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ARTICLE

Political Marketing Strategy

Efforts of Regional Head Candidates to Attract the Sympathy of Voters in Wajo Regency

Sudarsono 📵 💆

Universitas Bina Mandiri, Gorontalo, Indonesia

■ sudarsono@ubmg.ac.id

Abstract: This study aims to analyze the most effective communication strategies, personal branding, social media utilization, and data-driven campaign methods in influencing public opinion and mobilizing support. Qualitative descriptive research methods were employed to collect data through in-depth interviews, direct observation, and the analysis of documents pertinent to political campaigns. The result showed that the primary strategies employed by regional head candidates encompass the construction of a favorable image, placing campaign props in pivotal locations, and adapting campaign messages to align with the region's social, cultural, and community characteristics. The strategic incorporation of marketing components can potentially enhance a candidate's probability of electoral success. Both candidates continue to construct a robust and favorable image, optimize the utilization of campaign props, leverage social media as a dynamic communication tool, and provide pertinent and engaging campaign content. It is imperative to acknowledge that this research is constrained by certain limitations, particularly concerning the data employed, which is contextual and region-specific. Consequently, the findings may be challenging to generalize to other regions with disparate social, cultural, and political attributes. Therefore, further research must be conducted to evaluate the influence of ethical and regulatory frameworks on the utilization of political marketing techniques, including matters about data privacy and misinformation. Such an approach will contribute to the advancement of a robust and flourishing democratic system.

Keywords: Political Marketing; Regional Head Election; Voting Community.

1. Introduction

As democratic processes gain ground in numerous countries, including Indonesia, the phenomenon of political marketing has become an increasingly prominent feature of the political landscape. Political marketing encompasses not only the selfexpression of candidates but also the deliberate alteration of perceptions and the influence on voters' political decisions through systematic approaches (Baumgartner & Newman, 2023). Political marketing strategies have become an important element in the dynamics of elections, this phenomenon is particularly evident in local electoral candidates (Sophocleous et al., 2024). In the context of local government elections, candidates seek to gain the sympathy and support of voters through the utilization of a range of political marketing strategies (Kimbal & Rompas, 2024). Political marketing is a communication and promotion process carried out by candidate pairs or supporting political parties to attract support from voters in a planned and systematic manner (Scammell, 1995). The term political marketing is used to describe all communication actions undertaken with the intention of cultivating a favorable perception of a candidate among voters. These actions may include the production of campaign materials, the implementation of media campaigns, the organization of in-person meetings, the utilization of social media, and other similar efforts (Djuyandi et al., 2024; Lees-Marshment, 2009; Pratiwi, 2024). Political marketing is one of the important tools used by candidates to gain votes, especially in regional head elections (Hartati & Pratiwi, 2019; Stilin et al., 2019). With the increasingly competitive local political arena, regional head candidates must adapt to changes in voter behavior that are increasingly dynamic and critical. Voters are not only influenced by political promises but also by the way candidates present themselves, build their image, and deliver their political messages (Hanusch & Keefer, 2013; Louden & McCauliff, 2004; Werner, 2019). Political marketing strategies become a vital instrument in winning political contests at the local level (Lingier et al., 2022; Moslehpour et al., 2024).

Regional head candidates must be able to adjust their marketing strategies to the voting public's characteristics and the voters' demographic profile (Ayu, 2024). Voters in each region have different needs, expectations, and preferences, so regional head candidates need to conduct an in-depth analysis of their target audience (Mansyur & Hajad, 2024). An effective marketing strategy typically entails the utilization of political market research to ascertain the salient issues that resonate with the electorate, as well as to identify the communication style that is most efficacious in conveying the desired message. In this context, a common strategy that regional head candidates employ is cultivating a favorable image. The formation of a favorable public perception through various communication channels, both online and offline, constitutes a planned effort to build a positive image. A strong and positive image is very influential in attracting voter sympathy because voters tend to choose candidates who they consider competent, have integrity, and are relevant to the needs and aspirations of the local community (Sitanggang et al., 2024). The process of image building entails the consistent development of personal branding, whereby regional head candidates exhibit character, expertise, and values tailored to the voting population's specific demographics and psychographics. Furthermore, a favorable image is constructed through the utilization of visual imagery, an efficacious campaign narrative, and a robust track record. Furthermore, using social media as a direct conduit for interaction with the electorate offers a valuable opportunity for candidates to demonstrate their capacity for empathy and concern for local issues, thereby showcasing their humanistic side. The principal challenge in constructing this image is maintaining message consistency in the context of a rapid and diverse flow of information, as well as managing negative risks, including attacks from political opponents or the emergence of fake news. Therefore, an effective political marketing strategy must take this aspect of the image into account comprehensively and continuously, including responding quickly to issues that can damage the positive image (Sun et al., 2024; Winther Nielsen, 2013).

