

**“I STAND ON THE RIGHT SIDE”:
A WAR OF SOCIAL MEDIA AVATARS IN THE 2014 INDONESIAN
PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION CAMPAIGN**

Iwan Gunawan

Postgraduate Studies in Urban Art, Institut Kesenian Jakarta
iwan@pascasarjanikj.ac.id

Zeffry Alkatiri

Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Indonesia
zeffry_al@yahoo.com

FX. Catur Satria Aji Wibowo
catoursatria@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The development of social media in the realm of democracy through internet technology has been used by numerous groups for various purposes. A number of software programs with their applications make it easier for someone to produce countless content on social media. One of the functions of such programs is to create different images in relation to the 2014 Indonesian presidential election. In the 2014 presidential election, there was a rivalry between the two groups of voters who attacked each other using various image products through social media. Those supporting Joko Widodo (Jokowi) created a campaign image in the form of an avatar template containing the number “2” with the words "I Stand on the Right Side". The image then went viral and was responded to by the voters for the presidential candidate Prabowo Subianto with a variety of contending images. This research documents and analyzes the various images created and circulated during the 2014 Indonesian presidential election, as well as reconstructing the conflict between the two groups of voters in the presidential election in the context of Indonesian democracy, which was still in its development. Data was collected from various websites and social media from May to October 2017. This research was conducted through historical methods. Meanwhile, in examining the various images, this research used a visual communication approach to graphic design.

KEYWORDS: Avatar Meme, Presidential Campaign, Social Media

INTRODUCTION

The culture of social interaction and the influence of the rapid development of the internet in Indonesia have led to the emergence of the meme phenomenon on social media. This meme phenomenon arises from the behavior of uploading images with a visual language pattern, which is often done by netizens, to internet forums, social media, and entertainment sites.

The 2014-2019 general election period is one of the most interesting timeframes to observe because it seemingly divided the Indonesian people into two large groups. In a climate

of heated political competition, many contents in the form of tendentious images were circulating in attempts to bring down each presidential candidate. Some of the content that went viral in the form of image uploads began to be identified and referred to as ‘memes’ by netizens. These images were spread via social media, chat applications, and internet forums, such as *Kaskus*.

In the 2014-2019 presidential election campaign there were two competing candidates, namely Prabowo Subianto (Prabowo) and Joko Widodo (Jokowi). An interesting phenomenon from their campaign period is the heated debate between the two supporters via social media such as *Facebook* and *Twitter*.

In fact, the use of pictures in the form of political cartoons in Indonesia has existed since the independence era, along with the emergence of various newspapers and magazines at that time. The development of technology has then directly influenced the pattern of life of the people in Indonesia. Before the era of web 2.0, narration could only be circulated in written form as in text, but now narration can be conveyed through pictures. Moreover, various digital computer-based image and video editing software, applications, and techniques are increasingly easy to obtain and learn. This makes it even easier to upload meme images on social media.

Originally, the meme emerged as a form of entertainment media. However, in its development, it emerged out of political issues. During a political campaign period, the issue raised is related to the rivalry between the opposing groups of voters in the context of a democratic climate. However, the role of memes in political dynamics, especially in Indonesia, has not been widely explored. In this regard, this article aims to investigate how avatar memes were produced and reproduced as a visual language during the 2014-2019 presidential election campaign period. This article also intends to map and analyze political memes in the form of social media avatars during the 2014-2019 presidential election campaign period (mid-June-October 2014) from a visual semiotic perspective. Furthermore, this article will uncover how social media avatar as a visual language constructs meaning through signs in the context of political rivalry. Specifically, the memes examined in this study are in the form of social media avatar images with the text “I Stand on the Right Side”. The collected avatar memes are limited to the ones that appeared from mid-May to October 2014, which coincided with the determination of the presidential candidate pairs until the official inauguration of the new president.

LITERATURE REVIEW

When memes began to mushroom in Indonesia, most people did not understand the real term of ‘meme’. As a result, every funny, unique, weird, and sensational image that went viral on the internet was called a meme. Many people, thus, mistook memes for mere prank images regardless of the structures that construct them. This makes the meaning of memes a little different in Indonesia. Memes in Indonesia tend to be interpreted as images that become a sensation during a period and are often used to respond to a hot issue. Although memes are considered a new phenomenon, research on them in Indonesia has actually been done quite a lot, most of them come from journal articles, such as what was done by Nugraha (2015)

examining the spread of selfie memes in institutions or in research conducted by Pusanti (2014). about the representation of criticism of memes in the 2014 presidential election in social media 'path', which uses a semiotic study with the conclusion that, critical messages in political memes on social networks "Path" are depicted through satirical humor which is manifested by using visual signs and verbal signs which are analyzed through three Peirce's sign types are icons, indexes and symbols.

The unceasing presence of memes in the digital information era in Indonesia has also accelerated the impact of memes on the society. The presence of memes is not only felt in the context of trivialism or fun, but also for more serious issues, such as politics, economy, even race and religion. In the context of political issues, particularly the presidential election campaign in Indonesia, research on new memes has been carried out since the 2014-2019 presidential election campaign. This is because the new meme phenomenon emerged during the 2014-2019 general election, whereas in the previous general election period, the trend of the internet and gadgets was not as widespread as it is now.

