

Language of typography in political posters: visual rhetoric in Indonesian electoral design

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ABSTRACT

Background: The Indonesian electoral arena is saturated with posters, billboards, and digital visuals where typography and color play decisive roles in shaping political communication. **Objective:** The purpose of this research is to examine how typographic hierarchies, symbolic colors and fonts, and visual representations of leadership construct persuasive and ideological messages in Indonesian campaign design. **Method:** The study employs a qualitative, multimodal discourse analysis combining Typographic Discourse Analysis, Barthesian semiotics, and Critical Discourse Analysis on a corpus of posters, banners, and social media visuals from the 2024 presidential and legislative campaigns. **Results:** The findings reveal that typographic hierarchies consistently prioritize candidate names over party logos, signaling a personalization of politics; color and font combinations encode cultural values such as nationalism, religiosity, or modernity; and visual portrayals of leaders reinforce myths of morality, youthfulness, or decisiveness. **Implication:** The implication of this research is that electoral visuals actively participate in shaping democratic processes, offering both opportunities for political literacy and risks of reducing politics to symbolic spectacle. **Novelty:** This study contributes to the ways typographic and visual design elements operate as ideological resources that personalize political communication and shape voter perception within Indonesia's electoral landscape.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia's electoral landscape is saturated with persuasive visuals that compete for attention across streets, marketplaces, and social media feeds. In this environment, typography does not merely decorate messages—it functions as a linguistic system that orders attention, encodes authority, and frames candidate identities. The stakes are high: voters routinely encounter candidate names, slogans, and party symbols through posters, billboards, and digital posts where letterforms, sizes, weights, and colors structure meaning before words are consciously read. As campaigns migrate fluidly between offline and online spaces, typographic choices become a crucial interface between political messaging and public judgment. This study is necessary because most analyses treat “design” as a monolith, overlooking how typographic hierarchies—capitalization, bold emphasis, color contrast, and spatial layout—prioritize certain values (e.g., decisiveness, religiosity, modernity) and marginalize others. By treating typography as language, this study clarifies how electoral visuals shape perception, mobilize emotions, and normalize particular visions of leadership.

Existing scholarship on political communication in Indonesia has examined branding, color symbolism, and iconography, including the cultural connotations of red, white, green, and blue in party

imagery, as well as multimodal discourse in campaign media [1], [2], [3]. Studies of visual rhetoric and semiotics—often drawing on Barthes—have illuminated how images naturalize ideological positions [4], [5], [6], [7]. Research on critical discourse analysis (CDA) has further unpacked power, identity, and populist narratives in speeches and news coverage [8], [9], [10]. However, a typographically precise approach remains underdeveloped. Few works isolate micro-level typographic variables (font family, weight, letter case, kerning, hierarchy) or compare their persuasive effects across print and digital platforms. Even fewer integrate Typographic Discourse Analysis (TDA) with semiotics and CDA to connect formal design choices to symbolic meaning and ideological framing. This study fills that gap by linking typographic form, semiotic content, and discursive power within Indonesian electoral design.

This research asks: (1) How do typographic hierarchies—via capitalization, weight, scale, color, and spatial ordering—structure persuasive messaging in Indonesian political posters and digital campaign materials? (2) What symbolic meanings are produced by specific typefaces and colors when read through Barthes’ denotation/connotation and myth frameworks—e.g., modern sans serifs versus traditional or script-like forms; red versus blue or green? (3) How do these typographic-semiotic choices participate in broader ideological formations—nationalist, religious, technocratic, or populist—when analyzed through CDA? Empirically, we examine posters and billboards of presidential candidates and local legislative contenders, along with Instagram feeds of leading figures and parties. The corpus combines field documentation, KPU collections, and verified social media archives. Methodologically, we triangulate TDA for formal hierarchies, Barthesian semiotics for symbolic reading, and CDA for power/identity implications across print–digital contexts.

