

CHAPTER V

CLOSING

A. Conclusion

Based on the results and discussion in this research regarding Gen Z's decision factors in choosing political candidates, it can be concluded that:

Based on the results of interviews with 30 Gen Z informants in West Sumatra, it was found that the main factors influencing their decisions in choosing political candidates, especially Cerint Iraloza, were the influence of social media and the level of trust in the candidates. Social media has become the main platform for Gen Z to get political information, discuss and form opinions about candidates. Cerint has successfully leveraged social media to build direct connections with young voters through content that is authentic, interactive, and relevant to issues that are important to them, such as education and inclusivity. Trust in candidates is also a crucial factor, where Gen Z wants a leader who is honest, transparent and understands their needs. This is reinforced by Cerint's personality which is considered authentic and reflects the values of Gen Z, so it is able to create a close emotional connection with voters.

The role of social media marketing, political branding and candidate image are very effective strategies in influencing the perceptions and decisions of Gen Z voters. Cerint is able to present creative and consistent political branding, creating an image as a progressive, innovative and relevant young leader. Visual elements such as campaign design and personal narrative reinforce the authentic and humanistic impression that Gen Z greatly appreciates. By using social media

as a marketing tool, Cerint not only builds popularity, but also fosters trust and active engagement from voters. In conclusion, Cerint's success in attracting Gen Z support shows that innovative digital strategies and a focus on values relevant to young voters can be key factors in winning the hearts of this generation in the modern political context.

B. Suggestion

Based on the conclusions above, several suggestions given from this research are as follows:

1. The results of this qualitative study highlight the importance of authenticity, emotional connection, and interactive engagement in shaping a favorable candidate image among Generation Z. Candidates are advised to continue utilizing social media not merely as a promotional tool, but as a platform for meaningful two-way communication. Practices such as live Q&A sessions, behind-the-scenes content, and storytelling that reflects personal values can help reinforce trust and relatability. Furthermore, while this study provides rich, in-depth insights into voter perceptions and motivations, a complementary quantitative approach in future research could offer statistical generalizations by measuring the strength of relationships such as the correlation between specific social media activities and voter trust or intention to vote. This would enable a more comprehensive understanding of how digital engagement strategies influence electoral success.

2. Generation Z, as a digitally native demographic, is advised to cultivate a more critical and reflective approach when consuming political content online. The qualitative findings reveal that voters often respond positively to visually appealing and emotionally resonant content, but may overlook the importance of verifying information or evaluating candidates based on substance. Therefore, young voters should be encouraged to engage in deeper political literacy—by comparing sources, understanding the policy vision and track record of candidates, and participating in constructive civic discourse. Future studies using a quantitative approach could further explore the extent to which media literacy or exposure to certain types of political content statistically influences voting behavior, misinformation susceptibility, or civic engagement levels. Such data would be valuable for designing voter education programs tailored to Generation Z.

C. Implications

The findings of this study provide significant implications for political candidates, campaign teams, policymakers, and scholars in understanding the evolving dynamics of voter behavior, particularly among Generation Z (Gen Z).

1. **Practical Implications for Political Campaigns** The role of social media marketing is paramount in influencing the perceptions and decisions of Gen Z voters. Platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter are not only tools for information dissemination but also spaces for interaction, dialogue, and relationship-building. Candidates and campaign teams

should adopt innovative strategies that emphasize authenticity, creativity, and engagement. Content should be tailored to resonate with Gen Z's core values, such as inclusivity, education, and social justice, while leveraging visually appealing formats and interactive features like live streams, polls, and Q&A sessions. By focusing on transparency and relatability, political figures can foster trust and emotional connection, which are crucial in building long-term voter loyalty.

2. **Theoretical Contributions** This study enriches the existing body of literature on political marketing by highlighting the interplay between social media influence, candidate branding, and voter trust. It underscores the importance of aligning branding efforts with the values of target demographics. The findings validate existing theories that emphasize the role of emotional and value-based connections in political decision-making, adding a contemporary lens to how digital strategies redefine political campaigns.
3. **Policy Implications** For policymakers, the growing reliance on social media for political engagement signals the need for regulations that ensure transparency, authenticity, and accountability in digital campaigns. Policies aimed at combating misinformation and promoting digital literacy among Gen Z voters could further enhance the quality of democratic processes.
4. **Educational Implications for Gen Z** The study also highlights the responsibility of Gen Z voters to critically assess the information they

consume. Educational institutions and civic organizations should promote programs focused on media literacy, equipping young voters with the skills to identify credible sources, discern misinformation, and engage in meaningful political discussions.

D. Limitations

Despite its contributions, this research is subject to several limitations:

1. Limited Sample Size and Transferability

The study involved 30 informants from the Generation Z demographic in West Sumatra, selected through purposive sampling. While this is appropriate for qualitative research that prioritizes depth over breadth, it inherently limits the transferability of findings to wider contexts. Future research may benefit from incorporating larger and more varied samples, possibly from other provinces or regions, to capture broader sociocultural dynamics. Furthermore, a quantitative approach in future studies could help test the generalizability of these insights using statistical tools and larger datasets.

2. Single Case Focus

The research centers exclusively on the case of CerintIraloza, whose success is shaped by unique characteristics such as youth, appearance, and strategic branding. While this offers an in-depth look at a compelling political figure, it may not reflect the dynamics surrounding other

candidates. Future research is encouraged to conduct comparative case studies or cross-candidate analyses, both qualitatively and quantitatively, to uncover patterns and differences in political branding and voter response.

3. Subjectivity and Self-Reported Data

As with most qualitative studies, data collection in this research relies heavily on self-reported narratives obtained through interviews. While these accounts are valuable for exploring perceptions and experiences, they may be influenced by social desirability bias or selective memory. Future research can enhance methodological rigor by combining triangulation strategies, such as using content analysis of social media posts or field observations. A complementary quantitative study could also be designed to measure variables such as voter trust, engagement levels, or brand perception using validated instruments.

4. Contextual Focus and Thematic Boundaries

The study focuses specifically on three dimensions—social media marketing, political branding, and candidate image—without delving deeply into other influential factors such as socioeconomic status, political party affiliation, cultural norms, or religious values. While this narrowed scope allows for focused analysis, it may leave out complex interactions that shape voter decisions. Future research could adopt a holistic framework, integrating both qualitative and quantitative approaches to

explore the interplay between internal campaign strategies and external sociopolitical factors.

5. Temporal Specificity and Evolving Platforms

The findings are embedded within the specific context of the 2024 elections and the current digital landscape. However, social media platforms and voter behavior are continuously evolving. What resonates with Generation Z today may shift in future electoral cycles. Longitudinal qualitative studies or future mixed-methods research are recommended to explore how voter perceptions and political branding strategies transform over time in response to technological and cultural changes.



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