Political Branding via Social Media: Analyzing Computer Mediated Communication of 2024 Presidential and Vice Presidential Candidates on Instagram

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Informasi Artikel	Abstract
	The digital era has significantly transformed lifestyles, particularly in Indonesia, where computer-mediated communication (CMC) now plays a prominent role in human interactions. In public spaces, individuals often prioritize their digital devices over engaging with those around them. The rise of the internet generation has integrated media and communication into essential elements of daily life. This study focuses on the analysis of hashtag trends related to general elections, such as #capres2024, #cawapres2024, and #pemilu2024, on Instagram, and their influence on user perceptions. It examines the role of hashtags in CMC practices on Instagram during electoral periods. Through the analysis of seven samples, the study reveals that while certain posts align with the electoral purposes of the hashtags, others use these hashtags for visibility without relevance to the elections. The research underscores Instagram's potential for reshaping political branding and enhancing voter engagement. It demonstrates that the strategic application of hashtags, combined with high-quality visuals and interactive features, can amplify the visibility and impact of political messaging. By integrating CMC and political branding theories, this study presents a framework for understanding how digital tools can foster a more engaged and informed electorate.

Abstrak
Era digital telah mengubah gaya hidup secara signifikan, terutama di Indonesia, di mana komunikasi yang dimediasi oleh komputer (computer-mediated communication/CMC) kini memainkan peran penting dalam interaksi manusia. Di ruang publik, individu sering kali memprioritaskan perangkat digital mereka daripada berinteraksi dengan orang-orang di sekitar mereka. Munculnya generasi internet telah mengintegrasikan media dan komunikasi ke dalam elemen-elemen penting dalam kehidupan sehari-hari. Penelitian ini berfokus pada analisis tren tagar yang berkaitan dengan pemilihan umum, seperti #capres2024, #cawapres2024, dan #pemilu2024, di Instagram, dan pengaruhnya terhadap persepsi pengguna. Penelitian ini mengkaji peran tagar dalam praktik CMC di Instagram selama periode pemilu. Melalui analisis terhadap tujuh sampel, penelitian ini mengungkapkan bahwa meskipun beberapa unggahan tertentu selaras dengan tujuan pemilihan umum dari tagar tersebut, beberapa unggahan lainnya menggunakan tagar ini untuk visibilitas tanpa relevansi dengan pemilihan umum. Penelitian ini menggarisbawahi potensi Instagram untuk membentuk kembali pencitraan politik dan meningkatkan keterlibatan pemilih. Penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa penggunaan tagar yang strategis, dikombinasikan dengan visual berkualitas tinggi dan fitur interaktif, dapat meningkatkan visibilitas dan dampak pesan politik. Dengan mengintegrasikan teori-teori CMC dan pencitraan politik, penelitian ini menyajikan kerangka kerja untuk memahami bagaimana alat digital dapat mendorong pemilih yang lebih terlibat dan terinformasi.

Kata Kunci : CMC, Pemilu, Instagram

INTRODUCTION

The digital age has profoundly altered human lifestyles, particularly in Indonesia, where computer-mediated communication has become a dominant mode of interaction. Individuals in public spaces often focus on their devices, disregarding those around them, and even family members in close proximity frequently prioritize virtual interactions over face-to-face

communication. This pervasive use of technology has reshaped the dynamics of human interaction and communication.

The rise of the internet generation has brought a transformation in media and communication, evolving it from a mere lifestyle choice into an indispensable aspect of daily life. The internet provides instant access to news, facilitates online communities, enables communication, and supports e-commerce. These conveniences have fostered an internet generation characterized by heightened intelligence, adaptability, and openness to global diversity. This generation is proficient in cross-cultural communication and adept at understanding individual personalities through remote interactions.

Additionally, the internet generation has shifted internet connectivity from a luxury to an essential need in daily life. The emergence of social media platforms as essential elements within the retail ecosystem has transformed how brands communicate, engage, and connect with their target audiences (Krisprimandoyo et al., 2024). Social media platforms serve not only for entertainment and information but also for communication and professional purposes. Social media provides avenues for direct communication with consumers, enhancing the engagement and facilitating the use of data to optimize targeted advertising campaigns (Wono et al., 2020). Platforms such as Facebook and Instagram have eliminated the necessity of in-person interactions with colleagues, enabling remote work from any location. These platforms are widely used for both personal and professional engagement.

