



Resource-Rich Regionalism and Candidate Branding: Political Marketing in the 2024 East Kalimantan Gubernatorial Election

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Abstract

The 2024 East Kalimantan gubernatorial election provided a setting for examining candidate branding and political marketing within a multiparty coalition in a resource-rich province. This study examined how Golkar and Gerindra, within the broader coalition supporting Rudy Mas'ud–Seno Aji, organized political marketing and identified conditions that enabled or constrained its implementation. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, the study drew on retrospective interviews conducted in 2026 and campaign-related documentary materials. Eight informants were identified, comprising six campaign participants, one political observer, and one voter, although the findings relied predominantly on campaign-side accounts. The analysis employed the political marketing mix of product, promotion, price, and place. Findings showed that the coalition combined Gratispol and Jospol program branding and a youthful-leadership image with direct outreach, media communication, territorial mapping, and party networks. Campaign participants also reported uneven field implementation and coordination challenges, while the ticket lost in Samarinda despite its provincial victory. The study highlighted the distinction between extensive coalition resources and their consistent implementation, contributing an organizational perspective to political marketing research. Its retrospective evidence did not establish causal effects on individual voting decisions.

Keywords: Political Marketing, Candidate Branding, Marketing Mix 4P, Multiparty Coalition, East Kalimantan

Introduction

The 2024 East Kalimantan gubernatorial election offers a useful setting for examining how political parties organize electoral appeals within a multiparty coalition, in the broader institutional setting of Indonesia's synchronized regional elections (Kelibay et al., 2022; Seran, 2019). Rudy Mas'ud and Seno Aji, who had not previously held the province's executive offices, contested the election against Isran Noor and Hadi Mulyadi, the province's previously elected governor and deputy governor. The Rudy–Seno ticket secured 996,399 valid votes (55.66%), compared with 793,793 (44.34%) for Isran–Hadi (KPU Kalimantan Timur, 2024). The campaign unfolded across ten regencies and municipalities with different political networks, social characteristics, and access conditions. East Kalimantan's resource-rich economy, particularly its substantial coal-mining sector, provides an additional regional context for examining electoral



competition, although this study does not treat resource wealth as an independently tested explanation of voter behavior (Surbakti & Nurhidayati, 2025). A contemporaneous report recorded that Rudy Mas'ud explicitly described his campaign in terms of the four marketing Ps (Rifandi, 2024). Its provincial victory therefore offers an occasion to investigate how a broad supporting coalition formulated and circulated an electoral offer. The outcome, however, should not be treated as independent proof that any particular campaign practice caused voters to support the ticket. Contemporary debate coverage provides documentary context for the candidates' publicly communicated policy offers (Rahmad, 2024).

Political marketing scholarship has examined candidate positioning, political communication, and the organizational channels through which parties attempt to connect electoral offerings with voters (Lees-Marshment, 2001; Lock & Harris, 1996; Niffenegger, 1988). Firmanzah (2007) conceptualizes political marketing as encompassing political products, communication, perceptions of political cost, and the distribution of political offers. Lees-Marshment (2001) further distinguishes product-, sales-, and market-oriented political organizations, underscoring that electoral marketing involves organizational behavior rather than promotion alone. More recent research has applied this organizational perspective to candidate-level political marketing communication in Indonesia (Aceh & Kholisoh, 2023). In a local election setting, Andrias & Nurohman (2013) connected party positioning with organizational strategy. Recent Indonesian research has also employed the 4P marketing mix to examine the National Mandate Party's campaign in the 2024 legislative election, highlighting the roles of political products, campaign resources, distribution networks, and promotional channels (Wiwid, 2024). A study of the 2020 Berau election emphasized campaign messages, proximity to communities, and the work of a winning team (Berlyn & Taufik, 2022), while Widiyaningrum & Alifah (2023) examined how Gerindra-linked organizational networks were used to reach targeted constituencies. Research on the 2024 Central Kalimantan gubernatorial election further illustrates how candidates employed social-media communication to circulate political messages and programmatic appeals, although through a different political marketing framework (Firdaus & Muksin, 2025). These studies suggest that campaigning depends on more than candidate popularity: political messages also require organization, local access, and sustained contact. A review of Indonesian political-marketing practice similarly underlines image formation and political leadership as recurring concerns (Firmansyah et al., 2023).

