

## Literature Review on Political Communication Practices in the Digital Age

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### Abstract

*New media and technology have changed interpersonal interactions, communication patterns, and even socio-political discussions. Not only bringing change, in its development technological advances, especially digital media, also play an important role in democratic activities and political communication. By using a simple literature review, this article will attempt to present the development of political communication practices on social media and their implications for the dynamics of political communication. The findings show that the use of social media in political communication activities is not a new trend and its significance continues to increase over time. In addition, the use of social media in political communication has proven to be successful in providing benefits for both political actors and the public. However, the use of social media in political communication also presents other concerns, namely the phenomenon of black campaigns, the spread of hoaxes, hate speech, to polarization that require special attention and handling.*

### Keywords

literature review; media digital; political communication; social media



### I. Introduction

Advances in technology and digital media in recent years have had a huge impact on changing the way individuals communicate so that they are connected to one another (Moqbel et al., 2013). New media and technology have changed interpersonal interactions, communication patterns, and even socio-political discussions (Ahmad et al., 2019). However, the development of advances in digital media technology not only brings changes in interaction, but also plays an important role in democratic activities and political communication. Political communication itself includes communication activities of citizens, political figures, community individuals, government institutions, media, political campaigns, advocacy groups, and social movements. Political communication can be defined as a complex communicative activity in which language and symbols, carried out or used by leaders, media, citizens, and citizen groups, to have an effect on both individuals and/or society, and provide outcomes related to public policy nation, state, or community (Perloff, 2017). Furthermore (Perloff, 2017) states that the effects of political communication can occur at the micro level, namely influencing individual thoughts, candidate judgments, feelings, attitudes, and behavior, for example in the context of political advertisements and political campaigns or presidential debates that try to change attitudes or persuade. In addition to the micro level, political communication also works at the macro level, which provides broad effects based on public opinion, institutional change, political activism, and public regulation. Communication is the process of delivering messages by someone to other people to tell, change attitudes, opinions or behavior either directly orally or indirectly through the media. In this communication

requires a reciprocal relationship between the delivery of messages and recipients namely communicators and communicants (Hasbullah, et al: 2018).

The existence of digital media in the practice or activity of political communication itself is something that cannot be avoided (Munzir, 2019). (Zuniga & Chen, 2019) mentioned that digital media has become an inseparable part of the democratic and political life of citizens, in line with the massive and rapid growth of digital media users themselves. (O'Brien, 2021) explain that another important consideration when examining how technology or digital media is used by political actors or civil society is the issue of locality; The Internet has become increasingly localized and has become an integral part of everyday life. Data from DataReportal by (Kemp, 2022) noted that as of January 2022 alone, the total internet users in the world reached 4.95 billion internet users or an increase of four percent from 4.76 billion compared to January 2021. The high number of users and the massive development of media make digital media one of the things that must be adapted in political communication activities.

Compared to the era before the use of digital media was widely used, the process of political communication in the digital media era shows very far developments and differences. This difference can be seen from how digital media can provide easy access to information to the public to facilitate political discussion and political participation (Ahmad et al., 2019). The use of technology and digital media can help facilitate democratic activities and the practice of political communication because they can reach a wider, precise, and fast target audience (Waluyo, 2019). The same is said (O'Brien, 2021) in his research which shows that technology and digital media have enabled the rapid dissemination of information through and at the same time reaching new audiences.

The many variations of technology and its convenience make digital media superior because it can offer a new alternative or become a medium for cheap but effective and massive political communication. The use of digital media for political communication or political activity has been carried out in various countries and its significance is increasingly massive (Zuniga & Chen, 2019). The development of the use of digital media and its benefits can be seen from the mid-1990s where digital media platforms for new political communication activities quickly developed through sites with interactive features, discussion pages, blogs, online fundraising platforms, volunteer recruitment sites, and meetings. (Owen, 2018). This involves the process of new ways of delivering agendas or information for general political interests to the public. Through online political campaigns, political candidates and voters can publicize their ambitions and political agendas, as well as seek support from potential voters (Apuke, 2018).

Like in America, when Tim Obama took advantage of digital media features to create networking, collaboration, and the potential for developing social media communities as a political movement (Owen, 2018). In this way, the Obama Team was able to successfully use digital media, particularly social media, to collect data on political preferences, and create voter profiles to pursue specific groups, such as young professional voters, with customized messages. Then in Japan, China, and Taiwan, several political actors actively communicate their political policies and political activities through political chord private social media accounts and this implementation has proven to be successful in increasing public interaction, creating a discussion space for the public regarding the activities and policies taken by political actors. , and make the public more active or often discuss politics (Su & Xiao, 2022). In addition, in Indonesia, two presidential candidates, namely Prabowo and Joko Widodo in the 2014 Indonesian presidential election, actively used social media Facebook and created a verified personal page as a medium for

introducing themselves, political promises, and programs while enhancing their image to the public.(Juditha, 2015).

