

JURNAL KOMUNIKASI

P-ISSN: 1907-848X, E-ISSN: 2548-7647

Homepage: <https://journal.uui.ac.id/jurnal-komunikasi>

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To cite this article:

Pratiwi, M. ., Andarini, R. S. ., Arianti, Y. ., & Astuti, M. . (2025). Visualizing personalization on Instagram during the 2024 presidential election campaign. Jurnal Komunikasi, 19(3), 603–624. <https://doi.org/10.20885/komunikasi.vol19.iss3.art11>



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Published online: October 31, 2025



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To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.20885/komunikasi.vol19.iss3.art11>



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Visualizing personalization on Instagram during the 2024 presidential election campaign

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Article Info

Article History

Submitted:

October 31, 2024

Accepted:

October 21, 2025

Published:

October 31, 2025

Keywords:

Instagram, personal branding, political communication, presidential election 2024

Kata kunci:

Instagram, komunikasi politik, pencitraan diri, pemilihan umum presiden 2024

Abstract: The digital era has transformed political communication by positioning social media, particularly Instagram, as a strategic platform for political actors to build personal branding and foster emotional connections with voters. However, academic studies on the use of visual strategies by presidential and vice-presidential candidates during political campaigns remain relatively limited. This study examines how Indonesia's 2024 presidential and vice-presidential candidates used Instagram for personal branding, focusing on visual content to build voter support. Qualitative analysis of 2540 Instagram posts revealed three dominant dimensions of personal branding—style, competence, and standard—reflected in 15 themes, including public interaction, political campaigns, family orientation, achievements, and values. Results show that the style dimension — particularly public interaction and campaign activities — dominated image-building strategies, with candidate pair Anies Baswedan-Muhaimin Iskandar leading uploads in style and competence. At the same time, Ganjar Pranowo was strong in public interaction themes. Prabowo Subianto-Gibran Rakabuming emphasized achievements, cultural themes, and the celebration of memorable moments. These findings demonstrate that Instagram visuals were strategically used to highlight uniqueness, strengthen credibility, and foster emotional resonance with voters, underscoring the central role of visual branding in influencing voter behavior.

Abstrak: Era digital telah mengubah lanskap komunikasi politik dengan menjadikan media sosial, khususnya Instagram, sebagai platform strategis bagi aktor politik dalam membangun personal branding dan menjalin kedekatan emosional dengan pemilih. Namun, kajian akademik terkait pemanfaatan strategi visual oleh pasangan calon presiden dan wakil presiden dalam kampanye politik masih relative terbatas. Penelitian ini mengkaji bagaimana pasangan calon presiden dan wakil presiden Indonesia pada Pemilu 2024 menggunakan Instagram untuk personal branding, dengan fokus pada konten visual dalam membangun dukungan pemilih. Analisis kualitatif dengan 2.540 unggahan Instagram menunjukkan adanya tiga dimensi utama personal branding—style, kompetensi, dan standard—yang tercermin dalam 15 tema seperti interaksi publik, kegiatan kampanye, orientasi keluarga, prestasi dan nilai. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa dimensi style, khususnya interaksi publik dan aktivitas kampanye, mendominasi strategi pencitraan, dengan pasangan Anies Baswedan-Muhaimin Iskandar unggul dalam dimensi style dan kompetensi, sementara Ganjar Pranowo menonjol pada tema interaksi publik. Adapun Prabowo Subianto-Gibran Rakabuming menekankan prestasi, tema budaya, serta perayaan momen khusus. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa visual Instagram digunakan secara strategis untuk menegaskan keunikan, memperkuat kredibilitas dan membangun resonansi emosional dengan pemilih, sehingga menegaskan peran personal branding visual yang strategis dalam mempengaruhi voters.

INTRODUCTION

The digital era has changed the landscape of political communication, especially in election campaigns (Dimitrova et al., 2014; Oparaugo, 2021). The intense competition among political actors to gain voters' support is found in all types of elections. Some political actors were able to gain considerable and even wider political market support. Conversely, many other politicians find it difficult to expand support among voters who were their audience (Hatmanti & Ahmad, 2023). This condition encouraged political actors to develop strategies in marketing self-image through personal branding.

In Indonesia, personal branding was often used by political actors to create a self-image through political campaigns in order to attract the attention of the general public to win regional elections (Pilkada) and presidential elections (Pilpres), so that politicians were competing to build public perceptions of their self-identity through personal branding (Hadjira & Suranto, 2023). Personal branding was proactive, planned, and strategic; it was an individual's way of communicating their unique value. Individuals engaged in personal branding activities to manage their image and reputation, which could help them stand out. With the development of technology and digital platforms, individuals were increasingly doing their personal branding activities online (Venciute et al., 2024).

Social media was a new platform for leaders to build an image and create strong personal branding to represent themselves and their company (Md Saad & Yaacob, 2021a). The social media phenomenon had driven change, particularly in branding strategies. The emergence of new impactful actors and influencers characterized it. Personal branding was common among celebrities, athletes, politicians, and public

figures, as these individuals needed to stand out, be unique, and showcase their strengths to gain influence and power (Glucksman, 2017; Gorbatov et al., 2018a; Md Saad & Yaacob, 2021a). Social media plays a significant role as a playground for personal branding, offering many ways to build a brand. The social media revolution gave a whole new meaning to the concept of personal brand, as control and power shifted from professionals to individuals (Hämäläinen, 2017). Leaders used personal social media accounts to build personal brands by sharing content about their personal lives, engaging with followers, and being transparent about their lifestyles and work activities (Md Saad & Yaacob, 2021a).

