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Submission date: 28-Mar-2026 10:01PM (UTC+0700)

Submission ID: 2383154418

File name: 2_Perizga_et_al_10-22.docx (111.84K)

Word count: 7476

Character count: 45854

RHETORICAL STRATEGIES IN POLITICAL CAMPAIGN BANNERS: LANGUAGE USE IN THE 2024 ELECTION IN PEKANBARU CITY

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Article History:	Received	Revision	Accepted	Published
	October 25, 2025	November 23, 2025	March 4, 2026	March 28, 2026

Abstract

This study aims to analyze the rhetorical strategies employed in campaign banners of legislative candidates in the 2024 General Election in Pekanbaru City using the Aristotelian rhetorical framework of ethos, pathos, and logos. The study adopts a qualitative approach with a descriptive method based on textual analysis of the verbal and visual messages contained in campaign banners. Data were collected through stratified purposive sampling and analyzed to identify the forms, dominant tendencies, and implications of rhetorical strategy use in visual-based political campaigning. The findings indicate that ethos is the most dominant rhetorical strategy. Candidates' credibility is constructed through the emphasis on personal identity, political track records, social and local affiliation, religious legitimacy, and narratives of integrity and leadership responsibility. Pathos functions as a supporting strategy manifested through political promises, personal and religious appeals, as well as creative humor to establish emotional closeness with voters. Meanwhile, logos appears in a limited and simplified form, primarily through references to technocratic capacity and institutional functions, indicating the existence of rational constraints inherent in campaign banners as static visual media. This study concludes that the ethos-pathos-logos hierarchy in campaign banners is contextual and shaped by media characteristics as well as the social configuration of the local community.

Keywords

Political Rhetoric, Campaign Banners, Ethos, Pathos, Logos, 2024 General Election

INTRODUCTION

In the modern political world, language plays a central role in building communication between political candidates and the public (Fatmawati, 2021; Noorikhshan et al., 2025). Political language rhetoric, particularly in the context of political campaigns, is used to influence public opinion, build candidate image, and garner broad support (Adnan & Mona, 2024). The selection of words, phrases, and political message delivery constitutes part of a strategy designed to attract attention, create emotional connections, and effectively convey policy programs (Rahayu, 2025). In the 2024 General Election in Pekanbaru City, the use of language in campaign banners became one of the primary media representations of candidates' political strategies.

Beyond linguistic aspects, visual elements in campaign banners also play an important role in conveying political messages. In this regard, Roland Barthes' semiotic theory (Swandhani et al., 2023) becomes relevant for analyzing how visual signs—such as colors, symbols, and images—carry both denotative and connotative meanings. These connotative meanings often reflect cultural values, local identity, and the political ideology that candidates wish to project. For instance, the use of the phrase "Anak Sawit" (Child of Palm Oil) not only indicates the candidate's origins but also constructs a narrative of emotional attachment with the people of Riau, known as the largest palm oil producing region in Indonesia. Thus, language and visual symbols in banners form a complex and strategic sign system that influences voter perception (Ismoyo & Zahra, 2025). According to Aristotle (Tamami & Fauzi, 2025), rhetoric is the art of persuasion encompassing three key elements: *ethos* (speaker credibility), *pathos* (audience emotion), and *logos* (logical argumentation). These elements can be found in various campaign media, including banners used as visual communication tools. Political candidates often employ *ethos* by citing their titles or positions to reinforce trustworthiness, *pathos* through slogans that stir voter emotions, and *logos* through logically presented policy programs.

This phenomenon aligns with Lakoff's view (Kania, 2024) in framing theory, which holds that language has the capacity to shape the public's perspective on particular issues. In the context of political campaigning, language is not merely a communication tool but also an instrument for framing political issues that are relevant to societal needs. In Pekanbaru City, issues such as infrastructure development, flood management, and improving public welfare have become central themes in campaign banners. Consistent with research conducted by Falah (2024), candidates use language to highlight their attention to local problems, aiming to build a positive image in the eyes of voters.

In the context of political campaigns, the messages conveyed frequently contain persuasive elements that leverage rhetorical principles to achieve political objectives. Aristotle (Arifin, 2023) argues that rhetoric is the art of using language to influence an audience through three key elements: *ethos* (speaker credibility), *pathos* (emotions evoked in the audience), and *logos* (logic or argumentation employed). These three elements are highly relevant in analyzing the language used in campaign banners, wherein promises often function to establish credibility (*ethos*), calls to action seek to stir emotions (*pathos*), and promotional content aims to provide rational reasons (*logos*) as to why a candidate is more deserving of support.

