

Political Branding and the Gen Z Vote: A Phenomenological Study of Young Voters in Indonesia

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Abstract. This research aims to understand how does figure branding effect on generation z in the 2024 Indonesian general election. This research uses qualitative methods with a phenomenological study approach, Data collection was carried out with in-depth interviews and participatory observations involving randomly selected young people, and have the right to vote in the 2024 Indonesian election. Respondents were selected from several different regions in the Indonesian region namely Kupang, Surabaya, Batam and West Java. This study explores how political figure branding shapes the perceptions and voting intentions of Generation Z in Indonesia amidst the 2024 elections. Findings from phenomenological interviews with young voters highlight that realistic, charismatic and ethical traits alongside close citizen connect resonate strongly. By illuminating branding elements that capture youth imagination, results can guide candidate positioning and campaign communication strategies for improved electoral engagement.

Keywords: Figure, Branding; Perception, Intention, Gen Z, Election

1. Introduction

General elections are an important moment in the political life of a country, where citizens have the opportunity to cast their votes and elect leaders who will represent them. In recent years, Generation Z, made up of individuals born between 1997 and 2012, has been in the spotlight in the context of elections. Generation Z is a generation that grew up and thrived in the era of advanced digital technology, where access to information and social media was very easy. In the political context, figure branding has become an increasingly important factor in influencing the perception and interest in choosing Generation Z. Figure branding refers to the efforts of a figure or public figure in building their image and influencing public perception and opinion of them. In general elections, figure branding is used by political candidates to build a strong, attractive, and convincing image in the eyes of voters.

In this study, the main focus is on how figure branding affects the perception and interest in voting for Generation Z in the 2024 Indonesian general election. It is important to understand how Generation Z views political figures, how their perceptions are formed, and the extent to which figure branding can influence their interest in voting. Political marketing expert, (Newman & Verčič, 2016), in his research on figure branding in politics, reveals the importance of image and perception in influencing voters. Political figure branding involves building a strong, convincing, and authentic image of a candidate. This image can influence voters' perceptions and beliefs, as well as build a positive or negative emotional bond with the candidate." In addition, Marland (2013), highlights the role of figure branding in connecting political figures with young voters. He stated that Generation Z is a generation that is digitally connected and spends a lot of time on social media. Effective figure branding can communicate political values and messages in ways that are relevant and appealing to Generation Z.

Previous research has also shown that figure branding can have an effect on the perception and interest in choosing Generation Z. A study conducted by (Su et al., 2021) influence of social media in political elections, found that political figures who managed to build a positive and attractive image on social media tended to have a greater influence on Generation Z in voting (Tucker et al., 2018). In addition, Bode et al., (2021) on the effect of the image of political figures on social media shows that voters' perceptions of political figures can be influenced by the content posted by these figures. Content that reflects authentic personalities, values that Generation Z considers important, and interactions with voters can increase positive perceptions and voting interest.

In the context of Indonesia's 2024 general election, research on how figure branding affects perceptions and interest in voting for Generation Z is very relevant. By understanding the factors that shape the perception and interest in voting for Generation Z, political candidates can leverage effective figure branding strategies to increase their appeal and win the support of Generation Z.

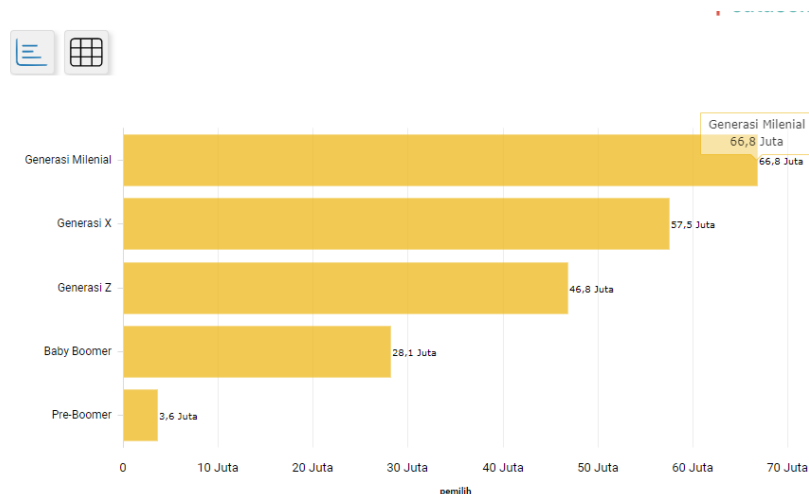


Fig.1: 2024 Election Voter Turnout by Age Group (July 2023)

Source; Databoks.com

Launching from Republika, based on the results of the DPT recapitulation, the majority of voters in the 2024 election are dominated by generation Z and millennial groups. A total of 66,822,389 or 33.60% of voters from the millennial generation," said KPU RI Commissioner Betty Epsilon Idroos in the DPT Recapitulation Open Plenary Meeting at the KPU office, Jakarta, Sunday (2/7/2023). Meanwhile, voters from generation Z are 46,800,161 voters or 22.85% of the total DPT for the 2024 election.

