

Brand Ambassadors in Advertising: Changes in the Visual Aesthetics of Indonesian Product Advertising from A Political Economy Perspective

Prayanto Widyo Harsanto^{1*}, Jalung Wirangga Jakti²

¹Faculty of Art, Institut Seni Indonesia Yogyakarta, ORCID: 0000-0002-0280-2766

²Graduate School of Indonesia Institute of the Arts Bali, ORCID : 0009-0004-0945-2262

ABSTRACT: The use of brand ambassadors in advertising has long been utilized by the business world as a persuasive communication tool. Brand ambassadors as brand ambassadors in Indonesian advertising have undergone changes over time in line with government leadership. These changes in the visual aesthetics of brand ambassadors are related to the influence of the ruling government's socio-political and economic regulations. This study aims to map, describe, and analyze these changes from a political economy perspective. A critical descriptive qualitative method is used to provide a comprehensive explanation supported by various literature sources. Data collection was conducted through observation, documentation, and literature review. This study found that visual changes in product advertisements are influenced by the policies of the ruling government, taking into account economic, social, cultural, and political elements (security, comfort, and order). In conclusion, the operationalization of advertising and politics has become a practice of the ruling government institution as a "strategy" to build and maintain the legitimacy of the regulator's power (the government) in setting aesthetic standards according to its interests.

KEYWORDS: brand Ambassador, advertising, political economy, aesthetics

1. INTRODUCTION

The journey of Indonesian governance from the New Order era to the Reformation era has witnessed significant changes in the utilization of public figures in advertising. These changes can be observed through national origin, profession or occupation, and socio-cultural transformations occurring in Indonesia. Such transitions are inextricably linked to the regulations implemented by the ruling government. The political-economic elements fundamentally cannot be separated from Indonesia's advertising landscape (Erlita et al., 2025). Vago (1980), in his book *Social Change* states that during the New Order era, political and economic stability became the primary keys in operating its governmental wheels. The New Order government regulated everything with highly detailed and strict regulations, including advertising matters, such as language usage in advertisements, limitations on advertising space in newspapers, content restrictions, and television broadcasting schedules. The entry of foreign advertising agencies into Indonesia was also controlled and limited. Restrictions on who could appear as brand ambassadors (public figures) for advertisements were also enforced. The post-New Order government (Reformation era) established different regulations and policies from its predecessor. Thus, it can be said that every change in governmental leadership was accompanied by changes in regulations and policies. These changes would subsequently impact or influence transformations in the advertising world.

The New Order government's regulations on issues and restrictions regarding the use of public figures as brand ambassadors for advertisements generated pro and contra discourse within the advertising industry. This included the closure and prohibition of several mass media operations, leading to the diminishing press freedom following the January 15, 1974 Malari Incident (Adryamarthanino & Ningsih, 2022). The ban on mass media publishing and broadcasting also impacted Indonesia's advertising landscape. Advertisers were required to comply with prohibitions on using Western (European) and Chinese brand ambassadors as advertising models. Other restrictions included the use of foreign languages and Chinese characters in publications, printing, and mass media. These prohibitions subsequently evolved into a ban on the use of Chinese language by ethnic Chinese communities (Jumaidi & Indriawati, 2023). All activities were continuously controlled and regulated by the authorities, with violators facing political risks, causing advertising producers to exercise caution to avoid potential responses from those in power. Therefore, with various restrictions in place, all stakeholders were compelled to become increasingly creative and persuasive in generating advertising ideas that could be accepted by all levels of society.

Research on public figures in advertising tends to be viewed through two lenses: First, the categorization of public figure personas. A public figure is an individual who becomes the center of public attention or is widely recognized by society. Public figures are individuals known broadly by society, whether through their profession, competency, or their actions. Public figures can

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also be referred to as community leaders or public personalities. Public figures play crucial roles in society, and their lives consistently remain subject to public consumption. Both positive and negative actions of public figures invariably become topics of discussion among the broader community.

Public figures are appropriately positioned as individuals worthy of being role models and exemplars. Those who can be classified as public figures include: politicians and government officials, celebrities and entertainers, athletes and sports stars, business leaders and entrepreneurs, and activists. (Hajiri, 2022) states that while the term public figure is often synonymous with celebrity, the key distinction lies in the persona presented by the individual. Celebrities possess a persona that emerges through their fame. This persona can also be described as the charisma inherent to the celebrity. Meanwhile, not all public figures possess personas as compelling as those of celebrities.

