Campaign Strategy through Social Media to Improve Brand Personality of Mataram Regional Head Candidates in 2020 in a Campaign During the COVID-19 Pandemic Era

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Abstract. The development of sharia pawnshops from year to year has become a benchmark for the success of the sharia economy in Indonesia. This research examines the influence of product knowledge and word of mouth on non-Muslim customers' purchasing decisions, with trust as a mediating variable. The method used in this research is quantitative with a causal approach. The data tested in this research came from responses to the questionnaire distributed, namely 101 respondents. The results show that product knowledge and word of mouth positively and significantly affect trust and purchasing decisions. It was also found that trust had a positive and significant effect on purchasing decisions and that trust had a positive and significant impact on mediating the relationship between product knowledge and word of mouth on buying decisions of non-Muslim customers.

Keywords: Campaign Strategy; Brand Personality; Social Media Campaign; Covid-19 Pandemic.

INTRODUCTION

The competition for candidates for the Mataram City regional elections held in 2020 to choose candidates for Mayor and Vice Mayor of Mataram is very tight. This requires candidates to determine ways and strategies to win the competition even though candidates had difficulty campaigning directly during the pandemic. Therefore, in politics, marketing is needed to market competing candidates. The need for the role of selling science in campaigning then gave birth to a new paradigm of the concept of political marketing, which mainly includes how to formulate political products through the development of symbols, images, platforms, and programs offered as well as marketing techniques, marketing strategies, publication techniques, offering ideas and programs, product design, and information processing [1].

Looking at the campaign provisions during this pandemic requires the winning candidates/teams to find effective ways to gain public sympathy without violating COVID-19 protocols. As the organiser in PKPU No.13 of 2020, the election commission requires pairs of regional head candidates to adjust all campaign activities to COVID-19 prevention protocols. The author [2] said that in the COVID-19 pandemic, traditional face-to-face campaigns are minimal. Galley believes campaigns will rely heavily on digital experiences, focusing on three areas: social media, campaign-specific mobile apps, and paid advertising on social media [2]. However, according to [3], this situation is set in the United States, where conditions differ from Indonesia.

In the election of regional head candidates, the identity of the pairs of regional head candidates is in the spotlight of the audience and voters. This makes introducing the prospective spouse's identity essential through strategic marketing communications. Marketing communication is how companies inform, persuade, and remind consumers directly or indirectly about the products and brands sold [4]. Political marketing communication strategies introducing the identity or personal branding of candidate pairs must make the pair of regional head candidates top of mind in voters' minds. So that the pair of candidates is easy to remember and know and ulti-

mately be elected as regional head on the day the election is held. Brand personality is a product association that already has a place in the minds of consumers associated with the product [5]. Similarly, creating and improving a contestant's brand personality is essential in political marketing. Instilling brand personality in voters' minds is an effort to instil the memories of voters, which in turn can lead voters to choose candidates for the relevant regional head.

In terms of political marketing to campaign for political parties and candidates for regional heads, several previous studies found several strategies. Authors [6] discovered creative campaign strategies in the 2014 presidential contestation. This campaign prioritises elements of creativity and art as outlined in videos, music, game applications, and other visual designs supported by advances in information technology. This strategy can transform conventional campaign models into modern, participatory, and joyful ones. Authors [7] researched using Twitter as a campaign medium for the 2016 American presidential candidate pair, which examined the strategy of using Twitter by Hillary Clinton as a Democratic candidate and Donald Trump as a Republican candidate in the 2016 American presidential election campaign. The results showed Hillary campaigned using a professional campaign style, where all campaign materials were prepared and executed more regularly. In contrast, Trump campaigned in an amateur style that emphasised Trump's style personally.

Research conducted by [3] explains how the campaign is implemented in the New Normal era, where the implementation of campaigns with conventional methods must be carried out by implementing strict health protocols and suggesting the use of social media as a campaign medium facilitated by the election commission for all pairs of candidates for regional heads and political parties. So far, no research has been found focusing on developing brand personality in political marketing, where social media is used as a communication medium to promote the built brand personality. Moreover, campaign activities are limited by the implementation of COVID-19 protocols. Therefore, the author is interested in researching campaign strategies through social media to improve the brand personality of candidates for the 2020 Mataram regional head in a campaign in the era of the COVID-19 pandemic.

METHOD

The method used in this study is qualitative, with a content analysis approach where the presentation uses a descriptive methodology. The object of research taken in this study is a Facebook social media account utilised by regional head candidates in conducting campaigns in cyberspace, which has been officially registered by the spouse of the regional head candidate to the election commission of Mataram. The pattern of data analysis used is ethnographic, namely from the records of the interview results of the winning team and from electronic data in the form of the Facebook status of each pair of regional head candidates. Then, coding, categorisation, or classification is compiled systematically, and themes are compiled based on the results of the data analysis.

