



STUDY OF POLITICAL BRANDING THROUGH TIKTOK ACCOUNTS OF INDONESIAN PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES

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Abstract

Early in 2024, there will be a simultaneous general election in Indonesia. The presidential election is receiving interest from the general populace. Social media is being used by the presidential contenders for 2024–2029 to promote their campaigns. We are Social claims that TikTok is the most widely used social media platform in Indonesia. As social media platforms continue to play a crucial role in modern political campaigns, TikTok has emerged as a significant tool for candidates to engage with the electorate, particularly the younger demographic. These candidates engaged in political branding. This research uses a qualitative approach using image analysis from Christopher Pich by collecting data from TikTok with exolyt analysis tools in the form of narratives and video uploads of presidential candidates. The content on each candidate's official TikTok account was examined as part of the analysis. The findings indicate that Prabowo Subianto was not visible on his official TikTok social media account, while Anies Baswedan created a story about change and projected a religious image on his account. Meanwhile, Ganjar created stories about how to sustain development, identified himself with white hair, and was a servant of the people.

Keywords: Presidential Election; Social Media; TikTok

INTRODUCTION

Politics and political processes remain a complex and often controversial field of study. Over the last twenty years, we have seen the use of commercial branding concepts, theories, and frameworks applied to politics (Pich & Armannsdottir, 2022). Branding is not just the name of an organization, product, service, or person; branding is a communication device, representing a complex set of values, visions, and personalities (Harris & Rae, 2011; Jo et al., 2003; Ströbel & Germelmann, 2020). Indeed, political branding acts as a shortcut mechanism for communicating a desired position to multiple stakeholders, such as supporters, activists, media, employees, and most importantly, voters (Balmer & Liao, 2007; Essamri et al., 2019; Pich et al., 2020). Indonesia will hold general elections in 2024. Currently, there are three presidential candidates (bacapres) proposed by a coalition of

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political parties that have fulfilled the requirements. *Presidential threshold*. The presidential candidates are Anies Baswedan, Ganjar Pranowo, and Prabowo Subianto.

Of the three presidential candidates, they began to carry out political branding both in the mass media and on social media. In a political context, a political branding image is a manifestation of a communicated identity combined with perceptions, associations, and attitudes that exist in the minds of citizens or voters (Pich et al., 2018). Pich further identified the main dimensions that shape a political image, including trust (*trust*), competence (*competence*), integrity (*integrity*), and attractiveness (*attractiveness*). The image of political branding can be seen as a direct understanding of political branding that is brought to life through association *top of mind*, understanding of physical and intangible elements, perceived expectations about how the brand will perform and supported [or not] by past direct and indirect experiences (Winther Nielsen, 2016). The image of a political brand should also reveal different differentiation factors, which can represent points that are unique to the brand (Pich et al., 2018, 2020).

Brand identity relates to the 'distinctive and relatively enduring characteristics' of the imagined position of a brand (Nandan, 2005; Su & Kunkel, 2019). The formation and management of political brand identities is an ongoing process. Indeed, they need to understand that identity is essentially an internally created construct, but they only sometimes have complete control (Armannsdottir et al., 2019). Therefore, strategists, politicians, and communications directors need to be aware that the formation and management of political branding identities involves various stakeholders (Pich et al., 2020). In the current era of information technology, a factor that must also be considered is social media. This new media has become an essential factor in political branding. Social media is a medium of communication between actors and society.

Connectivity or involvement that is built from the use of social media or what is known as "*engagement*". This is interpreted by (Bowden, 2009) as a psychological process concept that encourages customer loyalty. This is evidenced by the interaction with content that has been published via social media, which is expressed in activities such as liking content, commenting on content, and sharing with other users (Barger et al., 2016). The content that has been published is a form of loyalty and satisfaction, trust, and commitment (Van Doorn et al., 2010). Data from Indonesia Digital *Report t* (We are Social, 2023) shows that Indonesia, with a population of 276.4 million people, has 212.9 million active internet users (around 77% of the population) and 167 million active social media users (around 60.4% of the population). From this data, we can conclude that social media is a potential place for political branding.