Our working argument is that typography operationalizes ideology by translating political identities into visual priorities that appear “natural.” We hypothesize that bold, uppercase treatments and high-contrast palettes foreground decisiveness and urgency, while geometric sans serifs and cool hues connote competence and stability; conversely, scripts and calligraphic cues may index tradition or religiosity. We anticipate platform-specific recalibrations: digital formats privilege tighter letter-spacing, mobile-first scaling, and algorithm-aware color contrasts, affecting salience and readability. If supported, these findings imply that typography serves as a subtle governance of attention, influencing recognition, credibility, and emotional resonance. Theoretically, the study contributes an integrated TDA–semiotics–CDA model for electoral design research. Practically, it offers a diagnostic toolkit for designers, regulators, and civic educators to evaluate typographic ethics and transparency, enabling more informed visual literacy and fairer campaign communication in Indonesia’s democratic sphere.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Typographic discourse and its analytical dimensions

Typography is more than a technical arrangement of fonts and letters; it is a form of discourse that shapes how messages are received, prioritized, and interpreted. Scholars such as Hull and Panos (2026) emphasize its functional role in enhancing readability and legibility [11], while others, like van Leeuwen (2006), view it as a semiotic mode that actively constructs meaning [7]. In political communication, typography becomes an essential instrument of rhetoric, structuring hierarchies of attention through letter size, capitalization, bold emphasis, and color contrast [8]. Ghanizadeh et al (2020) goes further, suggesting that typographic choices encode cultural values and political orientations, serving as subtle carriers of ideology [9]. These perspectives illustrate why typography cannot be treated as neutral design but must be studied as a linguistic and cultural phenomenon. In Indonesia’s electoral context, where multiple cultural and generational audiences interpret visual cues differently, typographic discourse offers a critical entry point to understanding how political posters mobilize perception and allegiance.

Categories and indicators of typographic discourse highlight the mechanisms by which visual hierarchy translates into persuasive messaging. Van Leeuwen (2006) introduces the idea of a *typographic voice*, the expressive personality conveyed by a typeface, which may range from modernist minimalism to traditional scripts [7]. Hierarchy, achieved through size, weight, and case, directs the eye to what is most important—often the candidate’s name or slogan [10]. Color typographies add symbolic resonance, with red invoking urgency or passion and green signaling religiosity [12]. Spatial layout ensures these elements cohere, framing party logos and slogans in ways that guide interpretation. Empirical studies demonstrate that typographic scale and emphasis significantly influence message recall and credibility in marketing and political advertising [10]. In electoral campaigns, therefore, typography functions as a strategic tool of persuasion, deliberately designed to structure how messages are seen, remembered, and evaluated.

2.2. Semiotic frameworks in electoral visual communication

While typography highlights form, semiotics provides the framework for interpreting meaning. Semiotics, originating from Saussure and Peirce and expanded by Barthes, investigates how signs—whether

visual, textual, or symbolic—convey cultural and ideological messages [13]. Saussure conceptualized the sign as the relation between the signifier (form) and the signified (concept), while Peirce introduced the triad of icon, index, and symbol [12]. Barthes (1972) further developed this into the analysis of *mythologies*, where everyday symbols acquire ideological force by naturalizing social values [14]. In political visuals, semiotics enables researchers to decode how elements such as color palettes, typefaces, and party logos resonate with cultural myths of nationalism, religiosity, or modernity. Scholars differ in their applications: some restrict semiotics to analyzing media artifacts [15], while others extend it to discourse-level critiques that tie symbols to ideological structures [16]. For electoral design, semiotics becomes indispensable in understanding how visual texts produce layers of meaning beyond their literal content.

Categories of semiotic analysis have been systematically developed in political communication. Barthes' tripartite distinction—denotation, connotation, and myth—remains foundational. Denotation refers to the literal meaning, as when a bold sans serif font simply denotes clarity and readability. Connotation refers to cultural associations, such as the same sans serif font implying modernity and decisiveness. Myth emerges when these associations become naturalized as common sense, as in the use of red to embody bravery and nationalism or green to signal piety [7]. Party logos function similarly, condensing complex ideological narratives into single visual emblems. Contemporary political marketing research operationalizes semiotic indicators such as *affective appeal*, *cultural resonance*, and *identity framing* [17]. In the Indonesian context, where cultural plurality and religious symbolism heavily inform voter perception, these semiotic categories are especially useful for decoding the layered meanings embedded in campaign posters and digital visuals.

