

From Marketplace to Parliament: Converting Digital Business Capital into Political Agency among Indonesian Female Candidates

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Abstract: The 2024 Indonesian General Election saw a surge of “Mompreneur-Politicians”- female candidates who leveraged their micro-entrepreneurial background to boost their electoral appeal. This study employs a netnographic analysis of TikTok and Instagram to explore how they operate within the digital attention economy. Drawing upon Pierre Bourdieu's theory of capital conversion and Deniz Kandiyoti's concept of patriarchal bargaining, it argues that the Mompreneur identity converts commercial credibility into political trust. The findings suggest a “algorithmic campaigning” approach that combines soft-sell business stories with political messaging, which leads to increased audience engagement in comparison to traditional campaigning. This strategy offers women an alternative path outside of dynastic politics, but at the same time it reproduces patriarchal norms by legitimating political ambition through domesticity and service, and it commodifies democratic citizenship through increasingly clientelist-consumerist relations between voters and politicians.

Keywords: algorithmic campaigning; capital conversion;
digital politics; mompreneur politician;
patriarchal bargaining

Abstrak: Pemilu Umum Indonesia 2024 menyaksikan lonjakan “Mompreneur-Politisi” para calon perempuan yang memanfaatkan latar belakang kewirausahaan mikro mereka untuk meningkatkan daya tarik elektoral. Penelitian ini menggunakan analisis netnografis terhadap TikTok dan Instagram untuk mengeksplorasi bagaimana mereka beroperasi dalam ekonomi perhatian digital. Dengan mengacu pada teori konversi modal Pierre Bourdieu dan konsep tawar-menawar patriarkal Deniz Kandiyoti, penelitian ini berpendapat bahwa identitas Mompreneur mengubah kredibilitas komersial menjadi kepercayaan politik. Temuan-temuan ini menunjukkan pendekatan “kampanye algoritmik” yang menggabungkan kisah-kisah bisnis yang disajikan secara halus dengan pesan-pesan politik, yang menghasilkan peningkatan keterlibatan audiens dibandingkan dengan kampanye tradisional. Strategi ini menawarkan jalan alternatif bagi perempuan di luar politik dinasti, namun pada saat yang sama strategi ini mereproduksi norma-norma patriarkal dengan melegitimasi ambisi politik melalui peran domestik dan pelayanan, serta mengkomodifikasi kewarganegaraan demokratis melalui hubungan klienelistik-konsumeristik yang semakin kuat antara pemilih dan politisi.

Kata Kunci: kampanye berbasis algoritma; konversi modal;
politik digital; politisi ibu wirausaha; negosiasi
patriarkal

A. Introduction

The transformation of Indonesia's post-Reformasi political landscape is inextricably linked to the massive penetration of digital technology.¹ The Association of Indonesian Internet Service Providers reported that internet penetration has reached over 78% of the population, creating a new *agora* where public participation and market consumption merge. In this "attention economy" ecosystem, the demarcation line between commercial activities (business) and political activities has become increasingly blurred.² This phenomenon has given birth to a new variant of political actors in the 2024 General Election: female candidates whose basis of legitimacy stems not from traditional political party cadreship or grassroots activism, but from their success in building digital business empires and personal branding on social media.³

To fully grasp the significance of this phenomenon, it is essential to delve into the specific historical and structural challenges faced by female candidates in Indonesia.⁴ Beyond general patriarchal structures, women navigating the political landscape must contend with the entrenched legacy of "State Ibuism" (*Ibuisme Negara*) inherited from the New Order era. This ideological construct systematically domesticated women, positioning their primary societal value as supportive wives and nurturing mothers rather than autonomous public leaders.⁵ Consequently, overt female political ambition is frequently stigmatized as transgressive or culturally inappropriate. Furthermore, this ideological barrier is compounded by the harsh realities of Indonesia's contemporary open-list proportional representation system (*sistem proporsional terbuka*). This specific electoral mechanism fosters fierce intra-party and inter-party competition,

¹ Muhlis Hafel, "Digital Transformation in Politics and Governance in Indonesia: Opportunities and Challenges in the Era of Technological Disruption," *Society* 11, no. 2 (2023): 742–57, <https://doi.org/10.33019/society.v11i2.577>.

² Ross Tapsell, "Social Media and Elections in Southeast Asia: The Emergence of Subversive, Underground Campaigning," *Asian Studies Review* 45, no. 1 (2021): 117–34, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10357823.2020.1841093>.

³ Alejandro M Peña and Tomás Gold, "The Party-on-the-Net: The Digital Face of Partisan Organization and Activism," *Information, Communication & Society* 26, no. 16 (2023): 3257–74, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2022.2147399>.

⁴ Bhakti Wiranti et al, "Political Feminism and Women's Representation in Public Policy in Indonesia," *Jurnal Pelita Raya* 1, no. 1 (2025): 1–16, <https://doi.org/10.65586/jpr.v1i1.11>.

