PERSONAL BRANDING OF PURBAYA YUDHI SADEWA AS MINISTER OF FINANCE ON THE TIKTOK PLATFORM: A SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS

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Article Info

ABSTRACT

The growth of digital media, especially TikTok social media accounts accessed through websites or web-based applications, is currently a commonly used means of communication for disseminating information and news, enhancing social relationships, and building personal branding. This encompasses various aspects, ranging from popular issues raised by celebrities to the use of TikTok by politicians to disseminate policies while communicating with the public, fellow officials, or other public figures. Personal branding is often utilized by politicians during political campaigns to gain supporters and win elections by influencing public perceptions of their identities. This study explores the formation of personal branding through the TikTok activities of the Indonesian Minister of Finance, Purbaya Yudhi Sadewa, using Roland Barthes' semiotic approach and reinforced by several related communication theories, including relationship management theory and source of credibility theory. The purpose of this study is to investigate personal branding through denotative, connotative, and mythical meanings found in the text and images of Purbaya's TikTok activities as the Minister of Finance of the Republic of Indonesia, as well as his relationship with the public. The results of this study indicate that Purbaya's TikTok activities are a form of public interaction between the Indonesian Minister of Finance and the public. Purbaya is considered a trustworthy communicator, given the high level of connection between himself and the public. The denotative meaning of Purbaya's various TikTok activities clearly shows that he uses his account to convey information and news. Meanwhile, the connotative meaning shows that Purbaya is a flexible public official who uses his position with integrity. The mythical meaning reflects Purbaya as a public official who is adaptable, responsive, and creative in his relationship with the public.

Keywords: *Public Relations, Digital Media, Semiotics*

1. INTRODUCTION

The shift from long-distance message exchange, which initially relied on traditional means such as letters, to the use of practical and rapid media is a consequence of digitalization and globalization. This transformation has given rise to platforms used in the process of new message circulation, commonly referred to as new media. As previously predicted by a renowned communication theorist, Marshall McLuhan, we have now entered an era in which the exchange of information on a national and even international scale can be realized through a single medium (Kurnia, 2019).

The rapid evolution of information systems has produced forms of virtual modernity, one of which is social media. The capacity of social media is highly beneficial for public relations practices that target audiences in conveying institutional or individual messages in the digital sphere. Public relations functions to connect institutions with the public, a concept that aligns with Relationship Management Theory. Social media has become an institutional solution for maintaining connections with audiences, particularly through publishing information, creating news, and building personal branding as an organizational priority. Various types of social media are accessible in Indonesia, with TikTok emerging as one of the most dominant platforms in capturing the attention of social media users.

The platform—identifiable by its white musical note logo set against a simple black background and originating from China—offers users video-based content ranging from as short as 15 seconds to more than five minutes in duration. This platform attracts audiences through a range of engaging features, including unrestricted access to music to accompany photos and videos, virtual communication via live streaming, beautifying elements such as stickers and effects, voice modulation features, and spaces for audiences to share their daily activities.

Digitalization has intensified competition for public attention amid rapid technological advancement and fierce rivalry, making personal branding increasingly essential for embedding a lasting impression in the audience's mind. This platform from the "Bamboo Curtain" country serves as a solution for building a stable self-image by showcasing unique traits and personal expertise (Fitrianti et al., 2021). Image construction is closely related to figures involved in politics. Building a positive personal branding can be likened to winning the hearts of the people. It is therefore unsurprising that social media—particularly TikTok, which is currently thriving in Indonesia—is widely used as a promotional tool. Terms such as practical, precise, and fast aptly describe the platform's advantages in disseminating positive information about politicians.

Amid the political and economic dynamics following the inauguration of President Prabowo Subianto in 2024, public attention has not only focused on new policy directions but also on the leadership style and communication patterns of cabinet officials. One figure who has drawn significant public attention is senior economist Purbaya Yudhi Sadewa, who was entrusted with the position of Minister of Finance, replacing Sri Mulyani Indrawati. Unlike his predecessor, who was known for a formal and diplomatic style, Purbaya has appeared with a more open, relaxed, and often controversial communication

approach. Several of his viral statements—such as his remark that he occupies his office to serve the people rather than merely serve the grand white-painted palace, as well as an old video in which he referred to an institution as "foolish," and his arguments that resonated with younger generations—have reignited public attention and opened new discourse on the communication style of state officials. This blunt and straightforward approach has captivated netizens, particularly TikTok users, who have given him the nickname "The Cowboy Minister" due to his courage in speaking without filters.