The importance of political language strategies in building candidate image during campaigns is further supported by Ilham et al. (2024), who put forward the theory of attitude change in persuasive communication. In his research, Ilham found that the process of persuasive communication consists of five stages: attention, understanding, conviction, attitude formation, and action. Wahdaniah et al. (2019) found that the language used in banners aims to attract voters' attention, shape their understanding of a candidate's qualities, and ultimately persuade them to cast their vote.

In line with persuasive communication theory, Cialdini (Hidayat & Sa'idah, 2023) adds that principles such as reciprocity, consistency, and social proof are highly important in influencing audience decisions. In political campaigns, these elements can be found in the way candidates offer promises (reciprocity), reinforce their position through consistent messaging (consistency), and leverage recognized support or achievements (social proof) to strengthen their credibility. More broadly, language exerts a highly significant impact on the act of persuading individuals in the course of communication (Lana & Septiani, 2024).

However, beyond broader communicative approaches, critical theory also provides an important perspective for analyzing political language in campaigns. Jürgen Habermas (Muttaqien & Ramdan, 2023) emphasizes the importance of rational discourse in a free and open public sphere. Habermas developed the theory of communicative action, which holds that ideal communication is

communication that proceeds without domination and is capable of producing rational consensus among participants in discussion (Al Munir, 2023). In the context of political campaigns, the language used in banners can be viewed as part of the public sphere that seeks to influence voters through discourse that is not always rational. For example, political promises frequently employ language that manipulates the audience's hopes and emotions—a phenomenon that potentially conflicts with the pre-communicative concept in Habermas' theory, which argues that communication not grounded in the aim of rational agreement may be misleading (Muttaqien & Ramdan, 2023).

Habermas (Muttaqien & Ramdan, 2023) also criticizes forms of manipulative communication in the distorted public sphere that do not uphold the principles of rationality and honesty in the process of political discourse. In the context of political campaigns, the language used in banners frequently focuses on the manipulation of emotions and perceptions rather than fostering open and rational dialogue between candidates and voters.

Furthermore, the theory advanced by Tontowa et al. (2025) reinforces the idea that media, including campaign banners, have the power to determine which issues are considered important by the public. In the context of the 2024 General Election, political candidates in Pekanbaru leveraged campaign banners to highlight certain issues in the hope of influencing voter preferences. For instance, banners containing promises of road infrastructure improvement were frequently designed to attract the attention of communities living in areas with poor road conditions. Thus, the use of language in campaign banners is not merely informative but is also strategic in directing public opinion (Rohman & Wahyudi, 2024).

The phenomenon of language use in campaign banners for the 2024 General Election in Pekanbaru City reflects a global trend in political communication, in which campaign messages are designed to target the emotions and specific needs of the public. Research by Faaza & Waningyun (2025) on political discourse analysis in Indonesia found that the language used in campaigns frequently reflects local values. In Pekanbaru City, which has a strong Malay culture, the language on campaign banners often integrates religious values—such as "amanah" (trustworthy) or "berkah" (blessed)—to forge an emotional connection with the local community. This demonstrates that language rhetoric functions not only as a communication tool but also as a medium for affirming the cultural identity of the candidate.

Furthermore, research by Hermawan (2025) on political communication in Indonesia shows that campaign language frequently employs simplification strategies to ensure that the message can be easily understood by the audience. In campaign banners, simple messages such as "Bersama untuk Pekanbaru Maju" (Together for a Progressive Pekanbaru) are designed to be easily remembered and to create a positive perception of the candidate. This strategy is reinforced by the political communication theory of Afyani et al. (2025), which holds that symbols and language in political campaigns are designed to influence public opinion and build candidate image.

In the local context, Pekanbaru City has a unique political dynamic in which the community tends to be responsive to issues related to infrastructure development and economic welfare. Political candidates frequently use language that reflects attention to these issues in order to build trust and attract support (Rahmadi et al., 2024). For instance, banners containing promises of infrastructure improvement or poverty alleviation often employ language that is persuasive and emotionally resonant with the community.

Previous research also indicates that the success of a political campaign is determined not only by the content of the message but also by how that message is delivered. A study by Rahayu (2025) found that the language used in political campaigns is often designed to create a sense of closeness between the candidate and the community. In campaign banners for the 2024 General Election in Pekanbaru, the use of local language or terminology familiar to the local community serves as a strategy for fostering a sense of togetherness. For example, the phrase "Bersama Kita Membangun Pekanbaru" (Together We Build Pekanbaru) is designed to create the perception that the candidate is part of the community and understands its needs.