According to Reportal data, Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube were among the most popular social media platforms in 2023. Facebook leads with 2.958 billion active users, while YouTube is projected to exceed 2.5 billion by 2023. WhatsApp and Instagram also boast a global user base of 2 billion, while WeChat ranks fifth with 1.3 billion users. TikTok, with 1.05 billion users, ranks sixth, with an average monthly usage of nearly 23 hours per user. These platforms are crucial for facilitating user interaction and engagement, with Facebook and Instagram dominating the market (Yonatan, 2023).
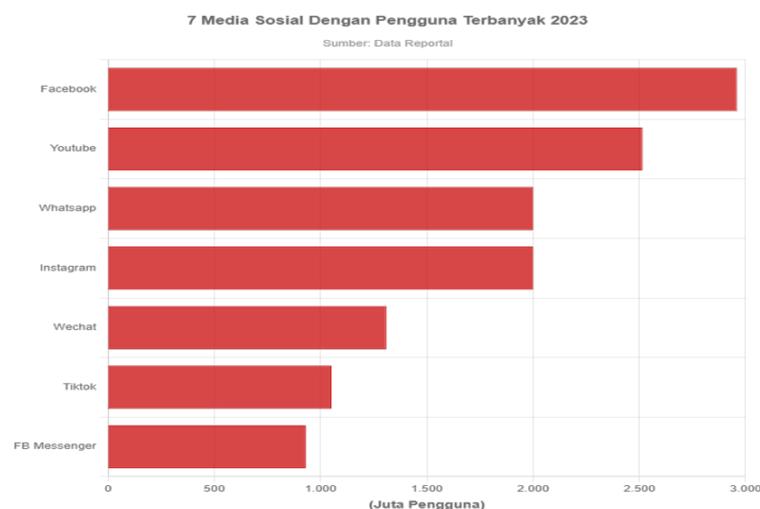

Figure 1. Social media with the most users by 2023

Instagram, as a widely used social media platform, boasts a younger and more dynamic user demographic compared to Facebook. By 2022, approximately 60% of Instagram's users fall within the 18 to 34 age range, with half of them aged 18 to 24 and the other half between 25 to 34. In contrast, Facebook's user base skews older, with only 22% aged 18 to 24 and 21% aged 25 to 34. Additionally, Instagram draws a notable proportion of users aged 35 to 44, contributing to its broader demographic appeal (Taylor, 2023).
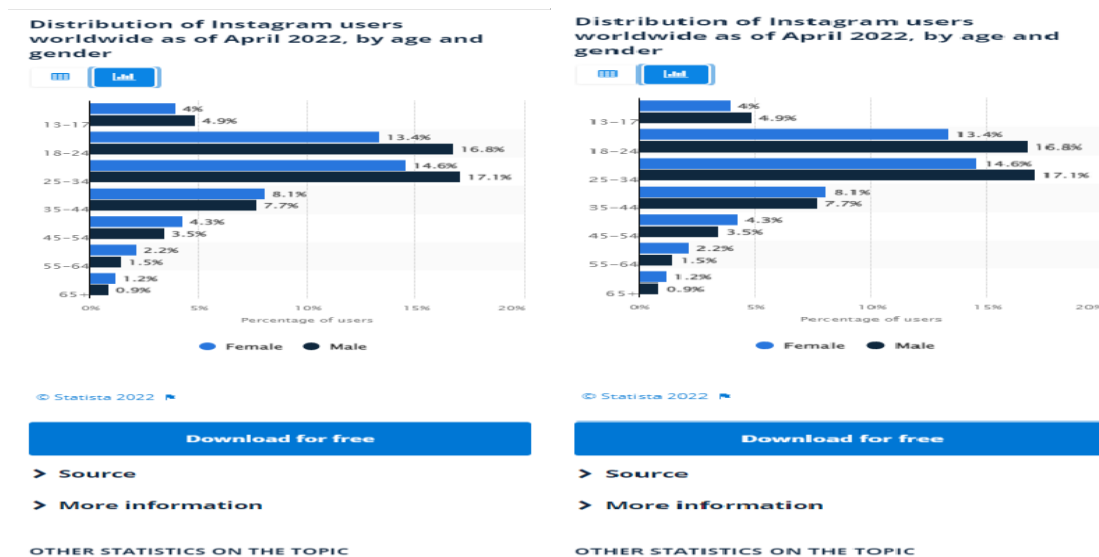
Figure 2. Age Demographic Statistics of Instagram (left) and Facebook (right) Users in 2022

According to a WeAreSocial survey, Instagram users in Indonesia are considered more prominent than Facebook users. In 2018, Facebook had a user base of 41%, while Instagram accounted for 38%. By 2019, Facebook users grew by 81%, while Instagram users saw a more than 100% increase (Connexindo, 2019). This substantial growth in Instagram's user base has attracted researchers to study this platform.

Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) is a modern field that leverages computers to facilitate communication on social media platforms. Since its inception in 1987, CMC has enabled individuals to interact and build connections without constraints of space, time, or distance. CMC's versatility allows users to perform tasks from any location and at any time, provided they have access to the necessary devices. This communication model also empowers users to engage with topics of their choosing, enhancing their overall social media experience.

Instagram, a leading social media platform, utilises hashtags to categorise content within posts. Hashtags (#) are frequently employed by content creators to facilitate easier navigation of information for users. Instagram enables individuals to share photos, videos, and live streams, allowing for the broad dissemination of information across numerous accounts.

Research by Cahyono and Zappavigna on Twitter, as well as Wikstrom's study on hashtags, demonstrates the role of hashtags in content categorisation and organisation. Wikstrom found that hashtags function as tools for expressing human experiences, indicating interpersonal relationships, and structuring textual content. Zappavigna's research explored the ironic use of hashtags and their application in marketing. The hashtag symbol (#) continues to serve its intended purpose, as demonstrated through examples from Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook. Hashtags not only categorise content but also fulfil various other functions while maintaining their original intent (Cahyono, 2021).

This hashtag trend has become particularly noticeable as the 2024 political year approaches. Recent posts frequently include hashtags such as #capres2024, #cawapres2024, and #pemilu2024. Additionally, many other hashtags featuring the names of presidential and vice-presidential candidates, such as #prabowogibran, #aniesamin, and #ganjarmachfud, are commonly seen across social media platforms.

Figure 3. Images with the hashtags #pemilu #pemilu2024 #capres #capres2024

In Figure 3, graphics and hashtags appear to be interrelated as they both address the topic of elections and the names of presidential and vice-presidential candidates for the upcoming 2024 election. The use of hashtags enables Instagram users to more easily locate election-related information on social media platforms.

Figure 4. Images with the hashtags #pemilu2024 and #capres2024 featuring images of presidential and vice presidential candidates

Figure 4 demonstrates the relationship between images and hashtags. The image in the post highlights a significant initiative related to the forthcoming economic policy, while the corresponding hashtag pertains to the topic by continuing to reference the context of the election.

Figure 5. Depicts a post of a meatball bowl with the hashtag of the name of one of the presidential and vice-presidential candidates

Figure 5 shows an individual enjoying a bowl of meatballs. The content creator of this post included hashtags with the names of the presidential and vice-presidential candidates, though the content itself is unrelated. The creator claims that the meatball seller is a favorite of one of the vice-presidential candidates. Recently, several other accounts have posted videos using the hashtag #capres2024, despite having no connection to the general election. Consequently, this content may appear to viewers following the hashtag, even though it is entirely irrelevant.

