Strategic political communication through storytelling:
A case study of the "Democreative Tales of Jokowi's *Blusukan"* comics

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Abstract

The 2014 Indonesian presidential election attracted massive interest of Indonesians around the world, who more than ever before, became very active in campaigning for the two candidates: Prabowo Subianto and Joko Widodo (commonly referred to as Jokowi). Strategies used by their supporters ranged from the use of smear campaign to the use of creative art. One form of creative art used by the volunteer supporters of Jokowi included *Tintin*-style (from the comics by Hergé) posters and other print materials depicting Jokowi. These comics have gone viral through social media. The collection of these posters were later officially published as a book titled "*Demokreatif Kisah Blusukan Jokowi*" ("Democreative Tales of Jokowi's *Blusukan"*- *blusukan* can be roughly translated into impromptu visits to meet the people). Through the art of storytelling, Jokowi is successfully portrayed as the people's leader, who is humble and down-to-earth, representing the proletarian. After being elected president, this storytelling strategy continues as the comics are still produced, but now portraying both Jokowi and Vice-President Jusuf Kalla.

This article analyzes the branding technique of Jokowi through storytelling, as well as the elements of storytelling used in the *Tintin*-style comics as a political campaign strategy. In-depth interviews are conducted with the creators and authors of the comics. Results are analyzed using the perspectives of the communication process, storytelling as strategic political communication strategy, and dimensions of storytelling.

Key words: Storytelling, Strategic Political Communication, Joko Widodo, Tintin Comics, Indonesia.

Indonesia: A brief introduction

The Republic of Indonesia is the world's largest archipelago and the fourth most-populated nation in the world, with more than 250 million people. It is also the world's largest Muslim population asapproximately 88 percent of Indonesia's population is Muslim. Other official religions are Catholicism (3%), Protestantism (7%), Hinduism (1.5%), Buddhism, and Confucianism (approximately 1.3%) (Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, 2015). Therefore, although constitutionally Indonesia is a secular country, Islamic principles play an important role in its decision making. To have a non-Muslim president, for example, is highly unlikely. Yet, Indonesian Islam is generally considered moderate (Indonesia Investments, 2016). With more than 300 ethnic groups, 14 different languages, and approximately 400 local dialects, national unity has always been a challenge throughout Indonesia's history (Ananto, 2003, p. 261; Simorangkir, 2011).

Indonesia's national system has been affected by Portuguese, Dutch, and Japanese colonization. On August 17, 1945, Soekarno (it is common among Indonesians to have only one name) became the first president, with Muhammad Hatta as vice president, when they proclaimed Indonesia's independence (Aditjondro, 1998). In 1966, General Soeharto became the second president after an unsuccessful coup on September 30, 1965 by the communist party was countered by Soeharto's troops. Under his 32-year presidency – better known as the "New Order" era – Soeharto built a strong centralized government, dominated by the military. His ability to maintain stability over Indonesia and his firm anti-Communist stance earned him the support of the West. Still, there were many conflicts among ethnic groups and tension between the military and civilians in parts of Aceh, Ambon, Poso, and Irian Jaya (now Papua) (Ananto, 2003). These conflicts kept growing into the mid-1990s, as web sites and universities increasingly exposed confidential internal documents of deals given by state banks to Soeharto's family members and their associates to finance projects for personal enrichment (Ananto, 2003). Student groups held public protests, demanding Soeharto's resignation. These protests culminated in the shooting of four Trisakti University students on May 12, 1998 (Ressa, 1998). On the day of the funeral, politicians, economists, and students pressured Soeharto to step down; even his cronies left him and his loyal military opted to remain neutral under international pressure. Nine days later, Soeharto resigned (Ressa, 1998).

As vice president, Habibie was Soeharto's successor, but did not quite get the people's favor, thus he agreed to hold elections in 1999. But the violent protests prior to these elections

were clear indications that Habibie would not win, so he withdrew from the presidential race one week before the elections (Richburg, 1999). A blind Muslim cleric and political leader named Abdurrachman Wahid replaced Habibie on October 20, 1999, marking the first time in Indonesia's history the public could follow the presidential election process through mass media. Yet again, Wahid was removed due to corruption and incompetence (Richburg, 1999). Megawati Soekarnoputri, daughter of Indonesia's first president, Soekarno, replaced Wahid on July 23, 2001, as Indonesia's fifth president and first female president. Even after Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (Megawati Soekarnoputri's successor) was elected as president in 2004, many critics argue that Indonesia's reformation era – as the period after Soeharto's downfall is known – has not changed the mentality of those in power (Ananto, 2003, p. 273; Simorangkir, 2011).
The 2014 Indonesian presidential election, on the other hand, attracted massive interest of Indonesians around the world, who more than ever, became very active campaigners for the two candidates: Prabowo Subianto and Joko Widodo (commonly referred to as Jokowi). As a former furniture businessman who grew up in a small village and eventually became governor of Jakarta, Jokowi was considered a clean politician who was humble and in touch with the people, as he made the term *blusukan* loosely translated to impromptu visits to local people. He was especially popular with the youth, and his distinct communication strategies leading up to his election are worthy of research.

