


The role of brand authenticity in activating brand love and brand trust and the implication on brand preference (brand study of the 2024 Indonesian presidential candidates)

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
Keywords: Brand Authenticity, Brand Love, Brand Trust, Brand Preference, Political Marketing	The study has examined the impact of brand authenticity in activating brand trust and brand love on brand preference in the 2024 presidential election. This research collected primary data by online questionnaire of 150 respondents were participated in the Indonesian presidential election of 2024. To prove empirically and validate the proposed model it tested by using partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM). The findings indicate that presidential candidates brand authenticity have significant impacts on brand love, while presidential candidates brand authenticity have significant impacts on brand trust. Overall, presidential candidates brand love has significant impacts on brand preference, which in presidential candidate brand trust have significant impacts on brand preference. Finally, we find that the brand authenticity of presidential candidates serves as an electoral tool to build trust, love, and brand preference among voters.
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INTRODUCTION

Politicians' opinions during debates are increasingly being considered in both political and academic contexts, and there are just a few that really analyze and discuss how voters should evaluate political issues (Luebke & Engelmann, 2023). People today want politics to be as simple as possible, presenting a more honest and open-minded version of themselves (Stoker et al., 2020). Shane (2018) reports that a growing number of respondents to general public opinion surveys and political campaigns believe that authenticity is more essential than policy. The conceptualization of political ideology and media is based on conservative ideologies that shape it (Luebke 2021). Originality is thought to serve as a person's guide to what is true, real, and authentic. (Achmadi et al., 2024).

To address the public's growing skepticism of politicians, one of the few aspects of political discourse that candidates must address and defend to the public is their uniqueness (Valgarosson, Clarke, Jennings, and Stoker, 2021). Positive associations are

revealed by the study on the authenticity brand's influence on voters' perceptions of presidential candidates as political products. This was demonstrated in the 2016 presidential candidate fight between Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton. Shane (2018) claims in this political science study that the general population can be influenced by social media perceptions of the Trump presidential candidate.

In the meantime, Kenny et al.'s academic research from 2021 came to the conclusion that voting intentions are significantly influenced by perceived genuineness. Because their authenticity sparked support among female voters, the female presidential candidates in the same study profited indirectly from the power of their authentic brands. One of the ideas of brand personality in the context of marketing is brand authenticity. Experts in the field of political product marketing advise against altering an individual's authenticity as a personal brand in favor of focusing on strengths such as consistency, truthfulness, and honesty. This will help to avoid the societal perception of inauthenticity and colliding identities (Gorbatov et al., 2018). There hasn't been much research done on how presidential candidates' political brands are impacted by authenticity that builds brands.

There are currently not many explanations or empirical data demonstrating how brand authenticity affects brand preference. In the context of presidential candidate brands, the primary challenge in this research is attempting to explain and comprehend the phenomenon of brand authenticity as a facilitator of brand love and brand trust and its consequences for brand preference. The purpose of this study was to determine how brand authenticity plays a part in presidential candidate's influence on brand love and trust, as well as how these factors can mediate brand preference, which requires an explanation and empirical support.

Human brands are employed as an academic method to identify a single, well-known, and influential brand that is typically the focus of marketing communications (Thomson, 2006). As a finished product and a political proposition made by the party, a presidential candidate serves as a human brand (Harrison et al., 2023). A well-known individual finds themselves the focus of a marketing campaign (Susanti et al., 2023). Although there hasn't been much research done to connect presidential candidate brands to human brands, Osorio et al. (2023) noted that political parties and politicians share many distinct brand characteristics. Compared to the party that endorses them, brand candidates have a significant amount of effect as an offer from the party (Gutiérrez-Rodríguez et al., 2023).

According to Mochla et al. (2023), candidate-brand presidential elections make candidates the focus of voters' attention, leading to the idea of self-marketing being a tactic for candidate brands. The qualities that define a presidential candidate's brand as a narrative brand are equally relevant to their significance. According to Nursing (2019), the human brand concept is categorized as a narrative brand. Brands that naturally spark conversation are known as narrative brands (Russell and Schau, 2014). A genuine and recognizable personal brand is essential for candidate companies to have when telling a story to the general public. According to Thompson et al. (2023), an iconic brand is one that

possesses a cultural identity and a symbol that personifies values that are revered, adored, and admired.