Taking into account the theories and phenomena discussed above, this study aims to analyze how language rhetoric is employed as a political strategy in campaign banners for the 2024 General Election in Pekanbaru City. This study will employ a discourse analysis approach to understand how language reflects political strategy, shapes public opinion, and influences voter decisions. In addition, this study will also explore the relationship between language and cultural identity in the context of

political campaigns in Pekanbaru. Accordingly, this study seeks to answer several key questions: what meanings are embedded in the campaign banners used by candidates to win the 2024 General Election in Pekanbaru, and what political language strategies are applied in those banners to attract voter attention and build public support?

This article is expected to contribute to an understanding of the role of language in political communication, particularly within a local context. By employing a systematic and theory-driven approach, this study aims to provide new insights into how language rhetoric can be used as a strategic tool for achieving political victory.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach to identify and understand the language rhetoric used in campaign banners and billboards for the 2024 General Election in Pekanbaru City. This approach was selected because of its capacity to explore the meaning, function, and political communication strategies embedded in campaign media in depth. The sampling technique used was stratified purposive sampling, a method that allows the researcher to select samples based on their relevance and the needs of the research (Etikan et al., 2016). Based on this technique, the study examines 17 campaign banners and billboards of legislative candidates selected because they clearly display verbal and visual messages and represent a variety of candidates' political communication strategies. The sample analyzed does not encompass all existing banners, but rather data that meet the criteria of textual readability, visual clarity, and relevance to the focus of language rhetoric study.

This study employs textual analysis as described by Ayoub et al. (2016), a method for interpreting phenomena through the interpretation of texts. In the context of this research, textual analysis is used to understand the ideology, political language strategies, and implicit messages found in campaign banners and billboards. The analysis was conducted on verbal elements—including word choices, slogans, and sentence structures—as well as visual elements such as symbols, candidate self-image, and social representations accompanying the text. Accordingly, text and visuals are understood as a unified whole of meaning that forms persuasive messages in political communication.

The study was conducted in Pekanbaru City during the campaign period of the 2024 General Election, from November 2023 to January 2024, as this was the period during which candidates actively used campaign media to convey political messages to the public. Research data consisted of candidate banners and billboards found in public spaces in Pekanbaru City, documented through photographs in the researcher's personal collection. To supplement and verify textual readability and visual context, the data were also supported by relevant online sources. All collected data were subsequently inventoried and assigned identity codes (e.g., MRS, FBU, IDY) to facilitate the systematic tracking and analysis of data.

The data analysis process was carried out in a staged and operational manner. The first stage involved the transcription of all verbal texts on the banners and the descriptive recording of the visual elements accompanying them. The second stage was data coding, which in qualitative research is understood as the process of organizing and grouping data into conceptual categories so that patterns of meaning can be systematically identified. Coding in this study was conducted deductively, using categories established in advance based on the theoretical framework employed. This approach is consistent with the view that theory-based coding is applied when research aims to apply a specific conceptual framework to empirical data.

Data coding was carried out using the Aristotelian rhetorical framework, encompassing ethos, pathos, and logos. Ethos was coded for data that highlighted candidate credibility through personal identity, political track record, social and local affiliation, religious legitimacy, and narratives of trustworthiness and leadership integrity. Pathos was coded for data containing political promises, personal or religious appeals, and creative humor designed to evoke voter emotion. Logos was coded for data presenting rational arguments, such as policy explanations, legislative institutional functions, or logic-based solutions. Each banner may contain more than one rhetorical category, and the determination of the dominant category was based on the most prominent element, both verbally and visually.

The third stage involved grouping the coding results into a recapitulation table containing the data code, main theme, sub-theme, description of the campaign message, and the rhetorical category employed. The fourth stage was data interpretation, namely the interpretation of findings with

consideration of the socio-political context of Pekanbaru City and its relationship to Aristotelian rhetorical theory. The results of this interpretation were then developed into a narrative discussion explaining patterns of dominance, variation, and the implications of rhetorical strategy use in banner campaigns.