Regional head candidates face the challenge of building an emotional connection with voters relatively quickly (Ardiyansyah et al., 2024). In order to achieve this objective, the aforementioned parties employ a marketing strategy that is analogous to that used in the marketing of commercial products. This strategy encompasses utilizing effective marketing techniques, methodologies, and instruments, including deploying campaign props. Campaign props are one of the important elements that aim to increase the visibility and recognition of regional head candidates among voters (Best & Ladewig, 2024). Campaign props, including billboards, banners, posters, and other items, serve as visual media that reflect the candidate's image, message, and political promises. Strategically placed in locations with high traffic, these props are designed to attract the wider public's attention. In addition to reinforcing the candidate's brand, these props also function as symbols of the candidate's physical presence in the area, thereby fostering an impression of proximity to the local community. The message conveyed through campaign props must be simple, clear, and easy to remember by displaying striking visual elements such as the candidate's face, an evocative slogan, and symbols of the supporting party or coalition (MacPhee & Dunn, 2024; Rodriguez Fielder, 2024). The efficacy of campaign props is contingent upon their strategic placement, aesthetically pleasing design, and visual coherence with campaigns disseminated through other media, including social media and digital advertising. However, the utilization of campaign apparatus must also adhere to pertinent regulations, such as those set forth by the Regional Electoral Commission concerning the dimensions, placement, and quantity of permitted campaign apparatus, as well as environmental ethics, to avoid creating a negative impression among the public. Candidates who place campaign equipment must be able to ensure that political messages remain relevant and are not overshadowed by campaign equipment from other candidates while avoiding visual fatigue or voter saturation due to too much campaign material in public spaces (Antir et al., 2024; Gaynor & Gimpel, 2024; Hodnett, 2024).

Currently, the use of data and technology in political marketing is growing. Digital technologies, such as big data analytics and microtargeting, allow candidates to personalize their campaign messages according to the characteristics of each voter group (Saifeddine & Abdellatif Chakor, 2024). The use of tailored messages to address the specific needs of particular voters is more likely to elicit a greater degree of sympathy. Regional head candidates who can optimize the use of this technology enjoy a competitive advantage in reaching a wider and more effective audience compared to those who continue to utilize conventional campaign methods. The use of social media has become a vital component in attracting the sympathy of voters (Moslehpour et al., 2024; Wiwoho & Rohman, 2024). Social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok provide candidates with a direct avenue for interaction with voters in real time, facilitate the rapid dissemination of campaign messages, and enable the development of a robust personal brand. One of the principal advantages of social media is its capacity to target discrete voter groups based on demographic characteristics, interests, or geographical location. This enables the implementation of more efficacious and focused campaigns. In addition, social media provides space for candidates to share more personal narratives, such as their daily activities, personality, and empathy for local issues, thus creating an emotional closeness with voters (Febriantory et al., 2024; Wilches-Tinjacá et al., 2024). Campaign content, whether text, images, or videos, is designed to foster interest, authenticity, and relevance to cultivate long-term relationships with the community. Conversely, social media also enables a reciprocal exchange of information between candidates and voters, allowing candidates to address emerging issues and provide clarification on misinformation or attacks from opposing parties. The utilization of social media must maintain message consistency amidst the rapid flow of information and manage the risk of fake news (hoaxes) or digital attacks that can damage the candidate's image. Therefore, an effective social media strategy must include measurable content planning, the use of analytics to monitor voter engagement (Taiwo, 2024).

