

AUDIENCE RECEPTION OF CELEBRITY POLITICAL ENDORSEMENT ON IKN POLICY THROUGH SEKRETARIAT PRESIDEN YOUTUBE CHANNEL

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Abstrak

Pada era komunikasi digital, *celebrity political endorsement* semakin banyak digunakan sebagai strategi komunikasi pemerintah untuk menjangkau masyarakat. Salah satu contohnya adalah kehadiran selebriti dalam konten video di kanal YouTube Sekretariat Presiden yang mendukung kebijakan pemindahan Ibu Kota Nusantara (IKN). Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji bagaimana audiens memaknai pesan dalam *celebrity political endorsement* terkait kebijakan tersebut serta menganalisis posisi decoding audiens berdasarkan konsep *Encoding-Decoding* Stuart Hall. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif melalui wawancara mendalam terhadap enam informan yang telah menyaksikan konten terkait. Analisis dilakukan dengan menggunakan teori resepsi audiens dan konsep *encoding-decoding* untuk memahami bagaimana audiens mengonstruksi makna terhadap praktik *celebrity political endorsement*. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa audiens tidak memaknai pesan secara seragam, melainkan secara aktif menginterpretasikannya berdasarkan pengalaman, pengetahuan, dan latar belakang sosial yang dimiliki. Kehadiran selebriti dipandang sebagai jembatan komunikasi yang memudahkan penyampaian isu kebijakan. Namun, keterlibatan selebriti tidak serta-merta meningkatkan kepercayaan audiens. Audiens cenderung mempertimbangkan kredibilitas, relevansi, dan kualitas informasi dalam mengevaluasi pesan yang disampaikan. Berdasarkan posisi *decoding*, empat informan berada pada posisi *negotiated*, sedangkan dua informan lainnya berada pada posisi *oppositional*. Secara keseluruhan, efektivitas *celebrity political endorsement* bersifat kondisional dan dipengaruhi oleh kredibilitas komunikator, relevansi, serta kualitas informasi. Temuan ini menegaskan bahwa audiens memiliki peran yang aktif dan kritis dalam memaknai komunikasi politik di era media digital.

Keywords: celebrity influence, digital engagement, government messaging, political communication, public perception.

Abstract

In the era of digital communication, celebrity political endorsements are increasingly used as a communication strategy by the government to reach the public. One example is the presence of celebrities in video content on the *Sekretariat Presiden* YouTube channel supporting the policy of relocating the national capital. This study aims to examine how audiences interpret messages in celebrity political endorsements related to this policy and to analyze audience decoding positions based on Stuart Hall's Encoding-Decoding concept. This study uses a qualitative approach through in-depth interviews with six informants who have viewed the relevant content. The analysis draws on audience reception theory and the encoding-decoding concept to understand how audiences construct meaning regarding the practice of celebrity political endorsement. The findings show that audiences do not interpret messages uniformly, but actively interpret them based on their experiences, knowledge, and social backgrounds. The presence of celebrities is considered as serving as a communication bridge that facilitates the delivery of policy issues. However, celebrity involvement does not automatically increase audience trust. Audiences tend to consider credibility, relevance, and the quality of

information when evaluating messages. In terms of decoding positions, four informants are in the negotiated position, while two others are in the oppositional position. Overall, the effectiveness of celebrity political endorsement is conditional and influenced by communicator credibility, relevance, and information quality. These findings highlight the active and critical role of audiences in interpreting political communication in the digital media era.

Keywords: celebrity influence, digital engagement, government messaging, political communication, public perception.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

In the digital era and the development of social media, the role of celebrities in political communication is increasingly significant. Transformation in political communication occurs along with the advancement of digital technology, especially social media, which changes the way the government conveys policies and builds communication with the public. Today, celebrities not only act as entertainment figures, but also as actors who can influence public opinion and increase public involvement in political issues. Celebrities who have attractiveness, high popularity, and a reputation that can be trusted by the intended public can make the promoted product known, known, and in demand (Harwiki & Hidayat, 2021). In this case, celebrities who act as endorsers have an influence in shaping the attitudes and behaviors of the target audience. Through the idea of meaning transfer, McCracken explains that the practice of endorsement works through a mechanism of meaning transfer, which is when a celebrity conveys certain meanings and associations when they act as a messenger for the object they are advertising (Halonon-Knight & Hurmerinta, 2010). These meanings and associations are reflected in the credibility and appeal that encompass the aspects of familiarity and likeability in the endorser. Through this mechanism, endorsement is often used as a communication strategy to address controversial issues related to society. Celebrity endorsement is defined as a promotional strategy that involves individuals who have public recognition and utilize that recognition to promote a product, service, or brand through joint appearances with the supported object (McCracken, 1989). Liao et al. (2023) in their research classifies endorsements into two main styles, namely explicit endorsement and implicit endorsement. Explicit endorsement is characterized by statements of support that are conveyed directly and contain a directive intention in the form of a direct invitation or recommendation, such as “I recommend it.” Meanwhile, implicit endorsement is indirect and implied, for example through emotional expressions or the creation of a positive impression, such as “I love it.”. These endorsements are often considered an effective strategy in political communication because they have a strong emotional connection with their followers that can influence their political decisions.

Friedrich & Nitsch (2019) defined celebrity political endorsement as the phenomenon in which celebrities publicly express support for a political candidate, parties, or political issues. Similarly, IJEH

(2024) explains that celebrity endorsement in political advertising refers to the public expression of support for a political candidate, parties, or political issues by an individual who need not be a politician but is widely known in the fields of entertainment, music, sports, film, media, or other fields, and who wields influence among the voting public. Based on these two definitions, it can be understood that celebrity political endorsement is not determined by a person's political background, but rather by their involvement in openly providing political support to a candidate, party, or specific political issue. In other words, a person can be categorized as a celebrity political endorser even if they lack formal political experience or office. The effectiveness of celebrity political endorsements is determined more by personal credibility, level of popularity, and the public perception they have cultivated than by formal political competence. In line with the development of this practice, Stephan C. Henneberg & Yi-Ling Chen (2008) distinguishes celebrity political endorsements into two categories based on the characteristics of the celebrities providing political support. First, external celebrity political endorsements, which are endorsements given by celebrities who come from outside the political world or do not identify as politicians. Second, internal celebrity political endorsements, which are endorsements from political figures who already possess celebrity status or high popularity as public figures. In this category, the figure providing the endorsement holds a dual identity as both a politician and a political celebrity. Thus, the main difference between the two categories lies in the origin of the endorser's popularity, whether it was built outside the political sphere (external) or stems from political activities themselves (internal). Based on the description, it can be concluded that celebrity political endorsements are not determined solely by an endorser's political background, but by the existence of political support openly provided by a public figure who influences society. Therefore, both celebrities from outside the political sphere and political figures who have become celebrities can be categorized as celebrity political endorsers as long as they meet these characteristics.

One form of political product that currently often gets support from celebrities is government policy, celebrities are often used by politicians or governments to support certain policies in the hope of building positive perceptions among the public (Putri & Muradi, 2017). In Indonesia, the use of celebrity political endorsement is increasingly widespread, as is the case with the issue of moving the country's capital. This policy has become one of the big agendas that has concluded many responses from the public, where some of them support and vice versa there are those who reject it for several reasons. Reporting from the official website of the Sekretariat Kabinet Republik Indonesia, Undang-Undang Nomor 3 Tahun 2022 concerning national capital city (UU IKN) was passed by President Joko Widodo on February 15, 2022. The relocation of the country's capital has always been a contentious topic, both pro and contra. Even after President Joko Widodo officially announced the plan, support and rejection became more massive. In response to the various pro and contra of relocating the national capital, the

government is trying to convince the public through campaigns and promotions about the national capital. This effort aims to provide clearer information about the capital relocation project, especially for people who still do not understand the concept and purpose of this policy.