Figure 6. An image showing a wedding video with the hashtag #capres2024
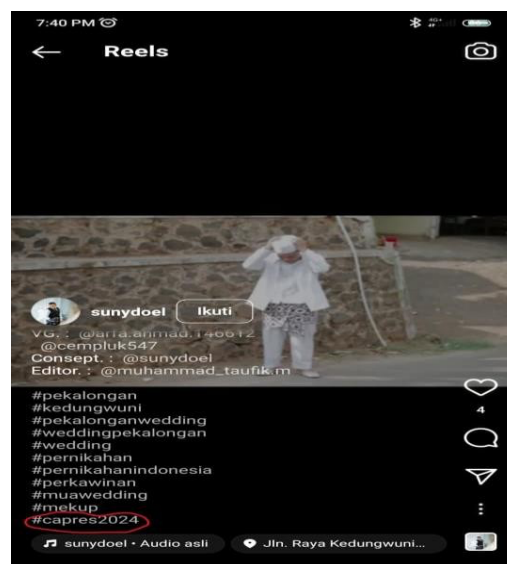
Figure 6 presents a wedding video from an account specializing in wedding photography services. The content creator used the hashtag #capres2024 in the video, despite no apparent connection between the hashtag and the video's context.
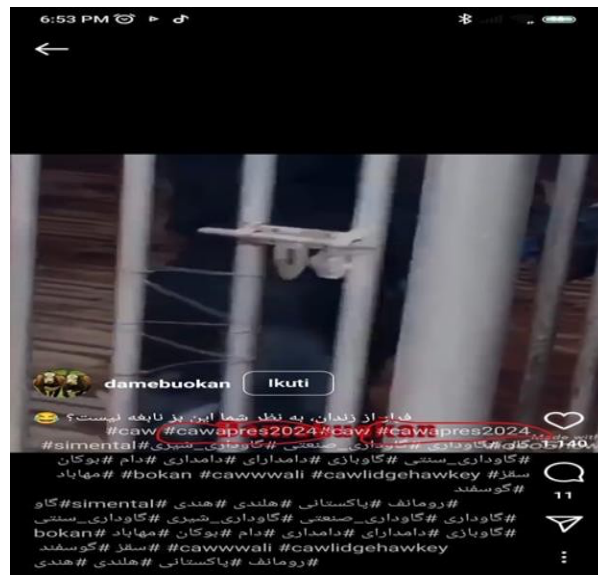

Figure 7. Image with video snippet with hashtag #cawapres2024

Figure 7 features a humorous video showing a goat independently opening its cage, which was posted by a foreign user. The video includes the hashtag #cawapres2024, despite having no connection to the election or the video's content. This hashtag enables some Indonesian users to access the video as well. Trending hashtags in CMC make it easier for users to find popular topics that align with their interests. However, some content creators may intentionally use unrelated hashtags, such as #pemilu2024, #capres2024, and #cawapres2024, for other purposes. Further research is required to understand this phenomenon.

This study aims to analyze the trend of election-related hashtags, such as #capres2024, #cawapres2024, and #pemilu2024, on Instagram and their impact on user perceptions. Additionally, it seeks to explain the role of these election hashtags within the context of CMC practices on Instagram. This study examines the influence of hashtags on political messaging and communication strategies during Indonesia's 2024 election year. By analyzing hashtag patterns on social media platforms like Instagram, the researcher observes news trends and evaluates computer-mediated communication (CMC) techniques. The objective of this research is to enhance understanding of social media's role in shaping political perceptions, offer valuable insights for professionals in politics and communication, and lay the groundwork for effective political communication strategies in the digital era.

METHOD

This study adopts qualitative research as a fundamental and realistic method essential for comprehensively understanding natural phenomena and observable symptoms, as emphasized by (Batubara, 2017). Through this approach, the research focuses on political branding via social media, specifically examining Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) related to presidential and vice-presidential candidates in Indonesia's 2024 election on Instagram. Using CMC, which involves communication through internet-connected devices, the research analyzes interactions on Instagram involving election-related hashtags. To structure the study, the post-positivist paradigm is employed, building on the works of Adian and Batubara, who emphasize realism and objectivity in research. This paradigm expands beyond traditional positivist approaches, providing deeper insights for stakeholders and policymakers by exploring the dynamics of hashtags in shaping election-related interactions on Instagram. The research examines

communication networks on the platform, focusing on key actors such as the Ministry of Communication and Information and the KPU, who monitor election-related interactions. Data is collected through primary sources, such as posts and hashtags, and secondary sources like user information, with methods including observation, literature review, and in-depth interviews. The study uses both quantitative and qualitative data to analyze communication network structures, centrality, and the role of actors in election-related hashtag interactions. Data analysis is conducted through qualitative methods and CMC to investigate how these networks function and how hashtags influence communication. To ensure the accuracy and validity of the research, reliability tests, confirmatory tests, and triangulation are employed, including techniques such as long-term observation, peer discussions, and member checking (Raphael, 2019). By applying this rigorous methodological framework, the study offers valuable insights into the role of hashtags and CMC in political communication and election monitoring, providing comprehensive recommendations for stakeholders.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This research explores the role of Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) through Instagram in political branding during the 2024 presidential election in Indonesia, revealing key trends and insights. The study confirms that hashtags such as #capres2024, #cawapres2024, and #pemilu2024 play a crucial role in shaping political discourse and engagement on social media. Hashtags not only categorize content but also facilitate broader discussions and interactions among users. CMC enables remote interaction through computer-based platforms, providing opportunities for communication without the need for face-to-face meetings. This democratizes access to communication, allowing less influential individuals to interact with more dominant groups. CMC enhances communication efficiency and accessibility.

