Political Communication Strategies In The Digital Era For Generation Z Voters

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ABSTRACT

The development of the digital era has changed political communication strategies, especially in reaching Generation Z voters. Social media such as Instagram, Facebook and TikTok have become the main platforms for delivering political messages. The purpose of this study is to analyze Generation Z's views on political communication strategies carried out by politicians in the digital era, as well as identify the effectiveness of social media platforms in attracting the attention of young voters. This research uses a qualitative method with data collection techniques through observation and interviews with six informants from Generation Z who have the right to vote. The analysis was conducted by categorizing the data into relevant themes. The results showed that political communication strategies using social media succeeded in attracting Generation Z's attention. Interesting political messaging and visual content are effective in increasing young voters' interest. The informants revealed that casual and familiar language, as well as the use of humor in political content, greatly influenced their engagement. Social media not only facilitates access to political information, but also enables direct interaction between politicians and voters. However, challenges such as the spread of fake news and the need for critical skills in assessing information are significant barriers for Generation Z. Political communication strategies that utilize social media are very effective for attracting Generation Z. However, efforts need to be made to ensure the accuracy of information and build critical skills in assessing news, so that Generation Z can participate informally in the political process.

Keywords: Strategy, Communication, Politics, Digital Era, Generation Z

Introduction

In the era of digitalization, the dominance of technology has become a revolution in various sectors of life, one of which is in the field of politics (Kneuer & Milner, 2019). In Indonesia and in many other countries that use the general election system in the process of transitioning power, they are certainly familiar with campaigns in various media. In 2024 in Indonesia, we see a lot of political campaign phenomena by utilizing various media such as banners, flags, billboards, and so on decorating the corners of public spaces in various regions, and it is not uncommon

for briefings to use various vehicles, both cars and motorcycles, into a campaign convoy that crowds the streets and becomes the public's attention of print and electronic media (Reitz, 2019). This phenomenon is a strategy of politicians in communicating their goals, be it visions, missions, or programs that can attract public votes in the 2024 general election contest. In addition, the effectiveness of political party campaigns can be measured by the number of prospective voters (the public) who make their choice for the political party. Nowadays, the community is getting smarter and more critical in choosing the right leadership candidates. The community is tired of the candidate's promises or programs after coming to power. The placement of the ads is also not appropriate (Wulandari et al., 2021).

In recent years, we have witnessed the emergence of new social media platforms that play a key role in the dynamics of political campaigns. Platforms like TikTok, with their unique appeal and interactivity, create new challenges and opportunities in designing political communication strategies. How candidates and political parties take advantage of the full potential of these platforms, create effective messages and reach a wider audience, is a key focus in understanding the impact of new social media platforms in recent election campaigns (Utari, 2022). In the digital era, political communication plays an important role in dealing with Generation Z voters. This generation was born in a fairly wide digital environment and connection. Therefore, political communication strategies need to be adapted to the behaviour of this generation.

First, social media platforms are the main platform to reach generation Z voters. Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok, candidates can convey their political messages in an attractive and concise style. Short videos, infographics, and other visual content are effective tools to attract the attention of Generation Z who tend to have a short attention span. Using familiar, relaxed, and authentic language is also important for building an emotional connection with voters (Agil et al., 2021). However, the ethics of communicating among young people and Generation Z in using digital platforms also need serious attention because social media provides a space for someone to express their opinions and voice their thoughts that were previously not expressed to the public (Siraj et al., 2021). In addition, political communication with students also empathizes, respects each other, and accepts their weaknesses or strengths so that a comfortable feeling is formed in interacting with young voters (Wulandari et al., 2021).