⁵ Maria Falk Mikkelsen and Mikkel Giver Kjer, "Autonomy Is Taken, Not given: The Role of Public Leader Networking in Shaping Perceived Managerial Autonomy," *Public Performance & Management Review* 48, no. 5 (2025): 1114–42, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15309576.2025.2517654>.

exponentially driving up the necessity for massive campaign logistics and clientelistic practices. Such a hyper-competitive environment creates a severe structural and financial barrier for women, who typically lack the established oligarchical backing, extensive political patronage networks, and independent access to substantial financial resources compared to their male counterparts.⁶

Historically, women's participation in Indonesian politics has often been analyzed through two primary lenses: as products of political dynasties perpetuating male kin power, or as fulfillments of the 30% affirmative quota, often trapped as tokenistic "vote-getters" lacking strong agency.⁷ Within the existing scholarly conversation, the intersection of digital politics, gender, and neoliberal market logic in Indonesia remains critically underexplored. Current literature generally bifurcates into two distinct, isolated streams. The first stream focuses extensively on digital political marketing and computational propaganda. While it meticulously analyzes algorithmic mobilization, cyber-troops (*buzzer* phenomena), and political polarization, it frequently treats the digital sphere as a gender-neutral vacuum. This perspective fails to account for how social media algorithms and the "attention economy" are inherently gendered often penalizing overt female political ambition while algorithmically rewarding the commodification of traditional femininity.

The second stream, rooted in feminist political science, provides robust critiques of structural barriers, political dynasties, and the efficacy of the 30% gender quota system. However, this body of literature largely confines its analysis to formal institutional mechanisms or traditional grassroots activism. It tends to position female politicians either as passive victims of patriarchal oligarchy or as formal legislative actors, thereby overlooking informal, highly individualized pathways to power. Consequently, a significant epistemological gap exists. There is a glaring lack of comprehensive studies examining how women navigate these deep-seated structural biases by utilizing the non-traditional, pragmatic route of digital micro-entrepreneurship.⁸

⁶ Gabrielle Bardall, Elin Bjarnegård, and Jennifer M Piscopo, "How Is Political Violence Gendered? Disentangling Motives, Forms, and Impacts," *Political Studies* 68, no. 4 (2020): 916–35, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0032321719881812>.

⁷ Alexander Lee, "Does Affirmative Action Work? Evaluating India's Quota System," *Comparative Political Studies* 54, no. 9 (2021): 1534–64, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414021989755>.

⁸ Tiffany D. Barnes and Mirya R. Holman, "Gender Quotas, Women's Representation, and Legislative Diversity," *The Journal of Politics* 82, no. 4 (2020): 1271–86, <https://doi.org/10.1086/708336>.

This article addresses this void by theoretically bridging Pierre Bourdieu's concept of capital conversion with Deniz Kandiyoti's framework of "patriarchal bargaining," demonstrating how the "Mompreneur" persona functions not merely as a marketing gimmick, but as a complex survival strategy to secure political agency without explicitly threatening the patriarchal status quo.⁹ By using an analytical framework on the conversion of capital, we can observe how *economic capital* (business profits) is converted into *social capital* (network of followers), which is then sublimated into *symbolic capital* (reputation/prestige), and finally exchanged for *political capital* (votes/office). The critical question remains: Is this conversion a form of genuine empowerment for women's political agency, or merely a form of the commodification of gender identity? Does the entry of these "Business Heroines" into parliament bring a substantive agenda for gender equality, or does it merely replicate the transactional logic of the market within democracy?

Furthermore, to theoretically understand the convergence of digital business and electoral politics in this context, it is crucial to conceptualize this phenomenon as "Algorithmic Clientelism."¹⁰ Traditional clientelism in Indonesian politics often manifests as a direct, transactional exchange of material goods for votes. Algorithmic Clientelism, however, adapts this transactional logic to the digital attention economy.¹¹ In this modern framework, the patronage relationship is mediated by social media algorithms and commercial mechanisms. Material exchanges are no longer distributed through clandestine political brokers, but are instead openly disguised as standard e-commerce marketing strategies such as massive flash-sale discounts, product giveaways, and exclusive digital vouchers broadcasted during live streams.¹² Consequently, the algorithmic visibility of the candidate and the financial benefits gained by the followers create a digitized patron-

⁹ Deniz Kandiyoti, "Bargaining with Patriarchy," *Gender & Society* 2, no. 3 (1988): 274–90, <https://doi.org/10.1177/089124388002003004>.

¹⁰ Peter Kahl, *Redefining Democracy for the Age of AI: AI Governance and the Fiduciary Turn in the Architecture of Knowledge* (St. Edmunds: Lex et Ratio Ltd., 2025).

¹¹ Isnaini Muallidin, "Algorithmic Governance and the New Face of Exclusion: A Digital Structural Violence Framework for Critiquing Techno-Solutionist Social Policies," *Telecommunications Policy* 50, no. 6 (2026): 103225, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.telpol.2026.103225>.

¹² Isabel Kusche, "The Old in the New: Voter Surveillance in Political Clientelism and Datafied Campaigning," *Big Data & Society* 7, no. 1 (2020): 205395172090829, <https://doi.org/10.1177/2053951720908290>.

client relationship where commercial loyalty is expected to translate into electoral support.

This article aims to analyze the strategy of converting digital business capital into political agency among female candidates. Through a multiple-case study of 3 female legislative candidates contesting in the electoral district of DKI Jakarta during the 2024 Indonesian General Election, this research argues that digital business success provides a pragmatic "third way" for women to enter the political arena, transcending structural party barriers. However, by theoretically bridging Pierre Bourdieu's concept of capital conversion with Deniz Kandiyoti's framework of "patriarchal bargaining," this study demonstrates that this strategy risks reducing democratic citizenship to a mere transactional relationship between seller and buyer. This analysis is expected to contribute to the literature on political sociology and gender studies, particularly in understanding the new face of women's representation in the era of digital democracy.