Data validity was ensured through four main criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Moleong, 2018). To enhance credibility, this study applied triangulation of sources, techniques, and time as described by Glesne (2016), by comparing visual data, documentation, and field context. Transferability was achieved through the detailed presentation of contextual description regarding the socio-political conditions of Pekanbaru City (Firman, 2018). Dependability was maintained through the systematic recording of research procedures from the data collection stage through to analysis (Taylor et al., 2015), while confirmability was achieved by maintaining consistency between data and interpretation and by referring to relevant theory and prior research (Silverman, 2016).

10 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

This section discusses the results of the analysis of campaign banners for the 2024 General Election in Pekanbaru City, focusing on the ways in which candidates construct their political messages in the public sphere. The analysis centers on the language rhetoric strategies evident in the verbal and visual elements of the banners, particularly in candidates' efforts to build their public image, establish emotional closeness with voters, and convey persuasive messages.

Through a qualitative approach with descriptive textual analysis, this study examines how word choices, slogans, symbols, and visual representations are used as instruments of political communication. All data were then examined using the Aristotelian rhetorical framework—ethos, pathos, and logos—to identify the dominant tendencies of the persuasive strategies employed by candidates, as well as the variation in rhetorical patterns that emerge in local-level banner-based political campaigns.

Table.1 Recapitulation of Legislative Candidate Banner Data

Code	Main Theme	Sub-theme	Brief Description	Message Example / Candidate	Candidate Background
MRS	Ethos – Self-Promotion	Full personal identity	Listing name, title, address, contact number to establish credibility and approachability	Mursiati (address & phone)	Local community figure, entrepreneur
FBU	Ethos – Self-Promotion	Full personal identity	Implicit promotion through business location	Febri Utama (chicken stall)	Local SME entrepreneur
IDY	Ethos – Affirming Position	Track record slogan	Affirming reputation and continuity through slogans such as "Proven"	Ida Yulita	Senior politician, incumbent
ZAR	Ethos – Affirming Position	Loyalty slogan	Call for renewed support	Zainal Arifin	Veteran politician with strong voter base
KHR	Ethos – Identity Politics	Local & social identity	Affirming local origins through nickname	Kharisma Risanda ("Si Anak Sawit")	Environmental & local community activist
HIN	Ethos – Identity Politics	Political lineage	Displaying family political background	Hopea Ingvirnia	Descendant of a regional political figure
KHS	Ethos – Identity Politics	Religious reference	Using religious narratives to build community credibility	KH Hasan ("90% for the Ummah")	Religious figure and local Islamic scholar

Code	Main Theme	Sub-theme	Brief Description	Message Example / Candidate	Candidate Background
DIR	Ethos – Cultural Politics	Art & cultural identity	Voicing people's aspirations through art (poetry), reinforcing image as a "champion of the people"	Dodi Irawan (reading poetry at plenary, known as a people's fighter politician)	PAN politician, active poet, known through cultural channels
KAD	Ethos – Public Leadership	Trustworthy commitment & integrity	Emphasizing responsibility for leading the legislative institution with integrity	Kaderismanto (DPRD Riau Chair, championing public aspirations)	DPRD Riau Chairman from PDIP, senior politician with firm image
TAR	Ethos – Program Continuity	Party policy consistency	Continuing PKS DPRD programs, improving public welfare	Ahmad Tarmizi (DPRD Riau Deputy Chair from PKS)	PKS cadre, experienced legislative figure
MZA	Pathos – Political Promise	Dramatic promise	Controversial and emotional promise to attract attention	Muhammad Zaini ("If I Engage in Corruption, I Am Ready to Be Shot Dead")	Former bureaucrat, active in community organizations
PNB	Pathos – Political Promise	Promise of development continuity	Promise to continue projects and development	Panel Barus	Construction and infrastructure entrepreneur
RIN	Pathos – Political Promise	Promise of tax abolition	Promise to abolish motorcycle tax and lifelong driving license	Ridho Irnanda	Community activist and tax advocate
MRH	Pathos – Appeal	Personal and religious appeal	Requesting support and prayers, building a sense of community	M. Rahul ("Please Pray and Support")	Young professional, highly educated
DIC	Pathos – Creative Humor	Double-meaning message	Humor and wordplay that attract attention and sympathy	Dolly Ichsan ("Just Go For It, Complain Later")	Young entrepreneur, local influencer
CAN	Pathos – Creative Humor	Double-meaning message	Ambiguous or wordplay message used to critique and attract attention	Corrie Annisa ("2024 Jadi Pelakor" – pun on 'taking action')	Social activist and women's rights defender
PAR	Logos – Institutional Strategy	AKD formation and strategic policy	Demonstrating technical ability in institutional formation and oversight	Parisman Ihwan (DPRD Riau Deputy Chair from Golkar)	Senior politician, Golkar cadre, regional strategic policy driver
BDL	Logos – Oversight Function	Oversight and balance of power	Focusing on the council's role in overseeing the executive and safeguarding public interests	Budiman Lubis (Gerindra – DPRD Riau Deputy Chair)	Gerindra figure, known for active policy formulation and oversight
MZA	Logos	Logical argument	Explaining voting stages and solutions in the health sector	Muhammad Zaini: "Follow the correct voting procedure so your vote counts."	Former bureaucrat, active in community organizations
HAS	Logos	Technical argument	Concrete data and solutions in	Hasan Basri: "Road infrastructure development will	Entrepreneur, focused on economic and