The study found that younger Instagram demographics are particularly active in political discussions, using hashtags to express support, dissent, and rallying points for candidates. This aligns with demographic trends showing Instagram's younger user base compared to other platforms, such as Facebook. The active participation of young voters through Instagram indicates that digital platforms are becoming essential tools for political branding and campaigning.

CMC is the exchange of information between physically or temporally separated individuals. This communication method is categorized into three segments: highly interactive, multidirectional, and both synchronous and asynchronous communication. Highly interactive CMC systems provide a dynamic blend of written communication and real-time interaction, while multidirectional communication allows for multiple-way exchanges, often within group settings. Synchronous communication occurs in real-time, while asynchronous communication allows for delayed responses, both of which are critical in online environments.

Instagram's platform exemplifies this theoretical foundation by enabling real-time interactions through comments and likes (synchronous communication) and delayed responses through posts and stories (asynchronous communication). This flexibility enhances Instagram's effectiveness in political branding and campaign efforts, allowing continuous, meaningful interactions between candidates and voters.

In summary, younger Instagram users are more actively engaged in political discussions, utilizing hashtags to communicate their political preferences. The interactive nature of CMC makes Instagram a vital platform for political campaigns in the digital age.

Implications of Hashtag Use in Political Branding

The use of hashtags for political branding has significant implications, highlighting the dynamic intersection between communication technology, political strategy, and social behavior. Hashtags allow candidates to establish a more direct and personal connection with voters through Computer Mediated Communication (CMC), facilitating immediate feedback and interaction. This enables campaigns to gauge public sentiment and adjust strategies accordingly.

Yuran, Hague, and Harrop emphasize the role of branding in politics, drawing parallels to branding in consumer markets but note the lack of empirical studies on the definition of effective

political branding. They argue that demographic factors, such as education, socioeconomic status, race, gender, and age, play a crucial role in influencing election outcomes, highlighting the need for further research into the complexities of political branding (Gangloff & Yuran, 2020).

Scammell, Nielsen, and others have contributed to the understanding of political branding, noting its importance in communication, management, and political science. Nielsen defines political branding as a unique expression that distinguishes political entities, while Scammell stresses the significance of the political image in branding. This approach challenges traditional judgments that prioritize style over substance, illustrating the complexity of political marketing (Winther Nielsen, 2017).

Over the past two decades, political branding has evolved into a distinct field within political marketing. Research has expanded, categorizing political parties, candidates, and movements as "political brands," with studies now examining how these brands are positioned and perceived by citizens. Despite this progress, Winther Nielsen and Pich & Newman argue that there are still gaps in understanding non-traditional politics and alternative political brands, with limited frameworks to assess political brand identity and image (Pich, C. & Newman, 2020).

The strategic use of hashtags has led to the formation of virtual communities around political candidates, enhancing their visibility and accessibility. This reflects the democratizing potential of social media, providing a platform for voices often marginalized by traditional media. CMC facilitates interactions among users with shared interests, supporting democratic practices such as debate and deliberation on political issues, and promoting more inclusive democratic processes.

Since its introduction by Twitter in 2007, the hashtag has become a critical tool for organizing and amplifying messages on social media. As Rauschnabel notes, users are motivated by various factors, including entertainment, organizing, and reaching wider audiences. These motivations align with the goals of political campaigns, which aim to engage and mobilize voters through resonant and targeted messaging.

In conclusion, the strategic use of hashtags and interactive content significantly increases the visibility and engagement of political candidates. Campaigns should focus on creating relatable content for younger demographics, who are more active on platforms like Instagram. By analyzing interaction patterns and the content that drives engagement, campaigns can refine their strategies, leading to more effective voter mobilization and support.

This study identified data in the form of posts from various Instagram accounts. These accounts featured content containing election-related hashtags, such as #capres2024, #cawapres2024, and #pemilu2024. These hashtags were used to categorize and engage with discussions surrounding the 2024 presidential election.