B. Method

This study employs a qualitative approach with a virtual ethnography (netnography) design to explore the digital interaction between female candidates and voters. Netnography is chosen as the most robust method for this study because the locus of inquiry is the digital sphere specifically the intersection of e-commerce activities and political campaigning on social media platforms (Instagram and TikTok).¹³ This design allows researchers to immerse themselves in the "natural habitat" of the subjects, observing the organic formation of personal branding and the subtle negotiation of power without disrupting the authentic flow of online communication.

The subjects of this research were selected using a purposive sampling technique. Specifically, this study focuses on an in-depth multiple-case study of 3 female legislative candidates contesting in the electoral district of DKI Jakarta during the 2024 Indonesian General Election. The selection criteria were strictly defined to include candidates who: 1) possess a verified professional background as digital entrepreneurs or MSME owners, 2) actively utilize digital

¹³ Joonas Rokka, "Netnographic Inquiry and New Translocal Sites of the Social," *International Journal of Consumer Studies* 34, no. 4 (2010): 381–87, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1470-6431.2010.00877.x>.

marketing features such as live streaming commerce for political campaigning, and 3) demonstrate high engagement metrics. Although limited to three candidates, the exceptionally high volume of daily digital interactions and the highly saturated political attention market in DKI Jakarta provided a dense and robust dataset, allowing the research to successfully achieve theoretical saturation. Regarding ethical considerations, this study adheres to the standard guidelines for internet-based research. Given the public nature of the candidates' social media profiles, they are treated as public figures where their campaign-related content is considered public domain. However, to ensure the protection and privacy of ordinary voters, all user-generated data extracted from the platforms (e.g., usernames and personal identifiers of the commenters) were fully anonymized prior to analysis and publication.

The data collection process was conducted as an intensive short-term netnographic observation throughout the official campaign period, spanning from November 2023 to February 2024. This procedure was executed through a cohesive three-phase approach, beginning with digital immersion where the researcher engaged in passive observation or "lurking" to comprehend the daily rhythm of the candidates' content production and the patterns of audience response. This immersion was subsequently supported by systematic archival documentation, in which relevant digital artifacts were captured using screenshot and video recording tools, with specific attention paid to content that explicitly hybridized business promotion with political messaging.¹⁴ Furthermore, discourse tracing was applied to track the evolution of specific narratives, particularly the construction of the "Mompreneur" persona, across different platforms to identify how these narratives were adapted or maintained consistently over time.

To ensure rigorous analytical depth, the collected data were examined using a multi-layered framework that integrates Pierre Bourdieu's Theory of Capital¹⁵ with Sara Mills' Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA).¹⁶ The data analysis was conducted through a systematic, two-step coding process. The first

¹⁴ Eva Pietroni, "Multisensory Museums, Hybrid Realities, Narration, and Technological Innovation: A Discussion around New Perspectives in Experience Design and Sense of Authenticity," *Heritage* 8, no. 4 (2025): 130, <https://doi.org/10.3390/heritage8040130>.

¹⁵ Pierre Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital," in *Readings in Economic Sociology* (New Jersey: Wiley, 2002), 280–91, <https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470755679.ch15>.

¹⁶ Norman Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language* (London: Routledge, 2013), 11–22, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315834368>.

analytical layer utilized thematic coding based on Bourdieu's structural lens to dissect the mechanism of capital conversion, tracking raw netnographic data (e.g., videos showing business logistics) to observe how economic capital is transformed into social capital (follower networks) and ultimately exchanged for political capital.

The second analytical layer explicitly applied Sara Mills' feminist framework to scrutinize the subject-object positions within the digital texts. Rather than merely describing the content, Mills' CDA was utilized to code specific discursive frictions. For example, researchers analyzed Instagram captions and TikTok live transcripts to identify how female candidates positioned themselves as active "Subjects" (e.g., capable CEOs). This intended framing was then cross-referenced and compared against the raw netnographic data from the comment sections, revealing how audiences frequently repositioned the candidates as passive "Objects" of traditional domestic expectations (e.g., ideal wives or mothers). This specific application of Mills' framework uncovers the mechanism of patriarchal bargaining.

C. Result and Discussion

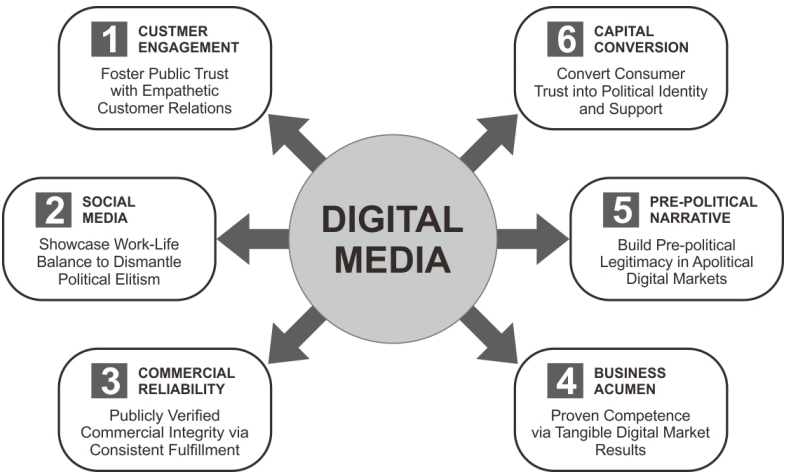
The 'Mompreneur' Advantage: Constructing a Trusted Identity in the Digital Marketplace

The initial phase of capital conversion begins not in the explicit political arena, but within the seemingly apolitical sphere of the digital marketplace. Before establishing themselves as political subjects, the candidates in this study first solidified their position as successful "Mompreneurs" a portmanteau of *mom* and *entrepreneur* that signifies a dual mastery of both domestic care and economic productivity. Our netnographic data reveals that this specific identity serves as a potent source of pre-political legitimacy.¹⁷ Unlike traditional politicians who often face a crisis of public trust due to perceptions of distance and elitism, these female candidates accumulate trust through the mechanism of commercial reliability. The act of consistently fulfilling customer orders, responding to product inquiries with empathy, and showcasing the tangible

¹⁷ Zamandlovu Sizile Makola, "Mumpreneurs' Experiences of Combining Motherhood and Entrepreneurship: A Netnographic Study," *Journal of Contemporary Management* 19, no. si1 (2022): 1–20, <https://doi.org/10.35683/jcm20129.139>.

results of their business acumen creates a track record of integrity that is easily verifiable by the public.