Indonesia held its first general election in 1955. This means that it will take 10 years after independence for the country to hold elections. Due to the unpreparedness of the country and the ongoing war at the time, the democratic process could not be implemented until 1955. In the 1955 election, voter turnout was 91.4%. The number of valid votes nationwide currently reaches 37.79 million votes, including 257 seats in the House of Representatives (DPR). However, the elections of 1955 were not held continuously and were only held in 1971. In the 1971 election, voter turnout was 96.6%. This number is the highest in history. Since then, elections were held every five years until 1997. In the first legislative elections of the reform era, voter turnout reached 92.7% in 1999. This figure is the lowest since the 1971 election. In fact, the participation rate of legislative elections showed a decrease until the 2009 elections. However, the participation rate of legislative elections showed an increase to 75.11% in 2014 and again increased to 81.69% in 2019.

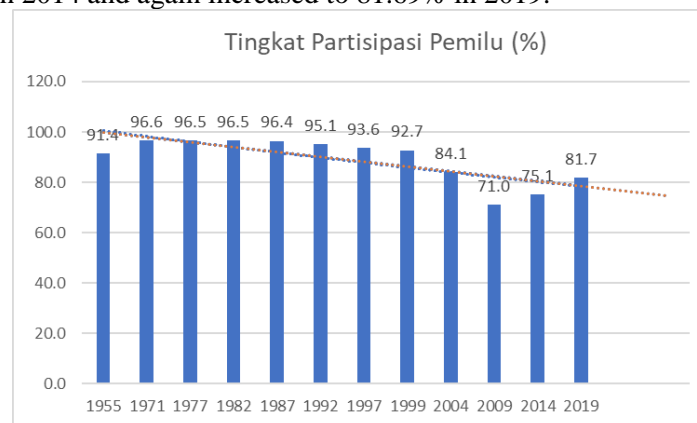


Fig.2: Election Participation Rate of Indonesian People Since 1955-2019,

Source: Databoks.com

The high level of political participation indicates that people in a country pay attention to various government problems. It may also indicate that the elected government in the country has a high degree of legitimacy. One of the easiest ways to measure political participation is public participation in elections. The basis is the calculation of the proportion of the population exercising their right to vote against the number of residents registered as voters. In Indonesia, voter participation in presidential elections declined from 2004 to 2014. But in 2019, the value increased again to 81.97%.

Each organization in achieving organizational goals, it is necessary to focus on potential target markets so that it can trigger the emergence of organizational innovations that support the achievement of organizational goals and make the organization have a competitive advantage (Talari & Khoshroo, 2023; Wakjira & Kant, 2023; Zhao et al., 2023). The potential target market in the context of the general election in Indonesia is one of the first-time voters who belong to Generation Z, so the focus of the organization (c.q. Political Parties) is very important to develop the right strategy to master their target market. Influencers as a form of figures who become role models have an important role in influencing discussions about politics in Gen-Z (Cheng et al., 2024). so that issues related to Gen-Z interest need to be studied in depth so as to get a more comprehensive picture to achieve the success of organizations (c.q. Political Parties) with a marketing approach (c.q. figure branding).

The gap in the phenomenon of young voter participation from year to year in Indonesia that has been described previously, has guided us in raising a critical research question on how does figure

branding effect on Generation Z in the Indonesian General Election? This research will make an important contribution in understanding the role of figure branding in politics and how it affects Generation Z in voting in Indonesia's 2024 general election. It is hoped that the results of this study can provide useful conclusions for political candidates, political parties strategies, and political marketing practitioners to develop more effective strategies in attracting and influencing Generation Z. The results of this study are also expected to contribute to the field of marketing, especially in expanding the views of the scholars in adding insight into the study of brand theory, especially in political branding.

