

Visual Representation of Candidate Pair 02 in Ai-Generated Content and its Relation to Voting Behavior Shift Among Young Voters in Indonesia's 2024 Presidential Election

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ABSTRACT: This study aims to analyze the visual representation of the Prabowo–Gibran in the digital campaign in the 2024 Presidential Election, especially those using AI-generated content, and their relationship to changes in the voting behavior of young voters. As is known, 60% of voters in the 2024 Presidential Election were Gen Z, and Gen Z is a generation that really sees or makes decisions based on visual considerations or considerations. In addition, with the increasing use of AI technology in creating campaign content, this study aims to explore how visuals generated by AI can influence the political perceptions of young voters. The approach used in this study is qualitative, using Roland Barthes' semiotic theory, voting behavior theory, and social judgment theory as an analytical framework. This study uses visual content analysis of various types of content generated using AI technology, such as videos, images, and memes of the Prabowo–Gibran campaign that are seen on below-the-line and above-the-line communication channels.

KEYWORDS: AI, social media, gemoy, young voters, gen z, candidat pair – 02, 2024 Presidential Election - Prabowo - Gibran

INTRODUCTION

The direct election of the President and Vice President in Indonesia was first introduced in 2004, following a historical period in which these positions were elected indirectly by the People's Consultative Assembly (Majelis Permusyawaratan Rakyat/MPR). Before this reform, the Indonesian public did not vote directly for presidential candidates, as the selection process was conducted through MPR mechanisms. Only after the amendment of the 1945 Constitution (UUD 1945) did the country adopt a direct electoral system.

The first direct presidential election in 2004 marked a significant milestone for Indonesian democracy. The election featured five candidate pairs in the first round and was ultimately won by Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono and Jusuf Kalla, who secured 60.62% of the votes. They became the first President and Vice President elected directly by the Indonesian people.

One of the most critical aspects of presidential and vice-presidential elections in Indonesia is the political campaign strategy employed by the candidate pairs. (Firmanzah, 2007) defines political campaign strategy as a series of systematically designed communication tactics developed by political candidates to influence public opinion and voter behavior within a specific timeframe. An effective and well-planned political campaign strategy plays a crucial role in determining the success of presidential candidates. The 2024 presidential election demonstrated significant changes in campaign behavior, driven by various factors, particularly technological advancement, generational shifts in the electorate, and evolving political dynamics.

Key transformations in campaign strategies over the past two decades can be summarized as follows:

1. The dominance of digital and new media channels in political campaigning
2. The emergence of new approaches in the political communication style of candidate pairs
3. The changing generational composition of voters
4. The rise of dynastic politics and low levels of political literacy among the public

Given the rapid transformations in media channels, generational characteristics, and socio-political trends, campaign teams must continuously adapt to ensure that their strategies remain relevant and attractive to voters. Over the last twenty years of direct elections, Indonesia has experienced substantial updates and new political dynamics—many of which are increasingly dramatic—requiring campaign teams in the 2024 election to develop strategies that reflect the evolving context.

The 2024 election marked a pivotal moment in Indonesia's democratic journey, showcasing a substantial transformation in political communication, particularly in the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in digital campaign content production.

Unlike previous elections, the 2024 presidential campaign no longer relied solely on conventional methods such as billboards, grassroots campaigning (blusukan), or television advertisements. Instead, campaigns evolved to embrace social media, memes,

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short-form videos, and notably, AI-generated visual content. Simultaneously, voter demographics also shifted. Young voters, particularly Generation Z, dominated the voter list, and they exhibited distinct patterns in consuming political content: visually-driven, fast-paced, and platform-oriented. Generation Z and millennials also demonstrated different preferences in social media usage.

A majority (51.9%) of Gen Z in Indonesia frequently access Instagram, while most millennials (74.09%) prefer Facebook (Ahdiat, 2024).