Political marketing does not only focus on selling "products" in the form of programs or policies but also on efforts to build trust and credibility of candidates in the eyes of the public through political messages delivered, materials presented, and campaign content presented on each campaign prop (Ahmad, 2024; Ridout et al., 2024). Campaign messages, materials, and content represent the fundamental elements of political marketing strategies, which are designed to influence perceptions and shape voter preferences in favor of regional head candidates. For campaign content to be effective, it is essential to consider the issue's relevance, the clarity of the candidate's vision, and the emotional appeal of the content. This enables the candidate to convince voters that they are the optimal solution to the local problems that are currently being faced. Campaign messages ideally focus on the issues that are most important to the public, such as infrastructure development, education, economic welfare, and public services, adjusted to the demographic characteristics and specific needs of the electoral area (Collier et al., 2024; Haßler et al., 2024). Moreover, campaign messages must establish a compelling narrative that resonates with voters and instills trust and hope. This may be achieved by emphasizing the candidate's track record of success, competence, and integrity. The visual content accompanying campaign messages, including slogans, videos, and posters, must be designed with aesthetic appeal and memorability in mind. This is crucial for creating an emotional impact and strengthening voters' memories. In addition, consistency in delivering messages across campaign channels, be it social media, physical props, or public debates, is essential to building a solid and credible political identity (Boudis & Baghdadi, 2024). In designing campaign messages, it is essential to simplify complex visions and work programs into easily comprehensible messages that retain their intrinsic value and to manage content flexibly in response to shifts in public opinion or challenges from opponents. Successful content not only informs but also inspires and moves the public to support and trust the candidate (Mahoney & Tang, 2024; Yang et al., 2024).

The activities undertaken by candidates at the regional level to garner public support and demonstrate their political strength in opposition to other parties can be described as mass campaigns. Mass campaigns are one of the tactics that function to disseminate messages and visions of regional head candidates widely, reaching various segments of the voting community quickly and effectively (Lora Amida et al., 2024; Mardaya et al., 2024). Mass campaigns encompass a range of activities, including rallies, convoys, parades, and the organization of social or cultural events with the objective of increasing the visibility of a particular candidate. Mass campaigns provide regional head candidates with an opportunity to foster direct connections with voters, convey political messages orally, and demonstrate their commitment and concern for local issues. Furthermore, the distribution of campaign materials, such as leaflets, t-shirts, or banners, is often employed to reinforce the

candidate's visual image in the minds of voters. The effectiveness of mass campaigns is greatly influenced by the candidate's ability to create a strong emotional atmosphere and arouse voter enthusiasm, so that they often feature elements of entertainment, inspiring speeches, and the presence of influential figures as supporters (Bentivegna & Rega, 2024; Hidayat et al., 2024). Nevertheless, the principal difficulty in mass campaigns is to guarantee that the fundamental message remains intelligible in the context of a multitude of competing messages while also reducing the likelihood of riots or other adverse consequences that could damage the candidate's reputation. In addition, in the digital era, mass campaigns are now often combined with media coverage and live broadcasts through digital platforms so that they can reach voters who are not physically present but can still feel the momentum and political messages conveyed (Saksono, 2020).

Political marketing strategies are essential to understand the strategies of regional heads in attracting the sympathy of voters, as well as to analyze the factors that influence the success of these strategies (Wiwoho & Rohman, 2024). The right marketing approach increases the chances of victory for regional head candidates and provides insight into how political communication is developing in the digital era (Saksono, 2020). Notably, this research incorporates several innovative components. contributing to its status as a novel contribution to the field. Firstly, the study integrates digital technology into political marketing strategies, including data analytics, big data, and artificial intelligence. This is a relatively understudied area in Pilkada (regional head elections). Secondly, the approach that links political marketing with voter psychology theories, including emotion analysis, candidate perceptions, and affective involvement, offers a novel perspective on how strategies impact voter decision-making. Thirdly, testing the efficacy of hyper-localized campaigns that adapt their messages to align with the specific concerns of small communities or regional issues represents an avenue for original contributions. Fourthly, another area of novelty lies in cross-time or longitudinal studies examining the impact of political marketing strategies before, during, and after the campaign, aiming to understand how these strategies persist or fade. Finally, this study can provide novelty by analyzing the role of ethics and transparency in political marketing, especially in the digital era, to address new challenges in modern democracy. Combining these elements provides a unique and relevant perspective in contemporary political marketing studies. This study analyzes the political marketing strategies of regional head candidates in Wajo Regency and provides recommendations for candidates in developing effective and efficient campaign strategies. The study of novel approaches that integrate digital technologies, locally based voter behavior segmentation, and the impact of socio-cultural context. This study puts forth the concept of political ethnography, which examines the online behaviors of candidates. Furthermore, the utilization of big data and artificial intelligence for mapping voter sentiment is addressed, in addition to field tests for evaluating the efficacy of diverse campaign tactics. The study concentrates on pertinent local issues, including resource management and using prevalent digital platforms such as TikTok or WhatsApp to engage younger demographics. This study examines the adaptation of post-pandemic campaign methods through a hybrid approach, integrating online and offline elements. Additionally, it addresses the ethical considerations surrounding the use of black campaigns or disinformation in political marketing.

