

## ***POLITICAL CAMPAIGN: WHAT YOUNG'S VOTERS WANT FROM POLITICAL ADVERTISEMENT?***

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### **Abstract**

Young voters played a significant role in Indonesia's 2024 election, yet their perceptions of political advertising remain complex and varied. This study investigates how young voters respond to political ads across multiple platforms, including television, social media, outdoor media in political campaign. Using a mixed-method approach that combines a survey of 137 respondents aged 17–30 and focus group discussions with the young's voters, the findings reveal that young voters demonstrate a high level of skepticism toward conventional campaign advertisements, especially those perceived as overly promotional or lacking substance. Social media ads—particularly on TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube—receive more positive engagement, but only when they present authentic narratives, concise information, and relatable messaging. The study also shows that young voters respond more favorably to political ads that highlight issue-based content, such as economic, education, climate action, and anti-corruption commitments. Visual appeal, message clarity, emotional resonance, and perceived sincerity emerge as the key factors shaping youth responses. The research concludes that political advertising targeting young voters must shift toward authentic, transparent, and issue-oriented communication, supported by creative digital storytelling. These insights provide practical implications for political campaign strategists aiming to strengthen youth engagement in future elections.

**Keywords:** *Political Campaign, Voter Preferences, Young Voter, Political Adv*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Political campaigns have undergone significant transformation in the digital era, particularly in the way political messages are designed and delivered to voters (Granato & Wong, 2004). The rapid development of communication technologies, social media platforms, and data-driven advertising has

reshaped political advertising strategies, making them more targeted, interactive, and personalized (Granato & Wong, 2004; Mackay, 2014). In this context, political advertisements are no longer merely instruments for information dissemination, but strategic tools for shaping political perceptions, emotions, and voting behavior.

The 2024 Indonesian General Election marked a significant milestone in the country's democratic development, particularly due to the dominant presence of young voters in the electorate (Moekahar et al., 2022). Millennials and Generation Z constituted a substantial proportion of eligible voters, positioning young citizens as a decisive political force in determining electoral outcomes. This demographic shift has compelled political actors and campaign teams to reconsider traditional campaign strategies and place greater emphasis on political advertising that resonates with younger audiences.

Young voters have emerged as a crucial segment in contemporary democratic processes. As digital natives, they are highly exposed to political messages through online platforms such as social media, streaming services, and mobile applications. Compared to older generations, young voters tend to be more critical, selective, and expressive in responding to political advertisements. They value authenticity, transparency, creativity, and issue relevance, rather than traditional campaign rhetoric or purely persuasive messaging. This shift poses new challenges for political actors in designing advertisements that resonate with young audiences.

The evolution of political campaigns in Indonesia has been strongly influenced by digitalization (Ismawani et al., 2019; Syam Maella et al., 2019; Taqwa et al., 2024). Social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, and X have become primary channels for political advertising, replacing conventional mass media as the main arena for political communication. In the 2024 election, political advertisements were increasingly characterized by short-form videos, visual storytelling, influencer endorsements, and data-driven targeting (Susila et al., 2020). While these formats enhanced message reach and engagement, they also raised critical questions regarding message substance, authenticity, and ethical standards in political advertising.

Despite their growing electoral significance, young voters are often characterized by political skepticism and fluctuating levels of political engagement. Ineffective or poorly designed political advertisements may reinforce apathy, distrust, or even rejection toward political institutions and candidates. Conversely, advertisements that align with young voters' expectations—such as those emphasizing social justice, economic opportunity, environmental sustainability, and ethical leadership—have the potential to enhance political participation and democratic engagement.

In many democratic contexts, including emerging democracies, research on political advertising has largely focused on message effects, voter persuasion, and campaign outcomes, while relatively limited attention has been given to young voters' perspectives and preferences. Understanding what young voters

want from political advertisements is therefore essential for developing more inclusive, ethical, and effective campaign communication strategies.

Based on this context, this article seeks to explore young voters' expectations, attitudes, and preferences toward political advertisements. By examining how young voters interpret and evaluate political campaign messages, this study aims to contribute to the literature on political communication and provide practical insights for political actors, campaign strategists, and policymakers in designing political advertisements that are more responsive to the values and communication styles of young voters.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **Political Advertisement in election**

Political advertisement is a central component of modern election campaigns, functioning as a strategic communication tool to inform, persuade, and mobilize voters (Strömbäck & Kaid, 2009). According to Kaid, political advertising conveys political messages through paid media with the intention of influencing voters' attitudes and behaviors toward candidates, parties, or political issues (Kaid, 2015). In democratic systems, political advertising plays a dual role: it facilitates political information flow while simultaneously shaping political images and emotional responses (Daud, 2021; Porath et al., 2014).