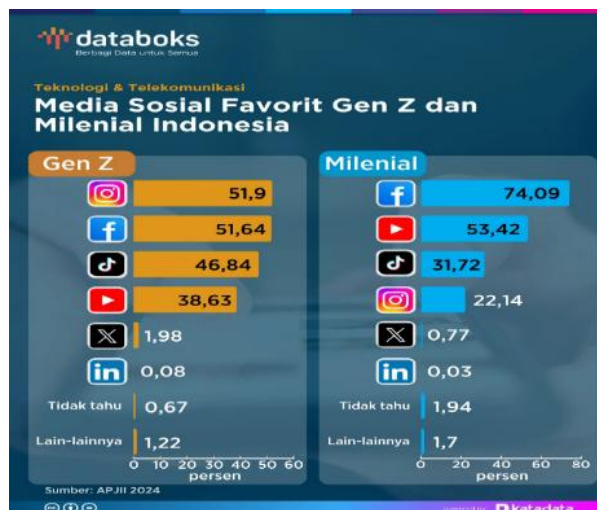


Figure 1. Preferred social media platforms among Indonesian Generation Z and Millennials in Indonesia.

Source: APJII, processed by Databoks (2024)

(Twenge, 2017) defines Gen Z as a group that grows up in a fully digital world, tends to be skeptical, visually-oriented, and seeks authenticity in political communication. According to (Pew Research Center, 2019), millennials are defined as those born between 1981 and 1996, characterized by early exposure to technology, a preference for flexible work environments, and a tendency to express themselves through social media (Twenge, 2014).

In the 2024 election, Gen Z and millennials together represented the majority of the electorate.



Figure 2. Voter Demographics in Indonesia's 2024 Presidential Election by Generation in Indonesia.

Source: KPU

This demographic dominance required campaign strategies to align with their preferences, utilizing digital platforms and advanced technologies. In the context of candidate pair 02, the use of AI-generated visuals became a prominent feature. The visualization of faces, bodies, and campaign symbols through creative content—including memes, positive deepfakes, and motivational videos—was deployed to construct a relatable political image and appeal to young voters.

This study is significant not only because it explores emerging trends in political campaigning, but also because it offers insight into the direction of digital political communication in the future. In a world increasingly saturated with fast, visual, and machine-generated content, a critical understanding of visual campaign strategies is essential to safeguarding democratic quality.

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Based on this context, the research questions posed in this paper include what factors driving the transformation of campaign strategies in the 2024 presidential election? How was the visual campaign strategy of candidate pair 02 developed to reach young voters via digital platforms? And in what ways do AI-generated visual representations shape political perception and influence voting preferences among young voters, particularly Gen Z and millennials?

This study also aims to identify the factors contributing to the shift in campaign strategies during the 2024 presidential election, analyze the visual campaign strategy of candidate pair 02 in engaging young voters through digital platforms, and examine how AI-generated visual representations shape political perceptions and influence the voting behavior of young voters, especially Gen Z and millennials.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study adopts a constructivist paradigm, which is deemed suitable because the focus of the research goes beyond merely identifying objective facts. According to (Moleong, 2017), a paradigm is "a philosophical and theoretical framework used to understand, explain, and predict phenomena in research." The paradigm provides the basis for selecting appropriate research methods and approaches.

Instead, it explores how meanings are constructed through visual representations produced by AI technology and how these visuals are interpreted by Indonesian society, particularly young voters. The visual representation of candidate pair number 02 is not merely a set of images but serves as a symbolic tool that shapes perceptions and influences the voting behavior of Generation Z and Millennials. Hence, the constructivist paradigm offers an appropriate framework for understanding the interplay between campaign content, candidate image construction, and the subjective interpretations of young voters during the 2024 Presidential Election in Indonesia.

This study employed a qualitative method with a descriptive approach to explore the meaning behind the visual representation of presidential and vice-presidential candidates—specifically candidate pair number 02 within AI-generated campaign content during Indonesia's 2024 Presidential Election.

Research methodology itself refers to the strategic approach employed by researchers to explore, measure, or understand a phenomenon. It encompasses the tools and techniques used to answer specific research questions (O'Leary, 2021).

The research aimed to investigate how these visual elements were constructed, disseminated through digital media, and interpreted or received by young voters. This approach enabled the researcher to examine the patterns and strategies of visual communication, symbolism, and political messaging embedded in AI-based campaign content.

Primary data were obtained through in-depth interviews using source triangulation, involving multiple informants: a representative from the campaign team of candidate pair 02, a political analyst, and voters from Generation Z. This triangulated approach was chosen to obtain a more comprehensive perspective and to reduce bias from any single viewpoint.

