



Information Integrity and Electoral Choices: Understanding The Dynamic of News, Political Branding, and Voting Intention

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Abstract – This study explores the relationship between news truthfulness, news credibility, source credibility, political brand trust, political brand image, and voting intention. The objective of this study is to understand how those factors collectively influence voters' perception and behavior. Using a quantitative approach, the data was collected through online surveys of 250 eligible voters in Indonesia, analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). The results indicate that news truthfulness significantly increases both political brand trust and image. Meanwhile, source credibility positively influences trust, but does not notably affect brand image. Interestingly, news credibility increases political brand image without directly affecting trust. Furthermore, political brand image plays an important role in shaping voting intention, whereas political brand trust does not show a direct effect. By integrating those dimensions of political branding into one model, this study fills the gap in existing research and provides insights into the dynamics of voter behavior. This study suggests that political entities prioritize maintaining news truthfulness and the improvement of source credibility to build trust and create a positive brand image. Additionally political campaigns should adapt their communication strategies so that it is in line with the voter's expectation in this complex media landscape for effective engagement and influence on electoral outcomes.

Keywords: news credibility, news truthfulness, source credibility, political brand image, political brand image, political brand trust, voting intention.

Abstrak – Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi hubungan antara kebenaran berita, kredibilitas berita, kredibilitas sumber, kepercayaan merek politik, citra merek politik, dan niat memilih. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk memahami bagaimana faktor-faktor tersebut secara kolektif mempengaruhi persepsi dan perilaku pemilih. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif, data dikumpulkan melalui survei online terhadap 250 pemilih yang memenuhi syarat di Indonesia, dan dianalisis menggunakan Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kebenaran berita secara signifikan meningkatkan baik kepercayaan merek politik maupun citra merek. Sementara itu, kredibilitas sumber berpengaruh positif terhadap kepercayaan, tetapi tidak berpengaruh secara signifikan terhadap citra merek. Menariknya, kredibilitas berita meningkatkan citra merek politik tanpa secara langsung mempengaruhi kepercayaan. Selain itu, citra merek politik memainkan peran penting dalam membentuk niat memilih, sedangkan kepercayaan merek politik tidak menunjukkan pengaruh langsung. Dengan mengintegrasikan dimensi-dimensi branding politik tersebut ke dalam satu model, penelitian ini mengisi kesenjangan dalam penelitian yang ada dan memberikan wawasan tentang dinamika perilaku pemilih. Penelitian ini menyarankan agar entitas politik memprioritaskan pemeliharaan kebenaran berita dan peningkatan kredibilitas sumber untuk membangun kepercayaan dan menciptakan citra merek yang positif. Selain itu, kampanye politik harus menyesuaikan strategi komunikasinya agar sesuai dengan harapan pemilih dalam lanskap media yang kompleks ini untuk keterlibatan dan pengaruh yang efektif pada hasil pemilu.

Kata kunci: kredibilitas berita, kebenaran berita, kredibilitas sumber, citra merek politik, kepercayaan merek politik, niat memilih.

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the role of media in influencing voter behavior has been an important topic in political studies, particularly during the presidential election period which is a crucial moment for democratic system



(Bennet & Pfetsch, 2018; Humprecht et al., 2020). The presidential election generates economic uncertainty, influencing financial stability and corporate investment decisions, which in turn impact national economic performance (Julio & Yook, 2012; Wagner et al., 2018). Therefore, it is important to understand how voter's political preference is shaped, especially through media and sources of information that influence public political perceptions (Cinelli et al., 2021).

One of the ways to influence voter behavior is through political marketing strategy, which uses marketing techniques to shape and manage the image of candidates or political parties in public perceptions. Political branding is becoming more recognized as the important element of this strategy, whereas the perception of political figures is shaped and managed to influence public opinion through messages conveyed through the public (Needham & Smith, 2015; Pich & Newman, 2020; Gillies, 2022). This branding not only covers visual aspects such as logo and slogan, but also how the candidate's values and policies are perceived by society.

Effective political branding is important to build and maintain voter's trust amid the increasing skepticism towards political institutions (Kavanagh & Rich, 2018). Traditional and digital media function as a connector between political candidates and voters (Metzger et al., 2010) that can determine how voters assess candidates or political parties (Pich & Newman, 2020). As such, source credibility is an important factor that influences public perception. The challenge in this digital era is the spread of hoaxes that can damage public trust in correct information and worsen political polarization (Lewandowsky & van der Lindern, 2021). The effect of information that is conveyed through the media is significant in influencing voting intentions. Credible information tends to increase voters' trust towards political brand image, while information that is not credible can damage the political reputation and reduce public trust (Tandoc et al., 2017). Therefore, understanding the interaction between news credibility, political branding, and the effect of information towards voting intention is an important thing in the context of political marketing.

