



Identity Representation in the Political Battle of Tasikmalaya's 2024 Mayoral Candidates

Nandang Kurniadi*; Yeni Artanti

Applied Linguistics Department, Yogyakarta State University, Indonesia

(*) Corresponding Author

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Abstract

The 2024 mayoral election in Tasikmalaya, Indonesia, presents a complex political landscape. Identity representation plays a pivotal role in shaping public discourse and voter perception. This study employs Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to examine the linguistic and semiotic strategies employed by mayoral candidates to construct and convey their identity representations. It examines how these strategies shape and reflect broader sociopolitical ideologies within the local context. Drawing from campaign banners, the study analyzes linguistic choices, imagery, and color schemes. It investigates how candidates position themselves in terms of ethnicity, religion, and regional affiliations. Using Fairclough's three-dimensional CDA framework, the study focuses on text analysis, discursive practice, and sociocultural context. The findings reveal that identity markers on campaign banners serve as tools for self-presentation for candidates, also helping them subtly differentiate themselves from opponents by tapping into local sentiments and values. This analysis deepens our understanding of how discourse shapes political identity and demonstrates how identity representation can influence voter engagement and local democratic processes. The study contributes to the discourse on identity politics in local elections and demonstrates how visual and textual cues in political campaign materials can influence public opinion and voter alignment in emerging urban centers, such as Tasikmalaya.

Keywords: *Critical Discourse Analysis; Identity Representation; Political Identity; Election*

Introduction

In 2024, Indonesia held a national democratic event, including the presidential election (Pilpres), legislative elections, and regional head elections (Pilkada) (KPU Indonesia, 2022). This event called the political candidates to present themselves to the public in various ways to secure votes. In local elections, such as mayoral races, candidates utilize different forms of media and public spaces to communicate their identities, values, and promises to potential voters. One of the most visible forms of communication in these events is political discourse, particularly banners and billboards placed in public spaces.

Political discourse, a key element of critical discourse studies, is often employed in political contexts to achieve specific objectives. Fairclough (1995) argues that discourse, viewed as a form of

interaction or action, fulfills two main purposes. First, it aims to influence, persuade, challenge, and convince. Second, it is recognized as a form of expression that is both intentional and controlled.

Pesiwarissa (2022) claims that discourse is produced by the speaker to convey a message that will be interpreted by the listener based on the context created. In this sense, no discourse is constructed without the speakers' specific purpose (Gama, 2019). Similarly, this principle applies to political discourse. Political discourse subtly manipulates, influences, and even controls society without resorting to force to achieve success. People appear to willingly accept the discourse, unaware of the political intentions hidden behind it (Gama, 2019; Panjaitan et al., 2023; Pesiwarissa, 2022; Simamora et al., 2024).

In political discourse, the visual representation of candidates plays a crucial role in shaping public perceptions (Boer, 2014; Panjaitan et al., 2023; Pesiwarissa, 2022). In Tasikmalaya City, the use of banners to project the identity of mayoral candidates has become a significant tool for communication (Gama, 2019; Retnowati, 2013). These visual materials do more than just promote names; they convey messages about the candidates' values, personalities, and visions for the city, influencing voters in subtle yet powerful ways (Gama, 2019; Pesiwarissa, 2022; Simamora et al., 2024).

The study of these visual representations is crucial for understanding how candidates strategically construct their public image (Lee, 2004, as cited in Gama, 2019). By analyzing the banners and billboards displayed on the streets, we can gain insights into how identity is crafted to resonate with local voters, reflecting social, religious, and cultural values specific to Tasikmalaya (Muktaf & Junaedi, 2014; Panjaitan et al., 2023). The research also examines how visual elements, such as color schemes, slogans, and images, contribute to shaping the candidates' public personass (Pratiwi, 2018).

This current research focuses on the identity representation of the mayoral candidates in Tasikmalaya, a city in West Java, Indonesia. Unpacking how the political discourse contained in the banner is a form of battle between the candidate leaders. The banners will be examined through the lens of Norman Fairclough's critical discourse analysis and Van Leeuwen. For Him, language is a form of power practice. He developed an integrated model of discourse analysis that combines linguistics with social and political thought, generally incorporating it into the study of social changes.

a. Banner as a Tool of Political Discourse

Many political communication models applied in liberal democracies have been adopted by political parties in elections, one of which is political advertising. The development of political advertising in Indonesia began to emerge after the first post-reform election in 1999 (Muktaf & Junaedi, 2014). In the 1999 elections, political parties were free to compete in a multiparty system, making political parties have to manage political communication programs (Setianto, 2015) with modern political communication standards, e.g., banners, billboards, social media, and websites (Boer, 2014; Gama, 2019; Panjaitan et al., 2023; Simamora et al., 2024).