The theory of political communication strategy was put forward by Onong Uchjana Effendy (2005:32) where strategy is planning and management to achieve a goal that can only be achieved through operational tactics (Khalifa, 2021). A communication strategy should include everything needed to know how to communicate with the target audience. A communication strategy defines the target

audience, the various actions to be taken, says how the target audience will benefit based on its point of view, and how the larger target audience can be reached more effectively. Communication strategies need to consider various components in communication because they are the components that support the course of a very complicated communication process. The five main components of communication that are the center of study in communication strategies are: (1) Communicators, who are actors in carrying out communication strategies. (2) Communication Message, is a message with a certain purpose, this goal is the determinant in choosing a communication strategy to be used later. (3) Communication Media. Communication media is no longer limited to mass media which has several characteristics of their respective mass media. The presence of the internet as a communication medium has given birth to various new modern communication media. (4) Target audience. In a communication strategy, identifying the target audience is an important thing that communicators must do. The identification of the target audience is adjusted to the purpose of communication. (5) Effects/Influences. Effect is the difference between what the recipient thinks, feels and does before and after receiving the message. The influence can occur on a person's knowledge, attitude, and behaviour. Therefore, influence can also be interpreted as a change or strengthening of beliefs in a person's knowledge, attitudes, and actions as a result of receiving messages.

This study aims to identify and analyze effective political communication strategies in reaching Generation Z voters in the digital era, as well as understand their perceptions of these strategies. The results of this research are expected to provide insights for politicians, political marketers, and researchers regarding effective ways to communicate with Generation Z. In addition, this research can also be a reference for the development of adaptive and responsive political communication strategies. In addition, this research can also be a reference for the development of political communication strategies that are adaptive and responsive to technological developments and the behaviour of young voters.

Research Method

This research uses a qualitative methodology that focuses on a deep understanding of the phenomenon, the uniqueness of the context, and the meaning of the data collected. The author conducted interviews with six informants to obtain research data. These six informants include three men and three women with a birth year range of 1999-2003. The reason for choosing the informant was because of the following considerations: they are all included in Gen Z, the second is that all informants use social media, and the third is that they are active in community organizations and student organizations. Validity testing in qualitative methods

involves various strategies to ensure the accuracy and validity of research findings. Validity testing involves internal validity which includes (i) in-depth involvement of researchers to understand the context and participants, and (ii) triangulation of data from various sources or methods to ensure consistency of findings. Furthermore, qualitative analysis methods involve steps such as data collection (observation, interviews, or document analysis to collect qualitative data), transcription and categorization (detailing the collected data and categorizing the information into themes or concepts), thematic analysis (identifying patterns, relationships, and meanings in the data to develop themes or concepts), as well as qualitative theory that integrates findings into relevant theoretical frameworks or the development of new theories.

Result and Discussion

This research was carried out through three stages, including: pre-research to the first stage, where the author conducts observations, and data analysis as the basis for research. The second stage is to find sources who are in the category of generation Z, then conduct interviews and explore their opinions on the use of the internet and social networking media as a means of conveying political messages and campaigns, the third is the final stage in the research process by closing through the preparation of reports based on the data obtained to then be processed and presented in descriptive form (Haddouche & Salomone, 2018; Munsch, 2021; Priporas et al., 2017).

Informal Profile Table

Table 1. Informant Profile

Informant Demographics	DL (Informant 1)	NY (Informant 2)	AL (Informant 3)	MM (Informant 4)	ZL (Informant 5)	CE (Informant 6)
Gender	Man	Man	Woman	Woman	Woman	Woman
Age	25	22	24	22	22	23

Source: Researcher

Based on table 1. The informants in this study were three men and three women with a birth year range of 1999-2003. With the majority of informants whom are students and a self-employed worker with the last education graduating from high school. From the informant, the author obtained analysis data that will be used in the research.

Political communication strategies in the digital era to choose generation Z

The use of the Internet is realized by election participants is very helpful in the implementation of campaigns. In its use, the internet can bring several advantages, especially more economical in terms of usage costs, energy and time when compared to conventional mass media, as well as allowing the exchange of data and other information quickly and easily to respond to the latest developments. The use of the internet or social media can also be used as a barometer of beginner voters' preferences in determining the direction of their choice through issues that are currently being discussed among Generation Z, so that politicians develop effective communication strategies to target audiences and benefit from their point of view (Langemeyer et al., 2018; Semode et al., 2017). Therefore, the use of digital media is an effective instrument for political communicators to reach and influence voters in modern political campaigns. When looking at Onong's communication strategy theory, the author managed to find several data that are similar to its components, including.

