Trust to loyalty: Examining the impact of political branding on voter behavior

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Abstract

This study analyzes the political branding strategy of the Political Party Partai Gelombang Rakyat (GELORA) Indonesia, implemented to build a modern, inclusive, nationalist political identity in increasingly fierce political competition. By adopting the constructivism paradigm and using qualitative research methods based on case studies, this study explores how the Political Party GELORA utilizes various mass media platforms, digital media, and community-based programs to expand the reach of its political communication. The findings of this study show that this Political Party's strategy focuses on campaign efficiency through digitalization, innovation in communication methods, and the placement of cadres in strategic government positions as a form of political legitimacy. Excellence programs, such as free education and eradicating illiteracy, have been a significant source of support, especially from the younger generation and women. Despite limited resources, the Political Party has successfully implemented a long-term strategy that blends value-based branding and a multi-channel approach. This research makes theoretical and practical contributions by offering a new understanding of the importance of synergy between political narratives, the use of digital technology, and the management of Political Party reputation in contemporary politics. Further research can focus on an in-depth analysis of the effectiveness of nationalism and Islamic values-based strategies in building voter loyalty and applying artificial intelligence technology to create more personalized and effective political campaigns.

Keywords: Digitalization, Political branding, Political communication, Political party GELORA, Voter loyalty.

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1. Introduction

In the modern democratic landscape, political branding plays a strategic role in building a positive image and creating a favorable public perception for political parties, especially in the face of increasingly fierce electoral competition [1-7]. This concept involves integrating marketing principles with political communication to create a unique identity that can attract

support from different segments of the electorate [1, 3, 8-12]. In the Indonesian context, political branding is increasingly relevant ahead of the 2024 elections, where competition between political parties is not only based on ideological strength but also on the ability to build an image that can reach the wider community [2, 3, 6, 7].

Political branding is not just a political marketing tool but also a strategic approach that integrates voter behavior analysis with political communication to strengthen voter engagement [1-3, 13-16]. In this approach, the image created by political parties plays an important role in influencing voter decisions, as does the concept of brand equity in commercial marketing [4, 8-10, 12, 17]. This approach is increasingly complex with the digital transformation that allows political parties to utilize social media to expand their reach and increase voter engagement, especially among the younger generation [6, 18-20].

One of the main challenges in political branding is how political entities can create unique and authentic identities in an increasingly competitive political environment [9, 21, 22]. Research shows that this process requires a deep understanding of social, cultural, and technological dynamics to develop strategies that are relevant to the needs of society [1, 23-25]. In the context of the Indonesian political party GELORA, this challenge has become increasingly complex because the party must overcome the stigma of being an Islamic-based political party to build its image as an inclusive nationalist political party [26-29].

Previous research has explored various aspects of political branding, including its influence on voter behavior, political decision-making, and differentiation in the political marketplace [3, 9, 11, 23, 30, 31]. However, there is still a gap in the literature that discusses how a political party's political communication activities can affect this branding, especially in the context of growing digitalization [3, 10]. This study aims to fill this gap by exploring the strategies used by the political party GELORA in building its political identity as a nationalist political party in the dominance of the established major parties.

This research is significant in addressing contemporary challenges in modern politics, especially how political parties like the GELORA Indonesia Political Party can build an inclusive political identity through political branding strategies integrated with digital communication and political marketing practices. In an era of increasingly complex political competition, this article offers theoretical and practical contributions by combining various concepts such as political branding [20, 32, 33], voter behavior [2] and political communication [4] and brand equity in a political context. In addition, the exploration of the relationship between digitalization and the success of political branding strategies [34-36] provides direct relevance to the need for political parties to adapt to rapid technological transformation. By offering a multidimensional approach that addresses the role of branding in creating emotional engagement, strengthening public perception, and encouraging voter loyalty, this article is expected to be widely accepted by readers, both academics and political practitioners, as an important reference for understanding the dynamics of modern politics in Indonesia ahead of the 2024 elections.

2. Methodology

This research employs a constructivist paradigm approach that views individuals as active participants in constructing meaning and knowledge through experience and social interaction [37-40]. This paradigm emphasizes that the understanding of social phenomena is constructed subjectively through individual perspectives and critical reflections [41-43]. In this context, constructivism is relevant for understanding complex political branding dynamics because this phenomenon involves a public perception that continues to evolve based on the communicated political narrative [44, 45]. This approach allows researchers to delve deeper into how the Political Party GELORA utilizes symbols of nationalism in constructing its political identity [46, 47].

This research uses qualitative methods for exploring dynamic phenomena such as political branding strategies [48, 49]. Qualitative methods allow for in-depth analysis of individual experiences, social interactions, and the narratives related to the phenomenon [50, 51]. This study applies a case study approach to explore further how the Political Party GELORA builds its image as a nationalist Political Party [37, 52]. Case studies allow research to focus on specific social and cultural contexts that affect how parties communicate with their constituents [2, 53]. With this approach, researchers can understand how political narratives are articulated through symbols, messages, and communication strategies [6, 54].

