



Political Communication Strategy of Amir Hamzah and Hasanul Jihadi Pair on Social Media in Winning the 2024 Binjai City Regional Head Elections

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the political communication strategies of Amir Hamzah and Hasanul Jihadi during the 2024 Binjai mayoral election, focusing on their use of social media and the challenges faced. Using Adman Nursal's political marketing theory – Push, Pull, and Pass Marketing – and the social construction of reality theory, the research adopts a descriptive qualitative method with data from interviews and social media content analysis. The findings reveal the effective use of all three marketing strategies and show how social media content was constructed to shape public perception and political discourse.

INTRODUCTION

"Continue and Perfect" is the slogan used by the pair Amir Hamzah (Mak Amir) and Hasanul Jihadi (Bang Jiji) in the 2024 Binjai City Regional Head Election (Pilkada). This slogan was chosen as one of the markers that this pair, who are the incumbents (Amir Hamzah) will continue and perfect the development that has been carried out when he led Binjai City. Within the framework of political and democratic thought, this view emphasizes that the collective will of the people is often considered a representation of the highest authority in public decision-making (Humaizi et al., 2024). Political communication is the process of conveying information, messages, or ideas related to politics between political actors, institutions, media, and society. Viewed from a political perspective, political communication is an effort by a group of people to control or gain power. Surbakti (in Syarbaini, et al, 2021). Social media is used as a mode to broadcast political goals, besides also functioning to display an image that is liked by the public. Based on research conducted by Sunarwan & Surlia (2021), social media bridges the public to see another, more personal side of officials such as President Joko Widodo.

Another example of a politician who uses social media as a means of political communication and is considered successful is Ganjar Pranowo as Governor of Central Java. Rahmah (2021) in his research revealed that social media provides opportunities for Ganjar Pranowo to communicate with his followers and build political communication through the personal branding he has formed. Another big name who is considered to often use social media is Anies Baswedan. According to research conducted by Mukharomah and Lenggana (2024), the successful teams of Anies Baswedan and Muhaimin Iskandar used social media to gain public support. The use of social media for political interests aims to maintain power or conversely, to gain power (Susanto, 2017).

Politicians and political parties use digital platforms, artificial intelligence (AI), big data analysis, and social media to spread messages, build images, and interact with voters. This progress has an impact on the use of algorithms to adjust political messages to individual preferences and the ability to disseminate information quickly and globally. Social media then became an integral part of political communication strategies in the era of the 5.0 industrial revolution (Alam et al., 2024; Harianto et al., 2023). Reported from We Are Social, data from 2024 shows that the total population (number of residents) is 276.4 million people, with 212.9 million internet users (77% of the total population in Indonesia). Meanwhile, the number of social media users is 167 million (60.4% of the population in Indonesia). Based on these data, it is also explained that the types of social media most used in Indonesia are: WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok (We Are Social, 2024).

Judging from these data, Instagram users are 85.3% of the population and Facebook users are 81.6% of the population (Riyanto, 2021). According to Wasesa (in Zuhdi, 2020), the presence of new digital-based media makes political information not only increasingly massive, but also distributed quickly and interactively (Ritonga et al., 2024). With these characteristics, not a few

political actors in a number of countries use social media as a political campaign strategy process. New media is also considered capable of attracting young voters at a relatively low cost. Political communication in digital media is not only carried out through verbal communication, but also through sharing photos to form a political identity, without the need for detailed explanations or costly campaigns (Nofiard, 2022).

Binjai City as a growing urban city has unique demographic characteristics, including a fairly high level of internet and social media penetration. The demographic conditions and society that enjoys technological developments make researchers view that the political communication strategy of the Amir Hamzah and Hasanul Jihadi pair can be an example of how digital campaigns are implemented in cities with characteristics such as Binjai City.