Using Hofstede's (De Mooij, 2000) dimensions of culture, Indonesia's strong in-group loyalty among family, friends, and members of the same ethnic group fits into the collectivistic culture (Ananto, 2003). The cultural norm, *gotong royong,* in which everyone belongs to a work team and must finish what he/she has agreed to do, significantly influences the political, social, and economic development of Indonesia. Indonesian society is characterized as *consultation, agreement, and solidarity,* thus conflicts are avoided and efforts are made to preserve good relationships (Mann, 1998), and older people, as well as those of higher status who take on the role of fathers in an organization, are honored. Consequently, however, decision-making is relatively slow in Indonesia, which has somewhat negative consequences on strategic communication practices, such as public relations, in which timing is an essential component. (Ananto, 2003).There is no doubt that the history and culture of Indonesia have major influence on its strategic communications industry, making its practice distinct from the strategic communications practice in other countries.

Strategic communication in Asia Pacific
The Asia-Pacific Communicators Monitor 2015/16 survey on the status quo and trends of communication management across Asia-Pacific, organized by the Asia-Pacific Association of Communication Directors (APACD) (2016), predicts a growth in the use and importance of owned media for such practices as sponsored content and "native advertising" (Macnamara (2014a, 2015). This will allow communicators to creatively convey their controlled messages to more people, yet at the same time, this is likely to blur the lines between journalism and public relations, raising questions between transparency and ethics (Communication Director, 2016).

Communication professionals in Asia Pacific consider social media and mobile communications as the most significant progress in the field. However, the levels of social media skills and knowledge are still low, which is why most corporations in the region still use social media to engage in one-way communication instead of two-way communication (Macnamara, 2013, 2014b, 2016). Therefore, the APACD perceives the competence in dealing with the digital progress and social web as the most vital concern for Asia Pacific's strategic communication industry in the next three years (Communication Director, 2016).

Strategic communication in political campaigns

Strömbäck and Kiousis (2014, p. 111) describe strategic political communication as the "organizations' purposeful management of information and communication to reach political objectives it has set out for itself." This definition not only applies to political campaigns, but also to interest groups and other organizations with political objectives, and strategically uses information and communication to reach these objectives (Manheim, 2011; Strömbäck & Kiousis, 2011; Strömbäck & Kiousis, 2014).

Even though election systems and campaign communications vary from country to country, Strömbäck and Kiousis (2014, p. 121-124) formulate 10 macro trends that in general apply across a broader range of countries:

1. Campaign communication is heavily television-centered.
2. Election campaigns and campaign communication focus heavily on individual candidates or party leaders at the expense of the parties.
3. The Internet has become increasingly important, as increasingly more people turn to the Internet for information about politics and society on every election cycle.
4. Due to ever-expanding media environment and media choice, individual preferences and motivations today have a stronger impact on media use than ever before, which leads to increasing audience fragmentation, and makes it harder for communicators to reach out to uninterested groups.
5. Microtargeting – identifying as many voter segments as possible that can be distinguished from other voter segments, but internally are homogenous – has become an increasingly essential campaign strategy.
6. Consequently, narrowcasting has also become an important strategy.
7. As media landscapes are becoming more diverse and fragmented, and voter behavior has become more volatile and unpredictable, the need for professional campaign and communication expertise has increased.
8. There has been increasing professionalization in political campaigns through the use of either of internal campaign staff or outside consultants.
9. Political parties have become increasingly marketing-oriented – but not market-oriented – indicated by the increased use of different marketing strategies and tactics to research and segment voters, develop and test messages, target messages to different groups, and branding and positioning themselves as well as the opponents.

10. Moreover, parties have also become more sales-oriented.

Strömbäck and Kiousis (2014) add that, as result of these macro trends, political campaigns have become more expensive than ever, particularly in countries such as the United States and Indonesia, where televised advertising and external professionalization are common. This may lead to ethical questions about fairness and political equality if campaign fundraising is not well regulated. In such countries, according to Strömbäck and Kiousis (2014), the wealthy may be able to afford more air time and external professional consultancies, whereas the less wealthy will have to find more creative ways of reaching out to prospective voters.

In the case of Indonesia's 2014 presidential election, Prabowo Subiyanto, a businessman, politician, former Lieutenant General and former husband of President Soeharto's daughter, was clearly the wealthier candidate. That is why it would be interesting to analyze the strategic political communication that helped Jokowi win the elections. Moreover, as Strömbäck and Kiousis (2014) have pointed out that political parties have become increasingly more marketing and sales oriented, it is also necessary to analyze Jokowi's strategy from a marketing perspective.

Branding through storytelling

When making a buying decision, today's customer is heavily affected by intangible factors, for example, stories about the company. Therefore, storytelling is an essential communication tool that can be used to reduce the gap between consumer and company or employee and company because it serves as "a bridge of longevity, loyalty, mutual understanding, connection and trust" (Mossberg & Nissen-Johansen, 2006; Hermansson & Na, 2008). As McLellan (2006) states, storytelling is a means of "framing information so that it is understandable, meaningful, and memorable" (p. 19). In other words, storytelling can build a strong customer or employee relationship through an emotional association with an abstract value by giving this abstract value personality and meaning to products and brands, thus the values are no longer abstract. This allows companies to establish and uphold the images they wish to portray, leading to the desired mindset (Simmons, 2006; Hermansson & Na, 2008). Indeed, strong brands are fostered on emotional connections between the consumers and the brands' clear values, incorporated into stories, and through storytelling and consistent brand images, emotional bonds develop (Fog & Budtz, 2005, Hermansson & Na, 2008).