One strategy that caught the public's attention was when President Joko Widodo invited a number of artists and influencers to visit and monitor the progress of the national capital construction project. After previously in 2023 President Joko Widodo invited a number of artists and influencers to see firsthand the construction of IKN, a similar activity was held again in 2024. Through video uploads on YouTube and Instagram, these celebrities shared their experiences touring IKN as well as reviewing the progress of the construction of the State Palace. The Minister of State Secretary, Pratikno, emphasized that the involvement of these celebrities is part of the government's communication strategy as a socialization effort to the public (Meidyana, 2024). The existence of these campaigns and promotions is also part of the government's efforts to build a positive image of the IKN Nusantara and influence the political attitudes and behavior of the public, both from civil society and stakeholders, such as business actors and investors. Thus, the presence of celebrities in IKN policy content shows characteristics that are in line with endorsement practices, because it involves public figures with a high level of fame who consciously convey messages of support for IKN policies to a wide audience.



Picture 1. Celebrities Visit to Inspect IKN with President Jokowi

Source: Sekretariat Presiden Youtube Channel

Among the various digital platforms, the *Sekretariat Presiden* official YouTube channel is one of the main media used by the government to publicize the moment of the visit in a more complete and structured manner. This channel serves as the government's official communication tool in delivering strategic information, including the development of the IKN project which is a long-term national agenda. The video documentation uploaded on the YouTube channel shows the interaction between President Joko Widodo and the celebrities while inspecting the construction site, complete with their positive comments and impressions of the IKN project. The narrative delivered through popular public figures is a communication strategy that targets a wide group of people. The videos were not only watched directly on

the *Sekretariat Presiden* YouTube channel, but also gained wider exposure through re-uploads on various other platforms. The high exposure of this content indicates that the government's communication strategy through the *Sekretariat Presiden* YouTube channel has successfully captured the public's attention. However, the high number of viewers and interactions is influenced not only by the topic of IKN development but also by the involvement of public figures who possess popularity, credibility, and appeal in the eyes of the public. In this content, celebrities do not merely appear as guests or visitors but also serve as communicators conveying narratives about the development of the IKN. These narratives are reflected in various statements highlighting the progress, benefits, and positive image of the IKN. This is evident in the statements made by several public figures in the IKN-related content on the Presidential Secretariat's YouTube channel. One of the most explicit examples can be seen in the video "Ketika Para Penggiat Seni Menikmati Malam di IKN Bersama Presiden Jokowi, 22 September 2023", through Saykoji's performance, in which he sings the lyrics "*Indonesia maju ekonomi, terjadinya pasti di zaman Pak Jokowi. IKN terbangun kita bisa lihat ada IKN. Arahan Pak Jokowi dibangun Pak Bas pasti semakin jadi paten. Lihat masa depan Indonesia melesat maju, semua bisa tepat, bisa berpacu.*" This statement directly links the development of the IKN to the success of President Joko Widodo's leadership and portrays the IKN as a symbol of the nation's progress. The message not only expresses appreciation for the development but also builds legitimacy for government policy by associating the success of the development with the current political leader. A similar sentiment is evident in the video titled "Presiden Jokowi Ajak Influencer Meninjau Progres IKN, 28 Juli 2024", Wilie Salim stated, "*IKN itu bisa jadi sesuatu yang mungkin 20 tahun lagi kita banggakan gitu kayak Indonesia punya IKN, nih, keren banget gitu kan. Masa depannya bagus.*" This statement frames the IKN as a promising project worthy of national pride. As an influencer with a wide audience reach, this positive assessment not only conveys a personal experience but also has the potential to shape public perception that the development of the IKN is a policy that will benefit Indonesia's future. Zaskia Sungkar also said, "*Kita semua aku rasa sepakat happy banget dan terutama begitu nyampai di IKN kayak masuk dunia lain. Keren banget aku enggak nyangka progresnya udah sampai tahap ini, benar-benar udah kelihatan kemegahannya. Arsitekturnya keren, terus alamnya juga cantik, terus apanya lagi tadi ya yang bikin aku... oh danau—danaunya juga itu bagus banget dan ya istananya juga megah banget, ada futuristik tapi tetap culture atau dan heritage Indonesia itu tetap dipertahankan*" This statement highlights the success of the IKN's development in terms of both infrastructure progress and the preservation of Indonesian culture. Through this description, Zaskia crafts a narrative that the IKN's development is not only modern but also preserves national identity. The positive narrative conveyed by this public figure strengthens the image and legitimacy of government policies in the eyes of the public. Atta Halilintar and Aurel Hermansyah also stated, "*Suatu kehormatan kita bisa ngelihat langsung. MasyaAllah keren banget tempatnya. Istananya juga unik gitu ya, unik banget yang*

menurutku Instagram-able banget jadi kalau ke sini itu kayak pengen foto aja.” These statements highlight their positive experience during their visit to the IKN while portraying the area as an attractive, modern place that holds appeal for the public. Although they did not explicitly call on the public to support the IKN, the positive experiences they shared with their millions of followers have the potential to increase interest and shape positive perceptions regarding the development of the IKN. The sharing of these positive experiences by public figures can indirectly strengthen public acceptance of the policies currently being promoted by the government. Meanwhile, Raffi Ahmad stated, *“Aku sendiri sudah melihat secara mata, kepala, hati, ngelihat ‘Wah ini kalau udah jadi Masyaallah ini benar-benar merinding’. Jadi apa tadi Pak Jokowi bilang ini yang zero, jadi enggak ada polusi sama sekali, green apa ya. Untuk menjalankan satu pemerintahan untuk kepala negara beserta jajarannya ada di sini, ini merupakan satu prestisius juga kalau misal tamu-tamu luar negeri datang ke Indonesia tahu bahwa Indonesia itu benar-benar indah sekali.”* This statement frames the development of the IKN as a prestigious project capable of enhancing Indonesia’s image in the eyes of the world. As a highly popular public figure, Raffi Ahmad’s positive opinion has the potential to boost public confidence in the IKN development and strengthen the legitimacy of the policy. Therefore, his statement can exert personal influence to foster a positive image of the government’s policy.

Based on those various statements, it is evident that celebrities are not only sharing their experiences during visits to the IKN but are also conveying narratives that highlight the benefits, progress, and positive image of the IKN development. These narratives are conveyed by public figures who possess significant popularity, credibility, and influence on digital media, thereby potentially shaping how audiences perceive government policies. Thus, the content on the *Sekretariat Presiden* YouTube channel exemplifies the practice of celebrity political endorsement, namely the use of public figures as communicators to bolster the image and legitimacy of a public policy. However, both the high level of exposure and the factors inherent in celebrities, such as image, credibility, and appeal, do not automatically reflect uniform public acceptance of celebrity endorsement practices or the messages constructed through such content. Audience attention and engagement represent the reach of the message rather than the certainty that the message is received and interpreted in accordance with the communicator's objectives as audiences have different experiences, knowledge, and social backgrounds that influence how they interpret the political messages they receive. This aligns with research conducted by Dharta (2024), he states that the influence of celebrity political endorsement in political communication on people's political attitudes does not always have a positive impact. The credibility of celebrities as a source of political information is often questioned, especially if they are considered to have little understanding or insight into the political world. This can lead to skepticism among a more critical public.

In communication studies, audiences are viewed as active subjects involved in giving meaning to

the media texts they consume (Pramesti & Kusuma, 2025). Audiences have the ability to filter, evaluate, and determine whether a message they consume is accepted or rejected. Messages conveyed through the media are not always interpreted linearly in accordance with the message creator's intentions, but are influenced by various factors that shape audience opinion, such as experience, culture, and audience identity, including religion, age, and gender (Agusty & Aisha, 2023). Therefore, high audience engagement in the form of views, comments, or other digital interactions is not always directly proportional to the level of acceptance of the message being conveyed. This phenomenon shows that the study of audience acceptance is important for analyzing how audiences actively respond to, interpret, and evaluate the practice of celebrity political endorsement as presented in the content of the Ibu Kota Nusantara (IKN) policy.