Communicators

Politicians are increasingly choosing digital media for campaigns because of the speed of access and wide reach to voters, especially Generation Z as an active community of social media users (Cohen, 2021; Dabula, 2016; Yasa, 2024). As is the case with the phenomenon in Prabowo Gibran's campaign in the 2024 Presidential Election. This phenomenon is increasingly enlivening conversations on various social media platforms, especially the TikTok platform, even one of the presidential and vice presidential pairs in 2024, Prabowo-Gibran, also carries the word "*Gemoy*" for his campaign language.

Communication Messages

Politicians often have characteristics in conveying their campaign messages, for example using adorable language with funny, cute, and current words. In addition, they also utilize engaging visual content such as emojis, memes, and various other visual content to increase interaction.

As stated by informant 5 is *"Communication using digital media is a contemporary democracy because politicians and the public can interact directly with each other, the depiction of government programs using social media is an attraction for generation Z who are generally always curious about viral things"*.

Personal branding and the use of humor are not only a communication strategy for politicians, but also a characteristic in approaching the public. For example, Politicians use the term "gemoy," which means adorable or something that looks adorable. This is done to attract the attention of the younger generation who are very influential in the political process. In addition, this strategy helps build a more

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public image of politicians, increase *engagement*, and strengthen their political branding. The use of the "gemoy" stage in contemporary politics includes the use of emojis and *memes* in politicians' social media posts, the creation of funny and entertaining TikTok videos, and *live streaming* in a relaxed and interactive style on various platforms.

Communication Media.

One of the most popular social media today is TikTok. The TikTok platform is increasingly popular and used by politicians as a means to convey political messages to the public through video uploads packaged in various creative content. TikTok has millions of active users around the world, including many of whom is Generation Z who may be difficult to reach through traditional media. TikTok's algorithm is designed to display content that users may be interested in based on their previous interactions (Cervi, 2021; Koç, 2023). This means that interesting campaign content can quickly go viral because it is constantly recommended. This social media reaches a much wider audience without requiring a large investment in paid advertising.

Next is the Instagram media platform as a political campaign medium. This media is one of the most popular media for Generation Z. This is because of the amount of interesting visual content where Instagram's focus itself is on photos and videos that are very suitable for Generation Z. In addition, Instagram is the main platform for influencer marketing, where Generation Z is a generation that is easily influenced by influencers on social media which allows campaigns to collaborate with influencers who can influence and increase awareness and trust among Generation Z. By leveraging the power of visuals, high engagement, and various creative features and advanced targeting, Instagram is a very effective platform to engage Generation Z in marketing campaigns.

In addition, there is a media platform called *Twitter*, usually used by Generation Z to find updated news, *Twitter* tends to be more updated than other social media news, then on *Twitter* also politicians use real accounts in communicating and socializing with the public, decent and responsive, provided by communicators on *the Twitter* platform Faster and authentic because it is directly from the original source

In accordance with the opinion of the informant in his interview said *"media that are diligently used among young people include Tiktok, Instagram, Twitter. Because it's easy if you want to get information related to politics that is happening."*

Target Audience

In the digital era, political communication plays an important role in dealing with generation Z voters. Generation Z is a young generation whose birth year is between the mid-1990s to the early 2010s. This generation was born in an

environment with a wide range of digital connections. Therefore, political communication strategies need to be adapted to the behaviour of this generation.

Social media platforms, online news sites, and content sharing platforms such as TikTok, Facebook, Instagram, and Youtube are the digital channels most often used by young people. Through digital media, political campaigns can easily reach larger and more diverse audiences, including those who are difficult to reach through traditional media. In addition, digital media allows for direct interaction with voters, providing space for discussion, direct feedback, and viral dissemination of messages. With analytics tools on digital media platforms, political campaigns can monitor their performance in *real-time*, allowing for tailoring communication strategies according to voter responses. This is in line with the opinion of the informant who said, *"A campaign using digital media is indeed appropriate, what more if the target is generation Z because almost all of this generation uses social media."*