Several political meme phenomena have been studied and researched. Plevriti concludes that satirical memes created by internet users are very effective in creating political criticism, developing discussion and debate, as well as increasing the role of public participation in a political process and issues that affect it. This research concludes that there is an inseparable relationship between politics and popular culture. Although they may appear to be fad and meaningless, political satirical memes are both a genuine form of expression and an effective source of political criticism. Memes can make politics look more accessible, especially for young people who tend to be more active and enthusiastic about consuming popular culture (Plevriti, 2014: 47).

The next meme study discusses from Wadipalapa (2015) he was discusses meme culture as a new phenomenon in the world of communication science and its relationship in a political context, especially in the 2014 elections in Indonesia. The use of the internet and new media in the Indonesian context is often seen in relation to the expressive response of society after the disappearance of the pressure and closure of the New Order era. The results of his research are, first, that new media is a strategic context that becomes an arena for political battles to run through meme text games. Memes are dynamic and moving strategies, disseminated with unlimited reach by playing with political formalities through comedy-satire. Second, meme culture is formed from-and centered on the political creativity of individual units. This basis for visual creativity makes it extremely difficult to predict, and makes it difficult for anyone to limit its spread. As a result, the image of politics in cyberspace has become a limitless imagination. Comedy-satire is able to reach out and respond to political events in unexpected ways. Third, meme culture must also be seen as a political movement, even though in a virtual area. Meme was created as an alternative response from all channels of criticism and protest against the political elite.

This current study serves as a more comprehensive complement to previous studies but specifically discusses the semiotics of signs from the point of view of visual language concerning the avatar template "I Stand on the Right Side" in the context of rivalry during the 2014 Indonesian presidential election campaign.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study used a qualitative observational research method. The research was conducted by collecting and observing samples in the approach of semiotic analysis and visual communication. The research began with mapping samples collected from various links on the internet using the Google Image search engine. The next data was collected from entertainment sites based on user generated content. The entertainment sites chosen were www.1Cak.com and www.memecomic.id (MCI). The main content of such sites is entertaining funny pictures. The humorous nature of avatar memes makes entertainment sites like them a fertile ground for internet memes to circulate. Statistically, the 1Cak site is indeed much more popular among the public than MCI. However, MCI is mostly visited on its Facebook page. Its viral nature has made memes spread on various sites, social media, and popular chat applications, such as BBM, WhatsApp, and LINE. The obstacle faced during the data collection was the random distribution pattern, so it is not clear where the meme originated. This makes the source of the site to which the memes were originally uploaded difficult to find.

There were 60 memes that were collected and became material for study. This data is used to map and categorize memes based on their style of expression. After the mapping was done, several samples of avatar memes were taken which had a strong correlation in the context of the rivalry between the presidential candidates, particularly those related to the "I Stand on the right side" avatar meme. The meme is then further elaborated to find out how the visual signs work to form meaning using Roland Barthes' semiotic theory and Stuart Hall's representative theory about secondary meanings and myths in visual communication markers. The result of this step explicated the manipulation and shifting of meanings and ideologies that influence the myths in the memes. Finally, a hypothesis was made, which was done by providing assumptions based on the data that had been studied.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The mimesis process in the internet era has become very fast (viral), so that it gave rise to a lot of pictorial phenomena that later became memes, and subsequently, many people replicated them. Memes are mostly humorous because in the beginning, memes originated and developed in the ecosystem of image-based entertainment sites (image boards). This section describes the findings obtained during the research. The data was avatar memes with the theme of the presidential election collected by the researchers from several internet portals, namely 1Cak, MCI, and Google Image through searches for relevant keywords. By using the data, the content structure, visual and text structure, and distribution structure were formulated.

Socio-Political Context

In 2014, Indonesia held a general election to elect a new president for the 2014-2019 term. Long before the presidential election campaign period started, the presidential candidate exchange had been enlivened by various names of political figures who were promoted by political parties as well as those registering from independent channels. In the 2014 Presidential

Election, finally two names of presidential candidates who would compete in the 2014-2019 presidential election campaign emerged. The two names are Prabowo Subianto from the Gerindra party and Joko Widodo from the PDI Perjuangan (PDI-P) party. Prabowo Subianto was promoted by Gerindra after forming the Red and White Coalition (*Koalisi Merah Putih/KMP*) together with the Golkar, PAN, PKS, PPP, Demokrat and PBB (non-parliament) parties. The Red and White Coalition is a coalition that controlled the majority of seats in the DPR by 63 percent. Meanwhile, the PDI-P party formed the Great Indonesia Coalition (*Koalisi Indonesia Hebat/KIH*) with PKB, NASDEM, Hanura and PKPI (non-parliamentary). Joko Widodo (Jokowi) was initially not the main presidential candidate from the PDI-P. However, looking at the results of the polls in which Jokowi had a high level of electability, finally PDI Perjuangan gave a mandate for Jokowi to run as a presidential candidate. Nevertheless, the candidacy of Jokowi, who was still the governor of DKI Jakarta at that time, generated a lot of controversy and public reactions.

After the determination of the national legislative election results on May 9, 2014, Prabowo Subianto and Joko Widodo officially advanced to the presidential election campaign. Prabowo Subianto paired with Hatta Rajasa, while Jokowi paired with Jusuf Kalla. The two pairs of candidates for president and vice president immediately stole the public spotlight.

Prabowo was considered the most suitable to be the new President of Indonesia because he is known as a firmly charismatic figure with a noble family background, as well as a bright military and academic career. He is also a successful entrepreneur in charge of many companies in the fields of palm oil, oil and gas and mining, forestry, pulp and fisheries. However, Prabowo also has a bad track record because he was allegedly involved in cases of human rights violations and the kidnapping of activists in 1998. This was still a matter of controversy, though, because Prabowo's party kept denying it. This bad track record continued to be a scourge for Prabowo during the presidential election campaign.

