

The Role of Content Marketing in Building the Branding of the Mayor of Baubau During the Nomination Period

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ABSTRACT

Keywords:

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In the digital age, content marketing has emerged as an efficient strategy for brand development, particularly for local leaders such as the mayor of Baubau. This study examines the impact of content marketing on the branding of the mayor of Baubau throughout the candidacy phase. Data was gathered via interviews and social media content analysis, employing a qualitative methodology and case study framework. The study's results indicate that content marketing has effectively cultivated a favorable perception of the mayor of Baubau as a leader who is kind, approachable, inclusive, and with a clear vision. Campaign videos and motivational storylines have proven effective in increasing community engagement and strengthening brand identity. However, the challenge lies in preserving message consistency and handling communication crises. The results of this study indicate that content marketing is crucial for garnering voter support.

1. Introduction

Political campaigns in the 5.0 era like today are inadequate using antiquated techniques including billboards, banners, or direct socializing gatherings. Including in the election of the Mayor and Deputy Mayor of Baubau, digital transformation has radically altered the way candidates engage with the public (Kithinji et al., 2023). Modern voters now shape their perceptions more via digital media, including content on social media, online news stories, and creative campaign videos. Candidates in this situation have to be more flexible and know how to create good relationships using the digital sphere (Swart et al., 2021).

Personal branding in politics is the candidate's effort to develop a strong and consistent self-image that appeals to the voters. Personal branding is a conscious effort to create a unique personality that sets one apart from others and improves their standing in the eyes of the audience (Zulfikar, 2023).

Personal branding becomes a major element affecting candidate appeal in the context of the Baubau Mayor and Deputy Mayor elections, especially in light of growing and complex rivalry. Candidates' personalities, values, and communication styles have more impact on voter preferences than just their suggested policies (Husnal & Hari, 2022). This suggests a change in modern voter behavior: people are giving personal stories including life experiences, core values, and leadership qualities—more importance than traditional political promises. Personal branding in the political sphere is a candidate's attempt to create a strong, consistent self-image that appeals to the public. Defining personal branding as a strategic tool to build an identity that sets one apart from others and enhances their standing in the minds of the audience (Iqbal & Sudiwijaya, 2024).

There appears to be no text supplied for translation. Send the material you wish to translate, please. Personal branding becomes a significant element deciding the appeal of candidates in the context of the Baubau Mayor and Deputy Mayor elections, particularly against growingly close and complicated competition. Based on opinions of the candidates' personalities, values, and

communication styles, rather than just the work programs provided, it reveals that voters are more likely to develop political preferences (Fikri, 2024). Modern voters' behavior is reflected in this; they are more interested in personal stories like life stories, personal values, and leadership character than only normative political promises (Al-Gasawneh et al., 2021).

Therefore, building personal branding has turned into a strategic need for mayoral candidates to promote emotional closeness, build trust, and improve their prospects of winning in political contests. Personal branding has become a main need in the political arena of today rather than merely an addition (Iqbal & Sudiwijaya, 2024).

Personal branding is how a candidate creates a strong, consistent, and appealing self-image in the eyes of the public. H. Yusran Fahim and Wa Ode Hamsinah Bolu created a leadership image by means of content posted on social media in the context of the Baubau election. Their personal stories and values seemed more real amid the fierce rivalry than just political promises, so winning the hearts of many voters (Kubin & Von Sikorski, 2021).

Content marketing has emerged as the primary tool in political campaign plans. To not just communicate messages but also to foster emotional intimacy with constituents. Yusran Fahim and Wa Ode Hamsinah Bolu utilize social media, humanistic campaign videos, and daily storytelling to portray themselves not merely as politicians, but as integral members of the Baubau community (Prudnikov & Nazarenko, 2021). Content marketing strategies such as these are efficacious in enhancing voter engagement and fortifying their loyalty (Towner & Dulio, 2012).

Research indicates that, due to the advancement of social media and digital technologies, digital campaigns are increasingly integral to elections. Chadwick and Stromer-Galley (2016) demonstrate that the digitalization of campaigns has enabled candidates to engage a broader public through social media and innovative material. In Baubau, H. Yusran Fahim and Wa Ode Hamsinah Bolu employ Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube to cultivate connections with voters, communicate their vision and mission, and reveal their personal attributes. Numerous prior studies, including those by Towner and Dulio (2012), emphasize how candidates utilize digital platforms to enhance voter engagement. Nevertheless, despite considerable efforts to comprehend social media strategies in campaigns, there is a deficiency of studies that rigorously investigate the function of content marketing, especially regarding the branding of mayoral candidates in Indonesia.