Even though much research has explored the role of media in politics, there are still gaps in the understanding of how media characteristics—such as news truthfulness, source credibility, and news credibility—interact to influence the trust towards political brands and voting intention. Previous studies have often explored these variables separately or did not explicitly relate them with the dynamics of political branding and voting intention (Metzger et al., 2010; Gillies, 2022). This research is intended to fill those gaps by examining the relationship between news truthfulness, source credibility, news credibility, political brand trust, political brand image, and voting intention. By employing surveys and analysis, this research is expected to provide deeper understanding of how media influences voting behavior, and also providing practical guidance to political actors in designing more effective and reliable communication strategies. This study does not focus on a single political party or candidate, but to explore and investigate how voters perceive political branding and the role of media in general. This approach is intended to get a broader understanding regarding voters' behavior across multiple political contexts, rather than limiting the understanding and analysis to one particular party. In addition, given the multiparty democratic structure in Indonesia, generalizing the research allows for a more comprehensive understanding of how news truthfulness, news credibility, source credibility, brand trust and brand image function in shaping voting intention in the middle of a range of political entities.

Voting Intention

Voting intention refers to the likelihood that voters will vote for a specific political brand (de-Oliveira et al., 2021). It is influenced by trust, perceived image, and personal alignment with the political brand's values (de-Oliveira et al., 2021). Studies suggest that voting intention often reflects how well voters connect with the political brand's values, policies, and overall image. McGregor (2018) notes that voting intention is influenced by personalized communication and interactions with political brands on platforms like social media, where voters form personal connections with candidates and parties (de-Oliveira et al., 2021) highlight that voting intention often correlates with voter trust and political engagement as it is directly linked to voters' confidence in a political brand's image and trustworthiness. In order to explore what influences voting intention, the following sections discuss the variables proposed in the research model, which are political brand trust, political brand image, news truthfulness, news credibility, and source credibility.

Political Brand Trust

Political brand trust refers to the confidence that the voters have towards political entities, such as candidates, parties, or government, based on their ability to fulfill their promise, meet expectations, and act

with integrity (Farhan et al., 2020; Ahmed et al., 2024; Pap, 2020). This trust is essential because it influences the voters' loyalty, involvement, and decision to vote. Political brands trusted by the voters tend to encourage positive and consistent engagement, essential for securing long-term support (Bennet & Pfetsch, 2018).

The development of political brand trust is primarily shaped by how voters perceive the reliability of the information they receive. Political brands consistently fulfilling their promises and meeting voter expectations are more likely to gain and sustain trust (Ahmed et al., 2024). Positive and consistent media portrayal can also enhance trust, while negative or biased coverage can diminish it (Vosoughi et al., 2018). The credibility of the sources delivering news plays a significant role in influencing political brand trust, with voters being more likely to trust political brands associated with reliable and trustworthy information sources (Pennycook et al., 2020). This highlights the importance of aligning media narratives with voter expectations to foster sustained trust and engagement. Although trust reflects voters' confidence in the integrity and consistency of political brands, this does not fully explain how the overall impression of political entities is formed. Beyond the aspects of trust, voters are also influenced by the symbols, communicated values, and visual identity, that together shapes political brand image. These elements shape how voters emotionally and cognitively relate to a political figure or party (Needham & Smith, 2015). Thus, making brand image a complementary but also distinct dimension from trust.

Political Brand Image

Political brand image refers to the set of perceptions that the voters have towards political entities, such as political parties or candidates (Kunkel & Biscaia, 2020). This image consists of visual, symbolic, and ideological elements that reflect the political entity's values, policies, and personality. A strong political brand image is important in order to differentiate a party or candidate from the competitors and maintain a positive emotional connection with voters (Kunkel & Biscaia, 2020). It is shaped by several factors, including media portrayal, public appearances, and also the consistency of the political message (McGregor, 2018; Needham & Smith, 2015). A consistent and coherent brand image can boost voters' trust and engagement by presenting a reliable and relatable political identity (Pap, 2020), while a fragmented or inconsistent image can lead to voter skepticism and disengagement (Farhan et al., 2020).

Media portrayal plays a significant role in shaping the political brand image. Positive and consistent media coverage strengthens political brand image, while negative or biased media coverage can damage it (Harisson et al., 2022). Voters often depend on media channels to form their perceptions toward political entities, thus making media management and public relations vital for political brand-building strategies (Abid et al., 2023). Voters are more likely to stay loyal and supportive across multiple election cycles to politicians who align with their values, demonstrate trustworthiness, and exhibit competence (Farhan et al., 2020; Pap, 2020). The political image built through the media cannot be separated from how information about political brand is perceived. One of the main aspects in that perception is how far the news consumed is considered to be truthful, objective and free from distortion. Therefore, understanding towards news truthfulness becomes important in explaining how political brand image is shaped and affecting people's trust.