The Facebook accounts of the pairs of regional head candidates registered at the election commission of Mataram are:

Table 1 − Pairs of Regional Head candidates registered at the Election Commission of Mataram

No	Candidate Pairs	Facebook Account	Friends / Followers	Posts
1	H. Mohan Roliskana, S.Sos., MH. and TGH. Mujiburrahman	Sahabat HARUM	8.659	160
2	Hj. Putu Selly Andayani, M.Si.	Hj. Putu Selly Andayani	12.203	69
	TGH. Abdul Manan, Lc.	TGH. ABDUL MANAN	5.307	52
3	Ir. H. Lalu Makmur Said, MM	Makmur Said	4.964	57
	H. Badruttamam Ahda	Ahda	3.689	44
4	H. Baihaqi, ST.	Baihaqi Ratu Diyah Ganefi	929	106
	Hj. Baiq Diyah Ratu Ganefi, SH.	Mataram Baru	681	48

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the Regional Head Election, pairs of candidates for regional heads in Mataram City use social media as an effective campaign strategy. Each pair of candidates has a different brand personal-

ity, according to the characteristics and values they want to highlight.

Candidate No. 1 focuses on harmony, security, friendliness, and sustainable development. They use content that illustrates their vision of creating a harmonious, safe, and sustainable life for the community. Candidate No. 2 features a friendly personality and cares about people's lives. They use content that shows direct interaction with the community and highlights their programs that favour the community. Candidate pair No. 3 strives to be informative and educative leaders for society. They use informative and educational content, such as infographics, articles, and short videos, to give people a deeper understanding of their programs and solutions. Candidate No. 4 emphasises openness, responsiveness, and polite communication. They use content that reflects the friendliness and active interaction with the community. In conclusion, social media, especially Facebook, became one of the essential tools in the campaign of regional head candidates in Mataram City.

In the context of the campaign of the regional head candidate pair in Mataram City, the use of social media, especially Facebook, as an essential tool in communication strategies can be viewed as an implementation of branding theory. Each candidate partner intelligently builds a brand personality that matches their vision and values. Through diverse content, such as campaign videos, infographics, inspirational stories, and testimonials from their supporters, prospective couples gain sympathy and mobilise community support. By leveraging social media as a platform that allows them to deliver messages directly and interactively, future couples successfully form a cohesive image and reinforce their identity as responsive, caring, and informative leaders.

Branding creates an identity related to certain presumptions, emotions, and feelings of identity [8]. Branding aims to identify a product or service or a group of sellers and distinguish it from other brands [4]. In political campaigns, candidate pairs build "brand personalities" that reflect their characteristics and values. Through social media, they can convey messages consistent with the brand personality and influence voters' perceptions of them.

Personal branding is forming a public opinion about several aspects of a person, including personality, abilities, or values, to create a positive public perception that can ultimately be used as a marketing tool [9]. Nowadays, personal branding has become very important compared to corporate brands. This is because it is easier to trust yourself than a company and establish relationships with people who make it comfortable [10].

Response and Interaction of Potential Voters. In the 2020 Mataram regional head candidate campaign, social media, especially Facebook, has a vital role in influencing voter support. The Candidate No. 2 campaign team is aware of this and uses social media to interact with potential voters. The No. 2 Candidate Spouse's campaign team has specific strategies for maximising engagement with voters on Facebook. They have a team that manages social media accounts and actively monitors responses and comments from potential voters. The team answers questions, provides needed information, and shares relevant content to reinforce the campaign message. Voter response to the interaction made by Candidate No. 2 Spouse on Facebook media was quite positive. They received many comments, questions, and support from potential voters. These interactions allow campaign teams to better understand voters' needs and expectations and respond accordingly. Despite the scepticism of social media voters, the team strives to remain consistent in providing accurate and transparent information.

The No. 2 Candidate's media team faced challenges interacting with voters through Facebook. One is to distinguish between genuinely interested and potentially supportive voters and voters simply looking for information or are sceptical. The team strives to respond clearly to any questions and provide a deep understanding of their vision and work program. In addition, they also seek to build trust by avoiding harmful content or attacks on political opponents. Overall, the responses and interactions on Facebook media made an essential contribution to strengthening the brand personality of the No. 2 Candidate. They can answer questions, provide further explanations, and establish closer communication with potential voters through dialogue. This interaction helps build strong connections between candidates for regional heads and likely voters, as well as strengthen their positive image in the eyes of voters.

The basic assumption of the theory used by the No. 2 Candidate is Communication Theory. This theory suggests that mass media, including social media, play an essential role in shaping public opinion and influencing political behaviour. In

this context, using Facebook by the Candidate Pair No. 2 campaign team helps them communicate directly with potential voters, convey campaign messages, and shape voters' opinions and attitudes towards regional head candidates.

