An Integrative Model of Candidate Image, Political Campaigns, Cultural Values, and Psychological Determinants of Voting Intention in the Maluku Gubernatorial Election

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Abstract

Political marketing has increasingly shaped how political actors build public trust and influence voter perceptions, yet research on its impact in regions such as Maluku remains limited. The competitive dynamics of the 2024 Maluku Gubernatorial Election demonstrate the importance of understanding how candidate image and campaign activities shape voter attitudes and choices. The purpose of this study is to examine the influence of candidate image and political campaign strategies on voting interest and voting decisions in the 2024 Maluku Gubernatorial Election. This study employed a longitudinal survey conducted in Ambon City, Maluku, using non-probability purposive sampling of eligible 2024 voters to examine the application of marketing mix theory and the theory of planned behavior in political activities. The findings show that candidate images and political campaigns have a significant impact on shaping voter attitudes, as evidenced by high T-statistics and low P-values. Cultural values also play a central role by strongly shaping voter attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control, indicating that local culture is a fundamental element in political preference formation in Maluku. The results further demonstrate that positive attitudes toward candidates and supportive subjective norms significantly increase voting intentions among voters. Overall, the study confirms that attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control are the three dominant psychological factors that determine voting interest in the political context of Maluku.

Keywords: *Candidate Image, Political Campaigns, Cultural Values, Voting Intention, Maluku.*

INTRODUCTION

Marketing has such broad dimensions that it is always used as a reference in management decision-making across various segments. In

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principle, marketing is a science interconnected with other disciplines in the world of knowledge. Ontologically, marketing is a managerial activity that facilitates transactions between two parties: one party provides value to the other, and the other returns something of greater value. This aligns with the view of Naisaniya & Saputro (2023), who argue that marketing is the art and science of determining target markets and distributing customer value that consistently satisfies needs, desires, and expectations, while adding value to goods and/or services.

Marketing is also closely related to rationality, requiring theoretical experience that drives the continuous development of marketing science and can contribute to other disciplines. Essentially, marketing is not merely a practical business but a social institution for meeting and satisfying needs (Firmanzah, 2019). Furthermore, Nurhidayat (2023) notes that marketing is the art and science of identifying and delivering value to customers explains that the use of marketing concepts is not limited to business organizations or institutions alone, because marketing science extends beyond producing, promoting, distributing, or selling products, but also encompasses how to meet and satisfy consumers. One example is the application of marketing science in politics.

The application of marketing science in politics, known as political marketing, is a method or way a political institution (political party) formulates its political products, costs, vision, and mission. This is processed into publication and communication programs and launched through segmented strategies to meet the needs and desires of constituents. This opinion is further reinforced by Firmanzah (2019), who states that the involvement of marketing science in politics is not intended to dominate political territory or distribute power, or even determine political power. Rather, marketing aims to help political parties become better known to the communities they represent or target, and to develop work programs and political issues that align with their aspirations and enable effective communication. The same view was also expressed by O'Shaughnessy (2001) that marketing involvement in the world of politics does not guarantee victory but provides tools to maintain relationships with voters so that trust and support can be established.

While implementing marketing concepts in politics will require time to adapt to the political environment itself, its essence lies in the right tools to build relationships with constituents and the wider community and achieve a strong response to the activities of the party in general and the candidate in particular. This means that political marketing prioritizes understanding the party's vision, mission, platform, and programs, while still considering cultural conditions and local wisdom over the long term, so that constituents develop awareness, understanding, knowledge, and positive behaviors that guide decision-making (Van Steenburg et al., 2022).

Therefore, it can be said that optimal political marketing implementation, in meeting the needs, desires, and expectations of the voter market, can confidently lead political parties and candidates to

victory in political competition at any level. To communicate political messages to consumers as constituents, political parties and candidates must carefully select the media to be used, the content of the message delivered, the delivery time interval, and other ethical considerations to ensure political goals are achieved. On the other hand, consumers, as constituents, will accept the vision and mission, platforms, work programs, and other indicators conveyed in the hope that their needs and desires can be identified and subsequently addressed (Kocaman & Coşgun, 2024).

For a democratic country like Indonesia, the application of political marketing will establish agreement and commitment to shared perceptions and public interests as its primary pillars. Public or consumer involvement in decision-making is a strong pillar of democracy, enabling every prospective leader to compete for the hearts and votes of the people. Various methods are employed to influence public decisions, from conventional methods of campaigning from one place to another to modern media, packaged through advertisements and other forms of promotion, to introduce proposed work programs in the hope of attracting potential voters (Al Amosh, 2024). Political marketing must be continuously implemented by political parties and candidates to build long-term trust among potential voters. Changing times demand the use of new approaches and strategies in political life, including in Indonesia, a country that implements a pure democratic system with direct public involvement in decision-making (Akinola & Adekunle, 2022).