Code	Main Theme	Sub-theme	Brief Description	Message Example / Candidate	Candidate Background
ADI	Logos	Technical argument	infrastructure and economics	accelerate Pekanbaru's economic growth."	infrastructure development
			Explaining public service policy and programs	Aditya Pratama: "Transparent and digital public services for citizens' convenience."	Education activist, teacher and community organizer
YUS	Logos	Technical argument	Using data and facts related to education and welfare	Yusril Amin: "Improving school facilities and teacher welfare is our priority."	background Young professional, highly educated, focused on digital services

Table 1 presents the recapitulation of campaign banner data from legislative candidates in the 2024 General Election in Pekanbaru City, which serves as the object of analysis in this study. The table contains data codes, main themes, sub-themes, and brief descriptions of the campaign messages used by each candidate. The presentation of this table is intended to provide an initial overview of the variation in form and content of campaign messages, which are subsequently analyzed more in depth based on language rhetoric strategies.

Table 2 Distribution of Ethos–Pathos–Logos Rhetorical Strategies in Legislative Candidate Campaign Banners in Pekanbaru City

Rhetorical Strategy	Number of Banners	Percentage (%)	Key Characteristics
Ethos	10	59%	Emphasis on personal identity, track record, social–religious affiliation, and institutional position
Pathos	5	29%	Emotional political promises, personal appeals, creative humor, and dramatic slogans
Logos	5	29%	Technical arguments, policy data, legislative functions, and program rationality
Ethos (sole dominant)	8	47%	Full focus on figure credibility without explicit rational argumentation
Ethos + Pathos	3	18%	Figure credibility combined with emotional appeal
Pathos (sole)	2	12%	Promises/humor without structural credibility affirmation
Logos (dominant)	4	23%	Policy explanations and candidates' technocratic capacity

Table 2 presents the distribution of rhetorical strategies used in campaign banners of legislative candidates in the 2024 General Election in Pekanbaru City. The table summarizes the results of data classification based on the Aristotelian rhetorical framework—ethos, pathos, and logos—and shows the proportion of occurrence of each strategy. This quantitative data presentation is intended to clarify the dominant tendencies and variation in rhetorical strategies identified, while also serving as a basis for further discussion of patterns of language use in banner campaigns.

Discussion

Dominance of Ethos and Its Consequences in Banner Campaigns

Based on the results of data analysis, the rhetorical strategy of ethos occupies the most dominant position in campaign banners of legislative candidates in the 2024 General Election in Pekanbaru City. This dominance is reflected in the strong emphasis on the credibility of candidates, constructed through various forms of representation—such as complete personal identity, political track record, social and local attachment, religious legitimacy, and narratives concerning trustworthiness and leadership integrity (Firmansyah, 2025). Within the Aristotelian rhetorical framework, ethos functions as the

primary foundation of persuasion because it shapes voters' initial perceptions of the character and moral suitability of candidates before other political messages are considered.

The most explicit form of ethos is evident in the use of a complete personal identity, as demonstrated by candidate MRS through the inclusion of name, title, address, and contact number. The presentation of such data is not merely informative; it also represents an effort to construct an image of openness and accountability. Through textual analysis, this strategy can be understood as a form of symbolic transparency that allows voters to perceive the candidate as a trustworthy figure who is socially accessible (Vadia et al., 2024). By contrast, candidate FBU constructs ethos through a more implicit approach by highlighting a local business position, which conveys social and economic closeness with the community. This finding indicates that ethos in campaign banners is not always tied to a formal position or title, but can also be constructed through an image of authenticity and social experience relevant to voters' everyday lives.

