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Gender Identity Moderation In Digital Campaigns: Content Analysis Of Idah Syahidah's Tiktok Account In The 2024 Regional Elections

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Abstract

This study addresses the challenge of how female politicians moderate their gender identity in digital campaigns, particularly in the context of a patriarchal society like Gorontalo, where traditional femininity and professional expectations are often confronted with dilemmas. The main objective of this study is to analyze and explain how gender identity moderation is displayed through front-stage elements (setting, appearance, and manner) in Idah Syahidah's digital campaign content on TikTok during the 2024 regional elections. Using a qualitative approach and Philipp Mayring's Qualitative Content Analysis model, this study systematically examines how visual and narrative data combine characteristics of traditional femininity and neutral professionalism into a unified strategy. This analysis is based on a conceptual blend of Erving Goffman's Dramaturgy Theory, Judith Butler's Gender Performativity Theory, and Eagly and Karau's Role Congruity Theory. The research findings indicate that gender identity moderation is constructed through an adaptive blend of traditional feminine values and demands for neutral professionalism. Idah Syahidah strategically leverages the TikTok platform to negotiate her gender identity, offering a leadership image that is both socially acceptable and socioculturally legitimate. This process involves aligning personal intimacy with professional capacity, demonstrating that women's leadership at the regional level can achieve solid legitimacy without having to abandon inherent gender characteristics.

Keywords: Gender Identity Moderation, Digital Campaign, TikTok.

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INTRODUCTION

Digital political campaigns provide a space for identity moderation, presented visually, narratively, and symbolically through social media. In this context, identity functions not only as a personal attribute but also as a carefully constructed communication strategy. Campaign content is no longer limited to conveying political programs but also shapes self-image through structured image management, allowing the public to directly observe the candidate's identity in a recurring and consistent visual format.

Femininity in digital campaigns is generally portrayed through images of emotional closeness, empathy, and interpersonal relationships with the public (Mazzuca et al., 2024). Meanwhile, neutral professionalism is displayed through the delivery of a vision, involvement in formal agendas, and leadership symbols that do not explicitly refer to a particular gender identity. These two dimensions demonstrate that digital campaign content can combine emotional and rational aspects in building a leadership image.

The development of digital media, particularly TikTok, has strengthened the dynamics of identity moderation due to the platform's visual, ephemeral, and interactive nature (Akmal et al., 2024). TikTok's high penetration in Indonesia, reaching 73.5% of total internet users (Riyanto, 2024), demonstrates its strategic role in building political imagery. Its flexible content format allows candidates to simultaneously showcase multiple facets of their identities within a single, easily accessible communication channel.

Based on pre-observations conducted by researchers on digital campaign content during the 2024 regional elections, differences in patterns were found, reflecting distinct communication strategies. Male candidates' campaign content tended to focus on strengthening authority through a predominance of formal public activities, such as conveying policy visions, open debates, and the use of assertive rhetoric. The narratives constructed tended to be linear, with a primary emphasis on competence and decision-making capacity as the core message conveyed to the public.

In contrast, in her digital campaign content on TikTok, Idah Syahidah displays a dynamic combination of traditional femininity and neutral professionalism. Although these two dimensions are presented as a unified image, closer observation reveals a tendency for one gender identity to dominate depending on the context of the message. This phenomenon demonstrates that identity moderation does not necessarily mean an even blending of identities, but rather a strategic emphasis on specific roles within each content unit.

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This gender moderation pattern demonstrates a layered character, namely the integration of multiple roles within a single, cohesive visual narrative. This integration of emotional and rational dimensions not only creates a more adaptive image but also reflects a communication strategy tailored to the expectations of digital media audiences. In this context, identity is not presented in a singular manner but is instead negotiated through the formulation of messages that prioritize the dominance of certain attributes in accordance with the goals of image management.

In this study, gender identity moderation is understood as a strategy for adapting and combining feminine attributes with the demands of professionalism to build social acceptance and legitimacy of leadership in the public sphere. The gender moderation pattern in TikTok content tends to be integrative, where femininity serves to build social closeness, while neutral professionalism reinforces an image of capacity, with one dimension serving as the primary focus in each post.