Applying qualitative methods within the framework of constructivism also involves collecting data through in-depth interviews, document analysis, and participant observations, aiming to gain a holistic understanding of the phenomenon of political branding [44, 48]. This approach allows for a deeper exploration of the political communication strategies used by the Political Party GELORA to create a nationalist identity amid Indonesia's socio-political dynamics [46, 55]. By combining theories of political marketing, communication, and constructivism, this research yields new insights into how political parties can use nationalistic symbolism to build voter trust and loyalty [44, 47].

3. Results
3.1. Political Products and Strategic Planning

This study finds that the political products of the GELORA Indonesia Political Party reflect a mature and structured political marketing plan, with the main focus on introducing political products as a nationalist Political Party. This strategy is based on the Political Party's vision and mission as the basic framework to gain public support. Firmanzah [56] emphasizes the importance of strategic planning in political parties that must align with organizational goals. As part of the communication planning, the Political Party GELORA adopts a strategic communication planning model [57] which consists of four main stages.

a) Formative Research Phase. At this stage, information is collected in depth to analyze the current situation, the organization, and the target audience. This analysis provides the basis for informed decision-making.

b) The Strategy Phase is the core of political marketing planning to build political branding. In this phase, organizational goals are set, and communication processes are structured to achieve these goals, focusing on managing the political party's reputation.

c) Tactics Phase In this phase, the strategies that have been designed are applied with various practical communication tactics, such as promotions and member recruitment campaigns.

d) In this phase, the success of the applied communication practices is evaluated to measure the strategy's effectiveness and the achievement of organizational goals.

3.2. Political Promotion and Regional Reach

The Political Party GELORA implements a comprehensive political promotion strategy through mass media and direct involvement with the community, such as "*Blusukan*" activities, presentations, and roadshows. In addition, support for regional head candidates is also utilized as a strategy to gain acceptance from local political figures and strengthen political branding at the regional level.

Since its establishment, the Political Party GELORA has developed representative offices in all provinces in Indonesia and established Regional Representative Councils (DPD) at the district/city level, reaching 484 regions. The existence of this representative office aims to expand political reach and build relationships with constituents. Previous research by Rachmawati [58] and Murni et al. [59] emphasized the importance of opening branches to expand regional reach.

This research shows that the political Party GELORA also relies on political advertising as a promotional strategy. The political ads stand out with uniqueness and cheerfulness, use jingles that are easy to remember and evoke, and aim to attract the attention of the younger generation and women. This is supported by research [60], which found that young voters were more interested in creative and engaging political ads.

3.3. Program-Based Branding

The Political Party GELORA utilizes program-based branding as one of the strategies to build a strong image [61-63]. Several flagship programs, such as free education for young voters, nutritional support for pregnant women, and efforts to eradicate the illiteracy of the Qur'an, are part of the flagship programs designed to attract public sympathy and support.

3.4. The Role of Media in Building Branding

Mass and digital media play an important role in the political communication strategy of the GELORA political party. The political party aims to strengthen its image as a fresh and open political entity through television advertisements, social media platforms, and outdoor media such as billboards and banners. Creative media focuses on a young audience, such as jingles in TV commercials and the tagline "New Indonesia Super Power" [64]. The media is also used as an effective means of political socialization [20].

The political party GELORA uses various media formats to convey its political message, including posters, campaign materials, and billboards. This outdoor advertising has become a trend in political branding, contributing to nationalist awareness. Publicity through news coverage is also an important part of the strategy to shape the institution's reputation [65].

3.5. Political Costs and Campaign Efficiency

The Political Party GELORA seeks to reduce political costs to minimize risks while increasing the effectiveness of political products. The increasing political expenditure concerns media campaigns, office operations, political party activities, and cadre development costs. In the face of the 2024 election, financial support for legislative candidates and regional leaders is an important part of the political funding strategy.

One of the efforts to reduce political costs is to maximize digital technology to increase campaign efficiency. Social media and information technology have proven effective in streamlining campaign efforts [66].

3.6. Research Gaps and Novelty

As a new political party, the GELORA faces a significant challenge in building its image as a nationalist political party amid the dominance of established political parties in Indonesia. This research fills a research gap in political branding, especially for new political parties that do not yet have a large support base. The novelty of this research lies in analyzing political branding strategies that combine nationalism and Islamic values, as well as focusing on flagship programs that target young and female voter segments.

Table 1.
Summary of the Strategic Stages of the Political Political Party GELORA.

