

Campaign Props: The Environmental Threat Behind Indonesia's Democratic Celebration

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ABSTRACT

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Campaigns in general elections have become a very important part of the implementation of democracy in a country. Indonesia as one of the democratic countries is also inseparable from these activities as part of the culture of democracy. However, the implementation of the campaign itself varies in every democratic country. The implementation of the 2024 elections in Indonesia, especially the Banjarmasin city area, is colored with banners, banners and billboards installed throughout the country. However, the installation of banners and billboards, especially those in the Banjarmasin city area, is still mounted on trees, corners, empty houses, in front of alleys and electric poles. Therefore, this paper raises the research question of how the use of billboards as promotional media in elections can disrupt the environment. Using qualitative methods, data was collected through literature study, documentation and direct observation. Through this research, it can be understood that the use of billboards on trees and public facilities is disruptive as a medium that is not environmentally friendly.

1. Introduction

Election campaigns are fundamental in a democratic system. Campaigns have an important role in shaping public opinion, increasing voter participation, and influencing election results. However, campaign activities in Indonesia are still carried out through traditional means, namely with banners of various shapes and sizes.

The use of banner materials that contain a lot of plastic and are difficult to decompose in nature becomes a big problem when not properly controlled. In addition, the placement of campaign props in the form of banners is also still messy. In fact, some banners were nailed to trees and on wires both on trees, electric poles and alleys.

The use of campaign media in the form of banners is a real threat both to the environment due to the impact of the use of materials that are difficult to decompose, also dangerous for the surrounding community, especially road users and become visual pollution that can interfere with concentration. Therefore, it is important in this case to understand the threat posed by the campaign media that is very widely used in the Indonesian general election in 2024.

In a world that has entered the digital era, there should be many media options for conducting campaigns that are more environmentally friendly and have fewer negative impacts. The use of digital media, such as social media, is a more environmentally friendly alternative to the use of banners. But if you want to continue using traditional media such as banners, why nail them to trees, electricity poles, fences or road gates which have a negative impact on the environment. We should be more aware of the threats caused by these problems, regardless of the excitement of the ongoing democratic party.

Previous research that also discusses the same issues in this paper is categorized into three main categories. First, there are writings that discuss regulations related to campaigns and their props (Isna et al., 2021; Salman & Sunarso, 2021; Sihombing, 2024; SWASONO & YOGA, 2017). The second category is writings that discuss campaigns and the use of campaign props in the view of the law (Akbar et al., 2023; Anam, 2018; Arsyad, 2019; Pratama, 2021). The last category is writings that discuss campaign media as visual waste (Amrurrobi, n.d.).

The closest previous research to this paper is the third category that deals with visual waste in campaign media. This paper also discusses the impact of campaign props as visual pollution. Moreover, what differentiates this paper, and the main discussion are additional threats related to Resource Consumption, the production of billboards and banners requires significant resources, including the use of disposable wood and plastic ropes. In addition to waste production, many billboards and banners are often discarded, leading to waste generation. Habitat disturbance, the installation of billboards and banners can disturb local habitats, especially if placed in natural or sensitive areas. The production and disposal of billboards and banners can involve the use of chemicals that are harmful to the environment. Most importantly, Traffic disruption, large and eye-catching billboards and banners can distract drivers, potentially leading to accidents and injuries, further impacting the environment and public safety.

This paper seeks to provide an additional perspective on the threats posed by election campaigns conducted in Indonesia. Based on previous studies, there are still not many writings that provide this view. With a critical approach, this paper seeks to provide an additional view from existing research studies.

2. Method

The present study utilizes a qualitative research methodology, which focuses mainly on descriptive research. According to Creswell (Creswell, 2012), the research methodology that has been selected is descriptive qualitative, and it entails the investigation and understanding of individual or group perspectives of social and human concerns. Three methods were used to obtain the data: literature review, documentation analysis, and observation.

The author in this study made direct observations in various areas of Banjarmasin city, while observing the placement of campaign props and taking some pictures. Observations were made on three indicators: first, the position of the campaign props, second, how the campaign props were placed, and third, the size of the campaign props. Furthermore, the author analyzed related literature to help the author explain the phenomenon that occurred.

3. Result and Discussion

This paper tries to bring back awareness regarding the use of traditional campaign props used in democratic parties in Indonesia. The use of billboards, billboards and banners is not prohibited from being used as campaign props, but it is better to regulate them appropriately so that they do not become a problem in the future. By understanding the adverse effects of irresponsible use of campaign props, we hope that we can improve it at the next democratic party in Indonesia.

