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FOR A BETTER COUNTRY? YOUNG VOTER'S INTENTION TO VOTE FOR A CANDIDATE: A STUDY OF YOUTH IN INDONESIA

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Abstract

This paper seeks to identify the focus areas for marketing strategies to encourage young voters. The paper utilizes quantitative approach research on factors influencing a young voter's commitment to vote. A survey was employed as a data collection method; whereas the data analysis was conducted using Partial Least Square method. The findings show that it is crucial to politically engage young voters so that they will be more confident that they make the right voting decision and hence will have higher commitment to vote. The number of respondents is relatively small and can be increased to improve the accuracy of the findings. The paper seeks to help political marketers and government to tailor their strategies to increase the number of young voters' participation. The paper presents a new perspective incorporating different factors that may have influence on young adult voters' decision-making in a developing country that can be leveraged by political marketers.

INTRODUCTION

Understanding consumer behavior decision-making is a significant area applicable to politics within the context of voter decision-making (Winchester, Hall, & Binney, 2016). As political parties invested significantly to gain crucial votes to win seats, understanding the drivers of voting decisions would provide practical benefits to these political parties (O'Cass, 2002). Indonesia is facing presidential election in 2019 while the majority of the voters are young voters. According to the 2015 national census, Indonesian aged 17-37 have accounted for at least 50 percent of the country's working age citizens or amounted 84 million out of the total population of 258.2 million (BPS, 2015).

Previous studies have dedicated considerable research attention to the political development of young people (Boonen, Meeusen & Quintelier, 2014). A study by Sievert, McDonald, Fagan and Michelsen (2016)

highlights the importance in finding out factors which influence young voters' preference of candidate, especially their knowledge of foreign policy.

Youth voting decisions are an interesting area to explore as it has been noted that youth participation may largely depend on the politics, social and economic contexts in which they stay (UNDP, 2015). Moreover, youth participation in political processes is considered to be lower than older generations across the globe (UNDP, 2015). This is perhaps due to the possibility that older voters are more experienced with how a political system and a party function (Anderson & Just, 2012). A research conducted on youth electoral behavior (Dermody & Hanmer-Lloyd, 2005) suggests that in Britain, young people are politically disengaged from electoral machinations and increasingly do not vote even when they have become eligible, and continue not to do so, making non-voting a norm for their age group (Dermody, Hammer-Lloyd, & Scullion, 2010).

On the other hand, some scholars have also noted that individuals may have shaped their attitudes and behavior towards politics before they turn eighteen, and these attitudes and behaviours tend to be remain the same throughout the lifespan (Sears & Funk, 1999). It is acknowledged how having positive attitudes to a country's democratic constitution is perceived as crucial (Rystina, 2013), and this holds true as well for the adolescent population.

Previous studies have mainly focused on the political maturity of adolescents' voters and link it to the willingness to participate in politics. A study conducted by Chan and Clayton (2006), have investigated how voters may vary in terms of their political interest, party identification, political knowledge, attitude stability and attitudinal consistency; and these differences can be used to make judgments on the level of political maturity of adolescents.

To the best of the authors' knowledge, very few studies have addressed the factors of political involvement and familiarity of the young voters with the political system as determinants of voting commitment. Commitment has been researched within consumer behavior, especially with regards to building relationships (Bloemer & Odekerken-Schroeder, 2003). This construct has also been applied to political marketing (Winchester, Binney, & Hall, 2014). It indicates that commitment is an important element in voter decision-making.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Reputation

Lau and Redlawsk (2001) have noted that a candidate's appearance may serve as an important heuristic cue since it enables them to make social judgments about people who are relatively unknown. Based on this cue, voters are able to quickly assess candidates for public office (Lau & Redlawsk, 2001). In the business literature, reputations are perceived as distinguishing attributes that differentiate one company from another (Barnett, Jermier & Lafferty, 2006) or as the customer's reactions to the company's services, its communication activities, and perception derived from interacting with the company either directly or indirectly through its representatives (Walsh & Beatty, 2007).