This phenomenon cannot be separated from the contemporary digital media ecosystem as a space for discursive contestation and social representation. TikTok, as a short-video-based social media platform, has become a primary medium for rapidly and widely disseminating political, economic, and public issue content. According to Ramadhani and Setiawan (2021), TikTok possesses the power to create closeness between public figures and society due to its visual, personal, and interactive nature. In Purbaya's case, many video clips of his statements have gone viral on TikTok, uploaded by institutional accounts, media outlets, and ordinary users alike. Through content that combines sound, text, and body expression, the narrative surrounding Purbaya is constructed not merely as a minister but as a representation of a leader who is bold, anti-establishment, and unconstrained by formalistic norms.

Social media, particularly TikTok, is not merely a communication medium but also a space for the production of political identity. The personal branding of public officials on this platform has become part of a new communication strategy that emphasizes emotional appeal, visual elements, and audience engagement. Research by Kartika and Munandar (2022) found that public trust in political figures on TikTok is shaped not only by factual information but also by emotional perceptions and accompanying visual narratives. In Purbaya's case, his communication style—perceived as honest and courageous—resonates with public aspirations for transparent and authentic leadership. Personal branding through TikTok thus becomes a crucial tool in shaping this image, given its ability to disseminate narratives quickly while generating strong emotional impact. This context aligns with Relationship Management Theory, which explains that the primary function of public communication is not merely to convey messages but to build and maintain long-term relationships with audiences. As Minister of Finance, Purbaya is not only required to communicate fiscal policy informatively but also to convince the public that such policies are aligned with their interests. TikTok enables two-way interaction, allowing Purbaya to be recognized as a public figure who is open to public opinion.

Nevertheless, academic studies on the personal branding of Purbaya Yudhi Sadewa on TikTok remain limited. Most existing research focuses on electoral figures such as Gibran Rakabuming or Sandiaga Uno, while technocratic figures like Purbaya have received relatively little attention in the literature. This creates a significant research gap, considering the crucial role of the Minister of Finance in shaping public opinion on national economic conditions. Moreover, semiotic approaches are still rarely used to analyze social media content produced by technocratic figures, even though symbolic levels are precisely where narratives and ideologies about leadership are formed and

reproduced. Studies such as that conducted by Fitri et al. (2024) on political videos on TikTok demonstrate that public meaning-making is highly dependent on the presentation of symbols, expressions, and visual context.

The urgency of this research is further driven by society's increasing reliance on social-media-based information, particularly in the context of public policy. In the contemporary era, where perceptions often outweigh facts, symbols and narratives become primary instruments in building public trust. Research by Latifah and Rahmawati (2022) indicates that viral political content tends to construct specific social myths, especially when associated with values such as courage, frankness, and nationalism.

Through Barthes' semiotic approach, this study seeks to examine how Purbaya Yudhi Sadewa's TikTok activities contain signs that shape his personal branding as Minister of Finance. Selected videos will be analyzed in terms of denotation (what is directly conveyed), connotation (implicit and cultural meanings), and myth (the broader narratives formed in the public imagination). The research focuses on visual and verbal narratives that depict Purbaya's identity as a public official who is approachable, honest, and non-elitist.

Roland Barthes' Semiotics

Semiotics can be explained as a social approach that examines how symbols operate. In this context, symbols are the primary components used to understand meaning (Sobur, 2017). Therefore, semiotics focuses on how signs emerge, function, and reflect various aspects of human life. Ferdinand de Saussure, in his work Course in General Linguistics, explains that in expressing a proposition, a langue can be used as a system of rules. Consequently, a langue can be viewed as part of a variety of other sign systems, including writing, sign language for individuals with hearing impairments, religious symbols, behavioral norms, or military signals. Semiotics itself developed from linguistics through Saussure's thought, as he is recognized not only as a pioneer of linguistics but also as a central reference in sign theory. In semiotics, Saussure divides the study of signs into three main domains. First, syntax, which refers to the rules governing the relationships among signs themselves. Second, semantics, which concerns the principles explaining how signs relate to objects or specific meanings such as individuals, objects, or events. Third, pragmatics, which examines how signs are used and interpreted within social contexts or by their users (Sobur, 2017).

Roland Barthes developed a structured model to analyze and understand the meanings contained in signs. His thinking centers on two levels of signification, namely an interpretive process that occurs in two phases. The first phase involves a direct relationship between the signifier and the signified, which becomes the source of a sign's basic meaning. Barthes refers to this phase as denotation. Denotation is the clearest and most explicit meaning and is generally regarded as a fully agreed-upon meaning. It represents the factual meaning found as it is. In other literature, denotative meaning is also referred to as cognitive meaning, conceptual meaning, or referential or propositional meaning, as it relates to factual and explicit information (Sobur, 2017).