Meanwhile, Jokowi was considered lacking some of the qualities that Prabowo have. Jokowi was born into an ordinary family, and he is not from the military and has an ordinary academic title. Before entering politics and becoming the mayor of Solo, he was only a furniture entrepreneur in Solo. His figure is thin, and his speaking style is considered by some to be clumsy, indecisive, and not charismatic. When he served as the mayor of Solo in his second term, Jokowi began to get the media spotlight because he was considered successful in fixing the city of Solo and received a number of prestigious awards when he served as a mayor. Due to Jokowi's increasing popularity, the PDI Perjuangan as a political party then gave the mandate for him to run in the election for the Governor of DKI Jakarta in 2012, and it was successful. This is proven by Jokowi's victory against his rival, namely the incumbent Governor Fauzi Bowo.

Those two figures are a separate phenomenon in the dynamics of the presidential election campaign in Indonesia. Both Prabowo and Jokowi had a large number of supporters. The hot issue of political competition between Prabowo Subianto and Joko Widodo had also attracted the attention of netizens. The fierce debate between supporters of both presidential candidates on social media, such as Facebook and Twitter, is a new phenomenon that occurred in the 2014-2019 election.

Visual Communication and Meaning in Memes

In recent years, the term meme has become very popular among internet users (netizens). There are several meanings of memes. Based on the meaning of the word, it comes from the Greek word *mimeme* which means "to imitate". According to the Indonesian Dictionary: "A meme is an idea, behavior or style that spreads from one person to another in a cultural context." (KBBI Online, 2017). The meaning of meme itself was introduced by a biologist, Richard Dawkins in his book *The Selfish Gene* (1976: 192). In his book, Richard Dawkins uses the word meme to describe his new replicator in a cultural context. Memes are defined by him as the ability to reproduce, process, and disseminate the information structure of genes in biology. Memes are replicators that can influence human evolution through variations and differences that affect human life habits. A meme is a cultural transmission unit or unit of imitation. The main constituent of memes is the imitation which lies in the human brain, in the inventive product, in the book, and then moves, spreads, survives through the imitation process.

With a simpler logic, it can be understood that the dissemination or propagation of memes is done by replicating existing memes. This means that memes continuously replicate through certain habits or ideas so that they become repeated patterns and eventually form a cultural pattern on a large scale. However, the nature of this meme is not only replicating, memes also undergo a process of evolution or change from time to time, and at the same time memes also try to survive the influence of new memes.

In this study, the intended 'meme' is a cultural unit as an image language. To describe the language pattern, sign reading in memes requires a visual construction that adopts other visual language patterns. In communication science, there is a popular saying, "Words doesn't mean, people mean", which denotes that it is humans who give meaning to the words or text (Tinarbuko, 2009: 1).

Mememes in the context of culture contain an ideological conception that is carried out by a certain group of people. Ideology is also defined as a form of manipulation of certain realities. Ideology is used here to indicate how a text is practiced to represent a false picture of reality. Such false awareness is produced through sign myths that consolidate a certain group or society (Storey, 2009: 2-3).

In the beginning, in Indonesia, memes were popularized on the www.1cak.com site. This site is actually still in the same gene as www.9gag.com which was first known in the United States. "1cak" is an Indonesian language site and is devoted to making comic memes that are also in Indonesian, with topics that are becoming a reality in Indonesia. During the 2014 Election, there were a lot of memes on these "1cak" websites that brought up political topics in Indonesia. Many of the photos of the presidential candidates and their supporting figures were mocked by placing memes, coupled with writing and taglines in meme images.

The phenomenon of memes on social media is of course inseparable from the role of social media users themselves in disseminating information related to popular memes. The user will repost or re-upload the meme to his personal account. Other users who also feel attracted to certain memes will do the same thing so that they become viral or spread widely.

Political memes are deliberately created by politicians with their buzzer paid to become

a medium to attract attention to one of the camps or with the aim of bringing down their opponent's partner in the upcoming general election. The appearance of this meme grew rapidly in the lead-up to the 2014 elections. This is natural because of the rampant phenomenon of satirical humor that covers political and social issues. It is not surprising that the public has begun to show their support for the 2014 General Election.

The internet has become an important locus of the 2014 presidential election political discourse. Memes in the 2014 presidential election in Indonesia attracted attention for two reasons. First, stronger public participation in filling the public space for election talks. Second, the escalation of the conversation is bridged by the internet medium through various social media facilities or other interactive forums. This characteristic is something new. The occurrence of Meme Wars is a virtual strategy in political satire.

Regarding memes in the dynamics of the 2014 Indonesian presidential election campaign, the public as voters responded to the signs that appeared in various ways. The reading of signs related to the presidential election campaign memes has a preferred meaning, which is predominantly offered in the text. However, alternative meaning is still possible. This interpretation triggers the replication and reproduction of cultural units in the form of memes. Differences in meaning usually arise because of differences in social status or cultural experiences.

The meaning of signs in memes in the society during the presidential election campaign was analyzed using the Message Reception Theory from Stuart Hall, which explains that there are three types of reading when understanding the meaning of a text, namely: (1) Dominant-hegemonic reading, which is when the recipient of the message is in a state dominated by the power of the message giver; (2) Negotiated reading, which is when the recipient of a message is able to negotiate messages outside the dominant point of view prevailing in the society; and, (3) Oppositional reading, which is when the recipient of the message reads the message according to his/her subjective preferences so that it raises a meaning that is opposite from the dominant meaning (Hall, 1993: 101-103).