Figure 1
The Integrated Digital Media Ecosystem Utilized for Capital Conversion



Source: Authors' analysis based on netnographic data (2026)

As illustrated in the integrated ecosystem in Figure 1, the strategic use of online platforms has paved a new pathway for non-political actors entering politics via digital media.¹⁸ Rather than relying on traditional party machinery, these candidates leverage political branding in digital marketplaces to build grassroots legitimacy from the ground up.¹⁹ Ultimately, this apolitical digital space facilitates a seamless social capital conversion in local elections. Within this framework, the accumulation of economic capital is latently charged with symbolic power. When a female candidate displays her daily routine of managing a micro-enterprise while simultaneously caring for her children, she

¹⁸ Ekaterina Zhuravskaya, Maria Petrova, and Ruben Enikolopov, "Political Effects of the Internet and Social Media," *Annual Review of Economics* 12, no. 1 (2020): 415–38, <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-economics-081919-050239>.

¹⁹ Christopher Pich and Bruce I. Newman, "Evolution of Political Branding: Typologies, Diverse Settings and Future Research," *Journal of Political Marketing* 19, no. 1–2 (2020): 3–14, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15377857.2019.1680932>.

is effectively performing a strategic subversion of the "double burden".²⁰ In traditional feminist discourse, the double burden is viewed as a source of oppression; however, in the digital political market, these candidates reframe it as "double competence." By broadcasting their ability to navigate the chaotic intersection of domestic chores and business logistics often visualized through content showing them packing orders with a child in their lap, they construct a narrative of resilience. This performative authenticity generates a unique form of affective trust. Rather than engaging with formal political platforms, followers articulate their support by validating the candidate's domestic and economic labor. To illustrate, an excerpt from a netnographic observation of a TikTok live stream (Candidate 1, December 2023; approx. 12,400 concurrent viewers) capturing the candidate sorting merchandise late at night reveals a consistent pattern of affective engagement:

@User_Anon123:

"Semangat terus Bun, pejuang keluarga hebat! Kalau urusan bisnis aja amanah, insyaallah urusan rakyat juga jujur." (Keep it up Mom, a great family fighter! If you are trustworthy in business, God willing, you will be honest in serving the people). [Received 1,452 Likes]

@User_Anon456:

"Inspirasi banget lihat wanita mandiri cari cuan sendiri nggak cuma ngandelin suami. Siap coblos dapilnya!" (So inspiring to see an independent woman making her own money, not just relying on her husband. Ready to vote for your electoral district!) [Received 890 Likes]

As demonstrated in these primary digital artifacts, followers frequently deploy these specific terms *amanah*, *pejuang keluarga*, and *wanita mandiri* to describe the candidates. These direct interactions provide empirical evidence that their economic independence is interpreted not just as financial success, but as moral proof that they are capable, hardworking, and distinct from the stereotype of the "idle" elite politician's wife.²¹

²⁰ Simantini Baraokar, "Shifting from the Patriarchal Legal Model to a Cultural Feminism Model: Combating the Double Burden on Women," *International Journal of Law Management & Humanities* 5, no. 6 (2022): 414–4216, <https://www.ijlmh.com/wp-content/uploads/Shifting-from-the-Patriarchal-Legal-Model-to-a-Cultural-Feminism-Model.pdf?pdf=1>.

²¹ Manuel Funke, Moritz Schularick, and Christoph Trebesch, "Populist Leaders and the Economy," *American Economic Review* 113, no. 12 (2023): 3249–88, <https://doi.org/10.1257/aer.20202045>.

Perspective on subject positioning, the "Mompreneur" persona allows these women to negotiate the "likability trap" often faced by female politicians. Women in politics are frequently penalized for appearing too ambitious (seen as aggressive) or too domestic (seen as incompetent). The Mompreneur identity bridges this gap: it allows them to be ambitious in business (asserting agency) while remaining grounded in the domestic sphere (maintaining traditional femininity).²² This hybrid identity functions as a political safety valve, neutralizing the threat of female power by wrapping it in the acceptable guise of maternal devotion. Consequently, the marketplace functions as a site of reputation building, where the transactional relationship between seller and buyer lays the groundwork for the ideological relationship between leader and constituent.²³ The logic is simple yet profound: if she is *amanah* (trustworthy) in delivering a package of goods, the public infers she will be *amanah* in delivering her political promises. Thus, the digital marketplace becomes the training ground where the "social contract" is first drafted in the language of commerce before being ratified in the ballot box.