The second stage is known as connotation. Connotation refers to additional meanings derived from culture, experience, emotion, or particular values. This meaning is not fixed but rather open and subject to multiple interpretations. Connotation may also arise from visual elements, including body posture, surrounding objects, photographic techniques, image aesthetics, and the arrangement of signs. At this second level, signs also form myths. According to Barthes, myth is not an ancient tale, but rather a way in which a culture interprets reality or assigns particular meanings to it. Myths are shaped by the dominant values of social groups and are then disseminated in everyday life through media, conversation, habits, and behavior. Within myth, there are basic components consisting of three elements: the physical form representing a concept, what is signified, and the form of the sign itself. However, myth functions as a system of deeper meaning that is built upon meanings that already exist in contemporary contexts. In other words, something whose reality is not yet certain emerges from a collection of existing meanings and reinforces particular cultural messages.

Personal Branding

The concept of personal branding is a combination of the words personal and branding, which refers to the development of an individual's image as a brand. In the field of marketing, a brand is understood as the perceptions and emotional responses of potential consumers, shaped by their experiences when using a product. This analogy is then applied to the personal domain, where personal branding is defined as the beliefs and feelings held by individuals about others, reflecting the totality of experiences within their interpersonal relationships (McNally & Speak, 2012).

Personal branding is not formed by a single factor but by several key elements that are interconnected and evolve simultaneously. According to Montoya and Vandehey (2009), these aspects can be grouped into three main components as follows. First, the individual (You), which refers to the person themselves. An individual can create a personal image through self-presentation and strategically planned communication tactics. The purpose of this process is to convey two primary messages to the target audience: who they are as a person and the profession they pursue. A personal brand reflects how the audience perceives the individual, including their values, traits, skills, and distinctive characteristics that differentiate them from others.

Second, commitment. A personal brand is regarded as a promise, namely a commitment to fulfill the expectations that arise from the self-image that has been constructed. Third, interaction. A strong personal brand is capable of building positive relationships with clients or audiences. The higher the value desired by clients and the greater the individual's influence, the better the quality of relationships established through the personal brand.

This discussion provides an opportunity to examine how personal branding operates, not merely as an image but also as an active reputation system within professional interactions. In The Brand Called You: Create a Personal Brand That Wins Attention and Grows Your Business, Peter Montoya outlines three core principles for creating successful personal branding (Montoya & Vandehey, 2009). The first principle is clarity,

which refers to the ability to clearly and comprehensively explain one's identity and the activities or skills one possesses. This can be exemplified, among other things, through visual representations such as photographs. The second principle is specialization, which emphasizes focusing on specific elements that make an individual unique and easily recognizable. The third principle is consistency, which refers to efforts to maintain a stable image so that it remains relevant and stands out among competitors.

From this explanation, it can be concluded that personal branding is a conscious process undertaken by individuals to construct the identity they wish to present to others, by leveraging their values, skills, and character to enhance their self-worth or value across various social and professional contexts.

New Media

According to Denis McQuail, new media refers to a set of electronic technologies that provide different experiences for each user. New media operates through various systems, such as cable or satellite networks, miniaturization technologies that make devices smaller, systems for storing and retrieving data, and capabilities for displaying text, images, and graphics visually. In addition, new media is equipped with configurations that can be operated across different types of digital devices. Technological development has driven the rapid growth of new media and facilitated its widespread diffusion throughout society. This technology enables individuals to communicate with ease and to access information without limitations of space and time. Users can interact anytime and anywhere, making new media a highly useful tool that offers substantial benefits to society as a whole.

The main difference between new media and traditional media lies in its more open, interactive, and customizable characteristics. New media is decentralized, meaning that the production, distribution, and selection of information are not fully controlled by communicators alone but are also shaped by active user participation. Furthermore, new media has a much greater capacity for information transmission through cable and satellite infrastructure, enabling it to overcome many of the technical limitations that once constrained traditional broadcasting systems. New media also facilitates direct two-way communication, allowing users to select information, provide feedback, exchange messages, and interact directly with others. The flexibility of new media is higher in terms of form, structure, and content, as well as in its patterns of use. This flexibility creates greater opportunities for diverse interactions and news production.