Second, the role of public figures in advertising. Public figures are frequently utilized as brand ambassadors in advertisements. Both emotionally and rationally, public figures can represent or serve as intermediaries between products and target audiences. The appearance of these figures in advertisements creates specific imagery that becomes intrinsically linked to the product. As stated by Terence A. Shimp (Shimp, 2000) and (Baudrillard, 2006), the visual presence of brand ambassadors in advertisements plays a crucial role in determining an advertisement's success. A brand ambassador is an individual engaged by a company to become the 'face' or icon of a brand to enhance brand awareness and sales. Brand ambassadors typically collaborate with companies/producers for a limited duration as specified in their contractual agreements. Producers seek to identify their products with public figures used in their advertisements to generate sustained positive imagery. This imagery is expected to provide added value to their products. Therefore, public figures must consistently maintain their behavior, ethics, and morality.

This literary evidence demonstrates the vital role of public figures as brand ambassadors in advertising. The utilization of public figures in advertising has undergone shifts over time, determined by evolving societal trends. These trends and lifestyles influence public preferences as potential consumers of goods and services. However, changes/shifts in public figures in advertising can also occur due to regulations imposed by governing authorities, as witnessed in Indonesia from the New Order era to the Reformation era. This phenomenon merits investigation because governmental policies as regulators can create challenges for business actors, the advertising industry, and Indonesian society at large.

This study was conducted in response to the strong political-economic role in Indonesian advertising, which can generate various factors affecting the changes in the use of public figures as brand ambassadors in product advertisements. Accordingly, this paper aims to describe, map, and analyze the changes in the utilization of public figures in Indonesian advertising. The authors observe changes in public figures' appearances in advertisements during the New Order government through the Reformation era and beyond. The topic addressing the issues as presented in this article's title represents an intriguing subject for further examination to uncover and explain the fundamental basis for these changes.

This study is premised on the argument that public figures as brand ambassadors in advertising play a crucial role in determining a product's success or failure. Therefore, companies utilize public figures to convey promotional messages to the public, with the expectation of increasing sales. The use of brand ambassadors is implemented with the anticipation of generating positive impacts for companies. Meanwhile, the study of changes/shifts in the use of brand ambassadors for advertising in Indonesia is conducted within a political-economic perspective. In fact, regarding a nation's economic growth, advertising plays a role in economic development, as evidenced by the growth in public purchasing power indicating increased economic growth. The presence of advertising as a consumer information source about products represents a crucial element in industrial market orientation within a country, including Indonesia.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Public figure (brand ambassador)

The utilization of public figures as brand ambassadors serves as a corporate tool to communicate messages and connect with the public, aiming to increase sales (El Hedhli et al., 2021; Liu & Zheng, 2024; Macheke et al., 2024). The employment of brand ambassadors can yield positive impacts for companies. Generally, brand ambassadors are selected based on celebrity imaging. (Rai et al., 2021) and (Xiong et al., 2021) assert that the use of public figures as brand ambassadors can effectively build brand awareness and create positive product imagery. Brand awareness relates to consumers' ability to recognize or recall a brand as part of a product category. Consequently, numerous companies employ brand ambassadors as instruments to convey marketing messages to broad audiences through advertising as a marketing communication medium. In subsequent developments, advertising stars (public figures, artists, and professionals) previously more commonly known as public figures, began shifting around the 1990s to be termed celebrities. The term 'celebrity' is used to indicate individuals who frequently appear and become news in mass media (Brooks et al., 2021). Its definition closely parallels that of public figure - namely, figures widely recognized by society. Public figures (celebrities) who become product advertisement endorsers predominantly comprise artists or film stars who are current trend setters.

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2.2. Product Advertising

Advertising is a promotional activity serving as a persuasive effort. Therefore, advertisements must be attractive to gain potential consumers' attention (Drissi et al., 2025; Rababah, 2023). One visual attraction in advertising to obtain audience attention is utilizing popular public figures as brand ambassadors for products. As mentioned by (Harsanto, 2016), "advertising is persuasion" because almost all advertising presentations contain the intention to influence or persuade audiences through specific presentations to generate stimuli leading to attitudes and behaviors desired by the advertisement. Thus, the presence of brand ambassadors in advertisements can provide product appeal, thereby increasing peak product awareness in consumers' minds. Consequently, the use of brand ambassadors in advertising can function to influence feelings, knowledge, meaning, beliefs, attitudes, opinions, thoughts, and consumer imagery related to a product.

