



Communication Theory of Identity: Artists Becoming Politicians (Case Study Nafa Urbach): Systematic Literature Review

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INFO ARTIKEL	ABSTRACT
Diterima : Direvisi : Disetujui :	This systematic literature review explores the identity transformation of artists transitioning into politics, using Nafa Urbach's journey as a case study and applying the Communication Theory of Identity (CTI) by Michael Hecht. The study aims to identify key factors influencing this transition, including communication strategies, media portrayals, and public perceptions. Through a comprehensive analysis of scholarly literature, this review examines how artists negotiate their identities across personal, relational, communal, and material frames to gain political legitimacy. The findings indicate that artists must strategically communicate their political agenda and reshape their public image to establish credibility and overcome initial skepticism from both the public and media. Media portrayals significantly influence audience perception, underscoring the need for effective media engagement strategies. The study also highlights the broader implications of identity transformations on political communication dynamics. As artists navigate dual expectations from their entertainment fanbase and politically engaged audiences, maintaining a coherent and relatable identity becomes crucial for political success. The research contributes to a deeper understanding of how communication strategies shape identity negotiation and political acceptance for celebrity politicians. This review offers practical insights for political campaign strategists and media professionals while laying a foundation for future studies on identity formation in political contexts.
Keywords: Communication Theory of Identity, Celebrity Politicians, Identity Transformation, Media Representation, Political Communication Strategies	

INTRODUCTION

The transition from entertainment to politics is a fascinating phenomenon that has gained traction globally, including in Indonesia (Manalu, 2024). Celebrities who move into politics often face the challenge of reshaping their public personas to gain political credibility and acceptance (Sugiarto & Yuwanto, 2020). One such notable figure is Nafa Urbach, a former actress and singer who successfully became a member of the Indonesian Parliament (*DPR RI*) under the Nasdem Party (Syam Maella et al., 2019a). Her journey provides an interesting case to explore how communication plays a crucial role in transforming public identity (Alvarez-Monzoncillo, 2023).

The Communication Theory of Identity (CTI), developed by Michael Hecht, offers a comprehensive framework for understanding the complex layers of identity (Hecht & Choi, 2012). CTI posits that identity is multidimensional, encompassing personal, relational, enacted, and communal layers that are negotiated through communication in social contexts (Thompson, 2014). In the context of artists transitioning into political figures, CTI helps explain how communication strategies are used to reconstruct and legitimize new identities in front of different audiences (Shin & Hecht, 2017).

This study conducts a systematic literature review to explore the application of CTI in understanding how artists, particularly Nafa Urbach, transform their identities when entering politics (Santosa & Yuliana, 2024). By synthesizing previous studies and analyzing relevant literature, the research identifies key patterns and communication strategies employed in the identity negotiation process (Jung & Hecht, 2004). The case study of Nafa Urbach provides a unique perspective on how an artist's identity is redefined to fit the expectations of political constituents (Howarth, 2016).

The findings are expected to contribute to theoretical discussions on identity construction and its intersection with communication and politics (Danugroho, 2024). Furthermore, this research offers practical insights into the communication strategies that can facilitate the identity transformation of public figures entering politics (Ferdy Firmansyah & Kurniawan, 2021). By integrating CTI with real-world examples, this study aims to provide a deeper understanding of the dynamics of identity negotiation in political contexts, especially for individuals transitioning from the entertainment industry (Kuiper, 2021).

RESEARCH METHOD

The transformation of artists into political figures has become an intriguing phenomenon in modern political landscapes, including Indonesia. Celebrities who enter the political world often face the challenge of reshaping their public personas to gain credibility as political leaders. Nafa Urbach, a well-known Indonesian actress and singer, presents a compelling case, as she has successfully transitioned into politics as a member of the Indonesian Parliament (*DPR RI*) under the *Nasdem* Party. Her journey offers a unique opportunity to explore how communication strategies and identity negotiations play pivotal roles in gaining public acceptance in the political sphere.

