

Digital Democracy: Examining The Impact of Instagram on Election Campaigns in Indonesia and Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

One thing to note is the use of social media as political propaganda. The strong influence of social media has a wide impact on political discourse. Instagram is one of the social media platforms that is often used as a political campaign tool, especially during election season in Malaysia and Indonesia. The purpose of this study is to identify how Instagram is used as a campaign media platform in the Indonesian and Malaysian elections in 2024 and 2022. The method used is a qualitative descriptive study using library research. One of the theoretical approaches used in this research is the Five Functional Stages of Development model. Based on the research findings, there was a significant use of social media in Indonesia during the political campaign for the 2024 election, particularly in relation to the Prabowo-Gibran case. This is explained in the Prabowo Gibran identification model, which includes five aspects of the Five Functional Stages Development model: identification, legitimization, participation, penetration, and distribution. On the other hand, Malaysia is passive in terms of social media usage such as Instagram, but active in terms of TikTok campaigns.

Keywords: Instagram, Campaign, Elections, Social Media

INTRODUCTION

The use of media as a political campaign tool is not new in Indonesia. In fact, every time there is a general election, the media is always involved in marketing it. The media will always be a link in general elections because of the need for information outreach that must be known by the entire community, for example in 1999, where the news that occurred at that time had political preferences in each newspaper. It can even be said that the newspaper coverage that occurred at that time became a second hand reality that reported social reality in a particular way, not as a whole, so that the media ultimately only became a tool for transforming social reality, rather than being a mirror of reality (Edy Susilo, 2000). This is in line with what Giltin (1980) mentioned that in fact the interests of political elites dominate the news in the media rather than being a mirror of reality.

In addition to the use of newspapers, political marketing is also carried out through the use of social media. The use of social media is certainly influenced by the massive growth rate of internet users in Indonesia. According to the survey results from the Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association (APJII) in 2023 stated that there was an increase in internet usage in Indonesia from 210 million users in 2022 to 215 million users in 2023. In addition, the penetration of internet users has also increased by 1.17% to 78.19% in 2023 (Siti Khopipah, 2024).

The Ministry of Communication and Information Technology (Kemenkominfo) states that of the many internet users in Indonesia, 95% are active social media users. Even in January 2022 alone, the number of active social media users in Indonesia has increased by 12.35%. This number is dominated by millennials and generation Z. According to Kompas media, the social media most widely used by internet users in Indonesia are Whatsapp (92.1%), Instagram (86.5%), Facebook (83.8%), Tiktok (70.8%), Telegram (64.3%), X (60.2%), and FB Messenger (51.9%) (Hayat, M. A., et al., 2024).

The increasing number of internet users eventually gave birth to a new generation of political communication as a continuation of the mainstream media generation, namely the new media generation, which is characterized by the strengthening of social media (Heryanto, 2018). The presence of this generation also cannot be separated from popular culture, where social media is the center of popular culture. Meanwhile, popular culture itself is at the heart of Indonesian national politics (Jurriens, 2011).

There are three well-known social media that are often used as political marketing tools, mainly by candidates as their contestation media, namely Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. Facebook and Twitter are often used by candidates to seek political support and popular sympathy. Both are social media that have even been owned by mobile phone users in remote areas. Meanwhile, You Tube is a medium of production as well as consumption and has its own similarities with television so that it has a populist dimension. Usually YouTube is used to re-record events shown on television so that it attracts comments from users which often lead to violent debates (Imron Rosidi, 2016).

The emergence of all three often makes political performances more varied, so that anything can be displayed as long as it can attract enthusiasts. But on the other hand, the birth of social media has actually reduced the authority of politicians. The reduction in authority is caused by attacks of criticism and unmasking carried out by anonymous accounts on social media. Even so, regulations have been made to prevent things related to black campaigns from happening. Based on this, we can know that the assumption of the people or voters as passive

objects is not entirely true. In social media, popular politics can be done by anyone, even ordinary people can make negative comments to politicians. In some cases, there are people who were previously not famous, but because of their controversial comments on social media, these people then became famous and became a reference for many people (Imron Rosidi, 2016).

