

# RELATIONAL SYNERGY IN INDONESIAN POLITICAL CAMPAIGNS

## SINERGIA RELACIONAL NAS CAMPANHAS POLÍTICAS NA INDONÉSIA

Article received on: 7/18/2025

Article accepted on: 9/20/2025

### **Budi Setiawan\***

\*Universitas Jambi, Jambi, Jambi, Indonesia

Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0009-0008-1380-9729>  
[budis2804478@gmail.com](mailto:budis2804478@gmail.com)

### **Syehmardi Yacob\***

\*Universitas Jambi, Jambi, Jambi, Indonesia

Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6827-277X>  
[syehmardi\\_yacob@unja.ac.id](mailto:syehmardi_yacob@unja.ac.id)

### **Junaidi\***

\*Universitas Jambi, Jambi, Jambi, Indonesia

Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5039-5395>  
[junaidi@unja.ac.id](mailto:junaidi@unja.ac.id)

### **Tona Aurora Lubis\***

\*Universitas Jambi, Jambi, Jambi, Indonesia

Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5728-0387>  
[tonalubis@unja.ac.id](mailto:tonalubis@unja.ac.id)

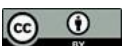
The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest

### **Abstract**

This study investigates how personal branding and political communication shape voter behavior, examining societal relations as a moderating factor in the 2024 legislative elections in Jambi City, Indonesia. The goals are to assess the direct effects of personal branding and political communication on electoral behavior and to test whether societal relations strengthen these effects. Using a quantitative field design, we surveyed 400 registered voters with structured questionnaires and analyzed the data through Partial Least Squares–Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The results show that both personal branding and political communication positively and significantly influence voter behavior, and that societal relations significantly amplify these relationships. These findings indicate that electoral choices reflect not only candidate attributes and message strategies, but also relational trust and community engagement. Theoretically, the study advances a relational synergy model that integrates individual-level branding and communication with community-level dynamics. Practically, it underscores the

### **Resumo**

*Este estudo investiga como o personal branding e a comunicação política moldam o comportamento eleitoral, examinando as relações sociais como fator moderador nas eleições legislativas de 2024 na cidade de Jambi, Indonésia. Os objetivos são avaliar os efeitos diretos do personal branding e da comunicação política sobre o comportamento eleitoral e testar se as relações sociais reforçam esses efeitos. Com um desenho quantitativo de campo, foram inquiridos 400 eleitores registrados por meio de questionários estruturados, e os dados foram analisados com Modelagem de Equações Estruturais por Mínimos Quadrados Parciais (PLS-SEM). Os resultados mostram que tanto o personal branding quanto a comunicação política influenciam positiva e significativamente o comportamento dos eleitores, e que as relações sociais amplificam de forma significativa essas relações. Esses achados indicam que as escolhas eleitorais refletem não apenas atributos dos candidatos e estratégias de mensagem, mas também confiança relacional e envolvimento comunitário. Teoricamente, o estudo avança um modelo de sinergia relacional que integra*



importance for political actors, campaigners, and policymakers of combining authentic branding, contextually grounded communication, and sustained community ties to enhance electoral effectiveness and strengthen democratic trust.

**Keywords:** Personal Branding. Political Communication. Voter Behavior. Societal Relations. Electoral Strategy.

*branding e comunicação em nível individual com dinâmicas comunitárias. Na prática, destaca a importância de combinar branding autêntico, comunicação contextualizada e laços comunitários sustentados para aumentar a eficácia eleitoral e fortalecer a confiança democrática.*

**Palavras-chave:** Marca Pessoal. Comunicação Política. Comportamento Eleitoral. Relações Sociais. Estratégia Eleitoral.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Modern democracy has evolved rapidly across the globe, shaped by technological advances, globalization, and the increasing participation of citizens in political processes. Electoral systems have provided an institutionalized arena for people to exercise their political rights and directly determine the direction of public policy through elections (Diamond, 2019). In Indonesia, the post-1998 reform era marked a fundamental transformation of its political system with the adoption of direct elections for presidents, governors, mayors, and legislative members (Aspinall & Mietzner, 2019). These institutional changes intensified political competition, shifting the determinants of electoral success from merely organizational structure to the ability of candidates and parties to build strong personal branding and deliver relevant political communication (Nursal, 2004). The role of digital platforms has further accentuated this transformation, as social media redefined political engagement by enabling two-way, interactive communication between candidates and voters (Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2021). Within this context, Partai Golkar has been a central player in Indonesia's electoral history, but fluctuating public support in recent decades highlights the urgent need to reassess the strategic elements that shape voter behavior, particularly at the local level (Ufen, 2008).