Previous studies generally discussed the use of social media in political campaigns and the motivations for women's participation in the political sphere. Hidayati's (2021) research highlighted social media as a means of political image building, while Adriani & Maulia (2024) discussed women's involvement in politics. However, these studies have not specifically examined how femininity and neutral professionalism are moderated through certain dominant patterns in TikTok digital campaign content in the context of the 2024 regional elections, and how these patterns are moderated in visual communication practices

This study applies Philipp Mayring's qualitative content analysis to systematically classify visual and narrative patterns of gender identity moderation in the Idah Syahidah TikTok campaign. Erving Goffman's dramaturgical perspective is used to dissect impression management on the digital front stage. The analysis is deepened by Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity to examine the construction of identities repeatedly produced on social media. Furthermore, Alice H. Eagly and Steven J. Karau's role congruity theory is integrated to examine the alignment between traditional feminine roles and masculine expectations in political leadership.

Thus, this research aims to examine how neutral femininity and professionalism are displayed in digital campaign content, and how the dominance of one identity bridges moderation in shaping gender identity moderation. The analysis focuses on the visual and narrative patterns that emerged in Idah Syahidah's TikTok content during the 2024 regional election campaign. This study is expected to contribute to the development of

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digital political communication studies, particularly in understanding gender identity moderation strategies in social media-based campaigns at the local level.

The problem formulation in this study is How is gender identity moderation that integrates traditional femininity attributes and neutral professionalism displayed through front stage symbols (setting, appearance, and manner) in Idah Syahidah's TikTok digital campaign content in the 2024 Pilkada?

This study aims to analyze and explain the moderation of gender identity through a combination of traditional feminine attributes and neutral professionalism displayed through front-stage symbols (setting, appearance, and manner) in Idah Syahidah's TikTok digital campaign content for the 2024 Pilkada.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Dramaturgy is rooted in symbolic interactionism, a key perspective in communication science. This perspective positions interaction as the primary source of meaning formation, where social reality does not exist in isolation but is instead produced through the exchange of symbols between individuals. In this line of thought, communication is understood as a process in which actors actively assign meaning to every action and symbol displayed, which is then interpreted by the audience. For example, in digital political communication, the choice of traditional attributes such as traditional clothing or the hijab is not simply a fashion statement, but rather a symbolic communication message constructed by the actor to align with the cultural values of the audience.

Dramaturgy theory was proposed by Erving Goffman in his work, * Presentation of Self in Everyday Life (1959). This theory views social life as a series of performances that take place in interactional situations. Individuals are positioned as actors who consciously or unconsciously perform certain roles before the audience (Goffman, 1959). Every interaction is understood as a process of self-presentation structured through symbols and actions. Thus, identity is not viewed as a fixed substance, but rather as the result of a process of social performance. This perspective emphasizes that social meaning is formed through the ongoing dynamics of performances.

Impression Management

The impression management process involves two important aspects. First, the creation of the desired image. Individuals select attributes, messages, and symbols that support the definition of a particular situation. Second, the control of potential disruptions

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to that image. Individuals strive to avoid actions or expressions that could undermine the consistency of the identity being constructed.

In the context of the digital public sphere, impression management becomes increasingly significant because social media provides a space for more deliberate identity moderation. Content can be re-recorded, edited, selected, and organized before publication. This reinforces the strategic dimension of self-presentation. Each post becomes part of a continuously constructed identity narrative.

Role Congruity Theory Alice H. Eagly and Steven J. Karau

Role congruity theory was developed by Alice H. Eagly and Steven J. Karau in 2002 to explain how gender stereotypes influence society's assessment of individuals in leadership positions. This theory is based on the assumption that every society has a set of social expectations regarding how men and women should behave (Eagly & Karau, 2002). These expectations then form the standards used to assess an individual's suitability for a particular role in social life.

According to Eagly and Karau (2002), women are traditionally associated with communal characteristics, namely traits that emphasize caring, warmth, empathy, gentleness, and an orientation toward interpersonal relationships. Conversely, leadership positions and the public sphere are often associated with agentic characteristics, namely the ability to make decisions, demonstrate authority, be assertive, competent, independent, and goal-oriented. This discrepancy between gender expectations and leadership expectations is the basis for role incongruity.

