

# The Beginner Voters in The Thick of Attack on Political Advertising

Agusly Irawan Aritonang  
 Department Of Communication  
 Petra Christian University  
 Surabaya, Indonesia  
 agusly\_irawan@yahoo.com

**Abstract-** A contest of general election, especially a Presidential election, becomes a phenomenon which is interesting to observe. The mixture of communication activities run by each couple of the candidates, which are in the form of opened campaign speech, political debate and also advertising on media, are the communication tools of the candidates so that their profile, vision-mission, and also programs can be delivered. Furthermore, the expectation is to affect the voters to vote that candidate. Related to the voters, the beginner voters becomes such a strategic target which is potential to work on. This research tries to observe the reception of the beginner voters toward the political advertising especially the advertisements of Jokowi – Ma'ruf and Prabowo – Sandi as the candidates for president and vice president in 2019. By using the method of reception analysis with qualitative approach, this research finds that the beginner voters have various reception related to messages of the candidates' political advertisements. The variety of this reception is caused by several factors. Collecting data is done by having deep interview toward chosen interviewee with various backgrounds.

**Keywords** - *the beginner voters, reception analysis, political advertisements*

## I. INTRODUCTION

2019 is a political year when a party of democracy will be held. General election this time chooses legislative members and President / Vice President. This momentum is always convinced as a tool to fix state's condition as well as to show whether or not the citizens' participation on politic gets better. In this Presidential Election, there are two couples of name that are onward as President candidates ; President Jokowi and his rival in President Election 2014; Prabowo Subianto.

Related to effort to attract the votes, the campaign effort is absolutely required. In every phase or process of general election, the campaign phase is always presented. This thing surely shows that the campaign phase is crucial as a moment to introduce

the candidates, their vision - mission, and also the work programs.

One of the candidate's methods to campaign is by presenting the political advertising. The political advertising still is a promising tool to introduce the candidates and their programs. If it is understood as a communication process, the advertisements containing certain political messages are delivered to the audiences so that they can notice and furthermore accept the messages then it is convinced that the advertisements have impact to the audiences, in this case they are the voters.

One of the voters groups which is potential to be the campaign target is the beginners voters. The beginner voters as the youths, who will use their vote right for the first time in the President & Vice President Election, surely will be such soft target to batter continuously with political messages so that they can know, have attitude and finally they can do act for choosing or not toward certain candidate. Besides, the involvement of the youths or beginner voters to actively use their voting right in the election is a form of process of a good political education for the citizens so the youths are expected to be not apathetic toward social as well as political problems. Data from Ministry of Home Affairs states that the beginner voters in the general election 2019 are more than 5 million. [1] However, if it is expanded with terms of young voters and millennial generation with age limit of 35 years old then it reaches 79 million people [2]

By having the understanding, that the audiences can create meaning with various backgrounds and other factors, make the audiences have various reception related to certain messages within the political advertising. Related to that thing, then it becomes interesting and important to see how the reception of the beginner voters in considering the political advertising of candidates for the President/Vice President 01 & 02 according to General Election Commission in Presidential Election 2019. By using a method of reception analysis with qualitative approach, then the interview becomes an instrument for collecting data

of the research target which are the beginner voters with age limit 17-21 years old who will use their political right for the first time to vote in the Presidential Election 2019.

## II THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### *A. Political advertising*

Political advertising is understood as a communication process when a source (usually it is a political candidate or party) buys an opportunity to expose a receiver toward political messages through mass channel with expected effect such as affecting attitude, belief, and/or their political behavior. [3]

Political advertising, as media for campaigning, surely contains messages. Generally, there are 3 main characters of messages within the effort of campaign and political advertising, which are information, persuasion, image. [4]

Robert Baukus in Combs says that political advertising can be distinguished into several, they are :

1. Attack advertising which is aimed to discredit the enemy.
2. Argument advertising which shows the ability of candidates to overcome problems they face.
3. ID advertising which gives knowledge on who the candidate is toward the voters.
4. Resolution advertising which the candidates conclude their thought to the voters. [5]

### *B. Reception of Beginner Voters*

The audiences are believed as the targets whose characteristic are active. It is according to a theory of active audience saying that people accept and interpret messages of media with different ways, usually it depends on factors such as age, ethnicity, social class, and many more. The audiences are not passive.