Ariel Heryanto (2015) argues that people's activism in political events is increasing ahead of general elections. Even direct elections themselves are a result of the development of new media. However, he also notes that it is possible that social media users who are active in popular politics are not so active in their social reality. They may not even vote on voting day. They may see political activities as mere entertainment, not as sacred political activities. Thus, new media also experiences similar pressure to be designed as entertainment rather than political education and propaganda.

In addition, there is one significant social media that has also become a political marketing tool in this new media generation, namely Instagram. Arfan & Rafni (2023) even argue that Instagram is the most effective social media in conducting political campaigns. In addition, Instagram is also the most accessed social media after Whatsapp according to the Kompas survey. In April 2022 alone, there were 99.9 million active Instagram users in Indonesia. This number is the fourth largest after India, the United States, and Brazil (Hayat, M. A., et al., 2024).

In Malaysia, the use of social media has even effectively contributed to the downfall of the corrupt and nepotistic regime of Najib Razak in 2018. The #Bersih campaign launched on various social media platforms has actually started since 2006. It was initially launched on Flickr and You Tube until 2008 when it expanded to Facebook and 2011 when it expanded to Twitter. Since then the movement has attracted a lot of attention from young Malaysians (Fadillah, et al., 2019).

The use of social media as a political communication tool in Malaysia has escalated significantly. In 2008, there were 800 million Facebook accounts and 3.429 million Twitter accounts participating in political commentary threads affecting the General Election. This number increased to 13,220,000 Facebook accounts and 2 million Twitter accounts in 2013, which coincided with the next general election in Malaysia (Gomez, 2014). This also indicates a very significant shift in the media landscape from newspapers to social media.

This research discusses the extent to which politicians and their supporters utilize social media, especially Instagram in the run-up to the General Elections in Indonesia in 2024 and Malaysia in 2022. The purpose of this research is to find out information about election matters on Instagram social media, especially in Indonesia and Malaysia. Through this research, readers can know and understand about the dissemination of information and knowledge on social media in outline.

Interaction

The first research that discusses the role of social media in political campaigns is the joint work of Muzahid Akbar Hayat, Husen Arif Hidayat, Elis Pebtianti, Erdyana Jaya Maulana, and Takdir Ali Syahbana entitled "The Use of Ganjar Pranowo's Instagram Social Media in the 2024 Presidential Election Political Campaign". The research explained that the use of Instagram media can build a positive image and credibility of a person. The study used a descriptive

qualitative research method with an empathy and homophily theory approach in which data were collected from surveys, observations, and various data collection (Hayat, et al., 2024).

The second research is Ooi Kok Hin's work entitled "How Political Parties Used Tiktok in the 2022 Malaysian General Election". The study explained that many parties and candidates for Prime Minister in Malaysia actually use Tiktok as a popular social media among young voters under 30 years old. Tiktok is used in order to build a good political image in front of young voters by utilizing influencers. The study used descriptive qualitative research methods (Hin, 2022).

The third research is the work of Rocky Arfan, Suryanef, and Al Rafni entitled "The Role of Social-Media in Increasing Millennial Political Participation in the Medan Johor Subdistrict". The research explains that social media (especially Facebook and Instagram) is used as a catalyst to increase millennial political participation so that millennials can understand the candidates who will lead later. The study used descriptive qualitative research methods (Arfan, et al., 2023).

The fourth research is the work of Deden Fahrudi and Atef Fahrudin entitled "Utilization of Social Media in Political Campaigns Ahead of the 2024 Election: Case Studies of Social Media Accounts of Political Parties and Politicians". The study explains that as many as 18 political parties and politicians who are presidential candidates in the 2024 elections have actively utilized social media as a tool for their campaigns. Social media that are active as their campaign tools include Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok. Gerindra Party and Prabowo Subianto are the two political objects that dominate the four social media. The research used a case study method with a comparative study approach (Fahrudi & Fahrudin, 2024).