This systematic literature review aims to synthesize existing research on the application of the Communication Theory of Identity (CTI) to identity transformations in political contexts. The study investigates how Nafa Urbach navigated identity shifts across CTI's four dimensions: personal, relational, enacted, and communal. By analyzing her communication strategies, media portrayals, and audience interactions, this research identifies key patterns in how artists construct and legitimize new political identities. The findings provide a deeper understanding of the dynamic interplay between communication and identity negotiation during such transitions.

To ensure methodological rigor, this study follows the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines (Page, McKenzie, et al., 2021). The review process includes keyword development, systematic database searches, and data sorting. Additionally, the Participants, Intervention, Comparison, Outcomes, and Study Design (PICOS) framework is used to formulate research questions and structure the analysis (Page, Moher, et al., 2021). By providing a comprehensive analysis, this research contributes valuable insights for both academic discourse and practical applications in understanding identity transformation at the intersection of communication, identity, and politics.

Keywords Development

Initial keyword development for this study focused on constructing comprehensive search terms related to identity transformation, communication strategies, and the transition of artists into political roles. Keywords such as "Communication Theory of Identity AND Nafa

Urbach,” “identity transformation AND artists becoming politicians,” and “communication strategies AND celebrity politics” were formulated to ensure a robust search strategy across various academic databases. After compiling the search keywords and retrieving relevant articles using tools like Scopus, CrossRef, and Google Scholar, the next step involved meticulously screening and analyzing the gathered literature. This process evaluated key communication strategies, public perceptions, and the role of media portrayals in facilitating the identity transformation of artists into political figures. By systematically synthesizing the evidence, this study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of identity negotiation and offer actionable insights into the communication dynamics at the intersection of entertainment and politics.

Database Search

We searched Scopus, Google Scholar, and Web of Science databases to collect literature relevant to the Communication Theory of Identity (CTI) and the transformation of artists into political figures. Articles published between 2004 and 2025 were included to capture both foundational studies and recent developments in celebrity politics. Initially, 2,709 articles in English and other relevant languages were identified. The reduction and extraction process involved removing duplicates, assessing topic relevance, and applying predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria. Subsequently, the collected articles underwent a rigorous screening process to ensure the inclusion of only high-quality studies directly addressing identity transformation, communication strategies, and the political transition of celebrities like Nafa Urbach. This process involved examining research designs, study populations, and key outcomes such as the role of media portrayal, public perception, and the interaction of personal and political identities. The final selection of studies was systematically reviewed to identify patterns, trends, and critical insights, offering a comprehensive understanding of how communication shapes identity transitions from entertainment to politics.

Data Cleaning and Sorting

The data for this study was obtained based on related keywords through a thorough data cleaning and sorting process. Several stages were conducted, including removing duplicate articles, filtering articles by titles and abstracts to assess their relevance, and applying inclusion and exclusion criteria specific to the topic of identity transformation and communication strategies in political contexts. Articles that did not directly address the factors influencing the political transition of artists like Nafa Urbach were excluded to maintain the study's focus and precision.

After the initial data cleaning and sorting, the remaining articles were rigorously evaluated to ensure they aligned with the study's objectives. This involved carefully reviewing abstracts, titles, and keywords to confirm their relevance to the research questions. Articles that lacked direct insights into key outcomes—such as the role of media portrayal, public perception, or the negotiation of personal and political identities—were excluded. The refined dataset included a focused collection of studies providing meaningful insights into the communication strategies and identity transformations of public figures moving into politics.

Citation data from 2,709 papers, downloaded in RIS format, were initially screened to remove duplicates, resulting in 1,878 articles. A systematic literature review was then conducted to identify, assess, and synthesize relevant findings. After reviewing titles, abstracts, and keywords, 1,130 irrelevant papers, those with unclear methodologies, or those without

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suitable theoretical frameworks were excluded, leaving only ten articles for in-depth analysis. These ten selected articles underwent a comprehensive review and data extraction process to uncover insights into the factors driving the identity transformation of artists into politicians. Key themes, patterns, and trends in the literature were identified, focusing on the role of communication strategies, media representation, and public perception. The findings provide a deeper understanding of how communication shapes identity transitions in the political arena.

