



Prabowo and The Gemoy Image in the 2024 Presidential Election Campaign Gerindra TV's YouTube

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Abstract

This research was conducted with the aim of understanding Prabowo and the Gemoy Image in the 2024 Presidential Election. The author has a sub-research focus, namely a Study of the Image Building of Presidential Candidate Prabowo Subianto in the 2024 Election Campaign through Animated Advertisements on YouTube Gerindra TV. The analytical method used in this research employs the Charles Sanders Peirce semiotic analysis method along with other theories to understand how Prabowo and the Gemoy Image are positioned in the 2024 Presidential Election. The results of this research reveal the portrayal of Prabowo and the Gemoy Image in the 2024 Presidential Election within the Animated Advertisement on YouTube Gerindra TV. The campaign presented in this animated advertisement features the figure of Prabowo in animated visuals accompanied by musical accompaniment and song lyrics that state the vision, mission, and programs promoted by the presidential candidate pair Prabowo Subianto and Gibran Rakabuming Raka.

Keywords: Prabowo Subianto, Presidential Election, Animated Advertisement, Campaign, Charles Sanders Peirce Semiotics.

1. Introduction

In the world of politics, social media is used to foster trust and is effective for building self-image in the public eye. The use of social media plays a crucial role in shaping public opinion, especially during general elections. This underlies presidential candidates' utilization of social media as a platform to disseminate information in the 2024 election contest. The 2024 election has become a highly tense political competition, where candidates vie for public support. Three pairs of candidates are participating in the 2024 Presidential Election. The 2024 Presidential and Vice-Presidential Election is contested by three pairs: Anies Rasyid Baswedan and Muhaimin Iskandar, Prabowo Subianto and Gibran Rakabuming Raka, and Ganjar Pranowo and Mahfud MD. These three pairs are vigorously campaigning on social media platforms to gain public support.

This research focuses on understanding "Prabowo and the Gemoy Image in the 2024 Presidential Election" through a study of the image construction of presidential candidate Prabowo Subianto in the 2024 election campaign via animated advertisements on Gerindra TV's YouTube channel. Prabowo Subianto has persistently participated in general elections since 2009 but has never won the vice-presidential or presidential office.

In the 2024 election, Prabowo is again running for president alongside Gibran Rakabuming Raka as his vice-presidential candidate. Prabowo and Gibran were designated as candidate pair number two by the General Election Commission (KPU) in October 2023. The Prabowo-Gibran pair is characterized by Prabowo as the oldest candidate with a military background and Chairman of the Gerindra Party, while Gibran is the youngest vice-presidential candidate, a PDIP politician and Mayor of Surakarta since 2020. Despite being 70 years old, Prabowo Subianto remains undaunted in the 2024 election.

Despite his advanced age, Prabowo Subianto has successfully attracted the attention of Millennials and Gen Z, who appreciate the campaign style of candidate pair number two for being perceived as less rigid and boring compared to conventional campaigns. Prabowo employs unique political strategies, one of which is showcasing body movements or dancing with his portly physique, making him appear endearing. Supporters even refer to Prabowo as gemoy, a term expressing affectionate exasperation. Prabowo's gemoy dance has won many hearts and successfully captured public attention.

Prabowo's gemoy dance has an interesting background. Prabowo revealed that the movement of extending both arms sideways is related to wayang (shadow puppet) stories taught by his grandfather, Margono Djojohadikoesoemo. Prabowo's grandfather admired the Pandawa and Kurawa characters, whose movements resemble pencak silat (Indonesian martial arts). The choreography in their battles extensively uses silat. This movement was adapted by Prabowo's family, becoming a distinctive trait passed down from his grandfather, Margono Djojohadikoesoemo. The purpose of the movement is to express happiness. Thus, the gemoy dance did not suddenly emerge during the 2024 campaign.

The gemoy dance spontaneously becomes a form of political communication created through uniqueness and serves as a hallmark of Prabowo Subianto. According to Less-Marshment (2003), party leaders must be popular in terms of leadership style, speaking style, character, etc. Political communication expert Maswadi Rauf defines political communication as the object of political science study, characterized by the delivery of messages related to state political power, governance, and the activities of communicators as political actors. Cangara, in his book, states that the elements of political communication include communicator (message sender), message, media, communicant (message receiver), and effect or feedback.

Attractive political communication automatically becomes political branding for the Great Indonesia Movement Party (GERINDRA), the party led by Prabowo Subianto. Downer (2013) summarizes Kirchheimer's view in two key points. First, voters and political parties can build bonds through branding behavior. Second, voter attachment arises not only from internal factors but also from activities conducted by political parties.