The reception analysis has emphasis on the using of media as a reflection of social culture context and as a process of giving meaning through the public perception on experience and production. [6] The reception analysis itself refers to qualitative study related to public reception which one of its aims is to reveal perception and impact of media from messages of mass media. [7] Stuart Hall quoted by BaranFor the attention, a researcher has to focus on (1) analysis on context of social and politic in

content production (coding) and (2) consumption the content of media (interpreting). [8]

Related to the reception analysis, there are 3 paradigm related to theory of reception analysis. They are encoding-decoding, audience ethnography, and constructionist or discursive paradigm. [9] Related to this research, then for research on reception analysis will be directed to encoding decoding paradigm. Related to this paradigm, then there must be at least 3 points which can be seen when the audiences try to interpret text from a media.

1. Dominant code which means that the messages delivered by media dominate the audiences. Thus the messages delivered by media is accepted positively by the audiences.

2. Negotiated code which means that the negotiated code admits that the audiences make their own adaptation based on certain situation. In doing the interpretation on what is said by the media, the audiences have consideration in interpreting it. The position of audience reception here can accept or refuse but with certain reasons.

3. Oppositional Code; when people in accepting the messages delivered by the media, do interpretation which the characteristic is refusing and decoding with the opposite way. The meaning delivered by the media is refused (not accepted) by the audiences. [10]

Related to the voters, General Election Constitution No. 7 year 2017 on general election mentions the voters are Indonesian citizens who are already hit the age of 17 (seventeen) years old or more, already married, or had married. Furthermore, the beginner voters is who vote for the first time or ever used their voting right once, have less experience in doing the voting. The less-experienced voters is affected by the less knowledge of politic so that they are included in floating mass with an age limit of 17-21 years old. [11]

## III RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### A. Reception of Beginner Voters Toward Advertisement of Candidate 01

#### *1. Assertion on Card as Work Program*

In the first presentation of advertising of candidate 01 Jokowi – M. Amin, it is shown that there are 3 cards which become mainstay of work program of Jokowi M. Amin. Those 3 cards are Pre- work cards, cheap nine food necessities cards, Indonesia Smart cards (university). Each of these cards has its own target which is adjusted with the target's need. This thing is stated by the President Jokowi's audio

which is supported by a presentation from video which illustrates the area from each video.

Romi (pseudonym), who is a university student, considers that the mentioning of those 3 cards is not proper. Through his opinion, Romi shows his disagreement toward those 3 cards since those cards programs stated by couple of Candidate 01 will only increase the state's debt.

*It's not important, because basically Indonesia has a lot of debts. With those 3 cards, the debts will soar. The debts will keep increasing.*

Siska (pseudonym), who is a Senior High School student, has a different opinion. Siska positively welcomes the emergence of those 3 cards as a work program proposed by candidate Jokowi – M.Amin. According to her, that thing will make Indonesia be more progressive. Siska positively welcomes especially for Senior High School students just like herself who are going to plan to continue their study to university, then the emergence of those 3 cards is such a proper thing. It can be seen from Siska's statement (pseudonym) below :

*The positive is that it can make Indonesia be more progressive. Just like the sembako (nine basic necessities) card, it is required, and then pre-employment card. Also the smart cards, for me as a Senior High School student, this is proper for the students of Senior High School who are going to continue tu university.*

The next interviewee is Tania (pseudonym). Tania is also a university student. Tania has view point that what is shown in advertisement of candidate 01, especially about the cards, is more about the assertion on the achievement or the work result.

*The advertisement of 01 contains the real work result of Mr.Jokowi, which has been realized in 5 years becoming a President of Indonesia. In my opinion, if the healthy card is presented, it is briefly to show the result of Jokowi's work.*

## 2.An Image of Fatherly Figure

The second advertisement of candidate 01 starts with a scene of a father takes care of his child. A visual view comes up with a scene of a father who teaches his child to save, accompanies when his child bikes and takes care when his child gets sick. After that, it continues with a scene of Jokowi distributes books for children, visits traditional market, leads shalat (prayer) and a scene where M.Amin comes to visit the sick people and continues with a scene of Jokowi carries a child with special need and then it

closes with Jokowi's speech to built optimistic message. Generally speaking, this advertisement shows that Jokowi is presented as a "father" figure for Indonesian citizens. This advertisement shows that Jokowi with a "father" figure is a figure who is required for Indonesian citizens. The image of "father" figure in this advertising gains various opinion from the beginner voters.