The cases above show that through online political campaigns, political candidates and voters can interact reciprocally to publicize their ambitions and political agendas, as well as seek support from potential voters. (Apuke, 2018). Digital media has become a medium that offers voters, political candidates and parties to communicate directly through a space that allows them to express their political activity preferences. (Apuke, 2018). This proves that the effectiveness of digital media has had active implications in political communication, especially in conveying political messages from the bottom up and vice versa. (Setiawan et al., 2021). Studies (Oparaugo, 2021) also added that digital media has played an important role in mediating institutions and political activities thanks to advances in information and communication technology. Not only helping in terms of political communication actors themselves, technology and digital media also help the public in terms of being a means to participate, be it political participation, policy, or social participation. (Suharyanto, 2016). The development of digital media has proven to be able to facilitate dramatic changes in terms of public access to government information and documents, methods and content of political campaigns, attitudes and preferences of political voters, activists' efforts in disseminating political campaign messages, as well as topics or discussions of public discourse itself.

Even with all the conveniences promised by digital media, including the effectiveness of social media in political communication activities, this does not make digital media or social media a problem-free information technology system. Social media also has a negative impact because it also opens up opportunities for anti-social actions and new types of crime (Siregar, 2020). The changes in the media ecosystem and its evolution over the past few years have confirmed the popularity of its use by various actors in political communication activities, although along with its popularity, actors and activists are also concerned about the devaluation of political information, leading to the loss of democratic qualities. (Siregar, 2020). The case of the United States election in 2016 and several European countries show that digital media, especially social media, has proven to be the largest source of information for billions of public users, although at the same time it poses a threat to disinformation and manipulates public opinion itself. (Ahmad et al., 2019).

By reviewing the above, this article will discuss political communication in the digital media era by examining how digital information mainstreaming practices can provide political actors with opportunities and affordability of new styles of political communication. By using a simple literature review, this article will attempt to present the development of political communication practices on social media and their implications for the dynamics of political communication. Thus, this article is expected to provide additional information or broader insights regarding the development of political communication practices through digital media, including in terms of benefits and disadvantages.

## **II. Research Method**

This research was carried out using the literature review method. The literature review is made to provide a general description of the sources being researched on certain topics(Marzali, 2016). In this study, the method used is a literature review with a simple narrative literature review. A simple literature review was chosen because of its characteristics, namely (1) The writing was made with the aim of providing an overview of

the topics from previous journals; (2) the approach and selection of the studied studies are not strict; (3) There is no critical appraisal (critical appraisal); (4) No risk assessment (risk of bias); and (5) the author's high level of subjectivity (Baumeister, 2013). The method is chosen to describe the topic or representative literature based on research that has been carried out. The literature review was carried out by following the stages of writing by (Nakano & Muniz, 2018) which includes determining the theme, collecting articles, summarizing the article, reviewing the content and depth of the article and then writing a literature review.

The article collection process includes literature search and evaluation conducted through several journal databases, namely Taylor & Francis, Sage Journal, IJMRE Journal, and Garuda. The search for articles is then carried out using the keywords "digital media", and "political communication" listed in the keywords, abstracts, and/or titles of journal articles. The search was continued by using a time limit for article publication, namely for the last five years, both written in English and Indonesian, are indexed journal articles and have gone through a peer review process, and are journal articles that are open access or can be accessed by everyone.

### **III. Result and Discussion**

#### **3.1 Political Communication and Social Media**

Social media has emerged as an important medium used by political actors to amplify their influence (Owen, 2018). Political actors especially leaders have used social media effectively to achieve political goals while continuously pushing the boundaries of discursive action to extreme modes. The use of social media in political communication activities is partly due to the characteristics of social media which have low limits and are easy to use, offering greater opportunities for political activities and reaching the masses. (Owen, 2018). Furthermore (Owen, 2018) in his research states that social media provides centralized access to information that makes it easier for the public or online audiences to monitor politics. Not only that, the increasing number of interactions in terms of discussion and sharing of information on their networks related to political activities also continues to grow along with the number of social media users themselves.