Gender Identity in Digital Campaigns

The use of TikTok in digital campaigns provides a highly controlled space for candidates to manage their gender moderation. This social media platform plays a crucial role in campaign promotion through the integration of communication strategies that encourage direct user engagement (Zahra et al., 2024). TikTok's short-form video-based nature allows for more precise impression management through the use of background music, visual filters, and deliberate editing techniques. According to Abidin (2020), this phenomenon is related to the concept of "calibrated amateurism," where the seemingly simple or "amateur" aesthetic of videos is actually the result of careful manipulation to build authenticity and relatability with audiences without neglecting the platform's visibility norms.

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Gender Identity Moderation

Women's identities are often positioned in comparison to the standards of masculinity that dominate formal leadership structures. Leadership is often measured through indicators of assertiveness, control, and dominance traditionally attributed to men. In this context, the urgency of identity moderation is heightened because the representation of female leaders at the local level remains limited. Public acceptance is heavily influenced by how personal identities are publicly displayed (Feeney & Camarena, 2021). This situation demands specific methods for female candidates to transcend existing gender boundaries.

Patriarchal social realities exacerbate the dilemmas women face in the political sphere. They are expected to demonstrate professional competence equal to men, yet must maintain feminine expression in line with social expectations. Excessive assertiveness risks being perceived as a deviation from gender norms, while dominant softness is often perceived as a weakness in leadership. Identity moderation offers a solution to this tension. The finding that female politicians tend to be more responsive to women's substantive interests, particularly in domestic social policy, suggests that gender management has substantive implications for political representation (Kläy et al., 2025).

Traditional Femininity

In a society still influenced by patriarchal structures, this construction of femininity becomes a normative standard that shapes expectations for women, including those involved in public and political spaces. As noted by Yakubu & Onwuegbuchulam (2025), women tend to face restrictions or negative judgment when perceived as deviating too much from conventional gender norms prevailing in society.

In the context of digital political communication, traditional symbols of femininity can be used as a strategy to build emotional closeness and gain social legitimacy. Appearances that emphasize maternal imagery, caring, politeness, and closeness to the community serve as a means to demonstrate that women's leadership remains aligned with the values valued by the audience.

Neutral Professionalism

In the context of digital political communication, neutral professionalism is demonstrated through various activities demonstrating involvement in public affairs, the implementation of institutional duties, and communication oriented toward program delivery and leadership responsibilities. Through social media, the public can observe

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how a political actor carries out their public functions, thus their leadership competence and capacity become part of public assessments.

The neutral professionalism category in this study is structured based on Role Congruity Theory, which explains that women in the public sphere need to demonstrate leadership capacity and professional competence to gain political legitimacy. Therefore, indicators of neutral professionalism are identified through the use of public space or bureaucracy, institutional attributes, appearances that reflect authority and readiness to carry out public functions, and communication activities that demonstrate leadership, decision-making, and the dissemination of information to the public.

Methods

This research focuses on the moderation of gender identity constructed by female politicians in the digital campaign space. This focus specifically focuses on the gender identity moderation strategy of one political figure in the 2024 simultaneous regional elections, namely Idah Syahidah, the candidate for Deputy Governor. This research was conducted for approximately ± 3 (three) months from March to May 2026.

The main unit of analysis in this study is TikTok digital content on Idah Syahidah's personal social media account. This platform has a massive user base in Indonesia, with 34.9% of them aged 18-24 years, making it a crucial arena for digital political communication (Akmal et al., 2024).

This study uses a qualitative approach with a constructivist paradigm to explore the meaning behind the moderation of gender identity as a result of the construction of symbols and communication. This approach is used to classify visual and narrative data into categories of traditional femininity and neutral professionalism to uncover how impression management is strategically managed to shape public perception in the digital realm.

This research is an intrinsic case study, focusing on Idah Syahidah's official TikTok account as a case study that reflects a strategic phenomenon: how gender identity is moderated in digital campaigns at the local level. The case study allows for a holistic exploration of the context and depth of symbolic representation.

The data in this study is qualitative information in the form of multimedia electronic documents. In this study, the primary data is digital campaign content uploaded to Idah Syahidah's official TikTok account during the official campaign period for the 2024 Pilkada. Meanwhile, secondary data was obtained through a search of relevant literature, such as official reports from the General Elections Commission (KPU).