Recent scholarship has examined the structural configuration of political coalitions in Indonesia's 2024 regional elections, demonstrating the significance of interparty relationships in coalition formation (Pratama et al., 2026). However, the studies reviewed here provide less direct explanation of how the four political marketing dimensions are translated into campaign practices within a multiparty gubernatorial coalition, particularly when their implementation varies across localities. An electoral coalition may combine party cadres, officeholders, campaign resources, and local intermediaries, but such resources do not automatically operate as a coherent apparatus. Research on grassroots partisan mobilization and Indonesian political brokerage provides reasons to distinguish access to networks from reliable collective action (Aspinall, 2014; Scarrow, 2015; Syahid et al., 2026). Coordination, the adaptation of messages to community settings, and the relationship between campaign planning and execution must also be examined. In East Kalimantan, the shared campaign of Golkar, Gerindra, and other supporting parties provides a bounded case for investigating these processes. The analytical concern is therefore not the existence of coalition resources or political marketing instruments in isolation, but how campaign actors reported organizing and implementing these resources and practices within a shared electoral strategy.

This study aimed to analyze the political marketing practices associated with Golkar and Gerindra within the broader Rudy–Seno supporting coalition and to identify the conditions that enabled or constrained their implementation. It addressed two research questions: (1) how were product, promotion, price, and place organized and enacted in the 2024 East Kalimantan gubernatorial campaign; and (2) what supporting and inhibiting conditions were reported by actors involved in these practices? The purpose was to reconstruct the campaign's reported strategic processes, not to estimate the independent effect of individual tactics on votes or to attribute every campaign decision exclusively to one party.

A descriptive qualitative approach was used to examine campaign practices through purposively selected informants and campaign-related documentary materials, following the logic of context-sensitive qualitative inquiry (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The study identified eight informants: six participants associated with the winning team, one political observer, and one voter. Its reported interviews took place Interviews were conducted in June and July 2026 and therefore elicited retrospective accounts of the 2024 contest. Campaign photographs, media publications, election materials, and other documentary sources provided contextual evidence alongside interview accounts, consistent with the use of existing documents in qualitative inquiry (Morgan, 2022). The analysis was organized around the four political marketing dimensions and the conditions reported to support or constrain their implementation. Because the available findings do not provide a separately traceable thematic account from the voter, the interpretation relies primarily on campaign-side testimony complemented by observer accounts and documentary materials.

The study's value lies in showing how campaign participants described the relationship between coalition resources, political message differentiation, territorial distribution, and the practical difficulties of executing a shared strategy. The case combines accounts of extensive mobilization with campaign participants' reports of uneven implementation of field plans; a campaign adviser also acknowledged that the ticket lost in Samarinda despite efforts to mobilize support there. Rather than treating a winning coalition as inherently cohesive, the study uses such observations to examine the difference between having organizational resources and coordinating their use. Recent research on Indonesia's 2024 presidential campaign has likewise examined coordination among volunteer organizations, formal campaign teams, and supporting political parties, illustrating the importance of relationships among organizationally distinct campaign actors (Buana & Perdana, 2024). This emphasis contributes an implementation-oriented reading of political marketing in an Indonesian provincial election, while recognizing that the source material does not fully separate Golkar's and Gerindra's individual organizational contributions. Indonesian research on political brokerage and clientelism likewise warns against treating access to networks as evidence that intermediaries always act as directed (Aspinall, 2014; Berenschot, 2018).

In this article, the political marketing mix refers to four analytically distinct but potentially connected practices: product, promotion, price, and place (Firmanzah, 2007; Niffenegger, 1988). Product concerns the policy offer, candidate experience, and symbolic positioning, including the Gratispol and Jospol labels and the narrative of youthful leadership. Promotion concerns direct meetings, door-to-door outreach, intermediaries, mass media, and digital communication. Price refers to reported economic resources and to perceived psychological or reputational risks that campaign actors sought to address; trust is treated as a desired response to these efforts rather than as a price in itself. Place refers to the territorial and organizational channels through which campaign messages were carried. Coalition-based political marketing denotes the reported mobilization of these elements within a joint campaign supported by multiple parties, without assuming a fully documented division of responsibilities between Golkar and Gerindra.

Methods

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach to reconstruct the political marketing strategies associated with the Rudy Mas'ud–Seno Aji ticket in the 2024 East Kalimantan gubernatorial election (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Villamin et al., 2025). The analytical focus was the four elements of the political marketing mix product, promotion, price, and place, as well as the organizational conditions that enabled or constrained their implementation. The Golkar Party and the Gerindra Party were examined in the context of the broader campaign coalition, rather than treated as independently measured and directly comparable party organizations.

The case was examined retrospectively, drawing on accounts provided after the election and on campaign-related documentary materials. The research sought to explain how campaign actors described the preparation and execution of political marketing practices. It did not employ

a voter survey, an experimental design, or an electoral attribution model, and therefore did not estimate the causal effect of particular campaign activities on individual voting decisions.