Figure 8. Summary of Content

The image in question is a screenshot of an Instagram Reels post featuring a predominantly black background with yellow and white text. The text includes the phrases "SPEAKER H4M45" and "4bu Ub4id4h," while engagement metrics show 3,603 likes and 73 comments. A message, dated "13 November 2023" and attributed to "ABU UBAIDA," conveys a religious and motivational tone, inviting viewers to widely share the post. Several hashtags, such as #pemilu2024, #abubaidasquad, #abuuabidah, and #taufanaalqsa, accompany the post.

Hashtag-Based Analysis:
1. #pemilu2024: Although primarily associated with the 2024 General Election, the post's content does not seem to directly relate to electoral candidates or campaigns. Its inclusion may aim to broaden reach by attracting those interested in election-related content.
2. #capres2024 and #cawapres2024: These election-specific hashtags, absent from the post, would not align with the non-political nature of the content.

CMC Analysis
Using Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) analysis, the following insights are drawn:
1. Engagement: The post demonstrates significant user engagement, suggesting it resonates well with its intended audience.
2. Message Clarity: The religious and motivational message is clearly conveyed, with an effective call to action encouraging sharing.
3. Audience Targeting: The use of hashtags, including #pemilu2024, reflects an attempt to reach a broad audience, although the primary focus is on religion and community.
4. Hashtag Strategy: While the use of #pemilu2024 extends the post's reach, its relevance to the actual content is limited, highlighting the importance of aligning hashtags with the post's message.

This Instagram post effectively communicates religious and motivational content, achieving substantial engagement. However, the inclusion of hashtags like #pemilu2024 seems to be a broader outreach tactic rather than content-relevant. For optimal CMC strategy, closer alignment between hashtags and content would enhance clarity and relevance, thereby increasing communication effectiveness.

Figure 9. Summary of Content

The visual analysis centers on an Instagram post from the account 'jamiladindahawk,' featuring a cartoon-like image of an individual looking through binoculars. The post promotes

peaceful elections and discourages political polarization by referencing "radicalism." The text overlay reads, "Elections have differences in political parties and presidential candidates, but these differences should not be exaggerated for a safe and peaceful election," attributed to Kombes Pol Andhika Wisnu, Dirintelkam Polda North Sulawesi. The post includes several hashtags, such as #Jokowinomics, #PemiluSerentak2024, #Pemilu2024, #TemanPemilih, #Pilpres2024, #KPU, and #Capres2024.

Hashtag-Based Analysis
1. #capres2024: Relevant as it addresses the broader election context, promoting peace without endorsing a specific candidate.
2. #cawapres2024: Not included, appropriately, since the content does not mention vice-presidential candidates.
3. #pemilu2024: Appropriately used, as the post directly encourages peaceful participation in the 2024 election.

CMC Analysis
1. Engagement: The post has minimal engagement, with only one like, suggesting limited visibility. The use of multiple hashtags can enhance reach over time.
2. Message Clarity: The message promotes peaceful elections, clearly advocating for unity and reducing political tensions.
3. Audience Targeting: The hashtags target a broad election-related audience, from voters to policymakers, by addressing both general election issues and specific topics like policies.
4. Hashtag Strategy: The use of election-related hashtags (#Capres2024, #Pemilu2024) aligns with the post's content and expands its reach, while additional hashtags like #Jokowinomics address specific policy discussions.

The image and text effectively communicate a call for peaceful elections, using hashtags such as #Capres2024 and #Pemilu2024 to maintain relevance and broaden visibility among those interested in Indonesia's 2024 elections. The post's CMC strategy ensures clarity, relevance, and strategic targeting of diverse election stakeholders, supporting the promotion of a peaceful electoral process.

Instagram Post Analysis Based on Hashtags and Content
This analysis evaluates several Instagram posts, focusing on their associated hashtags, relevance, and engagement levels. The primary objective was to assess the alignment between the hashtags and post content, as well as the clarity of the message conveyed. The posts analyzed include:

1. Religious and motivational content
2. Factory sales promotions
3. Campaigns promoting peaceful elections
4. Viral trader promotions
5. Announcements of political candidates
6. Posts supporting Ganjar Pranowo
7. Anti-misinformation campaigns

The study provides insight into the effectiveness of hashtag usage in enhancing engagement and message coherence across diverse types of content.