Romi has critical view point related to the presentation of this second advertisement. He does not agree with the image presented in the second advertisement of a couple of candidate Jokowi-M.Amin. According to him, the image which is more important is no mere an image of President who is humble but a President who is an executive profile as a head of state who work in the top level so that the people below him are happy.

On the other hand, Siska captures another message related to the "father" image in a figure of Jokowi in the second advertisement. According to her, the image in the advertisement shows that Jokowi is a figure who is assertive and prestigious. Siska is on negotiated position since she agrees with that image yet she captures another impression.

*"The second advertisement is interesting. I agree that Jokowi is a person who is assertive. He is also prestigious. I follow the news on his children and also how he acts toward his grandchildren. So, in my opinion he is prestigious."*

Tania also captures the same impression on the "father" image in the Jokowi's second advertisement. She states by having an image like this, then the messages tried to be featured is that Jokowi comes up as a "father" image who is required and always be there for the people. According to her, Jokowi's image with this "father" figure is such a natural thing because according to her, it is his true characteristic.

*"Before Mr. Jokowi is elected as a President, he has been wellkown for his kindness and being down to earth (both his appearance and his vibes). Therefore, people have already perceived that those are his natural characteristic, not merely for politic requirement."*

## 3.The effort to reach the young generation & millennial

In the third advertisement, the aspect captured by the interviewee tends to the aspect of presentation of the message which tries to reach the youth, the beginner voters, and millennial generations. Romi gives his own acknowledgement in the third advertisement of Jokowi – M.Amin. According to him, there is an interesting element in this third

advertisement and it is because of the setting and also the built nuance, which is the classic nuance. Besides, Romi also agrees that Jokowi has already tried to embrace the youth and millennial including the beginner voters. However, according to him it is not maximum yet because of the designation of the vice president which is even from the old group.

In the involvement and emergence of M. Amin as a candidate of vice president, Romi, Siska and Tania agree that the emergence of M.Amin as the candidate of vice president is so inconsiderable. Romi especially gives critical notes related to the emergence of M.Amin in the advertisement of Jokowi which, according to him, is so inconsiderable.

Siska and Tania show confused expression in responding the third advertisement. It is difficult for them to capture the message which is tried to build in the third advertisement. However, both of them give the same note in the portion of involvement of M.Amin which is considered less than Jokowi's, even in the whole advertisement of partner candidate 01. Tania says her argument :

*"I don't know how to criticize about this. However, Mr. Amin is quite passive as Mr. Jokowi's Vice President Candidate."*

#### B.The Reception of Beginner Voters Toward Advertisement of Couple of Candidate 02

The General Election Commission's version of Prabowo's advertising consists of 3 advertisements. From those 3 advertisements, there are observed points and they become important points for the respondents such as :

##### 1.The closeness of Figure Prabowo Sandi with people

The visual image of Prabowo which is close to people is considered that it appears in most advertisement of Prabowo – Sandi especially in the first and second advertisement. Romi gives his positive opinion toward Prabowo's advertisements showing much closeness with people. He expresses it through his statement :

*"In my opinion, the most interesting thing in Prabowo is that he never shows off that he is close to the people. So, in fact, it is the people who come close to him. It is not he who comes to the people. It is the thing that interests me."*

The same thing related to the of Prabowo's closeness and massiveness when meeting people in order to campaign is also alluded by Siska. Siska gives notes in this advertisement that Prabowo is closer to the people and it is such an interesting thing for her as a beginner voter. A figure of Sandi is also captured as one who is close to the people.

Tania is neutral with the video scene in Prabowo's advertisement showing Prabowo and Sandi often meet the people. According to her, that effort is such a part to introduce themselves in the campaign.