Despite the growing body of literature on political marketing, significant research gaps remain concerning the interplay of personal branding, political communication, and social relations in determining voter behavior in local electoral contexts. In Indonesia, most studies have treated personal branding and political communication as separate dimensions, with insufficient empirical attention to how community relations moderate their combined effects (Hill, 2019; Nasir, 2022). Fernandez et al. (2023) demonstrate that relational campaigning can substantially strengthen the persuasive power of political

messages, yet such models are rarely applied in Indonesian local politics. At the practical level, campaigns often remain conventional and fragmented, relying heavily on one-directional messaging and digital promotion without embedding strategies into the socio-cultural networks that define local communities (Kaur & Singh, 2024). In regions such as Jambi, where communal ties, kinship values, and interpersonal networks remain strong, this oversight produces a strategic gap that undermines the sustainability of electoral support (Park et al., 2024). Thus, this research identifies both theoretical and practical urgency in analyzing the moderating role of societal relations in shaping the effectiveness of personal branding and political communication in influencing voter behavior.

Conceptually, the study is anchored in several theoretical frameworks. Social Exchange Theory posits that political behavior emerges from reciprocal benefits, wherein voters evaluate candidates based on perceived rewards relative to their needs and expectations (Homans, 1961; Blau, 1964). Complementing this, Social Identity Theory emphasizes how political choices are shaped by group-based identification, where candidates resonate with voters when perceived as representing shared cultural or communal values (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Huddy, 2001). At the meso-level, the Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986) underscores the dual routes of persuasion—central and peripheral—that are directly influenced by both political communication and personal branding cues. Furthermore, Grunig and Hunt's (1984) Two-Way Symmetrical Communication model highlights the importance of dialogic relationships between candidates and communities, suggesting that sustainable voter loyalty depends not only on message clarity but also on the relational trust built through interpersonal engagement. The integration of these theoretical perspectives provides a robust conceptual foundation for investigating how personal branding and political communication interact with community relations in shaping electoral outcomes.

In line with these theoretical premises, this study explicitly seeks to: (1) examine the influence of candidates' personal branding on voter behavior in the 2024 legislative election in Jambi City; (2) analyze the effect of political communication strategies employed by Partai Golkar on voter decision-making; (3) assess whether community relations moderate the impact of personal branding on voter preferences; and (4) determine whether community relations similarly moderate the effect of political communication on voter behavior. By adopting a quantitative design through Structural Equation Modeling using Partial Least Squares (PLS-SEM), the study aims to test these

hypotheses empirically, thereby producing systematic evidence to address the research questions. The guiding problem formulation is therefore centered on the extent to which personal branding and political communication, moderated by societal relations, explain the electoral success of Partai Golkar in Jambi City during the 2024 legislative election.

The scientific contribution of this research lies in its development of a “Relational Synergy Model” for political campaign strategy. Unlike previous works that assessed personal branding and political communication independently, this study integrates them with societal relations as a moderating variable, thus offering a more holistic framework for understanding voter behavior in collectivist cultural settings. This novelty enriches the literature on political marketing in emerging democracies by advancing the role of relational dynamics as a catalyst that amplifies the effects of branding and communication strategies (Hanna et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2021). Moreover, the study provides empirical validation of a relational approach in local Indonesian elections, an area where prior research has been limited (Indah, 2018; O’Cass & Voola, 2011). In practical terms, the findings contribute actionable insights for political parties, candidates, and consultants seeking to design context-sensitive campaign strategies that not only resonate symbolically but also strengthen durable voter loyalty through authentic community engagement. By positioning societal relations as a strategic moderator, this study underscores the importance of embedding political strategies in socio-cultural networks to ensure electoral effectiveness and sustainability.