Studies on celebrity political endorsements have attracted widespread attention in political communication studies. Several previous studies have examined this phenomenon from various angles. A study examining the role of celebrities in political campaigns, entitled “Endorser Selebriti Pada Iklan Politik Sebagai Upaya Vote Getter Pada Pemilu Muda” by Martana & Andriana (2018) highlights how the Jokowi-JK campaign team utilized celebrities as vote getters, showing that their effectiveness is shaped by legitimacy, popularity, and charisma. Similarly, the study titled “Celebrity Political Endorsement and Young Voters in Europe: A Five-Country Comparison on Celebrity Support Effectiveness in the European Elections” by Friedrich & Nitsch (2019) measures the influence of celebrity attributes on attitudes and voting intentions show that the influence of celebrity endorsements is not always significant and is often inconsistent, indicating that the effectiveness of celebrity support varies depending on the social and political dynamics of each country. Another study examining in the context of digital media titled “Analisis Wacana Kritis Dukungan Peran Selebritis Pada Pemilihan Calon Presiden 2024 Prabowo Subianto Melalui Instagram @Prabowosubianto” by Prakoso et al. (2024). Using critical discourse analysis, this study reveals how the use of celebrities on social media is a form of persuasive communication that plays an important role in presidential elections and can influence voters' perceptions and behavior. In a similar context, another study entitled “From Entertainment to Engagement? Entertainment Figures’ Political Messaging and Audience Responses in the Digital Age” by Klüser (2025) analyzes how entertainment figures, communicate political issues on social media, finding that although political content tends to generate lower engagement than non-political posts, the use both positive and negative sentiments can increase audience interaction, highlighting that entertainment figures have the potential as influential agents in political communication.

Previous studies on celebrity political endorsement have focused more on measuring the influence and effectiveness of celebrity support on public opinion or political attitudes, which essentially places the audience as passive receivers of political communication. This approach looks at how messages conveyed

by celebrities directly influence the public without considering the process of meaning interpretation carried out by the audience. However, in today's era of digital communication, audiences are no longer seen as active agents in interpreting, assessing, and even negotiating the meaning of the messages they consume in the digital public sphere. This process is highly dependent on the social, cultural, and personal experiences of each individual. Therefore, it is important to understand how audiences interpret the practice of celebrity political endorsement, not only in terms of how effective the message is considered to be, but also how the meaning of the message is produced and received by the public. This study is also important in enriching the literature on Celebrity Studies, particularly celebrity political endorsement, by incorporating a reception perspective that positions the public as active agents in the political communication process. Furthermore, it contributes to Reception Studies and Political Communication Studies by providing insights into how audiences interpret celebrity political endorsement in public policy communication.

Based on the description of the phenomenon, the problem formulations in this study are:

1. How do audiences interpret the practice of celebrity political endorsement in the Ibu Kota Nusantara (IKN) policy packaged in video content on the *Sekretariat Presiden* YouTube channel?
2. What is the audience's decoding position in responding to practice of celebrity political endorsement in the Ibu Kota Nusantara (IKN) policy packaged in video content on the *Sekretariat Presiden* YouTube channel?

Based on the formulation of the problem, the objectives of this study are:

1. To find out how audiences interpret the practice of celebrity political endorsement in the Ibu Kota Nusantara (IKN) policy packaged in video content on the *Sekretariat Presiden* YouTube channel.
2. To analyze the audience's decoding position based on Stuart Hall's Encoding-Decoding concept in responding to practice of celebrity political endorsement in the Ibu Kota Nusantara (IKN) policy packaged in video content on the *Sekretariat Presiden* YouTube channel?

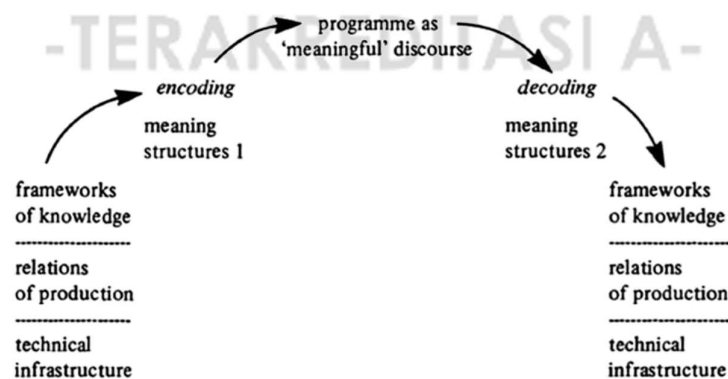
1.2. Audience Reception Theory

In today's digital age, the flow of information is no longer one-way. The public is no longer just passive recipients of media messages, but also actively interprets and makes sense of the content they consume (Bekti & Winduwati, 2023). To explain how individuals or groups respond to celebrity political endorsements in IKN content on the *Sekretariat Presiden* YouTube channel, this study uses audience reception theory developed by Stuart Hall as its theoretical framework.

Audience reception theory understands that contextual factors, such as audience identity, readers'

perceptions of news reports, and social, cultural, and political backgrounds influence how audiences understand, interpret, and respond to media messages (Dwiputra, 2021). Audience reception theory is part of audience studies that attempt to examine in depth the actual interpretation process in which discourse are received and assumed through discourse practices and audience culture (Qonaah et al., 2022). In this study, the audience is viewed as active interpreters, suggesting that the text and its recipients are complementary elements of an object of investigation, thereby addressing aspects of discursive and social communication.

One of the basic assumptions of this theory is that there is no “effect” without “meaning,” where in this case the public reinterprets the messages conveyed by the media, and the audience's interpretation will result in various impacts, and these impacts are the final stage of this research (Sari & Hariyanto, 2016). The most important theoretical concept of the audience reception theory is that the meaning of a broadcast or media content is not entirely determined by the content creator. In other words, the message conveyed in a video or media is not simply accepted as is by the audience. According to Stuart Hall, the meaning produced by the sender of a message (encoder) is not always received or interpreted by the recipient in accordance with the original intention of the sender/creator (Qolbidiasih, 2025). Instead, each person can understand and interpret the content of the media in different ways, depending on their experiences, backgrounds, and perspectives. In other words, meaning is created through interaction between the audience, such as watching, interpreting, and processing the media text with the content. In this theory, the audience is positioned as an active audience in front of the public, where the audience is an active participant in the public. The public is a group of people who are formed over certain issues and actively participate in discussions about the issues raised (Asmara et al., 2021).



Picture 2. Stuart Hall's Encoding-Decoding Model

Source: Hall, 1980

In his essay titled “Encoding/Decoding” in the book *Culture, Media, Language*, Hall (1980) presents a model of the encoding and decoding of broadcast structures. He explained that mass