This systematic literature review (SLR) is conducted to answer the following questions:

1. What are the key factors influencing the identity transformation of artists, particularly Nafa Urbach, as they transition from entertainment to politics?
2. How do communication strategies, media portrayals, and public perceptions shape the political identity of artists entering the political sphere?
3. What are the broader implications of these identity transformations on the communication dynamics between public figures and their audiences in political contexts?

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the data analysis results in three sub-sections: classification by publication year, characteristics, and review of included studies.

Classification based on the publication year

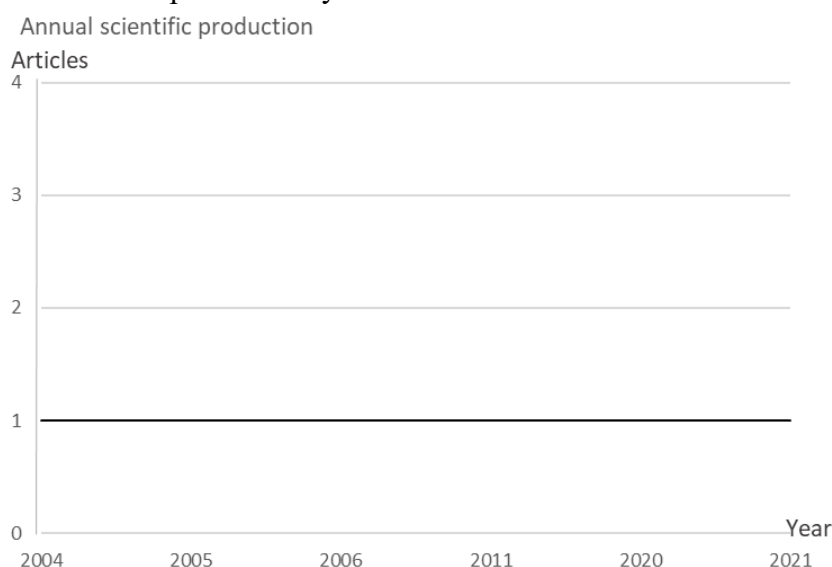


Figure 1. Total publications from 2004-2024

Source: Data were processed from the results of systematic literature searches in the Scopus, Google Scholar, and Web of Science databases (2025)

The data from the studies on the intersection of political representation and cultural identity reveal significant insights into how various authors have approached the topic over the years, highlighting the evolving nature of celebrity politicians and the implications of identity politics in contemporary society.

In 2004, John Street's study titled *Celebrity Politicians* explored the role of popular culture in political representation, examining how celebrity status influences political engagement.

This foundational work set the stage for further investigations into the phenomenon of celebrity in politics.

In the following year, Mary Bernstein published *Communication Theory of Identity: A Fifth Frame*, which provided a theoretical framework for understanding identity in communication processes, emphasizing its relevance to political representation. This study underscored the importance of identity in shaping political narratives.

The year 2006 saw Jürgen Habermas's work on *Political Communication in Media Society*, which investigated the relationship between media and democratic engagement. His research highlighted the role of communication in facilitating or hindering political discourse, emphasizing the need for a critical examination of media influences on political identities.

Yuiko Fujita's 2011 study, *Fabricating Japaneseness? The Identity Politics of Young Designers and Artists in Global Cities*, explored identity politics among young Japanese creatives in global contexts. This research illustrated how cultural identity is negotiated and represented in transnational art and design industries, offering insights into the broader implications of globalization on national identity.

In 2020, Firdaus Syam et al. examined *Celebrity Politicians: Popular Culture and Political Representation*, building on earlier works to analyze the continuing evolution of celebrity influence in politics. Their findings stressed the importance of understanding the dynamics between popular culture and political representation in contemporary society.

Most recently, Kimberly Kuiper's 2021 study, *Communication Theory of Identity: A Fifth Frame*, revisited earlier theories of identity, integrating new perspectives on how identity shapes and is shaped by communication practices in political contexts.

These studies collectively emphasize the need for a nuanced understanding of identity politics and the role of media in shaping political representation. Future research should continue to explore the implications of celebrity culture and identity in political discourse, focusing on how these dynamics evolve in response to technological and cultural changes.