In addition, data were gathered through participatory observation and the researcher's direct experiences during the campaign process, focusing on the behavior of young voters throughout the 2024 election season.

Secondary data were also utilized, including scholarly journals, news articles from mass media, and digital campaign content circulated on social media platforms (Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, X/Twitter). The researcher also analyzed AI-generated visual materials used in the campaign—such as posters, videos, and other digital assets produced both by the official campaign team and by social media users (user-generated content).

Together, these sources were used to identify the dominant visual representations and examine how such content was received and responded to by young voters (Gen Z and Millennials) within the context of their political behavior during the 2024 presidential election.

RESULTS OF RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION

One of the major distinctions in the 2024 Indonesian presidential election was the demographic composition of voters. According to data from the General Elections Commission (KPU) cited by Tempo.co (Rahmanda, 2023) Approximately 55–60% of the total voters were Generation Z (born between 1995–2010), with the remaining comprising Millennials, Generation Y, Baby Boomers, and Generation X.

This shift in voter characteristics significantly influenced campaign strategies. Political campaigns no longer relied solely on conventional methods such as billboards, on-the-ground visits (*blusukan*), and public rallies. Instead, digital media emerged as the primary battleground, especially in reaching and engaging younger voters.

In this context, Candidate Pair 02 (Prabowo–Gibran) stood out for its aggressive and creative use of digital technologies, including AI-generated visual content to shape a compelling and youth-oriented political image. Visual content such as cartoon-style portraits, humorous deepfake videos, memes, and interactive infographics—disseminated via platforms like Facebook, TikTok, and Instagram (customized by region)—became key tools to project the candidates as “*approachable*,” “*fun*,” “*youthful*,” and “*relatable*.”

Moreover, the campaign heavily involved influencers, key opinion leaders (KOLs), and content creators from across the archipelago,

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many of whom already had established youth followings. This approach highlighted that visual representation in political communication was not merely complementary but a core strategy to shape perception and influence voter behavior.

As supported by the journal article "*PEMILU 2024: Reviewing the Impact of Social Media Campaigns on Political Participation*" by Afrita (2004), social media serves as a critical public information source for Indonesian voters, especially those in remote areas with limited access to traditional campaign methods. Social platforms provide real-time updates about candidates, political dynamics, and public sentiment—making them essential in shaping political choices.

Based on this overview, the study further explores how the visual representations of Candidate Pair 02 created through AI were constructed, distributed, and received, and how such content contributed to the formation of political perception and influenced the decision-making processes of Gen Z and millennial voters during the 2024 election.

This study also employs three theoretical frameworks: Roland Barthes' Semiotic Theory, Voting Behavior Theory, and Social Judgment Theory (SJT). Each theory is used to explain the visual, psychological, and evaluative aspects of political communication and voter response within the context of AI-generated campaign content in the 2024 presidential election.

Roland Barthes' Semiotic Theory

Semiotics is the study of signs and how they are used to convey meaning. Several key figures have contributed to the development of semiotic theory, including:

1. Ferdinand de Saussure (1857–1913) – Father of Modern Linguistics
2. Charles Sanders Peirce (1839–1914) – Father of American Semiotics
3. Roland Barthes (1915–1980) – Semiotics and Myth

This study adopts Roland Barthes' semiotic theory, which focuses on visibility, the meaning embedded in popular culture, and ideology. Barthes distinguishes two levels of meaning in signs: denotation and connotation.

Denotation refers to the literal or surface meaning of a sign. For example, a picture of a Garuda bird denotes an eagle. However, at the connotative level, the same image may signify strength, power, national identity, and authority, conveying cultural, ideological, and societal values.

Barthes, as cited in (Chandler, 2007) describes connotation as a "second-order signifying system" that constructs reality through culture and ideology. It does not stand independently but emerges from the broader cultural context that frames the literal meaning. In relation to this research, the AI-generated visual representations of candidate pair 02 go beyond literal depictions of their faces. These visuals carry embedded messages that influence how the public perceives political figures, campaign messages, and political intentions.

Beyond denotation and connotation, Barthes introduces the concept of mythological meaning. (Chandler, 2007) defines myth as a culturally constructed meaning that appears natural. In political campaigns, myths are constructed through visual representations that shape the candidate's image in the minds of voters, potentially altering voting behavior, especially among Gen Z and millennial voters.