Likewise, the meaning in memes is very dependent on intertextual factors. A text can only exist if it contains several expressions originating from other texts, which cross and neutralize one another. Kristeva in Tinarbuko describes intertextuality as a crossing from one sign system to another (transposition) so as to form interrogations between texts. This textual interrogation can produce new expressions that are very rich in form and meaning. This interrogation can be in the form of borrowing or use (pastiche), distortion, pun, or play of meaning for critical purposes, cynicism, or just a joke (parody), deception or masking (camp), as well as iconic or kitsch reproductions (Kristeva in Tinarbuko, 2009: 20-21).

Penetration of Memes through Entertainment Sites on Social Media

After Dawkins introduced the term 'meme', people began to borrow Dawkins' term about this replicated cultural unit to explain some of the pop culture phenomena that are circulating among the society. The phenomenon of pop culture, which has become sensational, widespread, and popular, has begun to be referred to as a meme. Memes that were popular before the internet era included "*killroy was here*", "*Frodo lives*", and "*Andre the giant has*

posse"¹.

The above memes are a popular culture phenomenon that was circulated widely in the society before the advent of the internet. Those images were also replicated and implemented in various popular culture mediums, such as graffiti, murals, posters, films, and comics. In line with the development of internet technology and social media, the initial visual meme forms were then uploaded to electronic devices. In addition, the existence of software in various applications has made meme creation easier. These applications are usually also equipped with an uploader facility, so that memes that have been created can be directly uploaded to online sites and social media. Entering the second millennium, the internet has begun to expand more widely. An image sharing site (imageboard) called 4chan was founded in 2003. This site has contributed greatly in popularizing the form of anime memes to political nuances. Generally displayed in the ugly way, the images appear to be edit defective, asymmetrical, grammatical, and simple.

There are many well-known websites that provide memes as entertainment and provide information. These sites are like 9gag from overseas and 1cak site from Indonesia. Memes on Indonesian social media went viral after being allowed by the 1Cak site, whose initial content was entertaining². 1Cak implements a user-generated content system, in which all content is uploaded by users. At that time, 1Cak was considered the most popular entertainment site filled with meme content in Indonesia. Based on data from Alexa Traffic Rank, the 1Cak site ranked 254 as the most visited site in Indonesia. Besides 1Cak, there is another popular site providing links to memes, namely Meme Comic Indonesia (MCI), which focuses on its social media fanpage (Facebook). At that time, MCI had more than 2 million members on its Facebook fanpage.

Meme Creativity in a Political Context

Those meme creators expressed their ideas and opinions through the language of pictures. Therefore, memes can be called a work of visual art expression. The presidential election for the 2014-2019 period is considered as a new momentum in the democratic party in Indonesia. The wider influence of social media has made each individual able to spread his/her political ideas easily. On the one hand, each individual is able to become a political ambassador and participate in campaigning for the presidential candidate of his/her choice through social media in a fun way, which is through a creative campaign that puts forward the positive side of a political contest.

On the other hand, each individual also has opinions and views, thus possibly conducting a black campaign. Those memes are deliberately created to spread hoax or a truth which has not been clarified. Memes as a black campaign are used to demonize, slander, or form evil framing against political opponents. Today, hoax images are a separate phenomenon

¹ Jacopo Della Quercia, "7 Memes That Went *Viral* Before The Internet Existed", accessed from http://www.cracked.com/article_19119_7-memes-that-went-viral-before-internet-existed.html on 7 December 2014

² Wicaksono Surya Hidayat, "1Cak.com, Lelucon ala 9Gag untuk Indonesia" <https://travel.kompas.com/read/2012/11/16/11300792/twitter.com> accessed on 7 December 2014

in the dynamics of social media. These pictures are made in such a way to create a fictional narrative. The narrative that is made is usually provocative and exploits sensitive social issues, such as racial violence and crime. Memes used as a black campaign tend to be hoax, be provocative, and lead to defamation.

Content Mapping and Structure

During the 2014 presidential election campaign, many events took place and stole the public spotlight. To understand these dynamics, it is necessary to map the issues raised in the circulating memes. Several issues that arose during the presidential election campaign period were as follows:

1. Political Issues

Some of the issues which were often used to attack Jokowi is that Jokowi had broken his promise and that Jokowi was a puppet president. The issue of Jokowi breaking his promise concerns Jokowi's inconsistency in serving as the Governor of DKI Jakarta. Jokowi was considered to have failed to keep his promise to complete his 5-year term as the Governor of DKI Jakarta. In addition, the issue of Jokowi being a puppet president was widely echoed because the public felt that Jokowi was vulnerable to being ridden by higher political interests considering that his position in a political party was only a regular member. This particular issue did not actually point to Jokowi directly but to PDIP's Chairman, Megawati Soekarno Putri.

Meanwhile for Prabowo, the issue of him being the heir to the New Order regime and a human rights violator was often used to attack him. This is related to Prabowo's past political and historical background in the Soeharto regime. It can be seen here that the efforts to lead opinions to mutually damage the image of rivals were done by raising the sins of the political figures who ruled in the previous era.