The term social media is formed from two main concepts: media and social. The word social refers to individuals' capacity to interact, build relationships, and influence one another within social life. Traditionally, media is understood as a communication channel used to convey discourse in the form of text, sound, images, or video. Since early times, media has played a significant role in attracting public attention by presenting information, stories, and images that shape public perspectives and opinions. In contemporary society, a wide range of practices has emerged, including news dissemination and argumentative posts. Social media operates through web-based conversational applications that enable users to easily create and distribute content in various formats, ranging from written text and still images captured via mobile phones to moving images and even audio content

that engages the senses (Safko & Brake, 2009). Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Path, and YouTube are examples of social media that fall within the category of new online media. Through these platforms, not only experts but everyone is given the opportunity to communicate, engage in public discussion, share various types of content, and build online social networks. The ease of access and participatory nature of these platforms make social media an inclusive space for interaction, where users can also function as information producers within the digital ecosystem.

Relationship Management Theory

There are several theories within Public Relations; however, this study adopts a theory that focuses on how groups of people within a particular camp establish bonds with their audiences, both within and beyond their own circles. Therefore, this research employs Relationship Management Theory, which is regarded in Public Relations as one of the most substantial theories. This theory is also known as OPR (Organization–Public Relationship).

If we liken the relationship between audiences—such as customers or followers of an institution—it should be managed on the principle of mutual benefit. The relationship between an institution and its public is not merely a matter of conversation; rather, every action taken by both parties can have implications for their respective lives, as stated by Ledingham. In contrast, Broom simplifies this view by suggesting that relationships are shaped through information exchange between both sides: if audiences feel valued, it positively affects the institution, whereas negative experiences result in negative reciprocal effects.

In the past, Public Relations was often regarded as mere rhetoric disseminated through media by non-participatory publics. However, Ledingham, as cited in Kriyantono (2014), argues that its function has shifted from being merely message-oriented to maintaining the quality of relationships with external entities, particularly in contexts where public discourse is actively developing. In developing such relationships, several fundamental principles underpin this theory, as follows:

a) Essentially, the core task of a PR practitioner involves constructing high-quality connections with all communicants.

b) Both parties—institutions or individuals as communicators and external entities as communicants—derive mutual benefits.

c) PR practitioners should continuously maintain and attend to their audiences, as relationships naturally fluctuate over time.

d) Bonds become stronger with increasing intensity due to mutual expectations.

e) Mutual benefits emerge when both parties understand one another.

f) The level of trust granted by audiences serves as a key indicator of PR effectiveness.

g) Solutions to problems cannot be achieved merely through persuasive rhetoric, as rhetoric is only a tool, not a determinant of relationships.

h) The quality of OPR is influenced by the duration of communication, historical interactions, and reciprocity.

i)   Building relationships between institutions and other entities across interpersonal and various other domains constitutes the classification of OPR.

j)   Activities involving relationships between groups of entities and individual actors are created through collaboration.

Source Credibility Theory

In achieving effective information transmission from one entity to another, an essential factor that must not be overlooked is the credibility of the communicator. Selecting communicators to convey messages to other entities must be based on their credibility. The distinction between highly credible individuals and those lacking credibility can be observed through inherent communicator attributes, including not only physical appeal but also expertise in a particular field and self-confidence. An individual who is capable of standing before participatory and non-participatory audiences—even within the digital sphere—can be categorized as an expert in that field. Audiences are more inclined to trust charismatic communicators who demonstrate credibility as valuable entities. Accordingly, Hovland et al., as cited in Rakhmat (2018), formulated this theory based on the assumption that message recipients are more likely to be persuaded by speakers who exhibit integrity.

2.   RESEARCH METHODE

As a researcher, this study employs a qualitative method to examine the research problem. Conducting qualitative research requires the researcher to view the object of study as something unpredictable, dynamic, and evolving, as well as the outcome of a process of assembling ideas through cognitive networks and interpreting events that receive attention. Such events are not seen as isolated, since all occurrences are interconnected and should not be understood in fragmented conditions (Sugiyono, 2023). From social events or behaviors that take place, learning is generated; this constitutes the essence of the qualitative method (Creswell & Poth, 2023). In short, this approach serves as a means to uncover and interpret phenomena in depth.

The researcher adopts a qualitative approach rooted in the work of the semiotician Roland Barthes, employing semiotic analysis to examine the TikTok account of the Minister of Finance, Purbaya, which is readily accessible to human perception in the form of moving visuals. The ease afforded by digitalization enables access to the activities and interactions of a Minister of Finance with a broad public, as well as to various forms of audiovisual content shared on the platform.

