

## **Personal Branding, Party Image, and Political Promotion as Determinants of Voter Decision-Making: The Mediating Effect of Voting Interest in Indonesia's Local Elections**

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### **Abstract**

In 2024, Indonesia will hold general elections to choose legislative candidates at the central and regional levels. Kuningan Regency in West Java also held legislative candidate elections at the regency level. There's an interesting phenomenon where legislative council members consistently win seats in the two previous election cycles. In the context of political marketing, the candidate is the object that must be valuable to be chosen, making competition with a marketing approach interesting to study. To analyze this phenomenon, this research was conducted to determine the factors influencing voters' decisions in choosing legislative candidates for the Kuningan District DPRD. The focus of this research is the analysis of personal branding, party image, and promotions conducted by candidates, with voting interest as a mediating variable. Personal branding is the uniqueness built from a person's skills, experience, and personality, which can shape positive perceptions and a tendency to choose. Party image is related to the impression formed in the public's mind regarding political parties. Promotion is an effort made to introduce candidates to political marketing strategies thru media or public publication channels that are responsive to voters. The object of study is a legislative member from the PDIP party who has consistently won a legislative seat in the Kuningan District Council for two period. The respondents in this study were 200 people who are loyal voters for the candidate and are members and supporters of the PDIP party. The research method uses quantitative analysis with data collected using questionnaires and analyzed using SEM PLS. The research results show that all hypotheses are supported, all independent variables have a positive and significant effect on the decision to choose a candidate, and there is an Voting Interest that mediates the relationship between personal selling, party image, and promotion on the decision to choose. These results indicate that candidates who are consistent in their personal branding have a higher chance of being re-elected, supported by the party's image and promotions that generate strong voting interest and influence legislative candidate voting decisions. Practically, this research has implications for candidates, political parties, and policymakers. Candidates need to manage their personal branding not just for image, but to cultivate genuine interest in the eyes of voters. Political parties need to maintain a consistent image thru reputation, integrity, and tangible performance in order to generate public interest. Meanwhile, policymakers can leverage these insights to design political education strategies and campaign regulations that not only raise awareness but also encourage active voter interest in the democratic process.

**Keywords:** Personal branding; party image; promotion; voting interest; voting decision.

### **Abstrak**

Tahun 2024 Indonesia melaksanakan pemilihan umum untuk memilih calon legislative Tingkat pusat dan daerah. Kabupaten Kuningan Jawa Barat juga melaksanakan pemilihan calon legislative di tingkat kabupaten. Ada fenomena menarik dengan munculnya anggota dewan legislative secara konsisten mendapatkan kursi dalam dua periode pemilu sebelumnya. Dalam konteks pemasaran politik, kandidat adalah obyek yang harus bernilai untuk dipilih, sehingga persaingan dengan pendekatan pemasaran menjadi menarik untuk diteliti. Untuk menganalisis fenomena tersebut maka penelitian ini dilakukan untuk mengetahui factor yang mempengaruhi pemilih terhadap keputusan memilih calon legislative DPRD Kabupaten Kuningan. Fokus penelitian ini adalah analisis personal branding, citra partai dan promosi yang dilakukan kandidat dengan minat memilih sebagai variable mediasi. Personal branding adalah keunikan yang dibangun dari ketrampilan, pengalaman dan kepribadian seseorang sehingga dapat

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membentuk persepsi positif dan kecenderungan untuk memilih. Citra partai terkait dengan kesan yang terbentuk dalam benak public terhadap partai politik. Promosi merupakan upaya yang dilakukan untuk mengenalkan kandidat dengan strategi pemasaran politik melalui media atau sarana publikasi yang merespon pemilih. Obyek yang diteliti adalah seorang anggota legislative dari partai PDIP yang sudah secara konsisten dua periode memenangkan kursi legislative di DPRD Kabupaten Kuningan. Responden penelitian ini sebanyak 200 orang yang merupakan pemilih yang loyal terhadap kandidat merupakan anggota dan simpatisan partai PDIP. Metoda penelitian menggunakan analisa kuantitatif dengan pengumpulan data menggunakan kuesioner dan data dianalisis dengan SEM PLS. Hasil penelitian menunjukan seluruh hipotesis terdukung, seluruh variable independent berpengaruh positif dan signifikan terhadap Keputusan memilih kandidat dan ada minat memilih yang menjembatani hubungan personal selling, citra partai dan promosi terhadap Keputusan memilih. Hasil ini menunjukkan bahwa calon yang konsisten dalam melakukan personal branding memiliki kesempatan dipilih Kembali didukung oleh citra partai dan promosi yang menumbuhkan minat memilih yang kuat dan mendorong Keputusan memilih kandidat calon legislative. Secara praktis, penelitian ini memberikan implikasi bagi kandidat, partai politik, dan pembuat kebijakan. Kandidat perlu mengelola personal branding bukan hanya untuk pencitraan, melainkan untuk menumbuhkan ketertarikan yang otentik di mata pemilih. Partai politik perlu menjaga konsistensi citra melalui reputasi, integritas, dan kinerja nyata agar dapat menggerakkan minat masyarakat. Sementara itu, pembuat kebijakan dapat memanfaatkan wawasan ini untuk merancang strategi pendidikan politik dan regulasi kampanye yang tidak hanya meningkatkan kesadaran, tetapi juga mendorong minat aktif pemilih terhadap proses demokrasi.