Data Sources

The case was examined retrospectively, drawing on accounts provided after the election and on campaign-related documentary materials. The research sought to explain how campaign actors described the preparation and execution of political marketing practices. It did not employ a voter survey, an experimental design, or an electoral attribution model, and therefore did not estimate the causal effect of particular campaign activities on individual voting decisions. The findings draw predominantly on accounts from the six campaign participants and the political observer. Although a voter is listed among the study informants, the present findings do not attribute a substantive account to this participant because such testimony is not presented in the thesis findings.

Interview dates reported alongside the campaign and observer accounts fall in June and July 2026. Accordingly, the interviews are best understood as retrospective reconstructions of activities occurring during the 2024 election campaign. This temporal distance is relevant when interpreting participants' descriptions of campaign intentions, difficulties, and perceived effectiveness. The available materials do not establish a systematic division of tasks between Golkar and Gerindra at the level of individual respondents; the findings consequently refer to joint or coalition-level practices unless party-specific evidence is expressly described.

Data Collection and Instruments

The study reported the use of in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation. Interview material addressed the construction of campaign messages, political communication channels, territorial coordination, perceptions of candidates, and enabling or inhibiting circumstances. The observational component, as described in the thesis, encompassed campaign traces, documented political activities, and social-media publications. Because the materials provided do not specify which observations, if any, were conducted contemporaneously during the 2024 campaign, the present analysis does not describe these records as verified real-time participant observation.

Supporting materials described in the research included campaign photographs and videos, online campaign content, media coverage, election-related documents, and reproduced campaign-finance announcements. Documentary items were used to contextualize interview accounts and identify the types of campaign communication and organizational activity discussed by informants. The reproduced finance figures were treated as reported amounts in the underlying research, rather than as independently verified primary records.

Data Analysis

Data were organized following the reduction, presentation, and conclusion-drawing sequence described by Miles et al. (2014). First, relevant accounts and documentary descriptions were grouped by the four marketing-mix dimensions. Second, the material was examined for recurring campaign mechanisms, including candidate positioning, program branding, direct and mediated communication, perceived electoral risk, and distribution through party and community networks. Third, reported supporting and inhibiting conditions were compared across these dimensions to identify tensions between intended strategy and local implementation. This use of predefined analytical categories, together with an examination of patterns within the available material, is consistent with theory-informed qualitative analysis that accommodates both established concepts and context-specific observations (Bingham, 2023).

The source study reports source triangulation through comparison among informants and between interview material and supporting documentation. In presenting the results, this article distinguishes first-hand campaign accounts, observer interpretations, and documentary figures wherever possible. Its conclusions remain bounded by the dominance of campaign-side testimony, the retrospective interview period, the limited integration of direct voter evidence, and the absence of individual-level measures of campaign exposure or voter choice.

Findings

The Rudy Mas'ud–Seno Aji ticket obtained 996,399 valid votes (55.66%), compared with 793,793 votes (44.34%) for Isran Noor–Hadi Mulyadi, according to the election results reproduced in the source research. These figures describe the electoral outcome within which the marketing strategies were undertaken; they do not, by themselves, establish why individual voters selected a particular candidate. The qualitative evidence suggests that campaign actors organized their efforts around four interrelated marketing dimensions: political product, promotion, price, and place (Figure 1).

Political Product: Program Differentiation and Candidate Positioning

The political product was framed as a combination of candidate attributes and campaign promises. Campaign advisers presented Rudy–Seno as relatively young political leaders offering a change of direction without disregarding their legislative experience. A campaign adviser interviewed on 5 June 2026 described the contrast using the image of a “new driver” and an “old driver”. Within this narrative, the new driver symbolized energy, responsiveness, and an alternative to the previous leadership. The metaphor is evidence of the intended campaign framing, not independent evidence that voters adopted the contrast.

Program branding was developed around the labels *Gratispol* and *Jospol*. These labels also appeared in campaign-period coverage of the ticket's publicly articulated political marketing approach (Rifandi, 2024). An adviser explained that broad policy commitments, covering education, infrastructure, health, economic development, and welfare were condensed into short, memorable campaign labels so that Rudy–Seno could be distinguished from their opponents (interview, 5 June 2026). The campaign secretary similarly described *Gratispol*, especially the promise of expanded educational access, as an identifiable offer used to attract public attention (interview, 23 June 2026). These accounts suggest a deliberate process of translating a multifaceted policy platform into a small number of recognizable political symbols.

The content of the political product was also adjusted to local concerns. A territorial coordinator responsible for Kutai Barat and Mahakam Ulu emphasized infrastructure connectivity and uneven development as issues that could make the campaign's promises more locally relevant (interview, 22 June 2026). This account indicates that product differentiation had both a province-wide element, expressed through common slogans, and a territorial element, expressed through concerns specific to less accessible districts. The material supports an analysis of how the campaign sought to position its political offers, but not a claim that these offers were subsequently implemented or that they determined voter choices.