The widespread use of marketing theory in the political world, both globally and nationally, is in contrast to the facts on the ground; there is still little or almost no research that discusses the application of marketing theory to measure the voting behavior of the community, especially the people of Maluku, including the people of Ambon City. As the capital of Maluku Province, the implementation of the Maluku Governor election in Ambon City took place on November 27, 2024 simultaneously, marked by a battle of winning strategies carried out by the candidates and their winning teams. With a total of 250,194 voters spread across five sub-districts in Ambon City, the election process became more lively and interesting because it was followed by three pairs of gubernatorial candidates, including two new candidate pairs and one incumben candidate pair and more interestingly, of these three candidate pairs, two candidate pairs had military backgrounds (one new candidate pair and one incumben candidate pair) and one candidate pair had a civilian background. The recapitulation results of the Maluku KPU determined that the pair number 3, Hendrik Lewerisa, a former member of the Maluku DPR RI and Abdulah Vanath, a former Regent of East Seram Regency, both of whom have a civilian background, won the most votes with 437,379 or 47.40% supported by the GERINDRA, PPP, PERINDO parties, successfully defeating the incumbent who had a higher satisfaction and recognition survey. In second place, pair number 1 Jeffry Rahawarin, former Commander of XVI Patimura Military Command and Abdul Mukti Keliobas, former Regent of East Seram, supported by PDIP,

NASDEM and HANURA with a valid vote of 249,013 votes or 26.99%, and in third place, pair number 2 who is also the incumbent, Murad Ismail, former Maluku Police Chief and also Governor of Maluku (incumbent) and Michael Wattimena, former member of the Maluku DPR RI supported by the PAN, DEMOCRAT, PKS, PKB, GOLKAR parties with 236,377 votes or 25.62 percent.

The victory of candidate pair number three, with the slogan "New Maluku," was inseparable from the strategic and issue-based battles waged across the thirteen regencies/cities in Maluku, including Ambon City. The issues and themes varied according to the context and conditions of each regency/city. Ambon City's geographical location, situated in a mountainous and coastal region, resulted in the design of campaign issues and impromptu visits being varied and tailored to the local conditions and social environment, while still taking into account regional character and culture.

In the 2024 Maluku Gubernatorial Election (Pilgub), the implementation of candidate imagery and political campaign strategies played a crucial role in shaping public perception and influencing the election outcome. All three pairs of Maluku gubernatorial candidates sought to showcase their best qualities to build a positive image. The track records of each candidate pair were tailored to their educational and professional backgrounds.

Political campaigns have a significant impact on shaping voter attitudes, encompassing cognitive (knowledge), affective (feelings), and conative (actions). Political campaigns are among the most expensive and sophisticated marketing tools in the world. To inform and persuade voters, candidates at various levels rely on a variety of communication strategies, including advertising, social media, broadcasting, and selling themselves to voters at mass gatherings throughout the campaign period.

Based on the description and background explanation above, the research problem formulation is formulated regarding an integrative model of candidate image and political campaign on the interest and voting decisions of the Maluku governor.

LITERATURE REVIEW
Political Marketing

The application of marketing science in the world of politics, known as political marketing, is a method or way for a political institution (political party) to formulate its political products, costs, visions, and missions, which are processed in publication and communication programs and launched through segmented strategies to meet the needs and desires of constituents (Nurhidayat, 2023). Bruce I. Newman and Richard M. Perloff, in Political Marketing: Theory, Research, and Application, describe political marketing as the utilization of marketing principles within political campaigns, encompassing the involvement of multiple actors, organizational processes, and strategic activities related to analysis, implementation, and campaign management undertaken by candidates or political parties to shape public perceptions (Twum et al.,

2022). Similar views are presented by other scholars, including Nursal (2004), who argues that political marketing constitutes a set of deliberate and strategic actions, both long-term and short-term, designed to communicate political objectives and meanings to the electorate. Furthermore, political marketing is an activity aimed at enabling individuals and groups (political parties) to achieve their goals of success through political campaigns, development programs, issues, ideas, ideologies, and messages offered to the public, while simultaneously influencing them to make the right choices (Fernández Gómez et al., 2024).

Butler and Collins (2001) contend that the political marketing mix represents a stable framework that must be consistently applied by political parties or candidates to cultivate public trust and construct a favorable image, serving as a basis for assessing and determining political positioning. In a similar vein, Aryo Putranto describes political marketing as the comprehensive process of analyzing, planning, and implementing ideas, strategies, and political issues undertaken by parties and candidates to understand the aspirations and needs of various community groups. Likewise, Andrias and Nurohman (2013) describe political marketing as a sequence of coordinated activities, both strategic and tactical with long- and short-term implications, aimed at disseminating political messages to voters in order to shape and stimulate their expectations, attitudes, beliefs, orientations, and behaviors so that they remain supportive of a particular party or candidate.

Marketing involvement in the world of politics has a significant role, this is in line with the opinion expressed by Firmansyah, that the involvement of marketing science into politics with the aim not to control political territory or distribute power or even determine political power, but marketing aims to help political parties to be better known to the represented or targeted community and develop work programs and political issues that are in accordance with their aspirations and can communicate effectively (Bonfert, 2024). Henneberg (2003) explains that political marketing is an effort to form, maintain, and improve political ties over a long period of time so that it benefits the community and so that the goals of each actor and political organization can be achieved. This method is carried out through reciprocal exchanges or making promises. This definition is similar to the definition of Henneberg and O'Shaughnessy, who emphasize the relationship of marketing approaches. Harris defines political marketing as a general desire that is equated with techniques used in efforts to invite voters in campaigns to promote both politicians and their policies. In simple terms, political marketing is a combination of the social science disciplines of political science and marketing (Less-Marshment, 2001), explaining that political marketing is actually political behavior. Alabi argues differently, stating that political marketing is a marketing design to influence the target audience to choose individuals and parties.