**Kata Kunci:** Personal Branding; citra partai; promosi; minat memilih; keputusan memilih.

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## INTRODUCTION

Political marketing has become an interesting topic for researchers and academics to study in the context of elections. Kelley in 1956 was the first user of the term "political marketing" (Daudt, 1956). Kenaphoom (2023) states that political marketing is the way political organizations, politicians, political leaders, political parties, governments, and NGOs use marketing methods and concepts to create and develop their political products and understanding. The evolution from traditional campaigns to sophisticated data-driven strategies is happening in the modern era. Modern political marketing leverages data analytics and message personalization to reach voters more effectively and emotionally. Over the past 25 years, political marketing has transformed from a relatively obscure subject studied by a small group of researchers and academics into a significant international field of research within contemporary marketing. Conceptually, political marketing applies marketing techniques to communicate candidates, programs, and parties. The relationship between politics and the discipline of marketing is strengthened by research on the effectiveness of political advertising, segmentation, social policy, and political policymaking.

Elections held every five years are an important component of democracy in Indonesia and also an indicator of the quality of democracy. The general election is a democratic celebration for the Indonesian people. Political marketing to gain public sympathy requires high costs, so the effectiveness and efficiency of every political expenditure needs to be considered. Political marketing can be defined as the application of marketing principles and procedures in political campaigns by individuals and organizations (Savigny, 2010). This concept involves various techniques to promote candidates, parties, or political ideologies to voters. However, unlike commercial product marketing, political marketing has broader implications for the democratic process and public policy. The role of media in political marketing continues to evolve with changes in technology and information consumption behavior. An effective media strategy must consider the integration of various platforms, message personalization, and the ability to adapt quickly to changing media dynamics. A deep understanding of the strengths and limitations of each type of media is crucial for

designing comprehensive and effective political marketing strategies (B et al., 2021; Alexander, 1969). Political marketing in Indonesia has become relevant and interesting to study.

2024 is a political year for Indonesia. Leading up to the election, from urban areas to remote villages, it's very lively with various types of billboards from legislative candidates introducing themselves to the public. Elections free the people to choose their representatives in the legislature. The contestation of legislative elections encourages parties to prepare candidates who will be chosen by the people. The large number of participating parties in the election leads to competition among candidates both within and between parties. In the political system in Indonesia, voters choose candidates, not parties, so candidates compete with each other within the party and with other candidates outside the party. The candidates used various strategies to market themselves, as did the parties. This is interesting because voters will look for a candidate figure first, not choose a party first. The candidate factor becomes the determinant of the party's victory.

Personal branding is becoming an important aspect of legislative candidate campaign strategies in the modern political era. Personal branding can be defined as the process by which an individual and their career are branded, with the aim of building a reputation and increasing self-worth in the political market (Asmarianika, 2017). It is the development of a unique and compelling identity for a candidate or political party (Scammell, 2015). Political branding includes creating a consistent visual and verbal identity. Developing memorable slogans and taglines. And strategically managing the candidate's or party's reputation (Needham & Smith, 2015). Implementing this personal branding strategy can increase candidate visibility, build voter trust, and ultimately improve electoral success rates (Needham & Smith, 2015). However, it's important to note that personal branding in politics also faces criticism. Some observers argue that excessive focus on branding can sacrifice policy substance and fuel populist politics (Irawatiningrum, 2020). Research by Harifin (2009) and Megasari (2023) states that personal branding has a positive influence on the decision to choose.