According to Moorman (2020), a presidential candidate's brand must devise a plan on how to dominate the market with a small number of brand rivals, just like a brand for a good or service. When the personal brand as a final product has a significant impact on voter choices, the presidential candidate's brand's brand originality strategy becomes crucial (Harrison et al. 2020).

The principle of brand authenticity in marketing has been studied in tremendous detail. Several prior research investigations have looked into the relationship between interest in purchasing and brand originality. According to Nichols's research from 2023, a distinctive athlete endorsement greatly raises consumer interest in the goods. Frtiz (2017) carried a research to find out how customer intentions for purchase behavior and the caliber of brand relationships were affected by brand uniqueness. A revised definition of personal brand originality is the conviction that one's public character is sincere, genuine, and consistent (Allison et al., 2021).

In contemporary politics, originality is a narrative used to inspire confidence and demonstrate one's citizenship (Huang & Guo, 2021). The true meaning of a presidential candidate's human brand, according to Lee et al. (2020), is demonstrated by their actions and attitudes, which demonstrate sincerity, authenticity, and originality in morality and behavior. Authenticity has been deemed an essential attribute for a presidential candidate and a critical component in winning over voters, according to Valgarðsson et al. (2021). Historians equate the concept of authenticity with the candidate brand, or the candidate's personal brand, since there isn't a general consensus for what constitutes an authentic presidential candidate. Authenticity is linked to sustainability within time. Four dimensions—continuity, originality, reliability, and naturalness—have established measurement techniques as stated by Bruhn et al. (2012). Zniva et al. (2023) claim that positive perceptions are heavily impacted by assessments on the authenticity of an artist's brand and that authenticity has the ability to arouse emotions within the larger community at large.

According to Bøggild & Jensen (2023), political candidates are deemed authentic when their positions are sincere and do not influence voters. Other scholars associate political authenticity with politicians' honesty. Voters' contextual interpretations of candidates' perceived authenticity lead to inconsistent perceptions of their authenticity (Baumgartner & Newman, 2023). Research findings exhibit convergent, discriminant, and predictive validity. The notion of presidential candidate brand authenticity describes authenticity regarding dedication, integrity, sincerity, and legacy (Napoli et al., 2014).

In the context of business marketing, brand love is a requirement for behavioral loyalty, according to Alić and Mujkic (2023). Research by Safeer et al. from 2023 indicates that authenticity is important for the growth of the idea of brand love. In terms of sincerity, morality, behavior, and authenticity, brand image shapes consumer choices for brands and also impacts brand love (Nursal, 2019). These days, customers adore genuine brands

(Rodrigues et al., 2018). However, brand authenticity still has a minor but considerable effect on building brand love, according to Osorio et al. (2023).

Marketers must highlight the brand's genuine worth in order to win over customers because brand authenticity is an emotive topic in the business environment (Campagna et al., 2023). Manthiou et al. (2018) investigated the relationship between brand uniqueness and brand love using lifestyle congruence and memorable impressions. Researchers concluded that brand originality had a positive impact on brand love. For this reason, an additional investigation on the subject of self-authenticity in relation to fondness for presidential candidates is necessary. This research, which is novelty in the discipline of human brands, revolves on the following hypothesis. H1: Presidential candidate brand love is positively impacted by the authenticity of the candidate's brand

Building long-lasting client relationships can be facilitated by employing trust as a marketing strategy. Trust is essential to relationship management since it reduces perceptions of risk and uncertainty while making transactions (Amarullah, 2023). According to Bigné et al. (2023), there are two components that make up brand trust: affective, which is connected to emotional attachments to the brand, and cognitive, which is related to brand competence and dependability. In the meantime, Schallehn et al. (2014) looked into the connection between Brand Authenticity and Brand Trust in another scholarly study and discovered that there was one. Napoli et al. (2014) argue that brand authenticity as a multidimensional construct by developing a psychometrically robust measure of brand authenticity