communication does not occur as a linear process involving only the sender, the message, and the receiver. Instead, communication is understood as a structure consisting of a series of interconnected moments, namely production, circulation, distribution or consumption, and reproduction. Each moment is a necessary part of the overall communication process, but each has its own conditions of existence, form, and logic. In the Encoding-Decoding of Broadcast Structures diagram, the communication process begins on the production side. Hall explains that before a media program is produced, the broadcasting institution first operates within a production structure shaped by frameworks of knowledge, relations of production, and technical infrastructure. Frameworks of knowledge refer to the various forms of knowledge, experience, technical skills, professional ideologies, institutional knowledge, definitions of events, assumptions about the audience, and work routines used in the media production process. Meanwhile, relations of production refer to the social relationships that organize the media production process, while technical infrastructure encompasses all the technical equipment that enables production to take place. Together, these three elements form the production structure that serves as the foundation for media institutions in producing a program. Based on these conditions, media institutions then enter the encoding stage. At this stage, the production structure constructs the message. Hall emphasizes that a historical or social event cannot be transmitted in its raw form (raw historical event). In order to be communicated through the media, the event must first be translated into the form of a televisual discourse through linguistic rules and systems of signs (codes). In other words, an event must first become a story before it can become a communicative event. It is in this process that the event is constructed into a symbolic form that can be understood through language, images, sound, and various codes operating within a discourse. Therefore, the encoding process is not merely the transfer of information, but rather the process of constructing meaning around an event. The encoding process produces what Hall's diagram refers to as meaning structures 1. This term refers to the structures of meaning constructed by media producers during the production process. This meaning is the result of the use of various knowledge frameworks, production relations, and technical infrastructure at work during the encoding process. However, this structure of meaning is not immediately accepted by the audience. In order to circulate in the communication process, this structure of meaning must first be realized as a program as "meaningful" discourse. Hall explains that at a certain point, the broadcasting structure must produce encoded messages in the form of meaningful discourse. This means that the social relationships within the production process must first be translated into the discursive rules of language so that the media product appears as meaningful discourse. It is in this form that media programs can enter the circulation stage and be distributed to the audience. Once a program is presented as meaningful discourse, the communication process continues to the decoding stage. Hall explains that before a message can have an effect, fulfill a need, or be used by the audience, it must first be understood as meaningful discourse and then meaningfully decoded. Thus, meaning does not

automatically transfer from the media to the audience. The audience must interpret the discourse they receive through the codes they use. It is the result of this decoding process that can then influence, entertain, educate, persuade, or produce complex perceptual, cognitive, emotional, ideological, and behavioral consequences. In Hall's model, the decoding process produces meaning structures 2, which are structures of meaning formed within the audience after they interpret a media message. Subsequently, these structures of meaning re-enter the audience's frameworks of knowledge, relations of production, and technical infrastructure, thereby translating into various social practices. Frameworks of knowledge refer to the audience's knowledge background, such as areas of interest or educational level, individual ideologies, and assumptions about the media. Meanwhile, relation of production refer to the conditions that influence the audience's interpretation process, such as age and motivation, and technical infrastructure refers to the technical means that support the reception of media messages, such as the internet and devices (smartphones) (Krisbiyantoro & Wirawanda, 2023). Hall emphasizes that if the audience does not take on a meaning, then the message will not be consumed. Similarly, if that meaning is not articulated into social practices, then communication will not produce any effects. Thus, the communication cycle only becomes effective when the meaning generated through the decoding process is re-embodied in social practices, allowing the communication circuit to reach the stage of reproduction. Although the communication process has reached the decoding stage, Hall emphasizes that the meaning produced by the audience is not always identical to the meaning intended by the media producer. This is because the decoding process is an interpretive activity influenced by the codes the audience uses to interpret a discourse. Therefore, Hall divides the audience's decoding positions into three main categories:

1. Dominant Hegemonic Position

The dominant hegemonic position is a condition where audiences tend to agree with the dominant point of view provided or conveyed in the media discourse they read or watch.

2. Negotiated Position

Negotiated position is when audiences accept the dominant ideology but reject its use under certain conditions, meaning it occurs when the audience accepts the dominant ideology provided as long as its use is adjusted to the conditions and rules that apply around.

3. Oppositional Position

Oppositional position occurs when the audience rejects the meaning or message conveyed by the media and instead interprets it based on their own way of thinking, experience, and perspective.

Thus, the Encoding-Decoding model demonstrates that mass communication is a process of producing, circulating, interpreting, and reproducing meaning that unfolds through a series of interrelated moments; however, it never guarantees that the meaning produced by the media will be received identically by the audience.

Endorsement

According to Martin Roll (2006), an endorsement is a brand communication channel, where a celebrity acts as a spokesperson who validates a brand's claims and position by utilizing their personality, popularity, social status, or expertise in a particular field. In practice, the person chosen as an endorser is usually someone with a positive image, good communication skills, and is believed to be able to attract the attention of their followers to the advertised product. Thus, public figures used in this strategy not only convey messages, but also transfer their self-image and reputation to the advertised product or idea. The main purpose of endorsement practices is to influence public opinion, attitudes, and preferences towards certain products, services, or ideas through the support of individuals who are trusted and influential in society. McCracken argues that success in the endorsement process lies in the opinions and meanings attached to these figures, which make them influential and effective in supporting a product or message. In addition to being influenced by the meaning conveyed by a figure, the success of an endorsement campaign also depends heavily on the compatibility between the endorser's personality and the advertised product. Endorsements that are able to communicate the meaning of the endorser to the product will have a stronger influence on the audience (D'souza & Kumar, 2023).

As cited in Kurniawan (2015) study, Terence A. Shimp (2006) argue that endorsements can be divided into two types, namely: (a) Celebrity endorsement, which is the commercial use of celebrities by certain companies or institutions to promote products, services, or policies. Celebrities are chosen because they have a significant influence on public opinion and are highly attractive to audiences; (b) Public endorsement, which is a form of testimonial given by consumers or the general public based on personal experience with a product or service. This form of support is considered more authentic because it comes from direct experience. In this study, the theoretical basis used focuses on the concept of celebrity endorsement. The practice of celebrity endorsement is carried out by the government through the involvement of public figures or celebrities in expressing support for the policy of relocating the national capital (IKN).

Halonen-Knight & Hurmerinta (2010) explain that celebrity endorsement is a form of persuasive one-way communication. In this process, factors inherent to the endorser, such as source (the endorser themselves), credibility, and attractiveness, are important elements in determining the success of the message. The attractiveness of an endorser is formed from two main aspects, namely familiarity (the level of familiarity or closeness with the audience) and likeability (the level of liking for the figure). The higher the credibility and appeal of an endorser, the greater the influence that can be exerted on public perception. The influence of celebrities can also create a psychological effect that makes the public feel more confident about the quality of the advertised product. This is because the public tends to trust products or messages

supported by public figures they admire. According to Anisa Putri Br Lubis et al. (2025), the support provided by celebrities can increase consumer confidence, strengthen product image, and encourage purchasing decisions. Thus, endorsements play an important role in shaping brand awareness, expanding the reach of promotions, and increasing the credibility of messages.

The effectiveness of endorsements is greatly influenced by the characteristics of the endorser. According to Kunandar & Sanityastuti, (2022), there are three main factors that determine the effectiveness of an endorser, namely:

- a. Testimony : Endorsers provide testimonials based on personal experiences that show that they have benefited from the product or action being endorsed.
- b. Likeness : The endorser is a figure who is liked by the public, usually because of their popularity or positive image.
- c. Authority : The endorser has expertise or authority in a field relevant to the message being conveyed.

The image of an endorser has a significant influence on public perception of the products, services, or programs they support. This can be an advantage when the celebrity's image is in line with the values being conveyed, but it can also be a disadvantage if there is a mismatch. As explained Kunandar & Sanityastuti (2022), in endorsement practices, public figures bring their own image and reputation, so that what they support will be affected, either positively or negatively, which can be a booster or a boomerang for the message being conveyed.

Celebrities as Actors in Political Communication

McNair (2011) explains the concept of political communication as purposeful communication about politics that encompasses the entire process of conveying messages by political actors through the media with the aim of influencing the audience's political understanding, attitudes, and behavior. Therefore, political communication is not limited to campaign activities or official speeches, but also includes various practices of conveying political messages that take place in the public sphere through the media. As with other forms of communication, political communication involves the communicator as a key component that holds a crucial position as they convey and frame political messages to the public, thereby greatly influencing the effectiveness of political communication (Syauket et al., 2024).

Political communicators do not only come from individuals who have big names or official positions in the government structure (Sampurna et al., 2024). Any individual or group can act as a political communicator as long as they have certain goals, desires, and interests and have the capacity to engage in political communication (Dhani, 2019). Richard E. Petty and John T. Cacioppo explain that there are four important components that must be inherent in a political communicator, namely communicator credibility, communicator attractiveness, communicator similarity, and communicator

power (Syarbaini et al., 2021). These four components influence the extent to which political messages can be accepted, believed, and processed by the audience.

