

# Halo Effect as Bobby Nasution And Aulia Rachman's Political Communication Strategy In The 2020 Medan City Local Leader Election

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## ARTICLE INFO

Date received: November, 21  
2022

Date Revision: January, 12  
2022

Date published: March, 28  
2022

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### Keywords:

Medan City Election;  
Political Communication  
Strategy; Halo Effect

## ABSTRACT

Bobby Nasution, who is the son-in-law of President Joko Widodo, running for mayor of Medan, North Sumatra, is an interesting topic to discuss. Bobby Nasution was accompanied by Aulia Rachman as Deputy Mayor of Medan, North Sumatra. With the pairing of Bobby Nasution and Aulia Rachman running to become the Mayor and Deputy Mayor of Medan, it attracts public attention, because people often look at the background of a candidate to determine whether the candidate is good or bad. This is known as the halo effect strategy. This study aims to explain the halo effect as a political communication strategy for the pair Bobby Nasution and Aulia Rachman in the 2020 Medan City Election. This study uses a qualitative method with a constructivism paradigm and utilizes data collection techniques in the form of in-depth interviews. The results of this study indicate that the use of the halo effect as a political communication strategy forms a positive political image, this is also in line with the vision and mission of Bobby Nasution and Aulia Rachman, namely the Medan Berkah Collaboration, to form a positive image by bringing what is needed by the people of Medan City.

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## INTRODUCTION

The 2020 regional elections are a series of simultaneous regional elections in the fourth of seven waves planned by the government (Antara News, 2015). The interesting thing about the 2020 regional head election, there is a son-in-law of president Joko Widodo who is running for Mayor of Medan, North Sumatra, namely Bobby Nasution who is the husband of Joko Widodo's second child, Kahiyang Ayu. The existence of Bobby Nasution, who is running for Mayor of Medan, became attached to the issue of dynastic politics that hit him (Kompas, 2020). Various accusations also emerged in the midst of his candidacy ranging from reviving a political dynasty because he was the president's family to being accused of never living in Medan because he spent a lot of time in the capital.

Dynastic politics is considered to be able to cause concern because it will cause inequality in the distribution of political power so as to cause imperfections in democratic representation

in politics or it can also be called power to give birth to power (Gunanto, 2020). In addition, according to Teresia, Ananda, and Utomo (2020) there are many parties that support the pair of Bobby Nasution and Aulia Rachman consisting of PDIP, Gerindra, PAN, Golkar, PPP, Nasdem, Hanura, PSI, and Gelora as well as many popular figures such as Sandiaga Uno, Fahri Hamzah, Fadli Zon, Ganjar Pranomo, and Deddy Mizwar strongly support the issue of dynastic politics. However, this issue was dismissed by Bobby Nasution when he expressed his opinion to a number of reporters, that Bobby Nasution only wanted to improve the city of Medan (Warsito & Budi, 2020).

During elections, people often look at candidates from their backgrounds to their personalities. Background can be seen from work experience, education, performance, to achievements. Then in terms of a strong personal (personal branding) will provide many advantages, including providing advantages to the individual concerned to have more advantages when compared to other personal competitors in the market arena (Rampersad, 2008). With strong personal branding, prospective candidates have a better chance of winning the competition. This is something that is important for every candidate to do to win the hearts of voters. Personal branding is also considered effective to strengthen community support and increase electability (Nursal, 2004).

By looking at the background and personality of a candidate, it shows that first impressions are important. The first impression is also known as the halo effect. This effect is an effect that gives a person a good or bad predicate just because of our first impression of that person. Halo effects are also one of the cognitive biases that occurs when a thorough impression of a person or something obtained from generalizing one of its characteristics (Robbins & Judge, 2015).

In previous research studies the halo effect was used in determining an audit decision, namely in Jensen and Smith's research in 2016 related to the halo effect in its existence on the risk factors of fraud and gave the result that the auditor is likely not directly influenced by the halo effect, but the auditor can be influenced by the halo effect when carry out the processing of information or other evidence (Jensen & Smith, 2016). Moreover, Utami, Kusuma, Gudono, and Supriyadi (2014) provide empirical evidence related to the use of halo effects, that a convincing client display can cause a positive halo effect and have an impact on audit decisions when evaluating clients. Furthermore, the previous research that used the halo effect was from the research of Wardani (2017) related to the factor of perception failure in the formation of the image of participants in political debates on television. In this study, it was explained that the process of forming the image of participants through audience perception was inseparable from the cultural values of the community.