Storytelling in political campaigns

Storytelling has long been acknowledged as a powerful political tool to move people into taking action. Its underlying idea is that stories can influence the voters' decision making process by evoking emotions such as hope, fear, or compassion. Storytelling in electoral campaigns usually come in the form of television advertising, through which candidates attempt to trigger certain emotions and convince voters of the candidates' strengths, using elements such as music, images, and other theatrical tools.

As mentioned before, despite the dominance of the Internet, television is the most prevalent medium for political communication, allowing not only images to affect public

opinion, but also other elements such as camera shots, angles, sound, and body language, which can also influence how the voters' perceptions about the candidate. Before television became popular, however, political communication used to rely on the power of visual effects. For instance, in the fifties, pictures and images mythologized the "bourgeoisie" in a specific way and constructed a collective imagination (Montémont, 2012: 132; Pietrucci, 2013). This is in line with Barthes' (1957) argument that "a picture is a mirror, it gives familiarity and well known feelings" (p. 150). Therefore, even without visual technologies, an image can make a personal connection with the audience, creating an intimate emotion that provides a story.

The campaign strategies used by supporters of the2014 Indonesian presidential candidates,Prabowo Subianto Jokowi varied from the use of smear campaign to the use of creative art. One form of creative art used by the volunteer supporters of Jokowi included *Tintin*-style (from the comics by Hergé) posters and other print materials depicting Jokowi. These comics have gone viral through social media. The collection of these posters were later officially published as a book titled "*Demokreatif Kisah Blusukan Jokowi*" ("Democreative Tales of Jokowi's *Blusukan*"- *blusukan* can be roughly translated into impromptu visits to meet the people). Through the art of storytelling, Jokowi is successfully portrayed as the people's leader, who is humble and down-to-earth, representing the proletarian. After being elected president, this storytelling strategy continues as the comics are still produced, but now portraying both Jokowi and Vice-President Jusuf Kalla. These comics are a good example of visual storytelling as a political campaign strategy.

Narrative

Aristotle noted in *Poetics* (Willis, 2002) that stories have a beginning, middle, and an end. Stories organize their elements in a causal order, going toward a moment of crisis and change (Barbatsis, 2005). The elements that stories have are: character, setting, plot, theme, and tone (Rappaport, 2008). As Simmons (2005; cited in Erkas & Baron, 2007) claims, a story must have characters with specific roles; a plot and a timeline with a beginning, middle, and an end; a conflict, without which the story is not interesting enough. When these elements are coordinated into a narrative, "sequences of events have meaning because they are related to a change or "point" from which there is "no return" to being what it was" (Barbatsis, 2005).

Juri Lotman (1977) introduced the differentiation between a "primary modeling system" and a "secondary modeling system." Lotman (1977) claims that verbal language is the most essential cognitive means to interpret the world, and therefore it constitutes the primary modeling system in our culture. On the other hand, Ferraro (1994) argues that "the narrative form constitutes a basic tool for meaning construction and event interpretation. It could be said that, more than language, narrative should be considered the primary modeling system" (1994, p. 157). This argument is in line with the hypothesis that "texts are not necessarily linguistic (or visual) but narratively structured. In other words, narrative is the basic structure-creating device for meaning production" (Scolari, 2009). Therefore, storytelling can also be done through pictures.

Brands can also be given narratives. As Shankar, Elliott, and Goulding (2001) explain, brands in a marketplace can be perceived as "heroic", "romantic", or even "satirical" brands, and

the company's positioning strategies must also take into consideration the account the narratives of their brands within the marketplace (Shankar et al, 2001).

The brand persona

In order to successfully create a long-lasting emotional bond with the audience, a brand must have a persona. Strong brands such as Nike, Disney, and McDonald's have an instantly recognizable and memorable persona in which people can relate. They each have a clear personality associated with the brand, and this persona is carefully conveyed in stories that will help reinforce that brand persona. The persona can be illustrated in different stories, but it must remain stable (Herskovitz & Crystal, 2010).

According to Herskovitz and Crystal (2010), a list of possible archetypes can include the following:

1. The "rebel" who stands up to authority;
2. The "mom" who provides nurturing and safety;
3. The "rugged individualist" who listens to the beat of his own drummer;
4. The "champion" who battles against opposing forces on a regular or predictable basis; or
5. The "underdog," the tirelessly and scrappy fighter who takes advantage of the fact that he or she is consistently underestimated.

The persona includes attributes such as courage, decisiveness, determination, work ethic, honesty, flexibility, responsibility, and curiosity. Sticking to a consistent brand persona is not only important for commercial brands but also for politicians and public figures. Many presidential campaigns, e.g. Jon McCain, Al Gore, failed to remain consistent, showing different personae throughout the campaign, which leads to confusion. It is not enough to have a clever campaign. The audience will compare what the campaign says about the brand with its actions (Herskovitz & Crystal, 2010).