2. Methods

This study used a qualitative descriptive methodology to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon of political marketing (Lim, 2024). The researcher employs a multi-method approach, utilizing in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis to examine and elucidate the strategies deployed by candidates in political campaigns. In this instance, the main data sources are interviews with the campaign team, supporting parties, and voters. In order to gain insight into the perceptions and attitudes of key stakeholders in the electoral process, interviews were conducted with 14 community leaders, 14 political party leaders who support the two candidates, two coordinators from each candidate pair's campaign staff, and the chairperson of the General Election Commissions of Wajo Regency. The interviews were conducted over two months (August-September 2024) through visits to each informant. The interviews were unstructured and employed the participant observation approach. In-depth interviews offer a direct insight into the perspectives of key actors on the design, implementation, and reception of marketing strategies. The data obtained from these interviews are analyzed thematically to identify patterns, strategies, and approaches that are commonly employed by candidates to attract the sympathy of

Researchers employed the participatory observation method to directly observe the political campaign methods implemented in the field. These methods were observed to take the form of face-to-face activities, the use of social media, or mass campaigns. The researchers observed the interaction between the candidates and the voters, how the candidates conveyed their messages and the methods employed by the successful teams in managing the image of the regional head candidates they supported. Content analysis of campaign materials from each candidate pair, such as flyers, social media advertisements, and political speeches, to understand the narratives and symbols used to attract voter sympathy (Vincent et al., 2019). A combination of data collection methods was employed to gain a comprehensive understanding of political marketing strategies and to ascertain the extent to which these strategies are perceived and accepted by the voting public.

3. Results and Discussion

The study results demonstrate that the regional head election in Wajo Regency was characterized by high competition, with only two candidate pairs advancing to the subsequent stage. These were the candidate pair with the first serial number, H. Andi Rosman, S.Sos. The second serial number was allocated to M. Kes (nickname: Arrahman) and Dr. H. Amran Mahmud, S.Sos. The Wajo Regency Regional Electoral Commission has determined that H. Amran, SE (nickname: Pammase) and M.Si will compete in the 2024 regional head election in Wajo Regency. The incumbent candidate pair, nicknamed Pammase, received support from two political parties, PKS and PAN, and held eight seats (20%) in parliament. In contrast, the other pair, nicknamed Arrahman, received support from 12 political parties and held 32 seats (80%) in parliament. The Regional Head Election of Wajo Regency was held by the General Election Commissions of Wajo Regency in 2024 using a mascot called Wa' Bajo, which means that the 2024 regional head election of Wajo Regency has integrity, accountability, honesty, and optimism. The Bajo Tree serves as the mascot for the Pilkada, as the tree is intimately associated with the historical origins of the Wajo Regency. According to historical sources, the Bajo Tree was a focal point for the formation of the Wajo Kingdom.



Figure 1. Mascot 2024 Wajo Regency Regional Head Election

Source: General Election Commissions of Wajo Regency

The General Election Commissions of Wajo Regency is firmly committed to the implementation of the Mascot Pilkada of Wajo Regency and the aspirations of the Wajo community to undertake the stages of the Pilkada of Wajo Regency with integrity, accountability, honesty and optimism. One of the steps taken by the KPU is to determine the Permanent Voter List for the 2024 Election. This was done through an open plenary meeting that was attended by several notable figures, including the Chairperson of the KPU of South Sulawesi Provincial, the Chairperson and Members of the KPU of Wajo Regency, the Chairperson of the Election Supervisory Agency of Wajo Regency, and the Regional Leadership Communication Forum (RLCF). In attendance were representatives from the National Unity and Political Affairs Agency, the Head of the Department of Population and Civil Registration, representatives from Class IIB Sengkang Prison, representatives from the Ministry of Religion, Chairpersons and Liaison Officers (LO) of Political Parties at the Wajo Regency Level, representatives from the media, and Chairpersons and Members of the Subdistrict Election Committee throughout Wajo Regency.