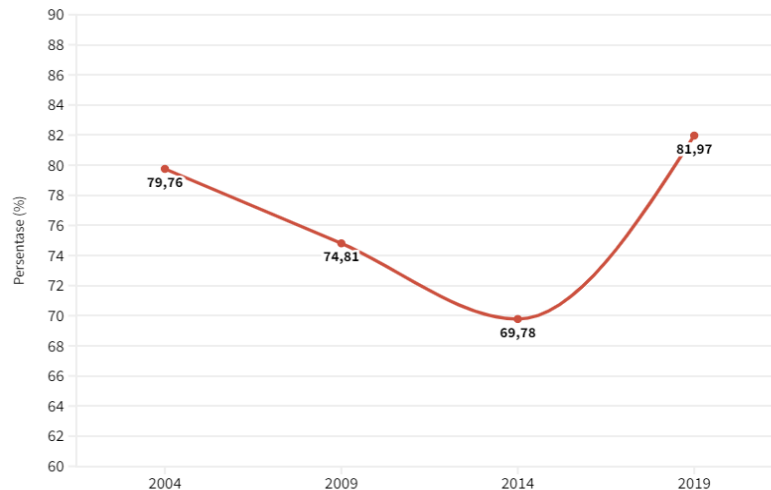


Fig.3: Percentage of Voter Participation Rate in the Indonesian Presidential election (2004-2019)
Source: Badan Pusat Statistik Indonesia (BPS) 2020

2. Literature Review

2.1. Figure Brand in Election Perspective

Brand figures in the context of elections are a powerful tool that can be used as heuristics for voters, especially beginner voters. Those with limited time and interest in politics can use Brand to find out the ideological attitudes and policy promises that accompany political product offerings (Bale, 2008; Scammell, 2015). Building a distinctive character for a good, service, or person is at the core of branding (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2012). Even people can have their own brand. The Brand Figure of the Presidential and Vice-Presidential Candidate pair in the 2024 general election is a form of Political Brand offered by a combination of parties that carry presidential and vice-presidential candidates in Indonesia. In terms of regulation, the election of president and vice president in Indonesia has characteristics and rules that are different from other countries. In accordance with the Election Law number 7 of 2017 stipulates that political parties or combinations of political parties fully have the authority to submit a candidacy for the president of Indonesia. It explained that presidential candidates can only be officially registered by political parties and have not allowed the emergence of independent candidates. The combination of political parties carrying presidential candidates certainly has a strategy on how to frame Brand and brand figures for the proposed presidential candidate.

Identity and image management is a core task of political marketing and operationalizing ideology to develop policies is crucial in political branding (Scammell, 2015; Smith, 2005). Brand identity can be conceptualized as a desired projection formulated and communicated by the creator of the brand with the aim of trying to establish the desired identity in the minds of consumers (Kapferer, 2008). Further, brand identity can be used to capture "the main idea of a brand and how it seeks to communicate that idea to stakeholders" (De Chernatony, 2001). In contrast, brand image can be thought of as a current/direct association perceived and formulated in the minds of consumers, which is often beyond

the control of the brand creator (Nandan, 2005) because they are also bombarded with competing messages from other sources. In addition, the brand image is created externally, and manifested through unique associations and perceptions, experiences and expectations associated with the physical and intangible elements of a brand (Bosch et al., 2006).

Political branding plays an important role in increasing citizens' political efficacy and political participation of young voters. Political branding is used to increase citizens' political awareness and encourage their participation in elections. Political branding includes the projection of a positive image of the political process and the unification of certain target groups, such as the image of certain politicians and political structures. By adopting the concept of marketing strategy, political branding is also used in political advertising to introduce voters to political proposals, promote political principles, and encourage voter participation by using rational and emotional tactics (Zaiter et al., 2023). Building a distinct image and reputation among voters requires positive political branding and this is very helpful for political parties and candidates. Through political branding, parties and candidates can effectively communicate their values, beliefs and policies to young voters, thus influencing young voters' perceptions and decisions. The concept of brand personality in the context of presidential candidates refers to the human characteristics associated with the candidate's brand, which play an important role in how voters perceive and connect with them (Harrison et al., 2023). Political branding is more broadly described as an important part of shaping national branding, so a focus on positive political branding can build a positive national image of a country and even some recent research has focused on how a country's political image affects its branding in the eyes of the world (Rojas-Méndez & Khoshnevis, 2023).

Political branding in Indonesia is an important concept in building relationships between political parties and young voters. Political branding in Indonesia is used to help political parties understand young voters' preferences and attitudes towards these parties through various influencing factors, including social factors, such as religion, ethnicity, and social class (Farhan & Omar, 2023). Although research related to political branding has become increasingly interesting to study, studies on political branding in Southeast Asia, especially in Indonesia, are still relatively rare, even though Indonesia is one of the largest democracy's country in the world, where political stability is very important in maintaining national stability.