Hergé's *Tintin* and the Clear-Line style

The Adventures of Tintin, by Hergé (Georges Remi) is a comic series, with Tintin and his dog Snowy as the main characters. Officially, there are 24 comic editions, including the unfinished last episode, *Tintin and The Alph-Art*. There are also unofficial fan-made Tintin comics that have gone viral on the internet, titled *The Voice of Blue Lagoon* and the controversial parody version titled *Tintin in Thailand*. The comic series has been published in more than 70 languages, including Indonesian. By 2017, 11 decades after the birth of Hergé in 1907, the Tintin comics will turn 80 years. More than 230 million copies have been sold since 1929 (Tintin.com, 2016).

The setting of this series is during realistic 20th century events. Some of the locations are real countries, including United States of America (*Tintin in America*), the former Soviet Union (*Tintin in The Land of The Soviets*), Republic of China (*The Blue Lotus*); while others are set in

fictional countries such as Syldavia (*King's Ottokar Sceptre*), and Los Dopicos (*Tintin and the Picaros*).

Tintin is a smart young Belgian investigative reporter, known as a humble person who loves to go on adventures around the world and helping others. During all his adventures, Tintin (*Kuifje* in the Belgian original edition) is accompanied by his faithful terrier dog, Snowy (*Milou* in the French edition) (Tintin.com, 2016).

Herge's drawing style has been admired for its clean and detailed drawing, known as *Ligne Claire* (*clear line*) style. Technically, clear line is a drawing technique using firm, strong and clear object boundary lines with the same width. In general, the clear line technique does not use shading in drawings. It uses strong colors, and the drawing style is a combination between combining between realistic and cartoon styles (Gravett, 2008).

Although *The Adventures of Tintin* uses slapstick humor in depicting Tintin's adventures, its earliest stories have been massively criticized (BBC News, 2007) for "containing racial stereotypes, animal cruelty, colonialist, violent and even fascist leanings, including ethnocentric caricatured portrayals of non-Europeans." For instance, *Tintin in the Congo* has been criticized for depicting the Africans as naïve and primitive. Some of Tintin's adventures have also led to accusations of anti-Semitism – especially because during World War II, Hergé worked for *Le Soir*, a newspaper that collaborated with the Nazis during the German occupation of Belgium (Ivry, 2009). Hergé has also been accused of sexism, as there is only one woman character of importance, Bianca Castafiore, who depicted as foolish and oblivious to people's negative reactions to her behavior (Sadoul & Didier, 2003).

Scholars of Hergé have argued that "Hergé did what he was told by the Abbé Wallez" (Thompson, 1991), Hergé defended himself by arguing that it was impossible for him to avoid such prejudice, "I was fed the prejudices of the bourgeois society that surrounded me" (Sadoul & Didier, 2003). Hergé revised some of his early albums at the demand of publishers. For instance, urged by American publishers, many of the African characters in *Tintin in America* were re-colored to give them a Caucasian or a vague race (Mills, 1996).

Knowing this background, it seems very risky to assimilate the candidate that is being campaigned for to such a controversial character. On one hand, Tintin is beloved by Indonesians of different ages, and the drawing style is very easily recognized. On the other hand, it could also result in Joko Widodo being associated with accusations of racism, sexism, and fascism.

Methodology

This article analyzed the strategic political communication technique of Jokowi through storytelling, as well as the elements of storytelling used in the *Tintin*-style comics as a political campaign strategy. In order to do so, in-depth interviews were conducted with the creators and authors of the comics, namely:

1. Hari Prasetya; Founder and Creative Director of Berakar Komunikasi Agency
2. Yoga Adhitrisna; Founder and Creative Chief Officer of Berakar Komunikasi Agency

3. Satriyo Wibowo; Strategic Planner of Berakar Komunikasi Agency.

We first contacted Hari Prasetya, as top manager of Berakar Komunikasi Agency, and requested his permission to interview him and his colleagues. Upon his permission, we then emailed him the list of tentative interview questions. However, the respondents were fully aware that the interviews would be semi-structured, and thus additional questions may arise.

Face-to-face interviews lasted approximately two hours, were audio-recorded with each respondent, and were then transcribed. The final transcripts were then verified by the respondents to make sure there were no mistakes.   For the final results, the interview transcriptions and meeting notes were coded, and integrated with the data gathered from the literature review and the comic documents discussed in this article. Results are analyzed using the perspectives of strategic political communication, storytelling as a communication tool, and elements of storytelling. Moreover, the researchers looked common themes about the sentiments behind the campaign for Jokowi, because even though the three respondents are strategic communication professionals, in Jokowi's campaign they were volunteers, and as such, did not get paid for their services.

Findings

Yoga Adhitrisna initially felt inspired when Joko Widodo (commonly referred to as Jokowi) were running for Governor of Jakarta with Basuki Tjahaja Purnama (commonly referred to as Ahok) as his partner.

> "At the time we thought, there's one month left for campaigning, but why does it feel like we're at war? Indonesia will be divided if we let things continue this way…So we had to take the neutral lane, not offensive but still interesting. So more or less, the goal was to build a content that was creative, neutral, interesting, and not embarrassing." - HP

Elements of Story

When asked to describe the character of Jokowi and they chose to compare him to the Tintin character, the respondents claimed that the some similarities between Jokowi and Tintin include: flexible, action-oriented, adventurous, friendly, humble, and honest.