Characteristics of Included Studies

Table 2 outlines the characteristics of the included studies on celebrity politicians and identity politics. The first study by Firdaus Syam et al. (2020) in Indonesia analyzed the role of celebrities in politics and elections, focusing on celebrities and politicians involved in elections. Through qualitative, in-depth interviews and a literature review, the study found that while celebrities possess high publicity value, this does not always guarantee election success. The conclusion emphasized that effective political strategies are essential for successful celebrity involvement, suggesting the need for a better political recruitment model to enhance candidate quality (Syam & Rizqi Rahmanillah, 2020).

In the UK, John Street (2004) examined the phenomenon of celebrity politicians and its implications for political representation. Utilizing qualitative analysis, the study revealed that celebrity politicians leverage their status to influence public opinion. The findings concluded that celebrity politics can be legitimate within democratic frameworks, indicating a need for a nuanced understanding of representation (Street, 2004).

Mary Bernstein (2005) conducted a study in the USA to review the concept of identity politics and its implications for various identity-based social movements. Through a literature review, the research highlighted the complexity of identity politics and its diverse

interpretations. The study concluded that identity politics can empower certain groups while marginalizing others, suggesting that future research should further explore the dynamics of identity in political contexts (Bernstein, 2005).

Kimberly Kuiper (2021) also based in the USA, aimed to extend the communication theory of identity (CTI) by introducing a fifth frame: the material frame. Her literature review identified the material self as a crucial aspect of identity. The study concluded that understanding the material frame enhances insights into identity dynamics, prompting future research to explore the interplay of identity frames (Kuiper, 2021).

In Germany, Jürgen Habermas (2006) analyzed the epistemic dimension of democracy and its relationship with political communication. Through theoretical analysis, the study found that political communication could facilitate deliberative legitimation, though it is often compromised by media influences. The conclusion emphasized the need for careful examination of the relationship between media and democracy, advocating for a self-regulating media system to ensure effective democratic practices (Habermas, 2006).

Finally, Yuiko Fujita (2011) focused on Japan, exploring the identity politics of young Japanese designers and artists in global cities. Through qualitative interviews, the research revealed that most designers aim for universal appeal, with few emphasizing "Japaneseness." The study concluded that these designers identify as "Japanese" without developing transnational identities, while also noting that media often emphasizes "Japaneseness," thereby influencing perceptions in the art world (Fujita, 2011).

These studies collectively provide valuable insights into the roles of celebrity and identity in political contexts, highlighting the need for further research to understand these dynamics in contemporary society.

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The studies presented in Table 2 highlight diverse perspectives on identity formation, celebrity involvement in politics, and communication strategies in political contexts. Firdaus Syam et al. (Indonesia) underscore the publicity advantage celebrities hold when entering politics, though they emphasize that fame alone does not guarantee political success without strategic planning. This finding resonates with Nafa Urbach's political journey, where her pre-existing public image as an entertainer had to be carefully restructured to fit the political landscape. Similarly, John Street's (UK) analysis of celebrity politicians highlights the potential for celebrities to influence public opinion and gain political legitimacy, providing a framework for understanding the dynamics of public perception in Nafa Urbach's case.

The theoretical contributions from Mary Bernstein (USA) and Kimberly Kuiper (USA) offer valuable insights into identity construction and negotiation. Bernstein's work on identity politics suggests that the blending of personal and political identities can either empower or marginalize public figures, a challenge likely faced by Nafa Urbach in her dual role as a former artist and emerging political figure. Kuiper's extension of the Communication Theory of Identity (CTI) by introducing the material frame provides an advanced understanding of how tangible elements, such as public appearances and media portrayal, contribute to identity negotiation. These insights are essential for analyzing how Nafa Urbach's political identity is shaped by both symbolic and material factors within Indonesia's political landscape. Together,

the studies underscore the importance of communication strategies, public perception, and media portrayals in shaping the political trajectories of artists transitioning into politics.