Table 1. Wajo Regency Permanent Voter List for the 2024 General Election

| No. | Districts | Sub-District | Polling Station – | Number of Voter | | |
|-------|--------------|--------------|-------------------|-----------------|---------|---------|
| | | | | М | F | M+F |
| 1 | Sabbangparu | 15 | 79 | 8,916 | 10,287 | 19,203 |
| 2 | Pammana | 16 | 97 | 11,606 | 12,632 | 24,238 |
| 3 | Takkalalla | 13 | 62 | 7,355 | 8,153 | 15,508 |
| 4 | Sajoanging | 9 | 56 | 6,550 | 7,079 | 13,629 |
| 5 | Majauleng | 18 | 91 | 11,346 | 12,701 | 24,047 |
| 6 | Tempe | 16 | 178 | 22,674 | 25,391 | 48,065 |
| 7 | Belawa | 9 | 86 | 10,856 | 12,087 | 22,943 |
| 8 | Tanasitolo | 19 | 121 | 14,686 | 16,106 | 30,792 |
| 9 | Maniangpajo | 8 | 48 | 6,019 | 6,419 | 12,438 |
| 10 | Pitumpanua | 27 | 125 | 14,859 | 15,863 | 30,722 |
| 11 | Bola | 11 | 61 | 7,301 | 7,934 | 15,235 |
| 12 | Penrang | 10 | 45 | 5,570 | 6,261 | 11,831 |
| 13 | Gilireng | 9 | 36 | 4,109 | 4,533 | 8,642 |
| 14 | Keera | 10 | 61 | 7,620 | 8,164 | 15,784 |
| Total | 14 Districts | 190 | 1,146 | 139,467 | 153,610 | 293,077 |

Source: The KPU of Wajo Regency 2024

According to data provided by the KPU of Wajo Regency, the total number of registered voters is 293,077 individuals, comprising 139,467 male voters and 153,610 female voters. These voters are distributed across 1,145 polling stations situated within 14 districts, 48 sub-districts, and 142 villages.

Regional head candidates carry out various strategies by combining integrated and adaptive marketing elements (Pratiwi, 2024). The findings of this study demonstrate that constructing a favorable image through the reinforcement of a distinctive brand identity and maintaining a consistent public profile is paramount in influencing voters' perceptions. The deployment of substantial campaign props is strategically distributed across various locations. Furthermore, the utilization of social media has been demonstrated to be an efficacious instrument for attaining a more extensive audience, facilitating direct interaction, and disseminating campaign messages in real-time and more personalized. The presentation of pertinent and engaging campaign content elucidates local concerns and community aspirations and reinforces the emotional bond between candidates and voters. Conversely, mass campaigns can generate considerable interest and support, but it is essential to ensure that the message is conveyed in a clear and focused manner.

3.1. Positive Image

The study results indicate that each pair of regional head candidates in Wajo Regency has a distinct positive image. Pair number 1 is closely related to political parties, including the winning political party in the election. Arrahman also has effective communication skills, which have enabled him to gain the support of numerous individuals within the community. Conversely, pair number 2, namely Pammase, has a positive image regarding credibility and integrity. This is evidenced by the implementation of government in Wajo Regency during the preceding period, which was characterized by a high level of public trust and a reputation for integrity, as well as a track record consistent with moral values and political ethics. The favorable impression of candidate pair number 2 is reinforced by the findings of the electability survey of the candidate pairs for Regent and Deputy Regent of Wajo conducted by PT. Indeks Politika Indonesia. The survey results indicate that Pammase received 48.3% of the votes, while Arrahman received 35.2%. Additionally, 16.5% of respondents abstained from providing a statement. Conversely, the survey institute Parameter Publik Indonesia (PPI) has released a survey regarding the incumbent's desire to return to office. The results of the PPI survey indicated that 39.5% of respondents expressed a desire for the incumbent to continue in office, while 37.0% indicated a preference for a change in leadership, and 23.5% of respondents abstained from answering.