2.2. Generation Z

Millennials are defined as those born between the 1980s and late 1990s (Ebeling et al., 2020; Lyons et al., 2015; Nimon, 2007). On the other hand, Generation Z is commonly referred to as the Internet Generation or i-Generation (Ameen & Anand, 2020; Dimock, 2019). This generation was born between 1995 and 2010 (Iorgulescu & others, 2016; Seemiller & Grace, 2018). This generation is the part or segment of society that uses internet-based social media the most. The intensity of millennials and generation Z in using internet-based information technology has become a trend and routine that sometimes takes up most of their productive time (Dobre et al., 2021; Kilber et al., 2014). This generation is undeniably the most active generation in using the internet for social media (Mangold & Smith, 2012; Turner, 2015). Based on the results of the Global Web Index survey (2021), social media is the most actively accessed platform with an average of 2.5 hours per day. Music and video streaming services are used for 1.7 hours and 1.6 hours per day. The use of Instagram with the age classification of 18-24 years is 33.90 million (women 19.8% and men 17.5%), ages 25-34 years (16.9 percent women and 15.3 men) and as many as (6 percent women and 5.5 percent men) aged 35-44 years. Then the use of YouTube has a percentage of access by internet users aged 16-64 years in Indonesia of 94 percent.

Generation Z, or i-Generation (internet generation) is known to be able to carry out its activities both in the real and virtual world simultaneously. They have been very familiar with sophisticated technology and gadgets since childhood. Their interaction with technology indirectly affects their personality and behavior. For them, ICT has become a word of life in their daily lives, because they were born at a time when access to information, especially the internet has become part of a global

culture that affects their views, values, and life goals. They are very proficient and independent in accessing and processing information through various ICT-based sources and media because at all times they are connected to ICT. This affects lifestyle and decision-making in everyday life.

Millennial and Generation Z voters in general election contestation will determine the victory of presidential candidates carried by political parties. According to the Kompas R&D Survey published in October 2021, young groups dominate other groups with details of Generation Z (8-23 years) as much as 27.94 percent and Millennial Generation (24-39 years) as much as 25.87 percent. Generation Z needs participation and the potential of this group is huge in the political affairs of the 2024 presidential election. This generation certainly contributes significantly to the presidential election in 2024. Therefore, it is important to understand and look deeply at Gen Z's perception of presidential candidates carried by political parties from the perspective of Gen Z.

3. Methodology

This research uses qualitative methods with a phenomenological study approach to explore, reveal, describe, and understand research problems from the point of view of the groups and individuals involved (Ataro, 2020). Based on the research question, the phenomena that will be interpreted, understood, and produced will be the object of research of researchers in this study, especially the experiences and challenges that are well felt by informants. Because the purpose of phenomenological research is to understand the nature of social phenomena from the perspective of people who experience them (Williams, 2007).

This study aims to determine the branding figure of Indonesia's future leaders in 2024 by conducting a qualitative study with a phenomenological approach. This research will seek to understand the feelings and experiences of individuals involved in the nomination process, such as the candidate himself, his supporters, and the general public. Through understanding such experiences, researchers hope to gain insight into various aspects of brand equity, including brand loyalty, brand recognition, and brand awareness. The results of this study will provide valuable insights into how brand equity impacts the nomination process and elections in general.

Data collection was carried out by in-depth interviews and participatory observations with research subjects consisting of key informants, namely generation Z. According to the Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS) Indonesia based on the results of the 2020 Population Census states that Generation Z is a population born in 1997-2012 with an estimated age of 11-26 years. To maintain the validity of the results, we invited volunteers who are willing to become respondents and be interviewed regarding their experiences regarding general election issues in Indonesia respondents were selected using *purposive random sampling* techniques, namely being included in the generation Z category, and having the right to vote in the 2024 Indonesian election. In addition, respondents were selected from several different regions in Indonesia, such as Kupang (East Nusa Tenggara), Surabaya (East Java), Batam (Riau Islands) and West Java. Finally, we found 6 sample who meet the criteria and willing to become respondents and were interviewed in depth that came from various regions in Indonesia.

Data Analysis Model

The study adopted Miles and Huberman's data analysis. It is a process of systematic approach to analyzing qualitative data. It has a five-step process that involves collecting and organizing data, coding, and categorizing data, analyzing data, drawing conclusions, and verifying conclusions (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Step 1: The process is to collect and organize data. This includes collecting relevant data from a variety of sources, such as in-depth interviews with research subjects, election documents, or any observations taking place. The data has been organized into an easy-to-analyze format. Data was collected from different city in Indonesia, we invited volunteers who are willing to become respondents and be interviewed regarding their experiences regarding general election issues in Indonesia. We did

a semi-in-depth interview to each respondent. Interview was taken for about 40-100 minutes and all the interview processes was recorded properly. Step 2: The second step is to code and categorize the data. This involves labeling data and organizing it into categories for example respondent 1 we categorized as R1, respondent 2 as a R2 until the respondent 6. There is a collection of data that allows conclusions to be drawn. The presentation of the resulting data is in the form of text, matrices, graphs, and charts. This helps make the data easier to analyze and interpret. To help us in organized the data, we made interview transcript for each respondent.