Personal branding is defined as a strategic process of creating, positioning, and maintaining a positive impression of oneself, based on a unique combination of individual characteristics that signal a specific promise to the target audience through a differentiated narrative and imagery (Gorbatov et al., 2018b; Suddaby, 2010). Personal branding involves shaping how society perceives a person's unique attributes — such as personality, skills, and values — and how these perceptions create a positive image in the community that can eventually be used as marketing tools (Basuki & Jimmy, 2022).

McNally and Speak believed that a personal brand encompassed both internal and external characteristics—that is, how individuals interact with one another and their overall perception (McCrae & Costa, 1987), and they put the concept of a brand in a personal context, defining a personal brand as “a perception or emotion, maintained by somebody other than you, that describes the total experience of having a relationship with you (McNally et al., 2011). Furthermore, a person's reputation, public image, legend, and

character all contribute to their personal brand (Chen & Chung, 2016). McNally and Speak (2011) identify three key dimensions of personal branding: *a. standard* —the values, principles, and integrity that define an individual's actions and set their personal benchmarks. *b. style*— the unique. Recognizable approach or manner in which a person presents themselves, creating a distinctive impression, and *c. competence*—the skills, abilities, and expertise that demonstrate an individual's capability and credibility in their field. These three elements contribute to building a strong, authentic personal brand. In fact, personal branding has been studied across various contexts. However, there remains a lack of investigation into why and how presidential and vice-presidential candidates develop their personal branding to win over voters and increase credibility. By addressing this gap in the literature, this research question examines how presidential and vice-presidential candidates used visual images in their self-presentation or personal branding on Instagram during the 2024 general election in Indonesia. Furthermore, this research highlights that existing studies generally emphasize what political branding *ought* to focus on — such as discourses, policy communication, and rhetorical strategies — while overlooking the empirical reality of how candidates in Indonesia actually employed visual imagery on Instagram as a central means of constructing credibility and voter appeal. The study seeks to connect the normative expectations of political branding scholarship with the lived practices of candidates in the digital campaign arena.

This study aimed to explore the personal branding efforts of presidential and vice-presidential candidates through visual images via Instagram during the

2024 general election period in Indonesia. The study would outline the strategies and tactics used by the presidential and vice presidential candidates to build personal brands. Previous literature approaches the *personal branding* phenomenon from the perspectives of business managers and their identity work (Hämäläinen, 2017) and of company CEOs (Md Saad & Yaacob, 2021b). In addition, most previous studies took a more personalized approach by discussing themselves on Twitter (X) (Molyneux, 2019). The use of platforms such as Facebook, X, Instagram, and YouTube can create an emotional connection with followers and ultimately improve their self-image through personal branding (Martikasari & Id, 2023). In this case, Instagram could also serve as a political communication tool during an election campaign (Beers, 2014; Musdalifah et al., n.d.; Prihatini, 2020; Rheault et al., 2019). However, the research has examined how political figures — specifically presidential and vice-presidential candidates — strategically employ *visual imagery* on Instagram as a form of personal branding during election campaigns. At the same time, previous studies highlighted business leaders' textual identity work or general self-promotion across various platforms; this study focuses on the unique role of *visual communication* in shaping political narratives, credibility, and emotional resonance with voters. By analyzing Instagram posts during Indonesia's 2024 general election, this research offers new insights into how visual personal branding functions as a political communication tool, distinguishing it from earlier works that were either corporate-oriented or text-based.

METHODS

This study used qualitative descriptive content analysis to see the reality of self-image formation through personal branding of presidential and vice-presidential candidate pairs based on empirical data from 6 (six) Instagram accounts of each presidential and vice-presidential candidate pair during the 2024 presidential election campaign period in Indonesia. In addition, content analysis was a research strategy used to categorize certain content by comparing it with similar content (Hwang et al., 2019; Schlægner, 2013).

The data in this study were automatically pulled using a Python application. This application allowed researchers to retrieve data from Instagram, including photos, videos, captions, comments, and the number of likes, for a specific period of time from particular accounts or #hashtags. The Instagram accounts of the presidential candidate pairs were as follows: Anis Baswedan (@aniesbaswedan, 819 posts); Cak Imin (@cakiminow, 500 posts); Candidate 2 Prabowo Subianto (@prabowo, 219 posts) and Gibran Rakabuming Raka (@gibran_rakabuming, 228 posts); and Candidate 3 Ganjar Pranowo (@ganjar_pranowo, 448 posts) and Mahfud MD (@mohmahfudmd, 328 posts). The data in this study were stored at 10.17632/vnkr4wsfcv.1.

Instagram content was treated as a medium of personal and political expression, through which candidates could indirectly communicate messages and construct favorable self-images. Each candidate brought distinct political experience and public profiles that influenced their personal branding strategies. Candidate pair number 1, Anies Rasyid Baswedan, was the Governor of DKI Jakarta from 2017-2022 and a former Minister of Education and Culture, while

Muhaimin Inskandar (Cak Imin) was the Chairman of the Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa (PKB) and a former Minister of Labor and Transmigration from 2009-2014. The Presidential candidate number 2, Prabowo Subianto, was the Indonesian Minister of Defense, and Gibran Rakabuming Raka was a city leader as the Mayor of Surakarta for the 2021-2026 period. Furthermore, the candidate number 3, Ganjar Pranowo, was the Governor of Central Java and had served as a Member of Commission IV of the House of Representatives responsible for agriculture, plantations, forestry, marine, fisheries and food in 2004-2009; in other hand, Mr. Mahfud MD as a vice-presidential candidate was the Coordinating Minister for Political, Legal and Human Rights (MenkoPolhukam) and was previously an Indonesian Constitutional Judge and Member of the House of Representatives. Moreover, identifying each candidate's unique use of Instagram could reveal the strategies behind the formation of personal branding to win public support or voters.