According to, advertising as a captain of industry aims to secure market share by organizing and controlling public taste and behavior (Vrtana & Krizanova, 2023; Zhao et al., 2022). Stuart Ewen (2001) refers to the situation of abundant consumer goods in the market as a continually responsive consumer marketing. In this context, a shift occurs: consumers who initially sought goods with reliable quality are now sought after by goods manufacturers. Factories not only produce goods but must also produce consumers who will purchase these goods. Advertising becomes the primary medium, as it is tasked with creating desire within consumers, reminding consumers that something is lacking in their relationships with others, offering and suggesting the use of their products as answers or solutions.

2.3. Political-Economics

Stockhammer (2022) states that political economy refers to the methods pursued or actions taken by the government in the economic sector or policies related to the economy. Political economy is an element that serves as a tool of economics and rationalization of political power in implementing plans to achieve desired objectives. In the political economy approach, the problems encountered include political variables, economic variables, socio-cultural variables, while influential factors include government intervention and policy changes.

Meier's assertions are reinforced by (Baudrillard, 1976; Deliarnov, 2006; Ewen, 2001), who maintain that successful business or industrial activities must be able to operate at all levels of political life. The sustainability of consumerism processes represents a substantial business, yet this sustainability also depends on political power and economic factors. The concept of 'political economy in advertising' examines the relationship between political policies frequently implemented on advertising through governmental power and authority. This statement is strengthened by (Andreas et al., 2021) and (Benjamin, n.d.), who discuss politics in the context of power, as the substance of politics is fundamentally about influencing, controlling, and instilling ideologies. In capitalistic political measures, all actions are legitimate for achieving economic targets. This implies that every aspect within economics and politics maintains an inseparable interconnection. Furthermore, it can be explained that every economic process has a relationship with political processes, and conversely, political processes are connected to economics. Political processes influence economic processes, and economic processes affect political processes. Similarly, economic institutions or actors cannot be separated from political actors, and political actors are inevitably linked to economic actors, with both actors being intrinsically interconnected.

3. METHODS

3.1. Methods and Approaches

This study employs a descriptive qualitative method with a political-economic approach conceived by (Meier, 1989; Meier & Stiglitz, 2001) to provide comprehensive explanations, supported by various literature sources. This study examines the visual presentations of advertisements utilizing public figures from the New Order era (1965) through the Reformation era (1998) to the present. The year 1965 marks the initial point of events that formed the foundation for the New Order government. These events would later underpin political stability and economic growth in Indonesia. Economic growth during the New Order era became key to the growth and development of more modern and large-scale advertising. The Reformation era began in 1998 with the end of the New Order era. As stated by Al Makin (2024), the reformation period in its narrow sense encompasses the period 1998-2004, extending to the Indonesian Presidential election in 2004. However, in its broader sense, it continues to the present day.

3.2. Data Collection

Data in this research were obtained through observation, documentation, and literature review. Observation of artifacts was conducted by directly examining various artifacts treated as data, specifically advertisements meeting the criteria from 1965-2023, which could provide insights into ideas, political situations, economic conditions, and socio-cultural aspects of that period. Documentation was carried out through document recording and photographing advertising artifacts, as well as recording data related to the study objectives. Artifacts were obtained from social media and mass media, including the Kompas Newspaper publishing center located at Palmerah Selatan Street, West Jakarta. At the Kompas Information Center (PIK), complete archives of Kompas Newspaper are preserved from its initial publication (1965) to the present, in both digital and conventional formats. Thus,

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changes in public figures in advertising could be observed and traced, enabling the acquisition of accurate and comprehensive information and data.

3.3. Analysis

According to Feldman (1992), the analysis of visual works can be divided into fundamental stages (Dehouche & Dehouche, 2023): 1) Description, in this stage, the task is to identify a work and obtain information that serves as indicators of the work's meaning and purpose. This involves objectively detailing what appears significant in a work without including opinion or interpretation. 2) Analysis, supported by theoretical foundations relevant to the problem discussion. The analysis stage begins to incorporate viewpoints, commentary, and arguments regarding the work or data collection results. This analysis reveals thoughts about what is meant or what lies behind a work, underpinned by theoretical foundations. 3) Assessment, represents opinions or determinations about what values have been observed and what has been described, analyzed, and interpreted. 4) Conclusion, constitutes the final opinion containing information based on facts and reasoning from the research object's results.