Content marketing in the political sphere is not only a theory; it is actually happening all over, even in Baubau. Yusran Fahim and Wa Ode Hamsinah Bolu use social media channels such as TikTok and Instagram to post personal reflections that stir feelings, different social projects, and community interactions. Candidates who seem genuine and consistent on social media, earn more public trust (Du Plessis, 2017).

Though several studies have underlined the need of campaign digitalization, many still ignore the clear link between the use of content marketing and the personal branding of political candidates. Previous studies have concentrated more on the broad use of social media and its effect on voter participation; they have less investigated how content marketing as a structured and focused content strategy can shape a candidate's self-image, especially in the context of mayoral elections (Lestari & Deslia, 2024). Furthermore, studies on social media content marketing—particularly in small and medium-sized Indonesian cities like Baubau—remain quite scarce. This is a site with significant untapped potential to help close the knowledge gap on the efficacy of content marketing in local politics (Ausat, 2023).

This study presents a novel idea for integrating content marketing theory with personal branding in the setting of mayoral elections. H. Yusran Fahim and Wa Ode Hamsinah Bolu in Baubau effectively used content marketing to promote their personal values and initiatives in a dynamic and humanistic manner. This study will investigate further how content marketing strategies like storytelling, producing campaign videos emphasizing daily life, and more personal stories help to foster emotional connections with voters. Therefore, this study emphasizes how content marketing might be a strategic tool to enhance the personal branding of local political candidates, closing the gap in earlier research that tends to see social media apart from political branding (Lopes et al., 2022).

Using the case studies of H. Yusran Fahim and Wa Ode Hamsinah Bolu in Baubau, this research aims to explore the potential role of content marketing in the branding of mayoral candidates. The

aim of this research is to provide in-depth information on how successful content marketing tactics can enhance campaign outcomes, increase voter participation, and improve the candidate's reputation. The aim of this paper is to provide an intellectual contribution to the understanding of local politics and digitalization, particularly in relation to regional head elections in Indonesia. It is hoped that future political candidates will use the findings of this research as a guide to create more successful and data-driven campaigns (Malarvizhi et al., 2022).

2. Method

This study employs a qualitative methodology through a case study to examine the impact of content marketing on the branding of the mayoral candidate during the campaign. This methodology enables researchers to explore the tactics employed by mayoral candidates and their impact on public perception. The research conducted is descriptive qualitative research focused on demonstrating the implementation of content marketing in local political campaigns. This study examines the utilization of content marketing in shaping the public image of candidates H. Yusran Fahim and Wa Ode Hamsinah Bolu in Baubau (Alqurashi et al., 2023).

Data was gathered via comprehensive interviews with campaign team members, local political analysts, and voters who monitored the campaign. These interviews aim to gain insights into the content marketing strategies used, such as the types of content and the chosen social media platforms. Furthermore, social media content analysis is performed by examining posts and campaign videos disseminated by the candidate's team. This is to comprehend how the content shapes the candidate's personal image in the eyes of the voters (Gkikas et al., 2022).

The collected data were subjected to thematic analysis to discern the principal patterns and topics that surfaced in the content marketing techniques employed by the campaign team. This study employs narrative analysis to examine how the narratives presented in the material influence branding and emotional ties with voters. This study was undertaken in the City of Baubau, concentrating on the content of the mayoral election campaign that occurred during the campaign period. The study timeframe is aligned with the political campaign's duration to guarantee the data collected is pertinent and current. This research employs source triangulation to assure data authenticity by comparing interview results, analyzing social media content, and reviewing available campaign paperwork (Alqurashi et al., 2023).