2. Personal Issues

Apart from the aforementioned issues, the circulating memes also often contained issues related to the personal life of both presidential candidates. Prabowo was often ridiculed because of his status as a widower, while Jokowi was ridiculed because his physical stature was considered unattractive. In memes, trivial issues are often made the main focus, causing a shocking effect because they are beyond the political context itself. However, through this "fun" mischief, meme content becomes fresh and reaches the general public.

3. Issues of Survey Manipulation and Supporting Media for Presidential Candidates

Some mass media were considered unbalanced and untrustworthy by the public. The public thought that the mass media had led opinions to win one of the presidential candidate pairs. The survey institutes involved in conducting the polls and quick counts were also alleged

to have become commissioning agents and manipulated the calculated data on the electability of the two presidential candidates. This then led to the emergence of memes criticizing the mass media and survey institutes. Memes, therefore, have become counter media for the mainstream mass media, which are considered to be monopolizing issues and driving opinions based on certain interests.

4. Issues of Presidential Candidate Debates and Political Promises

One of the interesting moments during the 2014 presidential election campaign period was when the presidential candidate debate was held and broadcasted by national TV stations. In this event, the two pairs of candidates were invited to convey their vision and mission and conduct an open debate which was witnessed by the public through television broadcasts. Many memes related to the presidential candidate debate appeared as a response and criticism. The expressions that emerged through memes in response to the debate program were mostly in the form of satire, and almost no meme was found depicting support or hope for the promises and program descriptions of the presidential candidates. This shows that rather than support for political promises, criticism is more likely expressed by the society through memes.

Mapping of the Styles of Language Expression in Memes

In addition to markers in the form of images, memes also have markers in the form of text, which bind the context of the image in a meme. From the text, memes can be categorized based on their language style of expression (figure of speech). The language style includes comparative figure of speech and contradictory figure of speech. Comparative figure of speech refers to decorative words that give rise to comparisons to make a certain impression or influence on the listener or reader. The characteristic of this comparative figure of speech is that there are things being compared, either directly or indirectly. In memes, images and text narratives are often found being compiled as comparisons or intended to compare things that are considered similar or the same.



Figure 1
Memes containing comparative figures of speech
(Source: www.memecomic.id)

Contradictory figure of speech contains a contradiction in order to create a more powerful effect. The meaning of the message is strengthened by making a conflict between one thing and another, such as the example of a meme below.

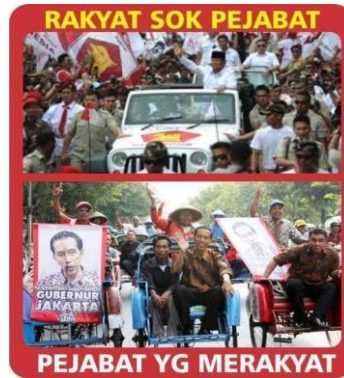


Figure 2:
Meme containing contradictory figure of speech
(Source: www.memecomic.id)

The use of figures of speech as the expressive style in a text is intended to be a dramatization. Satires were often found because the issues raised are related to the context of political rivalry in the presidential election. Comparative figures of speech, such as metaphors, associations, hyperbole, and personification, were used as expressions of a context. The most common forms of affirmation were especially found as exclamation, repetition, and rhetoric. Meanwhile, texts containing contradictory figures of speech were less frequently found in the sample because many contradictory narratives were also presented in the form of images, for example, the visualization of a good-looking person and a displeasing person being depicted without any text just by lining up photos of Prabowo being in contrast to Jokowi, who was considered to have less attractive stature.

Memes Using Social Media Avatar as a Creative Campaign Tool

Apart from being made individually, memes were also made by the campaign team to win the presidential candidate in an organized manner. Those memes were specially commissioned to win public support and sympathy. This research will discuss creative movements that were carried out openly and have become a new phenomenon in the democratic climate in Indonesia, oftentimes called the Creative Campaign, for instance, creative works created by the campaign team of each candidate to be used as a campaign tool.

On Jokowi's side, there was a creative campaign entitled "I Stand on the Right Side" made by an agency named Narada and "*Blusukan Jokowi*" by *Tim Berakar*. On Prabowo's side, the campaign series was arranged by a particular team from the Gerindra Party Communication Agency, which designed an iconic identity of "Garuda Merah" (Red Garuda) and the illustrated character of "Prabowo Hatta".

Narada Communication was an advertising agency assigned to work on a series of campaigns for the Jokowi-Jusuf Kalla pair in the form of TVC and other media. Narada created the creative campaign “I Stand on the Right Side” in the form of a social media avatar template that could be used as a profile picture. Users could use the avatar and insert their own photo. The avatar was used to show support for Jokowi.

According to a video featured in its official website³, the creative campaign “I Stand on the Right Side” was created as an effort to match Prabowo’s position, who was considered to have a political background and the support of superior media conglomerates. Moreover, support for Jokowi was deemed sporadic. The solution offered by Narada was to create a moral identity and invite the public to dare to show their conscience for Jokowi by using the avatar “I Stand on the Right Side”.



Figure 3.
The avatar “I Stand on the Right Side”
(Source: <http://www.narrada.com>)

This creative campaign was intended to encourage Jokowi's supporters to show their side and believe in the correctness of their choice. With the slogan “I Stand on the Right Side”, this avatar twisted the literal meaning of “right”, which can mean both the right side area on the avatar to place a profile photo and the correct political side. This creative avatar template was freely available to download and use on the social media profile photos of every Jokowi’s supporter.