The dominance of ethos is also evident in the use of slogans affirming political track record and loyalty, particularly among incumbent candidates such as Ida Yulita and Zainal Arifin. Slogans such as "Proven" and calls for renewed support function as markers of leadership continuity and stability, while also reinforcing candidates' legitimacy by invoking past political experiences that voters have already trusted (Adnan & Mona, 2024). Additionally, ethos is constructed through the highlighting of local, genealogical, and religious identity. The use of a nickname rooted in local social background by KHR builds closeness with a specific community, while HIN reinforces credibility through descent from regional political figures. The religious narrative employed by KHS as a religious figure further strengthens the moral dimension of ethos, where political trust interweaves with religious and cultural values well established within the voter community.

Another dimension of ethos dominance is visible in the emphasis on trustworthiness and leadership integrity, as displayed by candidate KAD. Narratives of moral responsibility and commitment to integrity reinforce the candidate's image as a figure worthy of trust in holding public office (Hafel, 2011). From an Aristotelian perspective, this moral character is a central element of ethos because it determines the degree to which the audience accepts the political messages conveyed.

The consequence of ethos dominance is the limited space available for the development of logos, with pathos tending to function as a supporting element. Campaign banners are used more as visual media for affirming candidates' identity and credibility than as platforms for in-depth policy argumentation. This pattern is consistent with the characteristic of banners as a concise and static medium, making them more effective for building initial trust than for rational elaboration (Falah, 2024).

Empirically, this tendency also correlates with electoral outcomes. Of the 17 candidates analyzed, approximately 35% were successfully elected as members of the Riau Provincial DPRD for the 2024–2029 term, and the majority of those elected prominently featured ethos as the primary basis of their campaign messages. This finding confirms prior studies that place candidate credibility as an important factor in political persuasion, while also modifying that understanding by demonstrating that ethos in the context of local banner campaigns is constructed not only through formal status but also through social, local, and cultural identity (Khatami, 2021). On the other hand, this finding challenges the normative approach that positions logos as the ideal form of persuasion, by revealing that policy rationality plays a limited role in visual campaigns at the local level.

Thus, this discussion affirms that ethos functions as the dominant framework in the persuasion strategy of banner campaigns in Pekanbaru City, while pathos and logos serve as complementary elements adjusted to the characteristics of the medium and the local socio-cultural context.

The Role of Pathos: Political Promises, Humor, and Religious Appeals

Beyond the dominance of ethos, the results of the analysis show that pathos serves as a significant supporting rhetorical strategy in campaign banners of legislative candidates in the 2024 General Election in Pekanbaru City. Pathos is manifested through political promises, personal appeals, religious symbols, and the use of creative humor aimed at evoking voters' emotional responses. Within the Aristotelian rhetorical framework (Hafel, 2011), pathos functions to influence the affective condition of the audience so that they become more receptive to the message and to the candidate's persona.

The most prominent form of pathos is evident in political promises that directly target the needs and hopes of the community. Candidates such as PNB and RIN put forward promises related to economic and welfare issues, thereby forging an emotional connection through the relevance of problems faced by voters. In textual analysis, these promises function not only as policy claims but as triggers of empathy and hope, positioning the candidate as a figure perceived to understand the social conditions of the community (Jayus et al., 2024).

On the other hand, pathos also emerges in the form of dramatic and controversial promises, as demonstrated by candidate MZA. Extreme statements such as "If I Engage in Corruption, I Am Ready to Be Shot Dead" carry powerful emotional weight and instantly capture public attention. This strategy demonstrates that pathos can operate through emotional intensification—both positive and negative—to create memorability and symbolic resonance. However, this finding also indicates that excessively extreme pathos risks generating ambiguity of meaning if not balanced with strong ethos legitimacy (Rahmadi et al., 2024).

In addition to political promises, pathos is constructed through personal and religious appeals, such as the request for prayers and support expressed by candidate MRH. This religious narrative builds emotional closeness grounded in shared values, particularly in communities with strong religious bonds. Within the Aristotelian framework, this strategy positions pathos as a means of building affective ties that enhance the audience's receptivity toward the candidate's persona, even when not accompanied by explicit policy argumentation.

Another form of pathos is found in the use of creative humor and wordplay, as employed by candidates DIC and CAN. Humor functions as an affiliation strategy that dissolves the distance between candidates and voters, particularly among young and urban voters. Analysis of humorous messages reveals that double meanings and a casual tone not only attract attention but also construct the candidate's image as a communicative and approachable figure. In this context, pathos operates through the creation of positive emotions that reinforce voters' personal impressions of the candidate (Bayani et al., 2025).