Researchers assess that academic studies related to political communication at the local level, especially in cities like Binjai City, are still limited. This research can then fill this gap and provide a new perspective. This research can also examine how local issues in Binjai City are integrated into their political communication strategy, making this study more contextual and impactful. Based on the context of the problem that has been explained above, researchers are interested in exploring and analyzing more deeply the political communication strategy of the Amir Hamzah and Hasanul Jihadi pair on social media in winning the 2024 Binjai City Pilkada.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

Mulyana (2014) stated that, as with the elements of communication in general, political communication also consists of several elements, namely: political communicators, communicants, communication content (messages), communication media, communication objectives, and effects. Each element has a clear function, namely achieving the objectives of political communication. In political communication, the primary function of communication is institutionalized with the primary function of the state according to the underlying political system. As in other forms of communication, political communication takes place in a process of delivering certain messages originating from the source, as the party initiating the communication, to the audience using certain media to achieve a certain goal (Zulkarnain, 2016).

Wiebe (in Cangara, 2016: 240) stated that if commercial goods such as toothpaste can be marketed in society, why can't social ideas such as ideals, programs, and candidates proposed by parties be socialized with marketing principles, "Why can't you sell brotherhood like you sell soap?" Nursal (2004: 109) stated that instinctively, a politician wants to gain as many voters as possible, just as a marketer wants to gain as many customers as possible (Sikumbang et al; 2024).

New media is a term used for various communication technologies with digitalization and wide availability for personal use as a communication tool (McQuail, 2002). This New Media Theory was developed by Pierre Levy. New media is described as a product of communication technology that is present together with digital computers. Before the 1980s, mass media maximized the

use of print and analog models, such as newspapers, television, cinema, and radio, but now it is present in a digital form. Similar to print media and electronic media, new media also has the ability to convey information to communication targets (audiences).

Murwani (2014) in his writing revealed that President Obama's success in using social media in his 2008 US presidential election campaign inspired politicians around the world to follow in his footsteps. Politicians also face other challenges in utilizing social media to build branding, namely creating a personal image that is in accordance with public expectations (Anshari & Prastya, 2014; Ohorella et al., 2024). According to Kurniawati et.al (2023), social media managers require special skills that not everyone has. New Media as a new public space in maintaining democracy has great potential. Borrowing Habermas' opinion about public space as a space that is able to accommodate public interests, the internet is one of the most representative spaces for expressing opinions (Fauzan et al., 2023).

In the field of communication, there are two most relevant elements in this theory. First, the central assumption that people understand experiences by constructing models of the social world and how it works. Second, the emphasis on language as the most important system by which reality will be constructed. The implication is that conversation acts as an important tool for maintaining reality (Littlejohn & Foss, 2016: 1072). Thus, the theory of social construction and communication context plays a role in explaining how social reality is constructed and understood in various communication situations (Karman, 2015). On the other hand, reality in the digital era is related to how information and communication technologies, such as the internet, mobile devices, and social media, influence and shape life. The essence of the theory of social construction of mass media lies in the rapid and widespread circulation of information, which allows social construction to occur very quickly and evenly. The reality that is formed also contributes to the formation of public opinion, where the masses tend to be *a priori* and have a cynical view (Bungin 2008).

METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative descriptive approach. A qualitative descriptive approach is used to understand social interactions and understand the behavior of people who are difficult to understand (Hernimawati, 2018). In this study, the researcher examined how the digital political communication strategy carried out by the Amir Hamzah and Hasanul Jihadi pair in the 2024 Binjai City Pilkada was studied using a constructivist paradigm. The selection of informants in this study was carried out based on the interests of the research being carried out and was considered the best party to be an informant based on the criteria required in the study (Pujileksono, 2015). The main informants in this study were members of the campaign team or winning team of the Amir Hamzah and Hasanul Jihadi pair. The criteria for the main informants in this study were directly involved in the Digital Campaign Team of the Amir Hamzah and Hasanul Jihadi Pair. Informants must be individuals who are directly involved in the planning, implementation, or evaluation of the digital