The “I Stand on the Right Side” avatar went viral because it was so easy to replicate. This avatar design uses a composition that divides the area equally. Social media users could place their profile photo in the black area of the avatar. The large number “2” in white contrasts with the solid red background color. The caption “I Stand on the Right Side” below the number “2” is a statement of the militancy of Jokowi’s supporters.

In terms of visual communication design, the avatar is dominated by red, so it stands out. Red is the color with the highest wave spectrum. Hence, it can stand out even when it is placed among other colors. Psychologically, red is a warm and extreme color. This color can increase the positive value in someone for survival, emitting strong and powerful energy. Red

³ Narada Communication, “I stand on the right side”: <http://www.narrada.com/i-stand-on-the-right-side> accessed on 20 August 2017

is also the color of passion, which can motivate someone to take action. Therefore, the red color is very suitable to be used to invite the public to dare to voice their support for Jokowi.

Narada's work is indeed conceptualized in such a way as to visually stimulate the subconscious mind, in addition to its brilliant strategy to come up with an avatar template. The 'template' method is a method used on meme maker sites or applications, such as meme generators and others. This method allows an image to replicate and easily go viral.

Since its release, the avatar immediately became a sensation and was used by many groups, including celebrities and famous musicians. After it went viral and sensational, netizens' creativity continued with the emergence of various parody memes of the avatar. Not only using the existing template, the community also modified and parodied the visual of the template in such a way as for the purposes of creating a profile picture or, for some, mocking the opponent.



Figure 4:
The parody of the meme “I Stand on the Right Side” (Source: Google Image).

From the parody, more and more funny and intriguing meme content emerged, so Narada's visual avatar template was even more widely spread. From this phenomenon, we can conclude that when an image is designed with certain methods and structures, it will undergo a process which Dawkins calls the replication and reproduction of cultural units or memes. This replication process will experience distortions of meaning which are influenced by the background of the reader, as explained by Stuart Hall in his Message Reception Theory.

Meme is a battleground for myths in political contestation. Meaning always changes in the encoding and decoding process. Changes in meaning lead to new picture narratives (memes). In the context of political rivalry, it is usually a criticism of the meaning offered by the message maker. In response to the campaign pictures of the two presidential candidates, message readers came up with other memes and bent the meaning of the dominant hegemony offered.



Figure 5:
The parody of the meme “I Stand on the Right Side”
(Source: Google Image).

Initially, the avatar campaign was a pro bono project by the Jokomania volunteer group. According to *Tim Berakar*⁴, this campaign was motivated by the rampant smear campaign aimed at Jokowi. Many pictures and memes circulating at that time had tendentious content, hoaxes, and slander to attack Jokowi. This caused Jokowi’s electability to decrease significantly. The goal of this campaign, according to *Tim Berakar*, was to foster the trust and positive aura of Jokowi’s voters who tended to be silent and passive towards the many black campaigns that had attacked Jokowi. According to *Tim Berakar*, the avatar “I Stand the Right Side” is a form of creative campaign as an antidote as well as the antithesis of the black campaign against Jokowi which was spread in the form of memes. *Tim Berakar* chose to fight against negative content memes by emphasizing the positive side of Jokowi through collective memories that emerged from a process of replicating cultural units.

The Symbol of Prabowo and Gerindra: Red Garuda

A creative campaign was also carried out by Prabowo’s campaign team. The iconic “Garuda Merah” (Red Garuda) emblem was chosen as the identity of Prabowo’s supporters. His visual identity was identical to the use of red and white, which was applied to all of Prabowo’s campaign materials.

⁴ Berakar agency, “The Story About Jokowi’s Impromptu Walkabout Campaign”, <http://shortyawards.com/7th/the-story-of-Jokowis-impromptu-walkabout-campaign> accessed on 20 August 2017



Figure 6:
Red Garuda as a visual identity icon for Prabowo's campaign
(Source: <https://hayunhasanah.wordpress.com>)

In terms of visual communication, the above identity displays the dominant color of red which is applied to the form of the Garuda Pancasila emblem, to create an impression of high nationalism. Nevertheless, this logo still stands alone as a visual element, without any space for meaning other than the symbol of nationalism. From this symbol, it can be seen that the Red Garuda symbol used by Prabowo's campaign team actually had the potential to spread as a meme to be used as a creative campaign. Unfortunately, the design stopped only at its visual elements, which were too generic in nature, which could not be tampered with and reproduced by others.

Prabowo's Illustrated Character

One of Prabowo's campaign materials included a series of pictures containing positive testimonials from several public figures about Prabowo. This series of images has a uniform design in terms of layout, use of colors, and fonts. However, in its application, the illustration icon is not placed as the main component so that the visual object only functions as a complement without any meaning at all.



Figure 7:
Images containing testimonials in Prabowo's campaign
(Source: <http://PrabowoSubianto.info/testimoni>)

The campaign materials below were twisted and turned into parody memes by the rival group with a similar layout design. Thus, without people realizing it, the replication had actually provoked parody memes containing fictional testimonials and messages that tend to insult Prabowo and the Red Garuda symbol.

