

The Role of Digital Advertising in the Presidential Election: A Content Analysis of Prabowo Subianto's "Gemoy" Positioning Through Digital Media

Muhammad Maulana¹, Inas Hamdan Billah²,
Muhammad Fathier Alkahfie³, Akhirul Aminulloh⁴

^{1,2,3,4}Department of Communication Science, Universitas Negeri Malang, Indonesia

Abstract

Advertising is one of the strategies widely used by companies to promote their products or services to the public. The functions of advertising are to provide information that makes consumers aware of a brand, persuade consumers to try the advertised product or service, maintain consumer memory of the advertised product or service, as an added value to the advertised product, and as a companion to efforts made by the company in terms of promotion. The rapid development of technology also affects advertising strategies, including using mass media, such as television, radio, magazines, and newspapers. Mass media itself comes from the word media, which is a tool or means used to convey messages from communicators to audiences while "mass" refers to a formless collectivity, whose components are difficult to distinguish from one another. There are also six perspectives in terms of seeing the role of mass media, namely as a means of learning to know various events, a mirror of various events in society and the world, which reflects what it is, as a filter or gatekeeper that selects various things, as a guide in presenting various information and ideas to the audience, and as an interlocutor or partner so that interactive communication occurs. The use of mass media in advertising has its function and is considered more effective because it can reach a larger audience so that messages or advertisements carried out are more effective on marketing targets, build brand image, increase brand awareness, and even influence consumer behavior in buying a product.

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Corresponding Author

inas.hamdan.2207616@students.um.ac.id

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Introduction

Technology is developing increasingly rapidly, affecting various business actors in promoting their products through advertising. Many companies compete to create creative and interactive advertisements to attract the public's attention to purchase the products offered. Advertising is a form of non-personal presentation of information about a product, brand, company, or business at a fixed cost (Peter & Olson, 2020). However, according to Kotler and Armstrong (2001), advertising is just a cost. Make non-personal presentations of ideas, products, and services. This also applies to Soemanagara (2008). Soemanagara defines advertising as a marketing communication activity that uses mass media to convey a

message. These various definitions indicate that advertising for a certain amount of money (essentially non-personal) can be concluded as a form of mass communication.

According to Shimp (2023), the role of advertising is to provide information, namely, providing information to brands that attract consumer attention and persuade consumers so that there is a desire to try marketed products or services and increase consumer memory—remembering or maintaining the advertised product or service, which functions not only as an added value to the advertised product but also as a support or accompaniment to the company's advertising activities. According to Kotler and Armstrong (2006), advertising aims to complete a specific communication task with a specific audience within a certain period. Advertising today also continues to develop from year to year following the current era in industry and economy both in the world and in Indonesia. Advertising activities also require the right strategy so that the advertisements play a significant role and are successful in product sales and promotion, one of which is using forms of media. According to Jefkins (2002), the media can be divided into two parts: mass media, the primary media of advertising, and over-the-line media such as radio, film, and television. In addition, there are also media that are not included in the mass media category and are often referred to as under-the-line media, such as brochures, banners, flyers, and neon boxes. Mass media is one of the media used by producers and marketers to implement their advertising strategies. Mass media itself comes from the word "media," which is a tool or means of delivering messages from a communicator to an audience, but "mass" is a formless collection whose components are difficult to distinguish from each other when referring to the body. (McQuail, 1994). This mass media is often used as a means of mechanical or electrical communication with a wide audience. The role of mass media cannot be separated from the function of mass media itself. In carrying out its role, mass media must pay attention to its function in society and remember that it can expand the scope of human communication. The role of mass media in social life, especially in modern society, is crucial. According to McQuail's book *Mass Communication Theory* (2000), there are six perspectives in considering the role of mass media: as a means of learning how to understand various events and its role as a mirror that reflects various events. The meaning is as a filter or gatekeeper who selects different things, as a guide who presents various information and ideas to the audience, and as an interlocutor or partner who conducts two-way communication. Moreover, mass media is a suitable and effective advertising medium that can reach a wider audience by placing advertisements and promotions, building brand images, and influencing purchasing decisions.

Previous Research

Development and Regulation of Advertising in Indonesia

The development of advertising in Indonesia was supported by the establishment of private television channels and the issuance of SK MENPEN No.111/90, stipulating that advertisements aired on television must be produced domestically by Indonesians. This will bring a distinctive Indonesian advertising style and enrich the Indonesian advertising scene. Government Regulation No. 201/2007 on Using Domestic Resources for Product Advertisement by Broadcasting Institutions also supports the advertising industry. Indonesia's advertising industry fluctuates based on economic growth trends, but the data shows a positive trend. In addition to television, we also make advertising efforts that utilize mass media such as radio and film. These media are referred to as "luxury media" in advertising. In addition, there are also other advertising media that are not included in the mass media category, namely under the line media (Jefkins, 2000).