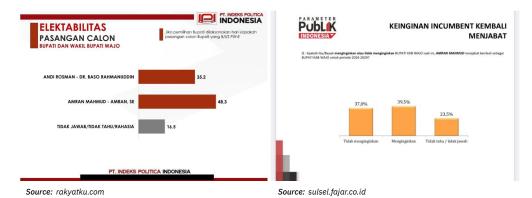


Figure 2. Results of the 2024 Wajo Regency Regional Head Election Survey

A positive image is one of the important results of implementing a successful political marketing strategy, especially in the efforts of regional head candidates to attract the sympathy of voters (Louden & McCauliff, 2004). Based on previous research, a positive image not only includes visual aspects such as appearance and campaign symbols but also touches on dimensions of character, competence, integrity, and emotional connection with the community (Djuyandi et al., 2024; Lees-Marshment, 2009; Pratiwi, 2024). Those candidates who can cultivate an image of themselves as capable and approachable leaders with a strong understanding of local issues and the ability to propose solutions tend to garner greater voter support. In this context, a positive image is often formed through various communication channels, ranging from social media that emphasizes the candidate's personal side and daily activities to face-to-face campaigns that show empathy and concern for the needs of the community (Hanusch & Keefer, 2013; Louden & McCauliff, 2004; Werner, 2019). The study's findings indicate that a consistent and authentic positive image is pivotal in securing voter trust. This is because voters evaluate political programs or promises and consider the candidate's personality and ethical standards. Furthermore, a positive image enables candidates to respond to attacks or negative issues from political opponents, as a favorable reputation facilitates the maintenance of credibility in the eyes of the public. The success of constructing a positive image is also closely associated with the campaign team's capacity to maintain message consistency, respond to emerging issues, and reinforce the candidate's reputation across diverse platforms and direct interactions.

3.2. Campaign Props

The study's findings on campaign props indicated that all candidate pairs employed a similar strategy, namely the use of billboards situated in key locations within Wajo Regency. In addition, each candidate pair utilized banners positioned at various locations. Additionally, various campaign materials were employed, including posters, banners, pennants, stickers, brochures, leaflets, and billboards. However, based on the available data, it can be concluded that the Arrahman Team utilized a greater quantity of campaign props, specifically 27% more, than the Pammase Team. This is attributable to the substantial support provided by political parties, which are well-versed in the production of campaign materials for both regional and legislative elections. Nevertheless, the Pammase campaign is characterized by an attractive visual presentation and design despite the relatively limited quantity of campaign materials.

The role of campaign props in enhancing the visibility of regional head candidates and influencing voter perceptions has been demonstrated in previous studies. Props such as billboards, banners, posters, and billboards function not only as visual promotional media but also as symbols of the candidate's presence in the community, strengthening the candidate's personal branding and political messages consistently (Best & Ladewig, 2024; MacPhee & Dunn, 2024). The findings of the study indicate that the efficacy of campaign props is contingent upon three key factors: firstly, their visually appealing design; secondly, their strategic placement in locations with high traffic levels; and thirdly, the suitability of the message to the needs or expectations of local voters. Effective props can communicate the candidate's identity, flagship programs, and slogans briefly but powerfully so that the public easily remembers them (Djuyandi et al., 2024; Lees-Marshment, 2009; Pratiwi, 2024; Rodriguez Fielder, 2024). It has been demonstrated that the strategic utilization of props can reinforce a candidate's favorable image, facilitate the formation of a profound visual memory, and convey the impression of seriousness



Figure 3. Campaign Props for the 2024 Regent/Deputy Regent Candidate Pair of Wajo Regency

and competence in electoral competition. Furthermore, the utilization of uniform colors, symbols, and images of the candidate's face across diverse props fosters visual cohesion, thereby reinforcing the collective thrust of the campaign. Nevertheless, the findings of the study also indicate that the positioning of props must take into account campaign regulations and environmental ethics to avoid any adverse effects or opposition from the voting public.

3.3. Social Media

The findings of the study, derived from an analysis of social media data, indicate that most candidate pairs employ informative and educational content on their social media platforms. Furthermore, the most successful teams of candidates exhibit a discernible pattern of consistent posting across a range of social media platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok. Nevertheless, some supporters of Arrahman utilize WhatsApp to disseminate information and visual and audio content to various groups. This is distinct from the Pammase team, which exhibits a proclivity for utilizing a greater proportion of online information and news portals to disseminate content to its supporters on social media. Those who espouse the candidacy of each candidate frequently create video animations, audio, and messenger stickers as evidence of their allegiance to the respective candidate pair.

The role of social media in the political marketing strategy of regional head candidates has been demonstrated by previous research findings. Social media platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok, have been demonstrated to be an efficacious strategy for amplifying the scope of political campaigns, fostering

