


Political Communication in the Digital Era: The Role of Social Media in Shaping Public Opinion in the 2024 Election

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
<p>Keywords: Political Communication, Social Media, Public Opinion, Digital Era, Digital Literacy.</p>	<p>This study discusses political communication in the digital era, focusing on the role of social media in shaping public opinion. The development of information technology has changed the patterns of political interaction, where social media has become a primary channel for political actors to convey messages, build images, and mobilize support in the 2024 Presidential Election. This research uses a qualitative approach with a literature review method and observation of political communication phenomena across various social media platforms such as Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok. The findings of this study show that social media plays a significant role in shaping public opinion during the 2024 Presidential Election. Social media facilitates two-way communication between candidates and voters, expands political participation, and provides quicker and more efficient access to political information. However, this study also identifies major challenges related to the spread of misinformation and political polarization, which can affect voter perceptions and exacerbate tensions in society. Overall, although social media offers advantages in terms of cost efficiency and audience reach, its use needs to be balanced with responsibility to ensure that the information disseminated is accurate and not misleading.</p>
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INTRODUCTION

The development of the digital era has revolutionized the landscape of communication, bringing fundamental changes in social interaction patterns and how society accesses and shares information. This transformation is inseparable from the advancement of information technology, which increasingly influences various aspects of human life (Fandhy et al., 2025). Over time, Indonesian society has begun to adapt to the presence of various forms of communication technologies, such as the internet, television, radio, and other digital devices, which have significantly facilitated access to a wide range of information (Marhamah et al., 2024). One of the greatest innovations is the internet, which represents the integration of global communication flows and the evolution of modern technology. The internet not only accelerates the process of information exchange but also creates new spaces for society to interact, participate in public discourse, and shape social mindsets amid the flow of digital information (Swastiwi, 2024).

One of the most accessed web-based services by society today is social networking sites. The advancement of social media technology has opened up great opportunities for individuals to actively participate in the digital public space (Hasan et al., 2023). Through platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter, people can easily share information, disseminate ideas, and build broader communication networks without being constrained by space and time. Digital media not only serves as a means of information exchange but also as a dynamic social interaction medium, where every individual has an equal opportunity to be both a producer and a consumer of information (Ardha, 2014).

Furthermore, the presence of digital media has the potential to strengthen democratic principles in national life. With digital political campaigns, political participation becomes more inclusive because it can reach groups that were previously difficult to access through conventional campaign methods (Rustandi & Suryadi, 2022). Social media provides space for every individual to express opinions, aspirations, and critiques openly to a wider audience, including policymakers. This phenomenon reflects a positive change in the dynamics of modern democracy, where digital technology becomes an essential instrument in expanding public access to political information and deepening public involvement in decision-making processes (Sari & Zulkarnain, 2024).

In Indonesia, the phenomenon of social media use in political communication has reached its most crucial moment, particularly during the 2024 Election campaign period. During this period, social media not only serves as a medium for disseminating political information but also plays an active role as a catalyst in shaping massive and dynamic public opinion (Purworini, 2024). According to a report by We Are Social (2023), the number of social media users in Indonesia has reached 167.8 million active users, representing about 60.4% of the total population. This high level of penetration indicates the vast potential of social media as a strategic tool in influencing political perceptions, attitudes, and preferences of society (Zahra, 2024). Political dynamics in the digital era have undergone a fundamental transformation, where the virtual public space has become the main arena for discourse battles, political narrative competition, and the rapid and widespread negotiation of meaning. Social media accelerates the spread of political issues and enables real-time political support mobilization, making it a significant new force in shaping the direction of national public opinion (Fauzy & Ratnawati, 2024).