In the Indonesian context, political advertising has evolved from traditional mass media-based campaigns to digitally driven strategies (Erlita, 2019). The 2024 General Election demonstrated a strong reliance on social media advertising, political branding, and visual narratives (Baulch et al., 2024; Taqwa et al., 2024). This transformation requires a reassessment of political advertising not only as a persuasive mechanism but also as a democratic communication practice that influences political literacy and participation, especially among young voters.

### **Young Voters and Political Communication**

Young voters, commonly defined as individuals from the Millennial and Generation Z cohorts, represent a unique political audience due to their socialization in a digital media environment (Boulianne & Theocharis, 2020; Riccio, 2016; Susila et al., 2020). Research on political communication suggests that young voters tend to consume political information through online platforms rather than conventional media. Their political attitudes are shaped by peer networks, influencers, and algorithm-driven content exposure (Mad-A-Dam & Ismail, 2023).

Studies indicate that young voters value authenticity, transparency, and issue relevance in political communication. They are more likely to respond positively to political advertisements that reflect real-life concerns, use

relatable language, and allow interactive engagement. Conversely, political messages perceived as manipulative, overly negative, or disconnected from youth realities may lead to disengagement or political cynicism (Loader et al., 2014) (Poorrezaei et al., 2023; Tumjanda & Tarar, 2019). This theoretical perspective positions young voters not merely as passive message recipients, but as active interpreters of political advertisements.

## METHOD

This study employs a mixed-methods research design, integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches to obtain a comprehensive understanding of young voters' preferences toward political advertisements in the context of Indonesia's 2024 General Election. The mixed-methods approach allows the researcher to combine the strengths of numerical data from surveys with in-depth insights from Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). Specifically, this study adopts a sequential explanatory design, in which quantitative data collection and analysis are followed by qualitative exploration to explain and contextualize the survey findings.

The quantitative component of this study uses a survey method to identify general patterns, tendencies, and relationships regarding young voters' perceptions and preferences toward political advertisements. The population of this study consists of young voters in Indonesia who were eligible to vote in the 2024 General Election, primarily from the Millennial and Generation Z cohorts. A sample of respondents is selected using criteria including age range, voting eligibility, and exposure to political advertisements during the election period. The sample size is determined to ensure adequate statistical representation and reliability. The number of samples selected was 137 respondents who were young voters in the 2024 election. Next, the researcher conducted an FGD with 15 informants who were young voters, media and political practitioners.

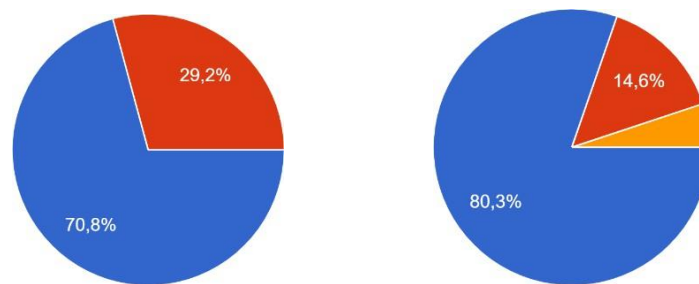
Data collected through a structures questionnaire. Quantitative data are analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Descriptive statistics are used to summarize respondents' demographic characteristics and general response patterns, while inferential analysis is applied to examine relationships between variables related to political advertising and young voters' preferences. To complement the survey findings, the qualitative phase employs Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) to explore young voters' experiences, interpretations, and expectations regarding political advertisements in greater depth. Qualitative data from FGDs are analyzed using thematic analysis. This process involves coding the transcripts, identifying recurring patterns and themes, and interpreting the findings to explain and enrich the quantitative results.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Respondents' Profile

The survey involved young voters who participated in Indonesia's 2024 Election, predominantly from the Millennial and Generation Z cohorts at Pekanbaru city. Most respondents reported high exposure to political advertisements through mass media and digital platforms, particularly social media such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube. This confirms that digital media constituted the primary channel of political advertising consumption among young voters during the election.