Political Promotion: Ground, Media, and Segmented Communication

Promotional activity was described by a Kutai Kartanegara campaign coordinator as combining a “ground strategy” and an “air strategy” (interview, 5 June 2026). The ground strategy relied on party structures, elected legislative members returning to their constituencies, field visits, voter mapping, and direct meetings with communities. The air strategy employed news media and other communication channels to present favorable narratives about the candidates and respond to unfavorable issues. The distinction is important because it reveals how campaign organizers understood the complementary functions of physical mobilization and mediated communication.

A campaign adviser described household-level outreach as a preferred channel for both disseminating information and collecting indications of local preferences. The account included door-to-door visits, printed campaign materials, and attempts to tailor language or issues to communities identified by geography and social background, including Javanese, Bugis, and Banjar groups (interview, 5 June 2026). This demonstrates an intended segmentation practice. The adviser's judgment that household outreach performed better than mass rallies should, however, be read as an assessment by a campaign participant rather than as a measured comparison of channel effectiveness.

Organizational networks expanded the channels available for promotion. A coordinator in Kutai Barat–Mahakam Ulu referred to mobilization through 16 subdistrict-level party committees in that area (interview, 22 June 2026). A deputy campaign secretary emphasized coordination among Golkar, Gerindra, and other coalition supporters across East Kalimantan's

ten regencies and municipalities (interview, 3 June 2026). The evidence describes a coalition-wide effort to mobilize overlapping party and community networks, although it does not establish a complete division of operational responsibilities between Golkar and Gerindra.

Different audiences were also approached through different media formats. A territorial coordinator distinguished digitally accessible younger audiences from groups considered more responsive to direct community meetings (interview, 16 June 2026). Campaign documentation reproduced in the thesis includes social-media materials and photographs of political activities. Together, these sources support the conclusion that the campaign pursued multichannel communication. They do not provide sufficient evidence to compare exposure, reach, or conversion into votes across the channels.

Political Price: Economic Resources and Perceived Risks

The study discussed political price along economic, psychological, and image-related dimensions. On the economic side, the thesis reproduced a campaign-finance announcement attributed to the East Kalimantan election commission. The reproduced figures report Rudy–Seno campaign receipts of IDR 23,361,693,149.38 and expenditures of IDR 23,361,693,129.87. For Isran–Hadi, the same thesis gives receipts of IDR 14,825,322,511.29 and expenditures of IDR 14,014,646,795.00. These figures establish how campaign resources were represented in the available source material, but the original commission announcement was not available for independent inspection in this reconstruction. The amounts cannot be used to infer that greater spending produced the winning vote share.

The psychological dimension concerns perceived uncertainty surrounding the candidates. The campaign secretary described the need for frequent meetings between the non-incumbent ticket and community groups so that potential supporters could become more familiar with the candidates' experience and commitments (interview, 23 June 2026). In this sense, the strategy sought to reduce the perceived risk of choosing a less familiar leadership team. The research documents the campaign's intended response to such uncertainty, not a population-wide measurement of voter trust.

The image-related dimension was apparent in efforts to challenge unfavorable portrayals of candidate identity and competence. A campaign adviser discussed responding to a circulating narrative that portrayed Rudy Mas'ud as insufficiently connected to East Kalimantan, including by emphasizing biographical associations and relations with social organizations (interview, 5 June 2026). Political image was therefore managed through counter-narratives and community intermediaries. The available evidence supports the existence of this reputational strategy as described by campaign actors; it does not independently verify the accuracy of the competing political claims or the magnitude of public acceptance.

Political Place: Territorial Mapping and Organizational Distribution

Place referred to the distribution of political messages and campaign contact through territorially situated networks, not merely to the physical sites of campaign events. A campaign adviser reported that the team mapped political conditions across all ten East Kalimantan regencies and municipalities, identifying strong rival areas, potentially competitive districts, and territories with strategic organizational resources (interview, 5 June 2026). Samarinda, Kutai Kartanegara, and Balikpapan were described as a particularly important set of territories in this calculation.

The organizational side of distribution involved party hierarchies and local intermediaries. Contemporaneous campaign reporting also documented expectations surrounding Gerindra's electoral machinery (ANTARA News Kalimantan Timur, 2024). A regional coordinator described incorporating party leaders at district and subdistrict levels, while campaign accounts emphasized the importance of cadres, volunteers, community associations, religious and customary figures, and other locally trusted actors. In this account, party networks supplied channels for campaign coordination, whereas social networks provided entry points into particular communities. Support expressed by an influential local figure should not be equated with the preferences of all members of that figure's network.