Authors [11] stated that communication is a process of thought and understanding conveyed between individuals. In marketing, companies and other organisations transfer their values to their customers. Along with the times, marketing communication is now better known as integrated marketing communication, which means a marketing communication planning concept that recognises the added value of a comprehensive plan that evaluates the strategic role of various communication disciplines such as print-electronic media advertising, direct response, sales promotion, and public relations and combines these multiple disciplines to provide clarity, communication consistency, and maximum impact. A campaign is a form of political communication to persuade voters to get support [6]. In marketing science, campaigns can be associated with promotional steps to increase the selling value of a product. Promotion is part of the marketing strategy process as a way to communicate with the market using the composition of the promotional mix [4].

In the context of Candidate Pair Number 2's political campaign, the integrated marketing communications they use include a promotional mix consisting of advertising, personal selling, sales promotion, public relations or publications, and direct selling [5]. The application of this concept refers to the view [12] that promotion is a form of marketing communication that seeks to disseminate information, influence/persuade, and remind the target market about the company and its products to be willing to accept, buy, and be loyal to the products offered. In this case, Candidate Number 2 utilises Facebook as the primary communication medium in executing its integrated marketing communications strategy. Through Facebook, they deliver campaign messages to potential voters, seek to influence voter opinion and aim to increase support for their regional head candidates. By leveraging Facebook's features, such as posts, paid advertising, direct interaction with users, and information dissemination through various content, the No. 2 Candidate Pair strives to achieve maximum clarity, consistency, and communication impact to achieve its campaign goals.

The Influence of Campaign Strategy on the Image of Candidates. In the 2020 Mataram City regional election, campaign strategies through social media positively influenced the image of regional head candidates. The campaign team successfully designed an effective campaign strategy by combining interesting content, active interaction with potential voters, and using social media as the primary means to convey campaign messages.

Before the campaign through social media, the image of regional head candidates was not evenly distributed among potential voters. Still, with the strategies implemented, voter perception was significantly changed. With the campaign strategy through social media, the image of the candidate for the regional head of Mataram City gradually adjusted to be more positive, and potential voters began to see the candidate for the regional head as a figure who was competent, with integrity, and able to lead. Marketing communication theory is a theory that can support the influence of campaign strategy on the image of candidates. According to [5], marketing is a social and managerial process in which individuals and groups get what they need and want by creating, offering, and exchanging valuable products with others. One of the main concepts in marketing is consumer orientation, where the company must determine the basic needs of buyers to be served and fulfilled, select the group of buyers who will be targeted for sales, and choose products and marketing programs.

According to [11], marketing communication is how companies try to inform, persuade, and remind consumers, directly or indirectly, about the products and brands sold. Marketing Communication Theory studies how marketing messages can be delivered to consumers effectively. This theory is relevant in campaign strategy through social media because it includes vital communication aspects in conveying campaign messages to potential voters. Applying good marketing communication theory can help improve the image of prospective regional heads by communicating persuasive and relevant messages through social media.

How the COVID-19 Pandemic Has Affected Campaigns. The COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 significantly impacted the campaign of the regional head of Mataram City. Physical distancing and mass gatherings forced campaigners to look for new solutions to stay in touch with potential voters. They experienced significant challenges but

quickly adapted to the situation. The campaign team for the candidate for the regional head of Mataram City swiftly shifted the focus of their campaign from face-to-face meetings and outdoor activities to campaigns through social media. They leverage platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube as primary tools to interact with potential voters.

When physical meetings are impossible, social media becomes a vital bridge between candidates for regional heads and the community. Using social media as a campaign strategy is very effective in overcoming physical restrictions imposed due to the pandemic. Regional head candidates can directly communicate with potential voters without the need to meet physically. They use interactive social media features like live streaming, campaign videos, exciting content, and quizzes to attract people's attention. By using campaign-related hashtags and mentions, candidates for regional heads have succeeded in expanding their reach and increasing potential voter participation. Regarding social media use, the number 2 candidate pair (Hj. Putu Selly Andayani and TGH. Abdul Manan) showed higher effectiveness than other candidate pairs. Hj. Putu Selly Andayani's Facebook account has the highest number of followers, reaching 12,203 people, and is active with 5,307 posts. This shows their efforts in disseminating information to the people of Mataram City.

Campaign strategies through social media play an essential role in overcoming physical restrictions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mataram City's regional head candidates managed to maintain their presence in the digital world and continue to communicate with potential voters. They can deliver campaign messages, explain their programs, and listen to aspirations and input from the community through social media. Although the campaign strategy through social media has great benefits, the team also faces some obstacles. They recognise that the situation and preferences of potential voters can change quickly. Therefore, monitoring sentiment on social media becomes important. By understanding the feelings of likely voters, campaign teams can take appropriate actions to strengthen the positive image of regional head candidates in the eyes of voters.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results of the research and discussion described above, it can be concluded that campaign strategies through social media can be an effective tool to improve the brand personality of a candidate for the regional head in campaigns in the era of the COVID-19 pandemic. In a pandemic, face-to-face interaction is limited, so social media has become the primary platform to communicate with potential voters. By utilising social media with the right strategy, candidates for regional heads can build a positive image, increase public trust, and strengthen the brand personality of each pair of candidates for the Mataram City Region.

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