With regards to reputation, customers are shown to have higher willingness to identify with companies with good reputations, to satisfy their need for self-distinctiveness and self-enhancement (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003). At an individual level, reputation denotes a person's perceptual representation of and generalized favorability towards a company's past actions and future prospects (Lange, van Gaal, Lamme, Dehaene, 2011; Mariconda & Lurati, 2015). Importantly, reputation has been shown to play a critical role in consumer behavior and decision-making (Artigas, Vilches-Montero & Yrigoyen, 2015). A study on candidate's reputation has indicated that legislators will build reputations which make it less possible for their toughest challengers to portray them as having unpleasant characteristics (Crisp, Kanthak and Olivella, 2017).

In this study, it is posited that the more positive the reputation of the presidential candidate, the higher the intention of young voters to vote for that particular candidate. Hence, it can be hypothesized that:

H1: Perceived candidate reputation will have a significant positive effect on commitment to vote.

Decision-making Confidence

Confidence can be defined as a belief about the validity of our own thoughts, knowledge or performance and which involves subjective feelings of an individual (Luttrell, Petty, Cunningham, & Diaz, 2013). Previous research suggests that confidence has strong implications for behavioral intentions and behavior (Tsai & McGill, 2011). Confidence guides behavior, and it is shown to increase behavioral intentions (Barden & Petty, 2008) and the likelihood of purchase (Wan, Rucker, Tormala, & Clarkson, 2010). Confidence within the realm of political marketing is described as "the extent to which the consumer has confidence in his or her ability to make the right choice and the perceived ability to choose the right party or candidate" (O'Cass, 2002). In this study, it is posited that the more confident the young voters are in the accuracy of their decision to vote for a particular candidate, the higher the intention of young voters to vote for that particular candidate.

In this study, it also posited that the more positive the reputation of the presidential candidate, the higher confidence of young voters to make decisions. Hence, it can be hypothesized that:

H2: Perceived candidate reputation will have a significant positive effect on young voters' decision-making confidence.

H3: Young voters' decision-making confidence will have a significant positive effect on commitment to voting.

Political Engagement

Political participation has long been considered as an essential characteristic of democracy (Park, 2013) and it signifies political involvement. Involvement can be defined as the level of perceived personal importance and/or interest evoked by a stimulus (or stimuli) within a specific situation (Antil, 1984). Involvement can be categorized into low and high-involvement (Krugman, 1965). In the case of voters, this implies that the involvement may depend on how the voter interprets the situation (Antil, 1984).

Previous studies have shown how the adolescent involvement in community organizations offering programs related to civic and political engagement may lead to higher adult political participation (Larson & Hansen, 2005). Moreover, participation in non-formal community youth groups and extracurricular activities has been found to lead to engagement in civic associations and political affairs in adulthood (Verba, Schlozman & Brady, 1995). It has been noted that as young people would become more interested in politics (Zvonovskii, 2009) as they grow older, which could mean that increased involvement may come from increased voting experience (Winchester, Binney, & Hall, 2014). Other studies have suggested that the positive experience of voting in other settings (Tse, 2000; 2009) will promote a sense of trust towards participating actively in civic and political life as adults (Saha & Print, 2010).

H4: Young voters' political engagement will have a significant positive effect on perceived candidate reputation.

H5: Young voters' political engagement will have a significant positive effect on young voters' decision-making confidence.

H6: Young voters' political engagement will have a significant positive effect on commitment to voting.

Familiarity

Familiarity is defined as the overall, general amount of knowledge that people have about an organization (Yang, 2007). Many researchers have studied the relationship between familiarity and reputation, most often treating familiarity as an antecedent of reputation. For instance, both van Riel (1997) and Brooks and Highhouse (2006) claimed that familiarity is a necessary antecedent for reputation to exist. Familiarity was also shown to influence the believability of information, leading to evaluation of reputation affecting the believability of the new information which in turn influences the degree to which such information affects reputation judgments.

The literature shows a positive relation between familiarity and reputation (Yang, 2007). An organization's reputation will be impacted by the degree of familiarity that it has managed to achieve among its customers (Lange et al, 2011; McCorkindale, 2008). In other words, familiarity can directly influence reputation (Brooks, Highhouse, Russel, & Mohr, 2003). Another study has also suggested that the positive experience of voting in other settings, (Tse, 2000; 2009), will develop a sense of trust towards participating actively in political life as adults (Saha & Print, 2010), possibly through enhancement of familiarity with the voting system.