Table 1. Characteristics of included studies

Author	Country	Purposes	Population	Method	Result	Conclusion	Implications
Firdaus Syam, Sahrudin, Ajeng Rizqi Rahmanillah	Indonesia	Analyzing the role of celebrities in politics and elections in Indonesia	Celebrities and politicians involved in elections	Qualitative, in-depth interviews, literature review	Celebrities have high publicity value but are not always elected	Celebrity involvement in politics does not guarantee election; good strategy is necessary	A better political recruitment model is needed to improve candidate quality
John Street	UK	To analyze the phenomenon of celebrity politicians and its implications for political representation	Elected politicians and celebrities	Qualitative analysis	Celebrity politicians use their status to influence public opinion	Celebrity politics can be legitimate within democratic representation	Need for a nuanced understanding of representation
Mary Bernstein	USA	To review and analyze the concept of identity politics and its implications for social movements	Various identity-based social movements	Literature review	Identity politics is a complex phenomenon with various interpretations	Identity politics can both empower and marginalize groups	Future research should explore the dynamics of identity in political contexts
Kimberly Kuiper	USA	To extend the communication theory of identity (CTI) by introducing a fifth frame: the material frame	Individuals engaged in identity negotiation	Literature review	Identifies the material self as a crucial aspect of identity	The material frame enhances understanding of identity dynamics	Future research should explore the interplay of identity frames
Jürgen Habermas	Germany	To analyze the epistemic dimension of democracy and its relationship with political communication	Democratic societies and communication systems	Theoretical analysis	Political communication can facilitate deliberative legitimation but is often compromised by media influence	The relationship between media and democracy needs careful examination	The need for a self-regulating media system for effective democracy
Yuiko Fujita	Japan	To explore the identity politics of young Japanese designers and artists in global cities	Young Japanese designers and artists	Qualitative interviews	Most designers aim for universal appeal; few emphasize "Japaneseness"	Designers identify as "Japanese" without developing transnational identities	The media often emphasizes "Japaneseness," influencing perceptions in the art world

Source: Synthesis of the author's analysis based on studies reviewed in a systematic literature review (2025)

Key Factors Influencing The Identity Transformation of Artists, Particularly Nafa Urbach, As They Transition from Entertainment to Politics

The identity transformation of artists like Nafa Urbach as they transition from entertainment to politics involves a complex interplay of personal and public communication strategies. One of the key factors influencing this transformation is the artist's ability to align their personal identity with the expectations and norms of the political environment. As a public figure, Nafa Urbach's established image in the entertainment industry must be carefully reshaped to gain credibility and trust within the political sphere. This requires strategic communication efforts to balance her former persona as an actress and singer with the professional and serious image required of a politician. Public speeches, media appearances, and interactions with political leaders play significant roles in communicating her new political identity, shaping how she is perceived by her audience and supporters (Syam Maella et al., 2019b).

Another critical factor is the influence of media portrayal and public perception. Artists transitioning to political roles often face the challenge of overcoming skepticism and criticism from both the media and the public, who may view their political ambitions with doubt or cynicism (Alfafa Iskandar, 2021). Nafa Urbach's ability to manage her image through carefully crafted media messages, social media engagement, and public appearances is vital in gaining political legitimacy. Moreover, the communal aspect of identity, as emphasized in Communication Theory of Identity, plays a crucial role in shaping how her political identity is constructed and accepted by society (Tleory, 2013). This involves the strategic use of communication tools to engage with political constituents and demonstrate alignment with their values, ultimately positioning her as a relatable and trustworthy political figure (Syam & Rizqi Rahmanillah, 2020).

Furthermore, this identity transformation resonates with broader patterns observed among women legislators in Indonesia. Syammaella et al. (2024) through a phenomenological study of female legislative members in Surabaya, identified four archetypal identity constructions: the female fighter, the people's fighter, the great woman, and the superwoman. These identities reflect how women internalize and perform multiple roles, often balancing personal convictions, public representation, and domestic expectations. For a public figure like Nafa Urbach, who carries the legacy of a media-crafted celebrity image, the transition into political identity may involve aligning with similar archetypes—such as portraying herself as a compassionate advocate (people's fighter) or a capable reformist (great woman). These identity categories intersect directly with CTI's personal and communal frames, demonstrating that identity transformation in politics is not solely about rebranding but about negotiating deeper socio-political roles. In this sense, Nafa Urbach's communication strategies are not only performative but also reflective of structural expectations placed upon women in political spaces, from media narratives to party affiliations and public morality