The emergence of TikTok is a global phenomenon that can change the way humans consume content, influencing popular culture with innovative approaches and sophisticated algorithms. TikTok has experienced rapid growth and has become one of the most downloaded applications in the world (Stokel-Walker, 2023). TikTok's advantage over other platforms is its very sophisticated recommendation algorithm. These algorithms learn user preferences and serve highly relevant and engaging content, thereby increasing user engagement significantly. This is proven on TikTok, which often influences global trends, such as memes (#challenges). Many companies and brands have taken advantage of

TikTok's advantages for marketing products and services, taking advantage of the platform's virality and reach. This opportunity was also taken advantage of by the presidential candidate for the 2024 Indonesian Election.

To identify *gap research*, then the researcher traced previous research. Researchers found several studies related to the research themes raised by researchers. Research with the title *Personal Political Branding: Ganjar Pranowo's Campaign Strategy for the 2024 Presidential Election on Social Media Twitter* aims to explain Ganjar Pranowo's political branding strategy through his Twitter social media account. This study uses a qualitative method; then, researchers used the Nvivo 12Plus application to analyze the data. The results of this research show that the political branding efforts carried out by Ganjar Pranowo present himself as a leader who is close to the lower middle class, a leader who upholds ethnicity and culture, a leader who supports improving the community's economy through MSMEs, a leader who is close to the younger generation. (Hadjira & Suranto, 2023).

The second article, entitled "Literature Review: Anies Baswedan's Digital Political Communication," is a review of several of the articles concerned in this review. The research method used is a *Systematic Literature Review*. Data collection in database searches was carried out for publication titles, abstracts, and the keyword "Anies Baswedan" in 10 (ten) electronic databases from the source <https://scholar.google.com/>. From the results of the literature review, it can be concluded that the public's stigma towards Anies Baswedan's leadership with his digital communication tends to be positive). The third article is an international article with the title "*Positioning a Personal Political Brand on YouTube with Points of Different Visual Storytelling.*" It seeks to fill this gap and tries to understand what kind of personal branding can be successfully created on YouTube for a politician's campaign. The analysis is an exploratory *visual storytelling brand-building* of two political leaders in Greece in the pre-2019 European Parliament election period. The results show that visual storytelling with emotional symbols, authentic appearances, and universal slogans are the main differentiators for politicians to position themselves effectively (Mochla et al., 2023). The fourth article is also an international article with the title "*Audio Identity in Branding and Brand Communication Strategy: A Systematic Review of the Literature on Audio Branding,*" which responds to the need to establish a conceptual foundation and state-of-the-art to advance in the in-depth study of the discipline through a systematic review of the literature. This review was carried out on the Web of Science database for the 2011-2020 period. After initial screening, a total of 36 articles were analyzed and divided into four areas of relevance: phonetics in brand names, advertising and audiovisual branding, local city or country branding, and political branding (Vidal-Mestre et al., 2022).

From the four research articles on political branding above, there are *research gaps* that the researchers raised this time, this research uses TikTok social media as the primary material in the research. According to the article (Kartini, 2023), social media TikTok is the most popular application in the world, including in Indonesia. Based on this article, researchers assume that TikTok social media will be used in branding the politics of the 2024 presidential election.

METHOD

This study adopted a qualitative research approach to capture rich insights and contextual understanding rather than proposing generalizations, allowing researchers to access a 'closed world' (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This is consistent with explicit calls for more interpretive research on different types of political brands to 'uncover' the deep meanings ascribed to political brands and their potential impact on society. In this research, researchers used software (*software*) TikTok *analytics*, namely Exolyte. Researchers collected data in the form of video documentation from official accounts (*official*) TikTok social media for presidential candidates who have submitted themselves in the 2024 General Election competition. The official TikTok social media account is marked with a blue tick symbol, which means the TikTok account is verified. The blue tick symbol indicates that the account is authentic according to TikTok's requirements. Researchers selected and sorted the Bacapres TikTok accounts by paying attention to the blue check mark (*verified*), which indicates that the account is the official account of the account owner.

There are two verified official accounts (*official*) who can be tracked Anies Baswedan with the account name @aniesbaswedan and Ganjar Pranowo with the account name @ganjarpranowo. Meanwhile, for Prabowo Subianto, researchers did not find Prabowo Subianto's official account on TikTok social media. Researchers analyzed the data presented by *software* exolyt, then determined primary data in the form of graphs and statistics from Bacapres' official TikTok social media account related to the political branding built on TikTok social media. The researcher's interpretation of the political branding of the official Bacapres account will provide important understanding for the public. This is consistent with the philosophical assumptions of this research (Van Manen, 2014).