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The data collection procedure was carried out with an initial stage, namely pre-observation of online initial searches on Idah Syahidah's official TikTok account to map all upload activities during the official election campaign period, then secondly data selection, where From the 20 contents found, researchers filtered to determine 6 digital campaign contents as the main focus of analysis. The selection of these 6 contents was based on information criteria, where the selected videos were the most complex uploads in displaying traditional feminine gender identities and neutral professionalism, followed by the technical data recording stage, namely Researchers conducted technical documentation using screen recording methods to maintain the integrity of audio-visual elements (sound, music, and movement) as well as screenshots for static text elements (upload captions and hashtags). Then entered Data Organization from All digital documents that have been downloaded are then arranged chronologically and entered into a recording table (worksheet) based on the theme category and finally Verification and Ethics, Researchers to re-check the completeness of the multimedia elements in each selected video to ensure the data is ready for analysis

The data analysis in this study applied the qualitative content analysis framework developed by Philipp Mayring. In line with the fundamental principles proposed by Mayring (2014), the entire data processing process was carried out systematically through rule-bound procedures to ensure objectivity and reliability of interpretation.

RESULT

Data Exposure and Research Findings Per Content Unit



Figure 1. Idah Syahidah Grilling Fish

Source: TikTok account @idahsyahidahruslihabibie

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The data presented in TikTok Content 01 shows Idah Syahidah appearing in the open kitchen of a local restaurant, grilling fish and interacting with the community. The setting serves not only as a venue for activities but also as part of the identity construction presented in the digital campaign. In social life, the kitchen is generally associated with women's domestic roles. However, in this content, this space is not positioned as a private space separate from public life. Instead, the activities depicted relate to social interactions and economic activities. This situation indicates that women's identity is presented through the digital front stage as an arena for visual political communication, communicating the idea of gender equality in a broader context than just domestic roles.

From the perspective of gender identity moderation, the use of the kitchen setting demonstrates an effort to balance feminine identity with the demands of public leadership. Idah Syahidah does not eliminate the symbols traditionally associated with women to gain political legitimacy. Instead, these symbols are maintained and displayed in the public sphere. This strategy demonstrates that women's identity is not positioned as a barrier to participation in practical politics. Activities synonymous with the domestic sphere are instead used to demonstrate closeness to community life. Thus, gender identity moderation is achieved by adjusting the meaning of feminine identity to maintain its relevance to leadership roles through an inclusive and participatory communication approach.

The text, "*Help other people's business... it can improve your livelihood*," further reinforces the moderation of gender identity displayed in this content. The message emphasizes the value of social awareness and support for community economic activities. These values are often associated with women's characteristics of caring and being considerate of their surroundings. However, in the context of political campaigns, these values extend beyond the personal realm. These values of caring are linked to broader social responsibilities, thus becoming relevant to public leadership roles. Thus, feminine characteristics gain space to contribute to the formation of political legitimacy.

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Figure 2. Political Speech in a Dialogic Campaign
Source: TikTok account @idahsyahidahruslihabibie

Based on data found in TikTok Content 02, it appears that the subject appears in a dialogic campaign activity on a formal stage equipped with a red carpet, microphones, and candidate banners. This setting consciously places the subject directly within a practical political space synonymous with leadership activities and public communication. Unlike the domestic space in previous content, this environment demonstrates the subject's involvement in an open political arena oriented toward conveying programs to constituents. Through this placement, the campaign stage serves as a structural marker that the subject is fulfilling her role as a political actor in the regional election contest. Consequently, women's identities are now positioned openly in a public space often associated with male dominance in modern discourse.

From the perspective of gender identity moderation, the use of this formal stage demonstrates the affirmation of professional identity without having to abandon inherent gender identity. As a form of balance, feminine characteristics are not hidden to gain political legitimacy but are instead presented alongside their roles as regional leadership candidates. Conversely, this phenomenon demonstrates that the moderating function is not always carried out through an approach that emphasizes women's domestic aspects solely. Furthermore, this direct placement within formal spaces adaptively integrates public capacity with the individual's gender characteristics. Therefore, women's identity and political identity are not positioned as contradictory dimensions, but rather as two elements that harmonize with each other.