Subsequently, a contextual analysis is performed, which constitutes discourse analysis based on the examined text in relation to its encompassing external context, including both situational and political-economic contexts. Context comprises all situations and elements external to the text that influence its usage, such as the situation where the text is produced, the participants involved, and the intended functions that must be understood and interpreted from underlying social conditions and environments. Within context, a message is not only interpreted from what is explicitly visible in the text but is analyzed to uncover hidden meanings. In this regard, public figures as brand ambassadors in advertising are not merely visual artifacts that can only be understood textually, but carry underlying meanings. The final stage involves drawing conclusions as part of a complete configuration activity. This represents the interpretation and synthesis of public figures in advertising as a research-derived conception. The research concludes once the required data is complete and an adequate level of confidence in the research findings' validity has been achieved.

3.4. Focus of The Study

To ensure this research maintains focus, direction, and effectiveness, the authors have categorized it based on several study criteria, considering criterion-based selection and temporal limitations. These include:

- a. This research focuses on display (pictorial) advertisements that utilize models.
- b. Display advertisements that offer consumer products featuring human figures.

4. RESULT

Data collection yielded 563 advertisements from 1965-2023 representing various product types. From these 563 advertisement versions, selection, reduction, and verification processes were conducted to establish categories for analysis aligned with the research objectives. The research substance positions public figures/celebrities in advertisements as a domain of study with potential for development and examination as an aesthetic-transformative object possessing values within the context of knowledge encompassing artistic, political-economic, and socio-cultural aspects. To understand the phenomenon of changes in public figures appearing in advertisements from 1965-2023, classifications can be made into several categories, including: Ethnicity or nationality, comprising Indonesian, foreign, and mixed/Indo-European. The next category is occupation or profession, including figures appearing from artistic circles, such as singers, film/soap opera stars, and comedians. Following this are community leaders, including officials, religious figures, and entrepreneurs. Finally, there are figures appearing in advertisements who are unknown to the public. The data acquisition results can be presented as follows:

4.1. Country of origin of Public Figure (brand ambassador) Product Advertisement

Indigenous refers to human figures originating from native ethnic groups in Indonesia, while non-indigenous refers to individuals who are not native Indonesian residents. In this context, these are advertising models identified as originating from Indonesia or other nations such as European and Asian countries (Japan, India, Korea). Additionally, mixed-heritage refers to individuals descended from two countries (indigenous/Indonesian with foreigners). Based on the calculation of 563 display advertisements, the data shows that Indonesian public figures account for 376 (68%), foreign public figures from Europe 87 (16%), and foreign figures from Asia (China, Japan, Thailand, Korea, India) account for 44 (8%), while mixed-heritage public figures comprise 46 (8%).

Based on the origin of public figures serving as brand ambassadors in advertisements from 1965-2023, it can be determined that Indonesian figures were the most numerous and dominant among the four categories. Foreign figures also maintained a significant presence as advertising models at 16%. The phenomenon of Western (European) figures frequently appeared during the first period of the New Order government, specifically approaching and during the 1970s. This phenomenon was attributed to several factors, including: 1) Products offered in Indonesia were generally from the West, such as Unilever products from Europe, thus models selected tended to have Western (European) features; 2) There were no Indonesian advertising agencies considered professional enough to handle advertising design; 3) The use of Indonesian figures as advertising models suitable for product concepts had not yet gained popularity. In the 1980s, the government opened opportunities for foreign advertising agencies to enter

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Indonesia or affiliate with domestic advertising agencies. Western or European-featured public figures remained a barometer of modernity for Eastern nations, including Indonesia, thus being considered as role models and ideals in lifestyle.