Political communication practices have undergone significant transformations in line with the development of digital technology and social media. This transformation has also brought celebrities into the spotlight as non-politician public figures who have symbolic authority in the digital space, making them a new force in shaping and directing public opinion (Lessy, 2025). The characteristics of celebrities as actors in political communication are marked by their ability to build emotional closeness with their audience (affective branding), high visibility in digital media algorithms (algorithmic visibility), and the recognition celebrities gain through their popularity in digital media, which then transforms into symbolic power (mediated legitimacy) (Thahirah et al., 2025). With these characteristics, celebrities not only play a role as entertainment figures, but also have the potential to become agents of change who are able to influence public opinion and encourage public political participation.

When celebrities are involved in political issues, they use their celebrity persona to influence political consequences in accordance with their desired goals (Alvin, 2022). Celebrities as actors in political communication have great potential to reach various segments of society and raise social issues in the public sphere in a more interesting way. In the practice of political communication, celebrity involvement allows policy messages to be conveyed in a more personal and narrative manner, making them easier for the general public to accept and understand compared to conventional forms of political communication.

2. METHODS

This study uses descriptive qualitative research with a constructivist paradigm to gain an in-depth understanding of how audiences interpret and make sense of celebrity political endorsements in YouTube content produced by the *Sekretariat Presiden* regarding the Ibu Kota Nusantara (IKN) policy. The descriptive qualitative approach allows researchers to present phenomena factually and contextually based on narrative data obtained from informants. Descriptive research also serves to guide researchers in formulating and exploring research problems by capturing the social situation under study in a comprehensive, broad, and in-depth manner (Sugiyono, 2020). In the constructivist paradigm, this paradigm emphasizes a framework of thinking that reality is viewed as a result of human construction formed through social interaction and subjective experience (Muslih, 2016), where experience, social context, and culture play an important role in shaping the meaning of a phenomenon.

The subjects in this study were YouTube users in Indonesia who acted as informants and became primary sources of data in exploring the audience's interpretation of celebrity political endorsements. This study did not limit the background of informants based on education, profession, or specific demographics, with the aim of capturing the diversity of audience reception influenced by differences

in personal experiences and socio-cultural backgrounds. To obtain informants who are suitable for the research objectives, the selection of informants in this study uses purposive sampling, which is a technique for selecting informants based on certain criteria tailored to the predetermined research objectives (Sugiyono, 2020). The criteria for informants are as follows:

a. Have watched one or both of the following YouTube videos:

1) Ketika Para Penggiat Seni Menikmati Malam di IKN Bersama Presiden Jokowi, 22 September 2023.

2) Presiden Jokowi Ajak Influencer Meninjau Progres IKN, 28 Juli 2024.

b. Aged 17 years or above.

This study set the age limit for subjects at 17 years or above because at that age a person is administratively and legally recognized by the state as an adult citizen. Citizens aged 17 years or above are also eligible to vote in general elections, so they are considered legally and politically capable of forming attitudes, views, and judgments on various social and political issues. In the cognitive development theory proposed by Jean Piaget, individual cognitive development at the formal operational stage experienced from the age of 12 and above, individuals are able to think abstractly, formulate hypotheses, and reason logically and systematically (Lubis et al., 2024). These abilities form the basis for the development of critical thinking and enable individuals to understand abstract ideas (Simanjuntak et al., 2025). The relevance of the age limit of 17 years to this research topic lies in the focus of the study, which discusses audience reception of celebrity political endorsement practices in public policy, namely the Ibu Kota Nusantara (IKN) policy. Understanding public policy and celebrity political endorsement practices as part of the government's political communication strategy requires certain cognitive abilities and levels of political awareness. Therefore, this age restriction is imposed to ensure that informants are able to interpret the issues under study in a reflective and rational manner.

Data collection techniques in this study were conducted through in-depth interviews and literature studies. In-depth interviews were used to obtain primary data sourced directly from informants to explore audience reception of celebrity political endorsements in YouTube content regarding the Ibu Kota Nusantara (IKN) policy. The interviews were semi-structured, combining pre-designed questions as a reference with flexibility for improvisation, allowing researchers to explore information in greater depth (Zahroh et al., 2025). Interviews were conducted online and offline, depending on the conditions and availability of informants, with a duration of 30–60 minutes. Data collection was carried out based on the principle of data saturation, which is when the information obtained from informants has shown a recurring pattern and no longer provides new insights or changes the existing understanding of the phenomenon (Arianto et al., 2024). In addition, secondary data obtained through documentation and

literature studies. The documentation used in this study consists of two videos uploaded to the *Sekretariat Presiden* YouTube channel. The first video, titled “Ketika Para Penggiat Seni Menikmati Malam di IKN Bersama Presiden Jokowi, 22 September 2023,” is 2 minutes and 15 seconds long and was uploaded on September 23, 2023. This video features President Joko Widodo spending time with celebrities in the IKN area during a dinner and casual interaction. The video also includes the artists' impressions of the IKN's development, which they noted has made progress compared to his previous visit. The artists also expressed their hope that the development of the IKN will serve as a symbol of economic progress, strengthen Indonesia's unity, and be a source of pride for the Indonesian people. The second video, titled “Presiden Jokowi Ajak Influencer Meninjau Progres IKN, 28 Juli 2024” is 4 minutes and 42 seconds long and was uploaded on July 29, 2024. This video documents President Joko Widodo's visit to the IKN area, accompanied by several influencers, to see the progress of construction firsthand. In the video, Reiza Setiawan, Head of the East Kalimantan National Road Implementation Agency, explains the infrastructure developments and improved connectivity to the IKN through the construction of toll roads and bridges that shorten travel time to the IKN area. The video also features the influencers' reactions, in which they share their impressions after visiting the IKN, including how the construction progress exceeded their expectations, the city's futuristic and eco-friendly design, architecture that preserves Indonesian cultural values, and the IKN's readiness to serve as the future capital. Both videos constitute the documentary data used in this study. Both videos were used as documentary data and served as material for analysis in this study. Secondary data was also obtained through literature studies to obtain relevant theoretical and conceptual foundations, with sources in the form of scientific journals, books, and online-based mass media discussing political communication, celebrity political endorsement, and audience reception theory.

Data analysis technique in this study uses the Miles & Huberman interactive model approach as the basis for the workflow, which includes the processes of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. In addition, to analyze the position of decoding in the meaning and interpretation of the audience towards celebrity political support content, this study uses Stuart Hall's Encoding-Decoding concept. Through this approach, the researcher grouped the informants' responses into three decoding positions, namely dominant-hegemonic position, negotiating position, and oppositional position.

Data validity testing in this study uses the triangulation method by matching and verifying information obtained from interviews with informants and relevant literature sources. The data collected from various sources was compiled to show which perspectives were similar, different, and specific among these sources. The data was then analyzed to draw conclusions that could lead to new conclusions consistent with the data obtained.