Algorithmic Campaigning: The Hybridization of Commercial and Political Content

In the regime of the attention economy, political legitimacy is no longer solely determined by the quality of a candidate's manifesto, but by their ability to navigate and exploit the platform's algorithm. Our netnographic findings reveal that female candidates with business backgrounds possess a distinct advantage: they understand that social media algorithms prioritize high-engagement content such as product reviews or viral trends over normative political broadcasts.²⁴ Consequently, they employ a strategy of content hybridization, where political messages are subtly embedded within

²² Patricia Lewis, Nick Rumens, and Ruth Simpson, "Postfeminism, Hybrid Mompreneur Identities and the Reproduction of Masculine Entrepreneurship," *International Small Business Journal: Researching Entrepreneurship* 40, no. 1 (2022): 68–89, <https://doi.org/10.1177/02662426211013791>.

²³ Suresh Malodia et al., "Future of E-Government: An Integrated Conceptual Framework," *Technological Forecasting and Social Change* 173 (2021): 121102, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.techfore.2021.121102>.

²⁴ Eva Sanches and Célia M.Q. Ramos, "Evaluating the Impact of Instagram Engagement Metrics on Corporate Revenue Growth: Introducing the Loyalty Rate," *Information* 16, no. 4 (2025): 287, <https://doi.org/10.3390/info16040287>.

commercial narratives to bypass the algorithm's and the audience's aversion to overt political advertising. This manifests as a "parasitic" symbiosis where political messaging hitchhikes on commercial content. For instance, a video caption might begin with a commercial hook about a product discount, but seamlessly pivot to a discussion on economic policy, effectively utilizing the high retention rate of the commercial segment to carry the political message to a wider, apolitical audience.²⁵ Furthermore, the feature of "Live Shopping" on platforms like TikTok and Shopee has been repurposed into a new form of "digital blusukan" (virtual town hall meeting). In these real-time sessions, the distinction between the "seller" and the "candidate" completely collapses, creating a unique space we term "Shop-floor Democracy."

The candidate verbally responds to comments that oscillate between product inquiries and political aspirations. This simultaneity creates a unique sense of intimacy and accessibility, marking a significant departure from the rigid formalism of conventional political communication. While traditional campaign paradigms often rely on top-down, asymmetrical orations delivered from sterile, distant podiums, the 'shop-floor' setting of a live stream fosters a parasocial interaction that feels horizontal and authentic. In this digital space, the candidate does not just present a manifesto; she performs 'affective labor' by engaging in real-time, domestic-commercial multitasking. This technological and narrative affordance allows for a collapse of distance between the leader and the led, which is difficult to achieve through the performative grandeur of formal political stages.²⁶ Consequently, the transaction of goods becomes a strategic proxy for the transaction of ideas; buying a product during a live stream is often reinterpreted by followers as a tangible act of political support. This blurring of lines effectively transforms consumer loyalty into a nascent form of constituent allegiance, grounded in the perceived reliability of the candidate's entrepreneurial personal.²⁷

²⁵ Peter M Bican and Alexander Brem, "Digital Business Model, Digital Transformation, Digital Entrepreneurship: Is There A Sustainable 'Digital'?", *Sustainability* 12, no. 13 (2020): 5239, <https://doi.org/10.3390/su12135239>.

²⁶ Olufisayo Akinbode et al., "A Stylistics Analysis of Niyi Osundare's the 'Leader and the Led'," *Ijinle: A Multidisciplinary Journal of the Faculty of Arts, Adeleke University* 6, no. 1 (2023): 60–75, <https://ijinle.adelekeuniversity.edu.ng/ijl/article/view/35>.

²⁷ Kaitlen J. Cassell, "When 'Following' the Leader Inspires Action: Individuals' Receptivity to Discursive Frame Elements on Social Media," *Political Communication* 38, no. 5 (2021): 581–603, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10584609.2020.1829761>.

From a gender perspective, this hybridization represents a significant shift from "hard-selling" politics to "political soft-selling." In marketing theory, soft-selling relies on emotional connection and storytelling rather than direct persuasion. By framing their candidacy through the lens of economic struggle and success, these Mompreneurs depoliticize their ambition. They are not asking for power; they are asking for the opportunity to "expand their service" to the community translating the language of service (*melayani pembeli*) into political service (*melayani rakyat*).²⁸ This linguistic maneuver is crucial for female candidates to navigate the gendered double-bind, where overt political ambition in women is often penalized as "aggressive." The hybrid content serves as a safety valve, allowing them to campaign aggressively without violating traditional gender norms, as their ambition is cloaked in the acceptable guise of entrepreneurial spirit and family economic support.²⁹

Ultimately, algorithmic campaigning restructures the voter-candidate relationship into a clientelist-consumerist model. The interactions observed in the comments sections indicate a disturbing trend where voters conflate their rights as citizens with their privileges as consumers, demanding "giveaways" or "discounts" as a prerequisite for their attention. The candidate is consumed as a brand, and the vote is cast as a purchase decision. While this strategy is highly effective in generating short-term popularity and capital conversion, it raises critical questions about the quality of representation, as the political contract is increasingly mediated through the transactional logic of the marketplace rather than the deliberative logic of civic duty.³⁰

The data presented in Table 1 delineates a profound shift in the landscape of political communication, revealing a stark dichotomy between the rejection of traditional political marketing and the embrace of hybrid commercial narratives. The low engagement rates associated with "Explicit Political Campaigns" suggest that the digital native audience suffers from an acute form of "political visual fatigue." In the high-velocity environment of social media scrolling, formal political attributes such as party banners, stiff podium speeches, and normative manifestos

²⁸ Zohal Hessami and Mariana Lopes da Fonseca, "Female Political Representation and Substantive Effects on Policies: A Literature Review," *European Journal of Political Economy* 63 (2020): 101896, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ejpeleco.2020.101896>.