Candidate Image

Candidate image is how the public's perception of a candidate's personality and character influences attitudes and voting decisions. Political parties require an image to foster a positive public impression of the party. The product being sold is the brand owned by the variables involved in political communication to constituents, namely the candidate, the campaign team, and the supporting political party. According to Bos, candidate image is a social construct formed by voter perceptions of a candidate's personal character, integrity, and leadership abilities (Harrison et al., 2023). Another opinion is put forward by Street that candidate image is a product of mediatized politics, namely the result of how the candidate is positioned by the media and campaign team in the political space. Furthermore, Street also adds that a candidate's image can be formed from the interaction between candidate communication, media, and personal experiences. According to Nimo and Savage, candidate image is a mental construction or public perception of who and what a candidate is based on information received through mass media, campaigns, debates, and opinions. Candidates can cultivate a positive image of themselves, both through campaigns and past events (Mazzoni & Mincigrucci, 2022). According to McGraw and Gilbert, a candidate's image influences voter evaluations more strongly than issues or programs. Voters are more likely to use heuristic cues such as the candidate's appearance and personality. Nurhidayat (2023) also explains that a political party's victory in a contest is largely determined by the candidate's image. A candidate with a positive image will increase their vote share in the election. Wibowo (2013) argues that a candidate's success in convincing the public is largely determined by the effectiveness of their political campaign.

According to Nurhidayat (2023), a candidate's image can be classified into several dimensions: competence, which refers to knowledge, skills, and experience in problem-solving. Integrity which refers to the candidate's honesty, morals, ethics, and consistency of personal values. Leadership which refers to charisma, assertiveness, vision, and the ability to inspire. Social closeness (empathy or identification with voters) refers to the candidate's ability to understand and represent the needs of the people. Communication style which refers to speech, facial expressions, clothing, and body language. According to Cantikoch, a candidate's image is a symbol of social representation, namely how the candidate is considered to represent a particular group or identity (Gakahu, 2024).

Political Campaign

Political campaigns, according to experts, emphasize a planned and deliberate communication process to influence the behavior, attitudes, and thoughts of the audience. Some experts identify campaigns as efforts to propagandize potential voters, while others see them as a series of communication actions to create certain effects on a large audience. A political campaign is an effort to influence voters to make

choices in accordance with the goals of the candidate (Flusberg et al., 2024). Furthermore, Setiawan and Sukresna added that a political campaign is a method used by citizens in a democracy to determine who will govern. A political campaign, according to Annisa, constitutes a deliberately structured, incremental, and sustained activity undertaken within a specified timeframe to shape the views of a predetermined target audience. Similarly, Bohnet and Huck describe a political campaign as a sequence of systematically organized communication efforts intended to generate specific effects on a broad audience, implemented continuously throughout a defined period (Setthasuravich & Kato, 2025).

According to Aqilah, a communication campaign is an organized communication activity directed at a specific audience over a specific period of time to achieve a specific goal. Furthermore, Safitri explains that political campaigns are better when focused on political branding and message control to create a positive image within a limited time (Borchers & Enke, 2021). Based on the General Elections Commission (KPU) Decree No. 35 of 2004 on Campaigns, several forms of campaign activities are identified, including public or open debates among candidates, various activities that remain compliant with statutory provisions, the placement of campaign materials in public spaces, the dissemination of campaign information to the public, publication through print and electronic media, radio and/or television broadcasts, as well as limited meetings, mass rallies, face-to-face engagements, and interactive dialogues. In addition, Leslie B. Snyder categorizes political campaigns into several distinct forms.

1. Product-Oriented Campaigns
   Product-oriented campaigns generally occur in business environments and are commercially oriented, such as new product launches. These campaigns typically also aim to build a positive image for the product being introduced to the public (Blocker et al., 2025).
2. Candidate-Oriented Campaigns
   These campaigns are candidate-oriented and generally motivated by a desire for political gain. Examples: Election campaigns, fundraising campaigns for political parties (Coffé & Von Schoultz, 2021).
3. Ideologically or cause-oriented campaigns
   These types of campaigns are oriented toward specific goals and often have a social dimension, or social change campaigns (Wittmayer et al., 2022).
4. Attacking campaigns
   These types of campaigns are divided into: Negative campaigns, which attack other parties through data or facts that can be verified and debated. Black campaigns, which are malicious or attempt to undermine political opponents for personal gain (Somer-Topcu & Weitzel, 2022).

Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) constitutes an extension of the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) introduced by Fishbein and Ajzen in 1975. This refinement emerged due to the limitations of the original TRA framework in explaining behavioral contexts where individuals lack complete volitional control. Similar to TRA, TPB places central emphasis on an individual's intention to engage in a specific behavior. Fishbein and Ajzen's (1975) TPB has been widely recognized as an analytical framework for examining the divergences between attitudes and intentions, as well as between intentions and actual behavior. According to Ajzen and Fishbein (1975), individual behavior that arises due to the individual's intention is caused by several internal and external factors, namely attitudes toward the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. Because this theory assumes consumer behavior is determined by intentions, behavioral intentions are a function of attitudes toward the behavior—that is, general feelings of favorability or unfavorability toward the behavior; subjective norms, that is, the perceived opinions of others regarding the intended behavior; and perceived behavioral control, the extent to which the considered behavior can be performed without perceived difficulty or hindrance (Youn et al., 2021).

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) serves as a framework for forecasting behavioral intentions by emphasizing consumers' attitudes toward performing a specific action rather than toward a product or service. Within this model, consumers' intentions to engage in a behavior are shaped by the normative social beliefs that influence them. As an extension of the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), the TPB incorporates perceived behavioral control as an additional determinant of behavioral intention. Perceived behavioral control (PBC) refers to individuals' subjective assessments regarding the degree of difficulty associated with carrying out the intended behavior (Hagger et al., 2022).