Conclusions were drawn through a process of reviewing data in the form of in-depth interviews with informants that had been reduced and presented. At this stage, each informant's statement was analyzed to identify patterns of audience interpretation of celebrity political endorsement practices in the Ibu Kota Nusantara (IKN) policy as presented in the *Sekretariat Presiden* YouTube channel content. These patterns of meaning were then compared and grouped based on similarities and differences in views among informants. Based on the results of this grouping, the informants responses were classified into three audience reception positions, in accordance with the audience's tendency to interpret them. This process produced inductive conclusions, which were compiled based on patterns and tendencies that emerged from in-depth interviews with informants and reflected the diversity of audience reception of celebrity political endorsement practices related to IKN policy.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Research Results

3.1.1 Informant Profile

No.	Name	Age	Domicile	Occupation
1.	YDN	21	Sragen	Student
2.	BCT	22	Malang	Student
3.	SA	21	Sragen	Student
4.	NB	21	Sukoharjo	Student
5.	RN	21	Bekasi	Student
6.	RZ	21	Bandung	Student

3.1.2 Audience Reception

Based on the results of the interview data reduction, several recurring patterns of meaning have been identified regarding the audience's interpretation. These patterns were obtained through the grouping informants answers based on similarities in meaning, attitude, and narratives consistency. The findings are presented in the following categories:

3.1.2.1 Celebrities Positioned as Symbols or Communication Bridges

The findings show that the informants positioned celebrities as symbols, representations of popularity, or supporting elements of communication that serve to bridge the government's message to the public. YDN stated that celebrity involvement is understood to be limited to roles in line with their professions.

“It’s more symbolic, I think. So it feels like it’s just a form of symbolism, more about their professionalism when they’re invited.” (YDN, January 28, 2026)

NB also interprets the role of celebrities as a symbol of popularity, not as a source of policy explanation. She stated:

"...because celebrities lack the capacity to explain state policies. Their role is more about representing popularity." (NB, January 30, 2026)

RN also clarifies that celebrities are positioned as messengers to make the message more interesting and easier to understand, but not as the authority in explaining policy. She stated:

"They don't really have the authority to speak on public policy. They're just there as a bridge to make the content less boring for the general public and easier for ordinary people to understand." (RN, January 31, 2026)

A similar view was expressed by RZ, who referred to celebrities as symbols of attention or attention-grabbers. She stated:

"...the function of celebrities is kind of like a frame—a frame that acts as a symbol of attention, like an attention grabber." (RZ, February 2, 2026)

Meanwhile, BCT views celebrities as messengers who act as liaisons between the government and the public, stating that they are merely bridges. A similar view was expressed by SA, who emphasized that celebrities serve more as symbols or representations so that messages can reach a wider audience more easily.

3.1.2.2 Celebrity Involvement is Perceived as Part of Professionalism

The interview results show that celebrity involvement in IKN policy content is interpreted as part of their professional work arises from the informants' assessment of the pattern of message delivery, which appears structured, controlled, and preconceived. YDN stated that there is a possibility of professional interests, such as compensation or image-building needs, behind the presence of celebrities in the content.

"Maybe it's just about professionalism. Because maybe behind all that, their invitation probably involves something, maybe there's payment, or they attend because they need branding, like positioning themselves as nationalistic influencers." (YDN, January 28, 2026)

RZ expressed a similar view. She added that celebrities only play a role in framing and conveying messages that have been conceptualized.

"Well especially celebrities or influencers who are clearly paid, I think it's just a form of professional work, not genuine support. It feels like their support toward the IKN is just framing

it, presenting it as something aesthetic, without really creating significant impact on the audience exposed to this IKN-related content." (RZ, February 2, 2026)

This view is in line with SA's statement. SA sees that what celebrities say tends to follow a script and does not reveal any personal explanations or opinions.

"I tend to view the presence of celebrities more as part of professional work. There's rarely any personal explanation from them about their position or personal views. So it feels more like something that has been pre-conceptualized, and what they say also seems quite scripted." (SA, January 30, 2026)

NB, BCT, and RN, confirmed a similar pattern of perception. They viewed celebrity involvement as part of their professional work. BCT assessed that this involvement was likely supported by government funding, so it was natural that the reviews presented appeared controlled, minimized criticism, and tended to be positive towards the policy. NB also sees it as purely professional work, with scripted and templated delivery and no personal explanation of the reasons for support or critical views. Meanwhile, RN views this involvement as part of a structured campaign, with a uniform narrative that makes it difficult to understand as a personal opinion.

3.1.2.3 Perception of Message Content and Delivery

The interview results show that some informants considered quite interesting and easy to understand. However, there were differing views regarding the clarity and depth of the message conveyed. YDN tends to give a fairly positive assessment but he still questions the objectivity of the message's content because the figures delivering it are part of the government structure.

"If the goal is to promote it, inviting artists or celebrities is actually the right approach. And from what I've seen, especially from Raffi Ahmad's interview, his answers seemed quite convincing. But we don't really know. Now that he's part of the staff, he's part of the system, it also makes it difficult to fully trust. Objectivity needs to be considered." (YDN, January 28, 2026)

Unlike YDN, BCT and SA interpreted the message in a more balanced way, both appreciating the delivery style but critically evaluating the content of the message. BCT highlights the lack of discussion regarding challenges and transparency.

"Everything is well-organized, polite, and has a positive vibe. However, due to the lack of criticism, there might be a perception that the public will believe it's just image-building. There is also limited discussion about the challenges faced there. So transparency is still not optimal". (BCT, January 28, 2026)

Meanwhile, SA believes the message is too simplified and doesn't address the doubts and criticisms in society. She stated:

"The delivery style is more relaxed and the language is not complicated. But what doesn't work is that the message becomes too simplified, almost oversimplifying the issue. The content also tends to highlight positive aspects, things that look impressive, grand, and appealing, so it doesn't really address the doubts and criticisms that exist in society." (SA, January 30, 2026)

On the other hand, NB, RN, and RZ criticized the content and delivery. but considered the overall strategy inappropriate due to unclear messaging, which gave the impression of a lack of seriousness in discussing the issue.

"What could be considered appropriate is the relaxed delivery style and the language that isn't too rigid. But overall, I think what the government has done is not quite right, because the message becomes unclear. In the end, it creates the impression that the government is not serious in addressing such a major issue and seems to be closing off space for criticism." (NB, January 30, 2026)

Criticism was also expressed by RN, who believes that a delivery style that is too scripted and rigid actually reduces the audience's trust in the message. She emphasized the importance of dividing roles between celebrities and experts so that the message to be conveyed is clearer.

"It is less appropriate if the goal is to convince the public about the urgency of the policy, because their way of speaking sometimes feels too scripted and rigid. Ideally, the proportion should be balanced—celebrities can be used for site tours, while experts or professionals explain the substance." (RN, January 31, 2026)

In line with this, RZ also highlighted that an approach that is too casual and lacks empirical data support makes the message feel narrow and has the potential to cause doubt among the audience.

"Practice of placing celebrities is too casual for a serious context like the IKN. So the message becomes limited because without empirical data or other facts. This can even create distrust, because the audience may feel like they're being manipulated by the content." (RZ, February 2, 2026)

3.1.2.4 Perspective on the Relevance of Celebrity Use

The interview results show that some informants consider this strategy to be highly relevant in the digital age and able to attract attention and reach a wide audience, especially when supported by credible figures and information, while others criticize it that celebrity-based strategies are becoming less effective as a primary approach. YDN and BCT believe that the use of celebrities is still very relevant

in today's digital age. They see that the way people consume information makes influencers or public figures an effective medium for reaching audiences.

"Very relevant. We need influencers, especially to advertise or promote something. We often hear, 'Oh, this influencer says it's good, so it must be good.' So our interest in a product tends to rely more on influencers than on the company's own marketing. So if we connect it to the IKN, the use of influencers to promote or socialize the IKN is appropriate and still relevant." (YDN, January 28, 2026)

In line with this, BCT also believes there are still aspects that need to be improved in terms of content delivery. She said:

"It's still very relevant because we are in a digital era where all kinds of information are easily accessed through digital platforms. Especially when using public figures, as has been implemented. Although there are still many aspects that could be improved in the video, for example in terms of content, as it lacks detail. I think for conveying information, activities like this are very effective in the digital era." (BCT, January 28, 2026)

Unlike the two previous informants, SA and RN considered that the use of celebrities was still relevant, but could not be used as the main strategy. SA argued that the relevance of celebrities was conditional depending on the figures and the clarity of the information.

