THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING AGAINST THE Z-GENERATION'S INTENTION TO PARTICIPATE IN THE 2024 ELECTIONS

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ABSTRACT
Simultaneous elections in Indonesia will be held in February 2024. This year's voters are dominated by the millennial generation and generation z. This research examines the role of social media marketing (SMM) activities, such as social media interactions, social media content, and Word of Mouth (WOM), as well as the influence of candidate image in determining voting intention in the Indonesian political context for Generation Z. This research further investigates the role of candidate image in social identity theory as a mediator between SMM and voting intention. This survey aims to better understand Generation Z in Indonesia in preparation for voting in the 2024 election. This research uses quantitative methods. The sample in this study amounted to 414 respondents, taken using a purposive sampling technique by distributing questionnaires online. Data analysis techniques using SmartPLS software include validity and reliability test analysis, as well as the t-test. The research results show that word of mouth (WOM) and social media content are the main factors influencing Generation Z's choices. From the findings of the analysis of this research, it was also found that social media interactions did not show a significant correlation with voting intentions. However, social media interaction variables show an impact on creating a candidate's image, which can influence voting intentions for generation z. Meanwhile, word-of-mouth and social media content do not have a significant influence on a candidate's image.

Keywords: Social media interaction, word of mouth, social media content, candidate image, vote intention

INTRODUCTION

Politicians, political parties, and governments around the world use marketing to achieve their political goals. Marketing has become an important tool in public policy in recent years (Lees-Marshment, 2019). Political marketing is largely seen as a response to the latest developments in media and communication technology (Williams, 2017). Strategic political marketing communications aim to develop and maintain beneficial relationships between political parties and their key stakeholders. It seeks to involve voters in deliberate communication, shaping and creating meaning with them (Klinger & Russmann, 2017).

The use of social networks in political campaigns has become a global trend. In particular, social media can provide a platform for people to take action, engage politically, and communicate with the mass media (Klinger & Russmann, 2017). For example, Donald Trump's 2016 presidential campaign used Facebook widely, and Facebook ads were designed specifically to connect with market segments (Lees-Marshment, 2019). A study that investigated the correlation between young people's participation in social media and their interest in politics shows that social media is an important source of political information among young people (Bode, 2016).

Social media has become one of the most important electoral campaign platforms, not only in Indonesia but throughout the world (Moslehpour et al., 2021). Social media should be a fair and competitive electoral strategy. So, politicians will take advantage of this incentive and start using the website for their campaigns. Therefore, this study discusses the influence of social media marketing on the intention of choosing Z-generation voters, with candidate images as mediation variables. Social media marketing is about content, interaction, and Word of Mouth(WoM).

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

The candidate's image can be measured based on personality attributes that characterize one or more aspects of the candidate's image. The main attributes of a political candidate are intelligence, ethics, power, charisma, leadership, and competence (Moslehpour et al., 2021). The component that forms the IC can be a human brand study that is used as a reference, as many of them include politicians and electoral candidates (Saboo et al., 2016).

Just as a brand can easily be associated with human characteristics and thus be given a "personality," a person can also be perceived as a brand and have characteristics closely associated with a brand (Moulard, Garrity, & Rice, 2015). Human brands are often considered "carriers of marketing communications efforts" (Saboo et al., 2016, p. 525).

Based on social identity theory, (Saboo et al., 2016), argue that social identity is increasingly popular and continues to develop. The presence of social media has enhanced human brand creation. Due to the increasing level of engagement on social media platforms, consumer engagement and relationship building between users and brands are at their peak (Moulard, Garrity, & Rice, 2015). Although the literature mentions well-known brands and their influential images in the entertainment industry, it says little about the images of political candidates. The following sections discuss and explain the hypothesized relationships in detail

Candidate Image

The candidate's image is one of the functions of campaign communication because the candidate's image is a characteristic based on the recipient; it is not an actual characteristic but rather a perceived characteristic of the candidate. These characteristics influence voters. Political problems require cognitive decision-making tools. Therefore, by default, people evaluate images as information shortcuts (Warner & Banwart, 2016).