RESULT DAN DISCUSSION

Anies Rasyid Baswedan's TikTok Account Description

Anies Baswedan's official TikTok social media account has *followers* as many as 153.9 thousand with 136 videos and 1.7 M likes. The account description contains an explanation that the account is Anies Baswedan's official account which is managed by the team, as well as the use of #ABW for personal uploads by Anies.

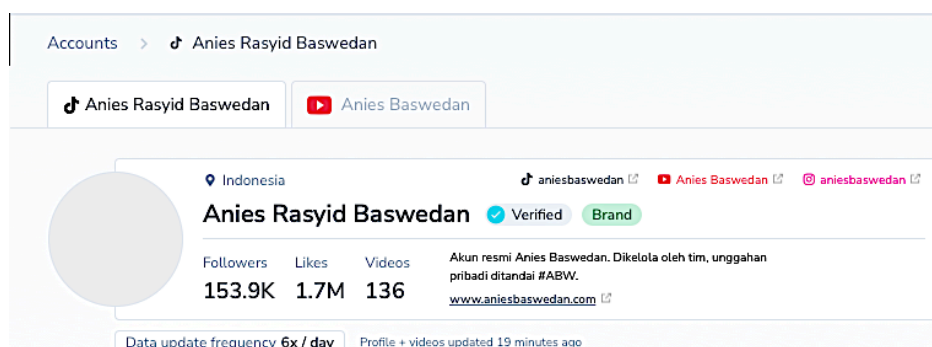


Figure 1. Profile of Anies Baswedan's TikTok account
Source: Exolyt profile account analysis, 2023

Anies' TikTok account in the period September-October 2023 was dominated by content-building branding towards the campaign period in November-February 2024. Anies

is the first Bacapres to choose Muhaimin Iskandar as Bacawapres to compete in the 2024 presidential election. Using TikTok allows Anies to reach a younger and more dynamic audience through creative and informative short video content. Apart from that, Anies also uses question-and-answer sessions, polls, and live streaming to interact directly with followers. This can help increase engagement and make followers feel closer. It cannot be denied that active interaction with followers can increase engagement, which is an important indicator of the success of a campaign on social media. *Engagement* can be seen through the following data:

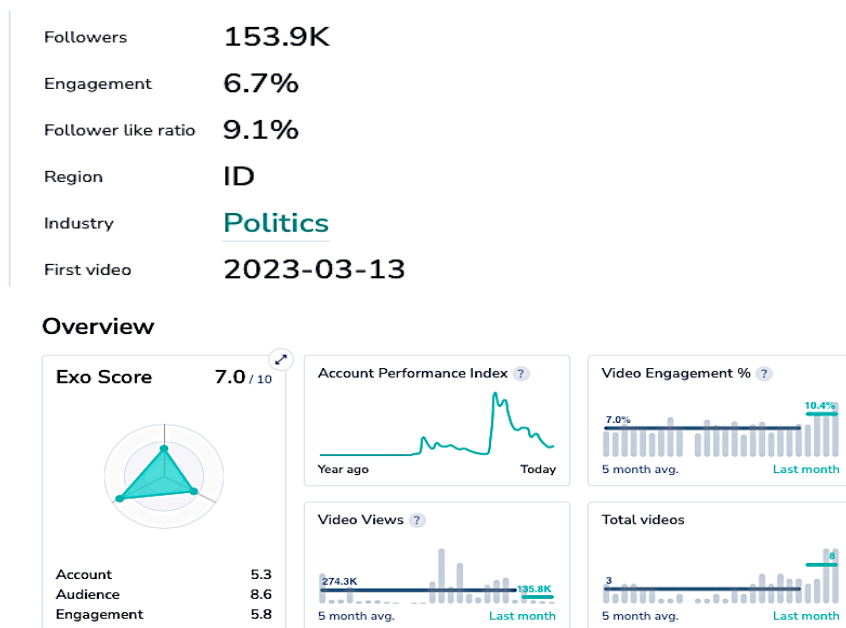


Figure 2. Overview of Anies Baswedan's TikTok account
 Source: Exolyt overview, 2023

Anies Baswedan's official account on TikTok social media has an *engagement* of 6.7% based on all videos on this official account. The engagement rate on a TikTok account is a metric that measures how active and engaged the audience is with the uploaded content. This is important to understand the extent to which the content created is successful in attracting attention and motivating interaction from followers (Hennessy, 2018). One of the factors influencing content *engagement* is the use of *hashtags* (#).