METHODOLOGY

Researchers combined descriptive studies with qualitative research approaches in this investigation. A study technique that generates descriptive data, such as written or spoken words from individuals or behavior observed by researchers, is the goal of qualitative research or approach. According to Moleong (2007), qualitative research typically concentrates on social issues and gives test participants' perspectives or a voice.

Qualitative research itself was born because it is based on the belief that knowledge is always generated from social phenomena and that understanding social knowledge is a legitimized scientific process (Emzir, 2011). Through a qualitative approach, researchers can get complete information about the use of Instagram as a campaign media in the 2024 Indonesian and 2022 Malaysian elections.

The data collected in the qualitative approach itself is in the form of words and pictures, not numbers. The approach does not use statistics, but is based on evidence. There are also those who state that a qualitative approach is an approach based on field reality and what is experienced by respondents by being studied using existing theoretical approaches (Moleong, 2007; Sudjarwo, 2011). The data obtained in qualitative research is then poured in the form of a report or description.

The descriptive study is a study that basically explains events and things. Usually descriptive studies are conducted if researchers want to know the status of something (Arikunto, 1992). There are also those who state that descriptive studies are studies conducted to describe something, symptoms, events, or events that occur at this time where researchers try to capture events and events that are the center of attention to then be written as they are (Nana Sudjana & Ibrahim, 1989).

Another definition states that descriptive study is a form of research used to describe existing phenomena, both natural and man-made phenomena. These phenomena can be in the form of forms, activities, characteristics, changes, relationships, similarities, and differences between phenomena (Sukmadinata, 2006).

The main reason for researchers in choosing this method is because this method is useful for obtaining real data when conducting research so that after obtaining the data, it is then analyzed. Descriptive studies are also appropriate for explaining various sources obtained from observations. From the results of these observations, they are then analyzed so that the results can be drawn conclusions that are expected in accordance with the objectives of this study.

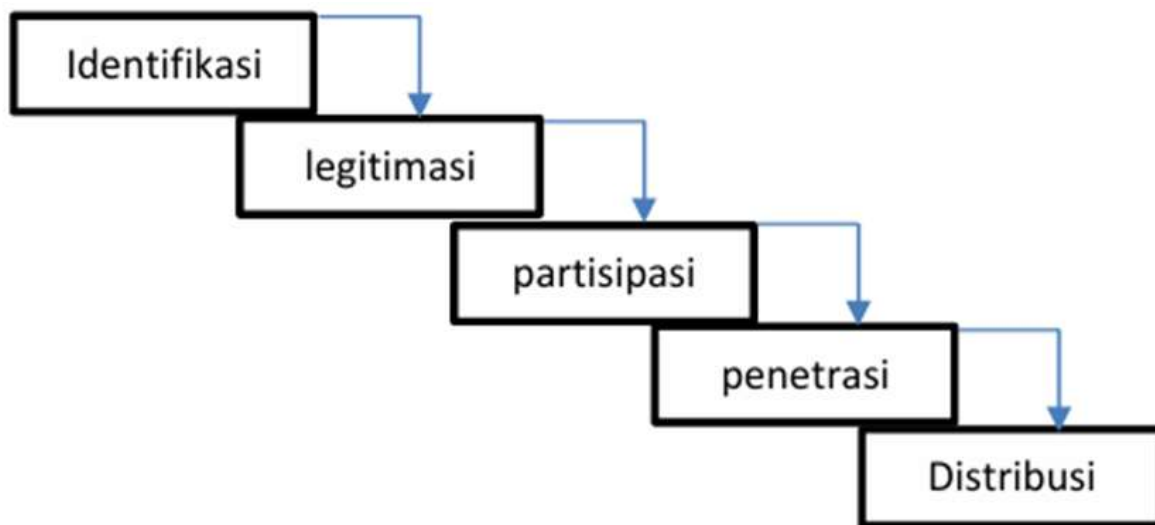
FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Theoretical foundation

Political communication is a field or discipline that examines communication behavior and activities that are political in nature, have political consequences, or even affect political behavior. Political communication is also a process of transferring symbols or communication symbols containing political messages from a person or group to other people with the aim of opening up perspectives or ways of thinking and influencing the attitudes and behavior of the political target audience (Cangara, 2009).