political communication strategy of the Amir Hamzah and Hasanul Jihadi pair. For example, members of the social media team, digital content creative team, or digital political consultants. The key informant used in this study was the chief advisor to the Amir Hamzah – Hasanul Jihadi winning team, who is considered to have knowledge of political communication strategies and tactics in digital media. The informant must have in-depth insight into the strategies used, such as how to utilize social media, manage political narratives, and approach audiences on digital platforms. In addition, the informant must be domiciled or understand the social context of Binjai City, including political preferences, digital habits, and social dynamics that are relevant to campaign strategies. This study uses the Miles, Huberman & Saldana (2014) model as a data analysis technique that maps into three interacting components in the qualitative research process. These components are data condensation, data display, and conclusions drawing. This research uses triangulation of data sources, namely exploring the truth of data/information through various different data sources.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Political Communication Strategy of Amir Hamzah-Hasanul Jihadi's Winning Team on Social Media

Political communication strategy is an approach used to plan, manage, and deliver political messages effectively to the target audience. This includes analysis of audience characteristics, the media used, and the content of the message to be delivered (Effendy, 2003). This technique involves repeating messages to shape public opinion. In addition, this strategy also includes the use of mass media for news, political advertising, and media relations, as well as agenda setting and framing, which involves selecting issues and arranging narratives to influence public perception. Public participation and interaction are important elements, through public debates, social media, and face-to-face meetings that allow direct engagement with the audience.

Personal branding in political communication is one of the key elements that cannot be ignored, especially in building emotional closeness between candidates and voters. In the context of the Binjai City Pilkada contest, the pair Amir Hamzah and Hasanul Jihadi utilized this strategy as an integral part of their communication approach. Personal branding is used to shape the public's positive perception of their personality, values, and integrity, with the aim of creating trust and voter loyalty.

From the interview results, it was revealed that the pair's personal branding strategy was not only carried out visually through social media, but also directly through interpersonal approaches, such as face-to-face dialogue with the community. In each meeting, they not only conveyed work programs or political promises, but also introduced themselves as simple, down-to-earth figures who are close to the daily lives of residents. This shows that their personal branding is multidimensional, not only building a professional image as a leader, but also highlighting the human and emotional side that is relevant to the values of the local community.

One of the personal branding approaches they took was to present themselves as "public servants". This narrative was repeated on various occasions, both in direct meetings and through posts on social media, to strengthen their position as leaders who are not elitist, but are present to listen, understand, and provide solutions to community problems. This kind of message is designed to build empathy and strengthen connectedness with voters.

Hasanul Jihadi, as someone who is considered to come from the creative field, treats social media in a different way. He often uses the comment reply feature on social media, which is then answered with the actions he takes to respond to the comments. For example, when there are complaints about garbage, he does not immediately reply to every comment. He prefers to use the comments as content to show what work has been done to address it. This is proof that social media can be a bridge between the community and the regional head.

This finding is relevant to a study conducted by Tedi Gunawan entitled *Adaptation of Social Media Logic as Gerindra's Political Communication Strategy Ahead of the 2024 Election* (2024). The study shows that digital democracy creates a new space that encourages public participation in democratic life without time constraints and physical barriers. Based on the results of this study, technology, especially internet-based social media, has an important role in expanding networks and strengthening pull political marketing strategies. Social media can increase political parties' efforts to communicate, trigger contestation, and rally more masses and vote support.

In addition, the Amir-Jiji pair also use a variety of taglines in each upload on social media. Let's just say taglines like Continue and Perfect, and #menujubinjaisejahtera, which are always present in each of their contents. The design of the content produced is also always dominated by blue and white. The clothes they use as publication materials also always revolve around light blue, white shirts, or bomber jackets. The use of these clothes is identical to the political axis they choose, as well as the impression of simplicity and embracing all parties that they try to highlight.