The Role of Strategy in Advertising As A Political Campaign Tool

Advertising is aimed at specific target audiences, called target groups. Target audiences are specific consumer groups that are targeted by advertising campaigns. This audience is a potential group that you expect to be affected by a particular advertising exposure. It would help if you designed ads creatively to get the desired response from your audience. Advertising creativity is the ability to develop fresh, unique, and relevant ideas that can be used as solutions to communication problems. Creativity in advertising can be achieved through a creative advertising process. (Belch & Belch 2004) states that Advertising creativity is the ability to develop fresh, unique, and relevant ideas that can be used as solutions to communication problems. A good idea must be relevant to the target group to be practical and creative. An example of a political strategy is a positioning strategy in a political campaign such as that carried out by Prabowo Subianto, which plays an important role in building a practical and attractive political image. The strategy is to utilize digital media, such as social media platforms, to reach a broader and more diverse audience, especially the younger generation. This positioning strategy focuses on political communication and managing political image in the changing social and cultural context.

In the context of political campaigns, the positioning strategy allows Prabowo Subianto to tailor his political messages to young voters' preferences, who prefer fun and playful leaders. This strategy involved using the term "gemoy," which means adorable, as an affectionate nickname from Prabowo's supporters. The use of this term shows Prabowo's attempt to reach out to young voters in a more relaxed and humorous way, which is different from his previous stern and authoritative political image. Political advertising is a marketing communication that promotes political candidates and programs using commercial marketing techniques. Political parties use these advertisements as a means to achieve their goals. According to (Lee, 2004, p. 35), political advertising is an informative and persuasive broadcast that aims to attract votes and promote political decisions regarding political parties, candidates, and political programs. Bolland (in McNair, 2003) defines advertising as the publication of organized paid news in the media.

Critical Media Theory

According to McQuail in critical media theory, the media is a significant player in the ideological struggle and can maintain the dominant ideology. From a classical Marxist perspective, the media is seen as a tool by the ruling class or group, especially the capitalists, to spread and strengthen their ideology. The role of the media is to spread ideologies that support and oppress the dominance of other classes in society. In critical theory, the mass media is considered an instrument that is never separated from interests, especially those related to the owners of dominant performative capital, the state, or groups. From this perspective, the media is seen as a tool to control and influence society, so the images presented may be biased or distorted. In addition, critical theory emphasizes the role of the media in shaping national consciousness. The media provides information and plays an important role in shaping people's views and perceptions of the world around them. Media representations are seen as an attempt to gain people's support and approval of existing social structures. In this way, the media can be a tool to reproduce and maintain the status quo.

Mass media is influenced by political, economic, cultural, and historical factors. Therefore, critical theory analysis of the mass media focuses on understanding how the media functions in society and for whose benefit it functions. The mass media's definition and reproduction of reality is an accumulation of facts resulting from ideological debates and the values of different systems. In this context, mass media is not a passive tool but part of a dynamic social reality that actively restates culture. Critical theory emphasizes that knowledge is the power that enables individuals to understand how they are oppressed and take action against that oppression. This fosters a deeper understanding of the power structures of society and the potential for more significant social change.

Critical media theory in this research focuses on analyzing how mass media is influenced by particular interests and how it affects public awareness. In the context of Prabowo Subianto's strategy for the 2024 elections, this theory highlights how mass media can be directed to strengthen his political narrative or agenda and how the use of media can become a tool of domination and hegemony to influence public opinion. In Prabowo Subianto's political strategy, critical media theory pays attention to how the mass media is influenced by his interests and how it is used to build his image and support his political message. This could be through narrative control, story framing, or even information manipulation to achieve his political goals.

Analysis of mass media with a critical theory approach also highlights the impact of "low-taste" content on society, including risks to morals and increased violent behavior. In addition, this theory pays attention to how audiences make choices in consuming media information and how mass media agenda setting can influence their perceptions and behavior.

Theory is essential to understanding how mass media plays a role in politics and how its influence can affect public awareness. In the context of Prabowo Subianto's strategy in the 2024 election, an understanding of this theory helps in identifying how mass media is used for specific political interests and its impact on information stability and oppressed groups.

Methodology

The methodology used in this research is a qualitative approach with descriptive data analysis. The first step was to collect data and facts about the events and activities that occurred as the unit of analysis. We applied various data collection techniques, primarily through literature review, to complete the data. Data collection was done by reviewing and analyzing information from literature and theories related to the research questions. Primary data was obtained from sources such as advertising books and magazines that provide direct information related to advertising. In addition, secondary data was collected from various other sources related to the research. This technology enabled the collection of comprehensive and relevant data for further analysis in the research study.

Data Collection Technique

The first step was to collect data and facts from the events and activities conducted as the unit of analysis. We used various collection techniques to complete the data, including a literature review. We collected data by searching and analyzing information from literature and theories related to our research. Furthermore, primary data was obtained from directly collected data and related books and magazines. Secondary data, i.e., data from various other sources related to this research, will also be used.

Data Analysis Technique

Regarding the data analysis method, all data collected is analyzed in detail using a descriptive approach. The analysis begins with collecting data from various sources, such as primary data from advertising books and magazines, data obtained directly from practice, and secondary data from other relevant sources. After collecting the data, the author identifies patterns, insights, and trends that emerge from the data. The author then organizes and categorizes the data according to the topic or topics under study.