Political branding uses consumer branding strategies to build a political image (Scammell, 2007). Political branding influences voter behavior in voicing their choices. Branding in politics shares similarities with product branding. In politics, branding is a commodification strategy often used by political actors to display added value, encouraging the public to choose them in political contests. At a fundamental level, a politician's branding in the political realm is formed subjectively based on public perception. It encompasses not only candidate elements but also appearance aspects such as clothing style and hairstyle, which clearly impact the candidate's image (Mitsikopoulou, 2008).

Prabowo Subianto's appearance in the 2024 Presidential Election is highly attention-grabbing. Wearing a light blue shirt, neat hair, and a portly physique, combined with his signature dance moves, makes his figure more endearing to supporters. Once perceived as stern and authoritative due to his background as a former Lieutenant General of the Indonesian National Armed Forces (TNI), Prabowo now presents a new image with the nickname "Gemoy."

"Gemoy" in colloquial language does not always denote annoyance (anger) but describes an expression of affectionate exasperation due to something cute and adorable. The success of Prabowo's gemoy campaign prompted the National Campaign Team (TKN) of Prabowo-Gibran to create an animated advertisement uploaded on Gerindra TV's YouTube channel. Prabowo is visualized in animated form, complete with his signature dance moves. The advertisement is filled with messages containing the vision, mission, and programs promoted by candidate pair number two. The one-minute content titled "Prabowo Gibran Memang Istimewa" (Prabowo Gibran is Indeed Special) has been viewed 1.3 million times within five months since its release on December 13, 2023.

With the lower-class population in Indonesia still at 9.36% based on Central Statistics Agency (BPS) data in March 2023, they trust that a leader with a simple appearance is expected to nurture, embrace, and listen to the people's grievances. This is why image-building at the beginning of the campaign is crucial for a politician's career trajectory.

2. The Art of Research

The art of this research is manifested in its systematic yet creative process of dissecting a unique contemporary political phenomenon. The journey began with a clear, focused research question: "How is the image of presidential candidate Prabowo Subianto constructed in the 2024 election campaign through animated advertisements on Gerindra TV's YouTube channel?" This question became the guiding beacon, ensuring every step from literature review to data analysis remained aligned with the core objective of understanding the construction of the "gemoy" image.

The next crucial artistic step was exploring existing research to understand the context. A thorough review of the literature was conducted, which can be likened to an artist studying classical and contemporary works before creating something new. This exploration mapped the academic landscape:

- Studies on Political Image in Media (e.g., Haris et al., 2022 on Anies Baswedan) provided a foundation for understanding image framing.
- Semiotic Analysis Studies (e.g., Afandy et al., 2024; Nawawi & Yuwita, 2023) offered methodological tools.
- Research on Digital Campaigns (e.g., Fahrudi & Fahrudin, 2023) clarified the context of social media use.
- Works on Political Branding (e.g., Susetyawidianta & Geraldly, 2024) presented theoretical frameworks on candidate packaging.

This exploration was not merely a listing of references but a critical process of gap identification. By examining previous works, the researcher identified a "blank canvas" a research gap. It was found that no previous study had specifically combined the analysis of the unique "gemoy" phenomenon, the animated advertisement format on YouTube, and an in-depth semiotic dissection using Peirce's model. This gap defined the originality and novelty of the research, just as an artist finds a unique perspective or untold story.

This deep understanding of the context then informed the chosen methodology. The researcher did not randomly select an approach but deliberately chose descriptive qualitative methods with Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic analysis. This choice was a direct consequence of the research question and the nature of the object (an audio-visual advertisement rich in signs). The triadic model of Icon, Index, and Symbol became the analytical "brush" to reveal layers of meaning in each scene of the advertisement.



Furthermore, the art of this research is also evident in how data was "painted" through careful observation. The animated advertisement was broken down into 10 thematic scenes. Each scene was then meticulously analyzed by identifying visual icons (e.g., animated Prabowo dancing), interpreting their indexical relationships (e.g., dancing with farmers indicates closeness to the grassroots), and deciphering their symbolic meanings (e.g., the gemoy dance as a symbol of approachability and breaking down the elite image). This process is akin to an art critic interpreting the composition, color, and symbolism in a painting.

3. Method

This chapter outlines the systematic approach employed to investigate the construction of Prabowo Subianto's image in the animated campaign advertisement. The methodology is designed to align with the qualitative, interpretive nature of the research problem, focusing on depth of understanding rather than statistical generalization. This study utilizes a descriptive qualitative research design with a semiotic analysis model. The paradigm underpinning this research is constructivism, which posits that reality, including political image, is socially constructed through language, symbols, and media. The research design is structured to intensively describe and interpret the meanings embedded within the audio-visual text of the advertisement.