Banner has emerged as the most popular political advertising and campaign medium. This medium is reasonably priced with a significant impact. Banners can be strategically placed in urban areas to maximize their impact. As a result, the availability of this banner has the potential to reach a larger number of voters in a shorter period. According to Bovee, Courtland L., and Arens, 1996 in (Gama, 2019), space media such as banners have significant advantages, including: 1) high impact medium, 2) large visual size, 3) overall difficult to ignore by passers-by, 4) constant reminder, 5) reinforces creative concepts in other media, and 6) the lowest cost medium.

Political advertising in public settings, specifically banners, is viewed as a selfish act that sells hollow promises. In some locations, political parties have also been advised to minimize their outdoor advertising efforts, as they are believed to contribute to street clutter, portray a negative image of urban planning, and become a source of waste in the future. However, for parties, banners are believed to have the power to significantly impact public opinion and behavior, making them a crucial component of political party campaigns. Political parties can use banners to successfully express work programs,

political statements, and the image of parties, people, and regional leaders (Retnowati, 2013). Furthermore, banners are highly effective at increasing popularity, which is why political marketing often utilizes them. The more frequently it appears in the media, the higher its popularity. This rise in popularity is projected to influence the value of electability in upcoming elections.

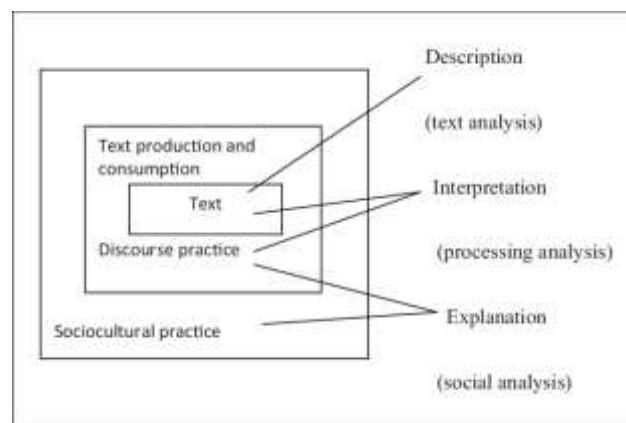
b. Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis

Fairclough's critical discourse analysis approach is based on the assumption that language is an irreducible part of social life, dialectically interconnected with other elements of social life; thus, social analysis and research must always take language into account (Fairclough, 2013). The primary focus of CDA is on the effects of power relations and inequalities in the production of social problems, specifically the discursive aspects of power relations and inequalities: the dialectical relationship between discourse and power, as well as its effects on other relations in social processes. Fairclough seeks to uncover ideological patterns and power in the text in his research analysis method (Gasa, 2019; Gee, J. P., 2013; Latiff Azmi et al., 2013; Manning & Weninger, 2004).

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a form of discourse analysis that examines how social power, dominance, and inequality are expressed, reinforced, and resisted through language within social and political contexts. Fairclough and Wodak (1997) present eight key principles of CDA: (i) CDA focuses on social problems; (ii) power relations are expressed through discourse; (iii) discourse shapes society and culture; (iv) discourse carries out ideological functions; (v) discourse has a historical dimension; (vi) understanding the relationship between text and society requires a socio-cognitive approach; (vii) discourse analysis is interpretative, explanatory, and follows a systematic methodology; and (viii) discourse is a social action (Amoussou & Allagbe, 2018)

Fairclough introduced a three-dimensional framework for analyzing discourse, which involves three different levels of analysis: examining language texts (both spoken and written), exploring discourse practices (the processes involved in producing, distributing, and consuming texts), and understanding discursive events as socio-cultural practices (Amoussou & Allagbe, 2018; Manning & Weninger, 2004). Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) model involves interpretations at the micro, meso, and macro levels. At the micro level, the analysis focuses on the text's syntax, metaphorical structures, and rhetorical strategies. The meso level examines how texts are produced and consumed, focusing on how power relations shape these processes. At the macro level, the analysis examines intertextuality, aiming to comprehend the broader societal contexts that influence the text (Pesiwarissa, 2022). This approach is structured within a three-dimensional framework, covering the description of textual analysis (description), the interpretation of text production and consumption (interpretation), and the explanation of the social conditions influencing the text's production and reception (explanation) (Amoussou & Allagbe, 2018; Janks, 2020; Turhan, 2017), as illustrated in Figure 1 below.