One form of political communication is a political campaign. There is not a single political event that can be separated from political campaigns. The political campaign itself according to Kotler and Roberto is an organized effort carried out by a group that aims to persuade other parties or political targets to accept, modify, or reject certain ideas, attitudes, practical actions, and behavior (Cangara, 2009).

Meanwhile, the model used in this research is The Five Functional Stages Development Model campaign model. This model was developed at Yale University by a team of researchers and campaign practitioners in 1969. This model focuses on the stages of campaign activities, not on the communication process between campaigners and campaignees. Broadly speaking, this model has five stages of campaign activities in order to win public votes (Venus, 2009). The Five Functional Stages Development model can be described like this:



Picture 1. The Five Functional Stages Development Model (Venus, 2009)

The first stage is identification. The identification stage is the stage of creating a campaign identity. Usually at this stage, candidates look for, create, and form symbols that are easily recognizable to the general public, such as colors, songs, or even shapes. The next stage is legitimization, which is the stage where a person has entered the list of candidates or a presidential candidate gets strong support from poll results. The next stage is participation. In this stage, a candidate gains support from the audience and the audience proactively shows their involvement in the campaign by distributing brochures, pamphlets, or posters. Participation itself can be divided into two, namely real participation, which is the direct involvement of the audience; and symbolic participation, which is an indirect involvement such as sticking a party sticker on the back windshield of a car or even just wearing a party shirt (Venus, 2009).

The next stage is penetration, which is the stage where a candidate and the ideas he brings have gained a place in the hearts and minds of the audience so as to attract their sympathy. While the last stage is the distribution stage or the proof stage, which is characterized by the achievement of campaign goals in general or the achievement of power expected by a political candidate (Venus, 2009).

Analysis of Instagram Utilization in the 2024 Election Campaign in Indonesia: A Case Study of Prabowo Subianto

An contender for the Indonesian presidency in 2024, Prabowo Subianto, together with his running mate Gibran Rakabuming Raka, made extensive use of social media. Prabowo aggressively persisted in using social media political marketing techniques to garner support during the campaign.

Prabowo Subianto basically had an unfavorable image in the eyes of the public due to his past that was considered a violation of human rights. However, in an effort to erase this bad image, Prabowo did many innovative things in his political campaign, one of which was attending podcast events on You Tube and holding socialization on campuses. In fact, Prabowo managed to change his image from a human rights violator to a person who received praise.

One of the monumental things that became a turning point in his campaign was when he attended the “Capres Bicara Gagasan” event on Najwa Shihab's You Tube channel. At that time Prabowo did a dance that invited laughter from the audience. His funny behavior became a hot topic of conversation on social media for several days (Rizky, et al., 2023).

Based on The Five Functional Stages Development model, the campaign stages that Prabowo Subianto went through are as follows.

Identification Stage

Prabowo Subianto went through the identification stage when he created his identity while attending You Tube podcast events. The peak was when he was a guest star on the “Capres Bicara Gagasan” program on Najwa Shihab's You Tube channel. At that time, Prabowo's behavior became his own identity, as a “gemoy” presidential candidate who was even able to attract the Gen-Z audience. Even according to the Indonesian Survey Institute (LSI) on July 1-8, 2023, Prabowo won the highest vote among voters aged 22 to 24 years with a total of 39.1%. Even in the age range of 26 to 40 years, Prabowo still leads by 39.5% (Rizky, et al., 2023).

Legitimization Stage

The legitimization stage was passed by Prabowo Subianto when he registered himself as a presidential candidate with Gibran Rakabuming Raka as a vice presidential candidate to the KPU on October 25, 2023. The Prabowo-Gibran pair was even the last pair to register with the KPU. The pair caused its own controversy so that it became the presidential-vice presidential pair that attracted the most public attention. According to the LSI survey results on October 19, 2023, Prabowo was 37% ahead of the other two pairs (Databooks, 2023).