This theoretical framework is critical to the study, as it helps explore how AI-generated content, such as the stylized depiction of candidate pair 02, constructs political narratives and resonates with younger audiences.

Voting Behavior Theory

According to (Schmitt-Beck, 2007), voting behavior is shaped by various factors, including political, social, and economic dynamics, particularly during periods of significant change, such as German reunification. This underscores that voters do not solely base their decisions on ideology or political programs but also on their historical background and lived experiences.

In essence, voting behavior theory aims to explain how and why individuals choose particular candidates. It comprises several approaches:

- Sociological Approach: Emphasizes the influence of social environments, such as social class, ethnicity, religion, and family background.
- Psychological Approach: Focuses on party identification, candidate perception, and emotional factors, for instance, if voters share similar hobbies with a candidate, they may be more inclined to support them.
- Rational Choice Approach: Suggests voters behave as rational agents, weighing the benefits they expect from supporting a specific candidate.

In the context of the 2024 presidential election, voting behavior theory is especially relevant, as roughly 60% of the electorate consisted of Gen Z and millennials. These generations differ significantly from previous ones, showing a preference for visual, lightweight, and digital-first content (via social media, YouTube, Google, etc.), including AI-generated imagery.

This research uses voting behavior theory to examine how AI-based visual content featuring candidate pair 02 influenced the image and voting decisions of Gen Z voters. The focus lies in how visual exposure through digital platforms can shape impressions, build interest and emotional attachment, and ultimately affect political decision-making among young voters.

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Social Judgment Theory (SJT)

According to (Smith, 2015), Social Judgment Theory (SJT) explains how individuals evaluate persuasive messages based on their pre-existing attitudes or views toward a particular issue. Everyone has an initial stance, and when presented with new information, they assess it through that lens instead of accepting it uncritically.

SJT divides the range of possible responses into three categories:

- Latitude of Acceptance: Range of ideas a person finds acceptable.
- Latitude of Rejection: Range of ideas immediately dismissed.
- Latitude of Non-Commitment: Neutral zone ideas neither accepted nor rejected outright.

The further a message is from someone's pre-existing view, the more likely it is to be rejected. Those with extreme opinions typically have wider latitudes of rejection, making them harder to persuade.

In this study, the theory is used to understand how Gen Z and millennials interpret AI-generated visual representations of candidate pair 02. If the viewer is already a supporter, the visuals likely fall within their latitude of acceptance and reinforce their support, possibly prompting them to share or promote the content. If the viewer is opposed from the outset, such visuals are likely to fall into the latitude of rejection, making them ineffective or even counterproductive.

Finally, undecided or apathetic voters, those in the latitude of non-commitment, remain persuadable. For this group, AI-generated visual representations still hold potential to influence their final voting decision, providing candidate pair 02 with a strategic opportunity to sway them.

This section is about to present the findings from the research on the Visual Representation of Candidate Pair 02 in AI-Generated Content and Its Relation to Voting Behavior Shift among Young Voters in Indonesia's 2024 Presidential Election.

The findings were derived from in-depth interviews with campaign team members, political analysts, social media observers, and Gen Z voters. In addition, the study involved visual content analysis of AI-based campaign materials used by candidate pair 02 throughout the election period.

According to insights from Mr. Ihsan Jauhari, a member of the Expert Council of Prabowo-Gibran's national campaign team, the use of AI was not initially a deliberate strategy or primary focus. While digital platforms were indeed part of the campaign infrastructure, the adoption of AI technology began incidentally, triggered by the reaction of a young potential voter early in the campaign.

The use of AI-modified images of Prabowo-Gibran aimed to deliver a fresh, visually distinct impression, aligned with the digital landscape and the campaign's intention to engage younger voters (Gen Z and millennials). The significant age gap between Prabowo and Gibran also served as a compelling reason to adopt a modern and visually appealing approach that could bridge the generational divide.

One notable campaign element was the use of the term "Gemoy" a highly unconventional political tagline. This term originated from a spontaneous remark made by a young student during Prabowo's visit to Muhammadiyah University of Malang. The campaign team, following internal discussion with creative consultants, strategically adopted and refined the term, recognizing its freshness, positive tone, and wide appeal, especially among young voters.