From the previous research above, researchers see a research gap that arises when viewed from the research that the researcher will conduct. Here the researcher sees that the problem of political communication studies, especially regarding strategy, is the loss of a component of the political image that has been formed in the pre-campaign period, namely the background of the candidate's spouse. The background is often used as leverage by the candidate's spouse to get the attention of the people. The background of the candidate can also be seen as the voter's first impression of the candidates who apply for public office. Halo Effect is a concept that shows that first impressions are relevant and important.

As previously explained, this effect has never been used in research related to regional elections, especially for candidates such as Bobby Nasution and Aulia Rachman who have backgrounds known to the public. Especially research related to the halo effect as a political communication strategy on candidates' spouses in regional elections. When viewed from the

Halo Effect theory, it can be seen that Bobby Nasution and Aulia Rachman have practiced the halo effect theory in the first campaign when running for regional head.

Marketing is often described as the process of exchanging information about a product or service between a seller and a buyer. When this concept of marketing is applied to political campaigns, the exchange process centers on the candidate offering to fill a political leadership position, through the policies he offers, and the vision for the domicile that he strives for in exchange for the votes of the people. Political marketing can be defined as the application of marketing principles and procedures in a political campaign by various individuals and organizations. Procedures involved include the analysis, development, implementation, and management of strategic campaigns by candidates and interest groups that seek to encourage public opinion, advance their own interests to win elections, advance ideologies, and pass regulations.

Political marketing communication can also be said to be a promotional activity to sell political products. Simply put, a political product is a political promise from an actor or institution (political party). For candidates, a political actor tends to make a lot of political promises as his political product, while if he has become a political official, the actor promises various development programs as his political product (Hamad, 2008). Political products can change according to the situation and conditions of the prevailing political system. In a multiparty democratic system, the political products offered are more diverse than in a biparty democratic system in order to attract the attention of constituents. In authoritarian systems, political products are usually uniform and monolithic. Political products can also differ based on the scope of the national or regional area. The political promises of presidential candidates are of course different from those of candidates for governor, regent, and mayor. The political product of one country or region can differ from that of a country or region. Differences in political products have also been ascertained based on the ideological orientation of each party or political actor.

As for marketing communication activities (promotion) of political products which are generally known in the form of political advertising (political advertising). However, actually political marketing communication can be in the form of a political marketing mix (promotion mix of politics) even in the form of integrated political marketing communication (integrated marketing communication of politics). To strengthen marketing communication, efforts are also made to explore the behavior of (potential) consumers or (consumer behavior). Typically consumer behavior includes perception, learning, and memory, attitudes, motivations and emotions, personality, lifestyle, and self-concept, as well as the way consumers take it decision in buying a product (Pawitra, 2001). To guarantee that political products are in demand by political audiences, political behavior is carried out which is parallel to consumer behavior in marketing communication, development of political product design or strategies in marketing communications, and the use of various political communication channels or promotional mixes in marketing communications.

The principles of marketing in politics are the same as those of marketing in the commercial market. A large company can come forward and sell their products or services because it has a market orientation and is always involved in creating value for their customers. So it is in politics. A prospective office must have their own market orientation, or at least enter into existing markets. This can be done by anticipating the needs of their customers and constantly developing their selling points to keep customers satisfied (Kaid, 2018).

In politics, the image is created through the use of visual impressions communicated with physical presence, appearance in the media, experience and record as a politician. However, there are new variables in the cultivation of a person's image, especially political actors, in this case background and affiliation, both family and organizations (political parties). This is associated with the influence of prominent people's support for the image of a person, such as the support of celebrities, public figures, leaders, and other distinguished people (Kaid, 2018). These endorsements can also be interpreted as political advertisements carried out to direct public opinion. Political advertising is defined as the process of communication in which a source buys an opportunity to expose the recipient to a political message through a mass channel with the desired effect of influencing their political attitudes, beliefs, and/ or behavior (Kaid, 2018).