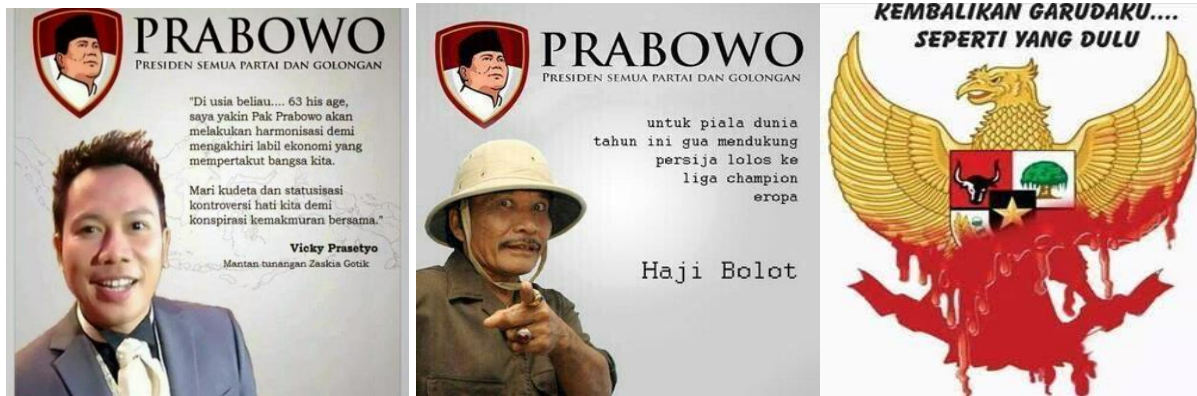


Figure 8:

Parody memes containing fictional testimonials related to Prabowo's campaign
(Source: http://yupedia.blogspot.com/2014/08/100-gambar-lucu-blunder-politik-prahara_3.html).

Viral Meme Strategy

From the start, the campaign strategy through memes was more pronounced in Jokowi's team. The creative campaign design carried out by Narada agency and *Tim Berakar* through the social media avatar "I Stand on the Right Side" and the story of "*Blusukan Jokowi*", which was in a Tintin comic style, is an active penetration by utilizing the viral nature of the meme phenomenon as popular culture. Meanwhile, the design of the symbolic icon of the Red Garuda and Prabowo's iconic character designed by the Gerindra Party Communication Agency were deemed less optimal in utilizing this phenomenon. The Red Garuda icon feels generic and less authentic, and its potential for replication was not maximized, such as the campaign items designed by the opposing campaign team. From this elaboration, it can be assumed that the passion for making memes was greater in Jokowi's team than in Prabowo's team.

During the campaign period, the two presidential candidates tried to attract support through means and strategies of producing signs as a political campaign strategy in the form of memes. Prabowo and Jokowi took different approaches in presenting their self-image in the mass media. Prabowo appeared to use religious, aristocratic, and militarist attributes, while Jokowi attached himself to the attributes of the lower class people. The production of these signs received mixed responses from the public.

Jokowi's team chose a quite different communication strategy with a sign emphasis on the attributes of simplicity and the image of the ordinary people. This strategy was consistently carried out by Jokowi, as seen in the picture of Jokowi riding a bicycle or riding a pedicab. The

myth offered by the message maker is the representation of pedicab drivers as village people and as a group of unskilled workers. This characteristic has become a myth surrounding the representation of pedicab drivers in general. Prabowo had also been shown as a pedicab driver, but this was parodied with him being depicted as a pedicab driver escorting Jokowi wearing a suit on his way to the presidential palace. In some of these examples, it can be seen how the meaning of the sign on the pedicab offered in the 2014 presidential election campaign photos experienced replication, transformation, and distortion of meaning in memes so as to create new interpretive spaces. Through his campaign advertisements, Jokowi appeared as a lower class society (as a pedicab driver and a tire repairman), which implies the myths of class resistance to elite hegemony. Meanwhile, the semantic code is found in the connotation of signs in the context of resistance between the common people and the government officials or between the common people and the elitist class.

CONCLUSION

After careful analyses, several conclusions can be drawn. Memes have a very fluid and fickle nature, which is heavily influenced by popular culture trends. Through memes, political issues are no longer the consumption of the elite but have entered into the trivial realm by borrowing texts from popular culture products, such as comics, films, and television. Political meme is a cultural phenomenon, which challenges and questions the reality of existing political agendas. Memes appear in parody or trivial (fad) packaging as a form of expression of people's "naughtiness", which seems to be fighting for a view and criticism of certain parties. Creating memes is similar to making political caricatures or cartoons. Critical narratives that emerge are implicit in nature through the replication and reproduction of visual signs bent through the coding and decoding process so as to create satire with parodic humor nuances. Since entering into the political dynamics in Indonesia, especially in the 2014-2019 presidential election, memes have become expressions of resistance poured out through visual language that mock each other in responding to political constellations.

Simple meme production techniques allow anyone to produce memes and publish them widely very easily through social media. This is different from political cartoons which must adhere to certain ethical codes, such as journalistic ethics, pornography, and editorial ideology. Coincidentally in 2014, memes had not been restricted by a specific code of conduct. On the one hand, memes lead to slander, hoaxes, and black propaganda because the visualizations that appear in memes have the potential to cause friction because they are sarcastic, against taboo, unethical, and provocative. On the other hand, memes allow creative and fun campaigns to be used as a campaign tool as well as criticism and propaganda in entertaining, creative ways.

Apart from being created by individuals, creative campaigns were also produced by the campaign teams of each presidential candidate. In the strategy carried out by Jokowi's team through Narada Agency, the avatar template "I Stand on the Right Side" was deliberately designed as an open meme avatar so as to optimize the potential and sensation of memes as a campaign tool. Meanwhile, Prabowo's campaign team designed a visual identity in the form of a Red Garuda logo and Prabowo-Hatta's cartoon characters. However, this visual identity is still too generic because it is only positioned as a visual complement without a design that can

be easily replicated as an avatar template.