The content shared by Anies Baswedan looks deep *caption*. Content descriptions always use #AMINAJaDulu. #AMINAJaDulu is the identity of the couple Anies Baswedan and Muhaimin Iskandar. Efforts to use #AMINAJaDulu for campaigning and instilling the *image* of Anies Baswedan in mind *followers*. With *followers* of as much as 153,900, Anies Baswedan's account obtained an *engagement rate* of 6.7%. The figure of 6.7% can be concluded as the involvement of *followers* in every content shared by Anies Baswedan is still low. Data shows that Anies Baswedan's TikTok account has experienced significant volatility (up and down) over the past month. For videos, *engagement* experienced a significant increase over the past month. Over the last five months video figures *engagement* around 7.0%, while in the last month, it increased by around 3.4% to 10.4%. This is influenced by the increase in the number of video uploads over the last month.

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	Title	Posted	Region ?	Promoted? ?	Views	Likes	Comments	Shares	Downloads	Favourited	Engagement
<input type="checkbox"/>	 Kami bertekad mengembalikan kewarasan dalam bernegara. #AMINAJaDulu	2 hours ago 2023/10/20 03:01	Indonesia		● 18.2K	● 2.6K	● 129	● 71	0	88	15.2%
<input type="checkbox"/>	 Alhamdulillah, pintu gerbang perjuangan kini telah dibuka. Gembok yang menghalangi itu hancur oleh niat lurus dan komitmen kuat untuk mendatangkan perubahan, menghadirkan keadilan. #AMINAJaDulu	4 hours ago 2023/10/20 01:16	Indonesia		● 43.8K	● 4.7K	● 223	● 65	0	153	11.5%
<input type="checkbox"/>	 Siap gaspol? Sebarkan pesan perubahan kepada semua! #AMINAJaDulu	6 hours ago 2023/10/20 10:52	Indonesia		● 7.4K	● 1.3K	● 88	● 29	0	42	19.8%
<input type="checkbox"/>	 Kemerdekaan adalah hak segala bangsa, itulah salah satu pesan konstitusi kita. Mari kita doakan saudara-saudara kita di Palestina yang sedang menghadapi gempuran dan cobaan. Kita terus dukung dan doakan Palestina segera merdeka untuk masa depan yang lebih baik. #AMINAJaDulu	20 hours ago 2023/10/19 08:50	Indonesia		● 66.5K	● 8.5K	● 358	● 178	0	347	13.6%

Figure 3. Engagement rate on Anies Baswedan's TikTok account
 Source: Exolyt Engagement Rate, 2023

From the videos uploaded on TikTok social media, Anies Baswedan's account uploads many videos with the theme of change. The theme of change raised is change for the better of the country. Videos with the theme of change are getting *engagement*, which is high by netizens. Recorded video *engagement* the highest at 19.8% with the *caption* "Siap gaspol? Sebarkan pesan perubahan kepada semua! #AMINAJaDulu". The use of the word 'gospel' in the *caption* This language is a slang language that is popular among the millennial generation and generation Z. This is Anies Baswedan's way of getting closer to the millennial generation and generation Z and creating a sense of inclusivity and closeness, making the younger generation feel that their views and ways of communicating are recognized and accepted. Based on data (We are Social, 2023), there are more social media users with millennial and Generation Z backgrounds than social media users with generational backgrounds, *Baby boomers* and Generation X.

Not only using familiar language, the caption "*Sebarkan pesan perubahan kepada semua!*", also contains a call to action that encourages active participation from the audience to gather support and social mobilization. This indicates a strategy to build an active support base and engage in the campaign. The use of the hashtag #AMINAJaDulu inserted in each caption in Anies Baswedan's TikTok account upload serves to increase the visibility and

virality of the campaign. This reflects the importance of branding and continuity in campaign messages on social media platforms.