Halo effect is one of the terms used when having a first impression on someone. Although based on personal opinions, this halo effect can affect the evaluation and estimation of a person's judgment to others (Febriansyah, 2020). This halo effect can also refer to the fact that when humans form a thorough impression of a person, it will tend to have a strong effect related to the assessment of their specific nature. From the first impression it will have a strong effect and become a law of primacy. First impressions are important to cause a halo effect, because halo effects can be caused through physical or behavioral characteristics. If the first impression is already positive then the next tendency will be positive. However, if the first impression is already negative, the next tendency will be negative (Wardani, 2017). Perilaku bias juga dapat menyebabkan munculnya halo effect. Halo effect merupakan bias kognitif di mana orang cenderung membuat persepsi dan gambaran secara umum tentang individu berdasarkan satu karakteristik tertentu (Ackert & Deaves, 2010). The halo effect will occur especially when the individual does not have enough information so that the individual will make assumptions based on one or two of the prominent information possessed. Such prominent information will cover up other information that should be more relevant (Djojopranoto & Mahadwartha, 2016).

When it comes to political communication, the halo effect often appears. Politicians who have attractiveness and a good impression certainly benefit from the halo effect, but on the contrary, if the attraction and first impression are not good, it will definitely not be seen by the public. The attractiveness of a person generates a halo effect in the sense that the perception of attractiveness can influence judgments related to personality traits. In an attempt by politicians to be elected by the public, politicians are dependent on the halo effect. In an article titled "To Understand American Politics, Understand the Halo Effect" published in February 2012, a lawyer named Erich Vieth argued that politicians would do all sorts of things to show that they are capable and likable rather than showing how well they are to lead a country (Vieth, 2012).

In addition, quoting from the questioning of the exposed psychologist, Daniel Kahneman from his book entitled "Thinking, Fast, and Slow", says that "If you like the politics of the president, you probably like his voice and his appearance as well. The tendency to like or dislike everything about someone, including things you haven't observed is known as the halo effect" (Kahneman, 2011). Thus, it is quite clear that the halo effect plays a powerful role in the world of politics.

With this halo effect, of course, it will give an image to Bobby Nasution and Aulia Rachman. This may also be due to the exposure of Jokowi's son-in-law and also a successful businessman who makes people look at the couple Bobby Nasution and Aulia Rachman. Judging from this situation, the halo effect gives a positive impression to the couple Bobby Nasution and Aulia Rachman.

## **METHOD**

The research that researchers conduct has the characteristics of the constructivism paradigm, which aims to understand an event or social event. The design of this study is a qualitative descriptive research using the in-depth interview method (Sugiyono, 2017). In conducting this study, researchers interacted with the team of the couple Bobby Nasution and Aulia Rachman during the campaign to win the 2020 Medan City regional head election which aimed to be an informant to find out how the halo effect is played out as a political communication strategy used by the couple Bobby Nasution and Aulia Rachman in winning the 2020 Medan City regional head election.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Halo Effect in Political Campaigning on Political Contestation of Medan City Election 2020**

In general, the halo effect is defined as the influence of global evaluation on a person's individual. Like for example, if we like someone, then we will assume that what they are doing is something good. Similarly, with politicians, politicians often take advantage of this halo effect by appearing warm and friendly to the general public or the public. At the time of the 2020 Medan City Regional Election, it also coincided with the existence of the Covid-19 pandemic in Indonesia. So that the democracy party in Medan city was held with limitations. This also makes the couple Bobby Nasution and Aulia Rachman need to find ways how they can be known and close to the community.

However, because Bobby Nasution has a fairly well-known background, namely as the son-in-law of president Joko Widodo, then of course with this, a Bobby Nasution has gained the exposure needed to start his political career. In addition, with this exposure, Bobby has a strong political network back up in the process. In addition, during the campaign, Bobby Nasution and Aulia Rachman often visited the regions to deliver their campaigns, bringing things related to the needs of the people of Medan City, such as improving access to damaged roads, reducing flooding, facilitating health access, and improving transportation infrastructure in Medan City. In addition, to expand support, Bobby Nasution, Aulia Rachman, along with their winning team tried to make a positive impression on the community by raising issues that are being discussed by the people of Medan City and disseminated through social media. This is also one of the strategies in interpreting the halo effect as their political communication strategy.