**Graph 1. Responses's Young Voter of Political Adv**



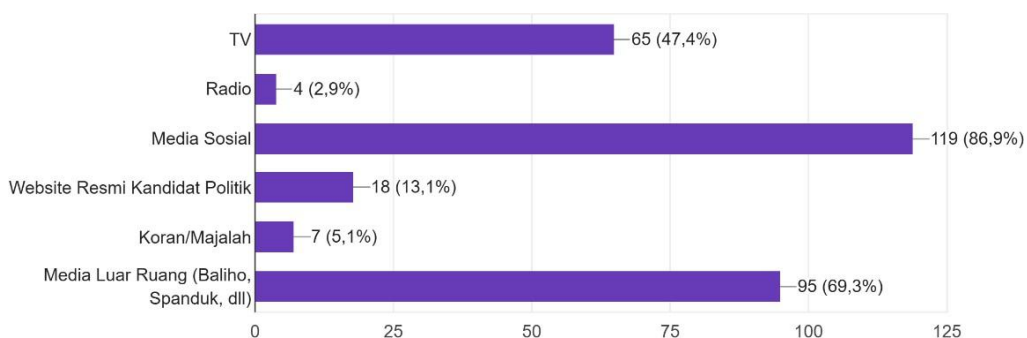
Source: Research Data, 2025

The graph 1 above explains that 70.8% of young voters often see political advertisements, while 29.2% admitted to having seen them and no respondents answered never. Exposure to political advertising among young voters is very high (Mad-A-Dam & Ismail, 2023; Sumerta et al., n.d.). As many as 70.8% of respondents reported frequently seeing political advertising, indicating that political advertising has become an intense part of the younger generation's media consumption, particularly through the digital and social media platforms they access daily (Leppäniemi et al., 2009). Meanwhile, 29.2% of respondents reported seeing political advertisements, although not frequently. This group still demonstrates that political advertising has a broad reach and is able to reach almost all segments of young voters. Most significantly, no respondents stated they had never seen political advertising. This finding confirms that political advertising has widespread penetration among young voters. This indicates that current political campaign strategies are successful in reaching the younger generation, but also pose challenges related to message quality, political communication ethics, and the potential for information overload. Overall, this data strengthens the argument that political advertising is a highly relevant and influential political communication instrument for young voters, making the effectiveness, credibility, and informative value of advertising crucial factors in shaping their political attitudes and preferences.

The next graph shows that 80.3% of voters strongly agree with the existence of political advertising during the election period, while 14.6% agree and 5.1% disagree. The majority of voters have a very positive attitude towards the presence of political advertising during the election period. A total of 80.3% of respondents strongly agreed, indicating that political advertising is seen as an important means of obtaining information about candidates, programs, and political visions. Furthermore, 14.6% of respondents agreed, further strengthening the finding that voters generally accept and acknowledge the role of political advertising in the democratic process. This high level of approval indicates that political advertising is still considered relevant and necessary as part of political communication between political actors and the public (Xenos et al., 2014). However, 5.1% of respondents disagreed with the presence of political advertising. While relatively small, this group reflects criticism or concerns about political advertising, such as the potential for message manipulation, misleading information, or fatigue due to excessive exposure.

Overall, these data indicate that political advertising during the election period enjoys strong legitimacy among voters, particularly young voters (Bakker & Vreese, 2011). However, the presence of this group of dissenters underscores the importance of managing political advertising ethically, informatively, and in moderation to maintain the quality of democracy and public trust.

**Graph 2. Responses's Young Voter of Political Adv**



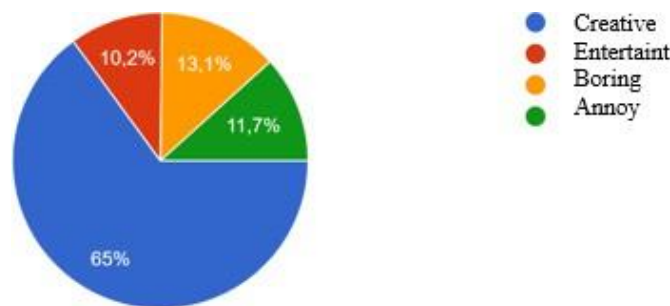
Source: Research Data, 2025

Based on this data, it can be analyzed that social media is the most dominant medium used by candidates to deliver political advertisements, with a usage rate reaching 86.9%. This finding indicates a shift in political campaign strategies toward digital platforms, which are considered more effective in reaching voters, particularly young voters, due to their interactive nature, speed, and the ability to tailor messages to audience characteristics. Nevertheless, conventional mass media—such as television, radio, newspapers, and outdoor media—still display a significant number of political

advertisements. This indicates that traditional media still plays a significant role, particularly in reaching a broader and more diverse voter segment and in building the candidate's legitimacy and credibility in the public sphere. The combined use of social media and mass media indicates that candidates tend to employ a multi-channel (multi-platform) campaign strategy. Social media serves as the primary means of increasing engagement and engagement with voters, while mass media plays a role in strengthening political exposure and image more formally (Cervi et al., 2023).

Overall, this data confirms that the dominance of social media does not completely replace the role of mass media, but rather complements it. Therefore, the effectiveness of a political campaign depends heavily on the candidate's ability to integrate political messages consistently and ethically across various media platforms in order to optimally reach and influence voters.