Ganjar Pranowo's TikTok Account Description

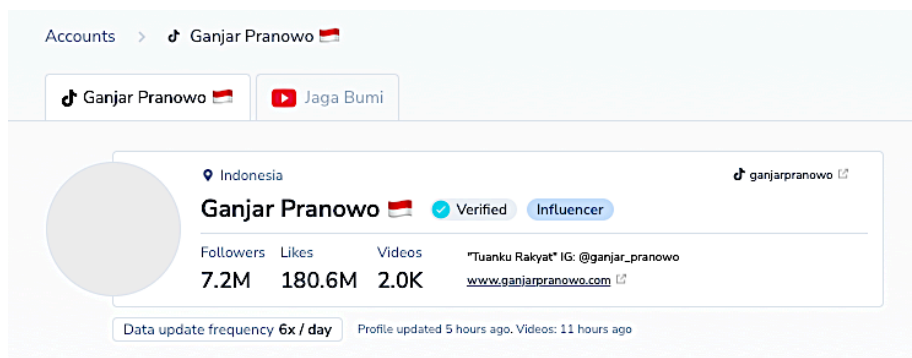


Figure 4. Profile of Ganjar Pranowo's TikTok account
Source: Exolyt profile account analysis, 2023

Second, researchers analyzed Ganjar Pranowo's TikTok social media account. This account has *followers* as many as 7.2 million and the number of videos is around 2,000 videos that have been uploaded to TikTok. A short description of this account uses the narrative "Tuanku Rakyat" IG: @ganjarpranowo accompanied by the website www.ganjarpranowo.com. Furthermore, Ganjar Pranowo's official account is recorded as having an *engagement* of 7.4% based on all videos that have been uploaded

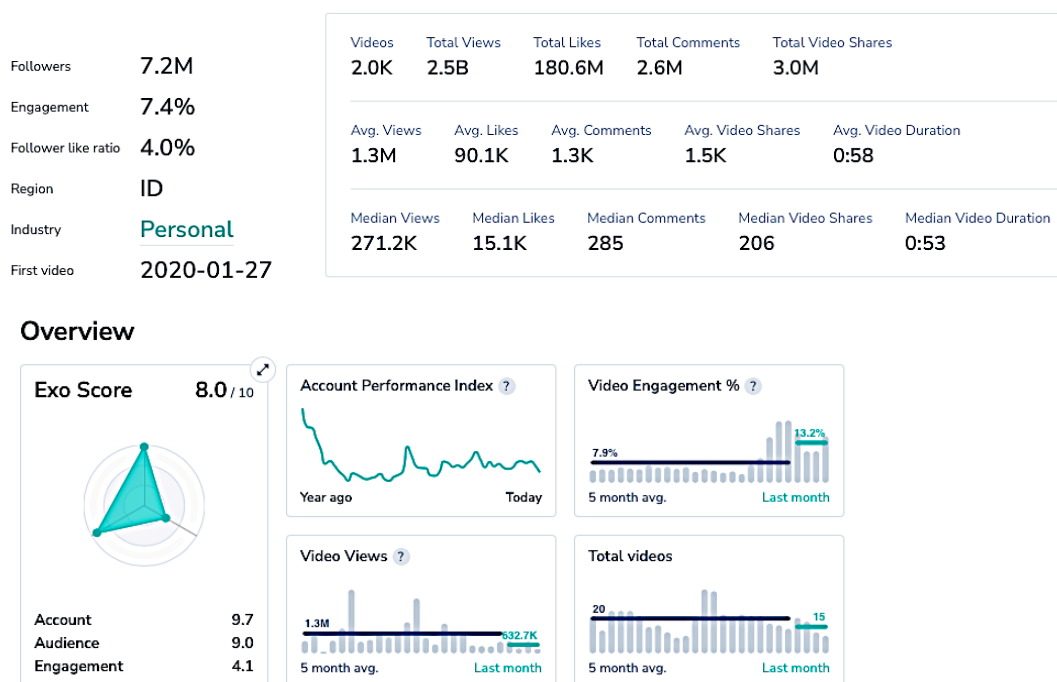


Figure 5. Overview of Ganjar Pranowo's TikTok account
Source: Exolyt overview, 2023

Data shows that Ganjar Pranowo's TikTok account has also experienced volatility over the past month. Video *engagement* experienced an increase of around 5%. For *views*, videos experienced a significant decrease of six hundred thousand *views* compared to the previous five months' total *views* as many as 1.3 million. This happened because of the decline in video uploads over the past month. Video uploads in the last month averaged 15 video uploads per week, compared to the last five months, with an average of 20 video uploads.