News Truthfulness and Political Branding

News truthfulness refers to the degree to which news is perceived as accurate, objective, and free from intentional distortion or bias (Fisher et al., 2020). The importance of news truthfulness keeps increasing with the rise of digital and social media platforms, where true and false information spreads rapidly (Tandoc et al., 2017). News truthfulness can play an essential role in shaping voters' perceptions of political parties, candidates, and government entities. An important factor influencing news truthfulness is source credibility, because a more credible source is generally perceived to provide more truthful news (Akram et al., 2023). When voters perceive the news as truthful, it enhances their trust in the political news, eventually strengthening their trust in the political entity (Vosoughi et al., 2018). In contrast, misinformation or fake news can reduce trust in political brands and lead to skepticism among voters (Guess et al., 2020).

Political brand trust depends on how voters perceive the truthfulness of the news that involves political entities. Ferreira and van Eyk (2022) argued that voters' trust in political brands increases when the information provided is credible and consistent with the voters' expectations. Vosoughi et al. (2018) support

this view by showing that truthful news strengthens voters' trust, particularly in the political context where accurate information can prevent the spread of skepticism. Bennet and Pfetsch (2018) warn that in the fragmented media environment, even truthful news may be interpreted differently by various audience segments, which can disrupt the efforts to build trust, showing the significance of consistency in the delivery of information for maintaining political brand trust. It implies the following hypothesis:

H₁ : News truthfulness increases political brand trust.

News truthfulness is also crucial in shaping a positive and enduring political brand image as Ferreira and van Eyk (2022) found that a positive political brand image is often supported by the voters' engagement with credible and accurate information. When the news presented is consistent with the values communicated by the political brand, the political entity's image increases from the voters' perspective. However, truthful news in social media can be distorted by the echo chamber effect, where information shared within closed networks can reinforce biases and alter how voters perceive political brands (Cinelli et al., 2021). Guess et al. (2020) support this view by showing that the exposure of false news can damage political brand image, even when truthful information is available and communicated effectively. It leads to the following proposed hypothesis:

H₂ : News truthfulness increases political brand image.

Although the news is considered to be true, it is not necessarily enough to build people's trust if the credibility of the content is still in doubt. News truthfulness has to be supported by the perception of news credibility, accuracy, and objectivity to be fully trusted. Therefore, in the context of political communication, news credibility becomes an important factor that determines the ability of information to form the trust and image of political brand.

News Credibility and Political Branding

News credibility refers to news content's perceived accuracy, reliability, and objectivity, which are key factors influencing how audiences trust and engage with media reports (Metzger et al., 2010; Kohring & Matthes, 2007). Metzger et al. (2010) emphasize the importance of accuracy and reliability, suggesting that these attributes are the foundation of news credibility. Kohring and Matthes (2007) take this idea further, noting that trust in news not only depends on these factors but also the perception of fairness and journalistic accuracy, thus adding conditions on how audiences evaluate credibility. This suggests that how news is presented can sometimes be as important as the factual content in determining its credibility. Henke et al. (2019) argue that news credibility can be significantly increased when supported by evidence highlighting the need for transparency in journalistic practices to build and maintain public trust.

Political brand trust is highly affected by the credibility of the news that the voters are exposed to. Trust in political brands, which involves a voter's confidence in a political entity's reliability and integrity, is shaped by the perceived truthfulness and fairness of the information available. Voters' trust in political brands increases when they perceive the news as credible and consistent with their expectations (Ferreira & van Eyk, 2022), which may contribute to long-term loyalty and engagement with political entities. Pap (2020) emphasizes that trust in a political party's leader or program, communicated through credible news, plays a significant role in maintaining voter stability and loyalty. While Henke et al. (2019) argue that trust in news is strengthened when evidence and fact-checking are clear, Freeze et al. (2021) highlight the damaging effects that misinformation can have on political trust, noting that once voter trust is reduced, it becomes difficult to rebuild, even with credible reporting. Political brands must actively manage their association with credible news outlets to maintain trust, especially when misinformation is prevalent as presented in the following hypothesis:

H₃ : News credibility increases political brand trust.

Political brands need credible news to maintain a positive public image because people tend to associate accurate and honest news with a brand's integrity. Ferreira and van Eyk (2022) explain that when voters believe the news is trustworthy and credible, they are more likely to view political entities in a favorable light. Credible news helps build a picture of competence and ethical values, which can improve the reputation of political brands.

However, maintaining a positive brand image is more complicated in today's digital world. Akram et al. (2023) believe that credible news can help political brands fight against the negative effects of fake news

on social media, but Cinelli et al. (2021) warn that even accurate news can be twisted in social media “echo chambers,” where people’s biases affect how they interpret the news. Maintaining a strong brand image requires a continuous flow of credible news over time, as fake news or dips in credibility can significantly damage a political brand’s reputation (Fisher et al., 2020). Thus, politicians must constantly work with reliable news outlets to ensure they are seen positively and stay aligned with public expectations. The relationship is presented as follows:

H₄ : News credibility improves the political brand image.