Several previous studies have shown how social media plays a strategic role in shaping public opinion in the political realm. Research conducted by Susetyawidianta & Geraldny (2021) revealed that social media, particularly Twitter and Instagram, became the main tools for politicians in building their image and strengthening public support during the campaign period. The study found that direct interaction between candidates and voters through social media improved positive perceptions of candidates, shortened communication distances, and created stronger emotional engagement compared to conventional media. Meanwhile, research by Amir (2025) strengthens this finding by showing that the strategic use of social media in political campaigns not only impacts the formation of individual opinions but also creates viral effects that expand the reach of political messages to various segments of society in a relatively short time.

Additionally, research by Fitriani et al. (2023) highlights how social media contributes to political polarization in Indonesia. Their study showed that social media algorithms, which tailor content to user preferences, reinforce echo chambers, where individuals tend to be exposed only to views that align with their own opinions. This not only strengthens political loyalty but also narrows the space for healthy cross-view dialogue. These three studies collectively emphasize that social media is not just a communication tool but also a space for perception formation, political identity strengthening, and even a battleground for narratives. Therefore, this study continues the discussion by focusing on how social media, in the context of the 2024 Election, not only shapes public opinion widely but also creates an increasingly complex and dynamic digital political landscape in Indonesia.

The aim of this study is to analyze the role of social media in shaping public opinion in the digital era, particularly in the context of political campaigns during the 2024 Election in Indonesia. This study aims to understand how digital platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter are used as effective political communication instruments, as well as how they influence changes in political dynamics and public engagement. The benefits of this study are to provide academic contributions to the development of political communication science in the digital era, serve as a reference for politicians and communication practitioners in designing more effective campaign strategies, and provide insights to the broader public about the importance of media literacy in dealing with the overwhelming flow of political information on social media.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive method. This approach is chosen to gain an in-depth understanding of the role of social media in shaping public opinion in the digital era, particularly in the context of the 2024 Election campaign in Indonesia. Data collection techniques were conducted through library research by analyzing various secondary sources such as scientific journals, books, research reports, news articles, and the latest statistical data related to social media usage in Indonesia. Additionally, the researcher also performed content analysis on several social media platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter to identify patterns of political communication that occurred during the campaign period (Sugiyono, 2016). The data analysis technique used is thematic analysis, which involves grouping data based on main themes related to the patterns of social media use in shaping public opinion. Data validity is maintained through source triangulation, by comparing different data sources to ensure the consistency and accuracy of the findings. The focus of this study is to examine how social media is used by political actors to build narratives, mobilize support, and influence the political perceptions of the public in the context of digital democracy in Indonesia.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Role of Social Media in Shaping Public Opinion in the Digital Era during the 2024 Election
In the 2024 Election, the role of digital media in the election process has become undeniable, with social media platforms serving as the primary channel for political campaigns.

Presidential and vice-presidential candidates, along with political parties, have utilized social media platforms like Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, and TikTok to reach a broader audience and gather support. Furthermore, the use of paid advertisements on these platforms has become increasingly common, allowing candidates to target specific voter groups based on preferences, location, and other demographics (Riana et al., 2024). This phenomenon shows how digital media not only serves as a communication tool but also as an effective political marketing strategy to build image and influence public opinion. Through various content, both informative and persuasive, social media is capable of engaging voters in political discussions and garnering support for particular candidates (Kurniawan, 2024).

Moreover, digital media also has a significant impact on the formation of public opinion, especially in influencing voters' perceptions of political candidates and emerging issues. Digital platforms facilitate voters' access to more transparent and diverse information about candidates' backgrounds, visions, missions, and track records (Siagian, 2015). This makes it easier for voters to find the information they need to make more informed and data-driven decisions. However, the variety of information spread across digital media also presents its own challenges, such as the emergence of hoaxes or misinformation that could influence how voters assess candidates or political issues (Judijanto et al., 2023).

Digital media plays a major role in shaping public opinion and mobilizing society for specific actions through online campaigns. Specifically, the author has summarized several roles of social media in shaping public opinion in the digital era during the 2024 election:

1. Social Media Platforms as Political Campaign Tools In the 2024

Election, social media has become a primary channel for political campaigns, with presidential, vice-presidential candidates, and political parties utilizing digital platforms such as Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, TikTok, and YouTube to expand their audience reach. These social media platforms enable candidates to connect with voters in a more direct and personal way, creating a closer relationship with the public. Through social media, candidates can access various voter demographics, including the youth who are highly active online. Additionally, paid advertisements and other digital marketing strategies allow them to target audiences based on location, interests, and online behavior, making campaigns more effective and measurable.