Furthermore, the appearance indicator, which depicts a neat shirt, trousers, a matching hijab, and a watch, demonstrates an adjustment to formal political professional norms. This choice of clothing does not overly emphasize feminine attributes, but also

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does not adopt the symbols of rigid masculinity generally used to demonstrate power. Dramaturgically, this visual arrangement acts as a form of impression management manifested through normative actions before an online audience. Through this professional appearance, the subject demonstrates the harmony between leadership capacity and the candidate's feminine identity. Thus, these physical attributes serve as a means of visual political communication to demonstrate readiness for a public role without having to abandon one's gender characteristics.

In this regard, the moderation of gender identity in the appearance aspect is evident in the ability to integrate female identity with expectations of a leader figure. In the context of contestation, female candidates often face challenges in the form of doubts about their capacity due to the persistent assumption that leadership is synonymous with masculine characteristics. However, through managing their professional appearance, the subjects are able to demonstrate conformity to the demands of the role without losing their gender attributes. This strategy demonstrates that acceptance in the public sphere does not have to be achieved through conforming to a male identity. Therefore, women's identities are maintained in a balanced manner while demonstrating the functional capacities required for public leadership.



Figure 3. Interactive Discussion at Dino Coffee Shop
Source: TikTok account @idahsyahidahruslihabibie

Based on data found in TikTok Content 03, it appears that the subject attended an interactive discussion held at the Dino Coffee Shop. This setting directly depicts a commercial space, which in social reality is often identified as a male-dominated public area. However, through the management of this digital front stage, this casual space is transformed into an inclusive arena for political communication. The presence of

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instruments such as microphones and discussion tables represents a spatial reconstruction of the active involvement of female candidates. Consequently, the subject moves political discourse into an informal space without abandoning the formal essence of the regional election contest.

From the perspective of gender identity moderation, this location selection demonstrates a strategic move to position women's existence within the broader social sphere. As a form of balance, the subject does not limit her space to the domestic sphere, but instead enters an arena for the exchange of heterogeneous ideas. Instead, this phenomenon demonstrates that women have equal access to discussing various public policy issues at the grassroots level. Furthermore, this expansion of participation is carried out adaptively without eliminating inherent gender identities. Therefore, this control of public space serves as a first step in breaking down traditional spatial boundaries that tend to be discriminatory.

Furthermore, the appearance indicator, which features a shirt, a neat hijab, and semi-formal attire, demonstrates an adaptation to the cultural context of a coffee shop. This choice of visual attributes does not project an elitist impression, but also does not disregard the professional standards of a regional head candidate. Dramaturgically, this physical arrangement acts as a form of impression management designed to reduce social distance with constituents. Through this understated appearance, the subject communicates the message that political authority can be reconciled with a casual environment. Thus, this physical appearance serves as an effective visual political communication tool to demonstrate readiness for public participation.



Figure 4. Idah Syahidah's interaction with pregnant women
Source: TikTok account @idahsyahidahruslihabibie

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The data presented in TikTok Content 04 shows that Idah Syahidah conducted impromptu visits to residents' homes in East Suwawa as part of direct political communication with the community. The choice of private residential spaces not only served as locations for these activities but also served as a medium for the intersection of the domestic and political spheres. In this context, the space of residents' homes, socially linked to family life, was infiltrated by open political activity. This situation demonstrates a shift in the boundaries between private and public spaces, where the two are no longer positioned separately but instead intersect in political campaign practices.

In this process, a mechanism of gender identity moderation occurs through the reinterpretation of domestic space into a space for political participation. The subject's presence in residents' homes not only demonstrates emotional closeness but also demonstrates how women's identities are positioned within the context of active and responsive leadership. The feminine identity traditionally associated with the domestic sphere is not erased but repurposed as part of a political strategy to build rapport with female voters. This process demonstrates that gender identity moderation works by expanding women's social space without eliminating their inherent gender characteristics.

In terms of appearance, the use of party vests, campaign t-shirts, and other political attributes demonstrates an affirmation of identity as a formal political actor. These attributes serve not only as markers of political membership but also as instruments for asserting legitimacy in electoral contests. At the same time, the use of a simple hijab and outdoor attire demonstrates an adjustment to the social context of the village community. This combination demonstrates the negotiated tension between formal political and social identities. Thus, appearance serves not only as a symbol of professionalism but also as a means of balancing the distance between the candidate and the community.