> "The character Jokowi can be easily placed in the middle of a market, or anywhere in Indonesia, and the picture would fit. This couldn't happen with Prabowo [Jokowi's opponent]. Prabowo fits better in a war setting, whereas Jokowi can be pictured anywhere…In advertising theory we call it *campaignability.* We can make long series and it would still be consistent." –YA

> "Tintin is an action-oriented character. Tintin does not talk much, right? In the comics, Haddock is the character that is placed next to Tintin and talks a lot. Tintin only talks

when it's necessary. He usually talks to himself when facing an artifact that he's investigating, or when he's talking to Snowy, his dog." -YA

"Tintin does a lot of action. His character likes to explore everywhere, is helpful, honest, gives solution, and respects diversity – and this is important as an antithesis to the other candidate [Prabowo] at that time. Tintin is also friendly, loyal, and as a reporter, Tintin likes to investigate. Jokowi likes to *blusukan* [impromptu visits to meet people face-to-face]. What he's actually doing is inspecting. Tintin is also humble. So when we compare them, they actually have the same style, except, whereas Tintin explores, Jokowi does *blusukan."* –YA

Storyline and Ssymbols

When asked what storyline or message is visually narrated through the "Tales of Jokowi's *Blusukan*" comics, the responses included:

"Actually through all that we've made [pointing at the 20 pictures of "Tales of Jokowi's Blusukan" comics], full-colored, to illustrate the concept of Indonesia's diversity. That is why we insisted on producing many, because this is Indonesia's identity…The message is: unity, humility, that Indonesian people like to get together and to help each other. However, each picture has its own message, as explained in our book "Demokreatif: Kisah Blusukan Jokowi" [Democreative: Tales of Jokowi's Blusukan], for instance, the one about Central Java, has a picture of a train (Picture 1), because at the time it was *mudik* (homecoming to celebrate the Muslim holiday, the Eid) season. The concept is *mudik*, but what we want to convey is actually that Jokowi has come to bring change to Indonesia." -HP
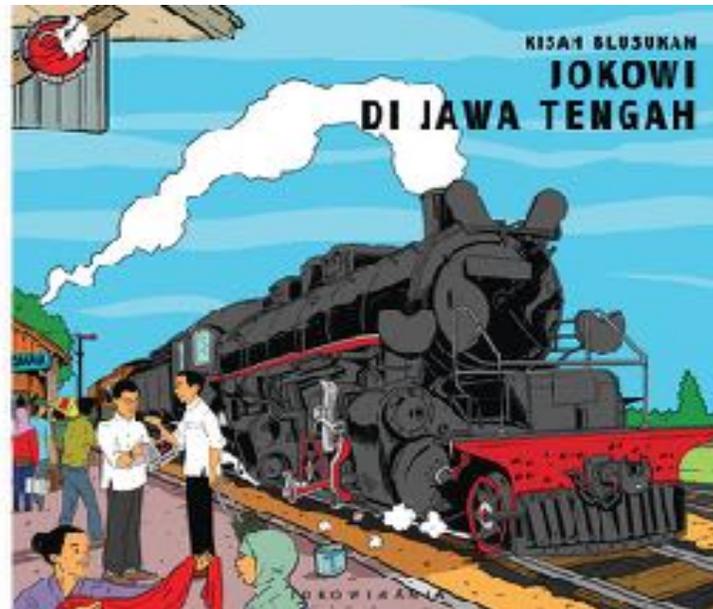
Jokowi in Central Java (2014)

Reprinted with permission from the creators

"Also, Jokowi repeatedly talks about the transportation system, the sea toll, for instance. He wants to build the transportation infrastructure. Therefore, this poster also represents the transportation terminology, as well as equalization. In other words, Jokowi as a president, thinks about everyone, not just certain elite groups" –YA

"Why is there a picture of the Pinisi ship in the Makassar edition? Because Indonesia is a maritime nation. We actually communicate the content in a subtle manner, but if you dissect it, actually there's everything. Like in Papua, playing soccer, that's because Papua is the number one contributor of soccer players in Indonesia. Then, in Aceh, [Vice President] Jusuf Kalla is up front. That means that Jusuf Kalla is an icon of peace. Also in the Ramadan edition, why is Jokowi looking for *takjil* [sweet snacks usually eaten to break fasting]? That's *to* show how Indonesia's Islam is, Islam *Nusantara* [another term for Indonesia], not Islam with white turbans. Then we have the Way Kambas episode with Jokowi riding an elephant. Jokowi has made many promises as a leader. Well, elephants are said to have the best memory. Our hope is that Jokowi never forgets his promises once he becomes a leader" –YA.