Step 3: Data Analysis The third step is to analyze the data. It involves searching for patterns and relationships between data. This can be done by looking for similarities and differences between data, and by looking for relationships between different pieces of data to identify key themes and insights from the data. The data analysis method used in this study uses the approach developed by (Gioia et al., 2013) This method is built on the logic of the inductive basis of qualitative research (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). Initially, researchers collected data in the form of interview transcripts, field notes, and secondary data available from digital platform to ensure the validity of research data. Next, the various cases were analyzed by carefully reviewing the interview transcripts. Quotations illustrating figure branding and intention to vote were classified and given particular consideration during this procedure. Step 4: Drawing Conclusions The fourth step is to draw conclusions. This can be done by looking for patterns and relationships between data, and by making inferences about the data. The result obtained is the action of generation Z representatives in considering potential candidates based on figure branding. Step 5: Verification: The fifth and final step is to verify the conclusions that have been drawn from the data. This can be done by comparing conclusions with other data sources, or by conducting further research.

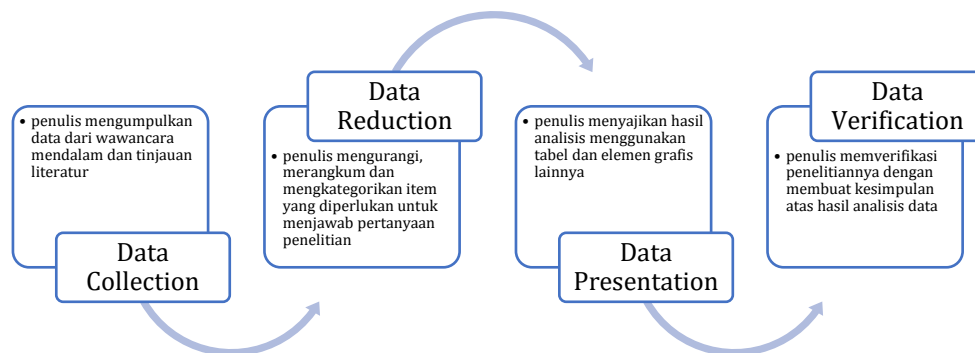


Fig.4: Data Analysis from Miles and Huberman 1994 Data processed by researchers, 2023

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Figure Branding on Gen Z Perspective

Having positive *branding* is a strategy used in winning the hearts of others, *Branding* can reflect the strength of an organization as well as individuals (Whelan et al., 2010). So that both individually and institutionally creating good *branding* is a challenge in itself as part of a strategy in competing. Especially in terms of selecting prospective leaders, figures or figures who become candidates must be able to convince their constituents through positive branding. One of the types of leaders expected by generation Z is the type of figure with charismatic branding.

"...for myself, I see it from both sides. Apart from the authoritative charismatic figure of all kinds. Because indeed the leader himself must need according to that." – R4

Charismatic branding is widely applied to countries in the Asian region (Wang et al., 2005) including Indonesia in the general election contestation in 2024. Charismatic leadership is a property that arises from the interaction between a leader and his followers, which occurs when followers attribute to the leader a certain extraordinary quality or ability and when this attribution, together with certain follower behaviors, gives rise to motivational and performance effects that transform his followers as well as the leader's and organizational relationships (House & Howell, 1992). Charismatic leaders inspire team members with confidence, assertiveness, and communication about goals and vision, charismatic leaders increase team effectiveness because they inspire confidence in the team's vision, inspire and increase confidence in the abilities of team members, but this type of figure continues to undergo very dynamic changes (Jacobsen & House, 2001; Paulsen et al., 2009).

The interview results show that in addition to charismatic branding, generation Z also describes the figure of the prospective leader as being realistic, decisive, and trustworthy. Gen Z doesn't really like rhetoric that is too broad but prefers ideas that are realistic so that they are easy to realize. Assertiveness in executing every idea of these figures is also important so that these ideas and ideas can be realized and can be trusted. Assertiveness also describes leaders who have the power to lead both powerfully and politically, so as to unite various groups in organizations or in the state (Vedeld, 2000).

"...like the character of a leader who is firm and brave, and also a leader who is willing to listen to his people, and also like a leader who is willing to sacrifice anything for the progress of his own nation." R6

Figures who can listen to the voice of the people and are close to the people are also one of the branding figures expected by prospective voters in Gen Z in Indonesia today. Gen Z considers that if the future leader is close to the people, it will be easier to listen to what is happening in the community directly so that it is faster and more precise in taking policies that are right on target.

"...I feel that we are progressing because of lead by example because I always see that when we stagnate, he always asks, let's work together what is lacking what for example is an obstacle and I always benchmark it also to my friends that, if for example I have given you responsibility, it does not mean that you work alone, I will also work but you as PIC only like that." R3

The closeness of figures to the community will also easily have a positive influence on the constituents or to the community they lead, including how a leader can provide inspiration in terms of ethics, social motivation so that it will be able to influence the ethical behavior of his followers as well (Hattke & Hattke, 2019). Gen Z also tends to expect branding built by these figures to be able to be a role model for them in solving problems from small things, by giving examples directly or *lead by example* words in line with action.