## **2 LITERATURE REVIEW**

The theoretical foundation of this study rests on the integration of several frameworks that explain the dynamics of voter behavior within electoral contexts. Social Exchange Theory, originally developed by Homans (1961) and later refined by Blau (1964), argues that social and political interactions are driven by reciprocal benefits, with individuals making decisions based on the perceived rewards and costs associated with each exchange. This perspective remains highly relevant in electoral studies, as voters are more likely to support candidates who they believe will deliver tangible or symbolic benefits to their communities. Complementing this, Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) emphasizes the salience of group-based identification, suggesting that voters often choose candidates who they perceive as representatives of their cultural or

communal identities. In the domain of communication studies, the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) by Petty and Cacioppo (1986) provides a nuanced understanding of persuasion through central and peripheral routes, highlighting the dual influence of rational message evaluation and affective cues such as personal branding. More recently, the relational approach to political marketing underscores the role of societal ties in shaping trust and loyalty, with scholars noting that interpersonal networks and community engagement amplify campaign effectiveness (Fernandez et al., 2023). Together, these theories provide a comprehensive conceptual framework for analyzing how personal branding, political communication, and social relations interact to influence voter behavior.

Empirical research in recent years has produced extensive findings on the effects of personal branding and political communication in various democratic settings. Nasir (2022) found that personal branding plays a pivotal role in fostering loyalty among young voters, particularly in emerging democracies where personality cues outweigh policy-based evaluations. Similarly, Li and Su (2023) demonstrated that emotional framing in political communication increases voter engagement by reinforcing affective attachments to candidates. Within the Indonesian context, Nugroho et al. (2023) highlighted the growing influence of digital campaigns in shaping youth political behavior, while Park, Choi, and Lee (2024) confirmed that interactive communication on social media enhances political trust more effectively than one-way messaging. Studies have also emphasized the significance of community ties, with Kaur and Singh (2024) reporting that local-level engagement strengthens perceived political proximity, and Hanna et al. (2021) stressing that relational politics fosters loyalty through trust-building mechanisms. Collectively, these findings establish the importance of integrating digital strategies with relational campaigning to capture the full spectrum of voter behavior.

Despite these insights, several research gaps remain evident in the literature. First, many studies have focused on personal branding or political communication as standalone constructs, without sufficiently exploring their interactive effects on voter behavior when mediated by social relations (Kim & Lee, 2023). Second, while relational campaigning has been theorized, empirical applications in the Indonesian local electoral context remain scarce, particularly in smaller urban centers such as Jambi City where kinship and communal ties play decisive roles (Setiawan, 2022; <https://journal.ui.ac.id/index.php/jcs/article/view/14377>). Third, much of the literature

relies heavily on qualitative or case-study approaches, which provide descriptive richness but lack the statistical rigor necessary to test causal relationships systematically (Simanjuntak & Ndonga, 2024). These limitations underscore the need for a more integrative, quantitative analysis that examines how personal branding and political communication jointly influence voter behavior within the moderating context of societal relations.

Positioning itself within this gap, the present study contributes by testing a relational synergy model that integrates personal branding, political communication, and societal relations into one empirical framework. Unlike previous research that isolates these variables, this article investigates their combined effects using a quantitative design, specifically Partial Least Squares–Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). This approach allows for rigorous testing of moderation effects, addressing the methodological gaps left by descriptive studies (Hair et al., 2021). Furthermore, by situating the analysis in Jambi City—a local electoral setting characterized by strong kinship ties and communal norms—the study extends the applicability of international theories on relational campaigning into the Indonesian context, thereby enriching both domestic and global scholarship on political marketing. In doing so, it provides empirical evidence on how relational dynamics amplify the influence of branding and communication strategies, filling a notable void in existing literature.

A review of methodological and theoretical trends in recent electoral studies further contextualizes this research. Globally, there has been a shift toward integrating psychological, sociological, and communication theories to capture the multidimensional nature of voter decision-making (Lee et al., 2020). Methodologically, the dominance of digital ethnography and social media analytics in political communication research has highlighted the salience of online behavior, yet such approaches often neglect the offline relational structures that underpin trust (Zhang et al., 2022). In Southeast Asia, electoral research increasingly incorporates survey-based quantitative designs to measure the impact of personal branding and media strategies, reflecting a trend toward data-driven approaches that align with the current study (Utari, 2022). This convergence of theoretical pluralism and methodological innovation provides a strong comparative backdrop against which the present article situates itself, reinforcing its novelty in blending relational variables with quantitative testing in a local electoral context.

The conceptual synthesis derived from this literature emphasizes that voter behavior is not solely a product of isolated campaign strategies but rather the outcome of an interdependent system involving candidate image, message relevance, and relational trust. Theoretical perspectives such as ELM highlight the dual cognitive and emotional routes of persuasion, while Social Exchange Theory underscores the role of reciprocity in sustaining voter loyalty. Meanwhile, empirical findings confirm that relational engagement is the missing link that amplifies the effects of personal branding and political communication. Building on these insights, this study advances a relational synergy model as the conceptual bridge to the methods section, where hypotheses are tested quantitatively to determine how these intertwined dynamics shape electoral success in Jambi City.

