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# STUDY OF ANALYSIS OF AUDIENCE ACCEPTANCE OF MANDALIKA CIRCUIT EVENT PROMOTIONAL ADVERTISEMENTS INVOLVING VISUAL POLITICIANS IN LOMBOK, NTB

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## Abstract

The phenomenon of visual branding in advertising is increasingly important because it affects the image and acceptance of politician officials, especially among millennials and Gen Z who are apathetic to politics. The use of local elements such as the Mandalika Circuit in advertisements by political officials is aimed at attracting young voters, but it is often less authentic and creates negative perceptions of politicians and promoted events. The research is important because of the gap between politicians' expectations of attracting young voters and the reality of their acceptance of ads that use certain branding elements. This study aims to determine the representation and acceptance of Millennials and gen Z people towards Mandalika circuit promotional advertisements involving visuals of officials or politicians. This research uses qualitative method with reception analysis theory owned by Stuart Hall. This study used focus group discussion (FGD) with 10 informants who saw advertisements and belonged to the Millennial and Z generations, using the purposive sampling method. Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis was used to determine the representation of advertisements, and compared with audience acceptance based on the results of focus group discussion (FGD) which was classified to obtain results using three hypothetical positions proposed by Stuart Hall. The conclusion of this study shows that the use of visuals of politicians' faces in promotional advertisements tends to be rejected by Millennials and Gen Z, who emphasize the separation between politics and sports. Millennials are generally skeptical of politicization in promotion, while Gen Z is more firmly opposed to politicization and demands integrity and ethics in political campaigns.

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## A. INTRODUCTION

Visual branding is an important strategy for politicians to attract the attention of audiences. Wheeler (2012) mentions that visual identity is a major element in building a brand image and conveying it to consumers, making it very important. Visual branding of politicians aims to make them recognizable, differentiated, and able to convey a message. Visual communication and personal branding are essential for politicians to characterize and amplify their political advertising. Political advertising is a means by which politicians persuade people to vote for them by providing information about a politician's qualifications, experience, background, and personality and promoting specific programs and policies (Lee & Johnson in Nimmo, 2011).

Most humans find it easier to recognize others through visuals. Children are also able to recognize and draw human figures easily (Ucman, 1972). Visual elements in political advertising are important because advertising messages can be conveyed through signs and symbols in the form of text, audio, and visual (Rusmana, 2014). Good visual branding can increase perceived value and create relationships between consumers and brands (Airey, 2010). However, visual branding in political advertising is often difficult to achieve goals because millennials and gen Z tend to be apathetic towards politics, with a very high level of political apathy reaching 62.63% (Jak Pat App in Juditha & Darmawan, 2018). The development of political advertising as a socialization medium for novice voters is expected to increase their political participation (Pich et al., 2019). More varied print media gives the impression of authenticity and a clear picture to the public, especially novice voters (Aman & Evanne, 2017; Goudarzi & Saeednia, 2018). Print media has a higher level of information retention than digital media because it provides a more complete sensory experience (Smith & Fischer, 2018).

The phenomenon of political advertising is growing rapidly during the 2024 election campaign, with political candidates using a variety of media, including outdoor media and the internet. However, some politicians in Lombok use the Mandalika Circuit and its events as a backdrop in their advertisements. The use of this element can affect the tourism image of the area and the credibility of the event (Novelli, 2005). In the advertisement, many politicians use the Mandalika

Circuit, reducing the authenticity of their branding. Authenticity is very important in political advertising because it can be well received by the public (Thompson, Rindfleisch, & Arsel, 2006 in Serazio, 2015). This study will analyze the meaning of using the Mandalika Circuit in political advertising using Stuart Hall's encoding-decoding model. Semiotics will be used to explore the representation and purpose of using the Mandalika Circuit in the visual branding.

The research is important because of the gap between politicians' expectations of attracting young voters and the reality of their acceptance of political ads that use certain branding elements. By analyzing the representation and acceptance of these political advertisements, this study seeks to answer Some key questions: (1) how is the representation of local politicians' branding in political advertisements using the Mandalika Circuit?; and (2) how is the acceptance of millennials and gen Z to political advertisements that use the Mandalika Circuit?