3. Result and Discussion

The Regional Head Election in Baubau will occur on November 27, 2024. On the afternoon of September 23, 2024, the Baubau City KPU in Southeast Sulawesi established the order numbers for five pairs of mayoral and deputy mayoral candidates in Baubau. The decision was reached via the drawing of numbers by the five pairs of applicants during an open plenary session organized by the Baubau City KPU. The candidate pair La Ode Ahmad Monianse-Ida Fitri Halili was assigned number 1, followed by Yulia Umar Samiun-Muhammad Ridwan at number 2, Yusran Fahim-Wa Ode Hamsinah Bolu at number 3, Laode Mustari-Zahari at number 4, and Nur Ari Raharja-La Ode Yasin at number 5.

On February 6, 2025, the Baubau City KPU designated the elected candidates for Mayor and Deputy Mayor. The selection of the elected pair of candidates was conducted during an open plenary session at the Baubau City KPU office. During the plenary meeting, the KPU of Baubau City designated the candidates for mayor and deputy mayor, number three (3), Mr. H. Yusran Fahim, S.E., and Mrs. Ir. Wa Ode Hamsinah Bolu, M.Sc. The elected duo garnered 31,966 votes, constituting 39.14% of the total permanent voter population of 108,628 in the Baubau mayoral and deputy mayoral election of 2024.

Haji H. Yusran Fahim was born in Makassar on December 17, 1962, and is presently 62 years old. Yusran pursued his undergraduate studies at the Muslim University of Indonesia from 1985 to 1989, obtaining a Bachelor of Economics degree. He is a graduate of the Faculty of Economics. Yusran Fahim is a politician with a business background. He additionally holds the position of chairman of the PPP Baubau party. He previously campaigned for mayor and attained the second-highest vote count, prompting his decision to contest the Baubau municipal election in 2024 once more. His deputy, Wa Ode Hamsinah Bolu, was born in Buton on April 20, 1967, and is currently

58 years old. She finished her undergraduate studies at Bogor Agricultural University (IPB) in 1986 and graduated in 1991. She subsequently pursued her master's degree at Georg-August University Göttingen, Germany, from 1998 to 2001. Hamsinah Bolu is a female politician who was a member of the Regional Representative Council of the Republic of Indonesia (DPD RI) from 2015 to 2019.

The TikTok account of the Yusran-Hamsinah couple, initially under the username @kerjabersamahyf, subsequently renamed to "Baubau Kerja Bersama" with the username @kerja_bersama, serves as a component of the political communication strategy for the Baubau city elections. This account serves to engage voters, particularly millennials and Gen Z, who constitute the predominant voter demographics in the region. Interviews revealed that informants indicated survey results affirm TikTok as the predominant platform in demand.

The TikTok account @kerjabersamahyf was established on July 9, 2024, and presently boasts 10,200 followers. This account actively distributes narratives through storytelling content. This account aims to engage TikTok users in content creation by utilizing accessible language and popular background music that resonates with its audience. Interviews with many informants indicate that the substance from this story significantly influences voter attention (Husnal & Hari, 2022).

3.1. Presenting the Results

A significant team discussion indicated that 60% of voters in Baubau City belong to the millennial and Gen Z demographics. The media team utilizes this data to address the phenomenon by producing relevant content. The generated material is grounded not just in trends but also in established facts and data (Dwi Santy & Andriani, 2023).



Figure 1. Age data of TikTok followers for Kerja Bersama HYF

This candidate employs social media sites TikTok and Instagram as a strategy. The Yusran-Hamsinah media team has selected TikTok as a campaign medium in digital media due to its popularity among Gen Z and millennials. TikTok was chosen as the primary platform due to its algorithm, which facilitates organic content distribution without reliance on paid promotions (Dwivedi et al., 2023).

The campaign team's storytelling strategy employs two distinct social media accounts: the official candidate account, characterized by a formal and informative tone, and the "Kerja Bersama HYF" account, which adopts a more casual and relatable style, utilizing contemporary language and engaging short video formats.

Storytelling is a potent method in political marketing utilized in content, as it fosters emotional ties with the audience and bolsters loyalty by employing personal branding methods through storytelling techniques on the social media platform TikTok.