2.3. Critical discourse analysis and visual ideologies

Beyond form and meaning, political posters must also be examined through the lens of ideology and power, which makes critical discourse analysis (CDA) essential. CDA, as articulated by Fairclough (1995), Wodak and Meyer (2016), and van Dijk (2008), investigates how discourse—whether textual, spoken, or visual—enacts and reproduces structures of domination and inequality [18], [19], [20]. In contrast to conventional discourse analysis, CDA explicitly interrogates the links between communicative practices and broader sociopolitical contexts [4]. Applied to electoral design, CDA reveals how posters frame leaders as moral guardians, nationalist figures, or populist champions, and how these visual frames normalize specific political identities while excluding alternatives. Different scholars emphasize different aspects: Fairclough stresses the dialectical relation between discourse and society, van Dijk foregrounds the cognitive dimension of ideology, and Wodak highlights historical and contextual embeddedness. Collectively, these perspectives equip researchers to expose the ideological work performed by typography and visual rhetoric in political campaigns.

CDA operates through layered categories of analysis that connect textual form to social practice. Fairclough (1995) identifies three levels: textual analysis, discursive practice, and social practice [18]. Textual analysis examines the formal features of posters, such as font choices, capitalization, and spatial design. Discursive practice considers how these posters are produced by campaign teams, circulated through media channels, and consumed by voters. Social practice situates these processes within broader ideological struggles, such as nationalism versus cosmopolitanism or secularism versus religiosity [5]. Indicators for CDA include ideological framing, power representation, and identity construction, which are particularly salient in Southeast Asian electoral contexts [6]. For Indonesia, where campaigns are often contested along religious, cultural, and generational lines, CDA provides a powerful framework to show how typographic and semiotic decisions are not neutral but politically charged acts that influence how leadership and governance are imagined.

3. METHOD

The unit of analysis for this study consists of the visual and linguistic elements embedded in Indonesian political campaign materials. These include posters, billboards, digital advertisements, and social media visuals that employ typography, slogans, party logos, and candidate imagery. By focusing on both textual and symbolic components, the study seeks to uncover how typographic and visual features structure persuasive meaning in electoral communication. The materials are drawn from the 2024 Indonesian presidential and legislative campaigns, with specific attention to candidates such as Anies Baswedan, Ganjar Pranowo, Prabowo Subianto, and selected local legislative nominees. Each artifact is treated as a communicative text in which typography interacts with color, layout, and symbolism to produce rhetorical effects.

This research employs a qualitative research design, specifically a multimodal discourse analytical approach. A qualitative design is chosen because the central objective is not to measure frequencies or test hypotheses quantitatively, but to interpret meaning and reveal ideological dimensions of typographic and visual practices. Multimodal discourse analysis (MDA), as articulated by van Leeuwen (2006), is particularly

relevant, since political posters integrate text, image, layout, and typography into coherent meaning-making ensembles [7]. The combination of typographic discourse analysis, semiotic reading, and critical discourse analysis situates the study within an interpretive paradigm, attentive to how visual texts embody social values and political ideologies. This design is also consistent with recent research in visual communication, where scholars argue that qualitative, interpretive methods are best suited to capture the symbolic and cultural significance of electoral visuals [21]. Thus, the methodological framework allows for depth, context-sensitivity, and cultural nuance.

Table 1. Unit of analysis across categories of campaign media

Type of Media	Examples of Corpus	Sources of Collection
Political Posters & Billboards	Candidate images, slogans, party logos	Field documentation, KPU archives, news portals
Digital Campaign Visuals	Instagram posts, Twitter banners, Facebook advertisements	Official social media accounts of candidates/parties
Public Space Banners	Spanduk in markets, neighborhoods, streets	Field photography, local news media

The sources of information in this study are both primary and secondary. Primary sources consist of campaign artifacts collected through fieldwork in urban and semi-urban areas, including photographs of posters, spanduk, and billboards displayed in public spaces such as roadsides, markets, and residential areas. Additional primary data are digital visuals obtained directly from the verified social media accounts of presidential candidates and political parties, ensuring authenticity. Secondary sources include official collections from the General Elections Commission (KPU), online media archives (Kompas, Tribun, Detik), and academic literature on Indonesian electoral communication. This triangulation of sources increases reliability by combining official, field-based, and mediated materials. It also reflects the multi-sited nature of contemporary campaigns, which unfold simultaneously in physical and digital spaces. By diversifying data sources, the study is positioned to capture both the localized grassroots dimensions of campaign design and its professionalized, mass-mediated expressions.