### **3 RESEARCH METHODS**

This study employed a quantitative field research strategy with an explanatory design, aimed at testing causal relationships among the variables under investigation: personal branding, political communication, societal relations, and voter behavior. The explanatory approach was chosen because it enables the systematic examination of direct and moderating effects, thus moving beyond descriptive associations toward inferential explanations of political behavior (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). By applying this design, the research provides robust empirical evidence to validate hypotheses derived from theoretical frameworks such as Social Exchange Theory and the Elaboration Likelihood Model within the local electoral context.

The data sources comprised both primary and secondary materials. Primary data were collected through structured survey questionnaires administered directly to registered voters in Jambi City during the 2024 legislative elections. These data reflect individual-level perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors concerning candidates' personal branding, communication strategies, and relational engagement. Secondary data were obtained from official records of the General Elections Commission (KPU) and the Regional Election Commission of Jambi (KPUD), which provided contextual electoral statistics. Additionally, academic literature and peer-reviewed journal articles were consulted to strengthen the theoretical framework and operationalization of variables (Bryman, 2016).

Data collection utilized a structured questionnaire designed based on validated constructs from previous political marketing and communication studies. The questionnaire adopted a five-point Likert scale ranging from “strongly disagree” (1) to “strongly agree” (5), enabling the measurement of latent variables such as credibility, emotional appeal, clarity of political messaging, responsiveness to community issues, and voting loyalty. The instrument was pre-tested to ensure clarity, reliability, and construct validity before being distributed to respondents. Data collection was conducted in person by trained enumerators and complemented with online distribution to increase accessibility and coverage, a mixed-mode strategy that has proven effective in political behavior research (Dillman et al., 2014).

The inclusion criteria required respondents to be: (1) registered as permanent voters (DPT) in Jambi City for the 2024 legislative elections, (2) at least 17 years old at the time of the election, and (3) actively residing in Jambi City during the study period. Exclusion criteria applied to individuals who were not registered voters, those under 17 years old, and respondents who submitted incomplete or inconsistent responses on the questionnaire. This ensured that the dataset accurately represented the electoral population while maintaining data reliability and internal validity (Etikan & Bala, 2017).

The unit of analysis in this research was the individual voter, as electoral behavior is shaped at the micro level by psychological, social, and communicative influences. The study surveyed a total of 400 respondents, selected using stratified random sampling to reflect the demographic and political diversity of the electorate in Jambi City. Stratification was based on three categories: Golkar voters, non-Golkar voters, and abstainers (golput), ensuring proportional representation across key segments of the electorate. This sampling strategy is widely recognized for reducing sampling bias and enhancing the representativeness of findings in electoral research (Lohr, 2019).

The data analysis employed the Partial Least Squares–Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) technique, using SmartPLS 4.0 software. PLS-SEM was selected due to its suitability for testing complex models involving latent constructs, moderating variables, and non-normal data distributions (Hair et al., 2021). The analysis followed a two-stage procedure: first, evaluating the measurement model through tests of convergent validity, discriminant validity, and construct reliability; and second, assessing the structural model through path coefficients,  $R^2$  values, and effect size ( $f^2$ ). Moderation effects of societal relations were examined using interaction terms to identify whether

relational engagement significantly strengthened the effects of personal branding and political communication on voter behavior. Bootstrapping with 5,000 subsamples was applied to test the statistical significance of the paths, ensuring robust inference in line with best practices in SEM.

## **4 RESULTS**

The data analysis in this study was based on responses from 400 participants who were registered voters in Jambi City during the 2024 legislative election. Descriptive statistics were first conducted to provide an overview of the respondents' demographic and social characteristics, followed by inferential statistical analyses to evaluate the relationships among the variables: personal branding, political communication, societal relations, and voter behavior.

### **4.1 Descriptive results of respondents**

The data was presents the demographic profile of respondents. Of the total 400 participants, 62.75% were male and 37.25% female. The largest age group was 26–35 years (31.25%), followed by 46–55 years (22.75%) and 36–45 years (22.0%). In terms of education, 67.25% held a bachelor's degree, 18.5% completed senior high school, and 5.75% possessed postgraduate qualifications. Occupationally, the respondents were dominated by private-sector employees (41.25%) and entrepreneurs (31.5%). Most respondents (76.25%) cited social media as their primary source of political information, followed by interpersonal discussions with family or peers (12.5%) and television (11.25%).