According to Mr. Nursatyo, M.Si, a social media analyst and lecturer in Communication Studies at the University of Indonesia, the virality of the "Gemoy" visuals can be explained through the concept of affective affordance, the capacity of social media platforms to facilitate emotional expression. The dominance of audiovisual formats on these platforms made AI-based visual content (both images and videos) highly accessible and easily memorable across demographic groups.

Another key finding concerns the remarkable campaign budget allocated to digital platforms. Although no specific figures were disclosed during interviews, it was revealed that approximately 60% of the total campaign budget was dedicated to digital strategies. These platforms were tailored to regional preferences, acknowledging that each region favored different digital ecosystems.

Through deeper analysis of AI usage across platforms, the study found that, on the denotative level, Prabowo-Gibran were portrayed with cartoon-like visuals showing cheerful moods, friendly smiles, open body language, and vibrant backgrounds. This contrasts with typical candidate photos, which often feature formal attire and studio-like settings.

At the connotative level, these visuals conveyed messages of youthful energy, optimism, strength, and future-readiness, making the candidates feel emotionally relatable to young voters. This creates what can be termed symbolic proximity, where individuals feel personally connected to a candidate's symbolic representation.

At the mythological level, the visuals construct an ideological narrative in which candidate pair 02 is seen as the embodiment of generational transition and modern leadership, leaders who bridge the old and the new. The repetition of similar AI-generated visuals reinforces these impressions and creates a shared political story in the minds of many young voters.

According to both political and media observers interviewed for this study, these visual approaches were not simply informative; they aimed to build emotional bonds with voters. As stated by Prof. Dr. Drs. A.A.F. Sigit Rochadi, M.Si, a political analyst and lecturer at Universitas Nasional, AI-based visual representation often communicates more than written statements, requiring audience interpretation. However, many viewers only engage with such content on a denotative level, which can hinder their ability

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to grasp deeper messages. Thus, while impactful, visual campaigns do not guarantee voting outcomes.

Further findings from interviews with first-time Gen Z voters revealed that some respondents felt emotionally connected to the visual style of candidate pair 02. They described the content as “modern,” “fun,” “light,” and emotionally resonant. The language used in captions and taglines mirrored their everyday communication, enhancing a sense of cultural familiarity and engagement.

This reflects the power of affective affordance in media, enabling emotional experiences through personalized content. The digital interaction between campaign content and users fostered active participation, not only in consuming but also in resharing, commenting, and remixing the visuals in creative ways.

However, the findings also highlight that some young voters responded critically. They questioned the authenticity of AI-generated content, labeling it as “*too good to be true*”, overly curated, and lacking originality. These voters preferred to verify information through live campaign events, candidate debates, or unedited images.

Such responses indicate the complexity of political decision-making among Gen Z voters, who are both digitally immersed and discerning.

Additionally, the study revealed that the credibility and emotional connection of the message sender, such as influencers, KOLs, or political figures, played a crucial role in the success of AI-based visual campaigns. In the digital ecosystem, content is evaluated not only by its aesthetic appeal but also by who delivers it, how it is presented, and how deeply it resonates with the intended audience. Based on these findings, it can be concluded that the visual representation of candidate pair 02 through AI-generated content does not merely shape symbolic perceptions but also fosters emotional relationships with young voters. This strategy underscores the importance of visuals that are not only aesthetically appealing but also emotionally and socially relevant.

In Barthes' semiotic framework, such visuals carry layered meanings from surface-level imagery to deeper ideological myths about modern, youthful, and approachable leadership. Meanwhile, the psychological model of voting behavior explains how these visual representations influence emotional responses and perceptions, which in turn shape political attitudes.

Visual Representation in AI-Generated Content of Candidate Pair 02

In the context of the 2024 Indonesian Presidential Election, the use of AI-generated visual content by candidate pair 02, Prabowo Subianto and Gibran Rakabuming Raka, marked a unique and unprecedented strategy in political communication. This approach significantly shaped public perception, particularly among young voters. The visuals produced by artificial intelligence (AI) were not merely aesthetic but also conveyed implicit meanings and symbols that contributed to constructing specific political narratives.



Figure 1. AI-Generated Cartoon Image of Prabowo–Gibran.