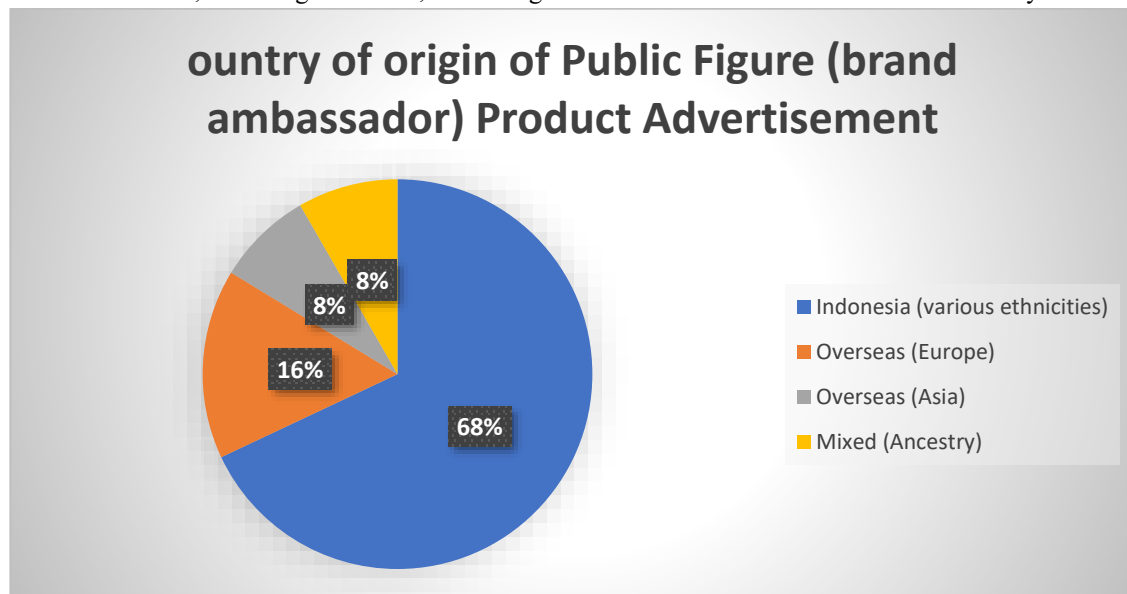


Table 1: country of origin of Public Figure (brand ambassador) Product Advertisement

4.2. Types of Public Figure Job as Brand Ambassadors in Product Advertisements

Public figures selected as advertising models generally maintain primary occupations or professions. The definition of occupation or profession, in its broad sense, refers to the primary activities conducted by humans; in its narrow sense, it refers to tasks or work that generates income. Figures in advertisements, based on their occupational/professional status, are divided into three categories: public figures, artists, and professionals. Public figure status refers to individuals holding special positions within society, such as government officials, religious leaders, and traditional leaders. Artist status generally encompasses occupations in arts and culture, such as singers, comedians, film stars, and musicians. Meanwhile, professional status refers to occupational fields founded on specific education and expertise. These professions have professional associations, codes of ethics, and specific certification and licensing processes for each professional field. Occupations classified as professions include pilots, doctors, nurses, engineers, and lawyers.

Based on the criteria of profession or occupation of advertising stars as community figures, artists, or those with specialized professions or expertise, the calculation results from a total of 563 advertisements show: community figures 17 (3%), artists 403 (72%), and professionals or individuals with specialized expertise 143 (25%).



Table 2. Job as Brand Ambassadors in Product Advertisements

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DISCUSSION

5.1. The Political-Economic Dynamics of the New Order in the Face of Indonesian Advertising

The New Order government (1965-1998) under Soeharto's leadership not only established political and security stability but also fostered Indonesia's economic growth. This structural change in the economic system proved to be key to the growth and development of more modern and large-scale advertising. Advertising in Indonesia experienced rapid development since the New Order came to power, as economic issues became a primary concern. The early New Order government period (1965) is referred to as the birth of modern advertising in Indonesia, operating with full-service advertising capacity encompassing media planning, account management, research, and other fields. This condition further encouraged the growth of advertising agencies in Indonesia. Indonesia's economy recovered rapidly following the transition from the Old Order to the New Order government. The New Order government established three main sectors in economic development: agriculture, industry, and services. Of these three main sectors, only the service sector's growth closely approximated the economic growth rate, reaching 8% from 1968 to 1981 (Hill et al., 1996). The advertising service sector played a crucial role in supporting marketing for the growth of traded goods. Throughout the New Order period, this service sector consistently generated at least 40% additional contribution to GDP (Ricklefs, 1998). Moreover, following the injection of foreign capital in 1970 into the domestic advertising industry, growth began to manifest. International or foreign advertising began entering Indonesia extensively, gradually and certainly transforming the advertising business sector into an international extension.