Effects/Influences

The effectiveness of the use of digital media to convey digital communication is so felt, especially in generation Z, one of which is in the campaign of one of the presidential candidates in 2024 Prabowo-Gibran who has a branding persona with his creative content, in addition to the selection of Gibran raka buming raka to become a vice presidential candidate in the hope of finding votes among young people, this couple is also often trending on various media platforms, especially *social* media, the election of the word "Gemoy" and the pleasant delivery made the number 2 candidate win in one round with 58.6% of the national vote with a total of 96,214,691 voters, defeating the number 1 candidate pair Anis-Muhaimin with 24.9% with the number of voters 40,971,906 and the number 3 candidate pair Ganjar-Mahfud by 16.5% with a total of 27,040,878 voters. (Recapitulation of the KPU RI in 2024)

Through an interview with one of the informants, he said, *"digital media politicians can easily and more widely reach Gen Z who tend to like information that is fast and attractively packaged."* Currently, the use of digital media is very important because many values are more than traditional media, in addition to cutting campaign costs less, digital media also reaches more people, not only Generation Z. In the era of digitalization, people today tend to spend more time on gadgets from doing business, studying, and digging for information, transacting, socializing, and so on. This means that the use of digital media is easier to attract public attention than traditional media in the form of banners, billboards, and pulpits in public places to deliver political speeches to the public.

Obstacles to Political Communication Strategies in the Digital Era for Generation Z Voters

Generation Z voters are very active in social media, this makes there is a perceived obstacle to political communication strategies in the digital era, this is because the increasing amount of fake news information circulating on social media can make it difficult for generation Z to filter and process political news that is reliable and accurate. Not all Generation Z have enough skills in evaluating trustworthy sources of information so that they are vulnerable to information manipulation. Many of Generation Z are also worried about the privacy of their data on social media, due to the many threats of identity theft and identity theft when communicating politically on social media.

As one of the informants argued "*In the digital era, there is more and more information circulating, therefore we generation Z have obstacles in this digital era, the obstacles are excess information, a lot of fake news, and many of us generation Z have a short level of attention and get bored quickly*"

The rise of the spread of false information or often known as hoax news is an obstacle that hinders the delivery of messages to generation Z, from the results of the interview it can be seen that the spread of fake news will cause friction that becomes a conflict, for generation Z itself The conflict results in a decrease in their level of attention to the real message.

Political Communication Strategy Efforts in the Digital Era for Generation Z Voters

One form of effort to face challenges in political communication in the digital era is to ensure the accuracy of information to avoid the spread of fake news, maintain the consistency of messages on various platforms, and manage reputation Online By responding quickly to criticism and questions, using data analytics to understand audience behaviour and adjust strategies in real-time, providing authentic and transparent content to build trust with the audience. By using effective communication strategies to reach a wider audience and ensure that political messages are conveyed in a way that is most appropriate for each platform and precaution of Generation Z. As only conveyed by the informant explained that "*Steps that can be taken To overcome the challenges in political communication in the digital age are Ensuring the accuracy of information to avoid the spread of fake news, maintaining the consistency of messages across various platforms.*" This was also said by the next informant who had almost the same view, namely "*There needs to be a quick response to*

criticism and questions, Using data analytics to understand audience behaviour and adjust strategies in real-time, Providing authentic and transparent content to build trust with the audience."

Transparency and authenticity of a message in communication is the key in trying to reduce news or false information for message recipients and communicators, the consistency that must be done by communicators is a barometer for communicators to trust a message conveyed. As Generation Z, there is also a need for *checks and rechecks* in digesting information scattered in the digital world.

Conclusion

Political communication strategies that utilize social media such as TikTok, Instagram, and Facebook are very effective in attracting the interest of Generation Z. This is due to the high visual appeal and interactivity of the content on the platform, the use of simple and easy-to-understand language, and attractive personal branding that makes politicians as communicators who can convey political messages in a fun way. The spread of false information or often known as *hoax* news is an obstacle that hinders the delivery of messages to generation Z. on the other hand. Not all Generation Z have enough skills in evaluating trustworthy sources of information so that they are vulnerable to information manipulation. Efforts made to overcome these obstacles for generation Z by getting used to finding the truth of information by understanding the amount of information scattered in the digital era are very free, then as communicators ensure the accuracy of information to avoid the spread of hoaxes, maintain the consistency of messages on various platforms, manage online reputation by responding quickly to criticism and questions, use data analytics to understand audience behaviour and Adjust strategies in real-time, and provide authentic and transparent content to build trust with your audience.

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