Phase	Description	Main Focus
Formative Research	Gathering information to analyze the current situation and audience	Develop a basis for decision-making and strategy
Strategy	Designing organizational goals and effective communication processes	Building the Political Party's reputation and identity
Tactic	Implementation of the designed strategy	Promotions, member recruitment, and direct communication activities
Research Evaluation	Assess the success of the strategy and the achievement of the objectives	Improve the quality and effectiveness of future strategies

This picture illustrates the entire political marketing strategy of the Political Party GELORA, starting from planning, promotion, and branding-based programs to media utilization and reducing political costs.

3.7. Political Party GELORA: Political Branding Strategy Towards a Strategic Role in the Cabinet

The results of this study show that the political strategy of Partai Gelombang Rakyat (GELORA) Indonesia plays a significant role in establishing its presence on the Indonesian political stage, even though this political party is still relatively new. Based on the analyzed data, several main findings underscore the effectiveness of the political strategy and branding implemented by this political party.

3.7.1. Success in Placing Cadres in the Government Cabinet

One of the indicators of the success of the Political Party GELORA's political strategy is the placement of its best cadres in strategic positions in the government cabinet. The Chairman of the Political Party GELORA, Anis Matta, serves as the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, while the Deputy Chairman, Fahri Hamzah, serves as the Deputy Minister of Housing and Settlement Areas [67-69]. This study shows that recognizing the competence of Political Party cadres at the national level gives legitimacy to the Political Party GELORA as a trustworthy political actor, even though the Political Party has not exceeded the parliamentary threshold of 4 percent.

These findings indicate that the Political Party GELORA's move to contribute to strategic policy-making at the executive level is a manifestation of a well-designed long-term political strategy. This approach allows the Political Party to remain relevant in national political dynamics despite facing considerable electoral challenges.

3.7.2. Modern and Inclusive Political Branding Strategy

The political party GELORA has succeeded in creating a strong political brand by carrying a modern, inclusive, and nationalist image. Based on the results of interviews and document analysis, this image is supported by the political party's narrative that highlights the intellectual capacity of its cadres, a progressive vision for the future, and a commitment to the people's interests. These findings show that the political branding strategy of the political party GELORA is oriented towards electoral interests and forming relevant political identities in the community.

This political branding is reflected in the political party's success in building connections with the community through strategic public policy issues. In addition, the involvement of cadres in the cabinet strengthens the political party's position as an actor who speaks at the rhetorical level and can provide real solutions through government policies.

3.7.3. Social Capital and Founder Support from Various Regions

Ninety-nine figures from 34 provinces founded the Political Party GELORA, most of whom are former cadres of the Political Party Keadilan Sejahtera (PKS). These findings show that the support of experienced figures in the political world provides excellent social capital for the Political Party GELORA to build its network and political influence. In addition, the founders' experience in practical politics is an important asset in designing Political Party strategies at the national and local levels.

This social capital also allows the Political Party to maintain its political relevance despite its challenges in achieving the parliamentary threshold target. With a support base spread across the country, the Political Party GELORA has the potential to expand its political reach.

3.7.4. Implications of Strategy on National Political Dynamics

This study found that the existence of the Political Party GELORA in the government cabinet strengthens its presence and positively impacts national political dynamics. This Political Party can take advantage of its position in the cabinet to influence strategic policies that favor the people's interests. This step is also an effort by the Political Party to build public trust and strengthen the loyalty of its constituents.

This success indicates that the political strategy of the Political Party GELORA has a layered effect: on the one hand, the Political Party strengthens its political legitimacy in the eyes of the public; on the other hand, the Political Party expands its influence through direct contributions to government policies. Thus, the Political Party GELORA has proven that even new parties can play a strategic role in Indonesian politics through long-term political strategies and effective branding.

The following is a reduction of qualitative data in the form of a table based on interviews given by the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the National Leadership Council of the Political Party GELORA.

Table 2.
GELORA Party's Efforts to Attract Young Voters.

Aspects	Findings in the Interview
Political Party GELORA's Strategy to Attract Young Voters	The Political Party GELORA sees young voters as having great potential, with almost 60% of young voters in the 2024 election. GELORA was born in the digital era and relies on a digital approach to attract the attention of millennials and Gen Z, who are sensitive to social issues and crises.
Relevant Activities for Young Voters	GELORA manages GELORA *TV*, which presents educational content and discussions relevant to the needs of young people, such as community welfare, social disparities, and environmental issues. More than 100 episodes have been produced with diverse themes.
Focus on Social Issues and Justice	Young voters tend to be drawn to social issues and justice, such as job creation, the climate crisis, and social inequality. GELORA pays special attention to these issues in its programs.
Young Voters' Perception of Leadership	Young voters want popular, honest, competent, and anti-corruption leaders. Fahri Hamzah and GELORA responded by emphasizing the importance of open democracy in combating corruption and improving the ethics of public officials.
Efforts of the Political Party GELORA in Eradicating Corruption	Fahri Hamzah emphasized that corruption can be eradicated through open democracy. GELORA also proposed an ethical justice system for public officials who violate ethics and supported a more transparent system to tackle corruption.
Political Education and Cadre Regeneration	GELORA develops a regeneration program to train young leaders through the Indonesian Human Academy and the Indonesian Leaders Academy. It is a way to introduce young people to politics and build their leadership capacity.
Impact of Youth Voter Regeneration and Participation	The regeneration program has produced over 1 million cadres, nearly 20 thousand candidates, and many young voters. This demonstrates the active participation and involvement of the younger generation in politics through GELORA.