The relationship between Brand Authenticity and Brand Trust has been studied by Bussers & Sulga (2018), and the findings indicate a strong influence between the two study variables of customer involvement in customer-Generated Advertising (CGA). As part of a conceptual framework, Coary (2013) also examined the connection between Brand Authenticity and Brand Trust and proposed the theory that brand trust moderates the impact of authenticity on attitude measurements (Coary, 2013). In the meantime, sincerity toward Brand Trust is one of the five dimensions of brand personality that Sung and Kim (2010) examined in their research on the subject. Brand Trust was significantly impacted by the results of the study on brand authenticity from the sincerity dimension. Existing research didn't devote significant attention to the influence between Brand Authenticity and Brand Trust in the setting of human brands, specifically presidential candidate brands. Because of this, the author tried to modify the idea of brand authenticity in general to fit the brands of presidential candidates. This research, which is novelty in the discipline of human brands, revolves on the following hypothesis. H2: Presidential candidate brand trust positively impacted by the presidential candidate brand authenticity.

Positive customer service has the power to create brand love in commercial marketing, particularly in service marketing, as well as sentiments of gratitude and support for the brand (Sung & Lee, 2023). This claim can be connected to political marketing—specifically, the affection for the presidential candidate as the brand. Support for candidates is influenced by their brand loyalty. Banerjee's (2021) research revealed that voter

preferences for political parties were positively correlated with voter love for political party brands, and that brand love and brand preference were positively correlated with contestation in the political market. Voter preferences can be influenced by brand love in political contests (Chauduri & Banerjee, 2021). Consequently, the third hypothesis might be stated as follows: H3: Preference for a presidential candidate's brand is positively impacted by their brand love.

Several empirical research shows that purchasing intention is influenced by brand trust, which eliminates needless complexity (Subroto, 2014). Young voters' party preferences were examined using the political brand trust variable, and Chauduri and Banerjee's research from 2021 revealed that brand trust significantly increased brand preferences. As a result, these results serve as a benchmark for the presidential candidate's human brand trust, which is crucial in influencing voters' brand preferences. Voter turnout and political brand trust are positively correlated, according to research on political marketing (Kustiawan et al., 2022). Because trust plays a crucial role in the relationship between brand candidates and voters to assure brand preferences, it is interesting to measure the level of brand trust among presidential candidates. The author will investigate how much voter preferences are influenced by brand trust in presidential candidates based on the previously mentioned considerations. Because of this, the following hypothesis is put forth: H4: The preference for a presidential candidate's brand is positively impacted by their brand trust.

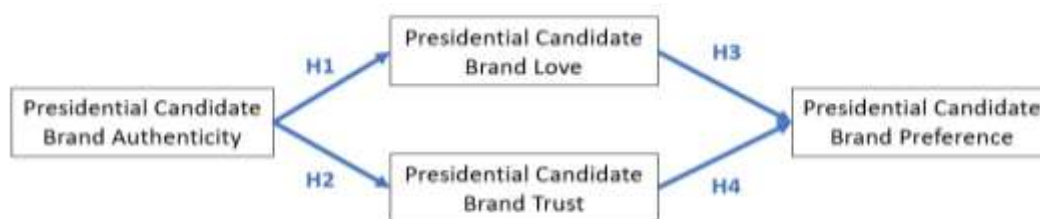


Figure 1. Conceptual model

METHODS

This study is a quantitative descriptive research using primary data collected through a questionnaire filled out by 150 respondents located in Jakarta, Depok, and Bekasi who participated in the 2024 Republic of Indonesia presidential election and did not have any specific affiliation with the candidates. Respondents accessed the google form distributed through whatsapp and facebook social media channels. The data collection for this research was conducted using an online questionnaire (google form). Four constructs, namely brand authenticity, brand love, brand trust, and brand preference, were adopted from various previous studies. Subsequently, the main research to test hypotheses was carried out using the Structural Equation Modelling-Partial Least Square (SEM-PLS) method.