Party image refers to the public's perception of a political party, including its reputation, values, and performance. This image can be influenced by various factors, such as the party's program and ideology, party leadership and figures, the party's performance in government or opposition, communication and campaign strategies, and scandals or controversies involving the party. Several studies have shown the importance of party image in influencing voter behavior. For example, a study by Pich & Dean (2015) found that party image has a significant impact on voter choice in the United States. In Indonesia, research by Prianto & Noorsetya (2016) indicates that party image is one of the important factors influencing voter behavior, especially among first-time voters. The party's image as a "winner" or "popular" can create a bandwagon effect, where voters tend to support the party perceived as likely to win. Party image can influence the balance between voter loyalty to a specific party and the tendency to vote pragmatically based on current issues. A consistent party image over the long term can foster strong party identification among voters, which can endure even in the face of short-term fluctuations. Strategies for building a positive party image can include consistency in advocating for the party's ideology and programs, transparency and accountability in party management, showcasing competent and integrity-filled figures, effective communication with constituents, and responsiveness to public issues.

It is important to note that the impact of a party's image can vary depending on the political, cultural, and electoral system context in each country. Additionally, the relationship between party image and its impact is often complex and not always linear. The research results conducted by Muhamad (2014) show that party image has a positive influence on voting decisions, while the research results conducted by Ihsan (2019) indicate that party image does not affect voting decisions. The second gap in the research likely

occurred because there were changes in the regulations of the Election Law. In the 2014 election, voters chose a party, which was then changed in the next election to choosing a candidate. In the 2024 election, the same regulations were used, namely choosing a candidate. This research will analyze the role of party image in candidate voting decisions. A negative party image can dampen voting interest and reduce voter turnout. Therefore, efforts to build and maintain a positive party image become crucial in increasing voter interest. Factors such as transparency, consistency, and the quality of party leadership contribute to how voters respond to and feel connected to the electoral process.

Promotion helps introduce candidates to voters and increase their awareness of the candidates. In a study by Anshori (2018), it was found that candidate name recognition increased significantly after an intensive promotional campaign. Promotions allow candidates to communicate their vision and work program. Research by Alwie (2012) shows that voters' understanding of candidate platforms increased after a structured promotional campaign. Promotion helps build an emotional connection between candidates and voters. According to a survey conducted by Winther Nielsen (2016), 65% of voters felt more connected to candidates after interacting with them thru direct promotional campaigns. Effective promotion can encourage active participation from supporters in the campaign. Studies by Gordon et al. (2012) and Morgan (2019) found an increase in campaign volunteer engagement after the implementation of integrated promotional strategies. Promotion helps differentiate one candidate from another in a competitive field. Analysis by Thompson (2019) shows that candidates with a unique promotional strategy have a 25% higher recognition rate compared to their competitors. Promotion allows for message tailoring to specific voter groups, as research by Lee (2021) mentions higher effectiveness in reaching young voters thru customized promotional campaigns. The use of social media and digital platforms in political promotion has a strong influence. Candidates who are active on social media receive more engagement from young voters than those who are not. Promotion can also help shape and manage a candidate's public image. A longitudinal analysis by O'Cass (2009) showed a positive correlation between the candidate image formed thru promotion and vote share.

Customizing messages for particular voter groups is made possible by marketing, as research by Lee (2021) shows that targeted promotional initiatives are more effective in reaching younger voters. Political marketing heavily relies on the use of digital platforms and social media. Young voters are more engaged with candidates who use social media than with those who do not. A candidate's public image can be shaped and managed with the aid of promotion. According to O'Cass's (2009) longitudinal investigation, there is a positive relationship between the candidate's image that is created through promotion and the total number of votes they obtain.

Voting Interest legislative candidates is influenced by various factors, such as candidate characteristics that become the candidate's brand. Sairambay (2020) found that a candidate's background and experience have a significant impact on voter preferences. Research by (Ansolabehere & Puy, 2018) shows that issue congruence between candidates and voters increases the probability of support by 25%. Voter attachment to a particular political party influences voting interest. Bartels (2013) in his study affirms that party identification remains a strong predictor of voting behavior, although its influence varies across countries. Voting Interest to mediate the influence of personal branding, party image, and promotion on the voting decision. When political promotion is packaged creatively, informatively, and relevantly to the needs of society, it will foster stronger political interest. This interest then serves as a bridge toward the decision to vote on election day. In this context, voter interest serves as a bridge between promotional efforts and voter decisions.

Candidate exposure thru campaigns and media coverage influences voting interest. (Kopacheva, 2023) found that media framing of candidates can influence voter evaluations and interest in supporting them. Socioeconomic factors, or the social and economic background of voters, influence their interest and preferences. This aligns with research by Potgieter (2013) showing a correlation between socioeconomic status and political participation rates and voting interest. For incumbent candidates, their performance during their term influences voting interest. Savigny & Temple (2010) in their research emphasize the importance of evaluating the incumbent's performance in voters' decisions. Other factors such as the political, economic, and social situation at the time of the election can also influence voter interest. McNair (2011) in his book "An Introduction to Political Communication" emphasizes the importance of effective communication strategies in influencing public opinion, which is related to a candidate's ability to communicate and connect with voters.