Social media not only serves as a means of conveying campaign messages but also allows candidates to build and manage their political image in real-time. In the fast-paced digital world, candidates can quickly respond to emerging political issues, provide clarifications, or even shift existing narratives according to the dynamics of the situation. The speed and flexibility of social media make it a highly influential tool in shaping public opinion and influencing voter decisions. With the ability to publish content in various formats, such as videos, images, or text, social media provides candidates the freedom to deliver their messages in an engaging and easily understood manner by a wide audience.

2. Way Interaction Between Candidates and Voters

Social media enables more open two-way communication between political candidates and voters. With platforms like Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook, candidates can not only convey one-way messages but also receive direct feedback from voters. Voters have the

opportunity to ask questions, comment, or express their aspirations in real-time. This interaction creates a more democratic and responsive dialogue, allowing candidates to better understand the desires and concerns of voters and adjust their campaign messages accordingly. This not only enhances political engagement among voters but also makes them feel more valued and heard in the democratic process.

Furthermore, the space for voters to participate in political discussions strengthens their role in shaping the campaign narrative. With two-way communication, the public is not only a consumer of information but also an active producer of information. They can share opinions, experiences, or even discuss political issues with others on social media, thereby expanding the political discourse in a more inclusive way. This gives voters a stronger voice in the formation of public opinion, creating a more open political atmosphere and allowing for the creation of campaigns that are more responsive to the needs and expectations of the public. Thus, social media plays a vital role in strengthening public participation in democracy.

3. Fast and Direct Information Dissemination

Social media provides voters with quick and easy access to information about candidates, their visions, missions, and track records. Through digital platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and Twitter, voters can quickly find various content detailing the candidates, including political program presentations, interviews, debates, and reports on their performance. This accessibility to information allows voters to make more knowledge-based and objective decisions. Voters are no longer entirely dependent on information provided by conventional media or direct campaigns, as this information can be found directly on the platforms they use daily.

Additionally, digital platforms facilitate the dissemination of information regarding political issues that could influence the public's views on candidates and their political programs. With social media, voters can easily stay informed about the latest developments on important issues relevant to the 2024 Election, whether related to social policies, economic issues, or local issues raised by candidates. The rapid dissemination of information allows the public to better understand and evaluate the arguments and policies offered by candidates, while also expanding the space for discussion and debate on ongoing issues. Overall, this enriches voters' understanding of their choices in the election

4. Polarization of Public Opinion

Social media has the potential to cause significant political polarization, where users are more often exposed to information that aligns with their views, creating what is known as echo chambers. In these echo chambers, social media algorithms play a key role by showing content based on previous behaviors and preferences, leading users to become trapped in a cycle of information that confirms their beliefs. As a result, users are rarely exposed to differing or opposing viewpoints, which can limit their perspectives and reinforce political biases. This process further deepens the divide between groups with different political opinions, exacerbating polarization in society.

This polarization can lead to a fragmented public opinion, where extreme or one-sided views dominate political discussions on social media, leading to greater social tension. When only viewpoints that align with personal beliefs are encountered in the digital space, it

becomes difficult to foster constructive dialogue between groups with differing opinions. Radical or highly partisan views often gain more attention and support due to the nature of algorithms that prioritize content generating quick interactions such as comments or shares. In the long run, political polarization fueled by social media can deepen social divides, impact public decision-making processes, and disrupt democratic stability by diminishing the quality of healthy political discussions.