Figure. 1. Fairclough's Three-dimensional framework



Research Methods

This research employs a descriptive, qualitative method and a critical paradigm based on Norman Fairclough's discourse approach (Critical Discourse Analysis), which encompasses text, discourse practices, and sociocultural practices. The data used in this study comes in the form of discourse found in mayoral candidate banners in Tasikmalaya, West Java.

In this study, the researcher plays a central role as the primary instrument, requiring careful attention during the observation process. The researcher aims to remain attuned to the data being collected, especially as observations are repeated and ongoing. The data collection method is structured around three key levels of analysis: textual, discursive, and social analysis. Textual analysis involves a detailed examination of the content, considering both its literal meaning and its deeper, semiotic significance. Semiotic analysis (Van Leeuwen, 2004), in particular, focuses on understanding the signs, symbols, and codes embedded within the text, helping to uncover hidden meanings and cultural references. Following the collection of reliable observational data, the data is processed through a series of stages: interpretation, classification, description, and explanation.

The data collected throughout the research will be validated using triangulation techniques, specifically theoretical triangulation and method triangulation (Lauri, 2011). Theoretical triangulation involves relating the analysis results to previous theoretical structures. Theoretical triangulation tries to improve the analysis and explanation of political discourse in candidate-pair flags (Donkoh, 2023).

The research process began with early observations, and the researchers chose Tasikmalaya city as the research area. Second, the researcher collected data in the form of photos of each possible pair's banners. The researchers then visited the data sources and interviewed people about how they interpreted the banners and how effective the banners were in influencing their choices. Finally, we analyzed and evaluated the results.

Results and Discussion

This chapter presents the research data and outcomes, which were gathered through observation and interviews. It encompasses discussions aimed at interpreting and elucidating the comprehension of the collected data and findings. According to the research outcomes, the discourse on banners during the Tasikmalaya regional head election serves as a medium through which each candidate pair constructs and disseminates their ideological representations, thereby engaging in a struggle over political identity.

Political identity refers to the alignment and representation of an individual's or group's beliefs, values, and affiliations within the political spectrum (Zaluchu et al., 2019). It encompasses elements like ideology, values, party affiliation, ethnic identity, and social beliefs. This identity often shapes how political figures are perceived and how communities align with political movements.

a. Semiotic Visual Communication

In the context of regional head elections, visual communication plays a crucial role in shaping perceptions and supporting campaign messages (Simamora et al., 2024). This section aims to dissect the various visual elements utilized in the Tasikmalaya regional head election campaign, reflecting the communication strategies of the candidates. By examining language choices, symbolism, modality, and tone, this section reveals how political identities and candidate images are communicated to voters.

First candidate

Candidate's name : Nurhayati & Muslim

Parties : PPP dan PDIP

Slogan : Tasik Beres "Berdaya saing, Religius dan Sejahtera"

Figure. 2. Banner of Nurhayati & Muslim

The slogan “Tasik Beres!” serves as a concise and direct promise of improvement, signaling actionable leadership and resonating with voters seeking tangible change. The slogan “Tasik Beres!” is crafted using a combination of letters and syllables that are unusual and challenging to formulate in the Indonesian language, as noted by Kridalaksana (2009). This acronym has been adopted as an identity for the candidates, signifying their vision for future leadership. The subtext, “Berdaya Saing, Religius & Sejahtera” (Competitive, Religious & Prosperous), adds depth to their message by integrating three critical dimensions: progressiveness, moral integrity, and social welfare. This combination appeals to both young and old voter bases, creating a balanced and inclusive narrative.