Key Findings
1. Hashtag Relevance and Strategy: Posts directly related to the election, such as those promoting candidates or addressing misinformation, effectively utilized relevant hashtags, exemplified by content like "Candidate Announcement" and "Promoting Ganjar Pranowo."

However, some posts, including "Plant Sales Promotion" and "Viral Trader Promotion," employed unrelated hashtags like #capres2024. This strategy, intended to increase visibility, risks misleading the audience.

2. Engagement Level: Posts focused on election-related content, such as the "Religion and Motivation Post" (3,603 likes) and the "Viral Trader Promotion" (1,398 likes), demonstrated higher engagement. In contrast, posts with unclear or misleading hashtag strategies, such as "Plant Sales Promotion" (3 likes) and the "Anti-Misinformation Campaign" (1 like), showed minimal engagement.
3. Clarity of Messaging: Most posts presented clear messaging aligned with their visual content, particularly those focused on the election. However, posts mixing unrelated hashtags, such as "Crop Sales Promotion" and "Viral Trader Promotion," experienced diluted messaging, reducing the effectiveness of their communication.

Hashtags And Political Branding In CMC

Research conducted by (Cahyono, 2021) underscores the importance of hashtags in organizing and categorizing content, making it easily accessible to users interested in specific topics. Our study corroborates this, demonstrating that strategically applied hashtags significantly enhance the visibility and engagement of political posts. For instance, the post titled "Candidate Announcement" effectively utilizes hashtags like #capres2024 and #pemilu2024 to categorize its content, ensuring it reaches users seeking election-related information. This targeted use of hashtags not only expands the audience but also strengthens the political brand by consistently linking the content to relevant election themes. By aligning hashtags with the content, political campaigns can effectively target their audience, enhance message clarity, and increase engagement, thereby maximizing the effectiveness of their digital communication strategies.

Increasing Voter Engagement

Visual Content and Messaging

High-quality visual content plays a significant role in voter engagement on Instagram. Given the platform's emphasis on visuals, and it is crucial in political branding for creating a memorable identity. Posts like "Promoting Ganjar Pranowo" and "Candidate Announcement" effectively used visually appealing photos, infographics, and videos to highlight the candidate's personality, achievements, and campaign promises, resulting in higher engagement. The practical takeaway is that political campaigns should invest in professional photography and videography to enhance the candidate's image and improve message delivery. High-quality visuals not only capture attention but also make campaigns more engaging and effective.

Interactive Features and Real-Time Feedback

Instagram's interactive features, such as comments and likes, provide real-time feedback, crucial for gauging public sentiment (Effendy & Keitaro, 2022). Posts like "Religion and Motivation Post" (3,603 likes) and "Viral Trader Promotion" (1,398 likes) illustrate the dynamic nature of such engagement. Political campaigns can benefit by responding to comments, conducting live Q&A sessions, and using Instagram Stories and Reels to provide updates, thereby fostering voter participation and enhancing campaign effectiveness.

Strategic Use of Hashtags

Relevance and Targeting

Strategic hashtag use is essential for reaching specific audiences. Relevant hashtags like #pemilu2024, #capres2024, and #cawapres2024 ensure that posts target voters interested in election content. For example, the "Peaceful Election Promotion" effectively used relevant hashtags, aligning with its content. The practical implication for campaigns is to develop a

comprehensive hashtag strategy that includes both general election hashtags and candidate-specific tags, maximizing visibility while ensuring relevance.

Avoiding Misleading Hashtags

While hashtags can increase visibility, their misuse such as irrelevant hashtags in "Plant Sales Promotion" can dilute the message and mislead audiences. Effective communication requires hashtags that accurately reflect content. Campaigns should focus on honest and consistent hashtag use to build trust and improve campaign credibility.

Content Compatibility with Political Branding

Prabowo Subianto - Gibran Rakabuming

The Prabowo-Gibran campaign uses a well-designed political branding strategy that emphasizes their approachable image through creative elements like the "Oke Gas" dance and AI-generated visuals. This aligns with their slogan "continue," symbolizing their commitment to building on Jokowi's policies, particularly in humanitarian efforts. The use of non-election hashtags still effectively connects to their broader branding, reinforcing their image and message.