Data collection followed a systematic process designed to maximize representativeness and ensure contextual richness. Field documentation was carried out during the official campaign period, photographing posters, billboards, and spanduk in various settings across Probolinggo, Surabaya, and Jakarta. Selection criteria included visibility, diversity of party affiliation, and prominence of candidates. Digital data were harvested using purposive sampling from official social media feeds of candidates and parties, particularly Instagram and Twitter, where visual design is central to campaign strategy. Screenshots and archived posts were cataloged by date, source, and thematic content. Secondary data from media outlets were also downloaded and archived to provide context. All materials were coded according to metadata such as location, candidate, party affiliation, and design features. This process reflects the recommendation of Campos (2024) that systematic collection and cataloguing are crucial for visual research, allowing subsequent analysis to be transparent, verifiable, and replicable [22].

Data analysis was conducted in three interrelated stages: typographic discourse analysis, semiotic interpretation, and critical discourse analysis. First, typographic features were coded according to hierarchy (font size, weight, capitalization), typographic voice (modern vs. traditional), and color schemes. This step provided a structural mapping of design priorities. Second, semiotic analysis was applied following Barthes' model of denotation, connotation, and myth, interpreting the symbolic meanings of typefaces, colors, and logos. For example, bold sans serif fonts were examined not only for legibility but for their cultural connotation of decisiveness and modernity. Third, critical discourse analysis linked these formal and symbolic features to ideological frames, examining how candidates were represented as nationalist, populist, or religious leaders. These stages were iterative rather than linear, with findings from one stage informing the others. Such triangulated analysis reflects contemporary best practices in multimodal research [23], ensuring that both formal design and ideological significance are captured.

4. RESULTS

4.1. Typographic hierarchies and persuasive messaging in political posters

One striking example of typographic hierarchy in Indonesian electoral design can be observed in the campaign posters of Anies Baswedan during the 2024 presidential race. In these posters, the candidate's name "*ANIES*" is printed in large uppercase letters, bolded with high contrast against a white or blue background, while the slogan "*Perubahan*" (Change) appears directly beneath in slightly smaller but still prominent type. Below these central elements, the party coalition logos are displayed in much smaller size, often clustered at the bottom edge of the poster. Visual evidence of this arrangement can be seen in

documented campaign materials shared by Kompas (2024) and archived by the KPU. This typographic structuring establishes an immediate focus on the candidate's personal brand, foregrounding his identity above both the slogan and the coalition. The use of uppercase and bold forms emphasizes authority and memorability, a technique widely recognized in typographic discourse studies [7].



Figure 1. Poster of Anies Baswedan – Muhaimin Iskandar political campaign

Figure 1 reveals a consistent pattern in typographic hierarchy across multiple campaign materials: the largest font is reserved for the candidate's name, medium-sized text for the slogan, and the smallest typography for institutional affiliations or logistical information. This mirrors a pyramid of salience, where visual attention is drawn first to the candidate's personal identity before moving downward toward secondary information. The choice of bold sans serif fonts ensures clarity and readability from a distance, which is particularly relevant in outdoor posters placed in busy urban settings. Additionally, the color contrast—dark bold text against bright backgrounds—enhances legibility and reinforces the order of visual priorities. Similar patterns have been documented in other global campaigns, such as Obama's 2008 "HOPE" poster, where typography played a central role in branding [1]. Thus, the Indonesian case follows a broader trend where poster design strategically orders text size, weight, and placement to control the flow of voter perception.

The typographic hierarchy evident in these posters reflects strategic communication decisions that prioritize candidate recognition over party loyalty or coalition identity. In a context where many voters may have limited time or literacy, large and bold typography for the candidate's name ensures immediate recall and emotional resonance. The slogan, positioned as secondary, serves to anchor the campaign's ideological orientation—whether "Perubahan" (Change), "Solid Bergerak," or "Indonesia Maju"—but remains subordinated to the personal brand. This reflects a personalization trend in Indonesian politics, where the electorate increasingly associates leadership with individual figures rather than parties [2]. By relegating party logos to the smallest typographic size, designers subtly frame political identity as candidate-centered rather than institution-centered. Such patterns align with the literature on typographic discourse as a vehicle for persuasion, where font scale and placement encode hierarchies of meaning and reinforce narratives of leadership [3].