The entry of international-scale advertising predominantly controlled by foreign entities (Western/European countries) contributed to shaping advertising appearances in Indonesia. Mass media advertisements were largely populated by foreign-faced models serving as brand ambassadors. Foreign public figures frequently appearing in advertisements were generally European artists. The presence of these European celebrities strongly influenced the socio-cultural life of society, particularly young people in Indonesia, marked by lifestyle changes in a society still transitioning toward developing nation status. In mass culture, "foreign" values were considered to hold higher status. These values were equated with modernity, thus it was unsurprising that everything originating from foreign societies was viewed as an appropriate and suitable model for emulation. Westernization occurred rapidly among Indonesian society, supported by the expansion of Western influence, particularly among urban youth. Indonesian youth adopted many spiritual life traits from Western lifestyles. Rationalism, individualism, freedom of speech, and even criticism of their own parents were readily adapted by Indonesian youth. Imitation frequently occurred through the mastery of language, behavior, attitudes, and knowledge of Western customs.



Picture 1: The beginning of the New Order era often saw celebrities from abroad being used for advertisements. "Foreign" values were considered to be of higher standing and were referred to as the modern lifestyle of Indonesian society. Such as Hollywood celebrities Madonna in Magazine advertisements and Charles Bronson for 'Mandom' hair care advertisements (Source: Kompas, January 25, 1981 and May 8, 1976)

The presence of foreign companies and capital in Indonesian advertising, whether consciously or unconsciously, influenced advertising visual styles that tended to reflect Western culture (Western style). This Western cultural influence on advertising style could be observed in concepts, clothing, behavior, and language usage (foreign or mixed languages). The majority of business entities (producers) lacked confidence in 'selling' their products using domestic concepts. One manifestation was the mixing of Indonesian with foreign languages (English). In reality, rather than proper Indonesian language, it became Indonesianized Foreign Language. Examples include: "Toko Pabrik" becoming "Factory Outlet," "Nikmati Jakarta!" becoming "Enjoy Jakarta!" and so forth. Other strong foreign cultural influences in Indonesia were reflected in advertising appearances through public figures (brand ambassadors) utilized and cultural attributes worn in Western-oriented (European) advertisements. Inadvertently, the influx of advertised foreign products created negative perceptions among Indonesian society. The public began to regard domestically

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manufactured products as inferior in quality, even beginning to abandon traditional culture (Cakram, December 1997). Consequently, the New Order government conceived campaign and propaganda movements with the slogan 'Buy Indonesian-Made Products'.

Recognizing these issues, the ruling New Order government attempted to encourage the revival of various cultural elements that had been forgotten or received insufficient attention. The New Order government stated, "National culture is the culture that emerges as the intellectual product of all Indonesian people. The ancient and original culture that exists as the pinnacle of regional cultures throughout Indonesia is considered national culture." As stated by (Gumulya & Meilani, 2023), traditional culture represents a harmonious balance between aesthetics and function, physical and ideological purposes, and economic and social decisions. Cultural endeavors must progress toward the advancement of the era, culture, and unity without rejecting foreign cultural elements that can develop and enrich the nation while elevating the humanitarian dignity of the Indonesian people. In this context, the ruling government employed ideology under the veil of nationalism, and through advertising, cultural concepts could be conveyed.



Picture 2: The Indonesian government's efforts to build national identity (Indonesianness) by encouraging regional cultural themes (local genius) to be used for advertising (Source: Kompas, 7 November 1986 and 6 June 1985).

The two advertisements above (Inza and Sari Ayu) depict Indonesian cultural identity recognizable from the clothing worn by the models (public figures). The function of clothing initially served as a means to protect the body from cold and hot weather. It subsequently became more diverse, for instance, to cover certain body parts for modesty, as ceremonial elements, as a means of fulfilling aesthetic needs, and for social functions. As stated by (Kartodirdjo & Hatmosuprobo, 1987), clothing modernization occurred with changes in societal functions. Many technical occupations required greater physical dynamism, rendering traditional clothing impractical. New habits, such as sitting in chairs, riding bicycles, operating motorcycles, and long-distance travel, all practically demanded modern clothing.

(Booth & McCawley, 1981; Setiyono, 2004) assert that the New Order government under Soeharto's leadership not only established political and security stability but also demonstrated Indonesia's economic growth. This structural change in the economic system proved to be key to the growth and development of more modern and large-scale advertising. The economic growth during the New Order era undeniably fostered the growth of advertising in Indonesia, accompanied simultaneously by government policies affecting advertising creativity, albeit indirectly.



Picture 3: When the New Order government banned the use of brand ambassadors from western countries (Europe), advertising companies were not less resourceful in using brand ambassadors of mixed descent (mixed race). For example, Lux soap advertisements use model Tamara Blezynski who is of mixed Polish-Indonesian descent, and Toshiba advertisements use model Luna Maya who is of mixed Indonesian-Austrian descent (source Kompas, July 30, 2009).