The information source credibility becomes an important element because the perception toward the reliability and integrity of the sources influences the level of trust in the news itself. Therefore, understanding about source credibility becomes essential to explain how brand trust and image of a political brand is shaped.

Source Credibility and Political Branding

Source credibility refers to the confidence the public places in a news source based on its expertise and trustworthiness (Asemah & Ogwo, 2013; Akram et al., 2023). The expertise is based on the source’s knowledge or competence, while trustworthiness relates to his/her honesty and integrity (Clemm von Hohenberg & Guess, 2022). Accurate news that comes from uncredible sources may be dismissed by the public (Asemah & Ogwo, 2013), which eventually affects opinions and creates long-term shifts (Clemm von Hohenberg & Guess, 2022).

Voters' trust in political brands is closely tied to the credibility of the news sources. If voters see the source as reliable, they are more likely to trust the political brand (Bhattacharjee, 2022). Credible sources are significant for protecting political brands from the harmful effects of misinformation, which can easily undermine trust (Akram et al., 2023; Bhattacharjee, 2022). Fisher et al. (2020) further emphasize that trusted sources help voters feel more confident about political information. A questionable source’s credibility damages the source’s reputation and voters’ trust in the politicians (Asemah & Ogwo, 2013). It signifies that politicians must manage their association with trusted sources to maintain voter trust, especially in environments where misinformation is widespread, which leads to the following hypothesis:

H₅ : Source credibility increases political brand trust.

When voters believe the news comes from a trusted source, they are more likely to see the politicians as reliable and competent (Fisher et al., 2020). If a politician is linked to untrustworthy sources, it can harm his/her image, even if the content is accurate (Asemah & Ogwo, 2013). Fisher et al. (2020) and Asemah and Ogwo (2013) emphasize that associating with credible sources strengthens the reliability and integrity of political brands, which is crucial for protecting and enhancing their public image, especially in today’s fast paced media environment (Clemm von Hohenberg & guess, 2022). Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H₆ : Source credibility increases political brand image.

Political brand trust and image formed through news credibility can be the basis for voters in determining preferences and voting decision. Both not only influence short term perception, but also build long-term loyalty and engagement. Therefore, it is important to understand how the dimension of political brand trust and image contributes to voting intention.

Political Branding and Voting Intention

Voting intention has been shown to be influenced by personalized communication and interaction with political brands, especially through social media where voters develop personal connections with candidates and also parties (McGregor, 2018). It is also closely associated with political engagement, as voters’ trust in political brand image and credibility plays an important role in shaping their voting intention (de-Oliveira et al., 2021). When voters trust a political brand, they are more likely to vote for it, as trust creates confidence in the brand’s ability to fulfill its promises and represent voters’ interests (Ahmed et al., 2024). Ferreira and van Eyk (2022) argue that trust in a political brand helps build voter loyalty, directly increasing the likelihood of voters acting on their voting intentions. Pap (2020) emphasizes that trust in a

political leader or program enhances voter stability and long-term loyalty, which are critical for increasing voting intention. These studies show that political brands that cultivate voter trust are more likely to see higher voting intention. Akram et al. (2023) further stress the importance of trust, particularly in environments where misinformation can reduce confidence. Maintaining strong trust through credible political branding is essential to safeguarding voting intentions in such contexts directing to the following hypothesis:

H₇ : Political brand trust increases voting intention.

A strong and positive political brand image aligns with voters' values, encouraging them to vote for the brand (de-Oliveira et al., 2021). Ferreira and van Eyk (2022) suggest that a well-crafted political brand image increases voting intention by creating a sense of alignment between the political brand and the voter, which will encourage greater loyalty and engagement. Pap (2020) supports this view by showing that a positive political brand image enhances voter engagement. However, misinformation and negative portrayals can damage a political brand's image, thereby reducing voting intention (Freeze et al., 2021). It highlights the need for politicians to manage their image carefully to shape voter perceptions (Akram et al., 2023) which leads to the following hypothesis:

H₈ : Political brand image increases voting intention.