Communication Strategies, Media Portrayals, and Public Perceptions Shape The Political Identity of Artists Entering The Political Sphere

Communication strategies are essential in shaping the political identity of artists transitioning into politics (Syam & Rizqi Rahmanillah, 2020). For public figures like Nafa

Urbach, carefully crafted communication messages are crucial to redefine their image and ensure alignment with political expectations. By leveraging various media platforms, including television interviews, social media, and political speeches, they can convey their new political stance and engage with potential voters (Revolusi et al., 2020). Nafa Urbach's strategic communication likely focuses on projecting authenticity, competency, and commitment to social causes, thus differentiating her from her entertainment background. These communication tactics help bridge the gap between her celebrity persona and her newly assumed political role, signaling her capacity to represent the public in the political domain (Sugiarto & Yuwanto, 2020).

Media portrayals and public perceptions play a pivotal role in the construction of an artist's political identity. As a well-known entertainer, Nafa Urbach's media presence can be both an asset and a challenge. While her celebrity status provides visibility, it also means that her actions and statements are subject to intense scrutiny (Epafras, 2013). Positive portrayals in the media can help solidify her credibility as a politician, but negative press can hinder her efforts to be taken seriously. Public perception, influenced by media portrayals, may shift as the public grapples with her dual identity as both an artist and a political figure. Effective management of media relationships, particularly through social media, allows her to address potential concerns, engage directly with constituents, and craft a narrative that blends her entertainment career with her political aspirations, ensuring her acceptance in the political sphere.

The Broader Implications of These Identity Transformations on The Communication Dynamics Between Public Figures and Their Audiences in Political Contexts

The identity transformation of public figures from entertainment to politics has significant implications for communication dynamics between these figures and their audiences in political contexts (Bachtiar et al., 2024). As artists transition into politics, they often carry a pre-existing fanbase that may have different expectations and perceptions of their new political role. This dual identity can create challenges, as the audience may initially struggle to reconcile their admiration for the artist with their political stances or actions (Toolkit, n.d.). Effective communication strategies, such as transparency, consistency in messaging, and active engagement with the audience, become critical in bridging this gap. Public figures must navigate these complexities by using their celebrity status to engage a wider demographic while demonstrating their political commitment through actions and policies that resonate with their followers (Blasko & Januaskiene, 2008).

Moreover, the broader implications of these identity transformations extend to the evolution of the relationship between public figures and their political constituents. The rise of social media has altered traditional political communication, giving public figures like Nafa Urbach direct access to their audience. This shift allows them to cultivate a more personal connection with voters, bypassing traditional media filters. However, it also demands a careful balancing act: while leveraging their celebrity status for political influence, these figures must ensure their political identity aligns with the values and needs of the electorate. As these figures continuously navigate their public identities, they not only shape their personal brand but also influence the expectations and behaviors of their audiences, ultimately contributing to the changing landscape of political communication in the digital age.

CONCLUSION

This systematic literature review reveals that the transition of artists, such as Nafa Urbach, from the entertainment industry to politics is a complex process shaped by communication strategies, media portrayals, and public perceptions. Using the Communication Theory of Identity (CTI), the study finds that successful identity transformation requires strategic alignment across personal, relational, communal, and material frames. Consistent messaging, proactive media engagement, and authenticity in political communication are essential for building credibility and overcoming public skepticism. The findings also highlight that celebrity status provides visibility but does not guarantee political success; it must be supported by substantive political agendas and responsive communication. Media portrayal emerges as a double-edged sword, with the power to either strengthen or weaken public trust. Effective management of this dynamic is key to sustaining a coherent and relatable political identity. In broader terms, this transformation influences the evolving relationship between public figures and constituents in the digital era. Direct engagement through social media allows for stronger voter connections but also demands greater consistency and accountability. For practitioners, these insights offer valuable guidance in crafting political campaigns for public figures transitioning from entertainment, while for scholars, they underscore the need for further research into how identity negotiation shapes political legitimacy in contemporary politics.

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