### **4.2 Descriptive statistics of variables**

The measurement of latent constructs indicated high mean values across the four variables. For personal branding, mean scores for indicators such as honesty and integrity ( $M = 4.34$ ), relatability ( $M = 4.35$ ), and transparency ( $M = 4.26$ ) fell into the “good” category (Table 5.2). Political communication showed similarly strong outcomes, with clarity of vision and mission ( $M = 4.38$ ), use of simple language ( $M = 4.31$ ), and direct

interaction ( $M = 4.37$ ) also categorized as “good” (Table 1). Societal relations were rated positively, with candidate reputation in society achieving the highest score ( $M = 4.33$ ) and community engagement ( $M = 4.25$ ) also favorable (Table 2). Finally, voter behavior indicators such as active use of voting rights ( $M = 4.57$ ) and identification with party values ( $M = 4.40$ ) received the highest ratings, indicating strong consistency in political participation (Table 3).

### 4.3 Reliability and validity tests

The outer model testing indicated satisfactory measurement validity and reliability. All factor loadings exceeded the minimum threshold of 0.70, demonstrating strong convergent validity. Average variance extracted (AVE) values ranged from 0.774 to 0.877, confirming that each construct captured sufficient variance of its indicators. Composite reliability values were between 0.966 and 0.977, exceeding the recommended cut-off of 0.70 (Hair et al., 2021; <https://doi.org/10.1080/00273171.2021.1891920>). The Fornell–Larcker criterion showed that square roots of AVE values were consistently higher than inter-construct correlations, confirming discriminant validity.

### 4.4 Structural model evaluation

The inner model evaluation revealed that the explanatory power of the predictors was substantial. The  $R^2$  value for voter behavior was 0.812, indicating that 81.2% of the variance in voter behavior was explained jointly by personal branding, political communication, and societal relations, with the remaining 18.8% attributable to other factors outside the model. According to Chin’s (1998) classification, this  $R^2$  value falls within the “substantial” category.

### 4.5 Effect size ( $f^2$ )

Effect size analysis showed that personal branding contributed moderately to voter behavior ( $f^2 = 0.219$ ), while political communication contributed ( $f^2 = 0.156$ ). Societal relations also displayed a moderate effect ( $f^2 = 0.160$ ). Importantly, the interaction terms revealed that societal relations strengthened the effect of personal branding ( $f^2 = 0.182$ )

and political communication ( $f^2 = 0.190$ ) on voter behavior, confirming their moderating role.

#### 4.6 Path coefficients and significance testing

Bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples yielded statistically significant results for all hypothesized paths (Table 5.11). Political communication had a significant positive effect on voter behavior ( $\beta = 0.369$ ;  $t = 2.840$ ;  $p = 0.005$ ). Personal branding also demonstrated a significant positive influence ( $\beta = 0.292$ ;  $t = 2.055$ ;  $p = 0.042$ ). The moderating effect of societal relations was confirmed both on the relationship between personal branding and voter behavior ( $\beta = 0.427$ ;  $t = 2.143$ ;  $p = 0.031$ ) and between political communication and voter behavior ( $\beta = 0.313$ ;  $t = 2.077$ ;  $p = 0.039$ ).

Table 1. Mean Scores for Personal Branding Indicators

Dimension	Indicator	Mean	Category
Credibility	Honesty and integrity	4.34	Good
	Consistency in words and actions	4.14	Good
Local engagement	Commitment to local issues	4.02	Good
	Responsiveness to community needs	4.20	Good
Emotional appeal	Emotional closeness to voters	4.20	Good
	Relatability	4.35	Good
Authenticity	Original personality	4.24	Good
	Transparency	4.26	Good

Source: Authors

Table 2. Mean Scores for Political Communication Indicators

Dimension	Indicator	Mean	Category
Message clarity	Clear vision and mission	4.38	Good
	Simple, clear language	4.31	Good
Message relevance	Local issues in campaign	4.20	Good
	Responsiveness to community aspirations	4.26	Good
Emotional strategy	Emotional resonance of messages	4.28	Good
	Positive image building	4.39	Good
Interaction	Direct voter communication	4.37	Good
	Use of social media	4.35	Good

Source: Authors

Table 3. Path Coefficients and Significance

Relationship	$\beta$	t-value	p-value
Political communication → Voter behavior	0.369	2.840	0.005
Personal branding → Voter behavior	0.292	2.055	0.042
Societal relations × Personal branding → VB	0.427	2.143	0.031
Societal relations × Political comm. → VB	0.313	2.077	0.039

Source: Authors

These statistical results provide robust empirical evidence on the predictive capacity of personal branding, political communication, and societal relations in shaping voter behavior within the local electoral context.