To collect valid and comprehensive data, the researcher gathered information relevant to the research topic by monitoring the activities of the Minister of Finance, Purbaya, on the platform originating from the "Bamboo Curtain" country, commonly known as TikTok. This monitoring included audiovisual content from various agendas, video descriptions that explain the content, and interactions established through the platform. Monitoring is a method frequently utilized by researchers to gain an understanding of the

sources under study (Laut, 2020). In addition, a literature review was incorporated as another source of data. In brief, these two components constitute the data collection techniques employed in this study.

More comprehensively, the core of this research integrates qualitative inquiry with a constructivist paradigm. Viewers' interpretations of what they observe depend on the knowledge frameworks prevailing in society (Harun et al., 2011). The primary reason for adopting a constructivist paradigm is that audiovisual materials and textual descriptions can be perceived, interpreted, and subsequently analyzed based on the activities accessible through the TikTok account @purbayayudhis, which belongs to the Minister of Finance. This account therefore serves as the subject of the study, focusing on how a newly appointed Minister of Finance constructs personal branding. In addition to employing Roland Barthes' semiotic theory to analyze the TikTok account @purbayayudhis, the researcher also applies Relationship Management Theory and a message-related capability theory centered on the communicator, namely Source Credibility Theory.

3.   RESULT AND ANALYSIS

RESULT

The Indonesian public has observed the transformation within the Ministry of Finance as both a striking and refreshing shift in atmosphere. The previous officeholder was widely known as an elegant, intelligent, and meticulous figure—akin to a final fortress that strictly guarded the state budget. Her manner of speech was wise, her appearance consistently formal and composed, and her conduct aligned with global technocratic standards. However, the arrival of Purbaya Yudhi Sadewa has dramatically altered the dynamics at Lapangan Banteng. Rather than presenting himself as a calm bureaucrat seated behind a desk, Purbaya appears with an energetic, "cowboy-style" demeanor, seemingly challenging the assumption that a finance minister must always remain reserved.

Public attention in Indonesia quickly turned to Purbaya as he began to display a distinctly different image as the nation's chief financial steward, one that does not rely solely on conventional image-making. Instead of delivering complex and rigid data reports alone, he has become known for frequently wearing jackets or caps emblazoned with "8%," which serve as representations of the vision he consistently carries—much like a campaign activist rather than merely a conventional minister. This image and its associated narratives are readily accessible to numerous social media users, particularly netizens on the "Bamboo Curtain" platform, TikTok.

Table 1. Research Findings (Purbaya Yudhi Sadewa Wearing a Jacket and Cap Bearing the Number "8%")

Activities of the @purbayayudhis Account on TikTok in the Form of Moving Visual Content

Denotative Meaning

As a symbol of the economic growth ambition intended to be realized during his tenure, Purbaya is seen wearing a jacket or cap labeled "8%." At the beginning of the video, Purbaya appears wearing and displaying a jacket bearing the "8%" inscription, which was most likely given to him by someone else. While smiling, he responds to various questions from journalists. Toward the end of the video, several photos show Purbaya smiling and giving a thumbs-up gesture. All of these visuals are accompanied by a K-pop song titled Fashion by Cortiz, which serves as background music to build the video's atmosphere.

The second clip in the video presents a different mood following the relaxed moment. At the start of this scene, someone is heard commenting that the cap looks cool, referring to the cap with the "8%" logo worn by Purbaya. While wearing his new cap, Purbaya explains that the figure refers to the 8% economic growth target that has become the President's main focus for Indonesia, while smiling broadly and giving a thumbs-up. A person standing nearby adds a remark, to which Purbaya responds by clarifying that this target is the President's directive rather than his own initiative. He then continues by stating that efforts are underway to make the 8% target a reality in the future.

The video concludes with a series of images of Purbaya after a meeting, showing him in a natural pose with a wide smile and a gesture pointing to the cap bearing the "8%" logo. In the third segment, a POV-style video shows Purbaya wearing a new jacket with the "8%" logo. At the beginning of the scene, he is seen examining the jacket before putting it on. After wearing it, Purbaya comments that MSMEs are "doing great" and will continue to move forward, while giving a thumbs-up. He then explains the details of the jacket, pointing to the words Dream Eight, the number 8, and a keris logo on the front. In the next part, Purbaya turns around to show the Dream Eight text on the back of the jacket. The video continues with remarks praising the quality of the varsity-style jacket, stating that MSMEs will keep progressing, and concludes with a religious utterance as a form of prayer that God will grant this hope, accompanied by a smile and a thumbs-up. At the end of the video, photos of Purbaya with others are also displayed, showing friendly expressions, smiles, and thumbs-up poses.