Additionally, the mode of communication also reflects the candidates’ priorities through its balance of formality and accessibility. The prominent display of the candidates’ names “Nurhayati & Muslim” emphasizes equality and collaboration, while their cultural and religious resonance reinforces trustworthiness. The directive “Coblos” (Vote), paired with the number “1”, amplifies the text’s motivational mode, with an imperative tone urging voters to act decisively while subtly emphasizing the candidates as the preferred choice. The interplay of a confident tone and a warm, reassuring message enhances the overall communication, ensuring that the banner conveys both competence and relatability. Together, these textual elements craft a cohesive political identity that aligns with voters’ aspirations for progress, spiritual, and prosperity.

Second candidate

Candidate’s name: Ivan Dede

Parties : PKS, DEMOKRAT, PSI, PERINDO, BURUH, HANURA,
GARUDA, PKN, PRIMA

Slogan : IDAMAN (Ivan Dede Maju Sauyunan) #Jadikeun

Figure. 3. Banner of Ivan Dede

The hashtag #JADIKEUN (Make it happen) serves as a motivational call to action, combining simplicity and directness to inspire confidence and urgency among voters. This simple and direct language suggests confidence and a proactive approach, aiming to rally support around the idea of making Ivan and Dede the leaders. The acronym IDAMAN (Ivan Dede Maju Sauyunan or Ivan Dede Progressing Together) personalizes the campaign while embedding cultural and communal values of unity and progress. The phrase Maju Sauyunan, expressed in Sundanese, deepens the candidates' connection to local culture, resonating with the electorate's shared linguistic and cultural identity.

The contrasting colors of the candidates' names, "blue for Ivan and red for Dede," symbolize complementary qualities, with blue representing trust and stability and red conveying energy and determination. The colors in the background symbolize the supporting parties. Together, they suggest a balanced partnership, projecting an image of unity and shared strengths. Their traditional attire, including black caps, signifies cultural alignment and respect for local traditions, grounding their image in humility and moral integrity. This visual representation aligns with van Leeuwen's (2005) concept of multimodal semiotics, where textual and visual elements work together to convey complex meanings.

The banner's tone, formal yet approachable, are achieved through the candidates' attire, "professional white shirts," and relaxed expressions, which project warmth and accessibility. This balance reflects a collaborative vision aligned with the idea of sauyunan (unity), emphasizing shared progress between leaders and the community. The use of hashtags and inclusive language positions Ivan and Dede as modern yet culturally grounded leaders. The banner's semiotic choices craft a political identity that merges cultural authenticity with progressive aspirations, establishing Ivan and Dede as relatable and capable leaders.

Third candidate

Candidate's name: Yusuf-Hendro

Parties : Golkar dan PAN

Slogan : YUSRO (Yusuf Hendro) #Lanjutkan

Figure. 4. Banner of Yusuf Hendro



Yusuf and Hendro strategically employ semiotic visual communication through its language choices, symbolic elements, and modality to construct a relatable and culturally resonant political identity. The banner prominently displays the names "Muhammad Yusuf" and "Hendro" alongside the title "Calon Walikota & Wakil Walikota Tasikmalaya" (Candidates for Mayor and Deputy Mayor of Tasikmalaya), clearly indicating their political aspirations. The large, bold lettering, with "Yusuf" in bright yellow, emphasizes his role as the primary candidate, using typographical hierarchy to establish authority and visibility while maintaining inclusivity by featuring both names.

The symbolic use of color in the background enhances the visual appeal and communicates deeper cultural meanings. The yellow represents the color of the Golkar party, red and white represent the Indonesian flag, and blue represents the PAN party. However, Warm tones (yellow and red) blend with

cooler blue hues, creating a harmonious balance that symbolizes energy, warmth, and trust. This tricolor palette subtly reflects the Indonesian flag, fostering a sense of nationalism and local pride. The specific associations of yellow with hope, red with passion, and blue with stability reinforce the candidates' message of optimism, action, and reliability, aligning with van Leeuwen's (2005) framework on the ideological use of colors in semiotic design.

Furthermore, both candidates wear traditional caps, symbolizing respect for local traditions and cultural alignment, which resonates with voters' values and reinforces their moral and cultural credibility. This is complemented by their plain shirts and relaxed, approachable expressions, projecting a "people's candidate" image that emphasizes relatability and openness. By this banner, they present themselves as culturally grounded, approachable, and capable leaders who embody both tradition and progress.