On the other hand, less effective or less appealing promotion can harm voting interest. Therefore, creative and communicative campaign strategies can play a significant role in increasing voter engagement and building stronger participation in the democratic process. Promotion can influence Voting Interest thru several ways. First, thru campaign media, candidates can introduce themselves, convey their vision, and describe their dedication to the interests of the community. This interaction can shape positive perceptions of the candidate, spark interest in voting, and strengthen the bond between voters and the candidate. Furthermore, promotional activities such as direct campaigns, public debates, and political education can shape voters' perceptions of the candidate's competence and integrity.

In Kuningan Regency, West Java, the 2024 general election was marked by campaigns using various visual aids and strategies, ranging from the installation of billboards by each legislative candidate to the use of social media to build a positive perception among the public. This is what motivated the researcher to conduct this study. Partai Demokrasi Indonesia Perjuangan (PDIP) was the winning party in the 2019 election, but recently it has experienced a decline in voter interest, although there are still PDI Perjuangan candidates who contributed the most votes in Kuningan Regency. PDIP the incumbent in the general election in Kuningan Regency, experienced a decrease in the number of seats in the 2019 election (Table 1). Less than half of them are incumbent legislators. This means there is a tendency for voter sentiment to shift.

The decrease in the number of seats is inversely proportional to the phenomenon of incumbents successfully winning the most votes. This success makes it interesting to investigate the factors that influence the decision to choose legislative candidates in general elections. Does marketing play a role in the electability of legislative candidates? The effect of direct candidate elections on the decline in seat acquisition in the legislature has led to some candidates receiving significantly more votes than needed to secure a seat in the council. As a result, it was inversely proportional to the party's overall seat count. This phenomenon occurred primarily within the PDIP party, even tho they achieved a large number of votes and gained more seats, it was a decrease from the previous period.

**Table 1 Number of Parliament Seats in Kuningan Regency**

Political Party	Number of Seat in Parliament	
	2014/2019	2019-2024
PKB	5	6 ↑
GERINDRA	4	7 ↑
PDIP-P	10	9 ↓

Golkar	7	5 ↓
NasDem	3	1 ↓
PKS	5	7 ↑
PPP	3	4 ↑
PAN	8	5 ↓
Demokrat	5	5 —
PBB	0	1 ↑
Amount of Seat	50	50 —
Amount of Party	9	10 ↑

Source: KPU Kab. Kuningan (2023)

The candidate's use of political marketing is a strong indicator of their success in gaining support during three elections. Many factors influence people's choices for legislative candidates, which is why a marketing approach is important for building an image for both the candidate and the party. Personal branding is an effective strategy for attracting voters. It takes a long time to build a personal brand and become a character that is ingrained in the candidate. The concept of party image is formed in voters' perceptions before they cast their ballots. Based on a preliminary survey of PDIP constituents in Kuningan Regency, an average of 55% of voters no longer choose PDIP candidates, while 45% remain loyal to PDIP candidates. As the largest party in Kuningan Regency, this situation certainly threatens PDIP's position.

This research aims to fill the knowledge gap regarding how the use of political marketing impacts the success of consistently elected legislative candidates from a party, leading to a third term in the Kuningan District DPRD, in gaining support from their constituents. In this study, the researcher focuses on examining the gaps in the personal branding, promotion, and party image variables, with voting interest as an intervening variable in the decision to vote for legislative candidates. Specifically, this research focuses on the mediating role of interest in voting, to understand the role of this variable in the mechanism linking political marketing strategies and constituent voting behavior.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses a quantitative approach with primary data collected thru questionnaires. The number of respondents is 200 people who meet the criteria and still choose the candidate being studied. In this study, a non-probability sampling technique with a purposive sampling approach was used. The choice of this method is based on the limited access to the very large overall voter population, making pure random sampling impossible. Additionally, political research often faces time, cost, and accessibility constraints, making non-probability techniques a more realistic option for obtaining field data. Respondents were contacted during the general election campaign period in Kuningan Regency, which is from October 2023 to January 2024. The respondents are supporters of legislative candidates from the PDIP party. The respondent criteria are Indonesian citizens aged ≥17 years/married, residing in Kuningan Regency, who claim to support and/or have voted for the PDIP legislative candidate who is the subject of this research in the last election. The legislative candidates who are the subject of this research are those who successfully received the most votes in the previous two general election periods in Kuningan Regency.

The respondents are registered voters in the general election, aged between 20-45 years. Consisting of 67% men and 33% women. The educational background of the respondents ranges from high school to

bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees. The results of the validity and reliability tests on 30 respondents showed that the results were valid and reliable. Questionnaires were used for data collection, with indicator variables measured on a 1-5 Likert scale and instrument testing conducted. The research approach uses SEM PLS analysis with 5 variables: Personal Branding, Party Image, Promotion, and Voting Decision, with Voting Interest as an intervening variable.