## 5 DISCUSSION

The findings of this study confirm that both personal branding and political communication significantly influence voter behavior, while societal relations strengthen these effects as a moderating variable. This directly addresses the research objectives and questions, which sought to analyze how candidates' image-building strategies and communication approaches shape electoral decisions in Jambi City, and whether these effects are amplified by relational dynamics. The statistical results, with significant path coefficients for all hypothesized relationships, demonstrate that voter behavior is not only influenced by individual campaign elements but is also embedded within social structures that reinforce trust and loyalty. Thus, the study empirically supports the proposition that an integrative model—linking branding, communication, and social relations—offers a more comprehensive explanation of electoral success.

From a theoretical perspective, these results align closely with Social Exchange Theory, which posits that political decisions are shaped by reciprocity and perceived benefits. Voters appear to reward candidates whose personal branding signals integrity and authenticity, reflecting an exchange of trust for representation (Zhang et al., 2022). The moderating role of societal relations also resonates with Social Identity Theory, which suggests that voters are more inclined to support candidates they perceive as belonging to or representing their community. In Jambi, relational ties reinforce this mechanism, transforming symbolic branding into actionable loyalty. Furthermore, the results provide evidence for the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), where personal branding cues act as peripheral signals while political communication represents central

route persuasion. The moderating influence of community relations suggests that both routes operate synergistically, reinforcing cognitive and emotional processing in voter decision-making (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986).

These findings both corroborate and expand on prior research. For instance, Nasir (2022) found that personal branding significantly enhances voter loyalty among younger electorates, a conclusion mirrored here but extended by demonstrating its moderated effect within community-based contexts. Similarly, Park et al. (2024) showed that interactive political communication fosters trust, which this study confirms in the context of Jambi's electorate. On the other hand, while Kim and Lee (2023) warned that over-polished branding might trigger skepticism among younger voters, the results of this study suggest that authenticity reinforced through societal relations mitigates such risks, thus offering a counterpoint to their findings. This demonstrates that relational embedding can reduce voter skepticism even when candidates employ intensive branding strategies.

The study contributes to both theoretical and practical knowledge. Conceptually, it advances the literature on political marketing by formalizing the Relational Synergy Model, which integrates personal branding, political communication, and societal relations. This framework provides a novel contribution by shifting the role of community relations from being merely contextual to a measurable moderating variable, expanding earlier work that emphasized either branding or communication in isolation (Fernandez et al., 2023). Practically, the findings provide guidance for campaign strategists and political actors in Indonesia and similar democracies. By demonstrating that branding and communication are more effective when rooted in authentic community ties, the study offers an evidence-based roadmap for designing campaigns that align with local social structures, especially in collectivist cultural environments (Kaur & Singh, 2024).

Nonetheless, several limitations must be acknowledged. First, the cross-sectional design captures voter behavior at a single point in time, limiting the ability to observe how perceptions evolve throughout different campaign phases. Longitudinal research would better capture these dynamics (Menon & Sharma, 2022). Second, the sample is geographically restricted to Jambi City, which, while rich in social ties, may not fully represent urban electorates in other Indonesian provinces or Southeast Asian democracies more broadly. Third, reliance on self-reported survey data raises the risk of social desirability bias, a common challenge in political behavior research (Daoust et al., 2021).

These constraints suggest that while the study provides strong evidence for its context, generalizations must be made with caution.

The findings carry several implications for future research and practice. For scholars, further investigation into relational variables is warranted, especially by comparing urban and rural contexts or by incorporating generational differences in digital-native voters. Expanding the model to include mediators such as political efficacy or perceptions of governance performance could also deepen theoretical contributions (Luo et al., 2023). For practitioners, the study highlights the importance of combining digital strategies with offline relational engagement, ensuring that campaigns remain both technologically sophisticated and socially embedded (Owen, 2020). For policymakers, the evidence underscores the value of fostering participatory platforms that enable sustained dialogue between candidates and communities, potentially enhancing both trust and voter turnout (Esser et al., 2022).