Fourth candidate

Candidate's name: Viman & Diky

Parties : GERINDA, PBB NASDEM, UMAT, GELORA

Slogan : HARAPAN BARU TASIK MAJU

Figure. 5. Banner of Viman Diky



The slogan "Harapan Baru Tasik Maju" (New Hope for a Progressive Tasik) conveys an aspirational and transformative message, positioning the candidates as symbols of change and renewal. The phrase "new hope" emphasizes a break from the past, suggesting a fresh vision for leadership. The term "progressive Tasik" conveys a commitment to modernization and development, appealing to voters seeking dynamic leadership that addresses contemporary challenges while fostering optimism for the future. The names "Viman Diky" are prominently displayed in bold, straightforward typography, ensuring visibility and recall. The inclusion of the large number "4" alongside their names highlights their ballot position, serving as an effective iconic device to aid voter recognition.

The candidates' attire further enhances their political narrative, blending professionalism with cultural authenticity. The matching light blue shirts, adorned with the "Viman Diky" logo, signify unity and professionalism. The use of light blue mirrors the campaign color of Prabowo, a national presidential candidate from the Gerindra party, subtly signaling their affiliation with a larger political movement. This visual connection reinforces their legitimacy and positions them as part of a trusted political lineage, resonating with party supporters.

Additionally, Diky's traditional headscarf introduces a cultural element that signifies respect for local traditions, strengthening their connection to community values. This combination of modern and traditional attire reflects a tone that values both professionalism and cultural awareness, projecting the candidates as relatable yet polished leaders. By integrating aspirational language, bold typography, and a blend of contemporary and cultural visual elements, the banner constructs a cohesive political identity that emphasizes progress, renewal, and cultural resonance.

Fifth candidate

Candidate's name: Yanto Amin

Parties : PKB

Slogan : YAKIN (Yanto Amin) EMAS (Edukatif, Maju, Agamis, Sejahtera)

Figure. 6. Banner of Yanto Amin



The banner strategically emphasizes Aminudin's title, "Kyai" (religious leader), which underscores his authority and credibility in addressing the community's spiritual needs. This title not only elevates his personal identity but also aligns his leadership with the cultural and religious values of the electorate. The color scheme of green and gold in their names further reinforces the campaign's narrative. Green symbolizes harmony and growth, while gold evokes prosperity and excellence, aligning with the EMAS slogan's promise of balanced development. These colors also carry cultural and religious significance, particularly in Islamic contexts, which strengthens the candidates' connection to the community's values.

The candidates' nonverbal communication and attire significantly contribute to the tone of their campaign. Their hand-over-heart gesture signifies sincerity, humility, and a commitment to serve, projecting trustworthiness and emotional resonance with voters. This aligns with van Leeuwen's (2005) discussion of modality in semiotic communication, where gestures and body language enhance textual and symbolic elements to create a cohesive narrative. Their formal white shirts convey professionalism, while Aminudin's traditional scarf adds a cultural element that reinforces respect for local traditions and religious alignment. This blend of modernity and cultural authenticity reflects the candidates' dual identity as relatable, culturally aware, and capable leaders.

b. Discursive Strategies in Political Discourse

This section highlights the campaign banner for the candidates, employing discursive strategies that reflect and respond to broader societal values, leveraging intertextuality, audience positioning, and genre conventions to construct a persuasive political narrative (Wodak and Reisigl, 2016).

The banner of Nurhayati & Muslim emphasizes "Religius" (Religious), exemplifying intertextuality and drawing on themes commonly found in Indonesian political discourse, particularly in regions such as Tasikmalaya, where religious values hold significant influence. By aligning with a wider tradition of emphasizing morality and spirituality in leadership, the campaign situates itself within a recognizable and trusted framework. As noted by Rahman, Lasido, and Syawie (2024), the strategic use of intertextuality in political discourse leverages shared cultural and religious narratives to engage voters, creating a seamless integration between individual campaigns and broader societal values.

In addition to intertextuality, the banner demonstrates careful audience positioning by incorporating terms such as "competitive" and "prosperous". These words appeal to voters concerned with economic

development and societal progress while maintaining the religious focus to reassure those who prioritize cultural and spiritual alignment. This dual strategy reflects Wodak's (2016) perspective on segmented political messaging, where discourse is crafted to address diverse voter priorities. Furthermore, the use of a professional layout with social media handles situates the campaign within the modern genre of political messaging, striking a balance between traditional values and digital accessibility. This strategy, in line with Widodo (2018), involves blending traditional and modern forms, which enhances the resonance of political narratives and appeals to both cultural conservatives and younger, digitally active demographics. Together, these strategies effectively construct a multidimensional political narrative that bridges the past and future, addressing the electorate's holistic aspirations.