The development of the presidential candidate brand authenticity (PCBA) measurement scale begins by gathering indicator items identified through literature review, resulting in 22 indicator items. The data collection for the calibration study was conducted through a survey by distributing an online questionnaire to respondents using convenience sampling method, which refers to a sampling technique that relies on collecting information by available members of the population willing to provide it (Kaid et al.,2021). Before proceeding to the core questions, the questionnaire starts with screening questions, which assess the respondent’s knowledge about the presidential candidates participating in the presidential election contest in February 2024. Next, respondents are asked to assess the suitability of the chosen presidential candidate with the total 22 indicators of presidential candidate brand authenticity (PCBA), presidential candidate brand love (PCBL), presidential candidate brand trust (PCBT), and presidential candidate brand preference (PCBP) using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree (5 points) to strongly disagree (1 point) was applied to measurement of each item.

The research method used in this study is quantitative approaches with descriptive analysis. The population of this study was participated in the Republic of Indonesia’s 2024 presidential election with the number of samples of 150 respondents, who live in Jakarta, Bekasi and Depok. The data is collected through distributing questionnaire to the respondents. The questionnaire was distributed both directly through online platforms such as google forms. The measurement items are shown in the table 1 below. The data is processed with the structural equation modelling-partial least square (SEM-PLS) 3.2.9 version.

Table 1. Research Construct

Variable	Construct	References
Presidential Candidate Brand Authenticity (PCBA)	PBCA 1 to PBCA 12	Bruhn et al. (2012)
Presidential Candidate Brand Love (PCBL)	PCBL 1 to PCBL 4	Banerjee (2021); Chang & Liu (2009)
Presidential Candidate Brand Trust (PCBT)	PCBT 1 to PCBT 3	Banerjee (2021); Guevies & Korchia (2012)
Presidential Candidate Brand Preference (PCBP)	PCBP 1 to PCBP 3	Albert et al. (2009)

Source: processed by researchers (2024)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondent Profile

One hundred and fifty Indonesian citizens who are eligible to vote in the general election of 2024 participated in the study. Five respondents in all said they did not actively follow news on the presidential and vice presidential elections. In this survey, 56 respondents were men and 94 were women. 38 respondents fell into the 17–27 age group, whereas 38 respondents fell into the 27–37 age range, according to age demographics. There were 39 respondents in the 37–47 year age group, and 35 respondents in the over 47 year age category. According to educational stratification, 31 respondents had completed a Diploma

Three (D3), while 42 respondents had only completed high school. There were 57 respondents at the Bachelor (S1) education level, and 20 respondents at the Masters (S2) and Doctorate (S3) final degree levels. According to their line of work, 71 respondents were private employees and 26 respondents were students. There are two lecturers, fifteen entrepreneurs, and six state civil apparatus responders. Twenty of the respondents were housewives, and ten of them were independent contractors who did not have a job.

Validity test

Based on the measurement model evaluation requires the fulfillment of certain requirements, such as the convergent validity test, model reliability test, and discriminant validity test. The indication of factor loading value > 0.7 and the AVE value for every latent variable with a value > 0.5 establish the convergent validity test. Furthermore seen in Figure 2, several indicators have loading factors less than or equal to 0.7, meaning they should be eliminated from consideration in the model.