²⁹ Rafi Mahmoud Al-rwaidan, "The Fear of Leadership: Critical Review," *Information Sciences Letters* 12, no. 7 (2023): 2843–47, <https://doi.org/10.18576/isl/120713>.

³⁰ S. Stephen, "Political Science: Method and Theory," *International Political Science* 74, no. 1 (2024): 15–42, <https://doi.org/10.1177/00208345241232770>.

are algorithmically and cognitively categorized as "noise" or intrusion.³¹ The dominant sentiment of cynicism recorded in this category (e.g., "*Janji Manis*," "*Skip*") indicates a fundamental breakdown in the traditional transmission of political ideology. The audience, accustomed to the entertainment-first logic of the platform, perceives the "hard-selling" of political ideas as an aggressive disruption to their leisure time, leading to immediate disengagement.

Table 1
Comparative Analysis of Audience Engagement across Content Typologies

Content Typology	Visual Presentation	Narrative Focus	Avg. Engagement	Dominant Audience Sentiment
Explicit Political Campaign	Candidate wearing party attributes, banners, formal podium.	Hard-selling: "Vote for me," "Visi Misi," Party Manifestos.	Low.	Cynical / Indifferent ("Janji manis," "Skip")
Pure Commercial Content	Product catalogs, testimonials, flash sale banners.	Transactional: Price, discount codes, product specifications.	Medium	Transactional ("Cek harga," "Ongkir berapa?")
Hybrid Content (Algorithmic Strategy)	Behind the Scene" activity (packing orders), Casual Live Streaming	Storytelling: "Struggle of an MSME mom," implicit political hope, "Mohon doa."	Very High	Sympathetic / Supportive ("Semangat Bun," "Siap Dukung")

Source: Authors' analysis based on netnographic data (2026)

Conversely, the "Hybrid Content" typology demonstrates a superior efficacy in capturing public attention, validating the hypothesis that in the digital era, the most effective political campaign is one that appears the least political.³² By wrapping their candidacy within the narrative of

³¹ Mohd Firdauz Mohd Fathir et al., "Social Media Visual Framing towards Political Participation: An Analysis on BERSIH 2.0," *Jurnal Komunikasi: Malaysian Journal of Communication* 38, no. 2 (2022): 127–43, <https://doi.org/10.17576/JKMJC-2022-3802-08>.

³² Hedda Martina Šola, Fayyaz Hussain Qureshi, and Sarwar Khawaja, "Human-Centred Design Meets AI-Driven Algorithms: Comparative Analysis of Political Campaign Branding in the

"entrepreneurial struggle" (*perjuangan UMKM*) and domestic resilience, these female candidates successfully trigger what sociologists term "affective engagement." The high volume of likes, shares, and supportive comments confirms that the algorithm prioritizes content that generates emotional retention over content that offers informational density. When a candidate shares the "behind-the-scenes" reality of packing orders late at night or negotiating with suppliers, she is engaging in performative authenticity. She is not merely selling a product or a policy; she is performing "affective labor" the work of projecting emotions that resonate with the anxieties and aspirations of the working-class voter.³³

This phenomenon can be theoretically framed as the "Trojan Horse" strategy of digital politics. The commercial narrative the struggles of a business owner, the joy of a sale, the relatability of a mother serves as the attractive wooden horse that the audience willingly accepts into their digital feed.³⁴ Hidden within this "safe" and "relatable" content is the political soldier: the candidate's name recognition and implicit ideological promise. The audience lowers their defenses because they perceive the content as "human interest" rather than "political propaganda." Consequently, the engagement metrics in Table 1 do not just represent popularity; they represent the successful conversion of parasocial interaction (feeling like a friend to the candidate) into political allegiance.

Furthermore, the disparity in sentiment between "Transactional" (Commercial) and "Supportive" (Hybrid) content highlights a unique reconfiguration of citizenship. In the Hybrid category, the comments evolve from mere inquiries about price ("Cek harga") to expressions of moral solidarity ("*Semangat Bun*," "*Siap Dukung*"). This transition signals that the voters are projecting their political hopes onto the candidate's business success. The candidate's ability to survive in the market is taken as a proxy for her ability to survive in parliament. Thus, the hybrid strategy does not just hack the

Harris-Trump Presidential Campaigns," *Informatics* 12, no. 1 (2025): 30, <https://doi.org/10.3390/informatics12010030>.

³³ Ghalia Shamayleh and Zeynep Arsel, "Digital Affective Encounters: The Relational Role of Content Circulation on Social Media," ed. Markus Giesler and Julien Cayla, *Journal of Consumer Research* 52, no. 5 (2026): 914–34, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jcr/ucaf023>.

³⁴ Nitesh Bharosa, "The Rise of GovTech: Trojan Horse or Blessing in Disguise? A Research Agenda," *Government Information Quarterly* 39, no. 3 (2022): 101692, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.giq.2022.101692>.

algorithm; it fundamentally reconstructs the criteria of leadership eligibility, shifting it from intellectual competence (knowing laws) to survivalist competence (managing a business and family).³⁵ This effectively renders the rigid "hard-selling" of traditional male-dominated politics obsolete in the face of the fluid, emotional, and algorithmic-friendly approach of the Mompreneur.