The respondents claim that throughout all the comic episodes, the overarching theme for the comics was hope and peace:

> **"**In the *Jokowi di TPS* [Jokowi at the election booth], Jokowi is pictured mingling with fellow citizens, and there's a picture of a dove. We're trying to convey the message of a peaceful election. Actually everything has a meaning" –HP

According to Christopher Booker (2005) in "The Seven Basic Plots," there are seven storylines: Tragedy; Comedy; Rags to Riches; Overcoming a Monster; Voyage and Return; The Quest; and Rebirth. When asked which storyline their comic follows:

> **"**The Quest. Because Jokowi is portrayed as travelling Indonesia with mission of making it better. This also depicts hope. What Hari has drawn is very ideal. Indonesia is truly beautiful. This is clearly not 'Voyage and Return', in which the protagonist is lost and comes back, like in the movie Cast Away or Interstellar." –SW
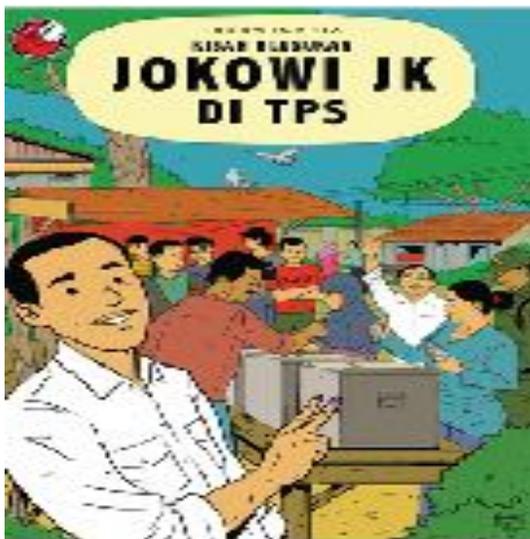
Jokowi at the Election Booth, 2014
Reprinted with permission from the creators

Visual Symbols

In visual storytelling, the narrative is not only found in the text, instead, it is found in every symbol, including colors, typography, angle, and many more. As the respondents said:

> "Semiotically, Jokowi is portrayed as part of the people, doing what ordinary people do – shopping in the market in Yogyakarta, drinking coffee in Makassar – and that is how the slogan "*Jokowi Adalah Kita*" [Jokowi is us] came to be." - SW

> "The colors portray diversity. Aside for that, the colors are similar to those found in Tintin comics, so as to grab the audience's attention. From a typography point of view, we deliberately chose a familiar font that is found in all computers, Abadi Condense Bold, to make it easy to produce."

They also produced a round edition to enable people to participate by typing the name of their city:

> "As long as it has the name of Jokowi and the name of the location, for example, Makassar…This represents our statement that Jokowi does *blusukan* everywhere. The layout and eye angle is designed at eye level, which conveys the message that we are all on the same level" –HP.
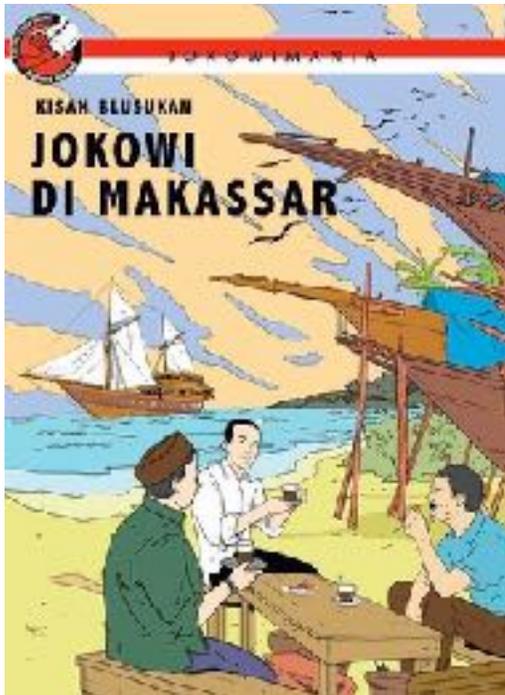
Jokowi in Makassar, 2014
Reprinted with permission from the creators

Characters

A story has to have characters: Protagonists and antagonists. When it comes to the Tales of Blusukan comics, the following are the characters:

Protagonists: Jokowi, Jusuf Kalla, and the people. The people are portrayed as optimistic, smiley, friendly, positive thinking, and united, e.g., drinking coffee together, breaking the fasting together, worshipping together.

Antagonists: In neither episode is the antagonist pictured.

> "Actually, the antagonist is always present in every episode, but we never picture it. For Instance, Prabowo cannot possibly play soccer. So that's how we do it. We don't put a picture of Prabowo there." -YA

> "The memes that used smear campaign brought up issues of ethnicity, religion, and race, without any justifications were the also the antagonists. Anonymous and irresponsible. They didn't dare to identify their names. We did, and we are proud of what we have done. But they don't have the guts. So the antagonists are ethnic, religious and racial discriminations, and slander, which cannot be justified journalistically" –YA

Other characters include the creative volunteers, for example the band Slank, who also appeared on one of the episodes. Slank has been portrayed as to convey an invitation to the audience to become volunteers just like Slank.