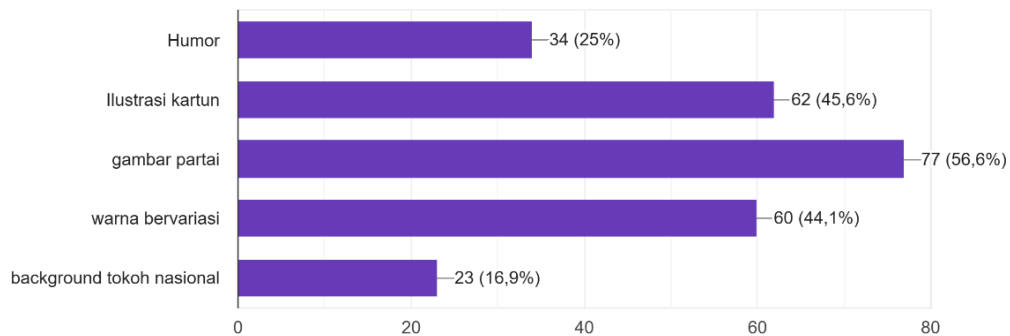
**Graph 3. Design of Political Adv**



Source: Research Data, 2025

Based on this data, it can be analyzed that political ad design is generally perceived positively by voters, with 65% of respondents rating political ads as creative. This finding indicates that most candidates have attempted to present political messages with more innovative visual approaches, narratives, and concepts to attract audiences, particularly young voters. Furthermore, 10.2% of respondents rated political ads as entertaining, indicating that entertainment elements are beginning to be utilized as a strategy to increase voter appeal and engagement. This approach aligns with the nature of digital and social media, which demand light, engaging, and easy-to-consume content. However, the data also indicates a negative response to political ad design. 13.1% of respondents considered political ads boring, indicating that some messages are still monotonous, repetitive, or irrelevant to voters' needs. Meanwhile, 11.7% of respondents considered political ads annoying, which could be attributed to excessive airtime, inappropriate ad placement, or formats that force viewers to watch the message.

**Graph 4. Design of Political Adv**



Source: Research Data, 2025

Overall, this data suggests that while the majority of voters appreciate creativity in political ad design, there are still challenges in maintaining a balance between creativity, relevance, and audience convenience. Therefore, candidates and campaigns need to design political ads that are not only creative and engaging, but also informative, contextual, and non-invasive, in order to increase the effectiveness of political communication and avoid voter resistance. From the FGD, informants stated that the boring political advertisements that are still prevalent in every election are identity advertisements. These advertisements seem to more accurately reflect the state of a country. Young voters are not ignorant people who don't understand the essence of political message dissemination through political advertising. Advertisements should be a strategic tool for conveying political programs or promises, not simply a display of a candidate's best photos. according to informants in the FGD, indicate that message substance is the most important factor influencing young voters' preferences toward political advertisements. A majority of respondents expressed strong agreement that political advertisements should clearly communicate candidates' policy programs, problem-solving capacity, and commitment to youth-related issues such as employment, education, and economic stability(Eberl et al., 2018; Echeverría, 2020; Ridout & Fowler, 2012).

In contrast, advertisements that focused excessively on slogans, symbolism, or personal image without substantive policy explanations were perceived as less appealing. This finding suggests that young voters are not merely attracted to surface-level messaging but seek meaningful political information.

The findings also reveal that creative format plays a significant role in attracting young voters' attention. Respondents showed a preference for short, visually engaging, and relatable advertisements that use simple language and storytelling techniques. However, creativity alone was not sufficient to sustain interest; advertisements perceived as entertaining but

lacking substance were evaluated less favorably. The qualitative findings from FGDs provide deeper insight into the survey results by revealing how young voters interpret and negotiate political advertisements. FGD participants consistently emphasized the importance of authenticity. Political advertisements were positively evaluated when candidates appeared genuine, used everyday language, and demonstrated an understanding of youth realities. Participants expressed skepticism toward advertisements that seemed overly scripted or staged.

The findings suggest that political campaigns targeting young voters should prioritize issue-based, transparent, and ethically responsible advertisements. Political advertisements that respect young voters' intelligence and address their concerns meaningfully are more likely to foster political trust and participation. From a democratic perspective, understanding what young voters want from political advertisements is essential for strengthening democratic engagement. When political advertising functions as a source of credible information rather than mere persuasion, it can contribute positively to political literacy and informed voting behavior among young citizens.

## CONCLUSION

The findings reveal that young voters demonstrate a high level of skepticism toward conventional campaign advertisements, especially those perceived as overly promotional or lacking substance. Social media ads—particularly on TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube—receive more positive engagement, but only when they present authentic narratives, concise information, and relatable messaging. The study also shows that young voters respond more favorably to political ads that highlight issue-based content, such as economic, education, climate action, and anti-corruption commitments. Visual appeal, message clarity, emotional resonance, and perceived sincerity emerge as the key factors shaping youth responses. The research concludes that political advertising targeting young voters must shift toward authentic, transparent, and issue-oriented communication, supported by creative digital storytelling. These insights provide practical implications for political campaign strategists aiming to strengthen youth engagement in future elections.

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