The objectives of this study are: (1) knowing the representation of local politicians' branding in political advertisements using the Mandalika Circuit; and (2) knowing the acceptance of millennials and gen Z to political advertisements using the Mandalika Circuit. The theoretical benefit of this research is to add insight in the field of communication science, especially visual political branding, and contribute to the development of political advertising theory. The practical benefit is to educate readers and other researchers to better understand the visual branding message in political advertising and provide insight for politicians in crafting more effective and authentic political ads.

## **B. METHODS**

This research uses a qualitative approach, which emphasizes extracting data depth (Kriyantono, 2020). According to Kriyantono (2006), the purpose of qualitative research is to provide an in-depth explanation of a phenomenon. The focus is on data quality, not quantity. To understand the representation of political advertising and the acceptance of millennials and Gen Z, the Focus Group Discussion (FGD) method is used. The narrative data obtained will describe the meaning of the community towards the use of the Mandalika circuit in visual political branding. This research is descriptive. Sukmadinata (2006)

explained that descriptive research aims to describe phenomena that take place or that have occurred without data manipulation. Thus, this study analyzes people's reception to political advertisements that use visual elements of the Mandalika circuit.

The research focused on the representation of political advertising by politicians using visual elements of the Mandalika circuit, analyzed through Roland Barthes' semiotics (encoding). Also is examined the acceptance of millennials and Gen Z people towards this political ad (decoding). The research was conducted in the even semester of 2024, in person and online via WhatsApp, Google Meet, Discord, and Instagram. The respondents were millennials and Gen Z in Mataram City, Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara. Samples were taken using purposive sampling (Sugiyono, 2009).

Primary data are obtained through FGDs with millennials and Gen Z, while secondary data come from documentation, books, journals, and other relevant sources (Lofland & Lofland in Moleong, 2013). The data collection technique uses an encoding and decoding model from Stuart Hall. The encoding process involves analyzing political advertising using documentation and in-depth interviews with political observers. The decoding process is carried out through FGD to understand the acceptance of millennials and Gen Z (Bungin, 2005). Analisis data dilakukan dengan tiga posisi hipotekal dari Stuart Hall: dominant, negotiated, dan oppositional reading (Baran & Davis, 2010). The results of the FGD were analyzed to identify dominant acceptance, negotiation, or opposition to political advertising with visual elements of the Mandalika circuit. The validity and reliability of data is guaranteed through Lincoln and Guba's criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Bryman, 2008). Credibility is gained by selecting relevant informants, transferability through question consistency, dependability through FGD implementation, and confirmability through data triangulation. Research ethics are maintained with informed consent, anonymity, and integrity throughout the research process. Informed consent explains the aims and objectives of the research and the rights of respondents (Nursalam, 2013). Anonymity is maintained by not including the respondent's name on the data collection sheet (Notoatmojo, 2012).

## **C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **1. Visual Analysis of Racing Event Promotion Ads at Mandalika Circuit: Utilization of Symbolism and Political Support**

The promotion of a major sporting event such as motor racing often involves the use of strong visual elements to grab the audience's attention and build the image of the event. At the Mandalika Circuit, the promotion of motorcycle racing events such as WSBK and MotoGP uses advertisements that highlight symbolism and political support. This study analyzes how these elements are used in these advertisements.

The first advertisement for the WSBK event at the Mandalika Circuit highlighted important logos as event organizers and supporters. The visual composition consists of three layers: a dark and monochrome background featuring the Mandalika circuit, racer visuals that are the main focus to show racing events, and official visuals at the top to highlight political support. This visual hierarchy is used to draw the audience's attention to key elements in the ad, reinforcing the professional and elegant image of the event.

The second ad is also for the WSBK event, having a similar layout and purpose to the first ad. The difference lies in the basic visuals and the basic colors. This ad uses visuals of the Mandalika circuit from the air with monochrome effects and black base colors. Racer visuals without monochrome effects are placed on the top layer to accentuate that the event is a race. Visuals of officials remain at the top, showing an emphasis on political support. This use of visuals suggests the event is supported by an influential authority, reinforcing the event's image.