The accounts also reveal limits to territorial mobilization. The campaign adviser acknowledged that, despite attempts to mobilize coalition parties and establish contacts with local political actors, the Rudy–Seno ticket did not secure an electoral majority in Samarinda

(interview, 5 June 2026). As documented in the thesis, this was a negative case within an otherwise successful provincial campaign. It suggests that the existence of organizational networks did not guarantee uniform electoral performance across localities; it does not identify which particular local factors caused the outcome.

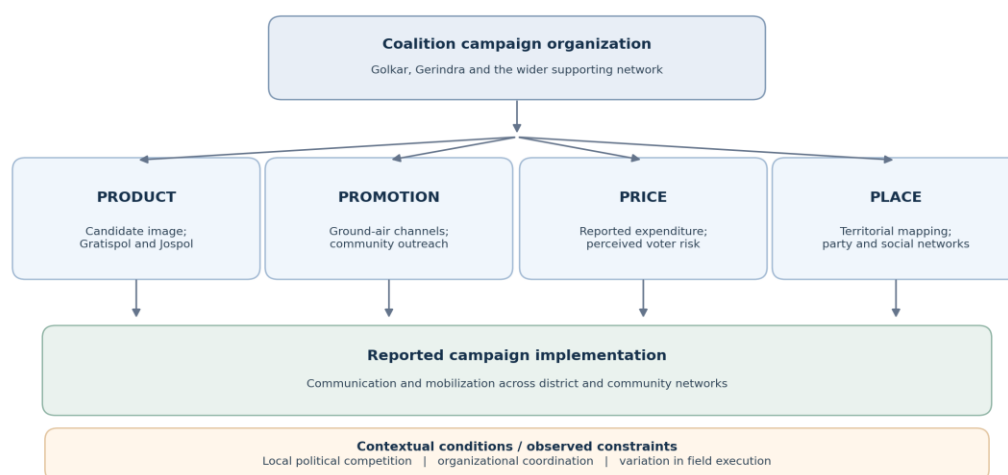
Enabling and Constraining Conditions

Campaign participants identified the breadth of the supporting coalition, established party structures, the accessibility of Gratispol and Jospol as campaign labels, and relationships with local community figures as enabling conditions. Party networks were described as extending the campaign's capacity to organize meetings, circulate campaign messages, and deploy personnel over a geographically diverse province. These were organizational resources as perceived and described by participants; their contribution to vote totals was not directly measured.

The same accounts described several constraints: the challenge of contesting candidates with earlier executive experience, unfavorable rumors, variations in geography and community characteristics, and strong local rival networks. More importantly, a campaign adviser stated that not every field unit carried out the territorial mapping, voter segmentation, and outreach plans as intended. The thesis also reports differences in field personnel's ability to deal with pressure during campaign activity. These observations indicate a gap between strategic planning and implementation, while remaining principally the testimony and interpretation of campaign insiders.

The findings therefore point to a distinction between acquiring organizational resources and translating them into consistent campaign activity. A broad coalition provided multiple communication and mobilization channels, yet local political competition and variation in personnel readiness constrained how uniformly those channels could operate. The campaign's eventual provincial victory should be understood as the context in which these practices occurred, not as proof that each reported element independently caused the result.

Figure 1. Analytical synthesis of the campaign organization and reported political marketing processes.



Source: Authors' synthesis of interview findings, campaign documentation, and political marketing mix (4P) (2026).

Discussion

Political marketing in regional elections is best understood as more than the circulation of campaign messages, because electoral offers must also be formulated, positioned, and distributed through political organizations. Firmanzah (2007) conceptualizes political marketing as the management of political offerings and relationships with voters, while Andrias & Nurohman (2013) connect electoral positioning with party organization in local contests. Recent Indonesian research has further applied the political marketing mix to the National Mandate Party's 2024 legislative campaign (Wiwid, 2024), while a study of candidate-level political marketing in East Kalimantan illustrates the importance of organizational orientation in campaign communication (Aceh & Kholisoh, 2023). Research on the 2020 Berau election likewise highlights coherent

political communication and proximity to communities (Berlyn & Taufik, 2022), and the study of Gerindra's women's wing illustrates the role of party-linked networks in reaching differentiated constituencies (Widiyaningrum & Alifah, 2023). Read together, these studies establish the importance of communication, candidate image, and organizational channels. They also provide a point of departure for asking how such components are brought together when several parties support a single gubernatorial ticket. The East Kalimantan case is particularly useful for examining the translation of a coalition's organizational resources into reported campaigning practices, rather than treating the existence of a large coalition as an explanation in itself.