The use of Structural Equation Modeling-Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) remains relevant because this method is variance-based, does not require assumptions of normal distribution, and is more flexible in dealing with limitations in sample representativeness compared to covariance-based SEM. To minimize potential bias that might arise from using non-probability sampling, this study establishes clear inclusion criteria for respondent selection, such as age, residency, and experience participating in elections. The validity and reliability of the data were rigorously tested, while the bootstrapping technique in SEM-PLS was used to ensure the consistency of the relationships between variables. With this strategy, the potential for bias due to limitations in sampling methods can be minimized.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The descriptive analysis of each variable is shown in table 2 below. The average responses from the respondents are at a score that tends to be moderate to low.

**Table 2 Descriptive Statistics**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Personal Branding	200	24.00	58.00	40.7800	7.56490
Image Party	200	25.00	80.00	50.0050	15.00569
Promotion	200	23.00	80.00	56.0600	19.64833
Vote Decission	200	20.00	80.00	53.1600	22.04710
Vote Interest	200	15.00	55.00	32.3500	12.20378
Valid N (listwise)	200				

The research model has seven indicators that represent personal branding variables, seven indicators that reflect party image, four indicators that reflect promotion, six indicators that indicate voting interest, and eight indicators that reflect decision-making. All of the variables met the requirements for convergent validity with a coefficient value greater than 0.6, according to testing on the instruments utilized. Moreover, the average variance extracted score of at least 0.5 is used to evaluate discriminant validity.

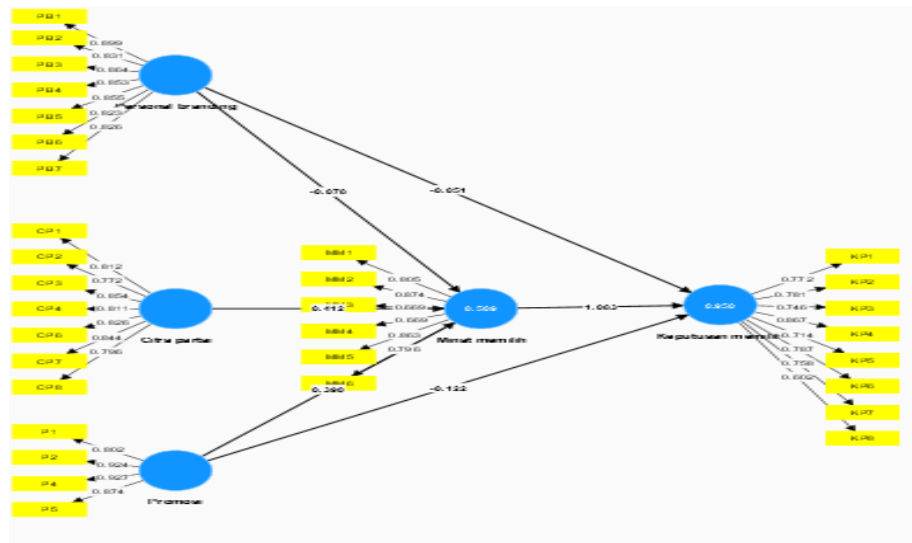


Figure 1 Outer model

The composite reliability findings are used to generate the reliability test. If a variable's reliability value is more than 0.70, it is deemed reliable. The instrument's composite reliability results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3 Composite Reliability Test

Variable	composite reliability value
Personal Branding	0,933
Image Party	0,914
Promotion	0,904
Vote Interest	0,952
Vote Decission	0,899

Discriminant validity is indicated by an Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value greater than 0.5, which means the instrument is considered valid. As shown in Table 4, all variables meet this criterion, where the AVE values for Personal Branding (0.711), Party Image (0.667), Promotion (0.647), Voting Decision (0.572), and Voting Interest (0.614) are all above the 0.5 threshold, confirming that each construct demonstrates adequate discriminant validity.

Table 4 Average Variance Extrated

Variable	Average variance extracted (AVE)	Description
Personal branding	0.711	Valid
Image Party	0.667	Valid
Promotion	0.647	Valid
Vote Decission	0.572	Valid



Vote Interest	0.614	Valid
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The Coefficient of Determination ( $R^2$ ), Goodness of Fit, and Hypothesis Testing (Direct Effect and Indirect Effect) are used to assess the inner model. The variables of personal branding, party image, and promotion have an influence on voting interest, as indicated by the coefficient of determination value (0.502), which measures the magnitude of influence in each model. This means that the three independent variables have a 50.2% influence on the dependent variable of voting interest. Additionally, the factors pertaining to party image, personal branding, and promotion on voting decision-making have a value of 0.559, meaning that the independent variables have a 55.9% influence on the dependent variable.