In exploring consumer complaint behaviors, Stephens and Gwinner introduce the concept of secondary appraisal to describe consumers' perceived capability to manage an unsatisfactory experience, such as submitting a complaint. Similarly, Shim, Eastlick, Lotz, and Waarington develop and empirically test a model of online pre-purchase intentions that integrates the notion of perceived behavioral control (Awa et al., 2021). For several reasons, the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) is considered highly appropriate for examining and predicting voters' voting intentions. First, in the electoral context, individuals are exposed to extensive information about political candidates, parties, policy promises, and public discussions. Consequently, prospective voters tend to engage in selective exposure, selective perception, and cognitive integration to formulate internal evaluative structures—namely, attitudes—that serve as a basis for determining their voting choices (Goetting & Becker, 2025). Second, within theories of voter participation, individuals are assumed to be part of social reference groups in which social pressures may emerge and be reinforced by non-opinion leaders.

Voters who constitute the majority within their reference group may find conformity important and thus decide to vote in a particular direction. Therefore, perceived social norms are expected to shape voters' behavioral intentions (Boghossian & David, 2021). Third, the element of perceived behavioral control is also relevant to the formation of voting intentions. When modifying their intended voting behavior, individuals must cognitively generate justifications for such changes, a process that becomes more challenging when their intended behavior conflicts with prevailing social norms (De-Oliveira et al., 2022).

Interest in Choosing

According to Hansen, social norms in society are increasingly reinforced through social media, which serves not only as a source of information but also as a tool for shaping social pressure and group opinion. This significantly influences voting intentions, especially among young voters active on digital platforms. Furthermore, Bruter emphasized that perceived political efficacy is a crucial factor in shaping voting intentions (González-Bailón & Lelkes, 2023). Individuals who feel their vote has an impact are more committed to participating in elections. This opinion reinforces the perceived Behavioral Control aspect of the TPB, which refers to the extent to which a person feels capable and confident in carrying out the act of voting. Furthermore, Karp and Banducci added the dimensions of political trust and satisfaction with the political system as variables influencing voting intentions. They found that low trust and satisfaction decreased voting intentions, suggesting that a healthy and trustworthy political context is crucial for increasing voter participation (Roldão Pereira & Scott, 2025). Research by Blais and Daoust expanded the TPB by including political identity and political emotions as factors that strengthen voting intentions. Positive or negative emotions toward a candidate or political party can significantly strengthen or weaken voting intentions.

Furthermore, Holmberg and Oscarsson highlighted the role of local social and cultural contexts, which can moderate the relationship between attitudes, subjective norms, and behavioral control with voting intentions. They stated that the unique social and cultural dynamics of a region must be taken into account when analyzing voter behavior. In the context of developing countries, Huang and Hu applied the TPB and found that perceived behavioral control is strongly influenced by access to technology and information (Fischer & Karl, 2022). The easier access to political information sources, the stronger the voting intention. Research by Shehata and Strömbäck integrated the TPB with new media theory, suggesting that exposure to digital media increases subjective norms and positive attitudes toward candidates, thereby increasing voting intentions. The influence of digital media has become very dominant in shaping political opinions and voter decisions (Bukari et al., 2023). In a recent study, Kim and Park examined the effect of interactive and personalized online campaigns on voting intentions. They found that campaign approaches that provide personalized experiences to voters

effectively shape and strengthen voting intentions. In Indonesia, Lestari and Nugroho added the dimensions of local culture and community involvement in strengthening social norms that support voting intentions. This research emphasizes the importance of integrating cultural aspects into political strategies to increase voter participation (Ioannidis, 2025). Finally, Martinez and Perez combined the TPB with psychological factors such as political hope and political uncertainty as predictors of voting intentions in developing democracies. They asserted that political uncertainty can reduce voting intentions by creating a sense of uncertainty and skepticism among voters (Christensen, 2022).

METHOD

The research design is a comprehensive series of research, including making hypotheses and their operational implications, up to the final analysis of the research results, as well as conclusions and suggestions. A research design states both the structure of the research problem and the investigation plan that will be used to obtain empirical evidence regarding the relationships in the problem. This research was conducted through a longitudinal study with a survey method. The location of this research was carried out in Maluku province, especially in Ambon city. This research focuses on how the application of the marketing mix theory and the theory of planned behavior is applied in political activities in Maluku, especially among the people of Ambon city. The sampling method is Non-Probability Sampling. The sampling technique uses a purposive sampling technique with the following criteria: (1) being a permanent voter in the 2024 Simultaneous Regional Elections, (2) Voters have a Pela-Gandong relationship with one of the candidates, and (3) Permanent voters in the electoral district of Ambon City (Saharan et al., 2024).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION
Data Normality Test

In this study, data normality was tested using skewness and kurtosis values, which are often used to describe the shape characteristics of a distribution. Skewness assesses the extent to which a variable's distribution is symmetrical, while kurtosis assesses whether the distribution is too narrow or peaked.

The general guideline for assessing skewness is if the value is greater than +1 or less than -1, but values between +2 and -2 are generally acceptable. Values above these values indicate a skewed or non-normal distribution. For kurtosis, a value greater than +2 indicates a distribution that is too peaked, and a value less than –2 indicates a distribution that is too flat. The test results indicate that all scores are normally distributed, as none of the absolute values of skewness and kurtosis are greater than -2 or 2.

Convergent Validity

Convergent validity is assessed based on the correlation between item scores/component scores estimated using PLS software. Convergent validity demonstrates validity at the indicator level, namely, the extent to which a measure positively correlates with other measures. An individual reflective measure is considered good if it correlates >0.7 with the construct being measured. This means that each item consistently and significantly reflects the intended construct. A threshold value of ≥0.7 is a widely accepted standard in PLS-SEM analysis because it indicates that more than 50% of the indicator's variance is explained by the latent construct. Measurement is performed using loading factor values and Average Variance Extracted.

