The Dramaturgy of Political Advertisement in General Election in East Java Indonesia

Sufyanto[1]

Abstract

This study tries to reveal political actors' understanding of political advertisement as a campaign media in the general election in East Java. Qualitative study with descriptive methods generates diverse understanding of political advertisement. In the perspective of back stage, political advertisement is understood by political actors as popular culture and political trend. In regards to popular culture, political actors feel the need to be popular in order to be elected by their supporters and in regards to political trend, political advertisement is a habit that must be performed by political actors. In the perspective of front stage, political advertisement is understood by voters as political celebrity and pretense. As political celebrity, political advertisement only makes political actors known and popular and as a pretense, political advertisement is a mask worn by political actors.

Keywords: Political advertisement, Political Actors, Political Parties, General Election and General Election of Regional Head.

A. Introduction

The phenomenon of political advertisement rose in line with the opening of political competition in general elections in 2004 and 2009, which were followed by the succession of power at local level called the General Election of Regional Head and Deputy Head either to elect the Governor, Head of the District or the Mayor. The strengthening of political advertisement is the awareness of political parties in order to win the election by utilizing mass media. Moreover, as the implementation of the direct election system encourages the participants of General Election and General Election of Regional Head to be more vigorous in raising the vote of the voters, political advertisement in the mass media is an important factor that should be taken into account by political actors. In other words, political actors are urged in such a way to take "market appetite"[2] into account.

In reality, indeed political advertisement has evolved and continued to change. In terms of publicity material, political advertisement spawns a rapid leap of change. Recently, political advertisement often used as campaign media cannot only be understood with a single meaning; rather it has a very broad meaning. political advertisement is a means of political communication as well as a means of image building to create a political identity[3] and raise popularity and electability. That is why, in campaigning themselves, each political party and political actor monopolize the idioms of the language of power as the actualization of political identity aimed at building imaging politics. David West (2004) in his work *New Social Movements* explains that political identity indeed can now be categorized as a new social movement that operates through 'personal politics' to form the 'politics of identity' through the mass media in a creative and persistent way.[4] Politics of imaging through political advertisement does not only occur at national level, but also at local regional as in East Java.

In the last two elections, some parties such as Partai Persatuan Pembangunan (PPP), Partai Demokrasi Indonesia Perjuangan (PDIP), Partai Demokrat (PD) Partai Amanat Nasional (PAN), Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa (PKB), and Partai Golkar (PG) were very intense in a campaign by selecting the political advertisement media.

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[1]The writer is a Doctor in "Sociology of Political Communication" from the Doctoral Program of Social Sciences, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Airlangga Surabaya. Born in Magetan, July 26, 1975. A san intellectual, he is currently a Lecturer in Political Communication in Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo, East Java. He is also currently the Chairman of the East Java General Election Supervisory Board.

[2] See, Adinda Tenriangke Muchtar, "Iklan Politik: Simbol Ketidakpekaan Elit," in *Harian Koran Jakarta, August 30, 2008*

[3] See, Keith Windschuttle, *The Media: A New Analysis of The Press, Television, Radio and Advertising in Australia,* (Australia: Penguin Books, 1988), p. 196-200

[4] See, David West, 'New Social Movements," in Gerald F. Gaus & Chandran Kukathas, *Handbook of Political Theory,* (London: Sage Publication, 2004), p. 268

Each contestant produced political idioms different from one another, both as a political identity and as political power. The scope of political advertisement as public space examined here was the operation of the realm of political advertisement at regional level, covering political advertisement in the General Election and Legislative Election published by local mass media in East Java. Mass media that published political advertisements in East Java were JTV (electronic media) and Jawa Pos (printed media) and outdoor media such as billboards, banners, and flags, as the supporting data of political advertisements found in the print and electronic media. Published political advertisement seemed to continue to invade the mass media and political world. Political advertisement being the focus of this study could easily be found during the General Election, such as the Legislative General Election, General Election for Regional Head and Deputy Head and the Presidential Election. It could even be found in the mentoring regarding the public policy issues held by an individual, public officials or interest groups. The phenomenon of political advertisement, in this perspective, could actually be categorized as a form of society active participation in a democratic space to encourage the meaningfulness of the process of democratization itself.