This paper divides the discussion into two main discussions. The first is about the environmental consequences of using billboards and banners in elections and advocate for more sustainable and eco-friendly advertising practices. The second discussion is about the shortcomings of alternative media such as new media in elections and advocate for more sustainable and eco-friendly advertising practices and how to maintain traditional media through good regulation and better understanding.

3.1. The environmental consequences

In environmental communication, the impact of using billboards and banners as promotional media in elections can be explained in detail to raise awareness and promote sustainable practices. Here's a more detailed explanation.

3.1.1. Visual Aesthetics

Billboards and banners, when used excessively or inappropriately, can disrupt the visual harmony of an environment. They can dominate the landscape, overshadowing natural features and architectural landmarks. This visual clutter can reduce the aesthetic appeal of an area, affecting people's enjoyment and appreciation of their surroundings. It can also impact tourism, as visitors may be deterred by the unattractive scenery.

The chaotic placement of banners as campaign props in Banjarmasin city has become an obstacle to the existing green scenery. The positioning of banners adds to the poor appearance of the scenery, especially for road users. The green environment, as well as the rice fields that are supposed to be the view of the road in the city of Banjarmasin, have turned into an ugly, colorful sight of a collection of campaign props.



Figure 1. Situation On Mahat Kasan Road

One of the things that the author encountered was a collection of campaign props along Mahat Kasan Street in East Banjarmasin Subdistrict. As we can see in Figure 1, the roadside is filled with campaign props of various colors and sizes along the road. In addition, the neighborhood is also close to residents' residences and mosques.

The proximity of the placement of campaign props to residents' residences is also a concern for the author. Although there have been no official complaints from homeowners, when the author made observations, there were a number of residents who seemed less friendly approaching and questioning the author's activities in documenting data. Although this did not become a serious problem when the author explained again the activities that the author was doing.



Figure 2. Placement of Banners Near Residents' Homes

In Figure 2, which is a collection of pictures that the author managed to collect, we can see how close the placement of campaign props is to the residence of residents. People who have beautified their living environment must be haunted by the dirty view caused by the placement of chaotic campaign props in their neighborhood. In addition, abandoned buildings, unoccupied houses and buildings that are in the process of construction seem to be the main spots for laying campaign props.

a. Sustainable Resource Use

The production of billboards and banners requires significant amounts of resources, including energy, water, and raw materials such as vinyl or plastic. These resources are often extracted and processed in ways that contribute to environmental degradation, such as deforestation for paper production or fossil fuel extraction for plastic production. By promoting more sustainable practices, such as using recycled materials or digital advertising, campaigns can reduce their environmental footprint and help conserve natural resources.

b. Waste Generation

After elections, many billboards and banners are discarded, leading to waste generation. These materials can take years to decompose, adding to landfill pollution. Proper waste management

practices, such as recycling or repurposing, can help minimize this impact. Campaigns can also consider using biodegradable materials or designing reusable banners to reduce waste.

c. Habitat Disruption

The installation of billboards and banners can disrupt local habitats, especially if they are placed in sensitive areas such as wetlands or wildlife corridors. This disruption can harm local wildlife and ecosystems, leading to loss of biodiversity and ecological imbalance. Campaigns should consider the environmental impact of their advertising locations and strive to minimize disruption to natural habitats.

Banjarmasin city, which is a wetland area, has become an important issue related to habitat disruption. The environment of Banjarmasin city, which has many rivers and swamps, is a sensitive area related to non-biodegradable waste. Waste from props that are damaged and destroyed due to natural situations will not decompose easily and pose a threat to existing habitats.



Figure 3. Banners Around Riverbank



Figure 4. Banner Nailed to Tree

The improper and haphazard placement of banners around the riverbanks and marshland as shown in Figure 3 poses an additional risk to the environment. In addition, the nailing and use of wires in campaign props banners on trees is another problem in habitat protection. Although there are regulations related to this, the author still finds many such cases in the field as we can see in figure 4.

d. Safety Concerns

Large, attention-grabbing billboards and banners can distract drivers, posing a safety hazard. Studies have shown that drivers are more likely to be involved in accidents in areas with distracting advertising (Oviedo-Trespalacios et al., 2019; Wallace, n.d.; Yang et al., 2024). This not only endangers motorists but also pedestrians and cyclists. Responsible advertising practices, such as avoiding overly flashy or distracting designs, can help mitigate these safety concerns.