Based on the loading factor values presented, two indicators had loading factor values below 0.7, so they were removed and not used in further analysis. Another test for convergent validity is evaluating the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value, which is the average variation of each measurement item within a variable. AVE indicates the extent to which the variables, as a whole, explain the variation in each measurement item. This measure also illustrates the convergent validity of the variable. An indicator is considered to have high convergent validity if its AVE value meets the standard, namely, greater than or equal to 0.50. This indicates that the construct is able to explain more than half of the variation in its indicators and indicates that the construct has consistent and reliable measurement.

Overall, the research results demonstrate that all constructs in the model meet convergent validity criteria and are suitable for use in testing the structural model (inner model). The AVE values are shown in Table 1 below:

Table 1. Average Variance Extracted

Variables	Average Variance Extracted
Candidate Image	0.559
Political Campaign	0.628
Culture	0.655
Attitude	0.698
Subjective Norms	0.693
Perceived Behavioral Control	0.790
Intention	0.727

Convergent validity in this model is measured using the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value. In the context of PLS-SEM, AVE reflects how much variance is captured by the construct compared to the error variance. Table 5.12 shows that a good AVE value is ≥ 0.5, which means the construct explains more than 50% of the variance in its indicators. Based on the loading factor results explained previously, it can be confirmed that all constructs in this model meet the requirements for convergent validity, as the loading factors for all indicators are above 0.7. Thus, all constructs, such as Candidate Image, Political Campaign, Cultural Values, Attitudes, Subjective Norms, Perceived Behavioral Control, and Intention, have valid AVE.

Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity describes the extent to which a variable or construct differs from other variables/constructs and is statistically tested. Discriminant validity testing is conducted at the indicator and variable levels. A model is said to have good discriminant validity if the loading value of each indicator of a latent variable is greater than the loading value of other latent variables.

Several methods are used, including Cross Loadings, which test at the indicator level, and Fornell-Larcker and Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT), which test at the variable level. Cross-loadings are considered valid if the value of a latent variable is greater than the value of another latent variable. Fornell-Larcker is considered valid if the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each variable is greater than the correlation between the other variables. Furthermore, the HTMT criterion for assessing discriminant validity requires the ratio to be lower than 0.850 and/or 0.900, and there must be no value between the lower and upper levels of the confidence interval.

Table 2. Discriminant Validity Values (Fornell-Larcker)

	Attitude	Candidate Image	Culture	Intention	Perceived Behavioral Control	Political Campaign	Subjective Norms
Attitude	0.836						
Candidate Image	0.357	0.748					
Culture	0.585	0.341	0.810				
Intention	0.505	0.294	0.566	0.853			
Perceived Behavioral Control	0.576	0.314	0.558	0.641	0.889		
Political Campaign	0.618	0.365	0.519	0.479	0.490	0.793	
Subjective Norms	0.579	0.297	0.627	0.478	0.504	0.576	0.832

Discriminant validity testing is a crucial step in evaluating the extent to which the constructs used in a research model are truly distinct from each other empirically. The Fornell-Larcker Criterion is a classic yet still widely used approach to testing discriminant validity. This criterion states that a construct is considered to have adequate discriminant validity if the square root of its AVE (located on the diagonal) is greater than the correlations between other constructs (off-diagonal) in a matrix.

This indicates that a construct is more capable of explaining its own indicators than other constructs. The table shows that all diagonal values (square roots of AVE) are higher than the inter-construct correlations (off-diagonal). For example, the Attitude construct has a diagonal value of 0.836, which is higher than its correlations with other constructs such as Political Campaign (0.618), Cultural Values (0.585), and PBC (0.576). The same applies to the Candidate Image construct, with a diagonal value of 0.748, which is higher than its correlation with Attitude (0.357), Cultural Values (0.341), and Intention (0.294). This condition is consistent with all other constructs, including Cultural Values (0.810), Intention (0.853), PBC (0.889), Political Campaign (0.793), and Subjective Norms (0.832). Therefore, it can be concluded that all constructs in the model have met the discriminant validity requirements according to the Fornell-Larcker Criterion.

Internal Consistency

To evaluate internal consistency, composite reliability is used, a measure that indicates the extent of a variable's reliability. A construct is considered to have high reliability if its value is at least 0.70. Other measures of reliability include Cronbach's Alpha and Rho A.

Table 3. Internal Consistency Reliability

	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	composite reliability
Attitude	0.784	0.784	0.874
Candidate Image	0.742	0.756	0.835
Culture	0.824	0.828	0.884
Intention	0.814	0.827	0.889
Perceived Behavioral Control	0.867	0.868	0.919
Political Campaign	0.702	0.714	0.835
Subjective Norms	0.779	0.780	0.871

Composite reliability must be greater than 0.7, and Cronbach's alpha must be greater than 0.6 to demonstrate acceptability. The internal consistency reliability in the table above indicates that all variables meet the required composite reliability value. Based on the instrument test results in Table 3, the variables generally meet the validity and reliability criteria. Therefore, each observed variable meets the requirements for the next test, the Goodness of Fit Model (GoF). GoF indicates how well the research model describes the observed data, which determines the overall quality of the model.

Table 4 below shows the GoF value, expressed as SRMR (standardized root mean square residual). SRMR is a measure of model fit, which is the difference between the data correlation matrix and the estimated model correlation matrix. SRMR values below 0.08 indicate model fit (Hair et al., 2018).