Against this background, the present study examined how Golkar and Gerindra, within the broader supporting coalition, organized the Rudy Mas'ud–Seno Aji ticket's political marketing and what conditions enabled or constrained its implementation. The two research questions concerned, first, the practices associated with product, promotion, price, and place and, second, the supporting and inhibiting factors reported by campaign participants. This formulation matters because the electoral outcome and the mechanisms of political marketing are analytically distinct. Rudy–Seno received 996,399 valid votes (55.66%) in the 2024 East Kalimantan gubernatorial election, but the vote total alone cannot establish which campaign activity altered a voter's decision. The interviews and documentary descriptions in the underlying study instead permit an examination of how campaign actors retrospectively understood candidate positioning, differentiated messaging, territorial outreach, and coordination across organizations. Moreover, because the available accounts principally concern the joint winning organization, the findings cannot consistently isolate the independent effects of Golkar and Gerindra. The relevant analytical unit is therefore their reported participation in coalition-based campaign practices.

The central result is that the four elements of the political marketing mix were presented by campaign actors as connected practices rather than four independent instruments. This interpretation builds on the 4P tradition while shifting attention to organization and implementation (Lees-Marshment, 2001; Niffenegger, 1988). Whereas Wiwid (2024) employed the 4P framework to examine the campaign strategy of a political party in a legislative election, the present study emphasizes how the four dimensions were reportedly connected through the organizational practices of a multiparty gubernatorial campaign. The political product combined the candidates' legislative experience and an image of generational change with accessible labels for programmatic promises, particularly Gratispol and Jospol. Promotion connected direct meetings, household visits, party cadres, community intermediaries, and mass or digital media. The price dimension appeared both in financial resources reported for the campaign and in attempts to address uncertainty about the ticket's competence, identity, and suitability for provincial leadership. Place consisted of territorial mapping and the use of party and community networks to carry messages across East Kalimantan. These practices were described as complementary: a simplified political offer supplied material for communication, organizational channels brought that offer into local settings, and candidate-image work responded to doubts encountered during outreach. This synthesis explains the reported architecture of campaigning. It does not establish that the four components contributed equally to vote acquisition, nor that their integration was fully achieved in every locality.

The most distinctive feature of the case is the effort to join message differentiation to a two-track promotional system described by a territorial coordinator as a “ground strategy” and an “air strategy.” Studies of digital campaigning emphasize that mediated outreach changes how party organizations engage supporters, but should not be read as direct proof of vote gains (Gibson, 2015). Research on Indonesian political parties' digital campaigns has examined how social-media narratives are used to communicate political messages (Hadmar et al., 2024), while a study of the 2020 Indonesian regional elections found that campaign-team involvement and party support were associated with candidates' adoption of particular digital platforms (Sanofi et al., 2025). These studies provide a comparative basis for examining mediated campaigning without assuming that online communication necessarily translates into electoral support. On the ground, campaign participants reported mobilizing party personnel and legislative members in their constituencies, conducting door-to-door visits, mapping potential supporters, and tailoring encounters to territorial and community characteristics. The parallel media strategy sought to extend the reach of the same political offer and respond to unfavorable candidate narratives.

Program branding was integral to this arrangement: a campaign adviser described Gratispol and Jospol as concise identifiers through which broad commitments on education, infrastructure, services, and welfare could be distinguished from rival offerings. The metaphor of a “new driver” further positioned the ticket as an alternative to the previously elected provincial leadership. These accounts suggest that the campaign’s reported innovation lay less in introducing a novel channel than in aligning memorable program language, symbolic candidate positioning, and locally embedded modes of contact. The evidence establishes how campaign insiders described this alignment, not how strongly each audience internalized the message.

A consequential counterpoint to the winning narrative is that organizational outreach did not translate into a favorable electoral outcome in every strategically important area. A campaign adviser described Samarinda as a critical target within the team’s territorial calculations, noted the rival ticket’s local relationships, and acknowledged that Rudy–Seno nevertheless lost there despite attempts to mobilize coalition support. The source study also reports that some field units did not implement electoral mapping, segmentation, and campaign instructions as planned. These negative observations qualify a straightforward equation between coalition breadth, message reach, and local electoral advantage. They are analytically important precisely because the overall gubernatorial result could otherwise encourage a retrospective portrayal of every component as successful. The Samarinda account and reported implementation gaps instead reveal a difference between designing a collective strategy and obtaining uniform organizational compliance or local support. They also indicate why the coalition’s aggregate resources should be treated as enabling conditions, not as a sufficient explanation for victory in particular districts or municipalities.