Figure 5: Dialogue with Residents Regarding the Scholarship Program
Source: TikTok account @idahsyahidahruslihabibie

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The data presented in TikTok Content 05 shows that the scholarship program socialization activity on residents' porches became a space for interaction between formal political interests and the community's social life. The choice of porches as the location for the activity demonstrates a shift in the boundaries between private and public space, where education policy issues were discussed in an informal and familial atmosphere. In this context, the domestic space not only serves as a setting for the activity but also serves as a medium for fostering emotional closeness between candidates and the community. This process demonstrates that residents' social space is utilized as a means of more easily accepted political communication without diminishing the substance of the public policies being discussed.

In this process, a mechanism of gender identity moderation occurs through the reinterpretation of the domestic space into an educative political communication space. The presence of subjects on porches not only demonstrates social closeness but also demonstrates how women's identities are positioned in active leadership roles on education issues. Feminine identities, traditionally associated with the realm of caregiving, are not eliminated but instead are transformed into the basis for approaches to conveying public policy. This process demonstrates that gender identity moderation occurs through the expansion of women's social functions, where feminine values are maintained but integrated into broader political leadership practices.

In terms of appearance, the use of party vests, campaign t-shirts, and other political attributes demonstrates an affirmation of identity as a formal political actor in the election contest. These attributes serve not only as symbols of political organization membership but also as markers of legitimacy in the public sphere. At the same time, the use of simple field attire and modest accessories demonstrates an adjustment to the social context of the communities visited. This combination demonstrates a managed tension between formal political identity and the demands of social closeness in the field. Thus, appearance serves not only as a symbol of professionalism but also as a means of balancing political authority with social accessibility.

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Figure 6. Idah Syahidah Campaign Accompanied by Her Husband
Source: TikTok account @idahsyahidahruslihabibie

The data presented in TikTok Content 06 shows that the dialogic campaign activities in the open field of Atinggola Village placed the subjects within a macro-political space characterized by mass mobilization, party attributes, and an atmosphere of consolidation of electoral support. The open space with its campaign tents served not only as a location for activities but also as a medium that emphasized the subjects' direct involvement in the larger political arena. The presence of supporters and party symbols demonstrated that the space was constructed as a space for affirming political power. In this context, public space was no longer neutral but became a digital front stage that linked political legitimacy with visible social support.

In this process, a mechanism of gender identity moderation occurred through the placement of women in a political space historically identified with masculine dominance, without eliminating the relational dimension inherent to their gender identity. The subjects' presence amidst the crowd not only demonstrated their position as candidates but also demonstrated how women's identities were negotiated in a space that demanded assertiveness, mobility, and control of the situation. Feminine identity was not erased but rather rearticulated within the context of large-scale leadership. This process shows that the moderation of gender identity takes place through the expansion of women's role capacity in a more complex and open political space.

DISCUSSION

Moderating Idah Syahidah's Gender Identity in Digital Campaigns

The moderation of gender identity in Idah Syahidah's digital campaign demonstrates that women's identities in the political sphere are not fixed, but rather are shaped through an ongoing process of adjustment according to the social situation and

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political demands faced. In this context, identity exists not only as a personal characteristic but also as a result of image management aimed at building public acceptance. What is presented in the digital space cannot be understood as a completely natural image, but rather as the result of a selection and adjustment process that takes into account prevailing social values.

This moderation process demonstrates an effort to bridge two demands that often go hand in hand, but not always in harmony. There is a demand for a leader who is decisive, capable of making decisions, and exercising control in the public sphere. Social expectations inherent in women demand a warm, close demeanor, and the ability to build emotional connections with the public. These two demands are not chosen individually, but rather presented simultaneously in a unified political appearance and action.

The fusion of these two demands does not occur spontaneously, but rather through a process of adjustment that takes into account how society evaluates female leaders. Social conditions that still place leadership within a masculine framework mean that women entering politics need to develop acceptable forms of communication without compromising their leadership capacity. Identity moderation can be understood as a way to maintain a balance between the need to appear politically powerful and the need to remain socially close.

Deep Interpretation through Theory.

A theoretical synthesis of the moderation of subjects' gender identities examines how the digital front stage is managed as a dynamic negotiation space. Through the lens of Dramaturgy Theory, every element, from the choice of setting and the arrangement of physical attributes to the communication style, is indicated as part of a structured image management. Subjects position their feminine identity not as a static reality, but as a communicative instrument. This alignment is achieved through a tendency to produce political feasibility for social media audiences without ignoring the cultural closeness of the community.