Table 4. Goodness of Fit Model Values

	Saturated Model	Estimated Model
SRMR	0.056	0.094
d_ULS	0.881	2.464
d_G	0.347	0.412
Chi-Square	1393.931	1539.245
NFI	0.806	0.785

The SRMR values in the table above are 0.056 (saturated model) and 0.094 (estimated model). This indicates that the model in this study fits.

Model Quality Evaluation

Model quality evaluation is performed using several criteria. The first criterion is calculated by calculating the Coefficient of Determination (R^2). The coefficient of determination R^2 is used to measure how much variation in the dependent latent variable is explained by the independent variables. The expected R^2 value is between 0 and 1. Reference R^2 values of 0.75, 0.50, and 0.25 indicate a strong, moderate, and weak model,

respectively. Adjusted R^2 is the R-square value corrected based on the standard error value, which provides a stronger picture than R-square in assessing the ability of an exogenous construct to explain an endogenous construct. Table 5 below shows the results of the R-square (R^2) estimation using SmartPLS.

Table 5. Results of the Quality Criteria Assessment Model Test

	R Square	R Square Adjusted
Attitude	0.484	0.482
Intention	0.453	0.451
Perceived Behavioral Control	0.311	0.310
Subjective Norms	0.393	0.392

The Attitude variable has an R^2 value of 0.484, indicating that approximately 48.4% of the variation in attitudes can be explained by the model. In other words, candidate image, Political Campaign, and Cultural Values are able to provide a fairly good understanding of respondents' attitudes. The Adjusted R^2 value is almost the same, namely 0.482, indicating that this model is quite good, although there is a slight penalty for model complexity that may be caused by variables that do not provide significant contributions. For the Intention variable, the R^2 value obtained is 0.453, indicating that 45.3% of the variation in respondents' intention to vote is explained by the model. This indicates that this model has moderate power in explaining intentions. The Adjusted R^2 of 0.451 is slightly lower, indicating that although this model explains most of the variation in intentions. The Perceived Behavioral Control variable has an R^2 value of 0.311, indicating that only approximately 31.1% of the variation in perceived behavioral control can be explained by the model. The nearly identical Adjusted R^2 of 0.310 indicates that this model contributes little to explaining the variation in Perceived Behavioral Control, possibly indicating that other factors not included in this model play a larger role in influencing perceived behavioral control. Subjective Norms has an R^2 of 0.393, meaning that approximately 39.3% of the variation in subjective norms can be explained by the model.

The nearly identical Adjusted R^2 of 0.392 indicates that while this model is able to explain some of the variation in subjective norms, there is room for improvement, either through the addition of more relevant variables or refinements to the structural model.

Hypothesis Testing

To evaluate the path analysis representing the hypothesized relationship between constructs in the structural model, a path analysis was conducted, using coefficient values between -1 and +1. Path estimates closer to 0 represent a weaker relationship, while values closer to +1 indicate a stronger positive relationship. Probability or significance values are determined based on standard error calculations through bootstrapping. The basis used to directly test the hypothesis is that if the p-value <0.05 (significance level = 5%), then it is stated that there is a significant influence of the exogenous variable on the endogenous

variable. Table 5.20 below shows the results of the hypothesis testing conducted.

Table 6 Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis		Original Sample	Sample Mean	Standard Deviation	T Statistics (|O/STDEV|)	*P-Values*	Note
H1	CI-ATT	0.092	0.095	0.031	2.965	**0.003**	Supported
H2	PC-ATT	0.406	0.407	0.036	11.176	**0.000**	Supported
H3	CUL-ATT	0.342	0.341	0.038	9.091	**0.000**	Supported
H4	CUL-SN	0.627	0.627	0.026	24.032	**0.000**	Supported
H5	CUL-PBC	0.558	0.558	0.029	19.425	**0.000**	Supported
H6	ATT-IN	0.136	0.135	0.047	2.915	**0.004**	Supported
H7	SN-IN	0.155	0.155	0.046	3.339	**0.001**	Supported
H8	PBC-IN	0.485	0.486	0.044	11.139	**0.000**	Supported

Based on the data in table 6 above, the test results show that Candidate Image (CI) has a positive and significant effect on Attitude (ATT) with a coefficient of 0.092, t = 2.965, and p-value = 0.003. Although the coefficient value is relatively small, this effect is statistically significant, so the H1 hypothesis is supported. Furthermore, Political Campaign (PC) has a much stronger effect on Attitude with a coefficient of 0.406, t = 11.176, and p-value = 0.000, which indicates that political campaigns are the main factor in shaping voter attitudes. Similarly, Cultural Values (CUL) also have a significant effect on Attitude (coefficient = 0.342, t = 9.091, p = 0.000), which reflects the importance of local cultural values in shaping attitude orientation towards candidates. The fourth hypothesis (H4) tests the influence of Cultural Values on Subjective Norms, and the results show a very strong and significant relationship, with a coefficient of 0.627, t = 24.032, and p = 0.000. This indicates that culture has a significant contribution in shaping social norms, especially in the collective context of Maluku society, where voting decisions are often discussed in traditional or family forums. Similarly, for the fifth hypothesis (H5), Cultural Values also have a significant influence on Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC), with a coefficient of 0.558, t = 19.425, and p = 0.000. This strengthens the assumption that local cultural values also shape individuals' perceptions of control in making free political choices. The sixth hypothesis (H6) states that Attitude influences Interest, and is proven to be significant with a coefficient of 0.136, t = 2.915, and p = 0.004. This means that a positive attitude towards a candidate does indeed encourage voting intentions. In the seventh hypothesis (H7), Subjective Norms also showed a significant influence on Intention, with a coefficient of 0.155, t = 3.339, and p = 0.001. This indicates that social influence from others is also relevant in determining voting intention. Finally, the eighth hypothesis (H8) found that Perceived Behavioral Control was the strongest predictor of Intention, with a coefficient of 0.485, t = 11.139, and p = 0.000. This

indicates that an individual's belief in their ability to vote according to their own wishes (without pressure and with sufficient information) significantly determines voting intention.