This table summarises the main findings from the interviews about the Political Party GELORA's efforts to work on young voters, focusing on the media, social issues, corruption eradication, and regeneration.

4. Discussion

The political strategy of the Partai Gelombang Rakyat (GELORA) Indonesia underscores the importance of evidence-based strategic planning to build a relevant political image in fierce competition from political parties. Referring to the strategic communication theory, the planning carried out by the Political Party GELORA includes three main stages: audience analysis, Political Party reputation management, and continuous evaluation. This approach ensures that every step of the Political Party has a strong empirical foundation, further translated into a political branding strategy to reach various segments of voters, especially the younger generation and women. This proves that the success of political parties depends not only on charismatic leadership but also on the institutional capacity to understand and respond to constituents' needs.

The political promotion by the Political Party GELORA highlights innovation through a multi-channel approach involving mass media, digital, and community-based activities. This strategy is relevant in Indonesian politics because it allows the Political Party to expand its reach and optimize cost efficiency. Digital-based campaigns, such as the use of social media, provide opportunities for new parties to create more interactive communication with voters. In addition, locally based approaches, such as *blusukan* activities and community dialogues, strengthen the emotional connection between the Political Party and the community. This strategy aligns with the research findings that a community-based approach is more effective in building public trust than conventional political campaigns.

The success of the Political Party GELORA's political branding is also supported by flagship programs designed to demonstrate their commitment to strategic issues, such as education and health. This program-based political branding creates differentiation from other parties and builds the Party's legitimacy as an organization oriented towards community service. This reinforces the argument that effective political branding should reflect the political party's values and vision, which are relevant to the needs of its constituents. Thus, political branding is a promotional tool and a strategy to create added value for the community.

On the other hand, the main challenge faced by the Political Party GELORA is the limited resources and political capital needed to compete with established parties. However, cost-efficiency efforts through campaign digitization are one of the strategic solutions. This approach proves that technological innovation can be a key factor in supporting the sustainability of new political parties. In addition, the success of the Political Party GELORA in placing cadres in various strategic positions shows that well-designed political branding can support the Party's legitimacy and existence, even though it has not yet reached the parliamentary threshold electorally. This strategy reflects the importance of synergy between strategic planning, tactical execution, and political image management in building Party sustainability in the political realm.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1. Conclusion

This study explores the role of the political branding strategy implemented by the Partai Gelombang Rakyat (GELORA) Indonesia in building a modern, inclusive, and nationalist political identity and how this occurs in the context of increasingly

competitive political competition. By adopting a multi-channel approach, the political party has succeeded in expanding the reach of political communication through mass media, digital platforms, and community-based activities. Flagship programs responsive to constituents' needs, as reflected in initiatives in the education and health sectors, are an important element in building political legitimacy and increasing public trust. However, challenges related to resource limitations remain significant obstacles that require more innovative solutions. Digitalization in campaigns has proven to be a relevant and efficient strategy, especially for new parties like the political party GELORA that need to maximize operational costs.

5.2. Recommendations
a. Other political parties can take advantage of the lessons learned from the Political Party GELORA branding strategy by applying a data-driven approach to planning and executing their political communications to achieve greater effectiveness in reaching a broader constituency.
b. Digital-based campaign optimization needs to be carried out to strengthen the interaction and involvement of voters, especially the younger generation, who tend to be more active on digital platforms. This will expand the reach of political messages and build more intense relationships with voters.
c. To increase competitiveness in domestic politics, the Political Party GELORA can strengthen the synergy between the political narrative it carries out and the involvement of local figures. This synergy can expand the influence of the Political Party at the regional level and increase the resonance of political messages among constituents.

5.3. Gaps for the Next Research
Further research can focus on analyzing the effectiveness of branding approaches that prioritize nationalist and Islamic values in building voter loyalty in the long term. In addition, exploring artificial intelligence (AI) in political communication strategies could be an interesting area to study, aiming to design more personalized and targeted campaigns. Research also needs to deepen the understanding of the role of social media in creating authentic political narratives and its impact on public perception in the context of the ever-evolving era of digitalization.

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