5.2. Welcoming Freedom of Expression in the Era of Reform

Following the end of the New Order government in 1998, Habibie was appointed as its successor. President Habibie's administration was relatively brief. The subsequent president was Abdurrahman Wahid, commonly known as Gus Dur, who became Indonesia's fourth president. President Gus Dur's administration was also relatively brief, spanning 1999-2001. His administration, though considered controversial, promoted unity within ethnic and religious plurality. Gus Dur's administration achieved significant progress in Indonesia, notably in supporting pluralism and tolerance. Despite his brief tenure, President Abdurrahman Wahid's (Gus Dur's) political policies were considerably expansive, allowing previously prohibited cultural expressions in Indonesia to develop freely. One of his key policies was the issuance of Presidential Regulation No.6/2000 in 2000, which revoked Presidential Instruction No.14/1967 issued by the Soeharto government, which had prohibited all forms of Chinese religious and cultural expressions in public spaces (Adryamarthanino & Ningsih, 2022a; Gischa, 2020).

The issuance of these government policies directly influenced the citizenship status of ethnic Chinese. Ethnic Chinese represents the most significant foreign ethnic minority in Indonesia. During the New Order era, the implementation of regulations regarding the Certificate of Republic of Indonesia Citizenship (SBKRI) specifically targeted Indonesian citizens of Chinese ethnicity and their descendants. Although this regulation was administrative in nature, the essential implementation of SBKRI effectively positioned Indonesian citizens of Chinese descent in a "questionable" legal status. The Reformation Era placed ethnic Chinese in a clear and definitive legal status position as Indonesian citizens. The officially recognized citizenship status of ethnic Chinese was warmly welcomed. This recognition was also well-received in Indonesia's advertising industry. Previously, ethnic Chinese faces were not permitted to appear as brand ambassadors in advertisements. In the Reformation Era, Chinese figures began appearing frequently after the fall of the New Order government in 1998. This is demonstrated in table 2 (37 figures out of 563 advertisements). This development fostered new creativity in advertising, notably with Chinese-featured public figures increasingly appearing in advertisements after the 2000s (post- New Order), and advertisements began extensively utilizing Chinese icons and attributes.

During the New Order era, restrictions were imposed on Chinese cultural development in Indonesia, including prohibitions on Barongsai artistic performances, Lunar New Year celebrations, and Chinese cultural development in Indonesia. This caused ethnic Chinese in Indonesia to feel comprehensively restricted, resulting in the absence of visual elements or images referencing Chinese culture in advertisements. Consequently, advertising concepts diverted towards Western culture, which was more 'acceptable' to the broader society, for example, by referencing Western countries (Westernized behavior). Political policies were inevitably directly connected, as individuals possessing power in certain political positions, particularly at the state level, held authority to regulate, control, and distribute matters related to production, trade, consumption, and other aspects. According to

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(Caporaso & Levine, 1992), economics and politics cannot be separated. Politics in democracy can be viewed as a method of formulating policies to gain votes, subsequently obtaining income, power, and authority. In democracy, rulers act to gain advantages and compete with other parties to achieve them. Thus, politics operates similarly to economics.

The post- New Order Reformation movement in Indonesia generated numerous policies that provided freedom of expression and openness to the external world. Globalization contributed to changing the direction/trends of Indonesian society's lifestyle. The penetration of foreign culture into Indonesia had significant influence on local culture. While previously Western/European trends and references dominated, Asia, specifically Korea, now directs Indonesian society's lifestyle orientation. One of the most striking examples is the influence of Korean culture through K-Pop phenomena and other entertainment industries. The social impact of K-Pop's popularity has brought changes in lifestyle, fashion trends, and even teenage behavior in Indonesia. This transformation occurred over approximately the last 15 years (beginning around the 2010s) when a trend shift emerged among Indonesian society, as South Korean arts and culture began gaining popularity and appreciation among the public (particularly youth). These Korean arts and cultural elements include films, television dramas, music, and culinary arts (cuisine). Numerous public figures, especially film artists and singers (musicians), have appeared and served as brand ambassadors for products circulating in Indonesia.