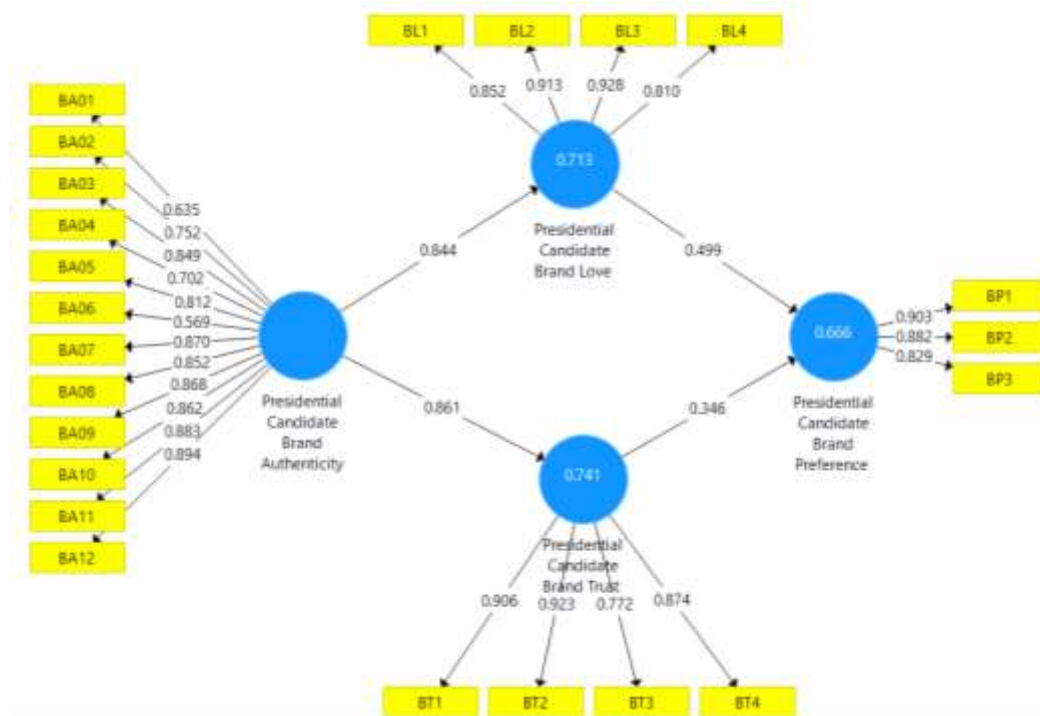


Figure 2. Loading factors in the initial measurement model

Source: Processed data (2024)

All the statistical indicators in Figure 3 have loading factors greater than 0.7, indicating the fact that they all satisfy the convergent validity requirements. In addition, Table 1 indicates that each latent variable has an AVE value more than 0.5, indicating that the model satisfies the convergent validity circumstances.

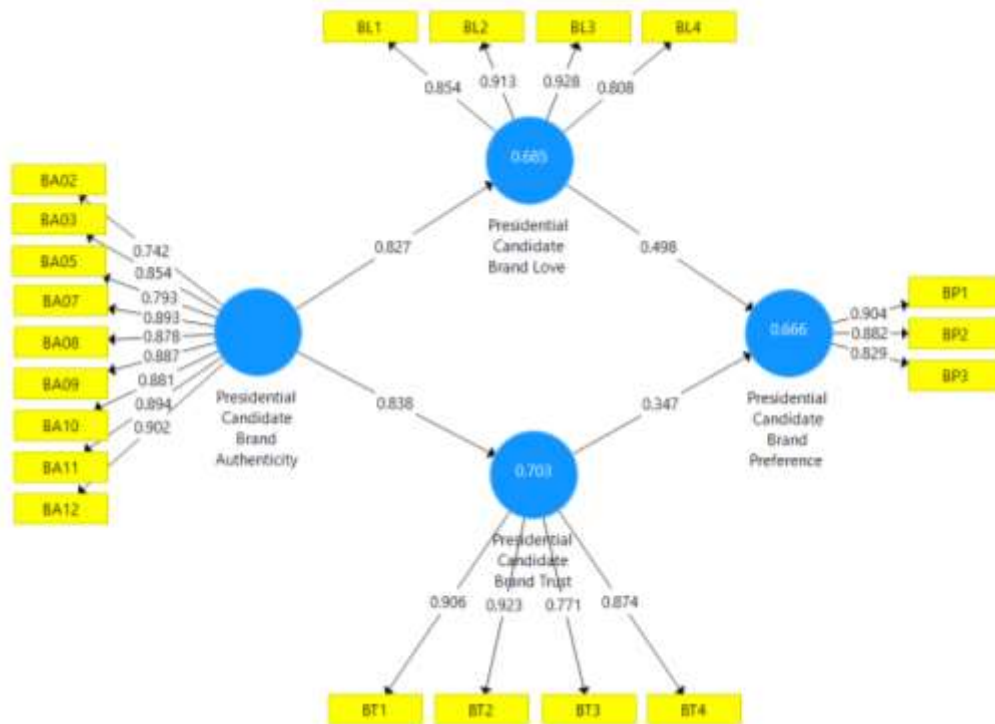


Figure 3. Loading factors on the final measurement model
 Source: Processed data (2024)

Reliability Test

The model's reliability test is the next measurement, which verifies the instrument's precision, accuracy, and consistency in measuring latent variables. Whenever latent variables with a value of greater than 0.7 in Composite Reliability and Cronbach's Alpha are measured for reliability, the data is considered reliable. Based on Table 1, the analysis's findings indicates that all latent variables have good, accurate, and consistent reliability, with each latent variable having a Composite Reliability and Cronbach's Alpha value of greater than 0.7.