Connotative Meaning

Overall, the three videos portray Purbaya as an enthusiastic, contemporary political figure who is close to the public and actively voices the 8% economic growth target. The use of visual elements such as jackets and caps labeled "8%," combined with smiling facial expressions and thumbs-up gestures, conveys optimism, support, and confidence in Indonesia's economic growth vision. Through friendly interactions, he emphasizes that this target is a presidential mandate rather than a personal ambition. Moreover, the lifestyle-style visual presentation communicates that the national economic agenda is neither exclusive nor overly formal, but can instead be conveyed in a relaxed, positive, and down-to-earth manner.

Myth

The sequence of the three videos consistently conveys the message that the 8% economic growth target is an appropriate strategy for advancing the nation—something inevitable that requires government management. The figure "8%" has now transformed into a representation of hope, progress, and Indonesia's future on its path toward becoming a developed country, rather than merely a complex technical objective. Through modest visuals, friendly smiles, thumbs-up gestures, personal touches such as jackets and caps, and interactions on a popular media platform, state leaders are presented as optimistic, humble figures who are steadfast in supporting the President's vision while skillfully linking economic policy to the realities of everyday life.

The narrative of achieving high economic growth of 8 percent has been reframed as a story of optimism and confidence, sidelining the inherent complexities, risks, and fundamental challenges involved. This target is portrayed as something natural, worthy of enthusiastic acceptance, and simply awaiting realization, rather than as a problematic project requiring critical scrutiny. Furthermore, Purbaya's responses to input from TikTok users can be understood as a form of symbolic communication that helps reinforce his image on social media. Although the account is managed by his personal assistant, the displayed responses aim to affirm Purbaya's portrayal as a friendly, positive, and approachable politician. As such, these interactions remain significant in the ongoing process of shaping his public identity.

Table 2. Research Findings (Purbaya Yudhi Sadewa Responding to Netizen Comments on Social Media from the "Bamboo Curtain" Platform)

Activities of the @purbayayudhis Account on TikTok in Static Visual Content

Denotative Meaning

The three images depict interactions between the official account of Purbaya Yudhi Sadewa and several netizens in the comment section of his social media. In the first image, a netizen comments that they are from Wonogiri and claims to be the first commenter on the moving visual content. Purbaya then responds by expressing his hope that the region will continue to progress, accompanied by a thumbs-up emoji. The next image carries a similar meaning, in which the account owner again claims to be the first commenter using a familiar and friendly address. Purbaya's response is brief, consisting of two words— "Mantap. Tks"—and is accompanied by prayer-hand and thumbs-up emojis. Meanwhile, the third image shows a netizen offering encouragement while also referencing an element of traditional entertainment that is a source of community pride. Purbaya replies with "IYA. Tks Mas," again using the same emojis. Factually, the three images demonstrate direct replies from Purbaya's official account to netizen comments, employing a down-to-earth style of language that resonates with everyday social interactions.

Connotative Meaning

The indirect communication carried out by Purbaya through digital platforms constructs a sense of closeness and openness between a public official and netizens. His brief replies, the use of everyday language such as informal greetings, and the inclusion of thumbs-up and prayer-hand emojis connote friendliness, reduced social distance, and a non-hierarchical attitude. This form of two-way communication, although not face-to-face, is selectively employed to respond to comments that are positive, light, and appreciative, thereby shaping an image of a public official who is not arrogant, relaxed, and comfortable interacting in digital spaces. In the context of personal branding, such responses reinforce the impression that Purbaya is present not only as a state official but also as a grounded individual who blends into the everyday social media activities of netizens.

Myth

The activities shown in the three images convey the notion that the ideal civil servant is a figure who is easily accessible, familiar with citizens, and capable of communicating in language that is readily understood. Purbaya's presence in the comment section is perceived as a symbol of participatory and approachable leadership, while also signaling

that power communication can be conducted in a relaxed manner without diminishing authority. The boundary between those in power and the public becomes blurred, as if both occupy an equal position, even though this relationship remains within the framework of planned image construction. Consequently, an image emerges of contemporary officials as present, responsive, and within reach of the people, while image-building activities and institutional communication management are regarded as normal and acceptable practices.