The coding process involved three researchers who analyzed 2540 Instagram posts from each presidential candidate pair in the Indonesian presidential election for the period 2024 to 2029, with posting dates from November 1, 2023, to February 29, 2024. There were six steps in the coding process: (1) observing and familiarizing oneself with the data. At this stage, researchers observed 2.540 Instagram posts, reading captions, and analyzing visuals; (2) generating initial codes, researchers systematically coded the posts, assigning labels or keywords to specific content elements (e.g., "Style", "Competence", "Standard"). Coding helps to organize raw data into manageable chunks; (3) searching for themes; the researchers grouped similar codes into broader potential themes. (4) Reviewing

themes, the next step involved checking whether the themes accurately represented the data; (5) determining and categorizing themes, categorized according to McNally's personal branding dimensions; (6) generating data used for thematic analysis and focusing on theoretical approaches. Each coder analyzed 2540 posts for each candidate. The Inter-coder Reliability Coefficient was calculated using the Holsti formula, with a minimum reliability figure that could be categorized as a reliable measuring instrument when the reliability figure was in the range of 0.7 to 1 (Eriyanto, 2011). The measurement resulted in this study for the Competence category (0.783), Standard category (0.898), Style category (0.887) and for the specific themes of Authenticity (0.821), Family Orientation Image (0.972), Communication Style (0.905), Interaction with the Public (0.953), Political Campaign (0.887), Togetherness with Public Figures/Political Figures or Religious Leaders (0.843), Culture (0.684), Special Skills (0.812), Uniqueness (0.913), Values and Principles

(0.869), Job as a Public Official (0.915), Personal Appearance (0.769), Celebration of Special Moments (0.806), Achievements (0.857), Religious Themes (0.946).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The three pairs of presidential and vice-presidential candidates in this study were public officials with careers in politics. By uploading photos to their Instagram accounts, the presidential and vice-presidential candidates used Instagram as a strategy for image-building through personal branding to generate positive resonance with voters. According to McNally & Speak (2002), personal branding aims to foster positive perceptions that can lead to trust and other actions. By advertising, McNally & Speak (2011) describe three dimensions that could serve as a reference for building personal branding, namely competence, standards, and style. Table 1 illustrates the distribution of content categories uploaded by candidates through their Instagram accounts.

Table 1
Analysis Results

	Anies Baswedan	Cak Imin	Prabowo Subianto	Gibran Rakabuming	Ganjar Pranowo	Mahfud MD	Total
<i>Competence</i>	55	64	10	17	4	5	155
<i>Standard</i>	52	120	72	91	40	94	469
<i>Style</i>	393	634	136	120	404	229	1,916
Total	500	818	218	228	448	328	2.540

Source: Data Processed by the Authors (2024)

Table 1 shows the number of Instagram posts uploaded by the candidate pairs in Indonesia, with the term "pasangan calon or paslon" across various content categories. Their political work was documented and uploaded to their Instagram accounts. We found that self-

image formation occurs through 3 important references in building personal branding: *Competence*, *Standard*, and *Style*. Among the three visual categorizations, we found that the most dominant dimension in image formation was the style dimension, followed by the

standard dimension, and finally the competence dimension.

The big underline had been discussed; the style dimension was mainly used by the three pairs of presidential and vice-presidential candidates, focusing on how they looked unique in others' minds. The style dimension involved matters related to relationships between individuals; every word conveyed by other individuals to provide judgment carried meaning and strong emotions. Personally, the person who uploaded the most in this dimension was Cak Imin, with 634 uploads, followed by Ganjar Pranowo with 404 and Anies Baswedan with 393. Recapitulation based on candidate pairs, the style dimension was mostly uploaded by candidate pair 1, namely Anies Baswedan and Cak Imin. Visualization of image formation in the style dimension was like interacting with the public, either directly through live Instagram Q&A (questions and answers) sessions, through question columns, or through political campaign activities during the 2024 election period. They used Instagram as a medium for political advertising, displaying uploads highlighting party attributes, showing work programs, and showing concern for fellow humans. Furthermore, to get others' attention, each upload used a humorous, friendly communication style, both in videos and captions.

The next category was the standard dimension, which Cak Imin mostly uploaded, whose real name is Muhaimin Iskandar: 120 uploads; then Mahfud MD, 94 uploads; and Gibran Rakabuming, 91 uploads. This dimension affected how others perceived an individual, with the strength of image formation stemming from the standards that had been given meaning and set. Setting standards was a form of individual responsibility because the higher the standard set, the higher the

responsibility and vice versa. By setting standards, we can strengthen each individual's abilities. The three pairs of presidential and vice-presidential candidates in this dimension made several provisions to shape the visualizations of their images on their Instagram pages, including uploads about values and principles that discuss integrity, ethics, honesty, empathy, and condolences. Some candidate pairs also presented a family-oriented image as a standard, namely by showing the role of a husband and father who had time with family. It was not infrequent that pairs of presidential and vice-presidential candidates also showed their work as public officials by conducting visits, meetings, and trials. All uploads made by the three pairs of presidential and vice-presidential candidates in this dimension were well packaged, with captions, so that people left messages in the comments column.