The third advertisement promotes the MotoGP event at the Mandalika Circuit. The ad has a similar three-layer concept, but the basic visuals show the circuitry Mandalika with a view of the beach to attract the attention of the audience. Internationally known visuals of MotoGP riders are placed in the middle layer to accentuate the race event. Visuals of officials remain at the top, ensuring that the main focus is political support. The event headline is displayed on a black background and bold red writing, clarifying the event information.

The three advertisements show consistent efforts in utilizing the presence of political figures to strengthen the image and support the legitimacy of racing events at the Mandalika Circuit. The visual use of officials in advertisements not only introduces their presence, but also associates racing events with political support and local authorities. This strategy is expected to attract the attention of the public, tourists, sponsors, and business partners. Although this strategy shows careful use of political power and local authority, there is a risk of negative perceptions from the public who perceive it as an abuse of power or political imagery that is irrelevant to the essence of the race event.

## **2. Visual Analysis of Racing Event Promotion Ads at Mandalika Circuit: Acceptance of Millennial and Z Generation Audiences**

Respondents indicated that the use of visuals of politicians' faces in promotional advertisements for the Mandalika Circuit was considered inappropriate. Many argue that this mixes sports and politics, which should be separated. They feel that politicians take advantage of the popularity of sporting events for personal gain, which reduces the focus on the main purpose of the event.

Respondents generally felt that advertisements involving politicians did not affect their views of the Mandalika Circuit as a whole. For them, the quality and success of the event is more important than who is involved in the promotion. There are concerns that too much politicisation could damage the circuit's positive image as an international sporting venue.

The majority of respondents prefer ads that focus on aspects of sports and entertainment rather than those that mix politics. Ads featuring sporting achievements, circuit facilities and the race-watching experience are valued more than ads that feature politicians' faces.

The effectiveness of campaigns involving politicians was looked down upon by respondents. They tend to assume that political ads will not change their views or decisions regarding support for the politician. There is an assumption that such advertising benefits politicians more than society or the event itself.

Millennials and generation Z show a negative attitude towards politicians involved in promotional advertisements for the Mandalika Circuit. They feel that

politicians should focus more on their tasks rather than seeking popularity through sporting events. This skepticism reflects a desire to see politicians work effectively without the need to use major events as promotional platforms.

Ads featuring politicians did not influence respondents' interest in attending or supporting events at the Mandalika Circuit. They are more interested in the quality of the event and the experience offered than who is involved in the promotion. Factors such as innovation, authenticity of events, and quality of organization further determine their interest and participation.

Both millennials and generation Z assert that political advertisements using the Mandalika Circuit do not affect their political voting interest. They feel that political decisions are more influenced by substantial issues, the real performance of politicians, and direct interaction with society. The practice of politicizing sporting events is considered unethical and ineffective in changing their political preferences.

Overall, both millennials and generation Z have a critical view of political ads that use the Mandalika Circuit. Millennials place more emphasis on the separation between sports and politics, with minimal influence of political advertising on their decisions. Generation Z is showing a more assertive rejection of politicians who use big events for self-promotion, demanding political campaigns that are more creative, ethical, and focused on real contributions. Both groups highlighted the importance of integrity, transparency and genuine performance in their assessment of politicians, with advertising having very limited influence on their political decisions.

### **3. Interpretasi Data Three Hypethetical Position**

In the dominant position, the informant fully accepts the meaning desired by the creator of the advertising message, that is, the politician or official. Of the 10 informants who participated in the Focus Group Discussion (FGD), eight were classified as Dominant Hegemonic Position. They agreed with the analysis of the representation of the Mandalika Circuit promotional advertisement and considered that the advertisement took advantage of the momentum of the race event for political purposes, such as "aji mumpung". Despite disagreements over abuse of power or political imagery, the eight informants felt the ad managed to convey the message the creator wanted.

In this negotiated position, informants accept some of the results of the representation but modify others according to their own perceptions and desires. The results of the FGD showed that two informants, Asriel and Aldi, were in this position. They acknowledged the political interest in the advertisement and considered it a natural tradition. Asriel sees the use of politicians' faces as a legitimate form of "aji mumpung", while Aldi criticizes politicians' lack of creativity and stuttering in political campaigns. They understand the social context and critique of politicians' communication strategies, but still accept such advertisements in some aspects.