The primary subject of this study is the political image of presidential candidate Prabowo Subianto. The concrete unit of analysis is the animated advertisement entitled "Prabowo Gibran Memang Istimewa" uploaded on the official Gerindra TV YouTube channel on December 13, 2023. This one-minute video serves as the primary text containing the signs and narratives to be deconstructed.

Data collection employed a purposive sampling technique, where the researcher intentionally selected a specific, information-rich case relevant to the research objective.

- Primary Data Source: The animated advertisement video itself, including all its visual elements (animation, characters, scenes, text graphics) and audio elements (adapted song lyrics, music).
- Secondary Data Sources: Supporting materials such as relevant journal articles, previous research (skripsi/theses), books on political communication and semiotics, and reputable online news articles used to provide context and theoretical grounding.

The main instrument in this qualitative research is the researcher herself, aided by tools for documentation and analysis.

- Non-Participant Observation: The researcher repeatedly and intensively observed the advertisement without being involved in its creation or distribution. Detailed notes were taken on each scene, visual detail, and lyrical content.
- Documentation Study: The advertisement was captured through screenshots for per-scene analysis. Data regarding upload date, view count, likes, and comments were also recorded from the YouTube platform.
- Literature Study: A review of relevant theoretical and empirical literature was conducted to build the analytical framework and contextualize findings.

The study does not measure variables in a quantitative sense but focuses on analytical categories derived from semiotic theory. The core framework for deconstructing meaning is Charles Sanders Peirce's Semiotic Triad, which analyzes the relationship between:

- Representamen: The form of the sign (e.g., the animated figure of Prabowo dancing).
- Object: What the sign refers to (e.g., the real person Prabowo Subianto, or the concept of "closeness to people").
- Interpretant: The meaning or understanding derived from the sign (e.g., "Prabowo is approachable and fun").

These relationships are further categorized into three types of signs, which became the key analytical lenses:

- Icon: A sign that resembles its object (e.g., the animated character's likeness to Prabowo).
- Index: A sign causally or contextually linked to its object (e.g., the depiction of farmers as an index of agrarian policy focus).
- Symbol: A sign whose meaning is governed by social convention (e.g., the color blue in the candidate's shirt symbolizing the Gerindra Party).

Data analysis followed an interactive model, specifically the intensive analysis model by Miles and Huberman, which consists of three concurrent flows of activity:

- Data Reduction: The collected data from observations and documentation were summarized, focused, and organized. The 60-second video was broken down into 10 key thematic scenes (scenes). Irrelevant data were discarded.
- Data Display: The reduced data were organized into a structured format to allow for conclusion drawing. This was done by creating analysis tables for each scene (as seen in Chapter IV, Tables 4.1 to 4.10), displaying the scene screenshot, corresponding lyrics, and the initial semiotic breakdown (Icon, Index, Symbol).
- Conclusion Drawing and Verification: Throughout the process, preliminary conclusions about the meaning in each scene were drawn. These conclusions were continually verified by revisiting the raw data (the video), comparing findings with theoretical concepts, and ensuring they coherently answered the research question. The final conclusions were formulated based on this iterative process.

This methodology provides a clear, replicable roadmap for how the research moved from a raw media object to an interpreted understanding of political image construction, ensuring the study's rigor and credibility.

4. Result

This chapter presents the findings from the semiotic analysis of the animated advertisement "Prabowo Gibran Memang Istimewa," followed by an in-depth discussion interpreting these findings within the framework of political communication and image construction.

4.1 Overview of Processed Data and Findings

The one-minute advertisement was decomposed into 10 distinct thematic scenes. The analysis for each scene followed the triadic model of Charles Sanders Peirce, identifying the Icon (the signifier), interpreting its Indexical relationship (the contextual or causal link), and deciphering its Symbolic meaning (the conventional or cultural significance). The processed data is synthesized in the summary table below, followed by a detailed discussion of key themes.