## 6 CONCLUSIONS

The study demonstrates that personal branding and political communication exert significant and positive influences on voter behavior, with societal relations acting as a critical moderating factor that amplifies these effects. The statistical evidence confirms that voter decision-making in the 2024 legislative election in Jambi City was shaped not only by candidate image and the clarity of political messaging but also by the strength of relational ties between candidates and their communities. This synergy underscores the importance of integrating image construction, persuasive communication, and authentic social engagement to comprehensively explain electoral behavior in a local democratic context.

Theoretically, the research contributes to the development of political marketing scholarship by introducing a relational synergy model that positions community relations as a moderating variable rather than a contextual backdrop. This conceptual refinement enriches existing frameworks by bridging micro-level communication strategies with meso-level relational dynamics, offering a more nuanced explanation of voter loyalty and participation. Practically, the findings highlight that electoral strategies are most effective when they blend strong personal branding, issue-relevant communication, and sustained

community presence, thus providing a valuable roadmap for political actors and strategists operating in collectivist environments.

Looking forward, future studies may extend this framework by examining generational differences, digital-native electorates, or cross-regional comparisons that capture the diversity of political cultures across Indonesia and beyond. Expanding methodological approaches, such as longitudinal designs or mixed-method strategies, could also provide deeper insights into the temporal dynamics of voter behavior. For practitioners and policymakers, the implications lie in fostering participatory mechanisms and relationally grounded campaigns that build sustainable trust, enhance civic engagement, and strengthen democratic resilience at both local and national levels.

### **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

The author sincerely expresses gratitude to all parties who have contributed to the completion of this study. Special appreciation is extended to the Faculty of Economics and Business, Universitas Jambi, for providing academic guidance and support throughout the research process. Deep thanks are also conveyed to the respondents in Jambi City who generously shared their time and perspectives, making this research possible. The author is equally grateful to colleagues and mentors whose constructive feedback has enriched both the analysis and presentation of this work.

### **DECLARATION OF NO CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

The author declares that there are no conflicts of interest, financial or otherwise, that could be perceived as influencing the content, methodology, or findings of this research. This article was conducted solely for academic and scientific purposes, with full independence and integrity.

### **REFERENCES**

Aspinall, E., & Mietzner, M. (2019). Indonesia's democratic paradox: Popular representation versus democratic quality. *Asian Studies Review*, 43(3), 381–403. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00074918.2019.1588052>

Blau, P. M. (1964). *Exchange and power in social life*. John Wiley & Sons.

- Bryman, A. (2016). *Social research methods* (5th ed.). Routledge.  
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315716862>
- Chin, W. W. (1998). The partial least squares approach for structural equation modeling. In G. A. Marcoulides (Ed.), *Modern methods for business research* (pp. 295–336). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3151312>
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (5th ed.). SAGE.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13645579.2018.1519384>
- Daoust, J. F., et al. (2021). Perceptions of honesty and voter turnout: Experimental evidence. *Electoral Studies*, 71, 102399.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.electstud.2021.102399>
- Diamond, L. (2019). Ill winds: Saving democracy from Russian rage, Chinese ambition, and American complacency. *Democratization*, 26(5), 877–892.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2019.1628432>
- Dillman, D. A., Smyth, J. D., & Christian, L. M. (2014). *Internet, phone, mail, and mixed-mode surveys: The tailored design method* (4th ed.). Wiley.  
<https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118779587>
- Effendi, M. (2013). *Sistem pemilu dan efeknya pada partai politik di Indonesia*. Gadjah Mada University Press.
- Esser, F., Stępińska, A., & Hopmann, D. N. (2022). Political communication in comparative perspective: Democracy and electoral contexts. *Information, Communication & Society*, 25(4), 525–540.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2021.2024209>
- Etikan, I., & Bala, K. (2017). Sampling methods in clinical research. *BMC Research Notes*, 10(1), 1–3. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13104-017-2723-6>
- Fernandez, R., Gutierrez, P., & Martinez, C. (2023). Relational campaigning and voter behavior: The mediating role of interpersonal trust. *Journal of Political Marketing*, 22(2), 145–170. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15377857.2023.2178325>
- Gil de Zúñiga, H., Weeks, B., & Ardèvol-Abreu, A. (2021). Effects of the news-finds-me perception in communication: Social media use implications for news seeking and learning about politics. *New Media & Society*, 23(5), 1386–1405.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/14614448211027215>
- Hair, J. F., Hult, G. T. M., Ringle, C., Sarstedt, M., Danks, N., & Ray, S. (2021). Partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM). *Multivariate Behavioral Research*, 56(2), 160–177. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00273171.2021.1891920>
- Hanna, R., et al. (2021). Emotional engagement and political marketing: The role of personal relations in voting behavior. *Journal of Political Science Research*.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/15377857.2021.1900718>