The main characteristics of political candidates are intelligence, ethics, power, charisma, leadership, and competence (Moslehpour et al., 2021). Candidate image can be measured based on personality attributes that characterize one or more aspects of the candidate's image (Moslehpour et al., 2021). Candidate images represent an overall evaluation of candidates based on their personality traits(Farrag & Shamma, 2014). Researchers found that when they studied voter behavior, they found the candidate's image also played an important role in political elections (Farrag & Shamma, 2014).

Voters tend to evaluate potential candidates' attributes as political brands and will use their assessment criteria. If voters believe that the candidate is credible and trustworthy, this positive attitude will most likely influence their intention to vote in elections in which the preferred candidate participates (Smith & French, 2011; Saputra et al., 2023). Based on these considerations, we recommend:

H_{1a}: Candidate image is positively related to voting intention.
H_{1b}: Candidate image is not positively related to voting intentions.

Social Media Marketing

Social media marketing is the activity of driving website traffic through social media sites. Social media marketing (SMM) is a form of Internet marketing that uses social media sites as a marketing tool (NWOKAH & JULIET, 2015). The American Marketing Association (AMA), in its 1985 Redefinition of Marketing, stated that marketing is the process of planning and implementing conceptions of

pricing, promotion, and distribution of ideas, goods, and services to create satisfactory exchanges. individual and organizational goals.

Social media is defined by Marrian Webster as a form of electronic communication (such as social networking sites and microblogs) that people use to create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content (Anthony & Bekwele, 2020). The role of social media and its use by brands is becoming increasingly important as these platforms enable marketers to operate more interactively by allowing them to observe consumer reactions and monitor reactions and conversations taking place on their platforms (Saridakis, Baltas, Oghazi, & Hultman, 2016). In turn, these features enable brands to better understand their consumers (Felix et al., 2017). As a result, social media has become an increasingly popular marketing tool in various fields, including political campaigns (Hultman et al., 2019).

Social Media Interaction

Social interaction is an important driver for attracting users to create content (Moslehpour et al., 2021). Social networking sites can help their users provide more space for exchanging opinions and having discussions. Strong engagement from social networking sites can motivate individuals to change their purchasing intentions (Clark & Melancon, 2013). Social media can also increase individual trust in organizations (Gummesson & Grönroos, 2012). Commenting and interaction are important aspects of social media (Moslehpour et al., 2021).

Even though candidates and political parties are described as brands for this research, they are still "people brands," but brands encourage voters to view them as users, thus moving in the same direction, namely more interaction with the "users" behind the profiles" (Moulard, Garrity, & Rice, 2015). Interactions that occur on social media can improve brand performance, increase positive brand image, and improve customer relationships (Rutter, 2016):

H_{2a}: Interaction on social networks is positively related to candidate image.
H_{2b}: Social media interactions are not positively related to candidate image.

Several studies have been conducted regarding voters' perceptions of politicians' personalities and how they are represented in the media (Moslehpour et al., 2021). Relational value is positively influenced by interactions between consumers and brands that occur at a more personal level (Zhang et al., 2014). Parasocial interactions increase consumers' desire to maintain relationships with brands (Yuan et al., 2016). Therefore:
H_{2c}: Social interactions are positively related to candidate image.
H_{2c}: Social media interactions are not positively related to candidate image.

Word-of-Mouth (WOM)

Word-of-mouth marketing is the voluntary exchange of information between consumers about an organization, product, or consumer experience with a product (Yaman, 2018). Online word-of-mouth (WOM) is becoming increasingly influential and powerful as the Internet is increasingly integrated into marketing strategies. Therefore, many companies spend funds to promote WOM on social networks and encourage customers to tell friends and colleagues about their company (Godey et al., 2016).

When seeking opinions, consumers seek advice from others, and social media platforms facilitate this exchange of information, influencing brand image and customer value (Godey et al., 2016). Although the influence of WOM on voters' decision-making power has not been widely discussed in the literature, marketers consider it to be one of the most influential factors in marketing policies, especially due to the increasing use of social networks among the younger generation. Therefore:
H_{3a}: Word of mouth is positively related to the candidate's image.