Through his uploads on a platform originating from the country known for the "Bamboo Curtain," Purbaya not only conveys economic information but also consciously adapts his communication style to prevailing trends on the platform, including the phenomenon of irregular moving visuals accompanied by heavy beats, commonly referred to as jedag-jedug. This choice of format is evident in energetic video segments, repeated smiles, and thumbs-up gestures, combined with rapid transitions that follow the rhythm of the music. By adopting a visual style favored by many TikTok users, Purbaya packages technical economic messages in an engaging way. This tactic demonstrates an effort to bridge the complexity of political discourse with the fast-paced and entertaining nature of social media.

Table 3. Research Findings (Purbaya Yudhi Sadewa Following Edited Video Trends on the "Bamboo Curtain" Platform)

Activities of the @purbayayudhis Account on TikTok in Moving Visual Content

Denotative Meaning

There are three videos with different contexts, all of which are related to the viral jedag-jedug phenomenon on this platform. In Image 1, the video shows a relaxed situation in which Purbaya is greeted by someone behind the camera with a "good morning," to which he responds briefly with an informal salute-like gesture. He then walks away, and the camera captures him pointing to the Ministry of Finance logo on his attire, followed by a thumbs-up gesture and a broad smile. The content ends with a typical TikTok jedag-jedug transition that displays clips of him smiling and giving a thumbs-up. This is even more evident in Image 2, where the video presents a press conference excerpt in which Purbaya explains inflation and the pace of economic growth using macroeconomic terms such as potential growth of 6.5% and opportunities for economic stimulus. These statement excerpts are then edited into a jedag-jedug format, showing Purbaya's natural poses while responding to journalists' questions, with a mix of serious expressions and smiles captured

in three static frames. Finally, Image 3 contains an interview excerpt with Purbaya in which he emphasizes economic recovery and job creation, accompanied by clarification and an apology for a previous statement. The video concludes with a jedag-jedug montage featuring photos of Purbaya smiling and giving a thumbs-up.

Connotative Meaning

As a public official, Purbaya seeks to project a professional yet humanistic demeanor. The use of light, informal greetings, respectful gestures, the absence of stern expressions, and frequent thumbs-up gestures connote humility, openness, and reduced social distance from the public. The visual emphasis on official Ministry of Finance attributes pointed out by Purbaya connects him with institutional legitimacy and state authority, while his technical explanations of inflation and economic growth create an impression of expertise and competence in the economic field he oversees. The video design, which follows TikTok's distinctive format, reflects an effort to simplify complex economic issues so they are more easily understood by the general public, particularly younger audiences. The combination of serious expressions, smiles, and signature thumbs-up gestures underscores a balance between professionalism and personal warmth.

Myth

The videos convey the idea of a capable Minister of the Economy who is not only technically proficient but also skilled in communication, approachable, and digitally literate. Purbaya is portrayed as a contemporary bureaucrat who can manage complex macroeconomic issues while maintaining a human touch in the digital sphere. Various intricate economic issues—such as inflation, economic stimulus programs, and job recovery—are articulated on the platform through visual narratives that are constructive, systematic, and optimistic. As a result, economic governance is represented as stable and well-managed, while personal interactions, smiles, and thumbs-up gestures serve as symbols that the state is operating calmly, confidently, and in continuous connection with its citizens.

ANALYSIS

The use of social media platforms by Purbaya through various types of videos and digital engagement reflects a shift in the communication methods of public officials in the era of modern media. Today, social media—particularly TikTok—serves not only as a means of entertainment but has also evolved into a crucial tool for public relations, image building, political messaging, and relationship-building with the public. In this context, content featuring jackets and caps bearing the "8%" label, responses to netizen comments, and jedag-jedug-style videos can be understood as part of a communication strategy aimed at aligning government messages with an ever-changing digital culture that is visual, emotional, and dynamic. This approach demonstrates that political communication no longer focuses solely on the delivery of substantive information but also on how messages are packaged to remain relevant and acceptable to broader audiences.

The videos uploaded by Purbaya showing him wearing jackets and caps marked with the number "8%" illustrate the use of visual elements as public relations tools. The number displayed on these fashion accessories symbolically simplifies the complex goal of national economic growth. Combined with his signature thumbs-up gesture, broad smile, and expressed support for MSMEs, political messages are conveyed in a form that is easily recognizable and memorable. In public relations practice, this effectively embeds

political issues within a more personal and positive narrative. These visual symbols establish a connection between Purbaya, the institution he represents, and public expectations regarding the future of the national economy. In this way, politics is no longer perceived as an abstract and technocratic discussion but rather as part of an individual identity that is regularly promoted in the digital sphere.