Source: AI-generated image circulated on Instagram during the 2024 campaign period. Screenshot by the researcher



Figure 2. AI-Generated Cartoon Image of Prabowo–Gibran (alternate version)

Source: AI-generated image shared by supporters on TikTok. Collected by the researcher during participatory observation.

As seen in the two images above, the use of artificial intelligence (AI) can create or recreate the faces of Prabowo – Gibran in a cartoon-like form, specifically tailored to the preferences of this presidential pair. For instance, the shirt remains blue (in accordance with the theme color of candidate pair 02), and notably, a bow tie is used as a distinctive visual element something that appears

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frequently in various campaign materials. Typically, political candidates are portrayed wearing formal shirts and ties, but AI enables the recreation of Prabowo – Gibran wearing bow ties, particularly with a checkered pattern.

The visual content portraying Prabowo and Gibran has been modified to appear younger, more expressive, and approachable. In Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis, these images can be interpreted through three layers of meaning: denotation, connotation, and myth.

At the denotative level (literal or surface meaning), the visuals show smiling faces of Prabowo–Gibran, smooth-looking skin, bright color tones, red checkered patterns, and casual attire. Gibran is often portrayed in a relaxed manner, wearing jackets or t-shirts, with youth-oriented backgrounds. At this level, the content simply depicts young, casual, and humorous male figures wearing bow ties. At the connotative level (deeper or implied meaning), these AI-generated visuals aim to convey that candidate pair 02 seeks to present a more casual, relaxed, and youthful image, unlike other candidates who appear rigid or overly formal. This approach is designed to appeal especially to Gen Z and millennial voters. The visual style, which resonates with younger generations, is part of a broader strategy to build a relatable and informal image.

According to Barthes' concept of myth, these visuals construct a new narrative: candidate pair 02 is not only portrayed as contemporary leaders but also as figures of the future detached from their past political and familial backgrounds. The combination of bold facial expressions with “gemoy” (cute and cuddly) aesthetics constructs the myth of a strong yet “fun” and approachable leader.

This representation encourages young voters to view Prabowo not merely as a political figure but as a reimagined ideal leader who promises safety and national stability. In a post-pandemic political climate characterized by public distrust, such narratives are significant in shaping voter behavior.

The “Gemoy” Narrative and Emotional Populism

After discussing the visual content that represents the new face of Prabowo–Gibran, the next section addresses the use of the narrative or tagline “gemoy” as a symbolic representation of Prabowo. As revealed during the in-depth interview with one of the campaign team members of candidate pair 02, the term “gemoy” originated unintentionally from a group of university students. Surprisingly, the use of this tagline turned out to be highly effective, offering a fresh political narrative in Indonesia, which is usually dominated by formal and outdated slogans.

According to a report (Jannah, 2023) the spokesperson for candidate pair 02 stated that the term “gemoy” was a nickname of endearment given by supporters. Furthermore, this label was believed to be one of the key factors that boosted both electability and appeal among young voters.

The visual portrayal of Prabowo in AI-generated content depicting a softer, cheerful, and expressive facial appearance reinforced by the “Gemoy” label, represents a cleverly crafted political campaign strategy, though not without its risks. These visuals were disseminated massively through social media platforms, forming part of a light, entertaining, and accessible campaign that resonated across social and economic groups, and aligned with the dynamics of populist politics. This strategy leverages emotional engagement and symbolic connectedness between political figures and the public.

The “Gemoy” label is not merely a humorous gimmick; it can be interpreted as a myth or newly constructed meaning: a strong leader who is simultaneously *adorable* and *endearing*. In other words, Prabowo's image is no longer confined to his military background but has been reimagined as a fun, approachable, even playful figure, a symbolic transformation that resonates deeply with Gen Z and millennial voters.

In line with this “gemoy” branding, the image was complemented by Prabowo's signature dance, consistently performed during campaign events and widely shared across digital platforms. This visual representation carries a strong affective dimension. When candidates are visualized smiling, dancing, or engaging warmly, such portrayals elicit positive emotional responses from young voters. Within the framework of the psychological voting behavior model, a voter's perception of a candidate's personality significantly influences their political choice. Here, visual elements do not merely support the political narrative; they become central, often replacing rational considerations such as vision, mission, or policy programs. This phenomenon reinforces the idea that in modern politics, image often trumps substance.

