

Political Commercial, Media for Controlling Public Awareness


Monday, 15 February 2016 WIB, By: Marwati



Political commercial has been an important part of political practice in Indonesia. The closer it is to the election for the legislative members, president and vice president or governor, the more crowded the space is with political commercials. Since the reform era, the role of political commercial has significant contribution to manipulate public awareness and been used as political tool for personal interest.

“Therefore, we need deconstruction of the commercial’s discourse to understand the hidden ideology behind those commercials,” Drs. Widodo Agus Setianto, M.Si, lecturer of Communication Department Universitas Gajah Mada (UGM), said at his open doctoral examination, Friday (12/2), at the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences.

According to Widodo, the trait of endemic political commercial could manipulate our consciousness and wipe critical thinking ability in the society towards the discourse being delivered. It leads to the fact that commercial is an effective tool to control public awareness. To influence society, commercials will work as a hidden agenda under manipulative message so that the public would not be aware of the influence it gave. Thus, political commercials have created a fake consciousness that made people supporting them without giving some critical thoughts.



In his dissertation, he analyzed political commercial of political parties, Partai Demokrasi Indonesia Perjuangan (PDIP) and Partai Golkar, in the 1999 election which were published in Kompas Newspaper. PDI Perjuangan and Golkar were two parties competing which were actively using political commercials as a tool to bring up particular agendas. The political commercials of both parties were published relatively frequent and continued with various versions.

On its political commercial, PDI Perjuangan underlined “perjuangan” (struggle/fight), as a word that reflects the journey of PDI Perjuangan itself to become social belief and an ideology to be spread and planted on people’s mind. While Golkar underlined the word “Bersatu” (united) that can be seen as Golkar’s mission to promote unity in Golkar specifically and Indonesia generally.

“Ideology which was represented is inherent with the parties themselves due to their social and political issues they were facing,” he explained.

Beside focusing on the main idea, the success of political commercial in influencing society was supported by the work on psychological, social and cultural aspects in the making. Therefore, commercials will be easily accepted as normal part of society.

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