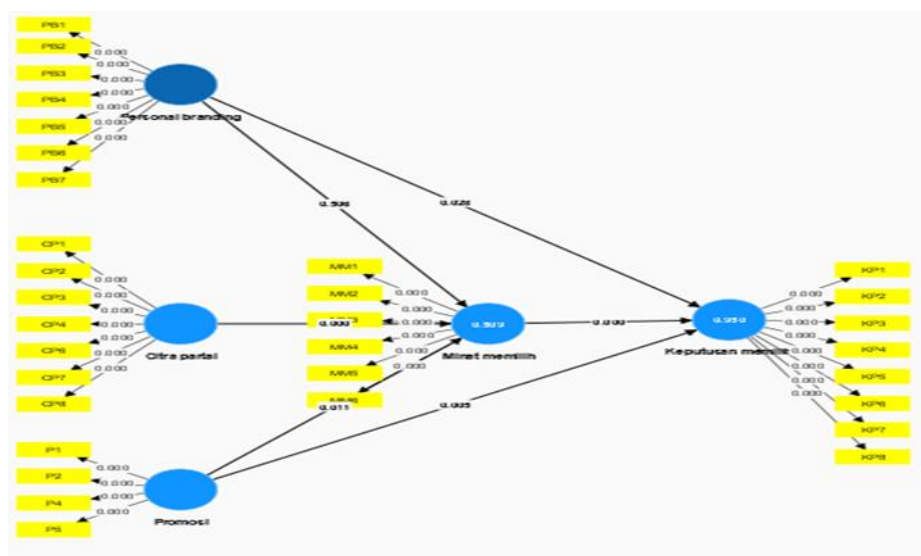


Figure 2 Inner Model Test

The Q-square value is used to assess the goodness of fit. A greater Q-square suggests that the model is more or better fitted to the data. The Q-square number is equivalent to the coefficient of determination (R-Square) in regression analysis. A Q-square value of 0.78, or 78%, means that 78% of the variability in the research data can be explained by the research model, with the remaining 22% coming from sources unrelated to this investigation.

In this study, the  $r$  Statistics and  $P$  Values were examined in order to provide a response to the hypothesis. If the  $P$  Value is less than 0.05, the hypothesis is accepted. The linkages between the research constructs—personal branding, party image, promotion, and voting interest—and voting decision are depicted in the research's structural model. In Table 5, the structural model is displayed.

Table 5 Direct Effect

	T statistics ( $ O/STDEV $ )	P values
Image Party -> Vote Interest	3.820	0.000
Vote Interest -> Vote Decission	51.270	0.000
Personal branding -> Vote Decission	2.201	0.028

Personal branding -> Vote Interest	2.871	0.006
Promotion -> Vote Decission	2.812	0.005
Promotion -> Vote Interest	2.534	0.011

Table 5 makes it clear that every endogenous variable affects every exogenous variable. With a P-value of 0.000, the t-statistic for the direct relationship between party image and voting interest is larger than the t-table (1.652), specifically 3.820. Thus, it can be said that there is a positive and substantial direct relationship between party image and voting interest. At 51.270 and a P-value of 0.000, the direct impact of voting interest on the choice to cast a ballot is likewise larger than the t-table (1.652). Therefore, it can be said that voting interest has a positive and considerable direct impact on the decision to cast a ballot.

With a P-value of 0.028, the direct effect of personal branding on decision-making is higher than the t-table (1.652), which is 2.201. Consequently, it can be said that there is a positive and notable impact from personal branding's direct influence on decision-making. With a P-value of 0.006, the direct impact of personal branding on the Voting Interest is higher than the t-table (1.652), at 2.871. Therefore, it can be said that there is a good and noteworthy impact from the direct influence of personal branding on choosing interest.

It is possible to conclude that the direct effect of promotion on decision-making has a positive and significant effect because it is greater than the t-table (1.652), which is 2.812 with a P-value of 0.005. It is therefore possible to conclude that the direct effect of promotion on the Voting Interest has a positive and significant effect because it is greater than the t-table (1.652), which is 2.534 with a P-value > 0.05 of 0.011.

The table below illustrates the indirect effect of choosing as an intervening variable on the link between personal branding, party image, and promotion with voting decision.