##### 2.The assertion of Figure's Profile of Prabowo – Sandi

As the candidate for President and Vice President, the personal impression as well as an image of a figure of a future leader which are captured by public becomes important. Related to image of a Candidate of President, then there are various answers given by the beginner voters who also become the respondents. Romi, as a voter, reveals that he captures the impression on Prabowo which is different from what people often say about him. If the impression came up in the public is that Prabowo is a figure who is strict, then in this political campaign advertisement, Prabowo comes up with characteristics which are kind and good. On the other hand, the impression on Sandiaga Uno which he captures from that advertisement is that he comes up as a figure who is expert in economy. This statement emerges since he sees in those advertisements that Sandi visits the market more often.

A different impression on Prabowo's figure is captured by Siska. According to her, even though in that advertisement it is shown many scenes that Prabowo comes to visit people but the impression of Prabowo as a figure who is strict and assertive is still appears. It is caused by Prabowo's background who is a former military leader. Siska's expression appears in her statements as below :

*"His profile is a strict person. He is strict but his background is also a leader, a military leader. He is strict yet assertive."*

On the other hand, Tania personally still cannot capture something related to what Prabowo Sandi try to show by Prabowo Sandi because, according to her, the domination of Prabowo's advertisement visually shows more on Prabowo campaigns and visits several places. This thing can be understood from Tania's statement which mentions :

*"I cannot captures the whole profile image because the advertisement only contains Prabowo campaigns and visits the several employments."*

##### 3. A combination of Narration and Visual in order to clarify Program, Vision- Mission, and Certain Issue

An element which becomes a power in Prabowo-Sandi's advertisement is that a strong

narration which strengthens the visual delivery. The three respondents also have attention point on narration used in Prabowo-Sandi's advertisement. According to Romi, the narration in Prabowo-Sandi's advertisement becomes a tool to deliver their vision and mission or ambition about Indonesia by the couple of candidate Prabowo-Sandi such as Fair and Prospered Indonesia.

On the other hand, Romi also has a note related to persuasion aspect from Prabowo-Sandi's advertisement. According to him, the Prabowo-Sandi's advertisement is less persuasive for their supporters to vote Prabowo-Sandi. The thing which Romi captures is this advertisement tends to support this general election. The portion of persuading only appears at the end of the advertisement.

Beside the narration, according to Romi, a visual image aspect is also used in Prabowo-Sandi's advertisement to state certain issue. According to Romi's view point, the couple of Prabowo-Sandi, who is often accused of issue of establishment of the principle of Khilafah if they win, in their advertisement even shows a different thing. According to him, Prabowo-Sandi's advertisement shows elements of the other religions. Romi compares it with Jokowi-M.Amin's advertisement, which according to him, tends to feature only one religion..

*"In this advertisement, there is no aspect for religion. There is only one religion that is presented; Islam. On the other hand, other religions are not presented. It is very different to the advertisement of Prabowo who is accused for Khilafah issue or changing the state into Islamic state. In his advertisement, all religions are presented. in my opinion, this one is more fair."*

Related to the religion issue / sentiment which blows hard during this presidential election, Romi gives argument about couple of candidate 02. He thinks that Prabowo-Sandi is the figures of leader who do not only focus on only their group of people but they are also the figures of fair leaders.

*"I think it's not true because Prabowo also considers people's fate. He will not only fight for his group. To be a leader, he must be fair. So, he will not create or change this state into Khilafa's state or Islamic based state, yet it is true that many Moeslems are behind him to support him. However, there are also many non-Moeslems such as Tionghia ethnic who is new politician (I forgot his name), there are also many figures such as from PAN, he is Bataknese who ever presented on TV ONE. He is a Prabowo's supporter. He is not a Moeslem, He is a Christian (is I'm not mistaken). There are many supporters who are not*

*Moeslems yet Prabowo still embrace them because yeah, they support each other."*

The issue on diversity is also concerned by Tania in Prabowo-Sandi's advertisement. According to her, the party of Prabowo – Sandi do realize that Indonesia is diverse. Thus, that thing is shown in their political advertising. However, Tania furthermore feels that concrete proof is more required rather than aspect of words which are delivered merely in the form of narration. . It is reflected in Tania's statement which says :