The Paradox of Digital Agency: Negotiating Patriarchal Bargaining through Commercial Femininity

The successful conversion of economic capital into political agency is predicated on a complex and often paradoxical negotiation known as "patriarchal bargaining." While netnographic data confirms that female candidates actively position themselves as powerful economic subjects capable of managing capital, employees, and logistics this agency is not achieved by challenging the patriarchal structure but by strategically accommodating it.³⁶ In the context of Indonesia's conservative political landscape, the "Mompreneur" identity serves as a mechanism of patriarchal bargaining, where women maximize their power and autonomy within the existing constraints of gender norms rather than attempting to dismantle them. By framing their political ambition through the aesthetics of domesticity and care, these candidates engage in a form of "safe subversion," exercising authority that is typically coded as masculine while cloaking it in a hyper-feminine performance of motherhood to remain electorally viable and socially acceptable.³⁷

Feminist stylistics reveals a dualistic tension in their subject-object positioning. On one hand, the candidates assert themselves as active Subjects in the economic narrative: they are the decision-makers, the "bosses," and the driving force behind their business empires. However, to mitigate the social penalty often incurred by ambitious women who are frequently labeled as aggressive or neglectful of their families they simultaneously position

³⁵ Aleksandra Nastoska et al., "Evaluating Trustworthiness in AI: Risks, Metrics, and Applications Across Industries," *Electronics* 14, no. 13 (2025): 2717, <https://doi.org/10.3390/electronics14132717>.

³⁶ Annie Roos, "Using Netnography to Explore the Entrepreneurship Process," *The International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Innovation*, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.1177/14657503251341791>.

³⁷ Jessica C. Smith, "Politics and Parenthood: An Examination of UK Party Leadership Elections," *Parliamentary Affairs* 71, no. 1 (2018): 196–217, <https://doi.org/10.1093/pa/gsx016>.

themselves as Objects of the traditional domestic gaze. This is evident in the visual framing of their content, where scenes of high-stakes business management are interspersed with or superimposed upon images of them cooking, caring for children, or serving their husbands.

Furthermore, this fusion of commerce and politics inevitably leads to the commodification of the female politician, where the logic of the marketplace colonizes the logic of citizenship. In the interactive discourse of the comments sections, the audience frequently conflates the candidate's commercial utility with her political capability, objectifying her not merely as a leader but as a product to be consumed.³⁸ The terms of endearment and support used by followers often mirror customer testimonials, assessing the candidate's "quality" based on her physical appearance, her fashion choices, and the reliability of her business service. This "market-based representation" risks reducing the political contract to a transactional exchange, where voter loyalty is contingent upon the continued delivery of tangible benefits such as giveaways or discounts rather than ideological alignment. If the business facade falters or the flow of commercial incentives stops, the political support risks evaporating, suggesting a fragile form of engagement that lacks deep civic roots.³⁹ Ultimately, despite these critical limitations, the phenomenon of the Mompreneur-politician represents a pragmatic "third way" for women's political recruitment in the digital era.

Table 2 provides a critical breakdown of the "discursive friction" occurring between the candidates' self-presentation and the electorate's reception. The data reveals a consistent pattern where the candidate attempts to position herself as an active subject an agent of change, leadership, and economic power while the audience unconsciously, or perhaps strategically, repositions her as a passive object of consumption, aesthetic pleasure, or material resource.⁴⁰

³⁸ Antonio F. Tavares and Nuno F. da Cruz, "Explaining the Transparency of Local Government Websites through a Political Market Framework," *Government Information Quarterly* 37, no. 3 (2020): 101249, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.giq.2017.08.005>.

³⁹ Anna E. McKean and Brayden G. King, "When Ideologies Align: Progressive Corporate Activism and Within-firm Ideological Alignment," *Strategic Management Journal* 45, no. 12 (2024): 2459–2518, <https://doi.org/10.1002/smj.3632>.

⁴⁰ Anna Verbytska et al., "Inclusive Social Marketing: Representation and Diversity in Brand Campaigns," *Marketing and Branding Research* 10, no. 1 (2023): 45–58, <https://doi.org/10.32038/mbr.2023.10.01.04>.

Table 2
The Discursive Tension: Candidate's Intended Agency vs. Audience Reception

Narrative Theme	Candidate's Subject Position (Intended Framing)	Audience's Objectification (Comment Section Analysis)	Theoretical Implication
Business Success	"The Capable CEO" Narrative: "I built this from zero. I can manage complex logistics." (Focus: Competence/Leadership)	"The Generous Patron" Response: "Bagi THR dong Bun," "Kalau menang diskon 50% ya." (Focus: Transactional Benefit)	Commodification of Politics (Voter as Consumer)
Domestic Activity	"The Super-Mom" Narrative: "Multitasking business & family." (Focus: Resilience/Strength)	"The Ideal Wife" Response: "Idaman suami," "Cantik dan sholehah," "Sejuk lihatnya." (Focus: Traditional Femininity/Beauty).	Patriarchal Bargaining (Approval based on gender roles)
Political Ambition	The Servant Leader" Narrative: "I want to elevate UMKM." (Focus: Policy/Vision)	"The Servant Leader" Narrative: "I want to elevate UMKM." (Focus: Policy/Vision)	Depoliticization (Focus shift from ideas to objects)

Source: Authors' Netnographic Analysis (2026)

This dynamic is most visible in the domain of "Business Success," where candidates construct a narrative of the "Capable CEO." By showcasing their ability to manage logistics, lead employees, and navigate market fluctuations, they attempt to signal competence a trait traditionally coded as masculine and essential for political leadership. The intended message is that economic capability translates directly to political capability. However, the audience's reception often strips this power of its leadership signifiers, reducing it to mere transactional

utility. The prevalence of comments demanding giveaways ("*Bagi THR*," "*Diskon dong*") indicates that voters view the candidate's wealth not as a sign of executive ability, but as a reservoir of resources to be extracted. This suggests a shift towards "Consumerist Clientelism," where the political contract is not based on policy trust, but on the immediate gratification of the voter-as-consumer.⁴¹