4.2. Voting Perceptions for Gen Z

Generation Z according to the Indonesian Central Bureau of Statistics is a generasi born from the range of 1997 – 2012 so that currently it is between 11 to 26 years. This generation is the most racially and ethnically diverse, which may make generalizations more difficult to apply, and now, this generation is ubiquitous and receives services from organizations traditionally (Rue, 2018) Gen Z is very happy with things that smell of technology because it can help them do things easier, and this generation also wants to be heard by their leaders more, especially in terms of conveying the ideas they have and expects that their leaders can respect every opinion (Ozkan & Solmaz, 2015).

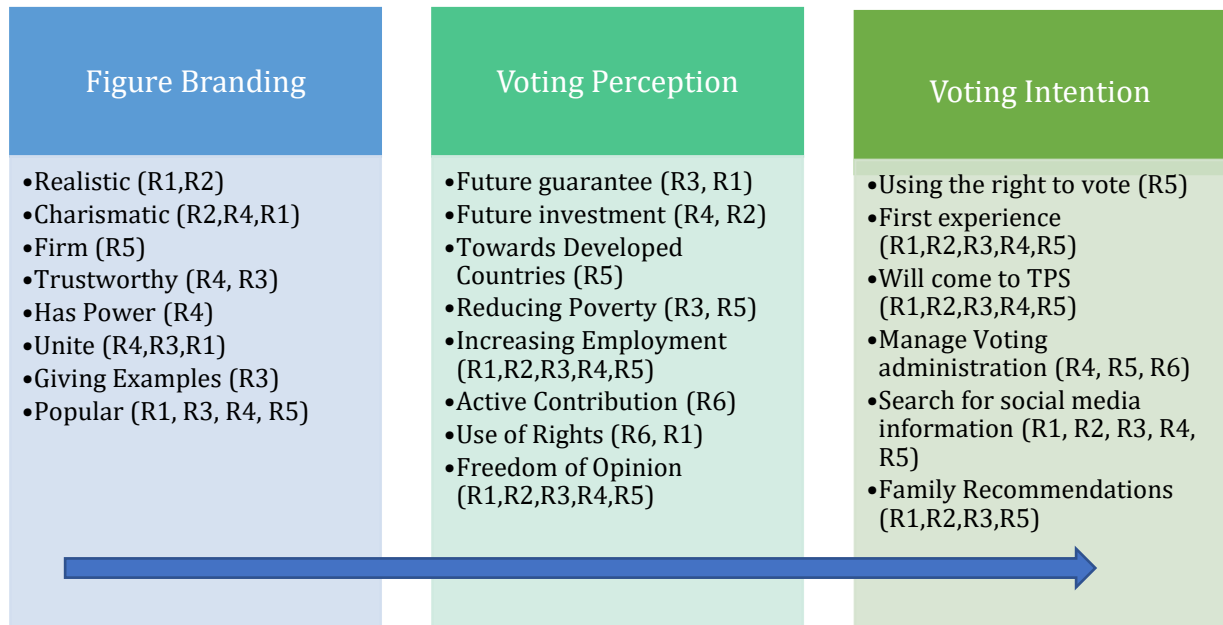


Fig.5: Model of the Influence of Figure Branding and Perception on Intention Gen Z in Indonesia Election.

Perception is the process by which individuals receive, organize, and interpret information to create meaning about the world around them. This process involves three main stages, namely Sensation, Attention and Interpretation (Schiffman & Wisenblit, 2016). Figure 5 shows the results of interviews with respondents which show that Gen Z has a very positive perception of the upcoming elections in February 2024 in Indonesia. This is reflected in the hope that Gen Z's interpretation of the election will be able to guarantee their future and by participating in the election they think they have participated as an investment in their future.

"...In my own opinion, it is very important, because young people are an investment, an investment in the future that might be able to bring this country better, because in the end, the current government may be filled with old people, old people, the state will regenerate to young people, to prospective successors and of course these young people do have a role later". R4.

Perception has a very important influence in shaping attitudes and also interest in behavior, one of which is the perception of *usefulness* (Pavlou, 2003; Schierz et al., 2010; Schiffman & Wisenblit, 2016; Sumerta et al., 2019). Gen Z views that this election benefits them both directly and indirectly. The direct benefit is that they can exercise their right to vote in democracy, they can also freely express their opinions and actively participate in political activities including through social media (Cheng et al., 2023).