Finally, the competence dimension refers to an individual's ability in a particular field. Competence is how our role with others reflects the expertise, personality, qualities, and values that set us apart from others. Among the three pairs of presidential and vice-presidential candidates, the competence dimension was mostly uploaded by Anies Baswedan (55 uploads) and "Cak Imin" (Muhaimin Iskandar; 64 uploads). The uploads contained specific skills, such as the expertise and experience of candidate pairs in politics and other fields, as well as their achievements and contributions to society.

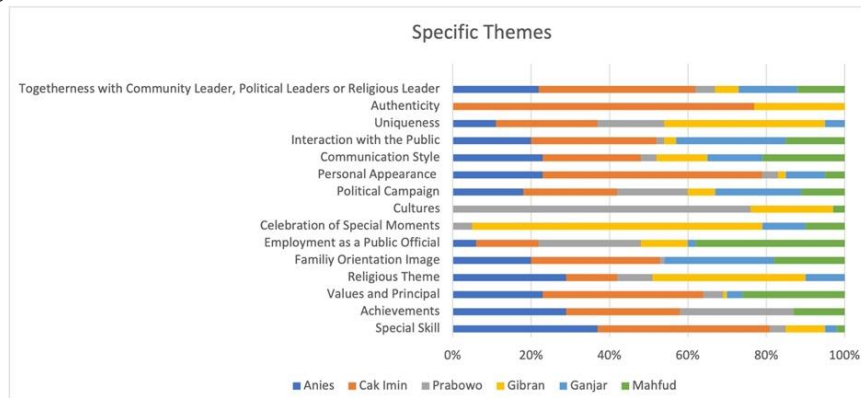
The three pairs of presidential and vice-presidential candidates used various ways to build and develop self-image in their fields, where image formation was needed to strengthen their presence before the audience, as the process was a lifelong journey aimed at making the image stronger.

Table 2
Categories and Specific Themes

Categories	Specific Themes	Pair 01		Pair 02		Pair 03		Total
		Anies	Cak Imin	Prabowo	Gibran	Ganjar	Mahfud	
Competence	Special Skills	51	60	5	14	4	3	137
	Achievement	4	4	4	0	0	2	14
	Value & Principal	30	54	7	1	5	35	132
Standard	Religious Theme	9	4	3	12	3	0	31
	Family Orientation Images	14	24	1	0	20	13	72
	Employment as a Public Official	6	15	24	11	2	36	94
Style	Celebration of Special Moments	0	0	4	64	9	9	86
	Cultures	0	0	29	8	0	1	38
	Political Campaign	85	112	84	36	105	52	474
	Personal Appearance	57	137	9	6	25	13	247
	Gaya Komunikasi	13	14	2	7	8	12	56
	Interaction with the Public	159	248	20	21	220	118	786
	Uniqueness	7	17	11	27	3	0	65
	Authenticity	0	10	0	3	0	0	13
	Togetherness with a Community Leader or a Religious Leader	65	119	15	18	44	34	295

Source: Data Processed by the Authors (2024)

Chart 1
Type of Specific Themes



Source: Data Processed by the Authors (2024)

Type of Specific Theme in Competence: **Special Skills**

If the intensity of its use were accumulated, it would be seen that only the presidential and vice-presidential

candidate pair number 1 uses many special skills themes from the competence dimension to shape its image in the 2024 elections. Based on the data, the Anies Baswedan and Muhaimin Iskandar pairs

were more likely to display special skills uploads, namely 51 uploads by Anies Baswedan and 60 by Muhaimin Iskandar. Then, other candidate pairs followed: Prabowo with five uploads, Ganjar with 4, and Mahfud MD with 3. The posts showing special skills by candidate pair number 1 constituted 10.2% of the total 500 posts on Anies Baswedan's Instagram page and only 7.3% of the total 818 posts on Muhaimin Iskandar's Instagram page during the 2024

election period. Judging by the dimensions, these uploads accounted for 93% of the total uploads in the competence dimension on Anies Baswedan's Instagram page and 94% of the total uploads in the competence dimension on Muhaimin Iskandar's Instagram page. The percentages of upload types were not far off when viewed from the competence dimension.

Figure 1

Anies Baswedan and Muhaimin Iskandar's Instagram Account



Source: Data Processed by the Authors (2024)

In this upload, Anies Baswedan demonstrated his abilities and skills in harvesting with farmers while interacting with them. Furthermore, the tweet stated that this activity was to listen to the community's aspirations to identify the changes needed. Muhaimin Iskandar's exceptional skills as a speaker in discussing with students, with captions displayed to show he understood what he explained, thus strengthening his image as an able speaker, supported by positive feedback and affirmation in the comments column. The two moments uploaded by Candidate number 01 clearly showed the abilities and special skills of each individual, supported by the value and expertise, with a reasonably clear video display assisted by captions that explained the activities and

comments that provided an upbeat assessment of the upload.

Achievements

The next theme was achievement, in this theme the presidential and vice-presidential candidates showed the achievements obtained during their career in the field and the achievement of contributing to society in the form of awards, in this case it was done by presidential candidate number 2, Prabowo with a total of 4 uploads, which meant only 2% of all 218 uploads on Prabowo's personal page and 44% of the total uploads of the competence dimension. In addition to Prabowo, other candidates also showed achievement uploads, including Anies Baswedan with 4, Muhaimin Iskandar with 4, and Mahfud MD with 2.

Figure 2

Prabowo's Instagram Account (@prabowo)



Source: Data Processed by the Authors (2024)

In this upload, Prabowo showcased his achievements, as stated in the caption: the number 2 presidential candidate received an award from the Singapore Government in the military field. This demonstrated the value and expertise in Prabowo's image-building. This upload's value was also supported by the number of likes and the content of the comments, which showed a positive response to Prabowo's achievements.