**Table 6 Testing the Mediation Effect**

Hypotesis	Upsilon v	Result
<i>Personal branding</i> > Vote Interest > Vote Decission	0,137	High Mediation Effect
Image Party > Vote Interest > Vote Decission	0,189	High Mediation Effect
Promosi > Vote Interest > Vote Decission	0,177	High Mediation Effect

The overall mediating affect is measured using the upsilon v statistical test, which is based on Lachowics et al. (2018). Interpretive criteria of 0.01 (low mediation effect), 0.075 (moderate mediation effect), and > 0.175 (high mediation effect) were applied by Ogbeibu et al. (2020). Table 6 above shows that the relationship between personal branding, party image, and promotion toward the choice of legislative candidates is significantly mediated by voting interest.

The results of the hypothesis testing on the mediation effect reveal that Voting Interest plays a crucial role in bridging the influence of Personal Branding, Party Image, and Promotion on Voting Decision. The mediation analysis confirms that Personal Branding significantly and positively affects voter decision-making, both directly and indirectly, through the formation of voting interest. A strong and consistent personal brand enhances voters' emotional attachment, trust, and perception of the candidate's credibility, which encourages their eventual decision to vote. This demonstrates that a candidate's personal appeal does not immediately translate into votes but first cultivates psychological engagement and voter enthusiasm, which subsequently manifests as actual electoral support.

Similarly, Party Image also has a positive and substantial relationship with Voting Decision, mediated by Voting Interest. The findings indicate that a favorable perception of a political party's integrity, reputation, leadership quality, and consistency in policy direction fosters stronger voter interest. This interest functions as a psychological bridge that transforms the party's positive reputation into actual voting behavior. When voters perceive a political party as credible and aligned with their values, they become more emotionally invested and are more likely to support the party's candidates at the ballot box.

In addition, Promotion exerts both direct and indirect effects on Voting Decision through Voting Interest. While promotion independently strengthens voter decision-making, its impact is magnified when it stimulates meaningful interest among the electorate. Effective promotional efforts—whether through media exposure, social engagement, or public outreach—enhance public awareness, generate enthusiasm, and create a sense of emotional connection between voters and candidates. These interactions ultimately lead to a higher probability of voter participation and support. Overall, the findings highlight that campaign success is not merely determined by visibility or communication intensity but by the ability of political marketing activities to evoke genuine voter interest, emotional resonance, and a sense of alignment between voters and candidates.

## **Discussion**

The direct influence of personal branding on the decision to choose has a positive and significant effect. In the context of modern democracy, voters no longer consider only political platforms or ideologies, but also how candidates build their self-image. Personal branding is becoming an important instrument capable of shaping public perception of a candidate's integrity, competence, and emotional connection. In Impression Management theory, individuals attempt to present a certain image to influence others' perceptions. This is in line with research findings that show positive results. A strong personal brand can create a positive impression of an individual, build trust, and increase their attractiveness as a choice (Pich & Dean, 2015). When someone has a personal brand that is consistent with consumer or voter values and preferences, the likelihood of being chosen increases (Megasari, 2023). In the context of Kuningan society, which tends to highly value role models and social closeness, a candidate's personal image becomes an important factor in generating political interest. Voters are not only evaluating the rationality of the program, but also the figure they believe is capable of representing their aspirations.

A person's attempts to mold their identity and image are included in their personal branding. In terms of consumer choice, personal branding may play a decisive role in influencing an individual's level of interest in or motivation to select a specific good, service, or person. A strong personal brand can increase a person's or a brand's appeal and pique consumers' curiosity about more interaction. Consumer curiosity might be piqued by the positive perception of added value created by personal branding. On the other hand, poor personal branding or branding that is inconsistent with the ideals and tastes of the intended audience may cause interest among consumers to dwindle.

Party image has a positive and significant influence on voting interest. This indicates that public perception of the party's reputation, integrity, and consistency is a determining factor in voter behavior. This result is consistent with political image theory, which emphasizes that voters are responsive to symbols and reputation rather than just programs and activities. The relationship between party image and voting interest creates important dynamics in the political process (Scammell, 2015). Party image reflects public perceptions of the integrity, credibility, and performance of political parties. A strong party image can motivate voters by giving them confidence that the party is capable of representing their interests (Matlosa & Shale, 2008). Voting interest is a major factor in reducing the impact of party

perception on voting behavior. The favorable influence of a candidate's party image is typically greater when voters are very motivated to cast a ballot. Strong election enthusiasm may make voters more susceptible to campaign messaging and more inclined to support well-regarded political parties. This finding aligns with the characteristics of voters in Kuningan, where party affiliation and family political identity are still primary considerations in voting behavior. The party's image as being pro-people or having a real contribution to regional development fosters trust, which then increases the likelihood of the public showing interest and ultimately making a choice in the ballot box.