The other candidate, with the slogan "Maju Sauyunan" (Progressing Together) and the hashtag #JADIKEUN is steeped in Sundanese linguistic and cultural traditions that emphasize community and collective progress. These intertextual elements not only evoke a sense of familiarity but also position the candidates as fighters of cultural values deeply rooted in Tasikmalaya's identity. By incorporating local idioms and cultural references into their campaigns, Ivan and Dede effectively position themselves as leaders who were born in Sundanese land and respect its culture.

Additionally, the use of Sundanese phrases such as "Maju Sauyunan" ensures alignment with regional pride, appealing to voters who value cultural heritage and tradition. At the same time, the clean and minimalist banner design, combined with hashtags and digital language, reflects a contemporary aesthetic that appeals to younger, tech-savvy voters. Political campaigns that combine traditional values with modern digital communication strategies successfully bridge the generation gap and foster a cohesive narrative (Nurdin et al., 2023). Through this strategy, Ivan and Dede present themselves as relatable and forward-thinking leaders who can unite tradition with progress and leaders who invite collaboration and progress together.

On the other hand, Yusuf and Hendro's campaign banners convey themes of continuity, cultural relevance, and modern engagement. The hashtag "#Lanjutkan" signifies the incumbent candidate's commitment to building on existing policies or achievements, creating a sense of stability and progress. This use of intertextuality connects the candidate's campaign to past successes, fostering familiarity and trust among voters. As Santoso et al. (2020) note, intertextuality in political campaigns strengthens narratives by linking them to recognized achievements, thereby increasing credibility and relatability.

Additionally, the banner positions Yusuf and Hendro as relatable and community-centered leaders. Their traditional caps and friendly demeanor symbolize humility and alignment with local cultural values, appealing to voters who prioritize tradition in leadership. This aligns with Nurdin et al.'s (2023) argument that incorporating cultural elements into political messaging deepens connections with voters while fostering trust.

Furthermore, the banner's combination of bold colors, hashtags, and traditional attire bridges generational divides, attracting both conservative voters and younger, digitally engaged audiences. As Herdiansah et al. (2018) observe combining modern design elements with traditional symbols is an effective strategy in Indonesian political campaigns, allowing candidates to portray themselves as progressive while respecting cultural heritage.

Viman and Diky convey a narrative that intertwines religious symbolism, cultural resonance, and modern political messaging. The background image of a mosque serves as a subtle yet powerful intertextual reference to Tasikmalaya's religious culture, positioning the candidates as culturally aligned with the electorate's spiritual values. Such strategic use of religious imagery is consistent with the findings of Zaluchu et al. (2019), who highlight that incorporating religious symbols into political campaigns creates a connection with voters by aligning campaign messages with their moral and cultural values. This alignment enables Viman and Diky to present themselves as leaders who respect and uphold the community's deeply held religious traditions.

The slogan "New Hope", along with the candidates dressed in professional clothing that includes traditional elements like a headscarf, highlights a blend of modern progress and cultural respect. This combination targets a broad range of voters by striking a balance between modern aspirations and a deep appreciation for heritage. The design features a neat arrangement, vibrant colors, and the visible party logos on the banner, conveying a sense of dependability and the strength of their coalition. This portrays the candidates as a strong and unified group poised to contest the current leadership.

Lastly, the campaign for Yanto and Amin integrates strategies to create a multifaceted narrative that appeals to cultural, spiritual, and aspirational values. The acronym EMAS (Education, Progress, Religion, Prosperity) draws from familiar themes, connecting the campaign to established societal aspirations and creating continuity with broader political discourse. By focusing on values such as "agamis" (religious) and "maju" (progressive), the banner positions Yanto and Amin as candidates who can bridge traditional and modern perspectives. This blend appeals to a broad demographic, including conservative and religious voters, as well as those who prioritize socioeconomic progress. The slogan invites voters to believe in this holistic vision, positioning the candidates as symbols of community aspirations. This approach helps position Yanto and Amin as leaders who not only promote progress but also remain deeply connected to the religious and community values of their constituents (Rahardi & Firdaus, 2024).

