers include leadership, inclusivity, wisdom, politeness, and youthful spirit.

Discussion

This research indicates that the physique dimension can accommodate the tangible qualities of candidates (Dahlén, Lange, & Smith, 2010; de Chernatony, 2007; Gordon, 1999; Kapferer, 2008). The physique dimension also provides a mechanism for understanding the consistency of tangible elements in political branding. Regarding the candidates' personalities, the physique dimension offers advantages, especially when these physical aspects can be leveraged as part of their brand identity. For example, Ganjar Pranowo is strongly associated with his white hair. In 2022, during a meeting with his supporters, Jokowi stated that a leader with white hair signifies a leader who cares for the people (Muhid, 2023). Many concluded that the figure with white hair referred to by Jokowi was Ganjar Pranowo. This illustrates that the physique dimension can serve as an attribute that distinguishes a candidate from others.

In addition to the physical dimension, themes related to political branding can be applied to the personality dimension of the Brand Identity Prism. The conceptualization of the personality dimension requires a greater focus to enhance the potential transfer of this dimension into political branding (Pich & Dean, 2015). The personality dimension in the three candidates for the 2024 Indonesian presidential election highlights several overlapping characteristics. Both Anies Baswedan and Ganjar Pranowo share a religious personality, as evidenced by several posts on their Instagram accounts showing their interactions with religious figures such as ustad (Islamic scholars) and santri (students at Islamic boarding schools). A similar personality is also observed in Prabowo Subianto and Ganjar Pranowo, where a friendly personality is reflected in their Instagram posts.

The dimension of relationship can be approached from both internal brand perspective (de Chernatony, 1999; Harris & de Chernatony, 2001) and external brand perspective (Kapferer, 2008). This is also consistent with the definition of brand identity (Pich & Dean, 2015). Each candidate for the 2024 Indonesian presidential election demonstrates the dimension of relationship in their Instagram posts in different ways. Anies Baswedan appears

to establish numerous connections and relationships with religious scholars and students (santri), representing the Muslim community. Additionally, he is frequently seen engaging in dialogue and interaction with the younger generation and intellectuals. On the other hand, Prabowo Subianto emphasizes his relationships with international representatives or delegates encountered in various state events. Furthermore, his connections with the military seem to be prominently displayed on his Instagram. Ganjar Pranowo frequently uploads photos of himself interacting with people from various backgrounds and regions.

Kapferer (2008) elucidates that cultural dimensions connect a brand with the values it aims to convey and play a crucial role in differentiating the brand. There appears to be a significant difference in the cultural dimensions demonstrated by the three candidates for the 2024 Indonesian presidential election. Anies Baswedan embodies a religious culture, Prabowo Subianto exudes a firm military-specific culture, and Ganjar Pranowo displays a polite and refined Javanese culture. However, despite their differences, these three candidates for the 2024 Indonesian presidential election share a commonality: they exhibit a nationalist culture in their Instagram posts. Demonstrating a nationalist culture is undoubtedly an effective strategy in the context of the 2024 presidential election to showcase their capability to lead Indonesia from Sabang to Merauke.

Dahlén, Lange, & Smith (2010) argue that a brand should reflect consumers' desires, rather than being their true selves, indicating that such reflection is merely a representation and a target, not necessarily a reality. Candidates undoubtedly have target consumers when designing their campaign or branding strategies, including the strategy of determining the content or visuals to be uploaded on their social media platforms. On Anies Baswedan's Instagram, it can be observed that there are specific target voters for his political branding, namely the Islamic community and the intellectual segment. This aligns with the outcomes of a survey conducted by LSI Denny JA, which ranked Anies Baswedan as the top choice among voters aligned with Islamic parties (Muhammad, 2023). Furthermore, Indo Barometer conducted a survey on the reasons for choosing a presidential candidate, where Anies Baswedan excelled in the criteria of intelligence and intellectuality, with a percentage of 71.1, surpassing other candidates for the 2024 Indonesian Presidential election (Hukmana, 2023). An interesting aspect is demonstrated by Prabowo Subianto, who appears to target the younger generation through his Instagram posts. He highlights the main theme of being 'gemoy' or endearing, with the hope of capturing the attention of the youth demographic. This serves as one of Prabowo Subianto's strategies to establish a closer connection with the younger generation and potentially secure their votes. On the other hand, Ganjar Pranowo, who frequently showcases his visits to various regions, indicates his intention to gain support or votes from the general public, particularly in Eastern Indonesia.