The presence of political advertisement continued to be expanded and used as the main tool of communication to raise and maintain popularity. Incumbents both in the legislative and executive regularly published political advertisement to communicate themselves and their programs to the public through political advertisement. Incumbent candidates often monopolized the success of the programs being implemented, made a massive publication throughout villages regarding the earned awards, such as the award for hygiene and urban environmental management and other awards. They even always congratulated on religious holy days, New Year or sympathized through advertisement in mass media massively when there was a public figure who passed away. In principle, incumbents firmly wanted to maintain the image of always be in the society through the media along with the attributes of the success of their leadership, aimed to lead public opinion known as *"Proven, continued!."*

Non-incumbent politicians also tried to monopolize the political advertisement in the mass media. Simply put, anyone who intended to have executive or legislative powers on a regular basis always started building his image of popularity with political advertisement in various media. One thing that distinguished the non-incumbents from the incumbents was; non - incumbents always used the jargon "change; to be better." Regarding the content, the politicians in political advertisement often ignored the social reality in the pursuit of the presence in public to maintain popularity and the identity of political image.

The reality of political advertisement by political actors as executive candidates in the General Election for Regional Head, as well as legislators candidate in the General Election, theoretically spawns several new models of political processes that accompany democratization at the local level; political advertisement encourages political dramaturgy (Goffman; 1959).[5] According to Goffman, political advertisement represents the social stage local democracy. The theory of dramaturgy assumes human action in society as drama and theater where individual performance is necessary to distinguish between the front stage, 'part of individual performance that regularly works in the common mode and remains to define the situation for those who witness the performance', and the back stage where individual may take off the attribute of the performance at the front stage so that the individual can joke, talk as friends, colleagues and so on.

The theoretical foundation is quite able to explain the phenomenon of political advertisement as a dramaturgy. In negotiating political desire and purpose of the advertiser to the voters, with the political communication process through political advertisement, the candidate in the democratization of power should certainly be able to bring him in social situations, even if he must hide his real performance and change his identity as a politician. Thus, political advertisement in the perspective of social science has reflected the complexity of social phenomenon, namely; political advertisement can bring dramaturgical practice in politics. On the basis of the argument, specifically this paper tries to uncover the political actors' understanding on the presence of political advertisement as a campaign media in the general election in East Java by using the perspective of Erving Goffman.

Method

The approach used in revealing the understanding of political actors on the presence of political advertisement in East Java was qualitative approach.

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[5] See, Erving Goffman khususnya in *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959).

This approach was chosen as it provided the opportunity for the writer to carry out the interpretation in order to gain a holistic understanding as explained by Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln in his book Handbook of Qualitative Research.[6] On the other hand, this study examined the phenomenon which was an inseparable unity since the actions occurred among political actors in East Java were certainly not caused by one factor or two, the actions involved many interrelated factors. The writer supported the understanding of the discourse and actions of political actors expressed in political advertisement using descriptive method since this method is a method in examining the status of a group of people, an object, a set of conditions, a system of thought, or a class of events in the present. The purpose of this descriptive study is to set description, picture or overview systematically which are factual and accurate in terms of facts, properties and correlations among the phenomena under investigation.[7] Ultimately, the writer found the connecting line of the dynamics of political actors in the research.

Data sources in this study were in the form of documents and research subjects. Documents uncovered in this study were data on the media of political advertisement. Political advertisement in this research referred to the ones in television and printed media. The research subjects who served as data sources were political actors from Partai Persatuan Pembangunan (PPP) represented by Muhammad Mirdasy, Partai Demokrat (PD), Partai Golkar (PG) Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa (PKB) Partai Demokrasi Indonesia Perjuangan (PDIP) and Partai Amanat Nasional (PAN). Besides the political actors, the subjects who served as the data sources in this study were voters, amounting to 30 people, with the following details: six people passed elementary education, six people passed Middle School, six people passed Higher Education, six people were gender and six people with different ideologies. The determination of sample size was based on purposive random sampling technique.