In Ganjar Pranowo's official TikTok account, there is a *Playlist* created by the account owner. *Playlist* This is in the form of a category of activities carried out by Ganjar and uploaded on TikTok social media. Data shows from *Playlist* There are seven categories, namely, children, infrastructure, sowan ulama, *quote*, *love*, near you, and reward work. From the categories *playlist*, Ganjar wants to portray himself on TikTok as a person who is close to young people, respects the ulama, and documents the results of his work while serving as Governor, especially in the infrastructure sector.

After analyzing two official TikTok social media accounts for each of the presidential candidates who will take part in the 2024 Indonesian Presidential Election, researchers saw that there were two different political brandings for the two official TikTok accounts of Anies Baswedan and Ganjar Pranowo. The choice of social media TikTok as social media for political translation is the case that these two figures want to be seen by the millennial generation and Generation Z as contemporary figures. Because TikTok social media itself is widely used by the millennial generation and generation Z. Meanwhile, Prabowo Subianto, who is also a presidential candidate whom his coalition has promoted, is considered not to pay attention to the millennial generation and generation Z, so he does not have an official TikTok social media account.

In political branding, it is very important to create the perception of figures in social media, so that the image becomes *top of mind* among the target audience. As explained in the initial analysis, Anies wants to be known as a figure of change in society. The changes highlighted in the uploaded videos use hashtags (#) with the theme of change, such as #coalisichange #forindonesia. As we know, using hashtags (#) is a step to categorize each uploaded video so that it is easy to search via search engines on social media (Nasution & Rojiati, 2021). Anies also documents his activities in the regions and uploads them to his TikTok account.

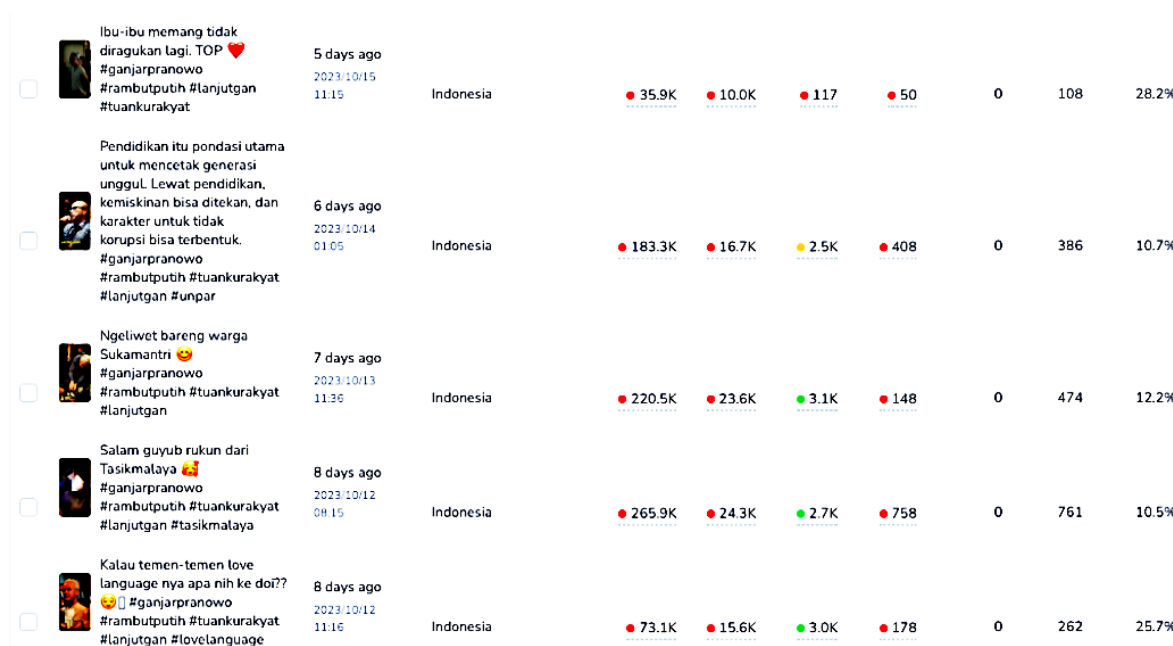


Figure 6. Engagement rate on Ganjar Pranowo's TikTok account
Source: Exolyt Engagement Rate, 2023