Picture 4: Since 2015, many Korean artists and actors (celebrities) have become Brand Ambassadors for advertising products circulating in Indonesia, such as Chu Loona (Pocari), Lee Min Ho (White Koffi)

(<https://about.vidio.com/artikel/ahn-hyo-seop-jadi-ba-mie-sedaap-manfaatkan-diskon-dan-voucher-spesial-di-tokopedia/>)

The utilization of figures such as Korean celebrities known in society is primarily based on appeal considerations. All of this aims to attract the attention of the target audience as a crucial element in advertising. A public figure is someone recognized by the broader society whose existence can influence the public. The utilization of "public figures" as message deliverers is expected to accelerate advertisement message reception by consumers. Consumers more readily accept products when advertisements employ celebrity models. Indeed, these figures are appointed because they can represent characters as cultural meanings most expected to effectively approach the target audience. The use of public figures who also provide testimonials remains one of the mainstays of advertising creators in conveying their visual messages. The creative approach of featuring famous stars is positioned as a personification of the star. The utilization of public figures is typically employed when the individual is at the peak of their fame. This utilization is believed to possess powerful and highly persuasive appeal capable of boosting product sales.

In this context, advertisements are deliberately designed to guide the masses (potential consumers) to reinforce social constructions according to producer interests (specific authorities). In political terms, the essence lies not in truth but in belief. As stated by Boorstin in (Leiss, William; Kline, Stephen; Jhally, 1986), "...the essence of modern advertising is not truth but 'believability'." Modern advertising is inseparable from the role of endorsement that can lead to the success of a product or service presented to consumers. Advertisement creation cannot be divorced from the role of public figures as endorsement. (Kotler, 1997) and (Chaney, 2009) note that public figures become one of the choices in advertising products because messages delivered by public

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figures as attractive sources receive substantial attention and are easily remembered by the public (potential consumers). Society acknowledges the credibility of public figures not through their declarations, but through their visual presence.

The presence of celebrities alone is sometimes considered insufficient to convince consumers, thus it is often accompanied by a form of testimonial from the individual concerned. This is intended to further assure consumers that the advertised product has been genuinely tested and used by their idol. As stated by (Shimp, 2000), the use of celebrities or public figures in advertisements is conceptualized as the 'center of interest' and 'eye catcher' for advertising displays. The presence of a celebrity in advertisements is expected to enhance consumer reliability value. This type of celebrity appearance in advertisements is frequently categorized as a testimonial ad or also termed endorsement ad, meaning that these 'celebrities' implicitly, and sometimes explicitly, provide support for the advertised product's superiority. Furthermore, the use of celebrities as endorsers or advertising stars serves three objectives: to attract attention; strengthen credibility; and boost image.

Celebrities acting as advertising stars or brand ambassadors sometimes merely pose when appearing in advertisements. In their poses, they neither make verbal statements nor utilize attributes related to the offered product. In their appearance, they no longer convey statements and testimonials embodied in text or script. The presence of these celebrities as advertising stars is not coincidental but rather represents semiotic propaganda. The presence of celebrities serves as a signifier for the signified, comprising values that product manufacturers aim to instill through their advertised products.

6. CONCLUSION

Furthermore, the factors influencing the changing use of brand ambassadors in advertising in Indonesia over time are inseparable from the government's responsibility to maintain political and economic stability. This study reveals that conceptually, advertising issues are influenced by various factors such as economic, social, cultural, political, technological, communication, and artistic aspects. The political-economic role of the ruling government contributes to determining communication messages and appearances in advertisements. In this context, the use of public figures (brand ambassadors) in advertising is forced to conform to the policy framework of the ruling government. This research also contributes to an understanding of issues related to the use of public figures in Indonesian advertising from the New Order government to the Reformation era. A consequence of the politicization of advertising is that promotional visual messages are filtered and sterilized by authorities. government, particularly during the New Order. Meanwhile, the Reformation era witnessed an openness to accepting differences through negotiations between the government and various stakeholders in advertising. However, both periods continued to consider economic, social, cultural, and political elements (security, comfort, and order).

The theoretical contribution of this study is a deeper understanding for advertisers of consumers' perceptions that a brand ambassador has the power to change perceptions of the product being offered. The study also suggests that advertisers should select the most popular brand ambassadors to target a wider population. The findings indicate that celebrity persuasive factors that can influence consumer purchase intention include the credibility, attractiveness, and popularity of public figures (brand ambassadors). Furthermore, characteristics such as likeability, expertise, and trustworthiness of public figures were found to be most appealing to audiences. This study has advanced understanding of the theory of source credibility (public figures), which states that the perceived characteristics of a source influence how audiences perceive the credibility of that source in a communication.

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