4.2. Symbolic meaning of color and font in electoral visuals

A compelling example of symbolic use of color and font can be found in Ganjar Pranowo's campaign posters for the 2024 presidential election. His visuals consistently highlight the color red, paired with clean sans serif fonts in white or yellow. In many banners, Ganjar is depicted smiling against a red background, with the phrase "*Sat Set Gaspol*" or "*Ganjar Presiden 2024*" set in bold, geometric type. The use of red aligns with his affiliation with PDI-P, a party historically symbolized by the color red, which signifies courage, nationalism, and grassroots solidarity in Indonesian political culture. Documentation of these posters is available from *Tribunnews* and the PDI-P official Instagram account, where campaign graphics reinforce red dominance in visual identity (Tribunnews 2024). This example demonstrates how font and color selection work together to construct ideological associations, with typography amplifying the emotional resonance of the dominant color scheme.



Figure 2. Poster of Ganjar Pranowo – Mahfud MD political campaign

Figure 2 consistently follows a visual grammar where red dominates the background, while the candidate's name appears in bold, capitalized white or yellow letters. The choice of sans serif fonts conveys modernity and decisiveness, contrasting with more traditional scripts that might signal religiosity or cultural rootedness. Yellow, often used for the slogan or secondary emphasis, provides contrast and visibility against the red backdrop, ensuring readability from a distance. This combination reflects a semiotic layering: red for bravery and struggle, white for purity and integrity, and yellow for optimism and energy. Beyond Ganjar, other parties and candidates also leverage this symbolic palette—blue for Prabowo (stability, order, authority), green for PKB and PKS (religiosity, grassroots), and orange for NasDem (dynamism, renewal). Thus, the Indonesian electoral field reveals a spectrum where color and typography merge to embody ideological positions, creating a consistent symbolic code across visual campaign texts.

The symbolic use of color and font in these campaign visuals illustrates how electoral design encodes ideology into everyday perception [21], [24]. By foregrounding red, Ganjar's posters not only signal his party loyalty but also activate cultural associations of bravery and national identity, resonating with voters who equate red with the struggle for independence and grassroots activism. The sans serif fonts, clean and bold, signify a break with traditionalism and align him with modern, pragmatic governance. In contrast, candidates who adopt calligraphic or script-like fonts often appeal to religious or cultural identities, framing themselves as guardians of tradition. This semiotic strategy reflects Barthes' (1972) theory of myth, where colors and fonts move beyond functional roles to naturalize broader ideological meanings [14]. In Indonesia's plural society, these symbolic codes become critical tools of persuasion, subtly shaping perceptions of authenticity, credibility, and alignment with voter values through design choices that appear merely aesthetic.

4.2. Visual ideologies and representation of leadership

The selected poster vividly portrays *Prabowo–Gibran* framed under the slogan "*Muda berakhlak*" ("Youth with Morality"), with both figures dressed in formal all-white attire. The choice to present them in pristine white, set against a minimalistic, light-toned background, underscores purity, discipline, and moral authority. Positioned centrally and standing upright, their posture transmits confidence and approachability. The tagline's modern sans serif typography, coupled with the phrase "*For Prabowo–Gibran 2024*", reinforces youthful energy blended with ethical integrity. This visual was widely circulated via Gerindra-affiliated media and recognized in local news commentary, underscoring its ideological framing of leadership as both morally sound and generational. The white color choice, accompanying slogan, clothing, and typography collectively craft a leadership image founded on moral credibility and forward-looking sensibilities.



Figure 3. Poster of Prabowo Subianto – Gibran Rakabuming Raka political campaign

Figure 3 demonstrates a clear visual pattern: white attire and slogans emphasize purity, morality, and ethical leadership; light-toned or neutral backgrounds highlight clarity and seriousness; modern sans serif fonts add freshness and contemporaneity; and central prominence of the candidates suggests equality and partnership in leadership. Together, these elements construct a visual grammar of youth-driven morality, distancing the leaders from traditional, perhaps authoritarian imagery. Their facial expressions—straightforward yet approachable—underscore sincerity. Additional symbolic touches, such as the hashtag #MUDABerAKHLAK, connect the visuals to broader identity and values-based messaging. This pattern resonates with broader trends in electoral branding worldwide, where appearance—in color, posture, attire—communicates intangible leadership traits such as trustworthiness, progressiveness, and moral integrity [25], [26], [27].