Jokowi in Potlot (2014)
Reprinted with permission from the creators

Audience
By assimilating the character of Jokowi with that of Tintin, naturally the target audience is originally those who are familiar with the Tintin comics:

> "The target audience are people their age, who read Tintin during their childhood, and have now become decision makers, have influence, and when they see our comic, they say "wow, this is cool" and become romanticized by the past, and pass it on to the next generation. But if I targeted teens under 17 to 19 years, they'd probably just say "nice", but there is no big impact. So I'd rather target those who are already familiar and can pass it on to their 5 year-old children, who in approximately 5 years will start to understand" - HP

When asked whether people who were not familiar with Tintin comics could be reached through their Jokowi comics, their answers included:

> "I feel that the message is beyond the style of the comic. Therefore the drawing style is not a barrier for the audience to receive the message…Because we are positioning Jokowi as part of the people, using typical Indonesian icons that everybody knows." -SW

> "In theory, this is called *affinity* or proximity. So a picture has a certain proximity with the audience, for example, in the Ramadan and Friday prayer episodes, which portray actual conditions" –YA

Table 1
Narrative elements in 'Tales of Jokowi's Blusukan Tales' comics

Characters	• Protagonists: Jokowi, Jusuf Kalla, and the Indonesian people. The people are portrayed as optimistic, happy, friendly, positive-thinking, and united, e.g., drinking coffee together, breaking the fasting together, worshipping together. • Antagonists: The antagonists are always present but never pictured. • Other characters: The creative volunteers, e.g. the band Slank, (to convey an invitation to the audience to become volunteers - just like Slank).
Storyline	The Quest: Jokowi is portrayed as travelling Indonesia with the mission of making it better. • Beginning: Indonesia is an ideal, truly beautiful country with peaceful, happy, united people. • Middle: Indonesia is in conflict, e.g.: transportation issues, illegal logging, etc. • End: Jokowi is the solution to a better, peaceful, united Indonesia.
Brand persona	The champion: Jokowi battles against opposing forces on a regular basis.

Messages	Overarching themes: Hope, peace, unity, humility. However, each picture has its own unique message: "In the *Jokowi di TPS* [Jokowi at the election booth] edition, Jokowi is pictured mingling with fellow citizens, and there's a picture of a dove. We're trying to convey the message of a peaceful election. Actually everything has a meaning" – HP
Visual symbols	• Assimilation of Jokowi and Tintin. Both are considered: flexible, action-oriented, adventurous, friendly, humble, and honest. • The colors portray diversity. • Semiotically, Jokowi is portrayed as part of the people, doing what ordinary people do – shopping in the market in Yogyakarta, drinking coffee in Makassar, and more – in line with the slogan "*Jokowi Adalah Kita*" [Jokowi is us].
Audience	By assimilating the character of Jokowi with that of Tintin, the main target audience is those familiar with the Tintin comics.

Strategic Communication Perspective

The viral success of this campaign was beyond their expectation, thanks to social media. Within days, their web site crashed because of the staggering number of visitors, while they didn't prepare the proper bandwidth. They immediately increased it. As mentioned earlier, political campaigns in general are marketing oriented. Therefore, from a marketing perspective, Jokowi is a brand, and the Tales of Blusukan comics are marketing tools. Therefore, the following are the "5 P's" according to the respondents:

Product: Pancasila [Indonesian ideology]

"The 'product' that we are 'selling' is none other than Pancasila itself…And we also sell creative campaign, to counter smear campaigns." –YA

Promotion: Internet, social media

"We use the user-generated-content method. We campaign using the voter's potentials. Thus, the voters also campaign" –SW.

Place: "We position Jokowi as leadership product that is action-oriented and thus, as his supporters, we are also action-oriented. Therefore, our advertising agency, Berakar Komunikasi, is a group of campaign volunteers" –SW.

"This is possible because Berakar Komunikasi is a shareholder / stakeholder. So we do all this without any intention on getting a business contract. We are truly volunteers" –YA.

Price:
"From our side, the price is our own satisfaction. When I saw the smear campaign strategies, I thought to myself, it is time that we, advertising practitioners, do something for the political arena, for the sake of our country. At least the audience will appreciate it, and that's enough for us. We did not think as far as gaining financial profit" –HP.

"From the context of presidential elections, we all thought, that if we commercialized this, it would be equivalent to a one-month leave. So during the campaign, we did not tackle any other jobs. We really focused on this campaign." -YA

"From the perspective of the audience, what is being sold is the hope that there will be a leader capable of bringing Indonesian to a better direction…"If the audience wants to get a leader like the one we're campaigning, the price that the audience has to pay is to participate in campaigning for Jokowi, and to vote for Jokowi. There are many with a strong political sense, but do not dare to speak up…Those who speak out are often smear campaigners who spread slander, and what I observe is that Indonesians tend to follow

whatever is 'loudly shouted'. Therefore, if Jokowi supporters remain quiet, they may be swayed by the haters" –SW.

People:

"People feel more confident that Jokowi is close to his people. Which other [Indonesian] president is willing to be made a cartoon? This shows a proximity between a leader and his people. There have even been people who asked for their houses to be painted with Jokowi's picture, whereas usually a person doesn't even want to put a picture of the president in their home" -HP