The campaign further amplifies its appeal by adopting a clean, minimalist layout that reflects professionalism and clarity. The structured presentation, clear typography, and straightforward communication of key values align with the expectations of voters who seek transparency and reliability in leadership. Additionally, the incorporation of visually modern elements, such as sharp fonts and organized spacing, reflects contemporary design aesthetics, making the campaign accessible and engaging for digitally literate audiences (Fauzan, 2002).

c. Power Relations and Socio-political Contexts

Social practice serves as a critical lens for understanding how power relations and socio-political contexts influence and are influenced by discourse. Social practice encompasses the broad societal structures, cultural norms, and institutional settings that govern the production and interpretation of discourse, indicative of Fairclough's insights into the intertwining of discourse and power dynamics within various contexts (Saputra & Muhsin, 2023). In the Tasikmalaya regional elections, candidates actively forge robust connections with voters by developing and promoting political ideologies that not only aim to influence the electorate but also to present their identities clearly (Rahmat et al., 2020). This strategic interaction facilitates greater resonance between the candidates and the electorate, leveraging locally significant cultural narratives.

The socio-political landscape of Tasikmalaya, a regency in West Java, Indonesia, is marked by adherence to cultural traditions, religious values, and community-centered dynamics. This unique context is shaped by a blend of local customs and Islamic traditions alongside modern governance demands that pose both opportunities and challenges for political actors. Candidates must adeptly navigate these cultural nuances to effectively engage their electorate, as demonstrated by Rahmat et al., who explore the intersection of socio-political values and community dynamics in political contexts (Rahmat et al., 2020). The candidates' ability to align with local customs is a vital aspect of their platforms and the broader political strategies employed in the region.

The content and presentation of campaign materials in Tasikmalaya significantly reflect the socio-political context. For instance, candidates like Nurhayati and Muslim highlight the theme of "Religious & Prosperous," aligning with community preferences for spiritual and economic wellbeing. Ivan and Dede engage through visual elements such as "sauyunan" (togetherness) and traditional attire, signaling their commitment to cultural unity. Conversely, Yusuf and Hendro embrace a more grassroots approach, presenting a simple and relatable campaign image. Viman and Diky utilize religious symbols, such as mosques, to emphasize their respect for local traditions, while Yanto and Amin's designation as "Kiai"

reinforces their roles as spiritual leaders. Such varied strategies illustrate how candidates adapt their discourse to resonate with a culturally and religiously diverse electorate, as highlighted in studies of political practice.

All the campaigns share commonalities in their strategic alignment with Tasikmalaya's cultural and religious identity. Each candidate emphasizes their attunement to the socio-political realities of the region through the use of traditional symbols, religious values, and culturally resonant language. These elements not only reflect the candidates' acknowledgment of local priorities but also shape their ideological positions, making their campaigns relatable and trustworthy to voters (Yunanto et al., 2024). Furthermore, the integration of modern elements, such as hashtags and professional designs, demonstrates an understanding of the importance of appealing to younger, digitally engaged audiences.

Despite their common emphasis on progression, religion and cultural alignment, candidates differ significantly in their ideological approaches. Nurhayati and Muslim focus on merging prosperity with spirituality, appealing to traditional moral values, while Ivan and Dede promote unity through community-driven narratives, positioning themselves as collaborative leaders. Conversely, Yusuf and Hendro advocate for stability and continuity, reflecting grassroots preferences for gradual progress, while Viman and Diky represent challengers who are ready to seize power from the incumbent with their "New Hope" narrative. Yanto and Amin's holistic "EMAS" vision integrates religion, education, and economic prosperity, making it appealing to voters seeking comprehensive leadership solutions. The candidates' ability to resonate with the electorate is echoed in their strategic presentations, showcasing the interplay between socio-political dynamics and ideological structures that frame electoral success.