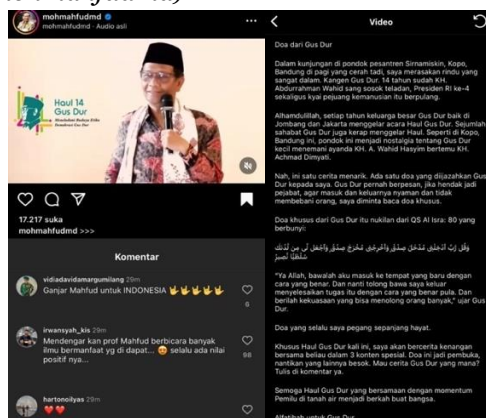
Type of Specific Theme in Standard: **Values and Principles**

In this section, 132 posts from all pairs of presidential and vice-presidential candidates demonstrated values and

principles, forming an image with the standard dimensions during the 2024 election period. There were 35 uploads about values and principles by Mahfud MD, which accounted for only 10.7% of the total 328 uploads by Mahfud MD and 37% of the standard dimension uploads, then from Candidate 1, Anies Baswedan, with 30 uploads and Muhaimin Iskandar with 54 uploads; Candidate 2, Prabowo, with seven uploads and Gibran Rakabuming with one upload, and finally Ganjar Pranowo with one upload. This showed that only a few candidate pairs were active in sharing posts about values and principles on their personal Instagram pages, which include integrity, leadership, honesty, and others.

Figure 4

Mahfud MD's Instagram (@mohmahfudmd)



Source: Data Processed by the Authors (2024)

The video upload above showed a value and principle held by Mahfud MD in living his life, demonstrating his integrity and ethics by continuing to teach and practice what had been taught or mandated. Furthermore, it was clearly seen in the values and principles of Mahfud MD This was also one of the efforts in shaping the image according to the standard dimension that the provisions carried out with responsibility could have a good impact on the image of the individual.

Religious Theme

This section explained the religious activities of each presidential and vice-presidential candidate, ranging from worship to holiday greetings and other activities that supported image formation through the standard dimension. In this case, Gibran Rakabuming made the most uploads with 12, accounting for 5% of the total 228 uploads on his Instagram page during the 2024 election period; then Anies Baswedan with 9, Muhaimin Iskandar with 4, and 3 each by Prabowo and Ganjar Pranowo.

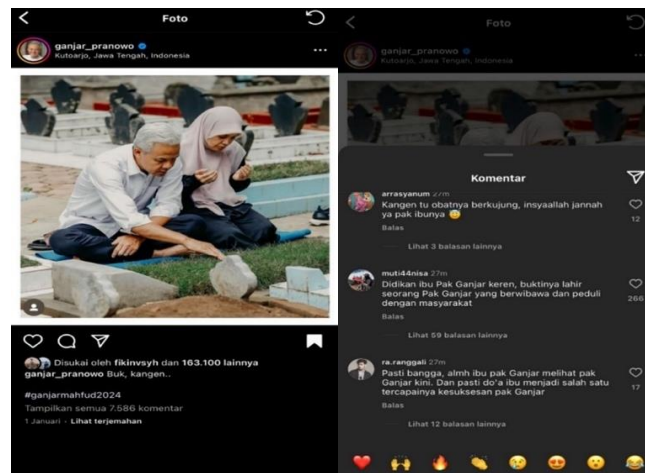
The uploaded date, December 24, 2023, featured a Christmas greeting by Gibran Rakabuming, indicating a stance of religious tolerance, which affected how others viewed Gibran. The comment column above showed that the community found the impact of the upload very positive. This created its own value for Gibran and made a new standard in image building.

Family Orientation Image

Family-oriented images were posts that showed presidential and vice-presidential candidates with their family members, whether in their role as a father, as a child, as a husband, or in time with family. In this case, Muhaimin Iskandar was the most dominant, with 24 uploads, accounting for only 2.9% of the total 818 uploads on his personal Instagram page. There was Ganjar Pranowo with 20 uploads, which accounted for 4.5% of the total 448 uploads on his personal Instagram page during the 2024 election period; then Anies Baswedan with 14 uploads; Mahfud MD with 13 uploads; and finally Prabowo with 1 upload. The following was an example of Ganjar Pranowo's family orientation image:

Figure 5

Ganjar Pranowo's Instagram Account (@ganjar_pranowo)



Source: Data Processed by the Authors (2024)

In Ganjar Pranowo's uploaded photo above, it shows his role as a child, as a husband, and time with family, by taking time to visit his beloved mother in the midst of the 2024 election activities. Furthermore, the caption shows that Ganjar expressed his longing for his parents, forming an image in the standard dimension that is family-oriented. In the comments column, there was interaction by the public towards Ganjar Pranowo, such as giving praise or giving advice to be stronger.