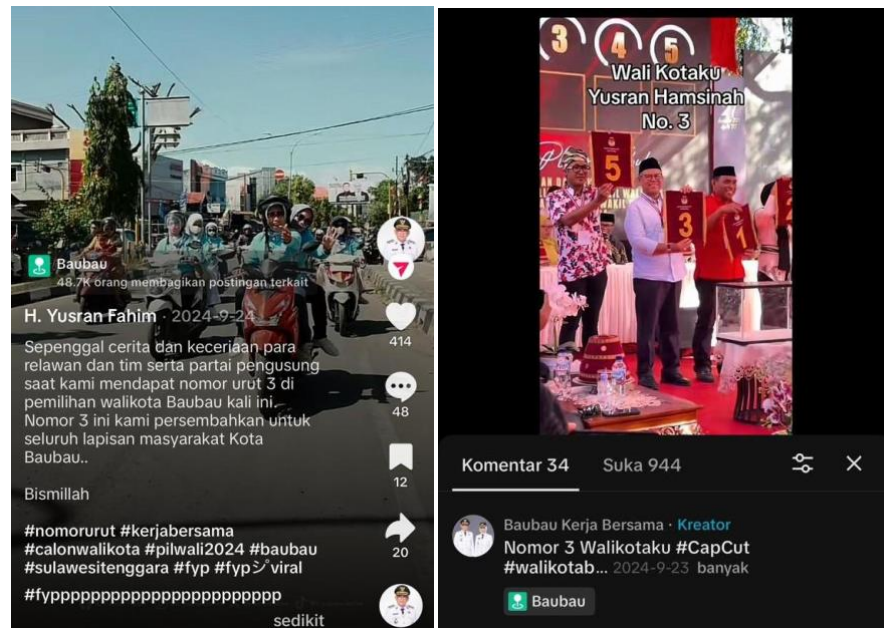


Figure 2. Caption from the candidate's TikTok content

The impact of employing influencers is substantial in enhancing the reach, renown, or popularity of a candidate. Influencers possess diverse audiences and affiliations, with their selection influenced not alone by follower count but also by their viewpoints and political inclinations. It is essential to align with the candidate's vision and mission. The influencers utilized may originate from both national and local domains, such as Zein Panzer, who can attract 5,796 new followers from a single content post, Arie Kriting with 76 followers, and local influencer Akbar Randi, who can garner 12 new followers from one release through his involvement in that content (Joshi et al., 2025).