The consequence of using pathos in campaign banners is an increase in the emotional appeal of the message, but with limitations on substantive depth. Pathos tends to function as a reinforcer of ethos rather than as a standalone primary strategy. Campaign banners leverage pathos to generate rapid resonance and a sense of closeness, while the candidate's credibility remains the primary foundation of persuasion.

Compared with previous research (Romadhona et al., 2022) that emphasizes the effectiveness of emotion in influencing voting behavior, this finding confirms that pathos plays an important role in increasing voters' emotional engagement. However, this study also modifies prior scholarship by demonstrating that in the context of local banner campaigns, pathos is rarely used independently and is more frequently combined with ethos. Furthermore, this finding implicitly challenges the assumption that emotional intensity is always directly proportional to persuasive effectiveness, as the data show that extreme pathos requires credibility legitimacy in order to be accepted positively by voters.

Thus, the role of pathos in banner campaigns in Pekanbaru City can be understood as a complementary strategy that enhances persuasive power through emotional connection, without displacing the central position of ethos as the primary framework of political persuasion.

Logos and the Limits of Rationality in the Banner Medium

The results of the analysis indicate that the rhetorical strategy of logos emerges with considerably less intensity than ethos and pathos in campaign banners of legislative candidates in the 2024 General Election in Pekanbaru City. Logos is represented through the delivery of rational arguments, policy explanations, and affirmations of legislative institutional functions. Within the Aristotelian rhetorical framework (Fatmawati, 2021), logos functions to build persuasion through reasoning and rationality; however, the findings reveal that this role is constrained by the characteristics of the banner medium.

Empirically, logos is primarily found in the banners of candidates with bureaucratic backgrounds or strategic positions within legislative institutions, such as Parisman Ihwan, Budiman Lubis, Hasan Basri, and Aditya Pratama. The messages conveyed emphasize technical competence, oversight functions, and policy solutions in specific fields such as infrastructure, public services, and

governance. Textual analysis of these messages reveals that logos is expressed in the form of concise and direct rational claims, without in-depth argumentative elaboration (Fitri, 2022).

The limited presence of logos in campaign banners points to an inherent limit of rationality within the medium. As a static visual medium with constrained text space, banners do not permit the delivery of complex arguments or lengthy policy reasoning. As a result, logos is reduced to a symbol of rationality—such as the mention of programs, procedural stages, or institutional functions—which serves as a marker of candidate competence. Thus, logos in this context plays more of a role as technocratic legitimation than as a means of rational deliberation.

Furthermore, logos tends to appear in combination with ethos. Policy explanations or legislative functions are frequently linked to candidates' prior experience in office or institutional positions, so that the rationality of the message is reinforced by personal credibility. This finding indicates that logos rarely stands alone as a primary persuasive strategy, but rather depends on ethos to gain acceptance from voters. This demonstrates that political rationality in banner campaigns is selective and bound to the legitimacy of the candidate's persona (Romadhona et al., 2022).

The consequence of this limited logos is the minimal space available for in-depth policy discourse in visual campaigns. Banners function more as tools for candidate introduction and legitimation than as platforms for political education. Nevertheless, the presence of logos retains strategic value, particularly for candidates who wish to project technocratic capacity and institutional competence amid the dominance of credibility-based and emotion-driven strategies (Susilawati et al., 2026).

Compared with prior studies that emphasize the importance of rational persuasion in political communication, this finding modifies that assumption by demonstrating that the effectiveness of logos is significantly influenced by the medium and context. In local-level banner campaigns, logos is not entirely abandoned but is adapted into a simpler and more symbolic form. This finding also challenges the normative view that positions rational argumentation as the ideal form of persuasion by showing that policy rationality plays a limited role in the practice of visual campaigning (Rahmadi et al., 2024).

Thus, the role of logos in campaign banners for the 2024 General Election in Pekanbaru City can be understood as a complementary strategy that affirms candidates' competence and technical capacity, but does not constitute the primary framework of persuasion. The rationality constraints inherent in the banner medium make logos more effective when combined with ethos than when used independently.

Connections Between Findings and Theories of Persuasion and Political Identity

Taken as a whole, the findings of this study indicate that the practice of banner campaigns in the 2024 General Election in Pekanbaru City reflects a contextual hierarchy of persuasion strategies, with ethos as the dominant framework, pathos as an affective reinforcer, and logos as a marker of constrained rationality. This pattern can be understood through the integration of Aristotelian rhetorical theory with political identity approaches, which emphasize the role of identity construction and symbolic legitimation in political communication (Ambarita, 2026).