*"Mr. Prabowo does understand and realize the diversity which is the characteristic of our nation and state; Indonesia. However, I actually do not undersand whether or not Mr. Prabowo can only show his visiting to the people..and what about his work program ?"*

On the other hand, Siska has her own opinion about couple of candidate of Prabowo-Sandi related to diversity issue. According to her, there is impression which makes her feel worry with this couple of candidate. This thing is reflected from Siska's statements, they are :

*"Actually, it makes me a little bit worry. However, if I think so, then Jokowi-Ma'ruf Amin are also the same because they seem on the Moeslem side. So, they are same. However, I think 02 makes me worrier."*

#### IV CONCLUSION

The thing which becomes a point related to the respondent's reception toward political advertising of couple of candidate 01 & 02 is : Romi has oppositional tendency towards 2 advertisements of couple of candidate 01 but he is on negotiated position toward 1 advertisement especially on the aspect of discussion effort to persuade the youth and millennial generation. On the other hand, for the advertisement of couple of candidate 02, Romi is on dominant position. Siska is on dominant position for 2 advertisements of couple of candidate 01 and one reception which is negotiated. On the other hand, for advertisements of couple of candidate 02, there is oppositional reception towards 2 Prabowo-Sandi's advertisements and 1 dominant reception. On the other hand, Tania is on negotiated position towards 2 advertisements of couple of candidate 01 and dominant towards 1 Jokowi's advertisement as well as negotiated towards all advertisements of couple of candidate 02.

The variety of reception from each interviewee, related to political advertising in Presidential election 2019, is affected by several factors which become the

background such as 2 of 3 these interviewees who are also the beginner voters are the voters who prefer to put forward the profile of a figure than vision-mission program. Nevertheless the beginner voters who have negotiated tendency tend to consider the vision-mission and program.

Besides, the aspect of early introduction of the candidates mainly still comes from the family. Media has function as information source to strengthen / deepen the information about figure of candidate who becomes the choice especially in discussion on important issues. In the process of general election 2019 this time, the religion sentiment also blows hard then the information got from the media strengthen how each respondent thinks and accepts the message which is delivered in other forms including political advertising. The pattern of media consumption affects the width / depth of issue which can be elaborated and become material of discussion by the interviewee.

It is also found in the interview that related to decision of the beginner voters to vote the candidate is also a result of family discussion. The family factor becomes crucial since family comes up as the ones who introduce and becomes a place for the interviewee to share their thought.

#### REFERENCES

- [1] (<https://news.detik.com/berita/d-4215354/ada-5-juta-pemilih-pemula-di-pemilu-2019>).
- [2] (<https://nasional.kontan.co.id/news/pemilih-pemula-dominasi-pemilu-2019-apa-dampaknya>).
- [3] Kaid, Lynda Lee. 2015. Handbook Penelitian Komunikasi Politik. (ed.terjemahan). Penerbit Nusa Media : Bandung. p :250.
- [4] Pawito, 2009, Komunikasi Politik: Media Massa Dan Kampanye Pemilihan, Edisi Pertama, Jalasutra, Yogyakarta.p: 257-265.
- [5] Cangara, Hafied. 2011. Komunikasi Politik. Konsep, Teori dan Strategi. Rajawali Pers: Jakarta.p: 281.
- [6] McQuail, Denis. 1997. *Audience Analysis*. London. SAGE Publications, Inc.p.17-18.
- [7] Jensen, Klaus Bruhn and Nicholas W. Jankowski.2002. A handbook of Media and Communication Research. London : Routledge.
- [8] Baran, 2010 TeoriKomunikasiMassa :Dasar, Pergolakan, danMasaDepan . PenerbitSalembaHumanika : Jakarta.p:33).
- [9] Devereux, E. (2003). Understanding the media. London: Sage Publication. p : 138.
- [10] Jensen, Klaus Bruhn and Nicholas W. Jankowski.2002. A handbook of Media and Communication Research. London : Routledge. p: 162-163.
- [11] Rudini, Atas Nama Demokrasi. Jakarta: Biograf Publishing, 1994, p. 109