Table 2 Average Variance Extracted (AVE), Composite Reliability and Cronbach's Alpha values

	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)	Composite Reliability	Cronbach's Alpha
Presidential Candidate Brand Authenticity	0.740	0.962	0.955
Presidential Candidate Brand Love	0.769	0.930	0.899
Presidential Candidate Brand Trust	0.758	0.926	0.892
Presidential Candidate Brand Preference	0.761	0.905	0.842

Source: Processed data (2024)

Hypothesis Testing

The bootstrapping results in Table 2 show that Presidential Candidate Brand Authenticity (PCBA) has a significant influence on Presidential Candidate Brand Love (PCBL) because the t-statistic value > t-table (1.96) or p-value < 0.05 (5% real level). . Apart from that, Presidential Candidate Brand Authenticity (PCBA) has a significant influence on Presidential Candidate Brand Trust (PCBT) because the t-statistic value is > t-table (1.96) or the p-value is < 0.05 (5% real level).

Presidential Candidate Brand Love (PCBL) has a significant influence on Presidential Candidate Preference (PCBP) because the t-statistic value > t-table (1.96) or p-value < 0.05 (5% real level). Likewise, Presidential Candidate Brand Trust (PCBT) has a significant influence on Presidential Candidate Preference (PCBP) because the t-statistic value is > t-table (1.96) or the p-value is < 0.05 (5% real level).

The influence of PCBA on PCBL is 0.827, meaning that as PCBA increases, PCBL will also increase. Likewise, the influence of PCBA on PCBT is 0.838, meaning that the more PCBA increases, the PCBT will also increase. Apart from that, the effect of PCBL on PCBP is 0.498, meaning that as PCBL increases, PCBP will also increase. Likewise, the effect of PCBT on PCBP is 0.347, meaning that the higher the PCBT, the more PCBP will increase (Table 2).

Table 3. Path coefficient and t-statistic values

	Path coefficient	T Statistics	P Values
PCBA -> PCBL	0.827	27.176	0.000*
PCBA -> PCBT	0.838	28.420	0.000*
PCBL -> PCBP	0.498	4.415	0.000*
PCBT -> PCBP	0.347	3.256	0.001*

Note: *) significant effect at the 5% level (T-statistic > T-table (1.96))

Source: Processed data (2024)

With an R-square value of 68.5%, the Presidential Candidate Brand Love (PCBL) structural model illustrates 68.5% of the diversity of PCBL factors that can be explained by the model, with the remaining 31.5% being explained by factors outside the model (Table 4). An R-square value of 70.3% is obtained using the Presidential Candidate Brand Trust (PCBT) structural model, indicating that 70.3% of the variety of PCBT can be handled by the model, with the remaining 29.7% accounted for by variables outside the model. The Presidential Candidate Brand Preference (PCBP) structural model provides an R-square value of 66.6%, implying that 33.4% of the diversity of PCBP is explained by factors outside the model, disposing of 66.6% of the diversity explained by the model.

Table 4. R Square Value

	R Square
Presidential Candidate Brand Love	0.685
Presidential Candidate Brand Trust	0.703
Presidential Candidate Brand Preference	0.666

Source: Processed data (2024)

Discussion

Based on the results of data processing from 150 respondents, it was proven that the hypothesis one in this research can be accepted because according of the result of this study, there is an influence of presidential candidate brand authenticity on presidential candidate brand love. The afore mentioned hypothesis backs up earlier study on the effects of brand originality on brand love by Manthiou et. al., (2018), who discovered that brand originality positively affects brand love through lifestyle congruence and unforgettable impressions. The genuine aspect of an individual characterizes how a prospective president conducts himself periodically, presents arguments, takes criticism effectively and, ought to he be elected, develops into a problem solution. If a candidate's true nature is widely acknowledged, then it is likely that potential voters will make their decision consistently and unaffected by other forces or factors that work against the candidate.