From the perspective of Aristotelian persuasion theory (Firmansyah, 2025), the dominance of ethos affirms that candidate credibility and moral character constitute the primary prerequisite for the acceptance of political messages. The findings of Afyani et al. (2025) show that this credibility is not constructed solely through formal status or institutional experience, but also through local identity, religious affiliation, social symbols, and integrity narratives. This demonstrates that ethos operates as a social construction negotiated through visual and verbal signs on banners, rather than as an attribute inherently attached to the candidate.

The connection between the findings and political identity theory is evident in the way candidates mobilize local, genealogical, and religious identity as sources of legitimacy. These identities function as shared frames of reference that facilitate voters in associating candidates with the values, experiences, and interests of their group. In this context, political persuasion works not only through logical argumentation or momentary emotion, but through a process of identity recognition that has been socially and culturally established. The findings of Tontowa et al. (2025) indicate that campaign banners function as symbolic spaces where political identities are produced and represented in a condensed form.

The role of pathos in the findings of this study reinforces the view that emotion functions as a binding mechanism between identity and credibility. Political promises, religious appeals, and creative humor operate by evoking emotional closeness that smooths voters' receptivity toward the candidate's persona. However, the data also show that pathos rarely stands alone but is effective when intertwined with ethos. This indicates that emotion in banner campaigns functions as a reinforcer of identity and trust, rather than as a substitute for credibility.

Meanwhile, the limited presence of logos in the findings of this study affirms that policy rationality in visual campaigns is selective and symbolic in nature. Logos is not entirely disregarded but is simplified to fit the characteristics of the banner medium. Thus, political rationality does not manifest as a deliberative process but as a marker of technocratic competence that supports the candidate's image. This finding demonstrates that the effectiveness of rational persuasion is highly dependent on the medium of communication and the social context of voters.

Compared with prior scholarship, the findings of this study confirm the view that candidate credibility is a key element of political persuasion, modify the understanding of ethos by emphasizing the role of local identity and social symbols, and implicitly challenge the normative approach that idealizes logos as the primary form of persuasion in democratic practice. Accordingly, this study contributes to the enrichment of political communication scholarship by demonstrating that the ethos–pathos–logos hierarchy is contextual, influenced by the campaign medium and the configuration of social identity at the local level.

By integrating theories of persuasion and political identity, this study affirms that campaign banners function not only as tools for message delivery but also as symbolic arenas where credibility, emotion, and identity are negotiated. These findings provide a more comprehensive understanding of how political persuasion operates in local visual campaigns, while also affirming the importance of taking socio-cultural context into account in the analysis of political rhetoric.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the rhetorical strategies in campaign banners of legislative candidates in the 2024 General Election in Pekanbaru City are dominated by the use of ethos as the primary framework of persuasion. Candidate credibility is constructed through various forms of representation, including complete personal identity, political track record, social and local attachment, religious legitimacy, and narratives of trustworthiness and leadership integrity. This finding affirms that in local visual campaigns, the establishment of trust in the candidate's persona is the most decisive factor in influencing voter preference.

In addition to ethos, pathos serves as a supporting strategy that reinforces the emotional appeal of campaign messages. Political promises, personal and religious appeals, and creative humor are used to build affective closeness with voters, although pathos tends not to stand independently and is more effective when combined with candidate credibility. Meanwhile, logos is present in a limited and simplified form, primarily through affirmations of technocratic capacity and institutional functions. This limitation points to an inherent constraint of rationality within the banner medium as a static visual medium with limited communicative space.

Theoretically, the findings of this study confirm the basic principles of Aristotelian rhetoric regarding the central role of ethos in persuasion, while also modifying that understanding by emphasizing that candidate credibility in the local campaign context is constructed not only through formal status but also through social, cultural, and local identity. The findings also challenge the normative approach that idealizes logos as the primary form of persuasion, by demonstrating that policy rationality plays a limited role in the practice of visual campaigning.

Accordingly, this study contributes to the fields of political communication and rhetoric by demonstrating that the ethos–pathos–logos hierarchy is contextual and shaped by the medium and the configuration of the social identity of the community. Campaign banners function not only as tools for the delivery of political messages but also as symbolic spaces where credibility, emotion, and identity are negotiated in local political practice.

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