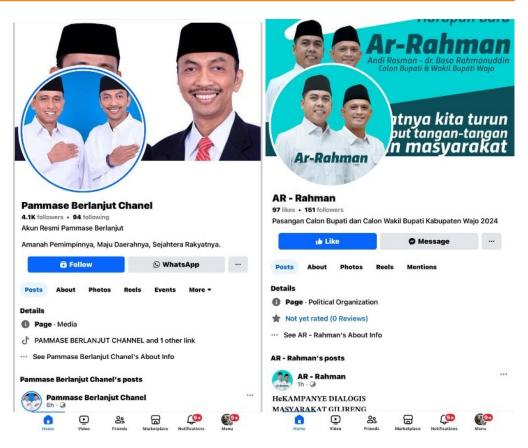


Figure 4. Social Media of the Candidate Pair for Regent/Deputy Regent of Wajo Regency in 2024

direct engagement with electorates, and enabling more intimate two-way communication. Candidates use social media to share more dynamic campaign narratives, highlighting personal aspects, personalities, and daily activities that can create closer emotional connections with the public (Moslehpour et al., 2024; Wiwoho & Rohman, 2024). Other research results also show that social media allows for delivering campaign messages quickly and precisely, with segmentation that allows candidates to target specific voter groups based on age, location, and political preferences. Visual content such as videos, infographics, and live streaming are important tools in building candidate pair branding, increasing voter turnout, and creating buzz around the campaign (Febriantory et al., 2024; Wilches-Tinjacá et al., 2024). Nevertheless, this study also emphasizes the difficulties associated with managing social media, including the potential risks posed by disseminating misinformation, hoaxes, and digital attacks that can damage the candidate's image. Consequently, the efficacy of social media utilization hinges on the consistency of content, expeditious responsiveness to emerging issues, and the capacity of candidates and campaign teams to engage in efficacious and transparent interactions with voters.

3.4. Campaign Content

The study's findings on the content aspect of the political campaigns of each candidate pair indicate that candidate number 2, namely Pammase, has a well-defined and focused vision and mission aligned with previously established development programs. The use of straightforward and readily comprehensible language. Conversely, the winning team, number 1, has developed a campaign that inspires and generates enthusiasm. Furthermore, candidate pair number one offers realistic and credible campaign promises.

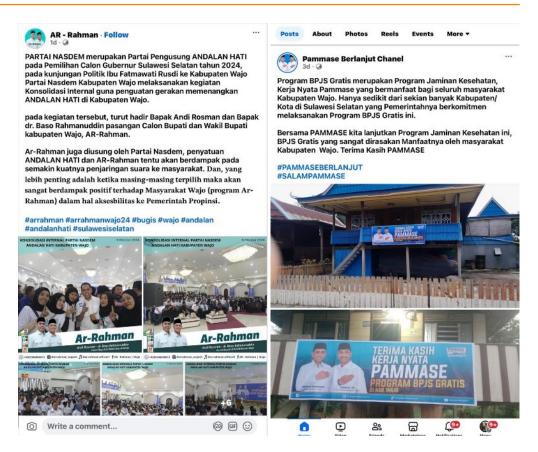


Figure 5. Campaign Content for Candidate Pair for Regent/Deputy Regent of Wajo Regency in 2024

Campaign content is indispensable in political marketing strategies, conveying messages, values, and visions of regional head candidates to voters. This is done to evoke sympathy and resonate with the target audience. The research results demonstrate that the content of political campaigns must be meticulously crafted to resonate with the aspirations and needs of the electorate. This entails the utilization of a diverse array of formats, including textual, visual, and video elements, and incorporating accessible infographics. Effective content often highlights local issues of concern to the community, such as infrastructure development, health, education, and social welfare, so that candidates can demonstrate concern and commitment to the problems faced by the community (Collier et al., 2024; Haßler et al., 2024). In addition, campaign content needs to be packaged in an interesting and inspiring narrative to arouse voters' emotions and motivation, as well as strengthen the candidate's positive image as a competent and accessible leader (Sitanggang et al., 2024; Sun et al., 2024; Winther Nielsen, 2013). Furthermore, the research underscores the significance of maintaining uniformity in the dissemination of messages across an array of communication platforms, both digital and traditional, to establish a robust identity and prevent ambiguity among the electorate. However, the challenge in content development is to create material that is not only informative but also attracts attention in the context of the high volume of information during the campaign period. It is, therefore, essential to conduct ongoing testing and evaluation of content to adjust the strategy in response to voter feedback and the evolving dynamics of the campaign.

3.5. Mass Campaign

The study's results concerning the mass campaign indicate that, in each event held, pair number 1, designated as Arrahman, demonstrated a greater number and level of



Figure 6. Campaign for Candidate Pair for Regent/Deputy Regent of Wajo Regency in 2024

mass participation. Moreover, Arrahman had a greater number of mass mobilizers. Some of these resources were obtained from the supporting party. One of the mass campaigns carried out by Arrahman was the internal consolidation of the supporting party, which involved the presentation of sympathizers, party administrators, and community leaders. Meanwhile, pair number 1, namely Pammase, exhibited a consistent approach to campaigning and branding and an elegant visual identity, which collectively attracted the community's attention. One of the mass campaigns was conducted through face-to-face meetings and dialogues attended by cadres of the supporting party, sympathizers, and community leaders.