The visual pattern functions as a carefully crafted ideological narrative. Presenting Prabowo and Gibran in white attests to their projections of ethical leadership—clean, transparent, and morally grounded. It also speaks to rejuvenation—“*muda*” (youthful)—suggesting a break from staid political hierarchies toward more energetic, relatable governance. The minimalist and bright visual language aligns the campaign with modernity and ethical progress, appealing to younger demographics and those seeking moral reform in politics. This reflects a broader semiotic strategy: clothing and color become signs not just of identity but of value systems. Youthfulness and morality are visually intertwined, naturalizing the idea that ethical leadership must be young and dynamic. This aligns with findings by Abdullah et al (2025), where visual representation intensifies candidate appeal and shapes public sentiment via symbolic imagery [21]. The conclusion is that electoral visuals do not merely depict leadership—they actively construct ideological meanings, suggesting that leadership emerges from moral clarity, youthful energy, and visual accessibility.

5. DISCUSSION

The typographic hierarchies observed in Indonesian political posters carry significant implications for democratic communication. Functionally, they ensure that candidate names dominate public memory, enhancing recognition in a crowded political field. The use of bold, capitalized typography maximizes legibility from afar, serving the practical function of recall and visibility in busy public spaces. However, this function simultaneously produces a dysfunction by marginalizing institutional affiliations such as party logos or coalitions, which appear in much smaller typography. As noted by Mietzner (2020), Indonesian politics has shifted toward candidate-centered rather than party-centered campaigning, and typographic hierarchy reinforces this trend [28]. The implication is that typography is not neutral but actively reorders democratic attention, prioritizing individuals over institutions. This raises questions about the weakening of party

systems, as voters may align more with personality-driven branding than with ideological platforms, potentially reducing accountability and undermining the institutional balance of power.

The cause of this typographic prioritization lies in the personalization of electoral politics and the visual logic of persuasion. Structurally, Indonesia's multiparty system encourages candidates to establish strong individual brands to distinguish themselves within crowded ballots. Typography provides a low-cost, high-impact medium to achieve this differentiation, especially in rural and urban roadside contexts where voters encounter dozens of posters simultaneously. The emphasis on candidate names over parties correlates with research on visual discourse in politics, which highlights the global trend toward personalization and the decline of partisan cues [4]. Underlying this structure is a media ecology where voters are visually bombarded, and salience becomes a decisive factor. In such contexts, bold typography ensures instant recognition, functioning as a mnemonic device. Therefore, the typographic order reflects both structural pressures of multi-candidate competition and cultural shifts toward valuing personal charisma over collective party identity, making typography a central mechanism of visual political economy.

The symbolic deployment of color and font extends beyond aesthetics, shaping ideological associations and emotional resonances in electoral communication. Functionally, colors like red, blue, and green serve as visual shorthand for courage, stability, and religiosity, respectively, allowing parties and candidates to quickly align with values that resonate with the electorate. The choice of sans serif fonts further communicates modernity, clarity, and decisiveness, strengthening candidate images as pragmatic and future-oriented. Dysfunctionally, this symbolic encoding may also oversimplify political identities, reducing complex ideologies into color-font packages that risk fostering superficial engagement. Barthes' (1972) theory of myth explains how such visual codes naturalize ideology, making red appear "naturally" nationalist or green "naturally" religious [14]. The implication is that symbolic design functions as an ideological filter, subtly shaping voter perception without explicit debate. This has ethical consequences for democracy: while effective for engagement, it risks manipulating affect at the expense of rational political deliberation.

The widespread reliance on color and font symbolism emerges from both cultural traditions and media logics. Structurally, Indonesian politics is embedded in a symbolic economy where colors carry deep historical associations—red with PDI-P's revolutionary heritage, green with Islamic parties, and blue with state authority. Campaign designers exploit these cultural codes to embed candidates within existing ideological lineages, ensuring familiarity and trust. At the same time, the rise of digital media amplifies the role of colors and fonts because visual content must capture attention in seconds on fast-scrolling platforms such as Instagram or Twitter. Studies by Malik (2025) demonstrate that digital audiences rely heavily on visual cues when evaluating credibility and relevance [25]. Thus, the underlying structure combines cultural semiotics with platform economies of attention. Campaign designers strategically merge both, knowing that colors and fonts not only convey identity but also function as algorithmically optimized hooks for visibility and virality in competitive media environments.