In opposition positions, informants fully understand the representation of advertising but have contrary opinions. They consider the ads as an abuse of power or political imagery irrelevant to the race event. However, in the results of the FGD conducted on March 18, 2024, no informant was in this position. All informants admitted that the ads were used by politicians or officials to promote themselves, but no one completely rejected the meaning conveyed by the advertisements.

Perception analysis according to Burton (1999) focuses attention on the specific social circumstances in which the reader takes place. Reception Analysis is a culturalist approach in which the meaning of media will be negotiated by individuals based on their personal life experiences (Mc Robbie, 1991 in CCMS: 2002). In this case, researchers use reception analysis to determine audience reception to Mandalika Circuit promotional advertisements that use visuals of politicians or officials in it. Stuart Hall said that the meaning contained and interpreted in a message can have differences, the encoded code (encoding) and the decoding (decoding) are not always symmetrical. When there is a decoding process in a communication, there will be three mortgage positions as stated by Stuart Hall (Baran & Davis, 2010, p. 305).

At the encoding stage, researchers wanted to know the representation of the advertisement using Roland Barthes' semiotic theory. Semiotics or in Barthes' terms basically wants to study how people interpret things. To signify in this case cannot be equated with to communicate. Meaning means that everything not only conveys information but also forms a structured sign system (Alex Sobur, 2003: 15). In this case, the encoding process analyzes the Mandalika Circuit



promotional advertisement which contains semiotic visuals of the faces of politicians or officials and is supported by interviews by the successful team as ad makers so that the results of the encoding are not subjective to find out the representation of the ad. The encoding results found that the representation of Mandalika Circuit promotional ads involving visuals of politicians' or officials' faces in the three ads showed consistent efforts in utilizing the presence of political figures to strengthen the image and support the legitimacy of the event. In all three advertisements, placing the faces of politicians or officials at the top shows a strong awareness of the symbolic power and authority they have in the local context.

The visual use of the faces of politicians or officials is not only aimed at introducing their presence in the event, but also to associate the racing event with the support of politics and local authorities. This reflects the organizers' efforts to strengthen the image of the event as an important activity for regional development and promotion, as well as attracting attention and support from various parties, including local communities, tourists, sponsors, and business partners. In addition, the presence of the faces of politicians or officials is also used to build close links between racing events and local governments, obtaining financial, infrastructure and other support from the authorities. Although the representation of Mandalika Circuit promotional advertisements involving visuals of politicians' or officials' faces shows a careful strategy in utilizing political power and local authorities to strengthen the image of the event, this also raises negative issues in the community. Some people may disagree with the presence of politicians' faces in advertisements because they consider it an abuse of power or political imagery that is irrelevant to the essence of the race event. This perception can generate distrust or dissatisfaction with the integrity of events and disrupt the audience experience, especially for those who think that politics should not be mixed with sporting events or tourism promotion.

The results of these representatives, reinforced and reinforced by the successful team through interviews which revealed that the main purpose of creating the ad was to brand the politician or official in a long-term political context. The advertisement is intended to introduce politicians or officials to the public as figures who play a role in organizing international racing events, in the

hope of gaining support and attention from the public. In addition, the advertisement also aims to promote the event and attract public interest to attend, by giving free tickets to the public, especially those who are less fortunate or in remote areas. The short-term goal of the ad is to take advantage of the euphoric momentum associated with racing events to create a positive impression of the politicians or officials involved, in the hope that the impression will help in their political image in the future. In addition, through these actions, politicians or officials also try to build an image that they are a figure who cares and can be relied on by the community, so as to strengthen their support base among grass roots. So with this, the encoding process has been completed objectively with the results of representations carried out by researchers using Roland Barthes semiotics and supported by interviews from successful teams to ensure the results of these representations are not subjective.

In the process of decoding to determine the reception of khaaya related to the advertisement, researchers use the FGD (Focus Group Discussion) method which is a research data collection technique carried out on research with qualitative data types that aim to find the meaning of a theme according to the understanding of a group (Bungin, 2005: 131). FGD (Focus Group Discussion) data collection was carried out to two generations, namely Millennials and Z, totaling 10 informants. Researchers use these two generations, because they dominate the 2024 general election, which is 56.45% of the total voters (Idroos, 2023). Therefore, it is important for politicians or officials who want to run for the people's representative or to the region to take into account these two generations.