The tension becomes even more pronounced when analyzing "Domestic Activity" and "Political Ambition." Candidates often project the "Super-Mom" persona highlighting their ability to multitask between business, politics, and family to demonstrate resilience and extraordinary stamina. They frame this double burden as a badge of strength. Conversely, the audience re-interprets this labor through a conservative lens, celebrating her not for her strength, but for her compliance with gender roles.⁴² Comments praising her as an "*Idaman Suami*" (Ideal Wife) or "*Sholehah*" (Pious) shift the focus from her *ability to lead* to her *willingness to serve*. Furthermore, when candidates attempt to articulate their vision as "Servant Leaders," the discourse is frequently derailed by the "Consumer Gaze." Instead of engaging with her ideas, the audience consumes her image, with questions about fashion choices or physical beauty dominating the feedback loop.

However, to fully engage with the complexity of this phenomenon, an alternative interpretation must be considered. It is plausible that this "Consumer Gaze" and the audience's fixation on domesticity are not strictly depoliticizing. In an electorate historically distrustful of formal political rhetoric, ordinary voters might be utilizing these aesthetic and domestic interactions as alternative, culturally resonant metrics to vet a candidate's authenticity, moral character, and relatability. From this perspective, the candidates' compliance with traditional gender roles might not merely be passive submission to patriarchal bargaining, but a highly calculated, active political strategy to build grassroots trust where traditional ideological appeals typically fail.⁴³

⁴¹ Hannah Bunting, Jennifer Gaskell, and Gerry Stoker, "Trust, Mistrust and Distrust: A Gendered Perspective on Meanings and Measurements," *Frontiers in Political Science* 3, no. 1 (2021): 1–15, <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpos.2021.642129>.

⁴² Firdaus Firdaus and Ratih Agustin Wulandari, "Implications of Low Women's Representation: Strategies and Challenges Towards Gender Equality in Indonesian Politics," *Indonesian Journal of Religion and Society* 5, no. 2 (2023): 138–53, <https://doi.org/10.36256/ijrs.v5i2.383>.

⁴³ Darian Harff and Desiree Schmuck, "Influencers as Empowering Agents? Following Political Influencers, Internal Political Efficacy and Participation among Youth," *Political Communication* 40, no. 2 (2023): 147–72, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10584609.2023.2166631>.

While this study provides novel insights into the digital political agency of female candidates, its findings must be interpreted within certain limitations, which simultaneously open specific avenues for future research. First, the scope of this research is confined to the pre-election campaign phase in a highly urbanized and digitally saturated electoral district (DKI Jakarta) with a qualitative focus on a limited number of candidates. Future research should expand this geographical scope through comparative studies to determine whether the "Mompreneur" strategy is equally effective in rural or semi-urban electorates where digital penetration and entrepreneurial dynamics differ. Second, as this study relies primarily on qualitative netnography and Critical Discourse Analysis, future quantitative research is needed to empirically measure the actual conversion rate of digital engagement into ballot-box success determining statistically how many digital "consumers" translate into actual "voters." Finally, and most critically, longitudinal studies are required to track these elected Mompreneurs post-election. Future research must examine their actual legislative behavior to determine whether the agency gained through commercial femininity translates into substantive policy advocacy for women's and MSME issues in parliament, or if it remains confined to the performative logic of the digital marketplace.

D. Conclusion

This study establishes that the 2024 elections mark a critical juncture in Indonesian political communication: the rise of the "Mompreneur-Politician." Unlike traditional female candidates who rely on dynastic lineage or activist credentials, this new typology constructs political legitimacy through the algorithmic conversion of economic capital. We conclude that the digital marketplace acts not merely as a funding source, but as a site of "pre-political incubation," where the transactional trust built through commercial reliability (*amanah*) is seamlessly sublimated into ideological trust. By hybridizing "soft-selling" commercial narratives with political messaging, these candidates successfully hack the attention economy, turning the "shop floor" into a new democratic podium that is more accessible and affectively resonant than the traditional campaign stage.

Theoretically, this research contributes a nuanced update to Pierre Bourdieu's concept of capital conversion in the digital age. It demonstrates that social media algorithms function as accelerants, expediting the transformation of

economic assets into symbolic power, provided they are wrapped in high-engagement content. However, from a gender perspective, this agency acts as a double-edged sword. As elucidated through the framework of patriarchal bargaining, the "Mompreneur" identity is a form of "domesticated agency." It allows women to exercise masculine economic power only by performing a hyper-feminine role of maternal care.

Ultimately, this phenomenon signals a shift toward "Algorithmic Clientelism," where the voter-candidate relationship is reconfigured into a consumer-provider dynamic. The danger lies in the commodification of citizenship, where political support is exchanged for tangible commercial benefits (giveaways, discounts) rather than policy commitments. However, these conclusions must be considered alongside several methodological limitations. This study relies on a small sample size within a specific electoral context, a short data collection period restricted to the official campaign, and focuses exclusively on two visual-centric platforms (TikTok and Instagram). To address these gaps, future research should employ quantitative survey designs to empirically measure the actual voting behavior resulting from this digital engagement. Furthermore, future research must critically examine the legislative behavior of these elected Mompreneurs: will they champion structural policy reforms for women and MSMEs, or will they remain trapped in the performative logic of the marketplace.[s]

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