This is also in line with what Vieth (2012) said in his book entitled "To Understand American Politics, Understand The Halo Effect" which says that in fact, politicians will do everything possible to show that they are capable and preferred rather than showing how well they are to lead a country or region. In particular, the manifestation of this halo effect is as a stereotype of attraction (Hazarika & Rai, n.d.), in which attractiveness can influence the impression of other qualities. The findings from Palmer and Peterson (2016) also explain that in conditions of limited information, people seem to prefer with their eyes rather than through the mind. The halo effect in these expressed preferences does not appear automatically but rather as additional information about a candidate. This is also reinforced by a report from Palmer and Peterson (2016) which explains that an attractive individual, will be more likely to hold one's beliefs. More attractive individuals will be more politically effective, as they will illustrate the effects of moderation in the process of political socialization.

Thus, this finding shows that the halo effect is part of Bobby Nasution and Aulia Rachman's campaign in the 2020 Medan City Regional Election. Because, this halo effect represents the process that underlies socialization into politics and into the wider society.

### **Halo Effect as a Political Campaign Strategy bobby Nasution and Aulia Rachman**

Campaigning is a phenomenon that is familiar to the ears of the Indonesian people. Campaigning can also be used as a form of marketing in the political field. Political marketing in the form of a campaign introduces the product in the form of a figure and political promises to gain their trust. According to Perloff (2021), political campaigns play an important role in contemporary democratic systems, namely as an introduction to political candidates and persuasive efforts to win elections. Campaigning has an influence on voter preferences towards candidates, with a record of political campaigns being conducted schematically and in accordance with the voter audience. Political campaigns seek to change the knowledge of one's attitudes, behavior, or the public towards the candidate or party being introduced (Dharmawansyah, Cangara, & Sultan, 2014).

Winning a political battle (election) is not easy if you only rely on popularity and capitalize on large capital, but it requires someone who can carry out the mandate, be honest, have credibility, and an established capacity, and are not corrupt. However, the pattern of leadership in Indonesia undeniably still uses a traditional approach with paternalistic cultural practices, primordialism, or leaders who have a descendant of the noble line or king (Andrias & Nurohman, 2013). In political communication, campaigning is a very important part of influencing voters (Damayanti & Hamzah, 2017). According to Lock and Harris in Firmanzah (2007), political campaigns are closely related to the formation of a political image.

The most common campaign strategy is to turn it out to the public to show that this candidate for the leadership cares about the needs of the community. In the case of Bobby Nasution and Aulia Rachman, they had already run the blouse long before they declared their candidacy. This is an example of a campaign strategy on the part of Bobby Nasution and Aulia Rachman, because with something like this, the public does not really suspect that the visit of Bobby Nasution and Aulia Rachman has other motives. So this also helps Bobby Nasution and Aulia Rachman in gaining the trust of the public faster and ahead of the opposing candidates of the incumbent.

This finding also corroborates a study from Sudarsono (2012) who said that going directly to the field to find the right solution, meeting directly with the community and approaching the community if it is going to launch a program, releasing everything that smells of protocol as a political official and blending in with the community is a communication position the equivalent. This is also reinforced by Ahmad Khoirul Umam, quoted by Siswanto and Isdiansyah (2022) as saying that *blusukan* is the best political campaign strategy that is run by potential leaders, because the best campaign strategy is to meet the people to be able to interact directly with the community. So this becomes very effective for increasing the popularity, likeability, and electability of prospective leaders.

Regarding this method of *blusukan*, Bobby Nasution indirectly applied what was previously done by Joko Widodo during the general election period to the Jakarta City area in 2012. So with this, Bobby Nasution and Aulia Rachman make branding as if they have a pragmatic and down-to-earth leadership style.

In the process of marketing Bobby Nasution before entering the official campaign period, Bobby Nasution has succeeded in building his image or personal branding in the national arena. The first stage, Bobby Nasution introduced himself to the world was when he married the daughter of President Joko Widodo, whether the marriage was used as a stepping stone for his political career or not, it still had an impact on the image of Bobby Nasution himself. Then, the second stage, as if to prove that Bobby is more than just the president's son-in-law, Bobby Nasution did a *blusukan* to improve his image.