Beyond moving visual content, public relations activities are also evident in the official account's engagement with netizen comments. In line with Relationship Management Theory, such interactions reflect efforts to build and sustain long-term relationships with the public. Fundamentally, this theory emphasizes that the effectiveness of organizational communication is not measured solely by the quantity of messages delivered but also by the quality of relationships established between organizations or public figures and their audiences. By responding to comments, Purbaya appears as a figure actively involved in community life, thereby transforming the relationship between public officials and citizens from a strictly hierarchical one into a more dialogic and personal interaction.

The relationships fostered through interactions on social media platforms play a significant role in building public trust. Consistent responses to positive comments create the impression that public officials are accessible and supportive of their communities. In the realm of public relations, this helps strengthen both the legitimacy and positive image of the institution represented. Although the social media account is officially managed, the responses still reflect Purbaya's public identity. Consequently, relationships formed in the digital sphere are not merely personal but also symbolic, carefully managed as part of public communication.

The use of edited videos following the jedag-jedug phenomenon in Purbaya's content highlights his ability to adapt to TikTok's communication culture. From a public relations perspective, this format is designed to capture attention and extend the reach of conveyed messages. Complex macroeconomic topics are simplified through visual elements and rhythmic editing, allowing audiences to grasp the core message without needing technical expertise. This approach reflects a broader shift in political communication—from formal, one-way dissemination to more visual, persuasive, and participatory forms.

From a personal branding perspective, these three types of content work collectively to reinforce Purbaya's image as a public official who is adaptable to contemporary developments. Personal branding is constructed not only through direct statements but also through the ways individuals interact with society. This combination creates a dual image of a public official who is both competent and capable of communicating with digital audiences in a relaxed and approachable manner.

The relationship between public relations, interaction management, and personal image in this context demonstrates a mutually reinforcing dynamic. Public relations provides a strategic framework for organizing institutional messages and appearances; interaction management explains how communication and responses shape relationships and public trust; and personal image emerges as the product of consistent and continuous self-presentation. Without a flexible public relations strategy, reaching digital audiences with political messages becomes difficult. Without interaction management, positive images become unstable and short-lived. Without a clear personal image, public officials risk becoming irrelevant in the highly competitive social media landscape. Ultimately, the range of content presented by Purbaya on social media platforms illustrates that political communication in the digital era cannot be separated from platform logic and popular culture. This practice underscores that the success of public communication depends not only on political substance but also on the ability to build relationships and construct images aligned with the characteristics of today's digital society.

4. CONCLUSION

The journal examining the personal branding of Purbaya Yudhi Sadewa as the Minister of Finance of the Republic of Indonesia on TikTok highlights his active use of the platform as a tool for direct interaction with the public as an implementation of the fundamental function of public relations, namely building communication between the government—specifically the Ministry of Finance—and society. The reciprocal nature of Purbaya's communication with the public provides mutual benefits through easy access to communication for both parties, while also fulfilling various organizational public relations functions. The high level of interaction between Purbaya and the public indicates that society perceives him as a capable public figure, a government official who is relatively close to the people, and someone who possesses personal appeal as well as communicative competence that is well received in public interactions. The formation of this personal branding is closely related to the credibility of the official as a message sender, the relationship between public relations and public officials, and the acceptance of the constructed self-image by society, ultimately resulting in more effective two-way communication. Clearly, Purbaya demonstrates his image as a capable Minister of Finance. The consistent two-way communication he maintains with the public through TikTok helps shape his personal branding as an official who is approachable and closely connected to society.

From the denotative meanings evident in nearly all of Purbaya's activities on TikTok, it is clear that he utilizes positive and energetic visuals that successfully generate public enthusiasm. His energetic appearance—characterized by laughter and smiles across 62 videos on his TikTok account, his responses to citizens' aspirations, and his daily story updates—illustrates how Purbaya, as Indonesia's Minister of Finance, effectively uses TikTok to carry out his role as a public official. The connotative meanings reveal that Purbaya is able to align himself with public expectations and demonstrate that, as Minister of Finance, he can exercise his position appropriately. Through interactions with the public on TikTok, Purbaya consistently provides positive responses to public opinions directed at him. These responses convey a genuine image of Purbaya as a Minister of Finance who is close to the people. The mythic level suggests that Purbaya is a public official who differs from others in his adaptability when communicating with the public, his responsiveness to public opinions on TikTok, and his creativity. As such, the expectation that public officials serve the people is exemplified by Purbaya through his use of TikTok and can serve as an idea or model for other officials in carrying out governmental duties and responsibilities toward society. Equally important, the role of public officials is expected to meet societal needs across social, economic, and educational dimensions.

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