The socio-political context of Tasikmalaya profoundly shapes campaign strategies, dictating how candidates align their messaging and visual symbols with community values. Through the use of traditional symbols, religious themes, and culturally resonant language, candidates articulate narratives reflective of local priorities, effectively capturing the electorate's aspirations for progress. This dynamic underscores the importance of understanding how power, discourse, and culture collaboratively influence political communication in regional contexts, highlighting the critical relevance of localized strategies in electoral politics.

d. Interdiscursivity: Voters' Views on Candidate Banners

The role of banners in political campaigns extends beyond simple visual representation; they function as instruments that contribute to the construction of voter perceptions and political identities. Political banners are designed not only to communicate candidates' objectives but also to resonate with voters' biases and assumptions, ultimately shaping their electoral choices. The literature indicates that campaign materials, specifically banners, can play a role in broader strategies for cultivating political identities, although their effectiveness can be limited compared to other campaign tools such as digital media and social outreach (Gattermann & Marquart, 2020; Maier et al., 2021).

Research demonstrates that while some voters perceive campaign banners as vital for becoming acquainted with candidates, others regard them as an outdated means of communication, especially with the rise of digital media (Bruns et al., 2023; Severin-Nielsen, 2024). The prevalence of social media and online engagement has shifted the landscape of political communication, often at the expense of traditional forms such as banners. Studies suggest that the effectiveness of banners may be diminished compared to contemporary strategies involving social media outreach (Sahlan, 2023; Severin-Nielsen, 2024). Nevertheless, there is consensus that banners serve primarily as introductory tools rather than decisive factors in the electoral decision-making process, often overshadowed by personal connections, candidate character, and community ties (Marquart et al., 2020; Fisher et al., 2023).

Some respondents consider banners to be an important tool in political campaigns. Some believe that banners help people get to know the candidates, while others view them as effective tools that can reach people in remote areas. Thus, the presence of banners as a campaign medium is deemed necessary. The idea that banners can instigate voter engagement and awareness reflects findings that voters

increasingly prefer candidates based on interpersonal relationships and alignment with personal or community values, rather than solely on campaign materials (Braun, 2021; Harrison et al., 2022). While banners may not directly sway voters' choices, they still hold value in establishing candidate recognition and awareness, playing a role in the political landscape where an informed electorate can assess candidates based on their commitments and past performances (Sukmawati et al., 2022).

Candidates must recognize that effective campaigning involves more than mere visual representations; it necessitates cultivating a transparent and relatable political identity characterized by credibility and community engagement. This aligns with findings that suggest personal attributes and candidate integrity significantly influence voter loyalty and perceptions, particularly in competitive political environments where subtle aspects of political branding can have a larger impact than traditional campaigning methods (Sahlan, 2023; Zittel & Nyhuis, 2020; Harrison et al., 2022). In conclusion, while campaign banners are crucial for familiarizing voters with candidates, they should be employed as part of a multifaceted approach that emphasizes character and community connection to effectively secure electoral support.

Conclusion and Suggestions

The political campaign banners utilized in the Tasikmalaya regional head election exemplify a sophisticated communication medium that integrates traditional, cultural, and contemporary elements tailored to resonate with a diverse electorate. Candidates have strategically deployed visual and textual semiotics as a means to construct their political identities, reflecting the socio-political and cultural dynamics of Tasikmalaya (Benu et al., 2024). This fusion of strategies underscores the candidates' understanding of their constituents, aligning their messages with community values such as spirituality, cultural heritage, and ambitions for development.

The banners articulate a careful balance between traditional symbols, such as local idioms and attire, which invoke cultural pride and modern visual elements, like hashtags and digital aesthetics, aimed at attracting younger, tech-savvy voters. The juxtaposition of these designs illustrates the candidates' acute awareness of the generational and ideological diversity within the electorate, which is critical to the success of contemporary political campaigns.

However, this study underscores that while campaign banners are effective in establishing candidates' visibility and reinforcing their branding, they do not serve as the primary determinants in voters' decision-making processes. Evidence suggests that personal connections, candidates' track records, and tangible community engagement hold greater significance for voters than the visual elements of campaign materials. These findings indicate that although banners remain a relevant tool for electioneering, their effectiveness is contingent upon being coupled with substantive actions and authentic engagement efforts to cultivate trust and ultimately secure votes.

For future research, it would be advantageous to explore the longitudinal impact of campaign visuals on voter behavior beyond the immediate election cycle. This could involve comparative studies across varying electoral contexts within Indonesia, examining how shifts in societal values and demographics may influence the efficacy of different campaign strategies over time. Additionally, the role of digital platforms in reshaping traditional campaign practices could be investigated, offering insights into the evolving landscape of political communication in an increasingly digital world.

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