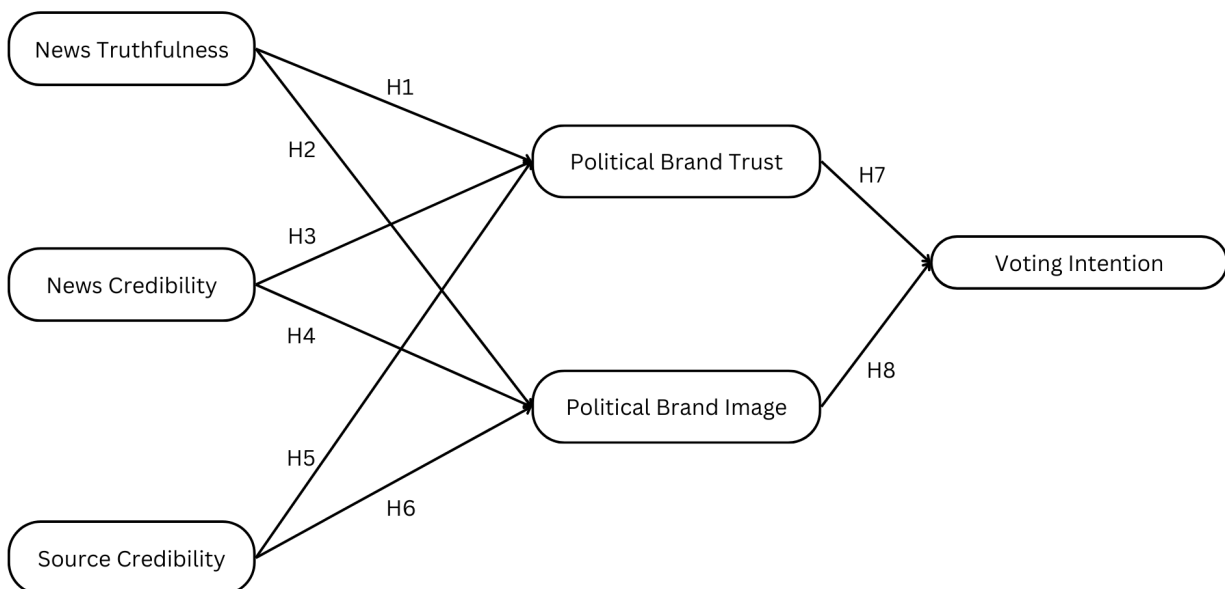


Figure 1. Research model

METHOD

This research used a quantitative method to test the effect of news truthfulness, news credibility, source credibility, political brand trust, and political brand image on voting intention. Data were obtained via an online questionnaire targeting Indonesian people that are familiar with their country's political situation and keeping up with the local political news in Indonesia. Samples were selected using purposive sampling by involving only those spending at least 1 hour per week following online political news. This specific criterion ensures the objectivity of respondents in giving their responses based on their media habits and political information-seeking behavior. This study did not direct respondents to evaluate a specific political party or candidate. Instead, it aimed to gather general perceptions about political brands in Indonesia. With allowing participants to reflect on any political figure or party they are familiar with, the study can capture a broader view. This study targeted at obtaining at least 170 (34 x 5) samples based on sample-to-item ratio using the ratio of 1:5.

The online questionnaire was prepared in Google Forms, and the access link was shared on social media from January to April 2024 during Indonesia's presidential election. To ensure the selection of a

pertinent and valid sample, a filter question was incorporated into the questionnaire by asking how much time was spent per week engaging with online political news. It was followed by a section asking for participants' demographic and behavioral details, including age, gender, education, monthly income, preferred social media platforms for political information, frequently used online mass media sources, and the frequency of sharing political news on social media per week. The measurement items were adapted from previous studies to make them relevant to this research context. News truthfulness was measured by 4 items from Fisher et al. (2020) and Akram et al. (2023). News Credibility was measured by 5 items from Akram et al. (2023), Henke et al. (2023), and Fisher et al. (2020). Source credibility was measured by 7 items from Asemah and Ogwo (2013) and Akram et al. (2023). Political brand trust was measured by 6 items from Ferreira (2022). Political brand image was measured by 7 items from Ferreira (2022). Voting intention was measured by 5 items from de-Oliveira (2022), Cuong (2020), and McGregor (2018). All measurement items were measured using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from completely disagree to completely agree.

The data collected was analyzed using Partial Least Square-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). Due to the complexity of the structural model, PLS-SEM was used to maximize the predictive ability and identify the key construct shaping voters' intention to choose their favorite political candidate.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The survey reached 343 eligible voters aged 17 and above. After filtering responses based on the specified criteria and already cleaned from outlier and unengaged responses, 250 valid responses were obtained. Among the valid samples, females slightly dominated the study. Most respondents were highly educated and had a monthly income of less than IDR 10 million (Table 1).

Table 1. Demographic profile of the respondent

Demographic People	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	114	45.6
Female	136	54.4
Age		
18-25	125	50
26-35	78	31.2
36-45	11	4.4
Above 45	36	14.4
Education		
Secondary education level	18	7.2
Undergraduate degree	210	84
Graduate/Postgraduate degree	22	8.8
Monthly Salary*		
Less than IDR5,000,000	42	16.8
IDR5,000,000 - 9,999,999	161	64.4
IDR10,000,000 - 19,999,999	24	9.6
More than IDR20,000,000 or more	23	9.2

Note: IDR1,000,000 equals USD 65.72

Convergent validity was fulfilled if the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) was at least 0.5 or the factor loading was at least 0.708 (Hair et al., 2017). After rigorous examination, five items within the News Credibility, Source Credibility, Political Brand Image, and Voting Intention (NC5, SC2, SC3, PBI2, VI5) were removed due to the low factor loading. Internal consistency was evaluated using composite reliability with a minimum coefficient of 0.7 (Hair et al., 2017). As presented in Table 2, all items had composite reliability above 0.8, providing a solid foundation for data collection in this study.