The ideological framing of leadership through visual representation has profound consequences for how authority and credibility are constructed in electoral contexts. Functionally, visuals portraying candidates in white attire, upright posture, and minimalist layouts project moral authority, transparency, and trustworthiness, which are crucial attributes in a society skeptical of political corruption. These visual narratives provide voters with symbolic cues that supplement or even replace substantive policy evaluation. Yet, this function also carries dysfunction: by constructing leadership primarily through aesthetics, campaigns may privilege surface-level imagery over programmatic debate. Research by Abdullah et al. (2025) underscores how visual framing significantly shapes public sentiment, often overriding rational critique [21]. The implication is that leadership is increasingly mediated through visual myths of morality, youthfulness, or modernity. While effective in mobilizing support, such representations risk entrenching politics as a theater of images, where ideological depth is subordinated to symbolic display.

The underlying cause of visual ideological framing is rooted in the mediatization of politics and the demand for relatable, emotionally resonant leaders. Structurally, contemporary politics operates within what Meutia et al (2025) calls the logic of mediatization, where political communication adapts to the formats and expectations of media culture [1]. In this structure, leadership must be visually legible—conveyed through dress, color, pose, and typographic framing—to gain traction among visually literate electorates. Indonesia's youthful demographics further amplify this logic, as younger voters are more responsive to symbolic cues of modernity and morality than to lengthy manifestos. The reliance on white attire or minimalist design reflects an attempt to meet these cultural expectations, situating candidates within myths of ethical renewal. This correlation suggests that visual ideologies are not accidental but systemic, shaped by cultural demands for authenticity and media systems that reward visual spectacle. Leadership, therefore, becomes inseparable from its visual performance.

6. CONCLUSION

The most important finding of this research lies in demonstrating how typography, color, and visual rhetoric function not only as aesthetic choices but as ideological instruments in Indonesian electoral communication. By analyzing campaign posters and digital visuals through typographic discourse analysis, semiotics, and critical discourse analysis, the study highlights how design strategies construct hierarchies of attention, encode cultural values, and project leadership identities. The key lesson is that typography is never neutral; it organizes political priorities, mobilizes emotions, and naturalizes ideological positions. This methodological integration offers a strong contribution to the scholarly field by bridging visual communication, discourse studies, and political science. In doing so, it expands existing perspectives that often treat campaign design as mere branding, showing instead that typographic hierarchies and symbolic color–font pairings are deeply tied to democratic processes. Thus, the research not only enriches theoretical discourse but also provides a framework for critically reading visual politics in Southeast Asia.

Despite its contributions, the study acknowledges certain limitations. The corpus of data is restricted to prominent candidates and official campaign materials, potentially overlooking grassroots or alternative visual strategies that may differ in symbolism and impact. Furthermore, the analysis focuses on posters and digital media but does not extend to audiovisual materials such as television ads or TikTok videos, which increasingly shape youth engagement. Another limitation lies in the interpretive nature of qualitative discourse analysis, where symbolic meanings may vary across diverse cultural audiences within Indonesia. These limitations suggest the need for further research that incorporates audience reception studies, cross-platform comparisons, and longitudinal analysis across multiple electoral cycles. Future investigations could also adopt mixed methods, combining qualitative discourse analysis with experimental or survey-based measures of voter perception, thereby deepening the empirical grounding. Such directions would enhance our understanding of how visual communication interacts with political cognition in complex democratic landscapes.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS STATEMENT

Reza Pahlawan: conceptualization (lead), visual rhetoric analysis (lead), writing – original draft (lead), writing – review and editing (lead).

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

Authors state no conflict of interest.

INFORMED CONSENT

We have obtained informed consent from all individuals included in this study.

ETHICAL APPROVAL

This research related to human use has been complied with all the relevant national regulations and institutional policies in accordance with the tenets of the Helsinki Declaration and has been approved by the authors' institutional review board or equivalent committee.

DATA AVAILABILITY

Data availability is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analyzed in this study.

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