"This practice is still relevant, but it needs to be used appropriately. Celebrities are suitable for attracting initial attention and opening discussions, but it cannot rely on popularity alone. It still needs to be balanced with strong and transparent information delivered by those who expertise. I think the celebrities or public figures used should be those who actually understand the issue being discussed. Nowadays, there are many influencers or TikTok creators who focus on legal issues, environmental topics, or public policy. They are more relevant and credible to conveying policy messages." (SA, January 30, 2026)

In line with this, RN also acknowledged that the use of celebrities is still in line with today's communication style, but she emphasized that this strategy is not enough on its own. RN said:

"It's still relevant as a communication style today, but it shouldn't be the main approach. Because nowadays, society, especially students like us, is becoming more critical and does not easily trust statements just because they come from celebrities. People need to see the actual studies and how the local community is affected. There is a need for real information." (RN, January 31, 2026)

In contrast to the previous four informants, NB and RZ assessed that the practice of using celebrities is becoming less relevant, especially for the younger generation, who are considered to be more

information literate and more sensitive to image-building.

"This practice is becoming less relevant, especially for Gen Z who now dominate digital media and are in a critical and information-literate phase. Today's society does not only need messages that are attractive, but also honest and transparent. If the government keeps relying on celebrities, it could actually foster distrust." (NB, January 30, 2026)

Meanwhile, RZ observed that increasing public sensitivity to image-building meant that celebrity-based strategies were no longer effective as the main approach in policy communication.

"It's less relevant. People are now more sensitive and easily aware of image-building efforts. Therefore, the government may need to shift toward more transparent, data-based, and locally inclusive communication strategies in the long term. So, it might still be used in a limited way, but it cannot serve as the main strategy if practices like celebrity involvement are used." (RZ, February 2, 2026)

3.1.3 Audience Decoding Position

Based on analysis using Stuart Hall's Encoding–Decoding concept, negotiated position and oppositional position were found in the interview results. This classification was determined through a analysis of the informants' answers, looking at their tendencies to accept, adjust, or reject the practice of celebrity political endorsement in the content.

No.	Name	Audience Decoding Position
1.	YDN	Negotiated Position
2.	BCT	Negotiated Position
3.	SA	Negotiated Position
4.	NB	Oppositional Position
5.	RN	Negotiated Position
6.	RZ	Oppositional Position

3.2. Discussion

3.2.1 Audience Reception

In modern political communication practices, the use of public figures or celebrities has become an increasingly common strategy for conveying messages to the public. However, audience reception of the practice of celebrity political endorsement is not always uniform as audiences have different backgrounds, experiences, knowledge, and perspectives in interpreting it. In the perspective of reception theory, audiences are seen as active participants in interpreting messages they consume (Bekti

& Winduwati, 2023), so that the meaning produced can differ from communicator's intent and one individual to another. Based on the interviews conducted, it was found that informants had various and criticized interpretations of celebrity political endorsements related to the dissemination of information about the IKN policy.

All informants interpreted the presence of celebrities within the practice of celebrity political endorsement as a communication bridge that helps convey information to a wider audience. Public figures are considered capable of attracting attention, making content more interesting, and making formal or complex issues easier to approach because they are conveyed through figures who are already known and familiar to the audience's daily lives. This is in line with the findings of Valdez & Dhani (2021), which show that the use of celebrities in government communication is effective in influencing public behavior while increasing public awareness of government policies. By involving endorsers and key opinion leaders, government communication strategies have great capacity and potential to influence public attitudes and opinions, as celebrities serve as figures who can attract attention, facilitate understanding, and make messages more easily accepted by the audience. Therefore, the use of celebrities by government organizations has proven to be highly effective in both encouraging public behavior and increasing awareness of the policies being socialized. Kissas (2024) adds that celebrities on social media can serve as a bridge between major issues and the daily lives of the audience. This happens because celebrities build closeness with their audience by presenting themselves as ordinary and recognizable figures, even though in reality their lives are far from ordinary. It is this closeness that makes the audience feel that celebrities understand and represent their interests. Thus, both the interview results and the literature show that although celebrities act as a bridge to help convey policy messages, informants interpret this practice as positioning celebrities as symbolic figures who do not have authority or technical capacity in the policy realm. This factor arises because celebrities are better known as public figures and symbols of popularity, so their role is limited to attracting audience attention, making content more interesting, and facilitating access to information, without being involved in the substance or decision-making of policy.

Although celebrities can serve as a symbols and bridges of communication in conveying IKN policy messages to the public, the interview results show that audiences do not always interpret this involvement as a form of personal support for the policy. Informants interpret the involvement of these public figures as part of a professional role, for example, because of compensation or other professional interests, so that the support is not fully interpreted as a sincere expression of the celebrities' personal attitudes. This perception arises from the way informants interpret the pattern of message delivery, which is considered structured, controlled, and following a certain concept, so that the content produced looks more like a pre-designed message than a spontaneous opinion from the celebrity concerned. This

interpretation is in line with the findings of Abidin's (2018) research, which explains that in influencer practices, popular figures often earn income through advertorials, a form of promotion delivered through personal narratives that resemble personal opinions or experiences. In this practice, promotional messages do not always appear explicitly as advertisements, but are packaged through stories, experiences, or personal perspectives from influencers so that they appear more natural, as if they were the personal opinions or experiences of the influencers. However, behind this personal narrative form there are promotional interests that are part of the influencer's professional activities on social media. Thus, the informants' perception of celebrity involvement as a professional job shows an awareness of the possibility of promotional practices behind the content delivered by popular figures. The informants not only assess the content of the message conveyed but also consider the context of the message's production, including the possibility of professional interests behind it. This shows that the audience is able to read celebrity content as part of a communication strategy related to promotional practices that are common in influencer culture.

In addition to considering the figure delivering the message, informants also pay attention to the content and delivery style of the message conveyed by celebrities. The interview results show that a relaxed, communicative, and informal delivery style is considered quite effective in attracting the audience's attention makes the content feel lighter and easier to understand, especially in the context of social media, which tends to prioritize informal communication formats that are close to the audience's daily lives. However, behind their assessment of the delivery style, some informants also expressed doubts about the substance of the message being conveyed. Several informants assessed that although the content presented by celebrities was interesting, the information conveyed was considered to be general, did not answer various questions that had arisen in the community, and did not provide a comprehensive overview of the issues that were the subject of public debate. This indicates that audiences interpret the practice of celebrity political endorsement not only as an engaging communication strategy, but also as a source of information that is evaluated based on its depth and quality. These findings are in line with Marinov & Saurette's (2023) research, which shows that various forms of news reporting, including political news, are increasingly characterized by an infotainment style, namely the delivery of politically relevant information using styles and formats more commonly found in entertainment-oriented programs. This condition can cause political messages to be conveyed in a form that is lighter and more accessible to the public, but at the same time has the potential to reduce the depth of information received by the audience. The information conveyed to the public not only serves as a persuasive message, but also as a source of knowledge that helps the public form an understanding of a policy. As explained by Marinov & Saurette (2023), political journalism is an important mechanism that ensures citizens have access to the type of information and analysis necessary

to form informed opinions, which are needed for democracy to remain healthy and functional. This shows that in conveying policy messages through celebrities on social media, the balance between the appeal of the delivery and the quality of the information is an important factor in shaping the audience's interpretation of the political message being conveyed.

After interpreting various aspects of celebrity involvement in IKN policy content, the informants then formed their own assessments of the overall relevance of using celebrities in public policy communication. This assessment was the result of an accumulation of interpretations of various aspects that had been observed previously. Some informants assessed that celebrity involvement could provide benefits in terms of expanding the reach of information, especially in social media environments that are heavily influenced by the popularity of public figures. However, on the other hand, there were informants who questioned the appropriateness of celebrities' roles when they had no direct connection to the issues being discussed or did not provide substantive explanations. The differences in views expressed by informants show that the effectiveness of celebrities in conveying messages can be seen from various different sides. This shows that the influence of celebrities on audiences does not always appear in the same way for each individual. Knoll & Matthes (2017) found in their research that celebrity endorsements can have a positive influence on audience attitudes toward the endorsed object, especially when compared to conditions without celebrity endorsements. These findings indicate that the presence of celebrities can increase informants' positive attitudes toward the object or message they support when certain conditions are met.