H7: Young voters' familiarity about candidate will have a significant effect on perceived candidate reputation.

H8: Young voters' familiarity about candidate will have a significant effect on young voters' decision-making confidence.

H9: Young voters' familiarity about candidate will have a significant effect on commitment to voting.

Subjective Knowledge

Consumer knowledge can be defined as the information that consumers have when they face a purchase decision (Brucks, 1985). In the political

domain, knowledge can be defined as “the range of factual information about politics stored in long-term memory” (Delli Carpini & Keeter 1996, p. 10 in Ran, Yamamoto and Xu, 2016). Based on this definition, the political knowledge can be divided into three: knowledge about political institutions and processes, knowledge on substantive issues and events knowledge that an individual has with regards to political actors and entities, such as politicians and political organizations ((Delli Carpini, 2005; Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1993 in Ran, Yamamoto and Xu, 2016). Research has shown that knowledge is related to many aspects of consumer behaviors (Flynn & Goldsmith, 1999).

Literature has noted that knowledge can be divided into two: objective knowledge and subjective knowledge. Subjective measures of knowledge are derived from an individual’s own interpretation of what s/he knows, whereas objective knowledge is measured by somebody else’s evaluation on an individual’s knowledge. In business literature, knowledge has been shown to influence the confidence of an individual (Cowley, 2004). The literatures have shown that consumers who are confident about their knowledge will exhibit stronger influence on both the category choice and the alternatives included inside their consideration set. It is well documented within the literature that the individuals who know more about politics are more likely to engage with the political system (Kenski & Stroud, 2006).

H10: Young voters’ knowledge on politics will have a significant positive effect on perceived candidate reputation.

H11: Young voters’ knowledge on politics will have a significant positive effect on young voters’ decision-making confidence.

H12: Young voters’ knowledge on politics will have a significant positive effect on commitment to voting.

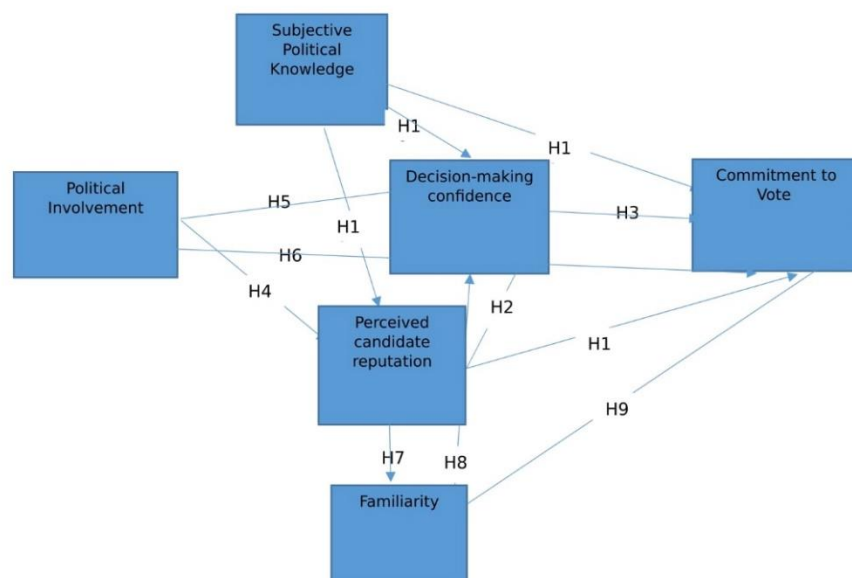


Figure 1. Theoretical Framework

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study is a quantitative research utilizing descriptive approach. A survey was employed as the main data collection method. Structural model equation modeling was used to analyze data collected using a self-completion online survey. The measurements of this study were adopted from various previous studies by O'Cass (2002a) and O'Cass & Pecotich (2005). The scales used in the questionnaire were five-point Likert scales ranging from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*. The respondents of this study are young adults who will reach/have reached the voting age in the year 2019 (born between May 1997 until March 2002) and a total of 118 completed surveys were useable.