"Basically, we are just duplicating something that is already there. In the advertising context, it is important to build reputation, and it takes a long time, not only during elections. Reputation is neutral. It becomes negative when the reputation is the goal…I have a motto from my previous office, "truth well told". A good reputation must begin from the truth. I'm a marketing person, and in marketing, the best tool is the product. When a product is good, whatever is truthfully good about that product, that's what we bring up." –SW.
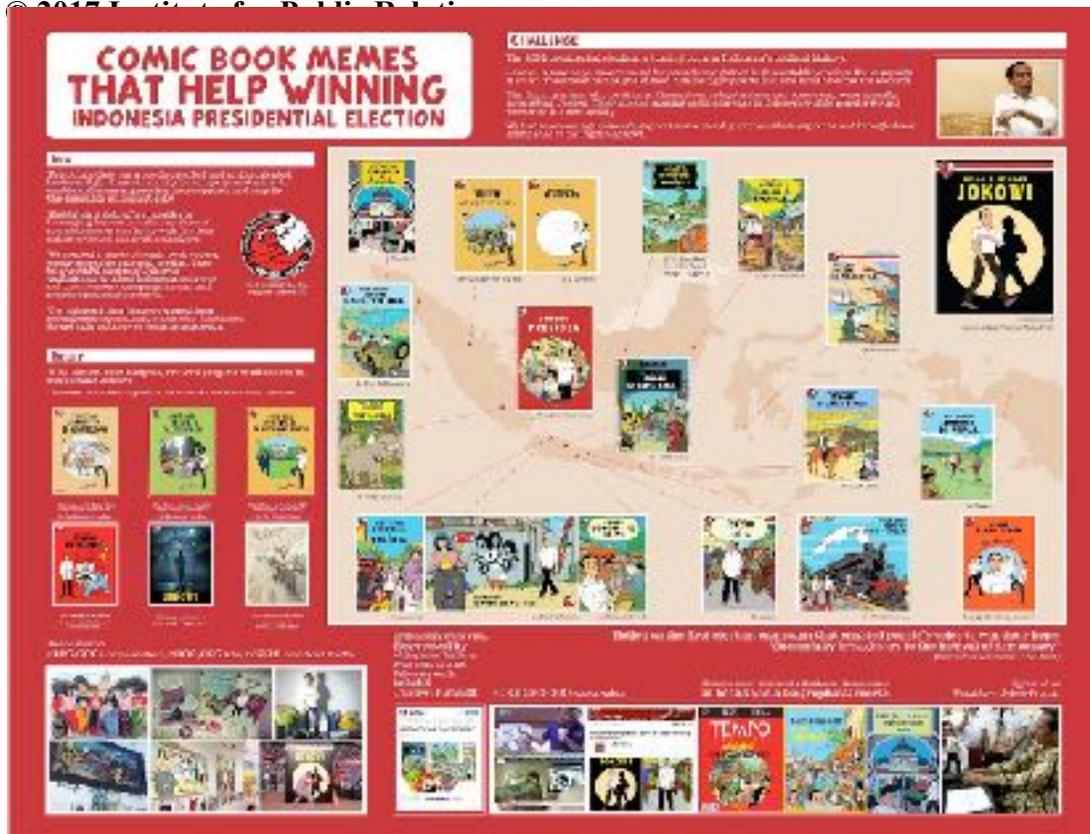
The collection of Tintin-style 'Tales of Jokowi's Blusukan Tales' comics (2014)
Reprinted with permission from the creators

Conclusion

Strategic political communication aims to use information and communication as strategically and effectively as possible to reach the goals of the political parties or individuals. In the meantime, not only are campaign practices and communication different from one country to another, they are also ever-changing and continuously influenced by the current situation of the political system, the media system, laws and regulations, the political culture, and the type of parties and party competition (Strömbäck & Kiousis, 2014). Therefore, though there appear to be cross-national macro trends in campaign practices and communication, Strömbäck & Kiousis (2014) warns against oversimplification and suggests deeper analyses keeping in mind the country context, that would expose reveal more detailed differences.

Storytelling is an ancient form of communication. However, as branding tool, it is an emerging concept. Scientific research has shown that storytelling helps make sense of the world, and also strengthens emotional connections. This is highly important in branding. Whether tackling product brands, company brands, or political brands, storytelling is essential to successful branding.

One essential part of brand storytelling, however is the persona brand. When done right, the persona brand enables quick recognition and memorization. When used inconsistently, however, it may cause failure as it creates confusion. The "Tales of Jokowi's Blusukan" comic is a wonderful example of successful brand storytelling. Not only do the comics use the proper storytelling elements, but they also have marketing and public relations elements. As a result, the comics were able to evoke emotional connections with the audience. Using the familiar Tintin-style also not only enabled the audience to connect the characters of Jokowi and Tintin, who share traits such as: humility, honesty, adventure-seeking, and down-to-earth; but it was able to bring up memories of youth – as readers of Tintin.

Even though "The Adventures of Tintin" were full of controversies of genderism, anti-Semitism, and orientalism, the Indonesian audience seems to be more familiar with Tintin's positive traits. In the end, however, the message that the creators of the Jokowi comics sought to convey were message of peace and hope for a better Indonesia, and these were all properly conveyed through symbols such as colors, typography, angle, and more.

Strömbäck & Kiousis (2014) warns that the macro trends of strategic political communication, particularly the heavy focus on television and the increased professionalization in political campaigns may lead to unfair competition in which the wealthy can have more influence. However, the case of Jokowi is noteworthy, because the creative campaign strategy using "Tales of Jokowi's *Blusukan*" comics were entirely run by volunteers, and this led to massive popularity. Strategic communication practitioners can learn from this case, and indeed, similar strategies are already being used by Basuki Tjahaja Purnama (Ahok) in his campaigns for Jakarta Governorship

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