All hypotheses in this model were statistically supported, indicating that the formulated theoretical model a combination of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) with external variables such as Candidate Image, Political Campaign, and Cultural Values has strong empirical validity. All studied constructs significantly contribute to voting intention, both directly and indirectly. In particular, Behavioral Control and local culture are important elements in the socio-political context of regions such as Maluku.

Discussion of Hypothesis 1

The first hypothesis tested the effect of candidate image on attitudes. The test results showed a T-statistic of 2.965 and a P-value of 0.003. Since the P-value is less than 0.05, this indicates that the candidate image has a significant positive effect on attitudes. This means that the better a candidate's image, the more positive voters' attitudes toward that candidate. Therefore, Hypothesis 1 is supported.

The results of this hypothesis test indicate that a candidate's image significantly influences voters' attitudes toward that candidate. Candidate image encompasses voter perceptions of the candidate's personal and leadership characteristics, including aspects such as trustworthiness, intelligence, leadership ability, and personal appeal. These elements are crucial in shaping voters' assessments of a candidate's worthiness to be elected. Candidate image is often understood as a representation of everything inherent in a political figure or candidate, including appearance, behavior, achievements, and communication skills.

Voters who perceive a candidate as trustworthy and who demonstrate intelligence in decision-making are more likely to have a positive attitude toward that candidate. A trustworthy candidate image reduces voters' doubts about the candidate's ability to perform their duties if elected.

Discussion of Hypothesis 2

The second hypothesis tested the effect of political campaigns on attitudes. The test results showed a T-statistic of 11.176 and a P-value of 0.000. The very small P-value indicates that political campaigns have a significant positive effect on attitudes. This means that political campaigns have a significant influence on shaping voters' attitudes toward the candidate or the issues promoted. Therefore, Hypothesis 2 is supported.

The results indicate that the more intensive and effective a candidate's political campaign, the more positive voters' attitudes toward that candidate. Political campaigns play a crucial role in shaping the candidate's image, communicating ideas and programs, and influencing voters' voting decisions. In the context of regional elections, political

communication through various media, including public relations, political advertising, and social media, has a significant influence on how voters evaluate candidates. Voters exposed to political campaigns that are open and clear about a candidate's ideology, vision, and mission tend to have positive attitudes toward that candidate.

Discussion of Hypothesis 3

The third hypothesis tested the influence of Cultural Values on Attitudes. The test results showed a T-statistic of 9.991 and a P-value of 0.000. The very small P-value indicates that Cultural Values have a significant positive effect on Attitudes. This means that an individual's cultural values can influence their attitudes toward a particular candidate or political issue. Therefore, Hypothesis 3 is supported.

Cultural values refer to the cultural dimensions described by Hofstede: collectivism, femininity, and long-term orientation. Maluku society, with its strong values of togetherness and close social relationships, demonstrates a strong tendency to base political decision-making on these social factors. This is reflected in voter behavior, which prioritizes emotional closeness and social relationships in determining their choices, which aligns with Hofstede's theory of collectivism.

The highly valued pela-gandong relationship in Maluku culture is a primary consideration for voters in selecting candidates. The values of Pela-Gandong reflect the bonds of kinship and cooperation that are at the heart of Maluku society. Research shows that voters are more likely to choose candidates who have an emotional connection to them or their community, as they believe such candidates will be better able to understand and champion common interests.

Discussion of Hypothesis 4

The fourth hypothesis examines the influence of Cultural Values on Subjective Norms. The test results showed a T-statistic of 24.032 and a P-value of 0.000. The very small P-value indicates that Cultural Values have a very significant effect on Subjective Norms. This means that an individual's cultural values influence the subjective social norms they consider important in decision-making. Therefore, Hypothesis 4 is supported.

In the context of the Maluku Gubernatorial Election, deeply rooted cultural values, such as the pela-gandong (traditional values), were shown to have a significant influence on the formation of voters' subjective norms. These cultural values reflect a social system based on relationships between individuals and communities, focusing on equality, harmony, and peace in communal life. The hypothesis that "cultural values have a positive effect on subjective norms" was supported by the research results, which indicated that voters in Maluku are more likely to adhere to the social values embedded in their lives, which in turn influences their decisions in choosing political candidates.

In Indonesia, particularly in the Maluku context, collectivism is deeply rooted, with voters often viewing political decisions as the result

of social processes involving family and community. In a society that values collective bonds, individual decisions are often based not only on personal preference but also on the social norms within their social group. Thus, the choice of gubernatorial candidate is not simply a personal decision but is also influenced by the social influence of family and traditional communities.

Discussion of Hypothesis 5

The fifth hypothesis tested the influence of Cultural Values on Perceived Behavioral Control. The test results showed a T-statistic of 19.425 and a P-value of 0.000. A very small P-value indicates that Cultural Values have a significant positive effect on Perceived Behavioral Control. This means that individuals with certain cultural values tend to feel they have more control over their decisions and actions, such as in elections. Therefore, Hypothesis 5 is supported.

The test results indicate that this hypothesis is supported, as strong cultural values, such as pela-gandong, play a significant role in shaping voters' perceptions of their ability to make independent political decisions. These cultural values influence the extent to which voters feel they have control and freedom to choose candidates without external obstacles or pressures.