The structural equation modeling (SEM) procedure, which focuses on measurement and structural model simultaneously, was utilized in this study. This study employed only the reflective measurement model in which the reliability and validity of the measurement model are assessed to determine its consistency. To assess the validity of the reflective model, several tools such as indicator reliability, internal consistency reliability, convergent reliability, and discriminant validity are utilized (Hair, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2016). After assessing the validity of the reflective model, the outer loadings were then examined to analyze the indicator reliabilities for reflective measures. The reflective indicator should be deleted if the outer loading was less than 0.40. The effect of indicator deletion on the composite reliability and the average variance extracted (AVE) was analyzed if the outer loading was greater than 0.4. The reflective indicator should be retained if the measures met the threshold criteria which was greater than 0.7.

Composite reliability is computed to analyze the internal consistency reliability of reflective indicators. Composite reliability values greater than 0.7 are generally acceptable. To establish convergent validity, the average variance extracted (AVE) is required to reach minimum value of 0.50. Finally, the discriminant validity of the reflective measures was assessed using Fornell-Larcker criterion where the square root AVEs of each reflective construct are greater than the highest bivariate correlation between the constructs.

The structural model was assessed in several steps. The initial stage involved the examination of collinearity issues. The Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values of less than 5 indicate no collinearity issues. The second stage tested the significance and relevance of path coefficients. The final steps included determination of R Square and measurement of effect using F Square.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

From the result of measurement model assessment all reflective indicators had outer loadings larger than 0.4, therefore none of the indicators were deleted or removed. The composite reliability which had a value greater than 0.7 indicated an acceptable consistency. The average variance extracted (AVE) was greater than 0.50 for all constructs indicating an acceptable convergent validity. In this case, all latent constructs met the cut-off criterion as shown in Table 1.

Table 1.
Validity of Latent Constructs

Latent Construct	Composite Reliability	AVE
Commitment to Vote (CTV)	0.880	0.657
Decision Making Confidence (DMC)	0.886	0.721
Familiarity (FMY)	0.925	0.756
Perceived Candidate Reputation (PCR)	0.846	0.649
Political Involvement (PIV)	0.930	0.817
Subjective Political Knowledge (SPK)	0.953	0.803

Finally, using Fornell-Larcker criterion, the square correlation between the two constructs of this study was found to be less than any of the two constructs' AVE, supporting the discriminant validity of constructs as seen in Table 2.

Table 2.

Discriminant Validity Fornell-Larcker Criterion

	CTV	DMC	FMY	PCR	PIV	SPK
CTV	0.811					
DMC	0.729	0.849				
FMY	0.558	0.677	0.869			
PCR	0.405	0.525	0.630	0.806		
PIV	0.712	0.726	0.599	0.431	0.904	
SPK	0.191	0.365	0.381	0.393	0.480	0.896

The initial step of assessing structural model showed that all the VIF values were below the suggested threshold levels (lower than 5); therefore, collinearity among the predictor constructs was not an issue in the structural model. Next, the significance of t-values associated with each party was tested using the Bootstrap procedure. Table 3 summarizes the path result and the corresponding t-values. The hypotheses were considered to be supported based on a significance level of 5% with a t-value of 1.96 (Hair, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2016). For the results shown in Table 3, seven out of twelve hypotheses are supported: H3, H5, H6, H7, H8, H10 and H12.

Table 3.

Results of Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Path Coefficient	t-value	Significance Level
Perceived Candidate Reputation --> Commitment to Vote (H1)	0.035	0.373	Not Significant H1 not supported
Perceived Candidate Reputation --> Decision Making Confidence (H2)	0.132	1.473	Not Significant H2 not supported
Decision Making Confidence --> Commitment to Vote (H3)	0.410	3.786	Significant** H3 supported

Political Involvement --> Perceived Candidate Reputation (H4)	0.015	0.123	Not Significant H4 not supported
Political Involvement --> Decision Making Confidence (H5)	0.507	5.582	Significant** H5 supported
Political Involvement --> Commitment to Vote (H6)	0.468	4.956	Significant** H6 supported
Familiarity --> Perceived Candidate Reputation (H7)	0.555	4.846	Significant** H7 supported
Familiarity --> Decision Making Confidence (H8)	0.308	3.631	Significant** H8 supported
Familiarity --> Commitment to Vote (H9)	0.062	0.619	Not Significant H9 not supported
Subjective Political Knowledge --> Perceived Candidate Reputation (H10)	0.175	2.039	Significant* H10 supported
Subjective Political Knowledge --> Decision Making Confidence (H11)	-0.048	0.656	Not Significant H11 not supported
Subjective Political Knowledge --> Commitment to Vote (H12)	-0.220	3.527	Significant** H12 supported