Kapferer (2008) explains that self-image is how consumers perceive themselves at present. What is interesting is that these three candidates for the 2024 Indonesian Presidential election appear to have consumers, or in this case, voters who are quite similar to their target audience. This means that the visual content uploaded on the Instagram accounts of each candidate effectively reinforces their targeted voter base.

CONCLUSION

This research demonstrates the potential for significant deepening of the model's six identity dimensions in exploring political branding within Kapferer's (2008) Brand Identity Prism. From the presentation of the Brand Identity Prism through the visual feeds of each candidate, several conclusions regarding personal branding can be outlined below: All candidates are cultivating a shared image as nationalist leaders. Additionally, each candidate possesses their own unique qualities in their visual posts. For instance, Anies Baswedan projects a very strong image as an intellectual and religious figure. This is evident in various posts that demonstrate Anies Baswedan's closeness to Islamic figures and communities, as well as his showcasing of his intelligence when engaging in dialogues with the public. On the other hand, Prabowo Subianto maintains a very strong image as a former military member. Interestingly, this image as a former military member is still reflected in his Instagram posts, alongside a new image he seeks to portray, that of being 'gemoy' or endearing, intended to resonate more with the younger generation. In contrast to Anies Baswedan and Prabowo Subianto, Ganjar Pranowo has a strong image as a courteous and inclusive figure. Ganjar Pranowo's Instagram feed is filled with visuals depicting moments of him engaging in dialogues with ordinary people, including religious leaders, children, mothers, and others.

This research makes a significant contribution to the academic literature in the fields of personal branding, politics, and visual framing analysis. Through an in-depth exploration of Kapferer's (2008) Brand Identity Prism in the context of political branding, this research enriches our understanding of how political candidates manage and construct their personal image on the Instagram platform. The results of the visual framing analysis for each candidate can serve as a valuable reference for researchers, academics, and students interested in comprehending the dynamics of personal branding in the digital era, particularly within the context of political campaigns.

In addition to its academic relevance, this research also makes a positive contribution to the public's understanding of the role of social media in shaping political images. By analyzing the visual feeds of the 2024 Indonesian Presidential candidates, this research can provide insights to the public regarding the personal branding strategies employed by potential leaders. The public can gain a better understanding of how the self-presentation of candidates can influence public perceptions and support. Furthermore, this understanding can also assist the public in interpreting and critiquing political content presented on social media platforms, thereby enhancing political literacy among the populace.

This research also holds significant practical implications for political practitioners and campaign teams. By understanding the effective characteristics of personal branding through visual framing analysis, candidates and campaign teams can optimize their political marketing strategies on the Instagram platform. This information can assist political leaders in better communicating with potential voters and constructing an image consistent with the values they wish to convey. Furthermore, the outcomes of this research can serve as a practical guide for political consultants and branding experts engaged in the planning and execution of political campaigns in the digital era.

Unveiling Political Persona: Visual Framing Analysis Of Presidential Candidates' Instagram Branding For The 2024 Indonesian Election
Komunika Vol. 6 No. 2 December 2023 Pp. 119-133

129

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Unveiling Political Persona: Visual Framing Analysis Of Presidential Candidates' Instagram Branding For The 2024 Indonesian Election
Komunika Vol. 6 No. 2 December 2023 Pp. 119-133

133