- Hill, D. T. (2019). Social media and political communication in Indonesia. *Asian Politics & Policy*, 11(4), 639–657. <https://doi.org/10.1111/aspp.12496>
- Homans, G. C. (1961). *Social behavior: Its elementary forms*. Harcourt, Brace & World.
- Huddy, L. (2001). From social to political identity: A critical examination of social identity theory. *Political Psychology*, 22(1), 127–156. <https://doi.org/10.1111/0162-895X.00229>
- Kaur, G., & Singh, R. (2024). Building political capital through community engagement: Evidence from local elections. *Journal of Communication Management*, 28(1), 44–62. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JCOM-08-2023-0102>
- Kim, J., & Lee, H. (2023). Voter skepticism toward over-polished political branding: Evidence from young voters. *Asian Journal of Communication*, 33(2), 185–203. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01292986.2023.2176420>
- Lee, W., et al. (2020). Social media influence on voter behavior: A cross-context analysis. *Social Media + Society*, 6(1), 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305120903890>
- Li, J., & Su, Z. (2023). Emotional framing in political communication: Effects on voter attitudes and engagement. *International Journal of Communication*, 17, 2341–2362. <https://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/20649>
- Lohr, S. L. (2019). *Sampling: Design and analysis* (2nd ed.). Chapman & Hall/CRC. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119488242>
- Luo, C., Sun, R., & Chen, Y. (2023). E-government, digital trust, and political participation. *Government Information Quarterly*, 40(3), 101841. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.giq.2023.101841>
- Menon, S., & Sharma, R. (2022). Political communication, participation, and behavior: Insights from electoral campaigns. *South Asian Journal of Business and Management Cases*, 11(2), 189–200. <https://doi.org/10.1177/09721509221083366>
- Nasir, A. (2022). Influence of personal branding on voter loyalty among young electorates in Indonesia. *Electoral Studies*, 77, 102363. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.electstud.2021.102363>
- Nugroho, A., Pratama, R., & Setiawan, D. (2023). Digital political campaigns and youth voter behavior in Indonesia's 2024 general election. *Journal of Political Marketing*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15377857.2023.2239940>
- Owen, D. (2020). The internet and campaign communication. In K. Kenski & K. H. Jamieson (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of political communication* (pp. 267–286). Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190916398.013.11>

Park, S., Choi, M., & Lee, J. (2024). Interactive political communication in social media and its effect on voter trust. *Telematics and Informatics*, 84, 102035. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tele.2024.102035>

Petty, R. E., & Cacioppo, J. T. (1986). *Communication and persuasion: Central and peripheral routes to attitude change*. Springer. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4612-4964-1\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4612-4964-1_1)

Setiawan, D. (2022). Media and local democracy: The evolving role of communication in Indonesian elections. *Journal of Contemporary Southeast Asia Studies*, 41(2), 211–229. <https://journal.ui.ac.id/index.php/jcs/article/view/14377>

Simanjuntak, J., & Ndong, P. M. (2024). Approaching first-time voters through digital media: A case study in Medan City. *Journal Nusantara: Politik dan Kebijakan Publik*, 15(3), 45–60. <https://journal-nusantara.com/index.php/publik/article/view/224>

Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (1979). An integrative theory of intergroup conflict. In W. G. Austin & S. Worchel (Eds.), *The social psychology of intergroup relations* (pp. 33–47). Brooks/Cole.

Ufen, A. (2008). Political party and party system institutionalisation in Southeast Asia: Lessons for democratic consolidation in Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand. *The Pacific Review*, 21(3), 327–350. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00472330701637040>

Zhang, X., Li, Y., & Chen, H. (2022). Personal branding and political trust: How authenticity and integrity shape voter perceptions. *Public Relations Review*, 48(4), 102235. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2022.102235>

### Authors' Contribution

Both authors contributed equally to the development of this article.

### Data availability

All datasets relevant to this study's findings are fully available within the article.

### How to cite this article (APA):

Setiawan, B., & Yacob, S. (2025). RELATIONAL SYNERGY IN INDONESIAN POLITICAL CAMPAIGNS. *Veredas Do Direito*, 22(2), e223305. <https://doi.org/10.18623/rvd.v22.n2.3305>