The coefficient of determination, R-square of reflective measurement model, was 64% for commitment to vote, while R-square value for decision making confidence was 63% and R-square value for perceived candidate reputation was 43%. This indicates that all variables explained 64% of the variance in commitment to vote. At the same time, familiarity and political involvement explained about 63% variance in decision-making confidence. In addition to that, subjective political knowledge and familiarity explain about 43% of variance in perceived candidate reputation.

The findings suggest that perceived candidate reputation does not have significant influence on commitment to vote nor decision-making confidence. This indicates that even when an individual perceives a political candidate to be suitable, he or she may not automatically be inclined to vote. There is a chance that these potential voters may consider other factors before making choices as they consider voting to be important. Generally speaking, individuals do not associate certain attributes to parties and candidates in a neutral fashion, but do so with either favorable or unfavorable feelings (Norpoth, 2009). However, this study finding ascertains that the young voters are not influenced by the reputation of the candidate. Instead, information that they have on the candidates may serve as a basis to familiarize themselves, but not necessarily form any kind of perceived reputation.

Political engagement was also not shown to influence perceived candidate reputation. This implies that perceived candidate reputation may not be

formed in the mind of an individual simply because this individual is politically engaged. An individual may develop perception on the reputation of the political candidate through exposure from the media or other sources. As there have been many televised debates among political candidates, it is possible to optimize these debates' ability to further engage young voters in the political process (Brubaker, Horning & Toula, 2015).

On the other hand, political engagement was shown to have significant positive influence on both decision-making confidence and commitment to vote. This is understandable because an individual may be more confident on the accuracy of their decision in voting when he or she is more involved in politics as this indicates their familiarity with the political landscape and possibly the voting process. Several scholars have argued that digital media can provide new opportunities for young people to become politically active since these media are in the formats which are familiar to youth (Burgess, Green, Jenkins, & Hartley, 2009; Cohen, Kahne, Bowyer, Middaugh, & Rogowski, 2012 in Brubaker, Horning, & Toula, 2015).

There is also a direct influence of the young voters' decision-making confidence on commitment to vote. This implies that the more confident the young voters are with their choice, the higher their commitment to vote will be.

It is possible that decisions that are made in public situations involving discussion with other people may lead to the individuals using different criteria than making private decisions (Lamberton, Naylor & Haws, 2013).

This suggests that these young voters are skeptical that the candidate's reputation may be embellished to some extent. Familiarity and subjective political knowledge were found to have positive influence towards building candidate's reputation; however, the candidate's reputation does not necessarily improve the voters' decision-making confidence or the commitment to vote. It is then advisable for anyone running for candidacy to provide necessary information about themselves which can facilitate these voters' decision making process. Since these youngsters are digitally savvy, the information can be made online to be more accessible.

It is interesting to note as well that subjective political knowledge was not shown to have a direct influence towards decision-making confidence despite its direct influence on perceived candidate reputation and commitment to vote. Individuals who perceive themselves to be more equipped with political knowledge may also believe that they have more information on the political candidates, and therefore can be more accurate in developing perception on the political candidates' reputation. In addition to that, the individuals who see themselves to be more knowledgeable may actually feel more obliged to fulfill their duty as a citizen to vote.

The findings have shown how it is important for political parties in particular and the government in general to develop better political engagement and political knowledge for youngsters. It is possible that the low commitment to vote stems from the youngsters' lack of knowledge and information on the candidates running for presidency. Moreover, the potential voters may also need to be involved more in the political activities. Participation in youth-based organizations will enable the youths to have better vision on what political systems look like.

CONCLUSIONS

It is expected that this study will shed some lights into the decision-making influencers of voters in Indonesia, especially young voters. This study will be beneficial for political marketers and officials who are interested in understanding their political base better. Secondly, this study will also benefit the government which wants to encourage young voters to participate. The next study will benefit from additional variables such as perceived benefits of voting, objective political knowledge, as well as perceived risks of not voting. Generational comparison (for example between generation X and generation Y) may also improve the insights of future studies.

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