The use of social media in political communication activities such as election campaigns is not a new trend even though its significance continues to increase over time (Ahmad et al., 2019). Literature review shows that the social media commonly used for political communication activities is Twitter (Fujiwara et al., 2020; Mustika, 2019; Paul et al., 2021), Facebook (Ahmad et al., 2019; Ndlela & Mano, 2020), Blog (Oparaugo, 2021), and Youtube (Apuke, 2018; Oparaugo, 2021). In line with this, data from We Are Social shows the high number of social media users, one of which underlies the use of social media as a medium of political communication. We Are Social stated that as of January 2022, there were around 4.62 billion social media users spread throughout the world. This figure shows that around 58.4 percent of the total world population uses social media (Kemp, 2022). Referring to data from We Are Social that the total increase in the number of social media users from 2021 to 2022 is 424 million new users or it can be concluded that there is an increase of more than 10 percent compared to the number of social media users last year. (Kemp, 2022).

The use of social media in political communication activities can be seen from two sides, namely from the side of political actors and from the side of the public or audience. In terms of political actors, social media has become a place for them to carry out their political communication with the public (Setiawan et al., 2021), including establishing

communication, disseminating political information to the public, and conducting two-way interactions with the public (Munzir, 2019). Various policies, policy proposals, statements, and other comments related to political issues, can be done through social media by providing easy access and savings in terms of political communication costs. (Setiawan et al., 2021). Other impacts of the use of social media in political communication activities include 1) Opportunities to communicate more both in terms of giving ideas, information, and opinions; 2) Opening up new opportunities to communicate directly without intermediaries; 3) Increase the speed of information and communication; 4) Open up opportunities to attract public attention efficiently and effectively; (5) Expanding the reach of supporters, especially young people who are not touched by the mainstream media; and 6) Enable political actors and political organizations to get faster data or information related to public opinion on parties, organizations, or public policies (Setiawan et al., 2021). As for the public or audience, social media is used as a centralized medium to obtain political information and becomes a new medium for expressing political participation, for example providing support, showing dislike, and so on. (Munzir, 2019).

The role of social media in political communication activities began in 2008 during the US Presidential election. Political actor Barack Obama and his campaign team carried out a campaign revolution by analyzing social media movements and mobilizing grassroots movements through digital or social media. (Owen, 2018). The breakthrough success of Barack Obama's digital campaign shows that the use of online news in 2008 increased by 28 percent compared to 2006 or increased to 37 percent in 2008 from 9 percent in 2006. (Owen, 2018). Obama's success in his digital campaign has also been followed by other political actors in various parts of the world to also use social media as a medium for his campaign.

In the presidential election in Nigeria, presidential candidate Goodluck Ebele Jonathan used Facebook as a campaign tool even though at that time Facebook was not a popular campaign media in Nigeria. (Oparaugo, 2021). In addition, in research (Paul et al., 2021) shows how political actors and political parties use social media Twitter to encourage public sentiment and effectively function in the 17th Lok Sabha Election or also known as the Indian general election in 2019. The results of research from (Ahmad et al., 2019) shows in the general election in Nigeria, the use of social media Facebook and Twitter managed to reach young prospective voters who actively choose to use social media and therefore feel very aware of political issues in Nigeria.

Another practice of successful use of social media Twitter is also shown from the results of research by (Fujiwara et al., 2020) who noted that Twitter increased the Democratic party's vote share in the 2016 US Presidential election. Trump's political awakening and success was a major shock to the United States and its political system. Trump political actors actively use Twitter and share their tweets regarding political views or campaign promises. Although the actual research results show that Twitter has no influence or participant effect, Twitter actively functions to spread sentiment or information about Trump to then increase popularity or public information related to Trump and in turn has persuaded voters with weaker priorities to vote for Trump in the election. president and increase the Democratic party's vote.

In Indonesia itself, the use of social media such as blogs has also begun to be adopted in legislative elections in 2009 (Waluyo, 2019). Furthermore (Waluyo, 2019) mentioned that this legislative election was the busiest election for campaigning through social media and it was also the first time that political actors, in this case legislative candidates, had media created and managed by their own team for campaign activities ranging from displaying self-profiles, programs, to political promises. . Another example of the use of Twitter in

political communication activities is the use of hashtags in the 2019 Indonesian presidential election.(Sujoko, 2019)in his research highlights how social movements with the hashtag #2019ChangePresident are widely used on Twitter. Furthermore, research results(Sujoko, 2019)shows that there are around 3 million more users who tweet with the hashtag #2019ChangePresident and the hashtag has managed to get exposure of 4,235,187 impressions. Although this campaign did not succeed in making a presidential change, how this hashtag can attract the attention of Twitter users, spread and discussed, including causing counter hashtags and generating offline demonstrations shows how Twitter social media can be used as propaganda, persuasion, to form opinion. public.