Table 4.1. Summary of Semiotic Analysis Across 10 Scenes

Scene & Theme	Core Icon (Representamen)	Indexical Meaning (Relationship to Object)	Symbolic Meaning (Interpretant / Constructed Image)
1. Closer to the People	Animated Prabowo dancing with diverse citizens on a street.	Direct interaction and shared joy in a public space.	Prabowo is approachable, down-to-earth, and connects with all societal layers.
2. Interaction	Prabowo dancing on a vegetable scale in a traditional market.	Engagement with the grassroots economy and informal sector.	Commitment to traditional markets and small traders amidst digital disruption.
3. Free Lunch & Milk Program	Visual of balanced meal and a child drinking milk with text overlay.	Direct promise of a social welfare program for children.	Prabowo as a caring, nurturing leader who invests in the nation's future generation and health.
4. Bhinneka Tunggal Ika	Religious leaders of different faiths together in one vehicle.	Display of interfaith harmony and unity.	Prabowo as a unifying figure who will uphold pluralism and religious tolerance.
5. Prosperous Farmers, Fertile Indonesia	Prabowo dancing with farmers in a rice field.	Association with the agricultural sector and rural livelihood.	Commitment to farmer prosperity and national food sovereignty.
6. Clean Water for All	Fish traders watching a TV ad about "Clean Water for All."	Reference to an existing infrastructure program.	Prabowo as a continuation leader who delivers tangible, essential public goods.
7. Belief in the One God	Prabowo in Muslim attire dancing with mosque youths.	Connection to religious identity and community.	Prabowo as a devout leader who integrates faith with a modern, cheerful persona.
8. Downstreaming	Phone screen showing "Benefits of Downstreaming" with happy workers.	Link to national economic policy (value-added industries).	Prabowo as a pro-growth, pro-job creation leader continuing strategic development.
9. Golden Generation	SMK (Vocational School) students running happily.	Focus on vocational education and youth potential.	Prabowo as an education-focused leader preparing a skilled, competitive future workforce.
10. Advancing Together with the People	Crowd cheering in front of a Prabowo-Gibran billboard.	Mass support and colle	

The analysis reveals a sophisticated, multi-layered image construction strategy. The "gemoy" persona is not merely a quirky trait but serves as the central Iconic vehicle that carries and softens the delivery of substantive political messages. The "Gemoy" Persona as a Unifying and Humanizing Icon: Across multiple scenes (1,2,5,7,8), the animated figure of Prabowo dancing (icon) consistently creates an index of accessibility and shared emotion. This transforms the symbol of a former military general into one of a relatable, joyful, and modern figure. The gemoy dance acts as a symbolic bridge, dismantling perceptions of elitism and making political engagement appear light-hearted and inclusive, particularly for young and apathetic voters.

Strategic Juxtaposition of Soft Image and Hard Policy: The advertisement masterfully intertwines the soft gemoy image with hard policy propositions. For instance, in Scene 3, the cheerful icon of a child drinking milk is indexed to the Free Lunch and Milk Program, symbolizing compassionate and welfare-oriented leadership. Similarly, Scene 8 uses the icon of cheerful



workers to index the Downstreaming economic policy, symbolizing prosperity that is both nationally strategic and personally felt. This juxtaposition ensures the campaign is memorable for its style while still communicating substantive platforms.

Constructing a Leadership Nexus: Tradition, Modernity, and Continuity. The analyzed scenes collectively build a nexus of leadership qualities:

- The Connected Leader (Scenes 1,2,4,5): By indexing interaction with farmers, traders, and religious leaders, Prabowo is symbolized as a leader rooted in the social and cultural fabric of Indonesia.
- The Modern and Visionary Leader (Scenes 8,9): Through references to downstreaming and vocational education, he is indexed to future-oriented economic and human capital development.
- The Continuity Leader (Scenes 6,10): By showcasing the clean water program (linked to his tenure as Minister of Defense) and mass support, he is symbolized as a tested and effective figure, a safe choice for continuing national development.

The Role of Music and Cultural Familiarity: The use of the adapted popular song "Koyo Jogja Istimewa" is a crucial Index. It immediately taps into a sense of cultural familiarity and nostalgia, making the political message feel less alien and more entertaining. The catchy tune enhances memorability and shareability, turning the campaign ad into a piece of popular culture itself.

In conclusion, the results demonstrate that the animated advertisement is a carefully crafted semiotic system. The gemoy image (Icon) is not an end in itself but a strategic tool used to create positive indices (approachability, joy, modernity) that redefine Prabowo's political symbolism—from a stern military figure to a caring, approachable, modern, and competent leader who embodies both traditional values and a vision for the future. The processed data in the tables confirms that every element in the advertisement, from character movement to background detail, contributes to this coherent and targeted image construction.

5. Discussion

The core argument of this research posits that the animated advertisement "Prabowo Gibran Memang Istimewa" is a deliberate and sophisticated act of political image reconstruction. The hypothesis that the "gemoy" persona is strategically employed not merely as entertainment but as a central semiotic tool to soften, humanize, and make palatable a broader, substantive political rebranding is strongly consistent with the results of the semiotic analysis. The findings not only confirm this hypothesis but also reveal the nuanced mechanics of how this is achieved.