Political marketing carried out by the Amir-Jiji pair also basically involves the three marketing elements. The use of this strategy can be seen from the conventional campaign carried out by Amir-Jiji. They often hold direct dialogues with the community to absorb existing aspirations. This is a form of push marketing. Then, in addition to face-to-face campaigns, the Amir-Jiji pair also utilizes various existing media to convey their vision and mission to the community. The information is conveyed through social media through created content, then the use of banners and billboards at points considered strategic. This activity is a form of pull marketing. Next, the Amir-Jiji pair also collaborated with many groups in society, such as religious leaders, youth leaders, and communities to attract public sympathy. This is a reflection of the practice of pass marketing that involves a third person in the process.

Social Media Construction by the Winning Team of Amir Hamzah and Hasanul Jihadi in the 2024 Binjai City Pilkada

The use of social media in political communication can be studied through the theory of reality construction which emphasizes that social media is able to construct the reality that exists in society. The Theory of Social Construction of Reality, introduced by Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann in their work entitled *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (1966), explains that social reality is the result of interaction and communication processes between individuals in society (Hadiwijaya, 2023). In general, social reality in the context of communication involves social interactions, symbols, language, norms, values, and communication patterns that together form and influence collective understanding of reality in a society. Thus, the theory of reality construction and communication context play a very important role in explaining how social reality is produced and understood in various communication situations (Karman, 2015).

There are several concrete examples of the application of the theory of social construction of reality, including media and political narratives. Through social media, political actors display content that represents their personality, values, ideology, and work programs. This is an early form of expression where political figures try to shape the public's initial perception of who they are and what they stand for through content uploaded to social media.

After the content is published, the public responds through comments, likes, shares, or online discussions. So the political construction that was previously personal begins to be considered a collective reality. The image of a "people's leader", for example, becomes credible because it is continuously displayed and reinforced socially. This political construction is then accepted by the public slowly but surely, and then makes it part of their beliefs, even influencing political preferences. At this stage, the political communication strategy has formed a lasting perception in the minds of voters. The public not only knows who the candidate is, but believes in the image that is built.

The media often shapes how political issues are understood by the public. For example, the way news reports are presented can influence public perception of a candidate or policy (Ritonga et al., 2024). If the media highlights the positive aspects of a politician, this can form a positive public image, while emphasizing scandals can create a negative image.

This can also be seen from the political narrative given by the Amir Hamzah and Hasanul Jihadi pair during the 2024 Binjai City Pilkada campaign period. Their vision and mission were massively disseminated through social media to the public. Promises of change, as well as achievements that have been achieved, became their own narrative that was relied on to increase public sympathy. This narrative was then constructed in such a way that it was then published through social media for consumption by the public.

The theory of social construction of reality also emphasizes the importance of social interaction. This means that a politician or regional head candidate must be able to build good interactions with their citizens. This can

be done by having direct dialogue, receiving input and comments to then be realized in development activities. This was also done by the Amir-Jiji pair during their campaign. They often held dialogues with residents, attended invitations to events initiated by residents, and carried out social activities intended for the wider community. These various activities were carried out to increase social interaction between regional head candidates and their communities.

In addition to direct social interaction, the presence of social media can also provide a platform for reciprocal interaction between politicians and the public. Currently, social media users can provide direct responses through comments, likes, or sharing content, which can ultimately influence how politicians respond to various issues. This process creates a situation where the direction of politics can shift along with the public's response. In practice, reciprocal interaction between politicians and the public can be seen from how the Amir-Jiji pair act and respond to each comment they receive on social media platforms. Based on the results of the interviews conducted, it was found that Amir Hamzah tends to respond to comments he receives on social media directly, without replying to existing comments. According to him, comments on social media will not have any impact if they are not realized. Meanwhile, Hasanul Jihadi utilizes social media features such as replying to comments to interact with his followers. He uses the existing features to give the impression of being close to his citizens.