Political promotion or campaigns have a positive and significant influence on voting decisions. This means that promotion can stimulate voter interest and participation by presenting the platforms, ideas, and values of candidates or parties. This finding confirms that the success of a campaign in conveying political messages, whether thru mass media, social media, or face-to-face interactions, can increase voters' trust and emotional connection with the candidate. Consistent with previous research, this strengthens the evidence that well-planned campaigns play a crucial role in winning political contests. Thru advertising, debates, and public activities, this promotion can raise public awareness about the election and encourage active participation in the process (Alfani, 2015). The messages introduced in the campaign, such as political promises or the candidate's vision for the future, can motivate voters to participate in the election. In Kuningan, interpersonal forms of promotion—such as community meetings, religious gatherings, or social activities—are more effective in creating emotional closeness and strengthening political interest. Consistent campaigning not only raises voter awareness but also makes them feel cared for, ultimately increasing their likelihood of casting a ballot.

The research findings prove that voting interest has a positive and significant effect on the decision to choose. This finding aligns with the theory of planned behavior, which emphasizes that intention or interest is a primary determinant of actual behavior. Thus, when voters have a high interest in both the candidate and the political party, the likelihood of them actually exercising their right to vote on election day also increases. This finding aligns with the Hierarchy of Effects Model in political marketing communication (Yongkang, 2024), which explains that promotion first builds awareness, then generates interest, and ultimately leads to action. In a political context, promotion plays a role in providing information, building an image, and fostering a sense of closeness. However, without the interest to choose as a psychological intention, the promotional message is difficult to translate into actual behavior. Thus, these findings reinforce the view that effective promotion is not only at the cognitive level, but must also penetrate the affective aspects of voters.

Furthermore, the Voting Interest to mediate the influence of personal branding, party image, and promotion on the voting decision. This confirms that a candidate's personal branding does not immediately determine voter behavior, but rather thru a psychological mechanism of attraction or interest first. In other words, when voters perceive a candidate's image positively—for example, as honest, competent, and close to the people—that perception will increase their interest in participating in the electoral process. Political campaign strategies can be more targeted to build effective personal branding and strengthen voting interest as a decisive factor for voters. This is consistent with the research findings of Megasari (2023) that Voting Interest mediates the influence of Personal Branding on Voting Decisions. Voting Interest also mediates the influence of party image on voting decisions. This means that a positive image of a political party does not immediately and directly determine voters' choices, but must first cultivate public political interest. When a party is perceived to have a good reputation, a clear vision, and consistency in fighting for the people's aspirations, voters are more likely to be interested in that party. Voting Interest also mediates the influence of political promotion on voting decisions. This means that

promotional activities or campaigns conducted by candidates and parties do not automatically lead people to cast their votes. Good promotion must first be able to generate voter interest. This is consistent with the research findings of Nurbasari (2013) that Voting Interest mediates the influence of promotion on the Decision to Choose.

This study has limitations in the number of respondents; it would be more interesting if it could reach a larger number. Another limitation is that it only focuses on one candidate from one party; it would be better if the study involved a more diverse range of candidates and parties so that the results of the study could be generalized.

## CONCLUSION

This research confirms that personal branding, party image, and political promotion play an important role in shaping voting decisions, but this influence is not linear. Interest in voting has proven to be a psychological mechanism that bridges the relationship between personal branding, party image, and promotion with voting decisions. In other words, a positive image and a strong campaign strategy are only effective if they can generate political interest, which then triggers real behavior in the form of electoral participation.

Theoretically, this research contributes by enriching the literature on political marketing and voter behavior thru the affirmation of the mediating role of voting interest. This result aligns with the Theory of Planned Behavior and the Hierarchy of Effects Model, and adds empirical evidence in the Indonesian context that intention or interest is a primary determinant of political behavior. This finding expands the understanding that personal branding, party image, and promotion are not sufficiently measured by exposure or public image, but must be assessed by the extent to which they are able to create sustainable political interest.

Practically, this research has implications for candidates, political parties, and policymakers. Candidates need to manage their personal branding not just for image, but to cultivate genuine interest in the eyes of voters. Political parties need to maintain a consistent image thru reputation, integrity, and tangible performance in order to generate public interest. Meanwhile, policymakers can leverage these insights to design political education strategies and campaign regulations that not only raise awareness but also encourage active voter interest in the democratic process.

However, this study has limitations because it only focuses on the direct mediation relationship without considering other external factors such as the role of social media, demographic segmentation, or voter ideological loyalty. Future research could expand the model by including moderating variables, such as age, education level, or media exposure, to understand under what conditions the mediating effect of voting interest becomes stronger or weaker. Additionally, a longitudinal approach is also important to see the consistency of this effect across different election periods.

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