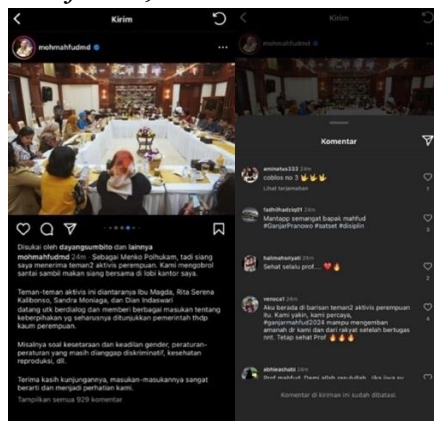
Employment as a Public Official

The uploads showed the work of public officials, covering activities such as

trials, meetings, work visits, and others, as part of the information in the standard dimension during the 2024 elections. On the other hand, by considering the uploaded pictures investigation, who had the most uploads on this specific theme from vice-presidential candidate number 3, Mahfud MD, namely with 36 uploads out of a total of 328 uploads, which meant only 11%, then Prabowo with 24 uploads, Muhaimin Iskandar with 15 uploads, Gibran Rakabuming with 11 uploads, Anies Baswedan with 6 uploads, and finally Ganjar Pranowo with 2 uploads. The following were examples of uploads of work as a public official by Mahfud MD:

Figure 6

Mahfud MD's Instagram (@mohmahfudmd)



Source: Data Processed by the Authors (2024)

The upload showed Mahfud MD's activities as Coordinating Minister for Political, Legal, and Security Affairs, conducting discussions with activists, before running as a vice-presidential candidate. Mahfud MD served as Indonesia's Coordinating Minister for Political, Legal, and Security Affairs before finally resigning as Minister at the end of the 2024 election. Mahfud MD's uploaded figure above received positive feedback, as seen in the comments column, which supported him. This helped build the image on Instagram, where the upload attracted new viewers.

Celebration of Special Moments

This specific theme discussed various celebrations of moments considered special, with value for image building. In this case, the most posts were uploaded by vice-presidential candidate number 2, Gibran Rakabuming, with 64 posts, which accounted for 29% of the total 228 posts on his personal Instagram page; then, Mahfud MD and Ganjar Pranowo each posted 9 posts; and finally, Prabowo posted 4 posts. Gibran uploaded an

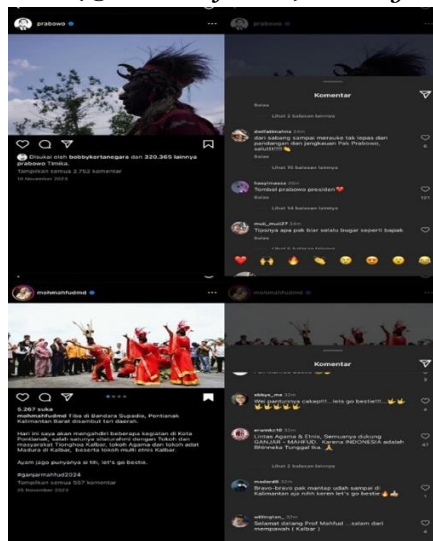
infographic showcasing a special moment: the art market in Solo City, featuring a variety of unique crafts. This upload attracted public sympathy, as people were happy to learn this information. The upload provided different views and meanings, depending on the intent and purpose of the uploaded figures, yet still helped shape the image of each vice-presidential candidate in the 2024 election.

Cultures

In the specific theme section on culture, there were only two pairs of presidential and vice-presidential candidates who shared information about culture, namely the way culture is covered in Indonesia. The presidential and vice-presidential candidate pair from serial number two was the dominant candidate pair, providing uploads about culture: Prabowo with 29 uploads (13.6% of the total 218 uploads on his personal Instagram page), Gibran Rakabuming with eight uploads, and finally Mahfud MD with one upload. The following were Prabowo and Mahfud MD, who posted examples of cultural:

Figure 7

Prabowo (@prabowo) & Mahfud MD (@mohmahfudmd)'s Instagram

**Source:** Data Processed by the Authors (2024)

The uploaded figure above illustrates Timika customs. Prabowo uploaded the photo with a short caption, and it was liked by almost 320 thousand more, with the comment section filled with praise for him. It looked different from the previous upload; Mahfud MD's upload showed culture ranging from traditional clothing to traditional dances in Pontianak, West Kalimantan. The caption also provided the public with information through rhymes in the last section, prompting people to comment in the comment column. The difference in how uploads were presented across the two presidential and vice-presidential candidate accounts still had one goal or one view: to show a culture, which depended on how each of them shaped their image.

Type of Specific Theme in Style:

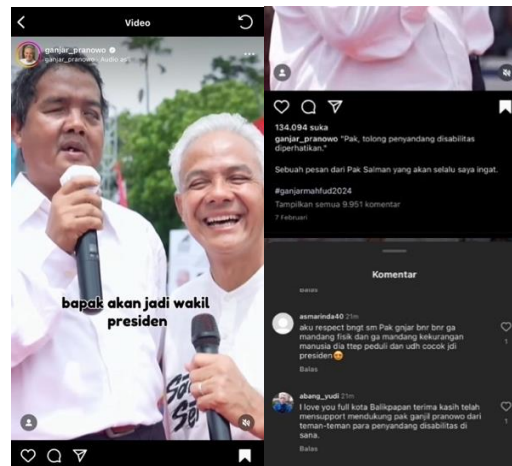
Political Campaign

In this section, we examine how the pairs of presidential and vice-presidential candidates in the 2024 elections shape the

dominant image, using a total of 474 uploads that include political campaigns such as party attributes, delivery of work programs, acts of concern for others, and advertising. In accordance with its dimension, namely style, things were related to relationships between individuals; other individuals conveyed every word to provide judgment, meaning, and intense emotions. In this case, presidential and vice presidential candidates who often use political campaigns for image-building include Muhaimin Iskandar, with 112 uploads (13.7% of the total) on his personal Instagram page. Ganjar Pranowo, with 105 uploads, or 23.4% of the total uploads, on his personal Instagram page during the 2024 election period; then Anies Baswedan, with 85 uploads; Prabowo, with 84 uploads; Mahfud MD, with 52 uploads; and finally Gubran Rakabuming, with 36 uploads. The following were examples of political campaigns:

Figure 8

Ganjar Pranowo (@ganjar_pranowo)



Source: Data Processed by the Authors (2024)

The uploaded figure above shows the political campaign activities carried out by Ganjar Pranowo. The atmosphere in the upload has a substantial emotional impact, conveying concern for fellow humans. All uploads made by presidential and vice-presidential candidates had a strong meaning, showing political activities throughout the 2024 elections; they also influenced each candidate's image formation.