The constructs' discriminant validity was assessed using the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio, where the value should not exceed 0.85 (Hair et al., 2019). Collinearity testing was conducted to evaluate the multicollinearity of the latent variables, with the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) for each construct should be below 3.3. (Ajina et al., 2023). The results of both discriminant validity (Table 3) and collinearity testing (Table 4) validated the robustness of the study's measurement model.

Table 2. Validity and reliability test result

Scale Items	Factor Loading
News Truthfulness (AVE: 0.564; α = 0.742; CR = 0.838)	
1. Political news that I read is open to comments and feedback from the public	0.698
2. I feel the political news I read is trustworthy	0.821
3. I feel the political news I read provides relevant political information	0.739
4. I feel the political news I read is informative	0.740
News Credibility (AVE: 0.602; α = 0.779; CR = 0.858)	
1. I feel the political news I read is authentic	0.821
2. I feel the political news I read is accurate	0.803
3. I feel the political news I read is believable	0.758
4. The political news I read includes sources that are trustworthy	0.719
5. The political news I read is not biased	0.428*
Source Credibility (AVE: 0.528; α = 0.776; CR = 0.848)	
1. Credibility of the source I read increases the believability	0.665
2. The political information source that are credible will win the sympathy of the electorates	0.531*
3. The political information source that are credible will win the support of the electorates	0.524*
4. I feel the source of political information I read is honest	0.721
5. I feel the source of political information I read is believable	0.745
6. I feel the source of political information I read is credible	0.775
7. I feel the source of political information I read is knowledge-based	0.724
Political Brand Trust (AVE: 0.543; α = 0.831; CR = 0.876)	
1. The political candidate whose news I follow is committed to listening to their voter's views	0.751
2. I am confident that the political candidate whose news I follow expedites the promise made during the campaign	0.773
3. The political candidate whose news I follow is concerned with the present and future interests of their voters	0.785
4. The political candidate whose news I follow is transparent in sharing information	0.696
5. The political candidate whose news I follow meets my personal expectations about the future of our country	0.779
6. The political candidate whose news I follow shares my political ideologies	0.624
Political Brand Image (AVE: 0.511; α = 0.808; CR = 0.862)	
1. The political candidate whose news I follow promotes youth leadership within the party	0.633
2. The political candidate whose news I follow does not play the blame game with other political parties	0.429*
3. The political candidate whose news I follow is sincere	0.657
4. The political candidate whose news I follow considers the repercussions of his/her actions	0.735
5. The political candidate whose news I follow avoids spreading messages that encourage violence	0.767
6. The political candidate whose news I follow promote equal opportunities for all	0.762
7. The political candidate whose news I follow acts with integrity	0.724
Voting Intention (AVE: 0.562; α = 0.740; CR = 0.836)	
1. In the forthcoming election, I would like more information about the candidates	0.688
2. In the forthcoming election, I am likely to vote for the best decision	0.738
3. I would intent to vote for the political candidate in the election in the future	0.826
4. I would certainly vote for the political candidate in the election in the future	0.741
5. I would vote for this for this particular political candidate if they ran in the next election	0.520*

Note: *non-valid items

The analysis investigated the relationships between news credibility, news truthfulness, source credibility, political brand image, political brand trust, and voting intention, as outlined by the hypotheses. The analysis utilized a sample dataset with corresponding variables and statistical measures to assess these relationships. The results are summarized in Table 5.

All three antecedents explained the variability of political brand trust by 27.3 percent, with news truthfulness ($\beta = 0.215$, $p = 0.013$) and source credibility ($\beta = 0.356$, $p < 0.001$) having significant positive effects, supporting H1 and H5. News credibility was found insignificant in affecting political brand trust (β

= 0.020, $p = 0.408$), not giving evidence to H3. The political brand image was explained by 19.5 percent, with news truthfulness ($\beta = 0.203$, $p = 0.009$) and news credibility ($\beta = 0.166$, $p = 0.032$) having significant positive effects, supporting H2 and H4. In contrast, H6 was not supported due to the insignificant effect of source credibility on political brand image ($\beta = 0.152$, $p = 0.080$). This study found that only political brand image had a significant positive influence on voting intention ($\beta = 0.436$, $p < 0.001$), while political brand trust was insignificant ($\beta = 0.088$, $p = 0.171$).