Following Roland Barthes' theory, myth is not a lie but a way in which meaning is naturalized. The “gemoy” nickname and repeated visual expressions, such as dancing, construct a new myth around Prabowo: a leader who is strong, yet humorous, cute, and humanistic.

Despite the overwhelmingly positive response to the “gemoy” label and Prabowo's dance, concerns remain about possible misinterpretations of the word. Subconsciously, “gemoy” could be associated with terms like chubby or plump potentially veering into body shaming territory. However, according to findings from the interview with the campaign team, extensive research was conducted prior to launching this image, ensuring that “gemoy” and the dance moves were framed as fresh and fun representations intended to soften Prabowo's rigid and militaristic image.

The Role of AI in Constructing Political Image in the Digital Era

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In today's digital era, the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in political campaigns has become a smart tool for shaping and managing a candidate's image both visually and narratively. As highlighted in a journal by (Dewi, 2024),

"Visual political communication in the digital era increasingly relies on synthetic imagery, including deepfakes and AI-generated content, to craft affective narratives and enhance engagement with younger audiences."

In the context of the 2024 presidential election (Pilpres), the campaign team of candidate pair 02 actively and extensively utilized AI to construct both visual identity and political narratives. Unlike the other two candidate pairs, whose use of AI was either minimal or not fully optimized, candidate pair 02 fully embraced AI, from recreating facial representations of Prabowo–Gibran to maximizing the use of social media platforms and tools, including leveraging Key Opinion Leaders (KOLs) and influencers on a massive scale.

These AI-generated visuals did not merely present the candidates in a more stylish, youthful, and visually appealing manner; they also created a strong emotional connection with younger voters (Gen Z and millennials). This strategy demonstrates how technology is being employed to shape political imaginaries the collective imagination of who the candidate is and what message they represent. Although this utilization of AI offers a refreshing approach and has the potential to reach broader audiences, it also raises several concerns. One significant issue is the perception of manipulation, that is, presenting something "fake" or inauthentic. For example, the AI-generated image of Prabowo portrays him as cheerful, charismatic, and consistently smiling, visually attractive. However, this raises the question: Does the real-life appearance and personality of Prabowo truly match the visual expectations created by AI? Another issue is the ethical and transparency dilemma surrounding digital content. The lack of stringent regulations makes it difficult for the public to distinguish between authentic and artificial content, even though Indonesia already has a legal framework in the form of the Information and Electronic Transactions Law (UU ITE). In the context of political campaigning, this ambiguity can lead to emotional manipulation of voters, whereby the digital image diverges significantly from reality.

Young Voters' Behavior toward AI-Based Content

Young voters constituted approximately 60% of the total electorate in the 2024 presidential election, making them a critical target for candidate pair 02. The substantial generational gap between Prabowo and younger voters, especially Gen Z and millennials, posed a challenge that required a strategic campaign approach capable of bridging this divide and appealing to both older and younger demographics.

The emergence of AI-generated content portraying the candidates with a fresher, younger, and emotionally relatable visual style illustrates a deliberate effort to connect with this market segment. In the case of candidate pair 02, the use of AI visuals to present Prabowo as *"gemoy," cute, and humorous* was a smart strategy aimed at attracting the attention and sympathy of young voters who are highly active on social media platforms and prefer visually engaging content.

This strategy proved to be fairly effective, particularly in shaping perceptions and fostering emotional resonance between candidate pair 02 and the youth electorate. Initially apathetic or disengaged from politics, many young voters began to show interest, responding with likes, hearts, and positive comments, and even sharing AI-generated memes as a form of digital political participation. This aligns with (Schmitt-Beck, 2007) assertion that:

"Voting behavior in the modern era is increasingly influenced by media exposure and emotionally charged symbols, rather than rational policy considerations."

Public responses to AI-generated content related to candidate pair 02 demonstrate that visual representation holds persuasive power. Remarks such as *"he's so gemoy, now I kinda want to vote"* or *"if he's this funny, having him as president could be fun"* suggest that emotional perception can significantly influence political preference, beyond logical or policy-based reasoning. Within the framework of psychological voting behavior theory, emotional affection and identification with a candidate strongly correlate with voting decisions. In this light, "funny" or "adorable" AI content is not mere political entertainment, but an effective instrument for shaping public opinion, particularly among visually-oriented youth voters.