3.2.2 Audience Decoding Position

Within the Encoding-Decoding concept, at the consumption stage the audience can accept, negotiate, or even reject that meaning. Thus, the meaning of the message can be changeable and open to various possible interpretations influenced by the audience's social background and experience. The findings show that most informants were in a negotiated position, there are YDN, BCT, SA, and RN. Within the Encoding-Decoding conceptual framework, Hall explains that a negotiated position occurs when the audience accepts the dominant ideology but rejects its use in certain conditions. In this study, the four informants acknowledged that the use of celebrities as policy communicators has strategic value in communication in this digital age. This shows that the audience accepts the effectiveness of using celebrities as a tool to increase awareness of IKN policy issues. However, this acceptance is not absolute. Informants remain critical of celebrities' limitations in explaining the substance of complex public policies such as the development of the IKN. The criticism that emerged from the informants showed a relatively consistent pattern, namely that celebrities were considered to lack the capacity or authority to explain policies in depth, especially regarding the objectives, mechanisms, impacts, and challenges that might arise from these policies. Therefore, the informants assessed that effective policy

communication still requires the involvement of experts or parties with competence in related fields. Thus, YDN, BCT, SA, and RN are categorized as holding a negotiated position because they neither fully accept nor reject the dominant meaning constructed in the content. All four informants accepted the use of celebrities as a communication strategy to raise public awareness of the IKN policy, but at the same time placed limits on the role of celebrities in conveying the substance of the policy. This process of both accepting and adjusting meaning based on their assessment of the communicator's competence demonstrates the characteristics of a negotiated position as described by Stuart Hall.

This study also found informants who were in an oppositional position, namely NB and RZ. In the Encoding-Decoding concept, Hall explains that an oppositional position occurs when the audience rejects the meaning or message conveyed by the media. Instead of accepting the meaning, the audience interprets it based on their own way of thinking, experiences, and perspectives on what is presented by the media. In this study, NB and RZ interpret celebrity political endorsement not as an effort to increase public understanding, but rather as a framing mechanism that serves to reinforce the positive image of the policy. Informants also expressed skepticism about the authenticity of the messages conveyed by celebrities. Both informants assessed that celebrities do not have sufficient competence to explain complex public policies such as the development of the new capital city. Therefore, they tend to have a lower level of trust in information conveyed by celebrities compared to information from experts or government officials who have authority in the relevant field. Based on these findings, NB and RZ were categorized as holding an oppositional position because both understood the purpose of using celebrities in IKN policy communication but did not accept the message the content sought to convey. Instead, they construct their own interpretations, viewing the involvement of celebrities more as a strategy for shaping the policy's image than as an effort to enhance public understanding. The rejection of the message crafted by the content creators, along with the emergence of interpretations based on their own ways of thinking, experiences, and perspectives, demonstrates the characteristics of an oppositional position as described by Stuart Hall.

From Stuart Hall's encoding-decoding perspective, the audience's process of interpreting media messages is influenced by each individual's frameworks of knowledge, relations of production, and technical infrastructure. These differences in background shape how audiences interpret messages, leading to variations in the reception of the same media message. Therefore, it is important to understand the informants' backgrounds, as this helps explain the context underlying the reception patterns observed in this study.

Most of the informants in this study demonstrated the dominance of frameworks of knowledge in

their decoding processes. YDN has active experience in student organizations that regularly hold academic seminars, discussions, and book reviews on social, political, economic, and legal issues. These experiences have fostered a habit of viewing issues from various perspectives, so informants tend not to accept messages at face value but first consider the communicator's objectivity and the substance of the information. A similar pattern is observed in SA, who is accustomed to consuming content from various influencers and public figures on social media. This habit gives informants an understanding of the characteristics and fields in which various influencers specialize. Consequently, in their reception of content, informants do not judge solely based on popularity but also on the relevance of the influencer's expertise to the issue being discussed. NB's involvement in journalistic organizations has fostered a habit of following developments on various issues from multiple sources while evaluating the credibility of the information received. This background explains why the informant pays more attention to a communicator's competence and the balance of information than to mere celebrity appeal. Meanwhile, RZ actively follows discussions on social and political issues as well as developments in national affairs through social media. This exposure has given the informant an understanding of the dynamics of communication in the digital space, including the use of public figures as a strategy to attract audience attention. Therefore, the informant tends to view celebrity involvement as a strategy to generate attention, while the substance of policies must still be supported by credible data and information.

In addition to frameworks of knowledge, this study also identified other factors that were more dominant among some informants. RN demonstrated a stronger focus on the aspect of relations of production. Her experience as a volunteer in various social and humanitarian activities fostered her concern for public issues and the importance of responsibly conveying information to the public. This background explains why the informant placed greater emphasis on the alignment between the communicator and the substance of the policies being conveyed. Meanwhile, BCT showed a stronger focus on the aspect of technical infrastructure. The informant actively uses social media, particularly X and TikTok, as a means of obtaining information and following discussions on various emerging issues. The intensity of their social media use has made the informant accustomed to observing patterns of information dissemination and evolving communication strategies in the digital space. This background provides context for the informant's view that the use of celebrities remains a relevant communication strategy in the era of social media.

Based on this discussion, it is clear that differences in reception among informants are also influenced by the background that shapes each audience's decoding process. Their experiences in following public issues, obtaining information, and interacting in digital spaces provide the context that influences how informants interpret messages about the IKN policy through celebrity involvement.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of an analysis using audience reception theory proposed by Stuart Hall, research findings show that informants interpret the practice of celebrity political endorsement as positioning celebrities as symbols of popularity and communication bridges that serve to convey government policy messages to the public in a more accessible and easy-to-understand manner. Most informants view celebrity involvement as part of professional activities that may be tied to specific interests, leading the audience to be selective in assessing the credibility of the message. In addition to considering the figure delivering the message, the audience also assesses the quality and depth of the information presented in the content. When the content emphasizes a casual communication style over an informative one, some members of the audience perceive that the message does not fully provide a comprehensive understanding of the policy.

Based on an analysis using the Encoding-Decoding concept, the interview results indicate that the majority of informants adopt a negotiated position, that is they accept some aspects of celebrity endorsement practices while maintaining a critical perspective. Specifically, the informants acknowledge that celebrities can help raise public awareness of IKN policy issues, yet they also believe that explanations regarding public policy still require the involvement of parties with expertise or authority in the relevant fields. Additionally, this study also found informants in an oppositional position, meaning they reject the practice of celebrity endorsement in IKN policy within the content and interpret celebrity involvement as part of an image-building strategy that emphasizes the policy's positive image rather than providing substantive explanations.

Overall, the results of this study indicate that the use of celebrity political endorsements in communicating IKN policies is conditional and does not automatically ensure that policy messages are accepted, trusted, or interpreted positively by the audience. Although celebrities can increase attention and the reach of messages on social media, audiences still interpret this practice critically based on the communicator's credibility, the figure's relevance to the issue being discussed, as well as the quality and depth of the information conveyed. These findings confirm that audiences in the digital media era can no longer be positioned as passive recipients of messages, but rather as active and critical parties in interpreting political communication messages.

This study still has limitations, particularly regarding the characteristics of the informants, most of whom come from a relatively homogeneous, in terms of age, occupational background, age, and gender, with women making up the majority. This situation means that the perspectives gathered may not fully represent the views of the diversity of public perspectives. Therefore, future research is advised to involve participants with more diverse backgrounds, in terms of age, profession, and social experience, to provide a more comprehensive picture of how various social groups interpret the

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