Argument 1: The "Gemoy" Persona Successfully Performs a Strategic Dissonance, Recasting Political Identity.

The data reveals a consistent pattern: the icon of a cheerful, dancing, portly figure (the "gemoy" Prabowo) is repeatedly placed in contexts (indices) that traditionally signify seriousness, authority, or struggle policy announcements, economic programs, religious settings, and grassroots interactions. This creates a purposeful semiotic dissonance.

In Scene 7 (Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa), the icon of Prabowo in Muslim attire dancing with youths merges religious solemnity with casual joy. The resulting symbol is not of a less devout leader, but of one whose faith is integrated with a relatable, contemporary personality. This directly counters any potential perception of rigid orthodoxy. In Scenes 5 & 8 (Farmers, Downstreaming), complex socio-economic agendas are indexed to scenes of communal dancing. The symbol crafted is that of prosperity as a collective, joyful endeavor, not a technical or burdensome policy.

This dissonance is resolved in the viewer's interpretation (interpretant) in favor of a new, hybrid identity: the authoritative-yet-approachable leader. The results are consistent with the hypothesis that "gemoy" is a calculated tool for identity recasting, moving from a "hard" military/political image to a "softer," more emotionally accessible brand.

Argument 2: The Animation Medium and Narrative Structure Enable a Hyper-Controlled, Idealized Image.

The hypothesis implied that the choice of animation was strategic. The results strongly support this. Unlike live-action footage, the animated medium allowed for the creation of a perfectly controlled semiotic environment.

Every character's expression is cheerful (Scenes 1-10), every interaction is harmonious (Scene 4), and every policy outcome is visually depicted as successful and welcomed (Scenes 3, 6, 9). There are no contradictory cues, no unscripted moments. This hyper-idealization transforms political promises (the object) into visual certainties (the icon), symbolizing a future that is not just promised, but already visually realized. This aligns with the argument that the ad is less a report on reality and more an aspirational blueprint, using "gemoy" as the friendly architect.

Argument 3: The Synthesis of Elements Creates a "Benediction Effect," Positioning Prabowo as the Natural Center.

A critical finding supporting the hypothesis is the recurring narrative structure: Prabowo's animated figure is not just a participant but the catalytic center of every scene. His "gemoy" dance (icon) acts as a force that triggers happiness and unity in the community around him (index).

In Scene 1, he emerges from a billboard to energize the street. In Scene 2, his presence enlivens the market. In Scene 5, he brings joy to the farmers. This constructs a powerful symbol: Prabowo is the source of positive affect and social cohesion. He is not responding to the people's joy; he is generating it. This "benediction effect" positions him symbolically as an indispensable, almost paternalistic source of national well-being, seamlessly blending the "gemoy" charm with an aura of foundational leadership.

Counter-Argument and Rebuttal: Is "Gemoy" Merely Superficial, Masking a Lack of Substance?

A potential counter-argument is that the "gemoy" strategy is pure spectacle, a superficial distraction from substantive political discourse. The results, however, provide a rebuttal. The semiotic analysis shows that the "gemoy" icon is inextricably linked to specific policy indices (free meals, downstreaming, clean water). The symbolism produced is not "substance-free fun," but "achievable happiness through specific programs." The ad argues, semiotically, that the leader's relatable character (gemoy) is the vehicle for delivering tangible goods (programs). Therefore, the style and substance are presented as two sides of the same coin, challenging the critique of mere superficiality.

Therefore, the discussion argues that the advertisement is a successful exercise in political alchemy, using the semiotic elements of icon, index, and symbol to transform the perceived raw material of Prabowo's established political identity into a new, more electorally potent compound: the gemoy statesman.

6. Conclusion

This study concludes that the construction of Prabowo Subianto's image in the animated advertisement "Prabowo Gibran Memang Istimewa" is a calculated political branding strategy. The analysis confirms that the "gemoy" persona serves as a central semiotic vehicle to **reconfigure** his public identity from a stern military figure into a relatable, compassionate, and modern leader. The advertisement achieves this by consistently linking the iconic, cheerful animation of Prabowo to substantive policy indices and diverse communal settings, thereby symbolizing a leadership that is both approachable and capable of delivering national progress. The research objective to understand this specific image construction is thus fulfilled, revealing a nuanced integration of persona and politics in digital campaign rhetoric.

Future research should investigate the audience reception of this constructed image across different demographic segments to evaluate its practical electoral impact. A comparative analysis with the digital campaign materials of other candidates would further contextualize these findings within **Indonesia's** broader political communication landscape. Additionally, longitudinal studies could examine the durability and adaptation of such carefully crafted political personas beyond the campaign cycle and into actual governance.

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