However, it is also essential to adopt a more critical lens when assessing the objectives behind candidate pair 02's use of AI. One must ask: Do AI-recreated visuals, the "gemoy" label, and Prabowo's dance routines truly enhance political literacy among Gen Z and millennials or do they serve merely as entertainment for a digital-native audience?

The Correlation between Visual Strategy and Electoral Outcomes

The ultimate goal of the political campaign strategy employed by candidate pair 02 was, of course, to win votes in the 2024 presidential election. All applications of AI technology were directed toward influencing the behavior of young voters, namely Gen Z and millennials.

The "Gemoy" tagline attached to Prabowo, along with a consistent visual narrative from casual poses and wide smiles to dance routines performed on various campaign stages, successfully established a cohesive and memorable brand identity. This image was widely disseminated through digital platforms, social media, AI-generated content, and political memes, all of which were quickly absorbed, remembered, and reproduced by young voters in online spaces.

Based on findings from interviews with the campaign team, the use of AI-powered visual content unexpectedly contributed to vote gains beyond the initial projections. Early predictions estimated that candidate pair 02 would not exceed 55% of the vote. However,

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from quick counts to final tallies, the total vote share reached over 58% approximately 0.3% higher than the internal projection by the campaign team.

This outcome illustrates that a strong, consistent, and easily understood visual representation can significantly boost electability even beyond expected targets. Visual elements that are light, emotional, and relatable have proven effective in building emotional closeness between candidates and their voters.

In this context, image is no longer a supplementary aspect of political strategy, but rather a central tactic in shaping public perception, influencing emotions and, ultimately, mobilizing voter support.

Based on the analysis above, it can be concluded that the AI-generated visual representation of candidate pair 02 actively contributed to shaping political perceptions among young voters. Carefully designed visuals with “gemoy” narratives, military-inspired aesthetics, and emotionally sympathetic expressions effectively shifted public focus away from more substantive political aspects such as programs, vision, or mission, toward appearance, tone, and visual storytelling.

Here, visual representation is not neutral; rather, candidate pair 02 strategically engaged with symbolic and ideological imagery. For young voters, who tend to be highly responsive to audiovisual stimuli and digital social interaction, this construction of image had an indirect but significant influence on political preferences. Thus, political AI content should be understood not merely as creative media but as a strategic campaign tool for constructing new political imaginaries.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the evolution of time and the advancement of technology, particularly artificial intelligence (AI), have significantly influenced political campaign strategies in Indonesia's 2024 presidential election. Unlike the 2019 election, where the use of AI was still minimal, the 2024 campaign of candidate pair 02 marked a major leap in leveraging this technology, especially in constructing appealing and accessible visual imagery for young voters.

These visual representations successfully built a new political myth that was more relatable, populist, and highly shareable among Gen Z and millennial audiences. They also fostered symbolic proximity; young voters did not merely see political figures, but absorbed the idealized image of leadership through visuals that were enjoyable, simple, and emotionally resonant.

Ultimately, this approach proved effective. The electability of candidate pair 02 increased significantly during the campaign and exceeded expectations in the final vote count, showing that AI-driven visual strategies can shape the preferences of younger voters who are highly responsive to visual and digital content. In other words, AI-generated visual representations are not merely aesthetic complements to a campaign but serve as strategic tools to influence political attitudes among digital-native generations.

This research affirms that political campaigning in Indonesia has entered a new chapter. Whereas conventional strategies such as billboards, direct campaigns, and open rallies dominated over the past two decades, the 2024 election signaled a major shift toward digital campaigning. Visual representation through AI technology is no longer a supplementary communication tool; it has become a central instrument in crafting political images and influencing voter behavior, particularly among young voters.

Through the AI-based visual representation of candidate pair 02, such as cartoon-style “gemoy” faces and narratives that construct emotional closeness, a powerful symbolic construction emerged, portraying a leader who is strong, approachable, and acceptable to younger generations. These visual strategies succeeded in building symbolic proximity and shaping a new perception of the “ideal leader” in the political imagination of youth.

This study is expected to contribute to the development of political communication scholarship and serve as a valuable reference for political consultants and campaign practitioners to better understand the importance of emotional, strategic, and tech-based visual approaches in engaging digital-native voters. As this trend will likely continue to grow, innovation in visual and technological strategies will become a critical need in future political contests.

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