Several findings reinforce established research on political marketing, especially the importance of positioning, consistent communication, and organizational access. The combination of candidate image, recognizable policy labels, and social proximity accords with the themes identified in the Berau Pilkada study by Berlyn & Taufik (2022). The use of grassroots structures, territorial calculation, and political networks also resonates with Andrias & Nurohman (2013) discussion of party machinery and positioning. A recent study of Gerindra’s campaign strategy in Jepara during Indonesia’s 2024 presidential election also highlights the importance of adapting organizational mobilization and political communication to different local conditions (Rafly & Munandar, 2025). Similarly, reliance on cadres, volunteers, and locally meaningful intermediaries is consistent with Widiyaningrum & Alifah (2023) attention to the organizational channels through which Gerindra-linked networks engage constituencies. The East Kalimantan evidence adds detail about how these otherwise familiar components were assembled within one provincial campaign and described by participants occupying strategic, secretariat, and territorial roles. Such convergence supports the practical relevance of the political marketing framework, while leaving open the question of how much each element influences voters under differing electoral conditions. Scarrow (2015) similarly demonstrates why the organizational bases of partisan mobilization warrant analysis in their own right. Research on campaign coordination in Indonesia’s 2024 presidential election further illustrates how volunteer initiatives, formal campaign teams, and supporting political parties may undertake interconnected but organizationally distinct roles (Buana & Perdana, 2024).

At the same time, the evidence qualifies the predominantly affirmative emphasis on successful communication and organizational mobilization found in the local campaign studies reviewed for this research. Where accounts of effective campaign networks foreground consistent messaging and outreach, the East Kalimantan interviews also describe uneven execution, pressure on field personnel, rival networks that proved difficult to dislodge, and disagreements between campaign plans and their implementation. These observations do not demonstrate that earlier case studies were incorrect: they involve different elections, organizational settings, and sources of evidence. Rather, they challenge any unqualified generalization that a broad party network automatically operates as a cohesive marketing apparatus. A second qualification concerns perceptions of candidates. Interviewees described image management and the mitigation of voter doubt as intended functions of campaigning, but the underlying study does not document these perceptions through a systematic body of voter interviews. The observed

difference is therefore between reported campaign intentions and evidence of implementation constraints, not a demonstrated contradiction in voter behavior across studies.

A plausible explanation for the combination of broad reach and uneven implementation lies in the distinction between organizational capacity and organizational coordination. Aspinall (2014) documents the autonomy and potential unreliability of electoral brokers in Indonesia, offering a relevant comparative lens rather than direct evidence about the Rudy–Seno team. More recent research on electoral brokerage in Indonesia has similarly shown that campaign resources and intermediary relationships do not necessarily provide candidates with reliable control over brokers or observable voter behavior (Hicken et al., 2022). A multiparty coalition can supply officeholders, local cadres, financial resources, community contacts, and channels for circulating the candidate’s programmatic offer. These assets enlarge the repertoire of possible outreach, but their use depends on assigning responsibilities, maintaining message consistency, adapting to social and geographic differences, and securing cooperation from local intermediaries. The campaign’s reported mixture of door-to-door communication and mediated promotion was one response to this coordination problem; territorial mapping and engagement with customary, religious, and community figures were others. Yet local rival strength and differences in field-team preparedness limited the uniform execution of planned activity. In this reading, product, promotion, price, and place are linked through the organization that carries them, while implementation is conditioned by local competition. The brokerage literature is used here as a comparative explanation of intermediary autonomy, not as evidence that the Rudy–Seno campaign engaged in vote buying or clientelistic exchanges. This mechanism is an interpretation of the source material, not a measured causal pathway from coalition activity to individual ballot choices.

These findings should be interpreted cautiously because the study reconstructs a winning campaign primarily from retrospective accounts provided by individuals associated with that campaign. The source thesis identifies eight purposively selected informants, six linked to the campaign, one political observer, and one voter, but its thematic findings do not provide a clearly traceable account from the listed voter. Interviews described in the thesis took place in June and July 2026, after the 2024 election, and the available documentation does not fully establish the timing or mode of every observation. Campaign-finance totals appear as figures reproduced from an election-commission announcement rather than as records independently re-audited for this article. These constraints limit claims about actual voter responses, the separate contributions of Golkar and Gerindra, and the comparative effectiveness of promotional channels. Two propositions may nevertheless guide future testing: wider coalitions expand potential communication infrastructure only when internal coordination is maintained; and locally adapted campaign messages are more likely to be implemented consistently where organizations can translate central plans into credible community-level contact. Both remain hypotheses rather than findings established by causal testing.