In the context of political rivalry, memes that appeared are competitive, like a battlefield. Each team tried to outperform its competitors by praising or dropping them through memes. The delinquency that occurs in political memes can be parodic, dramatic, hyperbolic, and even very unethical. This is also because the techniques for making and publishing them on social media are very easy for everyone to do, through the process of downloading and uploading images. The strength of memes is in the visual narrative patterns and text in various language styles which are packaged in such a way that they tend to be dramatic, sensational, and provocative so that they can trigger replication and become viral in the society.

Through this technical design, it shows that memes play in the connotation space that cannot be separated from the myths and hegemony of signs by tending to distort the meanings of existing markers. Various interpretations make the meaning of markers in the context of political rivalry continue to experience competition in cultural ideology, by presenting various myths of signs to respect each other's readers. The internet and memes have become a battlefield for the supporters of presidential candidates. From this description, it can be seen that memes in the context of Indonesian politics have become a new phenomenon that has emerged since the era of information disclosure, showing how some political interests work through visual signs, in various meme forms.

REFERENCES

- Barthes, Roland. (1974). *S/Z*, (terj. Richard Miller). New York: Hill & Wang
- Dawkins, R. (2006). *The Selfish Gene*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press. (Original work published 1976).
- Graham, Allen. (2000). *Intertextuality*. London: Routledge.
- Hall, Stuart. (1980). *Culture, Media, Language: Working Papers in Cultural Studies*. London: Hutchinson.
- , (1993). *Encoding and Decoding in the Television Discourse*. Birmingham: Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies
- Hoed, Benny. (2014). *Semiotika dan Dinamika Sosial Budaya*. Jakarta: Gramedia Pustaka Utama.
- Nugraha, Aditya, dkk. (2015). "Fenomena Meme di Media Sosial: Studi Etnografi Virtual Posting Meme pada Pengguna Media Sosial Instagram". *Jurnal Sosioteknologi*, Volume 14, Nomor 3, Desember 2015, 237-245. accessed on <http://journals.itb.ac.id/index.php/sostek/article/view/1558/1069> pada tanggal 15 Juli 2019.
- Plevriti, Vasiliki. (2014). "Satirical User-Generated Memes as an Effective Source of Political Criticism, Extending Debate and Enhancing Civic Engagement". Coventry : The University of Warwick.
- Pusanti, Rosa Redia dan Haryanto. (2014). "Representasi Kritik dalam Meme Politik (Studi Semiotika Meme Politik dalam Masa Pemilu 2014 pada Jejaring Sosial "Path" sebagai Media Kritik di Era Siber". accessed on [http:// www.jurnalkommas.com](http://www.jurnalkommas.com), 29 September 2019.

- Storey, John. (2009). *Cultural Studies and Popular Culture : an Introduction (fifth edition)*. London : Pearson Longman .
- Tinarbuko, Sumbo. (2009). *Semiotika Komunikasi Visual*. Yogyakarta: Jalasutra.
- Wadipalapa, Rendy, Pahrin. (2015). Meme Culture & Komedi- Satire Politik. *Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi Universitas Airlangga*.

Internet Sources:

- Andreas D. Arditya, “politics, Indonesia and the art of meme”
<http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2014/07/20/politics-Indonesia-art-meme.html> on 28 March 2019.
- Jacopo Della Quercia, “7 Memes That Went Viral Before The Internet Existed”, accessed from http://www.cracked.com/article_19119_7-memes-that-went-viral-before-internet-existed.html on 7 December 2017.
- Wicaksono Surya Hidayat, “1Cak.com, Lelucon ala 9Gag untuk Indonesia”
<https://travel.kompas.com/read/2012/11/16/11300792/twitter.com> accessed on 7 December 2017.
- Memes on Jokowi’s political background (Source: <http://tekno.kompas.com>, www.1cak.com/555047/ dan <https://Twitter.com/Boblintang/media>).
- Memes on Prabowo’s political background (source: <https://yonasukmalara.wordpress.com> and <http://sidomi.com/293557/>).
- Memes related to personal issue (Sources: <http://forum.detik.com> and <https://Twitter.com/politiktawa>).
- Memes on media supporting presidential candidates (Source: www.1cak.com/632961).
- Memes on presidential candidate debate (Sources: www.kompasiana.com and www.1cak.com/609292).
- Meme using comic (www.1cak.com/775213 dan www.1cak.com/725065)
- Meme using visual pun (Sources: www.memecomix.id and www.1cak.com/555047)
- Organized memes on the model of Jokowi (Sources: <http://www.narrada.com> and www.gulunglenganbajumu.com).
- Images from the official Gerindra campaign team for Prabowo-Hatta and meme poster about Prabowo. (Source: http://yuipeedia.blogspot.com/2014/08/100-gambar-lucu-blunder-politik-prahara_3.html).
- Narada Communication, “I stand on the right side”: <http://www.narrada.com/i-stand-on-the-right-side> accessed on 20 August 2017.
- Berakar agency, “The Story About Jokowi’s Impromptu Walkabout Campaign”,
<http://shortyawards.com/7th/the-story-of-Jokowis-impromptu-walkabout-campaign>
accessed on 20 August 2017.
- http://yuipeedia.blogspot.com/2014/08/100-gambar-lucu-blunder-politik-prahara_3.html
<http://PrabowoSubianto.info/testimoni>
<https://hayunhasanah.wordpress.com>