5. Challenges of Misinformation and Hoaxes

One of the significant challenges in the digital age is the spread of misinformation or hoaxes, which can have serious impacts on voters' perceptions of candidates and political issues. False or misleading information can spread rapidly on social media platforms, influencing how voters perceive candidates, policies, or even the electoral process itself. Misinformation often appears in the form of memes, videos, or articles created with the intent to deceive audiences, often for political or financial gain. As a result, voters exposed to false information may make decisions based on inaccurate data, potentially altering election outcomes and undermining the integrity of the democratic process.

Social media, with algorithms designed to prioritize content that has the potential to go viral, accelerates the spread of false information. Content that evokes emotions, controversy, or sensationalism is more likely to receive widespread attention, including fake news or conspiracy theories that are damaging. While these algorithms aim to increase user engagement, they inadvertently worsen the problem by distributing false information more widely. This creates confusion among voters, making it harder for them to distinguish between valid and unverifiable information, thereby damaging efforts to build an informed electorate. In the long term, the spread of misinformation threatens democratic stability by dividing society and diminishing trust in the electoral system itself.

6. Increasing Media Literacy Among the Public

To mitigate the negative effects of misinformation, it is crucial for the public to have strong media literacy. Media literacy not only includes the ability to access information but also to analyze and assess the credibility of the sources from which the information comes. Voters with a deeper understanding of how social media works, the role of algorithms, and the potential biases in information dissemination will be more cautious in receiving and sharing information. With these skills, the public can more effectively filter valid and trustworthy information from questionable or inaccurate content.

This process helps maintain the quality of political discourse, reduces the impact of hoaxes, and ensures that voters remain well-informed. Educated voters who know how to verify facts, recognize trustworthy sources, and understand the context of information will be less susceptible to fake news or misleading narratives. This also helps foster critical awareness among the public, enabling them not only to sift through information wisely but also to prevent further dissemination of misinformation. Overall, increasing media literacy will strengthen democracy by enabling voters to make more informed and responsible decisions in elections, ultimately enhancing the quality of the political process as a whole.

Social Media as an Effective Political Communication Tool and Its Influence on Political Dynamics Change

There are several reasons why social media has become an effective communication tool for conveying political messages during the 2024 elections:

1. Speed and Accessibility

Speed and accessibility are two key aspects that make social media a highly effective communication tool for delivering political messages. With the increasing spread of internet connections in Indonesia, social media allows political messages to be disseminated quickly, reaching a broader audience in a short period of time. Politicians and political parties can utilize platforms like Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok to upload relevant content, including videos, images, or text, that can be immediately seen by millions of people. This is in stark contrast to traditional media like television or radio, where message dissemination is more limited and requires more time and cost to reach a wide audience.

Additionally, social media allows political messages to be accessed anytime and anywhere, providing convenience for the public to follow political developments without geographic constraints. This presents a great opportunity for politicians to interact directly with voters, regardless of whether they are in large cities or remote areas. This high level of accessibility also allows voters to more easily search for information about candidates or political parties they support, enabling them to make more informed decisions in the elections. This convenience also encourages voters to actively participate in political discussions, share content they find important, and provide feedback to politicians, ultimately strengthening political engagement in the digital era.

2. Feedback

Social media platforms offer the opportunity for more open and direct two-way interaction between the public and political actors. Unlike traditional media, which tends to be one-way, social media enables the public not only to receive political messages but also to provide direct feedback through various features like comment sections, likes, and shares. These features enrich political communication dynamics, as they allow voters to express their opinions, ask questions, and provide critiques openly.

This two-way interaction is greatly beneficial to politicians in understanding public perspectives. By observing reactions such as comments or the level of engagement, politicians can gain a clearer picture of how their campaign messages are received by the public. This understanding allows them to adjust their communication strategies, refine ineffective messages, or develop topics that are more relevant to the needs and desires of the public. This process not only enhances political involvement but also enables politicians to be more responsive to emerging issues among voters, creating more relevant and impactful communication in shaping public opinion.