Barriers and Challenges to Political Communication of the Amir Hamzah and Hasanul Jihadi Couple on Social Media

Based on the results of the interviews conducted, hoaxes or fake news are one of the most significant challenges in implementing political communication, especially in the digital era where information can spread very quickly through social media. In the context of the Binjai City Pilkada, hoaxes not only spread misleading information, but also have the potential to shape public opinion negatively towards certain candidates, in this case Amir Hamzah, who is the incumbent mayor and regional head candidate.

As a public figure who is currently serving, Amir Hamzah is often the target of hoaxes, one of which is the narrative that says that he does not care about the drug problem in the Binjai City area. There were accusations that he allowed the proliferation of drug barracks as if he had not taken concrete action as a regional head. Narratives like this are a form of black campaign that tries to damage the image and public trust in his leadership.

However, according to informants, these accusations are baseless and were deliberately constructed to influence public perception emotionally, not based on data and facts. In dealing with hoaxes like this, the political communication team from the candidate pair –especially Amir Hamzah– took strategic steps by building a counter-narrative. One approach taken is to emphasize that drug eradication is a collective responsibility, involving cooperation between local governments, law enforcement officers, and the wider community. That way, the drug issue is not simplified as a single failure

of the local government, but rather as a systemic problem that needs to be addressed comprehensively.

In addition, as a form of affirmation of the commitment to eradicating drugs, Amir Hamzah actively attended the destruction of drug evidence carried out by the Binjai District Attorney's Office. This direct participation is also part of a symbolic communication strategy, to show the real involvement and concern of the regional head for the problem. Documentation of attendance at such activities is then disseminated through social media as a form of clarification and balancing information, as well as restoring public trust.

Thus, the challenge of hoaxes in political communication cannot be underestimated. Fast, data-based handling, and the use of social media for direct clarification are important elements in a modern political communication strategy. Handling hoaxes is not only about refuting, but also building a stronger, more credible narrative that touches the collective consciousness of society.

Damaged roads are another theme often used to attack Amir Hamzah as the mayor of Binjai. His position as the highest leader in the city government is considered to play a major role in the progress of infrastructure development in Binjai City. To respond to such comments, Amir always coordinates with related parties or agencies to resolve the polemic of damaged roads. The progress of resolving the problem is then published in his personal social media content.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Amir Hamzah and Hasanul Jihadi used a political communication strategy in the form of political marketing that utilized social media in it. The political marketing used involved three elements including Push Marketing, Pull Marketing, and Pass Marketing. In the Push Marketing strategy, the Amir Hamzah and Hasanul Jihadi pair conducted face-to-face dialogues with the community. They also often attended events initiated by the community to receive aspirations from the community. Then in the Pull Marketing strategy, the Amir Hamzah and Hasanul Jihadi pair utilized various media to help publish their vision, mission and political narrative. 2. The Amir Hamzah and Hasanul Jihadi pair utilized social media as a means of interaction with the community. The content produced went through the content planning stage by looking for ideas or issues that were developing in the community. However, because the activity schedule was considered very dynamic, the content production stage was then reversed so that the existing content followed the work schedule that was carried out. They often used the comment feature to receive aspirations from the community. Various comments that came in would then be responded to and followed up in accordance with applicable procedures. 3. The obstacles to political communication faced by the Amir Hamzah and Hasanul Jihadi pair still revolve around the technicalities of taking content material for social media. In addition, Amir Hamzah's position as the incumbent mayor is a gap for the emergence of hoaxes or fake news. Hoaxes or

fake news are still one of the challenges that must be faced in the practice of political communication on social media.

FURTHER STUDY

Further studies could explore the effectiveness of each political marketing element (Push, Pull, and Pass) in influencing voter behavior, examine how social media algorithms impact political content reach, and analyze strategies for countering hoaxes and misinformation in digital political communication, particularly for incumbent candidates.

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