Through the perspective of Gender Performativity Theory, subjects' actions on the TikTok front stage demonstrate that identity is not positioned as inherent or natural. This identity is produced through the repetition of stylized acts. Through the repeated visualization of domestic activities and institutional symbols, the data demonstrates a redefinition of the meaning of femininity. Activities previously relegated to the private sphere are indicated to acquire new functions that are relevant to public leadership discourse.

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These performative actions are interpreted as opening up opportunities for tactical subversion of patriarchal boundaries in the realm of practical politics. The subject constructs a binary separation between the domestic and public spheres by bringing the issue of family welfare to the formal campaign stage. This visual convergence displays a depth effect, providing constituents with an understanding of the candidate's political authority. Feminine characteristics are not positioned as structural barriers, but rather identified as social capital and an adaptive means of political communication.

Comparison with Previous Research

The findings of this research are related to the study by Fikri et al. (2025), which showed that TikTok is utilized as a political communication medium through visual symbols tailored to audience characteristics. This research indicates the significance of symbols in building closeness between political actors and the public. Consistent with this, this research also identifies the use of various symbols in digital campaigns to strengthen relationships with audiences. However, this analysis differs in that it demonstrates a more specific dimension, indicating that symbol use functions not only as a communication strategy but also as a means of moderating gender identity by balancing traditional femininity and neutral professionalism.

Furthermore, there is a connection to the study by Putri & Fridiyanti (2024), which found that women still face challenges in political participation due to the strong social construct of patriarchy. Both studies emphasize the existence of social expectations that limit women's acceptance in the public sphere. The findings of this research support the view that these expectations exist, but offer a distinct sociological contribution. While previous research focused on structural barriers, this analysis outlines adaptive strategies used to address these barriers through image management that balances gender expectations and political legitimacy.

This analysis also demonstrates alignment with Hidayati's (2021) study on the use of social media in shaping political imagery through managing appearance and self-presentation. The similarity between these two studies lies in the placement of digital media as a formal political communication instrument. However, the results of this analysis indicate that self-management on social media extends beyond visual image formation to encompass the process of gender identity negotiation. This context broadens the discussion of digital political communication by positioning gender identity as a dynamic element that is structuredly managed during the campaign period.

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Meanwhile, research by Yoteni et al. (2023) shows that gender-responsive political communication supports effective relationships between political actors and the public. This analysis reinforces this view by demonstrating that gender identity is not merely a personal characteristic but can be managed as a political resource to build public acceptance. This research provides further elaboration on how this process occurs through the mechanism of gender identity moderation, namely through the tactical integration of traditional feminine attributes and neutral professionalism within a single media strategy.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings and discussion presented, Idah Syahidah's moderation of gender identity in her digital campaign on TikTok demonstrates an adaptive and flexible positional negotiation process (dynamic positioning). This political communication approach does not aim to eliminate feminine characteristics to meet masculinity standards, but rather simultaneously integrates communal and agentic characteristics. This alignment illustrates that the capacity for neutral professionalism can coexist with traditional feminine values to produce the worthiness and legitimacy of female leaders in the digital public sphere.

This gender identity moderation process is structured through the use of dramaturgical instruments on the digital stage. The arrangement of setting elements using a domestic, rural space is indicated to function to reduce bureaucratic formalities, while the appearance aspect, through official political party attributes, maintains the candidate's institutional legitimacy. Regarding manner, the fusion of nurturing empathy and assertiveness in delivering work programs suggests a tendency for this image management to align sociocultural expectations with the demands of professionalism.

This moderation strategy demonstrates that the subject does not choose to completely depart from traditional gender constructs, but rather simply to rigidly reproduce them. The subject takes an adaptive redefinition path by elevating private domestic issues and the role of motherhood to public policy agendas, such as family health programs and the sustainability of educational scholarships. Through this pattern, feminine values are no longer positioned as limitations on freedom of movement, but are instead structurally converted into legitimate social capital in political communication.

This research is limited to content analysis within video uploads. Therefore, further research is recommended to examine audience responses, such as comments or user

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interactions, to gain a more comprehensive picture of acceptance of gender identity moderation.

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