Personal Appearance

In the part on self-appearance and image formation with the style dimension, the presidential and vice-presidential candidates were judged by how they dressed and by their masculinity, highlighting the value of leaders and others. The vice-presidential candidate who was very dominant in this specific theme was Muhaimin Iskandar, with a total of 137 uploads or 16.7% of the total number

of uploads on his personal Instagram page, while in second place was Anies Baswedan with 57 uploads, then Ganjar Pranowo with 25 uploads, Mahfud MD with 13 uploads, Prabowo with 9 uploads, and finally Gibran Rakabuming with 6 uploads.

Communication Style

Communication style was a theme that supported image formation through language, gesture, and intonation; for example, each uploaded image used friendly captions and humorous language. In this case, the dominant presidential and vice-presidential candidates who did those were Muhaimin Iskandar with 14 uploads, Anies Baswedan with 13 uploads, Mahfud MD with 12 uploads, Ganjar Pranowo with 8 uploads, Gibran Rakabuming with 7 uploads, and finally Prabowo with 2 uploads. The following was an example of a communication style uploaded by Anies Baswedan:

Figure 9*Anies Baswedan (@aniesbaswedan)***Source:** Data Processed by the Authors (2024)

The video upload above showed Anies Baswedan's communication style, using a video display to convey ideas coherently while telling stories, and captions that were easily understood by the public. However, this style accounted for only 3% of Anies Baswedan's uploads on the style dimension. The people who praised Anies' communication style showed strong emotions, indicating that a strong interest in Anies' image drove the process of image formation.

Interaction with the Public

The specific interaction theme with the public was the most uploaded, with a total of 786 uploads by pairs of presidential and vice-presidential candidates. The interaction referred to in this specific theme included how the candidates either interacted directly or responded to comments, conducted question-and-answer sessions, conducted live broadcasts, and heard input from the public. The presidential and vice-presidential candidates who dominated

interact with the public during the 2024 elections were Muhaimin Iskandar with 248 uploads or 30.3% of the total uploads on his personal Instagram page during the election period, then Ganjar Pranowo with 220 uploads or 49.1% of the total uploads on his personal Instagram page during the election, then Anies Baswedan with 159 uploads, Mahfud MD with 118 uploads, Gibran Rakabuming with 21 uploads, and finally Prabowo with 20 uploads. The following was an example of Ganjar Pranowo's interaction with the public. The uploaded images showed Ganjar's activities, including interactions with the public and direct observation of activities with villagers, and the captions clearly indicated the locations and activities. It was an effort to shape the image to get a positive response from the public, both local people and those who commented in the comment section.

Uniqueness

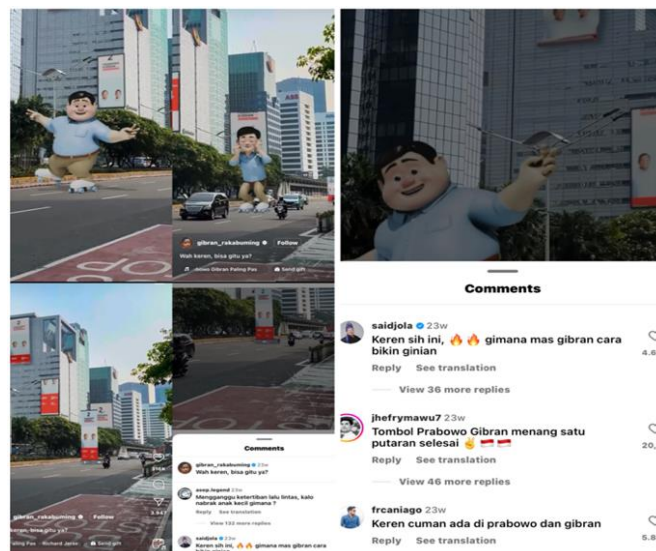
Uniqueness is a strength in image building that helps differentiate each

individual. In this theme, only a few presidential and vice presidential candidates showed their uniqueness, such as Gibran Rakabuming with 27 uploads (12% of the total uploads on his personal Instagram account), then Muhaimin

Iskandar with 17 uploads, Prabowo with 11 uploads, Anies Baswedan with 7 uploads, and finally Ganjar Pranowo with three uploads. Here, there was an example of a unique upload by Gibran Rakabuming:

Figure 10

Gibran Rakabuming (@gibran_rakabuming)



Source: Data Processed by the Authors (2024)

The uploaded image showed an animation of candidate pair 1, Prabowo-Gibran, packaged uniquely. To attract public attention, the comments section praised the upload's creativity and uniqueness.

Authenticity

The specific theme of Authenticity itself was the value of maintaining identity, or in other words, nature; this theme was usually already embedded in each individual. There were only two vice-presidential candidates with authentic posts: Muhaimin Iskandar, with 10 posts (1.2% of the total posts on his personal Instagram page), and Gibran Rakabuming, with three posts (1% of the total posts on his personal Instagram page). The following was an example of Authenticity

by Muhaimin Iskandar. The uploaded image showed the Authenticity of Muhaimin Iskandar, the vice-presidential candidate, of the serial number. The video explained Muhaimin's original traits, conveyed by his wife and child, indicating that Muhaimin Iskandar's self-image had been alive and embedded for a long time, recognized by others. In accordance with the style dimension, which emphasized relationships between individuals to create a strong emotion, Muhaimin Iskandar's image formation through this specific theme was the right choice; in addition, public responses in the comments column also supported the formation of the image.