Ganjar Pranowo - Machfud MD

Ganjar Pranowo's branding emphasizes his connection to grassroots communities and MSMEs, with the slogan "the people are my master." His media-savvy approach and hands-on leadership reinforce this image. Posts related to MSMEs, even if not directly election-related, align with Ganjar's political identity, increasing engagement through the strategic use of relevant hashtags and content.

Anies Baswedan - Muhaimin

Anies Baswedan's political branding centers on education and religion, strengthened by his connection to Islamic boarding schools and religious leaders. His support for Palestinian independence enhances his religious credibility. While some link Anies' religious branding to radicalism, he actively distances himself from such associations, demonstrating the complexities of political messaging when it involves sensitive topics like religion.

In summary, voter engagement on Instagram is significantly influenced by high-quality visuals, interactive content, and strategic hashtag use. Aligning content with political branding, while ensuring relevance and clarity in messaging, helps campaigns maximize their impact and appeal to voters across diverse segments.

Recommendations For Policy Making

Policymakers play a pivotal role in promoting the ethical use of social media in political communication. The following recommendations aim to enhance the effectiveness and integrity of political branding on platforms such as Instagram, drawing from insights in Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) and political branding theory.

Developing Ethical Guidelines

Policymakers should implement comprehensive guidelines focusing on transparency, honesty, and accountability in social media communication. Given the rapid spread of information on platforms like Instagram, these standards are crucial to maintaining the integrity of political discourse. Political campaigns must accurately represent their content, disclose paid sponsorships, and avoid misleading practices. Ethical guidelines should also mandate clear disclosure of sponsored content and influencer partnerships to foster trust. Furthermore, policies should prohibit the use of automated bots and fake accounts to artificially inflate engagement.

Strategic hashtag use can greatly influence voter engagement. However, the misuse of hashtags can mislead audiences, undermining campaign credibility. Policymakers should regulate

hashtag use to ensure alignment with post content. Posts must employ relevant hashtags that directly relate to the subject matter, preventing misinformation and promoting transparency.

Promoting Digital Literacy

Policymakers should advocate for digital literacy programs that help voters critically assess social media content. A national digital literacy campaign can equip voters with the tools to evaluate information, understand algorithms, and recognize misinformation. These programs, including workshops and online courses, should teach voters how to distinguish credible sources and verify information before sharing, thereby enhancing the overall quality of political discourse.

Policymakers should collaborate with schools, colleges, and universities to incorporate digital literacy into curricula. By integrating digital literacy into subjects like citizenship and media studies, educational institutions can provide young voters with the skills to critically evaluate social media content and engage responsibly with political information.

Promoting Transparency in Political Advertising

Transparency in political advertising is vital for maintaining electoral trust. Policymakers must enforce clear labelling of political ads, requiring the disclosure of funding sources to help voters understand the origin and intent of the content. Political advertisements should include disclaimers that identify who funded the ad and whether it was a paid promotion.

Independent regulatory bodies should be established to oversee political advertising on social media platforms. These bodies would monitor content to prevent misinformation and ensure adherence to ethical standards. Regular audits and a reporting platform for voters to flag misleading ads would further promote accountability in political communications.

CONCLUSIONS

The application of Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) and political branding theory in analyzing Instagram use during the 2024 Indonesian presidential election provides significant insights into the dynamics of digital political communication. This section synthesizes key findings, emphasizing the importance of strategic social media use in modern political campaigns. The study demonstrates Instagram's transformative role as a platform for political branding and voter engagement. Through the strategic use of hashtags, high-quality visuals, and interactive features, political messages gain increased visibility and impact. For instance, posts such as "Posting Religion and Motivation" and "Promoting Ganjar Pranowo" showed high voter engagement, indicating that Instagram facilitates active political conversations. Furthermore, the research stresses the necessity of aligning hashtags with content for clearer messaging and audience trust. Posts with relevant hashtags, such as "Candidate Announcement" and "Peaceful Election Promotion," achieved higher engagement compared to those with unrelated hashtags, underscoring the importance of a coherent hashtag strategy in amplifying political content.

SUGGESTIONS

Future research should incorporate longitudinal studies to monitor changes in voter engagement and perceptions over time, offering a deeper understanding of the long-term effects of digital political communication strategies. Additionally, comparing engagement metrics, audience demographics, and content effectiveness across platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram could reveal platform-specific best practices. Such a comparative analysis would help in shaping targeted communication strategies that leverage the distinctive features of each social media platform.

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