One of the primary strategies employed in the domain of political marketing is the implementation of mass campaigns. Through mass campaigns, candidates can reach a wider audience by organizing public events, such as rallies, convoys, or parades attended by thousands of people, thus creating moments of high visibility and mobilizing support (Collier et al., 2024; Haßler et al., 2024). The efficacy of mass campaigns is contingent upon not only the number of participants but also the candidate's capacity to disseminate a compelling and motivating message during the event and to establish an emotional connection with the electorate. Mass campaigns can attract media attention and increase buzz around the candidate by presenting entertainment elements, such as art or music performances, and inviting public figures or celebrities (Lora Amida et al., 2024; Mardaya et al., 2024). Nevertheless, the principal challenge in mass campaigns is to maintain focus on the core message and guarantee that communication remains clear in the context of many people while avoiding potential security risks or riots that could damage the candidate's image. Furthermore, research indicates the significance of integrating mass campaigns with digital strategies, such as live streaming on social media, to extend

the reach and engagement of voters who cannot attend in person. This approach fosters a more inclusive and interactive experience, enhancing the accessibility of the campaign for a broader audience. Consequently, meticulously devised and executed mass campaigns can serve as an invaluable tool for garnering support and enhancing voter awareness of the candidates' capabilities, thereby enhancing the likelihood of a candidate's success in the Pilkada contest.

4. Conclusion

Incorporating effective marketing elements can enhance a candidate's probability of winning an electoral contest. Both candidates are engaged in the ongoing construction of a robust and favorable image, the optimization of campaign props, the utilization of social media as a dynamic communication tool, and the creation of pertinent and engaging campaign content. Mass campaigns are conducted methodically and premeditatedly, employing a range of techniques and strategies to engage with the target community. Utilizing an array of marketing communication channels, encompassing both online and offline domains, enables regional head candidates to extend their reach and foster more intimate connections with voters. In the context of an increasingly informed and critical electorate, this is becoming an increasingly important consideration.

The overall results of this study emphasize the importance of adaptation and responsiveness to voter dynamics and the need for a holistic and sustainable approach in political marketing strategies to achieve success in elections. Despite a substantial body of research on this topic, this research emphasizes how candidates or campaign teams utilize real-time data to facilitate a dynamic adaptation of their strategy in response to shifts in preferences, emerging issues, or crises that arise during a campaign. This is particularly important in the digital age, given the potential for public opinion to shift rapidly due to the influence of social media or global events. Moreover, candidates have employed a comprehensive strategy integrating diverse political marketing tools, including traditional, digital, and interpersonal marketing, to develop coherent and consistent campaigns. These strategies leverage the strengths of mass communication, grassroots campaigns, and cutting-edge technologies such as chatbots and AI-driven personalization, creating a unified approach that harnesses the synergies between these elements. This study underscores the pivotal role of long-term relationships with voters in political marketing. This encompasses the development of a sustainable narrative, the maintenance of trust through transparency, and the creation of values that align with societal needs. This study examines how candidates utilize local cultural elements and universal values to establish an authentic and inclusive approach. This considerably impacts the formulation of adaptive, relevant, and ethical political marketing theories in diverse contexts. It is important to note that this research has limitations, particularly regarding the data employed, which is contextual and specific to a particular region. Consequently, the findings may not be readily generalizable to other regions characterized by differing social, cultural, or political attributes. Therefore, further research must be conducted to evaluate the influence of ethical and regulatory frameworks on the utilization of political marketing strategies, encompassing concerns about data privacy and misinformation. This will facilitate the assurance that political marketing serves to foster a robust and flourishing democracy.

The study underscores the growing intricacy of political marketing, emphasizing the necessity for regional head candidates to comprehend and adapt their strategies in accordance with evolving voter dynamics and technological advancements.

Candidates must engage authentically with the public, demonstrate transparency in their actions, and responsively address local issues to establish trust and garner support. It is therefore anticipated that candidates will not only concentrate on short-term marketing strategies in the period preceding the election but will also endeavor to cultivate long-term relationships with the community. This approach can potentially enhance their image and foster sustainable voter loyalty. Such an approach is likely to contribute to electoral success and subsequent leadership effectiveness.

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