Data collection technique in this study was observations and in-depth interviews. Through in-depth interviews, the writer tried to go into the psychological and social world of the research subjects by active listening. In addition to observations and interviews, this study also collected data in form of documentation obtained from biographies, books, newspapers, journals, diaries, articles, personal letters and also the results of studies related to the topic. Documentation of data retrieval is important as secondary data, given that as a field method, historical documentation describes the best as most situations being studied in social science always deal with aspects of the historical situation.

Data analysis of the study was performed through three stages of analysis, namely: ***First,*** understanding the point of view of research subjects. Interpretation of the subjects in this context was understood as first-order understanding. At this stage it was expected that the research subjects conveyed information as much as possible and as accurately as possible while the writer addressed the interview questions to help the subjects review communicative action of their political advertisement. ***Second*** is the second order understanding stage. It was the stage of the writer's re-interpretation on the subjects' interpretation in understanding the social reality of political advertisement. Thus, it provided broader explanation and understanding in order to obtain a new meaning of political advertisement. **Third** is the third order understanding stage. At this stage, the writer understood and assessed all events, situations and social conditions when the political advertisement was published. After the three stages of exploring the data based on the research subjects are completed, the next stage is processing he empirical materials to set patterns and categorization.

Results and Discussion
Political Advertisement as a Popular Culture

Political advertisement in the perspective of political actors was interpreted as a popular culture. In popularized himself, each political actor had his own ways and characteristics. For Partai Demokrat political actor, the best way to popularize himself was by quoting the word always used by the leader of the party, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY) namely "continue". This word was considered to be very powerful to popularize the political actor, arguing that SBY was one of the characters believed to receive sympathy from the society. The word "continue" itself was the symbol of the presence of SBY. Thus, when the political actor of partai Demokrat used the word "continued", it meant that SBY was with him. The political actor felt that he was part of SBY and very close to SBY.

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[6] See, Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln, *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (London: Sage Publication, 2000), 9th Ed.

[7] Moh. Nazir, Ph.D, *Metode Penelitian,* p. 54

The feeling of being part of SBY was the most effective way to be popular. Being popular, he wished to gain sympathy from the voters and eventually be elected in the election. In other words, to make himself popular, political actor of Partai Demokrat sold the figure of SBY.

Unlike the political actor of PD, the political actor of PPP popularized himself by conveying the message of honesty through the sentence "Do not sell your vote, for the sake of the future of corruption-free Indonesia" This phrase hinted that the PPP political actor was honest and that he wanted to build the nation with honesty together with the people of Indonesia. For the PPP political actor, this sentence was believed to be able to make him popular, given the situation and the growing issue today where many political actors in the House of Representatives involved in corruption issues. Based on the issue, the political actor of PPP believed that basically people expected an honest leader. Therefore, political advertisement depicted an honest political actor. With such figure, it was expected that the political actor of PPP became popular among the society.

Golkar political actor popularized himself by advertising him as a god-fearing, honest and dignified figure. The figure was depicted through a picture of political actor who was squatting in an Islamic fashion with the following sentence: "god-fearing, honest and dignified". Golkar political actor believed that with such appearance, it would be easy for him to be popular among the public. This assumption was based on the premise that past voters had Islamic culture which expected Islamic leader. In order to show that he came from Islamic circles as expected by society, the political advertisement depicted him as an Islamic leader aspired by the society.

For the PDIP political actor, the way to popularize himself was through political advertisement displaying Megawati in a much larger scale than himself saying "let's unite for a better Indonesia". PDIP political actor believed that he would be quickly popular by presenting the image of Megawati. This assumption is due to the fact that Megawati is the charismatic figure supported by very loyal people. As a charismatic figure, any spoken word from Megawati will be adhered to by her supporters. On the contrary, the supporters will totally defend Megawati if she is harmed. It means that anyone loyal to Megawati will have the support of the community. That is why political actor of PDIP did not need to represent him with a variety of attributes in order to be popular. He only needed to show a high loyalty to the Megawati. The loyalty was indicated by displaying a much bigger picture of Megawati compared to the picture of the political actor itself. Based on this assumption, PDIP political actor believed that he would be popular if he was side by side with the image of Megawati.