Meanwhile, on Ganjar Pranowo's official Tiktok account, we can see content about his activities while serving as Governor of Central Java and other activities such as cycling, running, and sports that portray him as close to young people. Recorded video *engagement* the highest at 28.2% with the caption “ibu-ibu memang tidak diragukan lagi, TOP”. The caption shows appreciation and recognition of the role of mothers, who are an essential social group in society. The involvement of emotional sentences is considered to tend to inspire, motivate, and create a sense of pride and appreciation which has the potential to increase sharing and positive comments. Apart from that, it also suggests that Ganjar is a figure who respects family and social values. Ganjar also often uploads family themes with content uploaded by his wife and children. In this case, Ganjar wants to be seen as a *family man* in the eyes of netizens. The hope is that this will have an impact on increasing Ganjar's popularity and support among "mother" voters.

DISCUSSION

Christopher Pich in his research on political images, offers deep insight into how modern politics utilizes branding principles to shape public perception. There are four main dimensions in forming a political image, the trust dimension, the competence dimension, the integrity dimension, and the attractiveness dimension.

Dimensions of trust play an important role in shaping public perception, namely the ability of a candidate or party to be considered honest, trustworthy, and consistent. The dimension of trust in Anies Baswedan's TikTok account and Ganjar Pranowo's TikTok account often share personal narratives and authentic stories that reflect experiences using *hashtags* respectively, like #AMINAJa Dulu for Anies Baswedan and #ganjarpranowo for

Ganjar Pranowo. The second *hashtag* has the most viewed by both followers. These two TikTok accounts also actively respond to comments and interact with their followers, marked with an *engagement rate* considered average. For authentic content, the Anies Baswedan account shares critical content and inspires public rationality to increase public trust. Meanwhile, the authentic content of Ganjar Pranowo's TikTok account was built through consistent content that raises issues about clean government, public services, and community welfare. Ganjar can strengthen his image as a leader who is honest, competent, and trustworthy to the public.

Dimensions competence reflects the abilities, skills, and abilities shared in social media content. The competency dimension in Anies Baswedan's TikTok account, conveys in his content the idea of change. The narrative about change depicts him as an individual full of ideas, as are the characteristics of a leader. Meanwhile, the competency dimension of Ganjar Pranowo's TikTok account can be seen from the content shared about his experiences as a leader in Central Java and his political views. This is done to build an image as a leader who is trustworthy and hard-working.

Dimensions integrity reflects the ethical values, morality, and honesty of a leader. The dimension of integrity, in Anies Baswedan's TikTok account, content is shared about issues of educational equality and elections that are honest, fair, and neutral. These themes are raised continuously on his TikTok account so that Anies can build and strengthen his image as an ethical and trustworthy leader. The integrity dimension of Ganjar Pranowo's TikTok account can be seen from video uploads that explain his decisions and policies openly and provide clarification if there is a misunderstanding or controversy. This shows a commitment to transparency and honesty.

Dimensions attractiveness on social media, including TikTok, includes a variety of elements that make content engaging and *engaging* for the audience. Both of them upload videos with high quality in terms of resolution and editing. However, what is different is the theme raised. Anies Baswedan's account uses #AMINAjaDulu as the *main hashtag*. This can be of interest to religious communities because the word Amen is the closing word of prayer. The atmosphere is different from the Ganjar Pranowo account, which consistently uses #tuankurakyat and #ganjarpranowo. Use *hashtags* this is less interesting (*catchy*) for the generation of young people whose percentage is high in the 2024 elections this time.

CONCLUSION

From the results of the analysis and discussion, it can be seen that Anies Baswedan and Ganjar Pranowo pay attention to the content they upload on TikTok social media. The opinion that social media TikTok is a media that is popular among the millennial generation and generation Z has made these two figures use this social media as a means for political branding and building a political image so that it is popular among these two generations. According to data, these two generations have a percentage of around 54% of the total voters in the 2024 elections. Meanwhile, Prabowo Subianto does not have an official TikTok social media account. So, no deeper conclusions can be drawn about this character.

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