"...I think like this, because we are young people, in the next 5 to 10 years we will continue this nation and will be the backbone to continue the golden Indonesia. " R3

The expected indirect benefits are as a long-term investment, this is reflected in the hope of Gen Z who is a candidate for future leaders with the implementation of elections, in the future Indonesia can become a developed country, can increase employment which is one of the main problems of young people today and is expected to reduce poverty levels in Indonesia. This is a very positive perception in welcoming the demographic bonus that will be faced by Indonesia and achieving a Golden Indonesia in 2045.

4.3. Voting Interest in Gen Z Beginner voters

Interest is a mental state that indicates a person's attention and involvement towards a particular object or event (Schiffman & Wisenblit, 2016). Interest becomes important to a person as a process in determining a decision or action (Cao et al., 2021; Kotler & Armstrong, 2018; Riaz et al., 2021; Schiffman & Wisenblit, 2016). As beginner voters, Gen Z has a very high interest in participating in the 2024 Indonesian elections. This interest is inseparable from the stimuli obtained by these young generations through the family environment, association and the most dominating is social media. According to (Ajzen, 1991) the intention in one's behavior is based on 3 things, namely first is an attitude toward behavior which is interpreted as a basic view of an individual's approval of what is the stimulus of his response, both positive and negative, the second subjective norm is an individual's perception of whether a certain norm is important to the individual and thinks about doing it or not, While the third is the perception of behavioral control (perceived behavior control) which is an individual's belief about the ease or difficulty to perform behavior.

Based on the results of coding conducted from interviews with respondents as presented in Figure 5. We group the things that underlie Gen Z having an interest in participating in elections, one of which is that they say that they will participate in elections because they think that by participating in elections these Gen Z can exercise their rights as citizens, so this positive response can trigger positive attitudes towards Gen Z's behavior in participating in elections (Anjali Morar et al., 2015; Roccato & Zogmaister, 2010). Some Gen Z are currently beginner voters, so the first experience in participating in this democratic party activity makes Gen Z feel very motivated and established themselves to participate and be directly involved in the 2024 elections. Stability in participating in this election is reaffirmed by the commitment of Gen Z in behavior such as ensuring themselves are registered as voters, will attend directly to polling stations even those outside the region willing to voluntarily take care of the administration of changing places to vote to participate in exercising their voting rights, this reinforces the subjective norms obtained by Gen Z that have an impact on their interest in participating in the Indonesian democratic party.

"...use a transfer letter sir, so that there are no abstentions, sir, it's a shame that my vote will be "golput", sir. "R5.

Behavioral control is important in receiving information in the era of open digitalization so that it is not easily exposed to incorrect information through social media. Gen Z as the most internet and social media users dominate today (Saputro et al., 2023; Schiffman & Wisenblit, 2016) need to validate information as a form of control over the information obtained. Social media can have so much influence on Gen Z, both positive and negative influences, that it needs validation of the information they get (Król & Zdonek, 2020).

"...Mostly from social media, sir, because generation Z is always on the internet about social media. " R5.

"...Supposedly on social media, the news source must be credible. But back to the young people, it's their own smartness to sort it out. " R2

"...For forums or applications, the comparison with social media that I receive is probably from Google, sir, Google. From Google itself there are also many forums such as Kompas.com Detik.com, or like other attachments that might provide information about the news that I might receive. " R6.

Validation of information on social media has been done well by Gen Z by confirming the truth of the news on official news accounts that can be accounted for the truth such as *kompas.com* and *detik.com*, so that the information circulating and received by Gen Z can be trusted and can be distinguished whether the information is true or just fake news (hoax). Another behavioral control carried out is to confirm with closest colleagues such as family and the circle of friends, so that sharing information can provide diverse views of existing information. But there are still Gen Z who ignore the validation of this information, and even tend to only follow the wishes of the group and the direction of the family, in this case there are still Gen Z who have not been able to make their own decisions.

"...My father said you have to choose ... because ... this and so on. ... So maybe my parents said remember you if for example you go to the polling station close to home to choose ..., even to the DPR, DPD and some of those chosen they have already mentioned later if you choose this DPD, choose this DPR, choose this President, it has even been given so. So when they enter the polling station, they don't just look at it, they immediately choose so they immediately vote and go home. So I said ooo it turned out to be very influential..." R3

The influence of family in providing stimuli to beginner voters has a very important role, family as a subjective norm has a significant influence in shaping interests (Md Husin et al., 2016; Mohammed Esmail Al-Ekam et al., 2012), so it is very important for political actors, especially figures who contest in general elections, to provide education and convey their programs to parents or even leaders of a community group. According to (Schiffman & Wisenblit, 2016) a person's behavior can depend on the opinion leader they respect or follow, so that in Indonesia, which is still thick with culture and customs, it is still very respectful of traditional leaders or people who are in a certain community group or environment.