PAN political actor popularized himself in a different way. He did it through the following sentence: "Come ...! Together We Achieve Developed and Prosperous Society ". The sentence seemed patronizing. However, with the sentence, PAN political actor felt more intelligent and that his way of thinking was much more advanced than the public at large. Assuming that he was more intelligent than the people are in terms of building the nation, PAN political actor believed that he would be popular among the public. This can be understood considering PAN is a political party born from the reform, born by the middle class and the intellectuals. The two groups highly influence the character of the PAN which is likely to be more rational and reformist. These characters also influence the language used in political advertisement, which seems to be rational and patronize the public.

PKB political actor popularized himself by presenting the sentence "Moving Forward with People, Winning with People, Faith". The term 'moving forward with people' and 'winning with people' illustrated that the only way to be known by the public was to put the political actor as part of the people. It showed that the political actor of PKB did not represent himself as a figure that was more intelligent than people and could understand the will of the people. It was contrary to PAN political actor mentioned above which showed a figure that was more intelligent than people in general. This was certainly strongly associated with PKB sympathizers who tended not to like the type of leader who believed that he was more intelligent and ambitious. The word 'faith' was the representation that PKB political actor shared the same faith and ideology with the people. The word selection was quite reasonable considering the characteristic of PKB supporters which was very fanatical on religion and ideology. Thus, if PKB leader did not share the same religion and ideology, he would never be accepted and popular.

Political advertisement as a Political Trend

In the perspective of back stage, political advertisement is defined by political actors as a political trend. Political trend referred to in the findings of this study is that political advertisement is a habit that must be performed in a campaign. All political actors of PPP, Partai Demokrat, Partai Golkar, PAN, PKB, and PDIP were not contented without political advertisement.

It means that the presence of political advertisement in the perspective of political actors is an imperative to perform, assuming that without political advertisement, political actors would be considered as not popular and not having enough economic assets as a candidate.

Almost all political actors considered that political advertisement through billboard was the most effective and least expensive one. As political advertisement is defined as a political trend, the function of political advertisement is limited to the consumer taste in general. In other words, political advertisement by political actors is not a means to convey a message but only limited to displaying images. That is why political actors of PPP, Parta Demokrat, Partai Golkar, PAN, PKB, and PDIP believed that there was no need to consider the contents of the message; rather they focused on the design, coloring, and the clarity of the image of political actors. Therefore, the presence of political advertisement in the perspective of political actors is not intended to describe the characteristics and the missions carried by political actors when they are elected. It is intended to tantalize the voters. This means that political advertisement basically does not portray the real presence of the political actors.

The success rate of political advertisement as a political trend in the perspective of political actors is not based on the content of message whether it can be understood by the receiver of the message, rather it is based on the number and size of political advertisements displayed. Political actors of PPP, Partai Demokrat, Partai Golkar, PAN, PKB, and PDIP in this study agreed that if a political actor could afford to display political advertisement as many as possible in a large size, it was possible that he would be quickly known to the public, which by itself could be elected in the general election. That is why political actors who possess a lot of funds compete to display political advertisement as many as possible in many places. Moreover, there are no rules to limit the number of political advertisement to display. Thus, it can be noted that political advertisement of political actor with substantial funds will dominate all territories. On the contrary, the political advertisement of political actors without sufficient funds is only a few.

Political advertisement as Political Celebrity

Political advertisement by political actors carries social implications in society. One of the social implications is that political advertisement is defined as a form of political celebrity. It means that political advertisement only makes political actors known and popular. The notion saying that 'if a political actor is known and popular, he will definitely be elected by voters' turns out to be just a notion of political actors. The notion is not in effect for the voters. People are unlikely to be affected by political advertisement. Whatever the message and no matter how good the image displayed is, the people are not affected as they have their own standards for a leader to be elected. This illustrates that making political advertisement a political celebrity does not make the people trust the political advertisement. In their opinion, political advertisement displayed does not illustrate the actual reality of the existence of political actors.