H_{3b}: Word of mouth is not positively related to the candidate's image.
H_{3c}: Word of mouth is positively related to voting intention.
H_{3d}: Word of mouth is not positively related to voting intention

Social Media Content

The content of information spread on social media is especially important in the case of human brands involved in politics and public service. The content of posts shared on these accounts can consist of several dimensions, including entertainment, quality arguments, and insight (Hultman et al., 2019). A message argument in social media is related to how trustworthy, strong, and convincing the message conveyed is, while the perceived benefits of the message are related to effectiveness, productivity, and increased performance as perceived by the target.

Although the quality of content and effectiveness of social media accounts and posts are very important, entertainment is among the best factors that make social media more desirable. Social media is often considered a hobby activity and a means of enjoyment (Godey et al., 2016). Since political marketing is often associated with comparative and humorous messages, entertainment is also considered important (Clementson et al., 2016). The entertainment aspect of content includes the fun and interesting nature of post-content (Godey et al., 2016).

Because it is uncertain whether the quality of arguments, ideas, and entertainment messages on social media have an impact on consumer decision-making, brand equity, consumer preferences, and loyalty used or not, the content of social networking messages is expected to have a similar impact on influencing voters (Godey et al., 2016). Therefore:

H_{4a}: Social media content is positively related to the candidate's image.
H_{4b}: Social media content is not positively related to the candidate's image.
H_{4c}: Social media content is positively related to voting intention.
H_{3d}: Social media content is not positively related to voting intention.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses quantitative methods to describe an event. This study focuses on facts obtained in the field, while the theoretical framework of quantitative analysis is used as a guide. In addition to providing a broad overview of the research situation and an in-depth discussion of research findings, a theoretical framework is also useful (Ning Ding & Xu Xiaoyan, 2019). Therefore, research using statistical methods is very appropriate. Data collection at the research stage will use quantitative methods.

Data and Sample

This research uses primary data collected directly from the research object through a questionnaire. Data collection was carried out by distributing online questionnaires to all respondents in October 2023. During the data collection process, 416 questionnaires were collected. However, only 414 respondents met the predetermined participation criteria, including generation z aged 17–23 years, Indonesian citizens, and registered for the 2024 Indonesian election. This figure was declared valid for statistical analysis

Measures

The population of this study is the Z generation of participants in the 2024 Indonesian election. The purposive sampling approach is considered the most appropriate sampling method for this research, considering that the method allows researchers to obtain accurate and reliable information. It is seen as the most suitable sampling strategy for this investigation as it allows the researcher to collect precise and reliable data.

Construct validity and measurement reliability can be tested. To measure parameters related to structure, a reflection model is used. The PLS algorithm was calculated to evaluate various test

measures, such as internal consistent reliability, indicator reliability, convergent validity, AVE, and discriminant validity.

Table 2
Respondent Characteristics

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Man	139	33,4
	Women	275	66.4
Domicile	Sumatera	177	42,8
	Jawa	124	29,9
	Kalimantan	50	12,1
	Sulawesi	41	9,9
	Papua	22	5,3
Last education	SMA/SMK/MA	238	57,5
	D3	30	7,2
	S1	142	34,6
	S2	3	0,7
Profession	Student	246	59,2
	Private employee	101	24,2
	BUMN employee	22	5,3
	Civil servant	3	0,7
	Self employee	30	7,2
	Housewife	4	1
	Professional	6	1,4
	Freelancer	2	1

Source: Data Process (2023)

Data Analysis

Based on internal consistency reliability, the composite reliability value must be greater than 0.708 to be accepted. Convergent validity is defined as the degree of positive correlation between alternative measures of a construct. Convergent validity refers to positive correlations between alternative measures of a construct. The reflective construct indicator shows that the AVE must be greater than 0.50 or greater to demonstrate the structure's ability to explain more than half of the existing variation. Table 1 also presents internal reliability figures above 0.7 for all latent variables measured. The AVE value as an evaluation criterion is used to assess convergent validity. Construct values are listed with an AVE greater than 0.50.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The application of the PLS algorithm to evaluate the selected reflectivity model shows an internal reliability level above 0.708. The reflective structure indicator shows an AVE greater than 0.50, and the data show that the parameter exceeds the threshold recommended in this study. Therefore, we can conclude that the theory fits the sample data, thereby verifying the validity and reliability of the measured construct. Based on the PLS model measurements presented in Table 1, the empirical model tested meets the validity and reliability testing criteria required in this research.