Participation Stage

Prabowo Subianto went through this stage when young people created the #AllinPrabowo trend. Proactively, millennial and Gen-Z voters continued to voice their support. Here, young audiences used Instagram to spread a good image of Prabowo through the hashtag. Not only that, to show their support, many young people created Instagram reels with the theme that Prabowo is the best Defense Minister who can keep the country's secrets. The support flowed through the hashtag #WeAlwaysWeHere. The account of the Ministry of Defense (@Kemhan_RI) also actively showed Prabowo's good image as Minister of Defense. Even Prabowo's words did not escape being content on the official account (Rizky, et al., 2023).

Penetration Stage

Not only hashtags and “gemoy” images displayed in the form of avatars, remix songs are also a form of political communication that young people voice through Tiktok videos and Instagram reels. The song in question is a song created by Richard Jersey entitled “Oke Gas Prabowo Gibran Most Fitting”. The song was uploaded on September 25, 2023 and by January 16, 2024 had been watched 9,127,238 times on YouTube. The snippet of the song was then used as background music in several Instagram video reels. The song then became a trend among young people even until this research took place (Harian Jogja, 2024).

Distribution Stage

The distribution stage was passed by Prabowo Subianto from election day, which was on February 14, 2024 until now. By this time, the Prabowo-Gibran pair had topped the quick count and the KPU's official count. On March 20, 2024, Prabowo-Gibran was declared the winner by winning 96,214,691 votes or around 58.58% of the total national valid votes (Kompas, 2024).

Analysis of Instagram Utilization in the 2022 General Election Campaign in Malaysia

The 2022 Malaysian election will mark the first time that voters under the age of 18 are permitted to cast ballots in Malaysia. The constitutional amendment known as "Undi18" gave rise to the rule. Six million newly registered voters emerged as a result of the amendment. This election represents a 30% rise over the last one. These young or passive voters previously had no history of voting at all or even rarely engaged in political discussions. Therefore, the utilization of social media for campaigning in Malaysia became an important issue at the time. Officials, candidates and political parties were busy using TikTok as their political marketing tool to reach these young voters (Hin, 2022).

One of the parties that reached out to the youth vote was Pakatan Harapan led by Anwar Ibrahim. One of the party's content creators named Jason Yew created a campaign video for Pakatan Harapan. The video is a collection of catchy video clips, and also includes footage of two Pakatan Harapan orators, Anwar Ibrahim and Rafizi Ramli. The video is one of the trending campaign videos in Malaysia. Between November 5 and 18, 2022, Yew's video was viewed 36 million times, received 1.5 million likes, received 246 thousand comments and 134 thousand shares (Hin, 2022).

TikTok is a very effective thing to be used as a political marketing tool in Malaysia. Even TikTok's popularity in Malaysia exceeds any social media except Whatsapp. Therefore, TikTok is also not only used as a campaign media, but also as a propaganda tool for activists ahead of the election. One example is a graphic designer, Fahmi Reza, who made a satirical video showing racial riots on May 13, 1969 (Hin, 2022).

CONCLUSION

This study analyzes the use of social media in political campaigns in Indonesia and Malaysia. It was found that in Indonesia, one of the presidential and vice presidential candidates, Prabowo Subianto, utilized Instagram intensively for his campaign. Prabowo carried out all stages of campaign development through social media, from identification, planning, content development, implementation, to evaluation and distribution. This shows that Prabowo comprehensively understands and utilizes social media as a campaign tool.

On the other hand, political campaigns in Malaysia tend to emphasize the use of TikTok social media more than Instagram. This is evidenced by the emergence of viral campaign videos on TikTok, such as Jason Yew's video campaigning for the Pakatan Harapan Party in the 2022 election and Fahmi Reza's satirical video raising the issue of anti-racism. This phenomenon shows that voters in Malaysia are more responsive to campaign content on the TikTok platform than Instagram. Overall, the findings of this study illustrate the differences in the utilization of social media for political campaigns in Indonesia and Malaysia, with Indonesia focusing more on Instagram and Malaysia predominantly on TikTok. This reflects

the different voter preferences and campaign strategies adopted by candidates in the two countries.

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