In the end, the use of social media in political communication activities can provide benefits both in terms of actors and audiences. Besides that,(Perloff, 2017)also mentioned that the use of social media can produce at least three effects in agenda-building activities which is one of the goals in political communication activities, namely 1) Social media can provide a pathway through which participants' agendas are built; this is because the online messages that are disseminated are spread among people who have the same thoughts or opinions thus strengthening their beliefs to be further disseminated massively; 2) Social media can exert influence through opinion leaders in a two-step flow, 3) Issues that are crowded on social media become issues or are also raised as issues by conventional media which can ultimately affect the public at large,(Perloff, 2017).

### **3.2 Implications of the Dynamics of Political Communication on Social Media**

The media provide information that is needed to be informed to the audience or the public. Those who follow the news in the media have more knowledge than those who do not. Nevertheless, (Perloff, 2017) assume that the information offered on digital media or social media still has several shortcomings such as lack of depth of information, context, and analytics, and so on so that it can lead to disinformation, misinformation, or other negative effects.

Ideology, propaganda, and persuasion are three important elements in political communication (Oparaugo, 2021). In political communication activities, propaganda is something that is commonly used to control public opinion(Apuke, 2018). Propaganda itself is an attempt by political actors to regulate the attitudes and actions of others by using a 'bias' that has been designed in such a way in their political messages to attract the emotions and/or irrationality of the public or the target audience so that later it can be in accordance with the wishes of political actors.(Oparaugo, 2021). The characteristics of social media itself, which offers the speed of information, the medium for people to share information, and so on make propaganda easy to do on social media(Apuke, 2018).

(Perloff, 2017)mentions that the media provide information that is needed to be informed to the audience or the public. Those who follow the news in the media have more knowledge than those who do not. Nevertheless,(Perloff, 2017)assume that the information offered on digital media or social media still has several shortcomings such as lack of depth of information, context, and analytics, and so on so that it can lead to disinformation, misinformation, or other negative effects. In addition, the ease of sharing information also causes the quality of the information provided to be questioned because everyone can share information freely in accordance with freedom of opinion itself.(Siregar, 2020)in his research also shows that this freedom has other negative impacts such as hate speech, fake news, misinformation and disinformation, and several other losses. Literature review also shows that even with all its benefits, the use of social media in political communication or political campaigns also has a negative impact on it.

Fake news, misinformation, and hate speech as one of the impacts of using social media in political communication also appear in Oparaugo's research.(Oparaugo, 2021)mentions that the two-way characteristics of social media allow audiences to not only receive messages or information but also become actors in creating messages or information. The open nature of social media makes the public free to write any information without any liability. This is also in line with the principle of freedom of expression in democratic activities. However, this freedom often leads to irresponsible behavior either because of the principle of anonymity, or the lack of self-control of social media users themselves. This freedom of opinion gives birth to statements that encourage, threaten, or encourage violence against certain political groups, vilify certain political groups, false information, and so on.(Oparaugo, 2021). With more and more people relying on social media as a source of news, there is concern that such content could affect audiences who are unable to distinguish truth from fact or news from propaganda.(Oparaugo, 2021). This also ultimately makes fake news, misinformation, and hate speech circulate on all social media platforms. The nature of social media that cannot be held accountable is also one of the things that lowers the credibility of information on social media compared to mainstream media.

Another negative impact of the use of social media in political communication is the ease of manipulation in search results on social media. This manipulation can be done to create trends, followers, and increase search results resulting in misinformation and fake news in the form of high popularity which is actually fake.(Metaxas & Mustafaraj, 2012). Other efforts made to form trends and increase search results or impressions are also done by using a buzzer whose purpose is to create and echo certain messages.(Mustika, 2019)in his research highlights the shift in the use of buzzers in the marketing industry to social media as a political imaging business. In his research,(Mustika, 2019)shows that political actors actively use buzzers to echo or raise certain messages or topics, namely through the production of messages with similar sentences and in large numbers, the use of hashtags, retweet activities, and so on. Buzzer itself has the characteristics of anonymity and does not involve individual identity so that accountability cannot be involved, allowing messages that are made to tend to contain negative campaigns that give rise to fake news, thought construction, message fabrication, cornering narratives, and even hate speech.(Mustika, 2019).