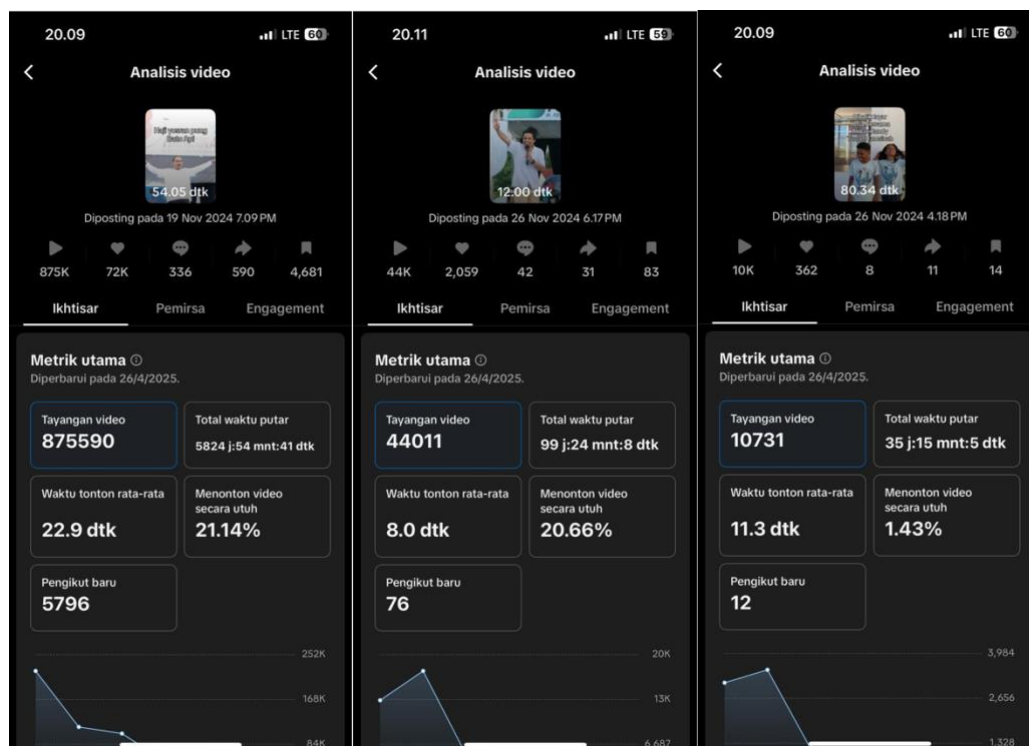


Figure 3. Collaboration Content with Influencer

The content development procedure seeks to maximize attention from potential voters by researching visual preferences, auditory methods, and prevailing music trends on TikTok among the populace. The media data team delivered the content with a blue color scheme and maintaining design consistency, including themes and typography. This establishes a distinct identity in the publication, rendering the consistency evident in comparison to other pairs.



Figure 4. TikTok Feed Candidate

3.2. Create a Discussion

The digital transformation in political campaigns, shown by the election of the Mayor and Deputy Mayor of Baubau, indicates a significant transition from conventional campaigning techniques to a content marketing-oriented strategy. Per Pulizzi's (2014) Content Marketing theory, the efficacy of this strategy depends on the candidate's capacity to generate and disseminate valuable, pertinent, and consistent content to engage and maintain a distinctly defined audience, ultimately aiming to incite advantageous actions (Al-Gasawneh et al., 2021). This concept is exemplified in the strategies employed by H. Yusran Fahim and Wa Ode Hamsinah Bolu, who adeptly utilize social media platforms such as Instagram and TikTok to forge emotional connections with voters via personal narratives, daily videos, and the articulation of their core values (Joshi et al., 2025).

This research demonstrates that content marketing serves not just as a vehicle for conveying political messages but also as a strategic instrument in crafting the candidate's personal brand. Yusran Fahim and Wa Ode Hamsinah Bolu developed an inclusive, genuine, and humanistic self-image, adhering to Pulizzi's notion that material must prioritize the needs and interests of the audience rather than mere self-promotion (Budiman, 2021). This tactic was effective, evidenced by the couple's triumph in the 2024 Baubau Regional Election, achieving the highest vote share of 39.14%. Personal tales and a cohesive emotional strategy in content production enhance voters' opinions of a candidate's credibility and leadership, transcending superficial political pledges (Granata & Scozzese, 2019).

Moreover, the findings of this study address a deficiency in prior research, which predominantly focused on the overarching use of social media in political campaigns, neglecting to investigate the impact of a systematic content marketing framework on the effective construction of political personal branding, particularly in medium-sized cities such as Baubau (Majeed et al., 2021). Storytelling techniques, the depiction of social engagements, and the reinforcing of local values through content have emerged as key elements that enhance voter loyalty. Consequently, in alignment with Pulizzi's concept, content marketing in political campaigns transcends mere visibility;

it also involves cultivating enduring trust that culminates in electoral success (Jafarova & Tolon, 2022).

4. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that content marketing significantly contributes to the personal branding of Baubau mayoral candidates, H. Yusran Fahim and Wa Ode Hamsinah Bolu, during the 2024 Pilkada campaign. Through social media and narrative-driven material, they effectively established a robust emotional bond with voters, enhancing the public's image of their leadership qualities and the values they represent. Pulizzi's information Marketing hypothesis (2014) posits that the campaign sought to communicate a political message while simultaneously providing relevant, meaningful, and consistent information designed to engage and hold the attention of a specifically targeted audience, particularly the citizens of Baubau.

The couple's success in obtaining 39.14% of the votes in the municipal election shows this approach has been effective in improving voter participation and strengthening loyalty. These results confirm that content marketing is not only a tool for transmitting political messages but also a vital strategy for building lasting confidence with voters and distinguishing politicians in a competitive environment.

Using tools like TikTok and Instagram, the Yusran-Hamsinah couple successfully connected millennial and Gen Z voters—demographics very active on social media and with notable electoral influence. Regular content and influencers help to enhance their brand with a relatable leader connected to the people and eager to share. This fosters emotional closeness with the voters.

This research significantly enhances the literature on the digitization of political campaigns, specifically with regional head elections in small and medium-sized cities in Indonesia. This research indicates that content marketing may emerge as a primary tactic for future political candidates to enhance personal branding and cultivate greater public trust.

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