5. Conclusion and Suggestion

The General Election of the Republic of Indonesia is a major democratic event held every 5 years. The trend of participation in voting for the Indonesian people has continued to decline since 1971, although in the last 3 elections the participation rate began to increase but it was still relatively far from the expectation of 100% participation rate. Especially now that dominating as potential voters is Gen Z, where most of Gen Z is now their first opportunity to participate in a democratic party in Indonesia which is the 3rd largest democracy in the World after the United States and India. The development of technology and the level of use of social media play an important role in disseminating information related to elections to Gen Z because through social media the dissemination of information will be much more effective (Król & Zdonek, 2020). Information circulating through social media cannot be immediately trusted, for that it needs to be validated through official news accounts so that the information obtained can be accounted for. In addition to validating through official media accounts, Gen Z also still gets a lot of stimuli from family and friends (Md Husin et al., 2016).

Gen Z is very critical in choosing potential leaders, one of the important factors they consider is the branding figures owned and offered by figures who participate in general election contestations. Figures who have realistic, charismatic, decisive, trustworthy characters, have the power to lead, unite all groups, set a good example and are close to the people are indicators of figure branding expected by Gen Z. The characters of national and international figures are also part of being idolized and become Gen Z's role models in choosing future leaders such as Barak Obama, Vladimir Putin, and Joko Widodo. Gen Z also has special attention to women leaders and women's involvement in leading the Indonesian nation in the future such as Ibu Sri Mulyani and Ibu Retno Marsudi. Gen Z's perception of politics is very positive, reflected in their various views regarding elections that can provide certainty and investment for the future towards advanced Indonesia, so that the country's ideals can be realized such as reducing poverty through increasing employment. In addition, Gen Z is open to being actively involved in political

activities because they consider that through politics they can exercise the rights they have and are a reflection of democratic freedom and freedom of expression. This positive perception arises from figures that appear in political contestation are figures that can bring hope to Gen Z as young people in the future. Interestingly, young people according to Gen Z are not only limited to age, but young people are someone who has a vision, mission and programs that support the progress of young people and leaders who have a strong spirit and soul so that they are able to hear the voices of young people.

This positive perception certainly has an impact on Gen Z's interest in exercising their right to vote later in the 2024 election. Their interest is reflected in efforts to take action, such as coming to the polling station, checking personal data in the voter list, and taking care of documents to move to vote for those outside the region. This shows positive things about Gen Z's interest in participating in the upcoming democracy party. Thus, the level of participation in voting for Indonesia can increase and reduce the number of white groups "golput" who do not vote and do not exercise their voting rights. So that answering this research question that How Figure Branding has a very important role in influencing Perceptions and Voting Interest in Generation Z in the 2024 Indonesian General Election.

The study offers politician and policy makers crucial young voter insights around realistic policy aims, ethical conduct and channels like social media engagement bridging credibility gaps between young voters and election issues, as well as how to increase their interest in the general election vote. Further research incorporating larger samples across urban and rural demographics can boost generalizability and advance political branding theory.

Theoretical and Practical Contributions

This study provides a significant theoretical contribution in understanding how figure branding influences the perceptions and interests of Generation Z voters in the 2024 Indonesian General Election. By highlighting the important role of figure branding in influencing the behavior of young voters, this research complements the existing literature on politics and political marketing. The main theoretical contribution of this research is identifying the relationship between figure branding and Generation Z voter interest, which can provide a basis for further research in this area.

From a practical perspective, this research provides valuable insights for political actors, especially political parties, in designing effective marketing strategies to attract Generation Z voters. By understanding that figure branding has a significant impact on the perceptions and interests of young voters, politicians can focus more on building a positive and attractive image for the younger generation. In addition, this research also provides practical recommendations on how to utilize influencers as role models to influence political discussions among Generation Z, which can be an effective strategy in winning the support of young voters.

Thus, the theoretical and practical contributions of this research not only enrich our understanding of the relationship between figure branding and Generation Z voting behavior, but also provide valuable guidance for political practitioners in designing more effective and relevant campaigns to reach young voters.

6. Limitation and Future Research

This research was only conducted on Gen Z with a limited respondent, especially beginner voters, so maybe the results will be different from Gen Z who have participated in elections both at the regional and national levels. So that future research suggestions can compare the interest in choosing generation Z who have already voted and those who have never voted and also future research could add more participant to get much broader and more varied results. Further research incorporating larger samples across urban and rural demographics can boost generalizability and advance political branding theory. This research data collection was carried out through in-depth interviews using zoom devices because

of the distance and time limitations between researchers and respondents and may cause discussions with respondents to be less personal and cannot clearly see body gestures and facial expressions during the interview. Further research is expected to conduct direct interviews so that they can establish deeper emotional closeness and also observe the body gestures and facial expressions of respondents directly.

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