Results and Discussion

In the growing digital era, the role of digital media has become one of the crucial factors in shaping a figure's political image and impression. This phenomenon impacts how politicians communicate with voters and changes the dynamics of politics. Through digital media, politicians can send their political messages faster, more broadly, and more directly to the public. Analyzing how politicians utilize digital media to position themselves in voters' minds in this context becomes very relevant. One exciting example is the role of digital advertising strategies in the election of presidential candidates, which is the focus of this research.

In this research, we will explore the strategies used by Prabowo Subianto, a political figure who has successfully transformed his image through digital media ahead of Indonesia's 2024 presidential election. We will examine how Prabowo transformed his previously assertive image into a more relaxed and "gregarious" figure through social media platforms such as Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok. In addition, we will also analyze the impact of this positioning strategy in shaping Prabowo's image in the eyes of the public, especially among the younger generation.

Prabowo understands the importance of positioning in influencing people's perception of him. Through digital media, especially on social media platforms that are popular among the younger generation, Prabowo has managed to build a more relaxed and fun image. The term "gemoy," popularized in his campaign, symbolized Prabowo's image transformation.

Prabowo also positioned himself as a more friendly and familiar figure through direct interaction with voters on social media. He used the platform to deliver his political messages and communicate personally with his followers. This helped Prabowo strengthen his image as an accessible figure close to the people. Positioning is a marketing term that refers to all actions of a brand, product, person, or even company to create a positive impression in the eyes of consumers and the public so that people can distinguish the product from other companies' products (Hayat, 2016).

Prabowo's "gemoy" positioning strategy through digital media significantly impacted the presidential general election. Prabowo gained sympathy and support from the younger generation, which is dominant in social media use. By presenting a more modern image relevant to current trends, Prabowo resonated with young voters, often considered a difficult market for traditional politicians to capture. It is not without reason that the word memory is associated with Prabowo Subianto, who was once considered solid and fierce. This happened because Prabowo often danced at several events that featured him in the media. Due to his change in behavior towards a more relaxed direction, he is known as a fun person. After some time, a photo illustration of Prabowo in the form of an artificial intelligence (AI) appeared on social media and was considered funny by social media users.



Image 1. Photo of Prabowo Subianto dancing at the General Election Commission event



Image 2. Photo Illustration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) GemoY Prabowo Subianto

Prabowo's digital advertising strategy success reflects his deep understanding of modern political dynamics. He can adapt to changes in voter preferences and behavior and utilize digital media to achieve his goals. Prabowo's success also shows the importance of innovation and creativity in the ever-evolving world of politics.

Conclusion

In observing the phenomenon of Prabowo Subianto's image shift through digital media ahead of the 2024 Indonesian presidential election, it can be concluded that the digital advertising strategy used has a significant impact in shaping public perception, especially among the younger generation. Through a more relaxed and fun image transformation, Prabowo managed to position himself as a figure that is closer to the public, especially to the younger generation, which is an essential segmentation in the modern political context.

This research reveals that Prabowo understands how important positioning is in influencing people's perception of him. By utilizing social media platforms such as Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok, Prabowo strengthened his image as a friendly, familiar, and accessible figure. The concept of "gemoy" carried in his campaign not only symbolized the transformation of Prabowo's image but also managed to gain sympathy and support from the younger generation active in social media.

One of the critical aspects of Prabowo's successful digital advertising strategy was his direct interaction with voters on social media. By communicating personally and delivering his political messages more informally, Prabowo broke the conventional boundaries of traditional politicians who are often considered distant from the people. This not only strengthens his image as a figure close to the people but also gives the impression that Prabowo is a leader who understands and cares about the aspirations and needs of the people. Prabowo's success in using digital advertising strategies also illustrates his excellent adaptation to voters' changing preferences and behavior in the digital era. By presenting a more modern and relevant image to current trends, Prabowo resonated with young voters, who are often considered challenging to capture by traditional politicians. This confirms the importance of innovation and creativity in the ever-evolving world of politics, where utilizing digital media to achieve political goals is crucial to success.

In a broader context, Prabowo's image change through digital media also highlights the importance of openness and transparency in political communication. By strengthening direct interaction with voters through social media, Prabowo is opening up space for more active public dialogue and participation, thus strengthening the foundation of an inclusive democracy responsive to people's needs. However, this research also raises questions about the long-term impact of digital advertising strategies in politics. While successfully gaining support in elections, can the image built through digital media be maintained and implemented consistently in day-to-day leadership? This suggests the need for further study of digital media's role and long-term effects in politics, including the challenges and risks that may arise as its use becomes more widespread.

As such, this research makes an essential contribution to the understanding of modern political dynamics, particularly in the context of the utilization of digital media to influence public perception and support for political figures. This study confirms that digital advertising strategies are an essential tool in political campaigns and reflect an evolution in how politicians interact and communicate with voters in the evolving digital age.

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