Togetherness with Community Leaders / Political Leaders or Religious Leaders

The last specific theme was image-building through togetherness among community, political, and religious leaders, carried out by presidential and vice-presidential candidates throughout the 2024 election. The togetherness in this case was referred to as deliberation, political, spiritual, and other activities. By considering this theme, the dominant vice-presidential candidate who shared some uploads of togetherness with religious leaders or leaders was Muhaimin Iskandar with 119 uploads or 14.5% of the total uploads on his personal Instagram page, then Anies Baswedan with 65 uploads or 13% of the total uploads on his personal Instagram page, then Ganjar Pranowo with 44 uploads, Mahfud with 34 uploads, Gibran Rakabuming with 18 uploads, and finally Prabowo with 15 uploads. The following were examples of uploads of Muhaimin Iskandar's togetherness with public figures, political figures, or religious leaders. The uploaded content showed Muhaimin's togetherness with several community leaders. Muhaimin's warm welcome to his guests had a positive impact, as seen in the comments; some praised his jolly attitude during the 2024 election. Therefore, it became a characteristic.

Personal Branding Visualization as a Political Campaign Strategy

In the 2024 presidential and vice-presidential elections, personal branding was an essential strategy for candidates through their Instagram accounts. Based on content analysis, this study found that the three pairs of presidential and vice-presidential candidates used various techniques to build self-image across the

three main dimensions of personal branding, as defined by McNally & Speak (2002): competence, standard, and style (Tables 1 and 2).

Other literature indicates that ideal personal branding comprises main and supporting components. The main components included values, skills, and behavior that were the most critical engines for what was developed. Then the supporting components included appearance, uniqueness, and Authenticity. The formation of personal branding played an essential role in the success and sustainability of one's career and in others' understanding of him (Parengkuan & Tumewu, 2014).

This study showed that Instagram was often used to build personal branding because it was considered adequate for that purpose. Personal branding included managing reputation, appearance, attitude, and skills to shape a strong self-image. This was very important for improving one's self-image and identity (Yuliaty et al., 2020). In an effort to be the best in society's eyes, a person would try to influence perceptions and views by demonstrating self-identification (Suryawati, 2021).

By detailing the discussions of this study, it was found that the style dimension was the most dominant in shaping the image of these three candidates. They focused on how they looked unique and interacted with the public through various ways that showed their concern for others, figures who were close to the people, open, and responsive. Muhaimin Iskandar (Cak Imin) was very active on Instagram, interacting with the public through Q&A on Live and through political campaigns that used a humorous, friendly communication style—followed by Ganjar Pranowo, who showcased his social concerns and party

work programs with an engaging language style that contributed to the formation of a strong and positive image in the eyes of the public.

The standards dimension played an essential role, though with fewer uploads. Candidates used this dimension to emphasize their values and principles, such as integrity and empathy, and to demonstrate their responsibility in their roles as public officials. For example, Cak Imin and Mahfud MD posted about family roles and religious activities that could reinforce their image as individuals with high moral standards and strong family values. Meanwhile, Gibran Rakabuming, who demonstrated religious tolerance in his posts, received a positive response from the community. Meanwhile, the competence dimension, despite being the least used, Anies Baswedan and Cak Imin most often display special abilities and expertise in the political field. Their posts more often showcase their achievements and contributions to society, strengthening their image as competent leaders. Anies Baswedan showcased his skills in agriculture and some of his educational achievements. Prabowo, on the other hand, reinforced his image through posts about the awards he received from the Singapore Government for his military service. This had strengthened their image of competence in the eyes of the public they had captured.

CONCLUSION

Each candidate used Instagram strategically to build personal branding in accordance with their strengths. Candidate 1 tended to emphasize the style and competence dimensions, while candidates 2 and 3 focused more on the standard and style dimensions. The three candidate pairs used Instagram to build their self-image through different approaches. The visual and narrative approaches they used in their

Instagram posts showed that personal branding on social media was a key element in modern political campaigns, serving not only to attract voters' attention but also to build trust and positive resonance in the community. Based on these findings, it is recommended that future candidates adopt a balanced approach to personal branding, avoiding an overemphasis on style at the expense of demonstrating competence. A comprehensive portrayal that integrates achievements, core values, and authentic personality traits is likely to enhance voters' perceptions of both credibility and Authenticity. Furthermore, campaign teams should consider engaging skilled content creators who possess a deep understanding of digital culture and the ability to translate political messages into compelling, visually engaging narratives.

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to the growing body of literature on digital political communication by demonstrating the applicability of McNally and Speak's (2002) personal branding framework within political campaigns, particularly in the Indonesian socio-political context. This research advances the understanding of how visual media serve as a critical tool in the construction and communication of political identity.

Practically, the results provide valuable insights for political strategists, social media consultants, and communication practitioners involved in the design and implementation of data-driven, audience-centric digital campaigns. The findings underscore the significance of Authenticity, consistency, and value-oriented messaging in cultivating public trust—factors essential to securing sustained political legitimacy in the contemporary digital era.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We would like to thank Universitas Sriwijaya, through the Institute for Research and Community Service, for funding this study through Research in Science, Technology, and the Arts. DIPA of

the Public Service Agency of Universitas Sriwijaya 2024 funded this article. SP DIPA-023.17.2.677515/November 24 2024, 2023. By Rector's Decree Number: 0012/UN9/LP2M.PT/2024 on May 20, 2024.

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