Table 3. Discriminant validity HTMT result

Construct	Discriminant Validity Values					
	News Credibility	News Truthfulness	Political Brand Image	Political Brand Trust	Source Credibility	Voting Intention
News Credibility						
News Truthfulness	0.827					
Political Brand Image	0.482	0.511				
Political Brand Trust	0.455	0.557	0.847			
Source Credibility	0.807	0.807	0.479	0.612		
Voting Intention	0.363	0.376	0.622	0.484	0.279	

Table 4. Collinearity statistic (VIF) outer model

Hypothesis	VIF Values
News Credibility → Political Brand Image	1.958
News Credibility → Political Brand Trust	1.958
News Truthfulness → Political Brand Image	1.922
News Truthfulness → Political Brand Trust	1.922
Political Brand Image → Voting Intention	1.891
Political Brand Trust → Voting Intention	1.891
News Truthfulness → Political Brand Image	1.894
News Truthfulness → Political Brand Trust	1.894

Table 5. Hypotheses testing for direct effect

Hypothesis	Std. β	S.E	t value	f^2	Decision
H1: News Credibility → Political Brand Image	0.166	0.090	1.856*	0.018	Supported
H2: News Truthfulness → Political Brand Trust	0.215	0.096	2.230*	0.033	Supported
H3: News Credibility → Political Brand Trust	0.020	0.086	0.233	0.000	Unsupported
H4: News Truthfulness → Political Brand Image	0.203	0.087	2.350*	0.027	Supported
H5: Source Credibility → Political Brand Trust	0.356	0.084	4.258**	0.093	Supported
H6: Source Credibility → Political Brand Image	0.152	0.109	1.403	0.015	Unsupported
H7: Political Brand Trust → Voting Intention	0.088	0.093	0.952	0.006	Unsupported
H8: Political Brand Image → Voting Intention	0.436	0.103	4.234**	0.134	Supported

R^2 Political Brand Image = 0.195

R^2 Political Brand Trust = 0.273

R^2 Voting Intention = 0.245

*Significant at 0.05; **Significant at 0.001

Discussion

The findings of this study provide insights into how the news truthfulness, news credibility, and source credibility relate to political brand trust, political brand image, and voting intention. While some hypothesized relationships are supported, others are not, highlighting the complexity of voter perceptions and behavior. The research results show that news truthfulness significantly increases trust in political brands and enhances their image. This finding is in line with previous research, such as Ferreira and van Eyk (2022), who emphasize that truthful information builds trust and strengthens how political figures are viewed. When news is seen as reliable, it aligns with voter’s expectations, which is crucial for establishing trust, as highlighted by Vosoughi et al. (2018), and creating a positive political brand image (Pennycook et al., 2020). However, the current broad digital media landscape complicates this relationship. The “echo chamber” effect as noted by Cinelli et al. (2021), shows that even truthful news can be distorted, leading to mixed perceptions among different voter groups. As a result, political campaigns need to focus not only on

delivering accurate messages but also on managing how these messages are disseminated across various platforms to prevent misunderstandings and mitigate polarization.

This study found that news credibility has a positive effect on the image of political brands. Contrary to expectations, however, it does not significantly impact trust in these brands. This highlights the complex role credibility plays in how voters perceive information. Credible news can certainly boost how reliable a political brand seems (Metzger et al., 2010), but that does not directly translate into trust as trust requires consistent and personal engagement with the brand. Therefore, political campaigns should focus on using credible news to enhance their brand image by aligning their messages with the values and identities of voters. However, building trust requires additional efforts, such as personalized communication and consistent interactions, which go beyond the scope of news credibility alone.

Source credibility significantly influenced political brand trust but did not have a noticeable impact on the overall brand image. This finding emphasizes the importance of trustworthy sources in fostering voter confidence. Voters are more likely to trust political entities when the information originates from sources they perceive as knowledgeable and reliable (Clemm von Hohenberg & Guess, 2022). However, the lack of a significant effect on political brand image suggests that while trustworthy sources can help build trust, they do not necessarily influence how voters view the broader political brand. This finding aligns with Akram et al. (2023) who argued that source credibility is more pivotal in addressing misinformation and skepticism than in creating a complete brand identity.

The results confirm the significant role of political brand image in shaping voting intentions, while political brand trust did not show a direct effect. This suggests that voters are more influenced by how well a political brand resonates with their values and aspirations rather than just their trust in its reliability (de-Oliveira et al., 2021). While political brand trust may not directly drive voting intentions, its role in fostering long-term engagement and loyalty remains crucial. A strong and coherent brand image can create emotional connections with voters, increasing their likelihood of supporting a candidate during elections (Pap, 2020). In contrast, the lack of a significant effect of trust on voting intentions may point to the impact of external factors like misinformation and social media dynamics, which can overshadow trust in influencing voter behavior.