3. Audience Segmentation

Social media allows politicians and political parties to target audiences much more effectively than traditional media. Platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter collect demographic data from users, including age, location, gender, interests, and online behaviors. Using this data, political messages can be tailored to reach specific groups who may be more

interested in particular topics or issues. For example, campaign ads can be targeted at young voters who are more active on social media or those with a particular interest in environmental or economic issues. This allows politicians to allocate campaign resources more efficiently and maximize the impact of each message delivered.

Additionally, with the ability to customize messages based on audience preferences and needs, social media increases the likelihood of receiving a positive response from voters. Relevant and personalized messages tend to capture more attention and encourage engagement, whether through comments, likes, or shares. By providing information that aligns with the interests and views of the audience, politicians can build stronger relationships with their voters. This not only enhances the effectiveness of communication but also boosts voter involvement in the political process. In turn, this can contribute to increased political participation and strengthen public trust in the electoral process.

4. Use of Attractive Visual Content

Visual content such as videos, infographics, and animations has proven to be a highly effective tool in delivering political messages in the digital era. Visual content can convey information in a more engaging and easily understandable manner, especially when simplifying complex issues that may be difficult to explain through long texts. Campaign videos, for instance, can combine visual elements, music, and powerful narratives to deliver messages more emotionally and persuasively. Meanwhile, infographics provide a clear and concise overview of a particular issue or data, making it easier for the audience to grasp information quickly. In this way, political messages can reach a wide range of audiences, including those who prefer visual content over text.

Moreover, visual content has the ability to enhance audience retention of the delivered message. Since the human brain tends to remember images and videos more easily than text, delivering political messages in visual formats increases the likelihood that the audience will remember and respond to the message. Attractive visual content is also more likely to be shared on social media, expanding the reach of the message virally. The more people share the content, the greater the chances of the message reaching a broader audience. By leveraging the right visual elements, politicians can create a stronger and lasting impression in voters' minds, which could potentially influence their decisions when voting in the election.

5. Affordable Costs

Using social media as a political communication tool offers significant financial advantages compared to traditional media like television, radio, or print media. In traditional media, the costs involved in purchasing ad space on TV or in magazines, as well as the costs of professional content production, are often very high. In contrast, social media allows politicians and political parties to upload campaign messages directly at a much lower cost. Platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter offer various advertising options that can be customized for smaller budgets, enabling political actors to reach a broader audience without incurring large expenses. Furthermore, organic posts such as statuses or live videos can be spread without additional costs, providing politicians the opportunity to communicate directly with voters without relying on big budgets.

The financial efficiency offered by social media also provides more flexibility for politicians to make the most of their resources. They can allocate campaign budgets to highly targeted digital ads that can be customized for specific audiences, such as age groups, geographic locations, or particular interests. Additionally, social media allows politicians to measure the results of their campaigns more transparently and accurately through analytics, such as clicks, views, or interactions generated by their ads or posts. With this information, they can adjust their communication strategies to improve the effectiveness of their campaign messages. This makes social media a highly cost-efficient option for politicians looking to maximize the impact of their political communication without requiring a large budget.

CONCLUSION

Social media has become a highly effective communication tool in the political context of the digital era, especially in the 2024 election campaign. The speed and accessibility offered by social media allow politicians to reach a wider audience and deliver political messages directly to voters without geographic limitations. With the ability to tailor messages based on demographic data and audience interests, social media also accelerates public engagement in the political process. Furthermore, digital platforms like Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook enable two-way communication between candidates and voters, providing space for the public to give feedback and actively participate in political discussions, thus strengthening democracy and expanding political participation. However, despite the vast potential of social media, there are challenges that need to be addressed. One of these is the risk of misinformation spread and political polarization, which could worsen tensions within society. Moreover, while social media allows more affordable communication compared to traditional media, the uncontrolled spread of content and biases built through algorithms can shape public opinion in a one-sided manner. Therefore, it is crucial for both politicians and the public to be more mindful when using social media, ensuring that the information shared is accurate and accountable, to maintain the quality of democracy and prevent misinformation that could undermine public trust in the election process.

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