In Indonesia itself, the practice of using buzzers in political campaign activities has been started since 2012, namely in the election of the Governor of DKI Jakarta. Its use has become more commonplace and massive, including in the 2014 Indonesian Presidential Election, and the 2017 DKI Jakarta Governor Election(Mustika, 2019).(Siregar, 2020)in his research also highlights the same thing that the four-year political contestation (Election) in Indonesia often involves various anti-social acts and criminal acts. Furthermore(Siregar, 2020)mentioned that the phenomenon of black campaigns, the spread of hoaxes, and hate speech had become a daily routine and many appeared before the election on social media. This phenomenon is exacerbated by the low filtering of information from the side of the audience who no longer sees the source of the news and the tendency to believe in something they have believed before.

How is the negative impact of using social media in political campaigns, one of which can be seen from the existence of political polarization and the strengthening of bias due to the social media algorithm itself(Fujiwara et al., 2020). Social media with information-sorting or algorithmic capabilities can influence the type and amount of information consumed by the public(Zuniga & Chen, 2019). Social media presents the possibility of bias, homogeneous information, and lives in filter bubbles or echo chambers.

The concepts of 'filter bubble' and 'echo chamber' refer to the intellectual isolation that can occur when a website uses algorithms to selectively assume the information the user wants to see, and provides information to the user according to these assumptions.(Ndlela & Mano, 2020). This is because the media does not have the same effect on knowledge. What people know affects what they learn in the media(Perloff, 2017). The possibility of people to consume the news they want and the algorithms of social media allow people to live in filter bubbles, echo chambers, or bias due to homogeneous information. This is exacerbated by circulating false information, hate speech, and other biases that ultimately result in bias and political polarization. This political bias and polarization also appears as a negative impact in research(Sujoko, 2019)who observed how the #2019ChangePresident campaign on Twitter social media resulted in extreme polarization of the two sides of each supporter in the digital world and directly and contributed to repressive actions and intimidation as a tangible form of poor political communication built up in the 2019 Indonesian presidential election.

The phenomenon of fake news, misinformation, hate speech, to polarization as an effect of the use of social media in political communication has become a global phenomenon that occurs throughout the world. In some countries, online political campaigns in the context of general elections are colored by the spread of misinformation, uploads of hate towards one actor, narratives with character assassination and violent speech to discredit actors, to false information as a strategy to influence potential voters. Social media is openly used to discredit opponents, influence public opinion, mobilize from online to offline, to polarize(Apuke, 2018; Siregar, 2020; Zuniga & Chen, 2019). The development of digital media technology and information fragmentation have facilitated this. This creates an extreme and detrimental political communication while at the same time making elections or campaign activities no longer an exciting democratic party, but rather an arena for the spread of hatred and slander among the public so as to create polarization between the two poles that clash with each other and even in certain circumstances lead to an escalation of tensions that leads to tensions. to the disruption of state order and security(Siregar, 2020).

#### **IV. Conclusion**

Digital media has become an integral part of the political life of citizens as more and more people around the world use digital media technology for information and communication. Political communication through new media such as the internet and social media in several countries is considered one of the effective and efficient campaigns in accordance with the advantages of social media itself. Changes that occur in political communication activities through digital media bring various advantages that were not previously expected, namely in terms of speed in message distribution, number of message coverage, the ability to provide two-way interaction, and the ability to carry out political communication activities efficiently and effectively at a lower cost. inexpensive.

However, in addition to distributing informative messages, being a means of interaction and coordination, and mobilizing, digital media also presents several negative impacts, namely the lack of depth of information, context, and analytics in the information that is present on social media, facilitating the spread of misinformation either These include misinformation, disinformation, hate speech, to fake news, increasing information gaps and information bias from algorithmic social media presented so that the information received by the public is not balanced, as well as presenting political mobilization and political polarization in the real world. The absence of responsibility and credibility of



information in social media is one of the shortcomings of social media compared to mainstream media such as television or radio. Besides that,

Based on this, from a practical point of view, political actors are advised to use a combination of media, namely a combination of mainstream media and digital media in their campaign activities or political communication. Digital media can help target young prospective voters who are not touched by the mainstream media and can help speed up the spread of messages and increase interaction with potential voters. Meanwhile, the government can take responsibility for educating both political actors and political audiences to use social media wisely, including not conducting black campaigns, carrying out hate speech, spreading false information, including re-screening all information received through social media.

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