These findings both support and enhance existing literature in significant ways. For example, while Ferreira and van Eyk (2022) emphasize the essential role of truthful news in developing trust, this study goes further to demonstrate that truthfulness also contributes to a stronger political brand image. Similarly, although Metzger et al. (2010) highlight the significance of credible news in shaping perceptions, this research adds depth by revealing that credibility has a stronger impact on brand image than on trust. This difference suggests that earlier studies might have treated trust and image as the same result of credibility, but they are affected by these factors in different ways.

Moreover, the findings regarding source credibility align with the work of Clemm von Hohenberg and Guess (2022), but this study expands their findings by explaining that while credible sources help build trust, they have a limited impact on how people view the overall brand. Furthermore, the complex relationship between trust, image, and voting intention highlights the complexities mentioned by de-Oliveira et al. (2021) and suggests that outside factors like misinformation can complicate these relationships even more. Overall, these comparisons highlight how this study helps refining and expanding the understanding of the complex connections between truthfulness, credibility, trust, image, and their roles in shaping voter behavior.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the analysis of the relationships between news credibility, news truthfulness, source credibility, political brand image, political brand trust, and voting intention provides valuable insights into the dynamics of voter perceptions and behaviors. While some hypothesized relationships were supported by the data, others did not yield statistically significant findings, highlighting the complexity of voter decision-making processes. The findings underscore the importance of credibility and trust in political communication and branding. This study confirms the findings of Asemah and Ogwo (2013) and Akram et al. (2023) that the source credibility is important for politicians to build trust of the information they convey. Political entities should prioritize building and maintaining credibility among voters by ensuring transparency, authenticity, and reliability in their communication efforts. Furthermore, cultivating a positive political brand image is essential for garnering support and influencing voter behavior.

This study contributes to the theoretical understanding of political communication by highlighting the interplay between information integrity, political branding, and voting intention. The findings expand previous literature by distinguishing the effects of credibility on political brand trust and image, showing that credibility influences image more strongly than trust. The findings extend the existing literature by demonstrating how news truthfulness, political brand image, and source credibility jointly shape voter perceptions and electoral decisions. The research underscores the significance of news truthfulness as a key variable in fostering public trust in political actors. By incorporating these insights, the study enhances current models of political communication and offers new perspectives on the dynamics of information influence and political branding in electoral contexts. Practically, the study provides actionable insights for political actors and campaign teams in crafting more effective communication strategies. Political figures should invest in enhancing their credibility and managing their political brand by delivering messages tailored to specific voter segments. Customizing messages based on voter preferences and behaviors is essential for fostering strong relationships and increasing voter engagement. Moreover, political campaigns must engage in continuous evaluation and adaptation of their communication tactics to stay relevant and responsive to evolving voter preferences, ensuring that strategies remain effective in influencing electoral outcomes positively.

The implications drawn from this study are significant for political communication, campaign strategies, and voter engagement. Political actors should invest in strategies aimed at enhancing credibility, managing brand image, and tailoring messages to specific audience segments. These findings highlight that fostering trust and building a strong brand image require complementary but distinct approaches. By adopting comprehensive approaches that address various factors influencing voter attitudes and decisions, political entities can effectively engage with constituents, build trust, and influence electoral outcomes. Continuous evaluation and adaptation of communication strategies are essential for remaining relevant and responsive to evolving voter preferences. Political entities should regularly assess the effectiveness of their branding efforts and communication tactics, making informed adjustments as needed to ensure continued engagement and support from the electorate.

In summary, the conclusions drawn from this study highlight the critical role of credibility, brand management, and strategic communication in shaping voter perceptions and behaviors. By incorporating these insights into their campaign strategies and communication efforts, political entities can enhance their ability to connect with constituents, build trust, and ultimately, influence electoral outcomes.

While this study offers valuable insights into the relationships between news credibility, source credibility, political brand image, political brand trust, and voting intention, it is not without limitations. First, the research relies heavily on self-reported data, which may introduce biases such as social desirability or inaccurate recall from respondents. This could affect the validity of the relationships examined between credibility, brand trust, and voting intention. Second, the study is limited in its geographical and cultural scope, as it may not fully capture the diversity of political contexts, media landscapes, or voter behaviors in different regions. The findings might be less generalizable to other electoral systems or societies with distinct political environments. Finally, the study focuses primarily on quantitative analysis, which may overlook the nuanced factors and subjective experiences that qualitatively influence voter decision-making, such as emotional responses or personal values.

To address these limitations, future research could expand in several directions. First, employing mixed-method approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative data, could offer a more holistic understanding of how voters perceive news credibility and political branding. In-depth interviews or focus groups could uncover deeper insights into voters' emotional and psychological responses to political communication. Second, comparative studies across different countries or political systems would help examine the generalizability of these findings in varying contexts, particularly in regions with different media structures or political cultures. Finally, future research could explore the role of emerging digital media platforms and their impact on voter trust and brand image, especially in light of the increasing prevalence of social media as a primary source of political information. This could provide a more comprehensive view of how digital environments shape political communication and voter behavior.

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