One key factor in this context is the deep collectivism of Maluku society. In collectivist cultures, individual decisions, including those regarding the selection of political candidates, are often influenced by broader social norms, such as family or community expectations. However, in many cases, people also feel they have the freedom to make decisions, as long as they consult with elders, such as traditional leaders or close family members. This suggests that despite social pressures, voters in Maluku feel they can still control their decisions, especially when they have sufficient information about the candidates and perceive options that align with their cultural values.

Discussion of Hypothesis 6

The sixth hypothesis examines the effect of attitude on interest. The test results show a t-statistic of 2.915 and a p-value of 0.004. A p-value less than 0.05 indicates that attitude has a significant positive effect on interest. This means that a positive attitude toward a candidate or election can increase an individual's intention to participate in the election. Therefore, hypothesis 6 is supported.

This study aims to test the hypothesis that attitude (attitude) has a positive influence on intention to vote (interest) in the context of candidate selection in the Maluku gubernatorial election. The results of this hypothesis test indicate that a positive attitude toward a candidate significantly influences voters' intention to vote for that candidate on election day. This is consistent with the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), which states that attitudes toward a behavior will influence the intention to perform that behavior. In this context, voters' attitudes

toward gubernatorial candidates will significantly determine whether they will actually vote for that candidate.

Voters' attitudes toward candidates are reflected in their assessments of the candidate's qualities and characteristics. Voters who feel that choosing a candidate is the right choice, feel proud to vote for him, and feel confident that the candidate deserves to be elected, tend to have a stronger intention to vote in the regional elections.

Discussion of Hypothesis 7

The seventh hypothesis tested the influence of Subjective Norms on Intention. The test results showed a T-statistic of 3.339 and a P-value of 0.001. A P-value less than 0.05 indicates that Subjective Norms have a significant, positive effect on Intention. This means that an individual's subjective social norms—such as the views of friends, family, or society regarding the importance of voting—can encourage them to participate in elections. Thus, Hypothesis 7 is supported.

The results of the hypothesis test indicate that subjective norms do influence voters' intention to vote in the upcoming regional elections. This phenomenon is highly relevant to the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), which emphasizes that decisions to take action, such as selecting a candidate, are influenced by social norms within an individual's environment.

Subjective norms refer to the extent to which individuals feel social pressure or support in making their decisions. In the context of the Maluku gubernatorial election, this pressure can come from family, friends, or the wider community, which plays a significant role in shaping voters' political decisions. For example, if the family supports a particular candidate's choice, voters are likely to feel more moved to follow that choice.

Discussion of Hypothesis 8

The eighth hypothesis tested the effect of perceived behavioral control on intention. The test results showed a T-statistic of 11.139 and a P-value of 0.000. With a very small P-value, this indicates that perceived behavioral control has a very significant positive effect on intention. This means that individuals who feel they have more control over their actions, including participating in elections, are more likely to vote. Thus, Hypothesis 8 is supported.

The test results indicate that the higher voters' perceptions of control over their candidate selection, the greater their intention to vote in the upcoming regional elections. The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), introduced by Ajzen, explains that PBC plays a significant role in influencing an individual's intention to perform a behavior, in this case, choosing a candidate in a regional head election.

Perceived behavioral control in this study refers to the extent to which voters feel they have control over their decision to choose a candidate, based on the information they have and the freedom to choose without external pressure. Voters who feel they have sufficient

information about the candidates and their policies, and who feel there is no external pressure hindering their choice, are more likely to have the intention to vote for the candidate they consider appropriate.

CONCLUSION

The results of the study indicate that the candidate's image has a very strong influence on voter attitudes, where voters who view the candidate's character and leadership positively tend to build a positive attitude towards him, as evidenced by the T-statistic value of 2.965 and P-value of 0.003, which indicates the significance of this influence. Effective, open political campaigns that are able to reach various levels of society are also proven to have a significant impact on the formation of attitudes, indicated by the T-statistic value of 11.176 and the P-value of 0.000, which confirms the strong influence of the campaign in shaping voter perceptions. In addition, cultural values such as collectivism, femininity, long-term orientation, and local cultural ties are proven to contribute greatly to shaping voter attitudes, with the T-Statistics value of 9.991 and P-Value of 0.000, which confirms the significance of this influence, while also indicating that cultural values are an important foundation in the formation of people's political preferences. Cultural values also play a crucial role in shaping subjective norms, where voters in Maluku are influenced by social pressure, family support, and community expectations, and this is reinforced by the T-statistic value of 24.032 and the P-value of 0.000, indicating a highly significant influence. Furthermore, cultural values have a significant impact on voters' perceived behavioral control, including confidence in their ability to make political choices freely and consciously, as evidenced by the T-statistic of 19.425 and P-Value of 0.000. The next finding shows that positive attitudes towards candidates significantly influence voting intentions, where voters with positive views of a candidate's qualities and policies have a greater tendency to intend to vote for him, as indicated by the T-statistic of 2.915 and P-Value of 0.004. Subjective norms from social environments such as family, community, and friends also strengthen voters' interest in participating in elections, with the T-Statistics value of 3.339 and P-Value of 0.001 indicating the significance of this influence. Finally, perceived behavioral control, namely voters' belief in their freedom and ability to make political choices without external pressure, is proven to have a very strong influence on voting interest, as supported by T-Statistics 11.139 and P-Value 0.000, so that overall the results of this study confirm that attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control are the three main psychological factors that significantly shape voting interest in the political context in Maluku.

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