Table 1
Construct Reliability and Validity

Cronbach's Alpha**	Rho_A	R^2	Composite Reliability**	Average Variance Extracted**

Social Media Interaction	0,749	0,749		0,856	0,665
Word-Of-Mouth	0,786	0,786		0,875	0,700
Social Media Content	0,769	0,775		0,886	0,683
Vote Intention	0,799	0,800	0,330	0,914	0,638
Candidate Image	0,887	0,786	0,598	0,882	0,700

Source: Data Process (2023)
*Note: * Valid if AVE > 0.5*
*   ** Reliabel if Composite Reliability or Cronbach's Alpha > 0.6*

In this research, the path coefficient was deemed statistically significant with a probability level of 10 percent. As demonstrated in the structural model, the path coefficient corresponds to the proposed correlation between latent variables. The analysis results for the level of significance of the path model structural path coefficients as presented in Table 3 show that the variables of social media interaction and social media credibility do not have a positive correlation with vote intention. Meanwhile, other variables appear to positively influence both candidate image and vote intention.

Table 3
Result of Partial Least Square (PLS) Structural Model Method

	Original Sample	Sample Mean	Standard	T statistic	P Values	Sig.
SMI->CI	0,437	0,431	0,087	5,004	0,000	Support
SMI->VI	0,115	0,110	0,072	1,588	0,113	Not Support
WOM->CI	0,046	0,047	0,080	0,577	0,564	Not Support
WOM->VI	0,289	0,286	0,067	4,333	0,000	Support
SMC->CI	0,137	0,141	0,095	1,453	0,147	Not Support
SMC->VI	0,348	0,356	0,080	4,356	0,000	Support
CI->VI	0,155	0,153	0,058	2,646	0,008	Support
SMI->CI->VI	0,068	0,066	0,030	2,280	0,023	Support
WOM->CI->VI	0,007	0,007	0,013	0,547	0,584	Not Support
SMC->CI->VI	0,021	0,022	0,019	1,141	0,255	Not Support

Source: Data Process (2023)

Based on the relationship between variables and candidate image, only the social media interaction variable is positively correlated, while the word-of-mouth and social media content

variables are directly related to voting intentions. The findings of this research explain that social media content and word of mouth directly influence voting intentions. Meanwhile, social media interaction is related to voting intentions through the role of the candidate's image.

This explains that their content on social media does not influence the formation of the candidate's image. The content presented may be less different from other competitors, but this candidate still tends to be similar; only the intensity is higher, and the campaign is prone to having similarities. These results are in line with research conducted (Nanda, 2022).

The findings in this research show that social media interactions do not correlate with voting intentions and require the role of candidate image. Social media can be like a big exhibition where each candidate shows off their image. We tend to choose people who we see as someone we can trust or admire. If someone succeeds in building a positive image on social media, it can influence our perception of them (Farrag & Shamma, 2014).

Mediation analysis shows that the relationship between SMM variables and candidate image perceptions is very weak. People tend to vote based on their values and beliefs, which may not be fully reflected in social media content. While WOM can shape images, its influence on voting intentions can depend on the extent to which the information is relevant to the needs and values of voters.

CONCLUSIONS

The study found that word-of-mouth and social media content are the main factors that encourage Generation Z to vote. Models based on social media interactions show no significant correlation to voting intentions. However, the media interaction variable shows an impact on creating a candidate's image, which can influence voting intentions for generation z. Meanwhile, word-of-mouth and social media content do not have a significant influence on a candidate's image.

In the upcoming 2024 elections in Indonesia, prospective candidates need to pay more attention to their public image by using social media marketing to increase their chances of getting votes, especially for generation z in the Indonesian elections.

The limitation of this research is that the sample variation is too large for a short period due to time constraints. Because this study focuses on election behavior, moderate characteristics including age, gender, occupation, and education level could be included in future research to produce more comprehensive rescue research results.

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