This is in accordance with the opinion of Newman and Perloff in Kaid (2018), who said that in politics, images are created through background and affiliation, both family and organizations (political parties). This is evidenced by the influence of prominent people's support for the image of a person, such as celebrity endorsements, community stores, leaders, and other distinguished people. With this, Bobby directly received support from top celebrities, namely President Joko Widodo himself and also received support from political parties that descended into President Joko Widodo's coalition. In this case Bobby Nasution and Aulia Rachman's campaign strategy is to use the halo effect to form a positive political image, which is in line with Bobby Nasution and Aulia Rachman's vision and mission, namely the Medan Berkah Collaboration, where Bobby Nasution and Aulia Rachman strive to form a positive image by always collaborating with the community by bringing what the community needs.

### **Halo Effect Implementation In Bobby Nasution's Campaign Strategy**

In political communication, especially campaigns, there are certainly several factors that have a major influence on the success of the delivery of messages that do not date from what the content of the message is, but come from the role of the background. The background can be divided into many things, one of which is family and affiliation. In the context of family and affiliation, one of the effects that can be caused is the halo effect. Halo effect is an effect that takes place when you get a first impression. According to Hasan (2016), first impressions or public opinion in political communication play an important role in shaping the image of candidates. Therefore, first impression or public opinion is a constructed response, so it will be very strategic if the politicians who fight have an interest in the politics of packaging opinion.

The halo effect is raised through the political promises of candidates and the actions of candidates who are able to get closer to the people as voters. In the context of Bobby Nasution and Aulia Rachman, the effect of the halo effect is not only created from the political actions carried out, be it a blouse or an oration with promises, but also created from when Bobby Nasution became the president's son-in-law. Joko Widodo. In addition, communication networks are also one of the factors that influence the persistence of the halo effect in the formation of the image of a political figure. Communication networks are essential in shaping how people can build self-representation (Guillory & Hancock, 2016). The strong communication network or kinship will have an impact on the strength of self-representation, which in this study Bobby Nasution and Aulia Rachman strengthened their communication networks with all supporting party members, city leaders from supporting parties, to communication relationships to president Joko Widodo who is his in-law of Bobby Nasution himself.

### **CONCLUSION**

Political Contestation during the Covid-19 Pandemic which was held for the first time in Medan City invited a lot of attention and gave many different colors to the Medan City democracy party. The presence of a new figure in the world of politics who is still young and newbie in Bobby Nasution is felt to give a new breath to the people of Medan City who are already saturated with the figure of an old and corrupt leader.

Political Communication is very important in political contestation, one of the forms of which is Campaigning. Campaign Strategy really needs to be well thought out to get optimal results. The campaign strategy of Bobby Nasution and Aulia Rachman's team is to use relationships and mass media to introduce themselves and be assisted by the Winning Team

which is divided into official and Volunteers. It was this Winning Team that campaigned grassrootsly on all fronts.

Halo Effect is an effect obtained in the first impression. Image building depends largely on first impressions. Bobby Nasution's first impression is divided into two stages, the first is the impression that is awakened from the kinship factor and the political network where he is the son-in-law of President Jokowi. The second is the impression built by his persona as a young man who first explored his feet in the world of politics as if to bring a breath of fresh air into the turbidity of the political world of Medan City.

Halo Effect makes the bobby-aulia winning team not need to spend maximum effort. The support of the political parties that came naturally certainly eased the process of Bobby-Aulia's political communication. Plus his status as the President's son-in-law makes it easier for people to quickly catch who Bobby Nasution is. His clean record in politics, because it is still new, is also a matter of public consideration so that Bobby- Aulia's campaign strategy only focuses on delivering programs and does not have to bear the burden of building an image as an individual.

In this case, the halo effect used in Bobby Nasution and Aulia Rachman's political communication strategy can be said to be successful, because Bobby Nasution and Aulia Rachman can package what the two have and carry in the campaign period until their election as Mayor and Deputy Mayor of Medan. Starting from them doing direct blouse to the regions to be able to find out what is the problem in the city of Medan and then bring it into the vision, mission, and also the program they will work on when elected, to become the top of mind of the community because they bring things that are really necessary and do not care about talk related to dynastic politics.

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