Another social implication regarding the presence of political advertisement as a political celebrity is from the point of view of highly educated people. Highly educated people have knowledge of the political situation and the reality of the politics in Indonesia. In their point of view, political actors could only make promises without keeping them. Based on their knowledge and experience, political advertisement had no relevance whatsoever to the characters and natures of political actors. According to the highly educated people, political advertisement was like a stage show where political actors could play any roles. During the campaign season, political actors, through their advertisement, presented themselves as a fighter and defender for people interests. However, after they were elected, they no longer played as a fighter for people.

For different reasons, those who passed high school also defined political advertisement as political celebrity. According to them, basically in advertising politics, political actors were limited to flaunt the profile of political actors, while the message carried, as in advertisement in general, was not so clear. It means that the political message conveyed is not too important. What mattered is the profile of the political actor that has been created in such a way that the figure appeared charming. It means that the figure of political actors in the advertisement is similar to the figure in advertisement in general. As a commercial star, political actors may appear in every way, such as a Moslem figure, a thoughtful leader, a nationalist and so on. This view implies that people who passed high school do not fully trust the political advertisement. The political actors can advertise just about anything, but the people will never take anything for granted.

Political advertisement as a pretense.

Another social implication of political advertisement is that it is a form of pretense. The form of pretense is illustrated as a mask worn by political actors. Basically, what reflected in the political advertisement is not the real face of the political actors. Even the words selection and the actual behavior of political actors are very far from expectations.

In this perspective, political actors are actually seen as people who are looking for work, not those who fight for the interests of the people. It was not possible that political actors who have spent quite a lot, do not expect the funds to return. The political actors already expected the funds they spend for the campaign activities to be returned once they are elected. Therefore, political actors would pretend to be accepted by the public. The form of pretense can be varied in accordance with the tastes of the public.

Assumption of political advertisement as a form of pretense was made by voters whose background was gender. The reason was that political advertisement by political actors did not illustrate the actual situation. The political actors appeared in political advertisement with full of fakes. Some appeared as if they were religious. This view leads to the argument saying that political advertisement is a form of pretense. The explanation above shows that the gender voters did not simply trust political advertisement. Not only the gender, the voters with secondary and high education also assumed that political advertisement was a pretense. Certainly, this assumption has a relevance to the notion of political advertisement as a celebrity.

When political advertisement was interpreted as a form of pretense, it was actually very ineffective in delivering the message. This argument was based on the assumption that whatever the design and message of political advertisement are, the public had justified it as a form of pretense. Thus, whether or not political actors had political advertisement, for the gender group and those with secondary and high education it had no relevance at all in raising votes. No matter how many advertisements displayed and what the message were, those did not affect the gender group and those with secondary and higher education to elect the political actors who advertised.

Conclusion

Political advertisement based on the back stage theory of Erving Goffman is used by political actors merely to gain sympathy in an effort to be voted in the general election and it did not represent the overall track record of political actors. The conclusion is based on findings that put the existence of political advertisement as a popular culture and a political trend. In a popular political culture, political advertisement was used by political actors to popularize themselves through their visions, missions and promises delivered to the voters, as well as through the image of them designed as perfect as possible in the stage of political advertisement. Regarding political trend, political advertisement is used by political actors to participate in the ongoing political habits by imitating their political idol and popular message, without being able to carry out the personal commitment of political actor in an honest way.

Social implication arising from the existence of political advertisement by political actors is that the existence of political advertisement was not positively accepted by the voters. In reality, instead of having sympathy for the political actors who advertise themselves, voters become antipathy to the political actors. This conclusion is based on the analysis of back stage of Erving Goffman, in which voters assume political advertisement as a means to create a celebrity and a pretense. In political celebrity, political advertisement is only to introduce and popularize the social actors. The social implication of political celebrity is that public view political actors can only make promises without being able to keep them. In the meaning of pretense, political advertisement is viewed only as a form of pretense made by political actors. As a form of pretense, political actors can play any role. It means that through political advertisement, political actors can appear in accordance with what is desired, although it is not in accordance with their actual personality.

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