The principal contribution of this case is therefore to view coalition-based political marketing as an implementation process whose reported practices are conditioned by the interaction of political offerings, communication channels, organizational coordination, and local competitive conditions. Work on Indonesian patronage networks likewise emphasizes how local intermediaries and resources are embedded in political institutions (Aspinall & Berenschot, 2019; Berenschot, 2018). Recent mapping of Indonesia’s 2024 regional electoral coalitions provides a structural perspective on the relationships among political parties, including the prominent positions of Gerindra and Golkar (Pratama et al., 2026). The present study complements this perspective by examining how campaign participants described the use and coordination of coalition resources during electoral marketing activities, rather than inferring operational coherence from coalition structure alone. Conceptually, the analysis moves beyond classifying campaign activities under the 4P labels by showing why the organizational connection among these elements matters and why it may break down. For political parties, the findings suggest the practical importance of realistic territorial planning, clear responsibilities among coalition partners, consistency between policy promises and campaign messages, and mechanisms for checking whether outreach plans are carried out. These recommendations concern campaign organization and accountable political communication, not proof that any particular tactic

produces votes. Future studies could compare winning and losing coalitions, examine variations across districts, include opponents and independent observers, and collect contemporaneous voter and campaign data. Such designs would help distinguish campaign narratives from observable implementation and test whether organizational coordination mediates the relationship between coalition resources and electoral support.

Conclusion

This study examined how Golkar and Gerindra, within the broader coalition supporting Rudy Mas'ud–Seno Aji, organized political marketing in the 2024 East Kalimantan gubernatorial election and identified the conditions that supported or constrained its implementation. The findings indicate that campaign actors employed four interconnected political marketing dimensions: program branding and candidate positioning (product), direct and mediated communication (promotion), reported financial resources and efforts to address perceived psychological and reputational risks (price), and territorial mobilization through party and community networks (place). Gratispol and Jospol functioned as recognizable labels for campaign promises, while the narrative of youthful leadership, expressed through the “new driver” metaphor, sought to differentiate the ticket from its opponents. These political offerings were communicated through a combination of grassroots outreach and media-based strategies, supported by the broader coalition's organizational networks.

The study's principal contribution lies in demonstrating the analytical importance of organizational implementation within the political marketing mix. Rather than treating product, promotion, price, and place as independent campaign instruments, the findings suggest that their practical connection depends on how coalition actors coordinate resources, distribute responsibilities, and adapt political messages to local conditions. Although the coalition provided extensive organizational resources and communication channels, campaign participants reported uneven implementation, differences in field personnel's preparedness, and difficulties mobilizing support in particular localities. The Rudy–Seno ticket's electoral defeat in Samarinda, despite its provincial victory, further illustrates the limits of assuming uniform local electoral performance from extensive coalition networks. However, this local outcome does not independently establish that coordination problems caused the defeat. Situated within East Kalimantan's geographically diverse and resource-rich provincial context, the study therefore emphasizes the relationship between coalition resources and reported campaign implementation rather than attributing electoral outcomes to regional economic characteristics.

These interpretations remain subject to several limitations. The evidence relies predominantly on retrospective interviews with campaign participants, while direct voter perspectives are insufficiently represented in the thematic findings. The available materials also do not establish a systematic division of operational responsibilities between Golkar and Gerindra or permit an independent assessment of the electoral effectiveness of particular campaign messages, expenditures, or communication channels. Consequently, the study provides a process-oriented interpretation of coalition-based political marketing rather than causal evidence that specific campaign practices determined individual voting decisions or the provincial election outcome.

Future research should compare campaign organizations across electoral outcomes and localities, incorporate perspectives from voters and competing campaign teams, and combine contemporaneous interviews with independently verifiable campaign records. For political parties and campaign coalitions, the findings highlight the practical importance of clearly defined organizational responsibilities, coherent and verifiable political messages, realistic territorial planning, and systematic monitoring of field implementation. Such practices may strengthen campaign coordination and organizational accountability, although their effects on electoral behavior require further empirical examination.

Ethics approval

This study was conducted as part of an undergraduate research project at Mulawarman University. Data collection involved interviews with members of the Rudy–Seno campaign team, a political observer, and a voter, alongside observation and the examination of campaign-related

and electoral documents. Administrative permission to conduct the research and access relevant information was requested through an official research permission letter. Formal approval or exemption from an institutional research ethics committee is not documented in the available research records.

Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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Underlying data

The findings presented in this article were derived from interview accounts, observational and documentary materials reported in the underlying undergraduate thesis, and relevant election-related documents and publicly available sources. The interview excerpts and supporting materials reproduced in the thesis constitute the available primary research record for this article. Complete original interview transcripts, field notes, and non-public campaign records are not available for public deposit or sharing upon request. Publicly accessible supporting documents are identified in the references.

Declaration of artificial intelligence use

Generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools were used to assist with English-language editing, manuscript organization and restructuring, preparation of draft passages, and identification and organization of relevant academic literature. These tools were not used to generate new empirical data, fabricate interview responses, or conduct additional fieldwork. The authors retain full responsibility for verifying the accuracy of the information, checking references against their original sources, critically evaluating AI-assisted content, and approving the final interpretations and conclusions presented in this article.

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