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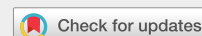
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Symbolic Political Communication, and Trust: A Young Voters' Perspective of the Indonesian Presidential Election

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Abstract

Communication in political marketing plays an important role in political mobilization, building trust both in political actors and the government. Politicians construct their messages through careful branding as the power of the cultural symbols and signs conveyed through the brand are potent heuristic devices. This is particularly important in emerging democracies, where there is limited political knowledge and understanding. Therefore, this research explores how young voters understand the symbolic communication fashioned by political actors in Indonesia and how it relates to their brand. Indonesia is an interesting area for study; it is both secular and the world's largest Muslim democracy. Using a phenomenological approach, a total of 19 in-depth interviews with young voters were conducted to gain rich insight into perceptions of the

complexity of political symbolism, and trust among young voters. This study conceptualized political communication as a dual approach. The political brand promise is intrinsically linked to cultural references and conveyed through symbolic communication combined with a distinctive brand message. This builds trust, which then affects political participation. This conceptual framework provides insights into the importance of culture in branding which has implications for policy makers and actors in emerging and established democracies.

Keywords:

emerging democracies

Indonesian politics

political branding

political communications

young voters

Additional information

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Dr. Ihwan Susila is an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Economics and Business, Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta, Indonesia. He obtained his PhD at Hull University Business School, UK in Management. His research interests focus upon political marketing, electoral decision-making, and consumer behavior.

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Dr. Raja Nerina Raja Yusof is an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Economics and Management, Universiti Putra Malaysia, where she started her career as a Tutor in the faculty in 2000. She received her PhD in Management from the University of Otago, New Zealand. Her research interest is in the area of International Business Management focusing on multinational corporations, Islamic business practices, cross-cultural management and international marketing. She teaches Principles of Management, International Business and Entrepreneurship courses in the faculty. In addition, she serves as an Associate Editor for the Asian Journal of Case Research (AJCR) and has been actively writing cases for journals and case books, as well as doing external case study consultations for organizations such as CEDAR (SME Bank) and Lembaga Tabung Haji (Pilgrims Fund Board).

Raja Nerina has also authored and co-authored books and journal articles especially in the area of halal management and international business.

Anton Agus Setyawan

Dr. Anton A. Setyawan is an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Economics and Business, Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta, Indonesia. He earned his PhD in Management from Faculty of Economic and Business, Universitas Gadjah Mada, Indonesia. His research interests are in the area of marketing focusing on relationship marketing, consumer behavior and supply chain management. He has published several papers in Journal of Asia Business Studies, Journal of Competitiveness and Business; Theory and Practice.

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