In reception analysis research, researchers use the theory put forward by Stuart Hall in classifying clahayatic reception. Stuart Hall explained that in the audience in carrying out the process of decoding media messages, classified using Stuart Hall's Three Hypothetical Positions to form conclusions from the acceptance of each informant related to the Mandalika Circuit promotional advertisement involving visuals of politicians' or officials' faces, namely dominant hegemonic position, negotiated position and oppositional position (Storey, 2010). In the dominant hegemonic position, informants can understand the phenomena that occur and understand the advertisement and there is no misunderstanding

between the recipient and the sender of the message, and does not reject or disagree with the prevailing situation. In the negotiated position, it contains a combination of characteristics possessed by the dominant hegemonic position and oppositional position, in which all messages can be understood by the informant but modified based on the informant's personal experience. As Hall said in Morrison (2010), informants in carrying out the decoding process, will involve perception, interpretation and personal thoughts. This is intended such as age, education, gender, and experience in the environment that can influence informants in receiving messages during the decoding process.

From the results of the FGD (Focus Group Discussion) which discusses the Mandalika Circuit promotional advertisements involving visuals of politicians or officials, the results tend not to vary. Overall, Millennials tend to be skeptical of politicization in sports promotion and stress the importance of separation between sport and politics. They judged that the use of politicians' or officials' faces in such advertisements was inappropriate and would not significantly affect their political choices. Although the creativity of advertising can influence, their final decisions are more influenced by controversial cases or moral issues related to the circuit. However, there were two informants who modified their opinions to be more conciliatory and reconciled with the pattern or tradition of sports advertising associated with politics. The two informants fall into the category of negotiated positions, because they have opinions that are slightly different from the opinions of other informants based on the thoughts and experiences of the two informants themselves.

On the other hand, generation Z shows a more assertive and resistant attitude towards politicization in promotion. They demand accountability, integrity, and ethics in leadership and reject politicians who use big events for self-promotion. Both highlight the importance of creativity, transparency, and a focus on real contributions in political campaigns. Discussion of the results of this study shows that Millennials and generation Z have high expectations of integrity and ethics in political leadership. The results of this analysis also point to the need to understand the different perspectives between millennials and generation Z in addressing politicization in sports promotion and its impact on their political interests. This offers valuable insights for future research into how

young people respond to politicisation in various aspects of life, including in the context of sporting event promotion.

#### **D. CONCLUSION**

Based on the analysis that has been carried out by researchers, it was found that the representation that appears in promotional advertisements of Mandalika circuits that use visuals of politicians or officials is the use of visuals of politicians' faces or officials not only aimed at introducing their presence in the event, but also to associate the racing event with political support and local authorities. This reflects the organizers' efforts to strengthen the image of the event as an important activity for regional development and promotion, as well as attracting attention and support from various parties, including local communities, tourists, sponsors, and business partners. In addition, the presence of the faces of politicians or officials is also used to build close links between racing events and local governments, obtaining financial, infrastructure and other support from the authorities. Although the representation of Mandalika Circuit promotional advertisements involving visuals of politicians' or officials' faces shows a careful strategy in utilizing political power and local authorities to strengthen the image of the event, this also raises negative issues in the community.

The acceptance of the local people of West Nusa Tenggara (NTB) from the Millennial generation tends to have a skeptical attitude towards politicization in sports promotion and emphasizes the importance of separation between sports and politics. They judged that the use of politicians' or officials' faces in such advertisements was inappropriate and would not significantly affect their political choices. Although advertising creativity can influence, their final decisions are more influenced by controversial cases or moral issues related to the circuit. Generation Z, on the other hand, shows a more assertive and rejecting attitude towards politicization in promotion. They demand integrity and ethics in leadership and reject politicians who use big events for self-promotion. Both highlight the importance of creativity, transparency, and a focus on real contributions in political campaigns. This research shows that Millennials and generation Z have high expectations of integrity and ethics in political leadership. The results of this analysis also point to the need to understand the different perspectives between millennials and generation Z in addressing politicization in sports promotion and its impact on their political interests. This offers valuable insights for future research into how young people respond to politicisation in various aspects of life, including in the context of sporting event promotion.

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