Hypothesis two in this research show positive significant, presidential candidate brand authenticity has a positive effect on presidential candidate brand trust. This is in line with previous research conducted by Eggers et al (2013), which said that there was a significant influence between brand authenticity and brand trust. The inherent authentic side, such as sincerity, honesty, integrity, and what you are, becomes a figure that is remembered by the voters, so that, in the human brand context it becomes personal branding. Therefore, during the election of a presidential candidate, a figure's sincerity will influence the extent of trust that potential voters have in their decisions to vote. Before the election there will be fewer uncertainties since voters will feel more confident in the candidates.

Hypothesis three in this research can be accepted because presidential candidate brand love has an influence on the presidential candidates brand preference. The outcome of this study show that voters affection for a presidential candidate's brand is significantly shaped by the authenticity of the candidates brand. A candidate president's authenticity evokes a desire to continuously follow brand-related information and willingness to make sacrifices, defend, and participate in ensuring the victory of their preferred candidate to become the future president of the Republic of Indonesia. The integrity and consistency of promises fulfilled in the past by presidential candidates remembered by voters shape voter affection. This hypothesis also support the research conducted by Chauduri and Benerjee (2021) that there is a significant positive relationship between party brand trust and brand preference.

Hypothesis four in this research can be accepted because presidential candidate brand trust has a positive effect on presidential candidate brand preference. This is in line with previous research conducted by Banarjee (2015) as well as Chauduri & Banerjee (2021), which examined the variable of political brand trust towards party preference among young voters and found that brand trust has a significant positive impact on party preference among voters in India. Trust in the presidential candidates brand shapes the voters perception that their candidate is the best among the other candidates. Additionally, voter trust shapes preference choices when the presidential election take place, voters already have preference based on perceptions formed in their memory. This hypothesis also supports the academic study conducted by Kenny (2021) that the perceived authenticity of Bidden and Buttigied is positively related to the intention to vote in the 2020 presidential election in the United States. The presidential candidate brand, who is a presidential candidate, already has a track record of past performance. Unconsciously, voters have stored in their memory how the candidate brand's personality is perceived – genuine, responsible, and fulfilling promises made to the public. Therefore, when the presidential candidate attempts to change these traits and engages in action contrary to their personal image, it will lead to voter distrust. In the context of a presidential election, this distrust impacts electoral value.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research and discussion above, the authenticity factor of a presidential candidate is the primary source of brand strength, symbolizing honesty, sincerity, consistency over time, and genuine character that forms positive voter affection and trust. Brand trust helps to overcome voter anxieties and antipathies towards political products. This research describes how brand love and brand trust from a strong brand can influence voters' behavior in considering their decision to vote for a presidential candidate. From an antecedent perspective, presidential candidate brand love and presidential candidate brand trust are positively influenced by presidential candidate brand authenticity. In other words, perceptions of presidential candidate brand love and presidential candidate brand trust are formed by voters' interpretations of presidential candidate brand authenticity. Trust and brand love are formed due to the impact of consistency in fulfilling promises and attitudes, sincerity, integrity, and authenticity possessed by the presidential candidate over a long period, thus potentially converting feelings into votes, and ultimately enhancing electoral value. This study provides very unique managerial guidelines for political marketing institution like political parties. First, the authentic brand owned by presidential candidates can be considered an assets, so in the selection of presidential candidates, it is necessary to consider the brand authenticity of the candidate. Second, the role of the brand authenticity in activating brand love and brand trust has been proven to create brand preference among voters, in this context, political marketers can create a roadmap to plan investments in building political brands in the future. Third, for long-term purposes, political marketers need to nurture and build awareness among young politicians

about the importance of brand authenticity from an early stage. Building credibility in context, consistency in delivering messages, credibility. This can be done through leader branding programs. Fourth, this research provides insight and up-to-date knowledge as input for political marketers. The findings revealed in this study can enhance the fundamental understanding of politics regarding how voters think. Considering this study's sample size was restricted to 150 respondents, further data from respondents who more closely represents Indonesia's population will be required in order to draw more comprehensive findings. Additional investigation may uncover additional variables, such as, brand heritage, brand archetype, brand personality that influence voting intention, this research could also be expanded by measuring the role of digital media in strengthening authenticity for presidential candidate's voters.

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