The placement of campaign props in Banjarmasin itself still does not concern the level of safety of road users. Campaign props are still placed at intersections, bends and turns. At some points, they are even placed in front of alleys, making it difficult for drivers to see the entry and exit of vehicles.

In addition, the installation of the props banners is also still fairly fragile which can result in the fall or detachment of the props. Several cases related to the fall of campaign props have occurred in several other regions in Indonesia. Such as in the East Jakarta area, a motorcyclist hit a car, campaign props that fell on the East Jakarta brass laying bridge, billboards of campaign props blocking pedestrians and students who died because the billboards of campaign props were blown into the road (Hajid & Amijaya, 2024; Kausar, 2024; Prihatini et al., 2024; Setiawan, 2024).

Even worse, there are some people who place props in the middle of the road divider. The author witnessed this phenomenon when passing through the inter-city road that connects Banjarmasin City, Banjar Regency and Banjarbaru City. The props were placed in the middle of the windy road divider and attached using ropes.

The placement of campaign props in the city of Banjarmasin also has the potential to threaten road users. Fortunately, until this research was conducted, there have been no accidents caused by campaign props in the city of Banjarmasin. However, this does not mean that Banjarmasin city does not have this risk.

By explaining these impacts in detail, this paper can raise awareness about the environmental consequences of using billboards and banners in elections and advocate for more sustainable and environmentally-friendly advertising practices. Whether it is through other alternative media such as new media or tightening regulations related to the installation of campaign props. In addition, campaign participants and their success teams can understand the threats posed by their activities by considering their impact on the environment.

3.2. Why Not Switch to New Media?

Then why not do the campaign through new media? Although new media such as the use of social media and digital media has a better impact on the environment, new media still has some weaknesses. There are several things that new media cannot fulfill in running a campaign. Such as algorithms, segmented audiences and others. While new media offers several advantages for election campaigns, there are also challenges and drawbacks that may make it less suitable or effective in certain contexts.

- **Digital Divide:** Not all voters have equal access to new media platforms, such as the internet or smartphones. This can create a digital divide, where certain groups of voters are effectively excluded from campaign messages that are primarily distributed through new media. This can be particularly problematic in areas with limited internet access or technological infrastructure.
- **Information Overload:** The proliferation of digital media channels and platforms can lead to information overload, making it difficult for campaign messages to stand out and resonate with voters. In a saturated digital landscape, campaigns may struggle to capture and maintain the attention of their target audience.
- **Fake News and Misinformation:** New media platforms can be vulnerable to the spread of fake news and misinformation, which can distort public discourse and undermine the credibility of election campaigns. Campaigns may find it challenging to combat misinformation and ensure that their messages are accurately conveyed to voters.
- **Privacy Concerns:** New media platforms often collect and use personal data for targeted advertising, raising concerns about privacy and data security. Campaigns need to navigate these concerns carefully to avoid backlash from voters who are increasingly concerned about their privacy online.
- **Technical Challenges:** Digital advertising campaigns require technical expertise to create and manage effectively. Campaigns may face challenges in navigating the complex landscape of digital advertising platforms and optimizing their campaigns for maximum impact.
- **Regulatory Issues:** New media advertising is subject to various regulations and policies, which can vary widely between jurisdictions. Campaigns need to ensure compliance with these regulations, which can be complex and time-consuming.
- **Overall,** while new media offers many benefits for election campaigns, including reduced resource consumption and increased efficiency, it also presents challenges that need to be carefully considered and addressed to ensure a successful campaign.

Then how important it is for us to switch to new media in election campaign issues depends on the target audience we want to reach. Although we cannot abandon traditional media such as banners in election campaigns, it does not mean that there is negligence in the implementation of the use of these media. So it is important for us to understand the risks of its use and how we manage these risks.

4. Conclusion

The use of disposable banners and billboards in election campaigns in Indonesia does have a negative impact on the environment. However, it is not easy to switch to new media entirely on this issue. Therefore, it is important for every level of society, election participants and regulators in this case the government to understand the risks that will be caused.

We must anticipate the risks that arise, not only by providing clear regulations regarding their use but also awareness of the environmental impacts that will be caused. The public and election participants and their success teams must understand that their safety and environment are at risk. Therefore, awareness regarding this issue must be understood. We do not want our elected leaders to only solve the problems they created during the campaign process to get them elected.

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