

## Political Battles on Social Media

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### Abstract

Political battles on social media have emerged as a significant force in contemporary political dynamics. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok have evolved into strategic arenas for politicians, political parties, and their supporters to convey messages, shape their image, and most importantly, influence public opinion. This direct and interactive form of political communication, facilitated by social media, allows political candidates to engage with voters without the traditional media intermediaries. However, this political battle is not without its drawbacks; social media has also become a battleground for malicious comments, hate speech, hoaxes, and disinformation that can undermine the democratic process. The anonymous and rapid nature of social media further facilitates the spread of negative messages and personal attacks on political opponents. Yet, it's not all negative; social media also enables the mobilization of support, greater public participation, and the widespread dissemination of information. This abstract underscores the intricate nature of political struggles on social media, revealing how these platforms can be potent tools for building political support while also posing significant challenges to the ethics, integrity, and quality of political communication in a digital society.

**Keywords:** *Fight, Politics, Social Media*

### A. Introduction

Ahead of the *Pilkada*, which will be held on November 27, 2024, regional head candidates have begun to campaign intensively and try to gain public sympathy. This phenomenon is often seen in installing banners, billboards, and campaign activities in various remote areas.

The battle on social media has become a place for various positive and negative comments, especially in politics. Some aspects explain why social media has become a place for multiple comments. This phenomenon shows that social media is a double-edged sword in the context of political communication. Although it has excellent potential as a platform for exchanging ideas and concepts, social media can also become a nest for malicious comments and negative behavior if not managed properly. Users need to have digital literacy and ethical awareness when communicating in cyberspace.

During an election, the media may focus more on economic than health issues, causing the public to see the economy as the primary issue that needs to be addressed. A story about a protest may be framed as an “anarchist action” or “a fight for justice,” which will influence how the audience views the protest. In a political context, supporters of a particular candidate may choose not to voice their support if they feel that the majority opinion around them supports another candidate. Specific terms in political campaigns, such as “people’s welfare” or “mental revolution,” can be interpreted as a way to frame and shape the public’s understanding of a particular political ideology.

A public figure or influencer on social media can spread a particular political message to their followers, who will then spread the information to their social circles.

## **B. Discussion**

Political communication theories are conceptual frameworks used to understand how political messages are delivered, received, and influenced by various actors in a political context. These theories help explain how politicians, the media, and the public interact in political communication. Here are some essential political communication theories:

### **1. Agenda-Setting Theory**

This theory zeroes in on the media's ability to shape what issues are deemed important by the public. By deciding which issues receive the most coverage, the media molds public perceptions about what needs to be addressed. This power to

influence public perception is a significant responsibility that the media, and by extension, social media, must handle with care.

## 2. Framing Theory

Framing theory explains how the media tells us what to think (agenda-setting) and how we should think about an issue. This is done through the way the media frames or presents information.

## 3. Spiral of Silence Theory

Put forward by Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann, this theory states that individuals tend to remain silent when they feel their views differ from the majority view for fear of being socially excluded or punished.

## 4. Uses and Gratifications Theory

This theory focuses on how individuals choose media and content based on their needs and desires. This means that audiences are not passive recipients of political information but actively select the information they consume. Young voters may prefer social media to get political information, while older generations may rely more on television news (Mulyana, 2008).

## 5. Cultivation Theory (Planting)

Developed by George Gerbner, this theory states that prolonged exposure to media, especially television, can shape one's perception of social reality. In a political context, this means that what the media presents can influence an individual's political views in the long run. If someone frequently watches news that highlights corruption cases, they may develop the perception that all politicians are corrupt.

## 6. Propaganda Theory

This theory highlights how political messages can be manipulated to influence public opinion and behavior. Political actors often use propaganda to shape an image or control information that reaches the public. (Budi, 2022). Certain

governments or political groups may spread messages that benefit them and discredit political opponents through mass media or social media. (Pradana, 2020).

#### 7. Two-Step Flow Theory (Two-Stage Flow)

This theory was put forward by Paul Lazarsfeld and Elihu Katz, who stated that political information is usually not directly received by the public from the mass media but through "opinion leaders" who then spread the information to other people.

#### 8. Critical Discourse Analysis Theory

This theory focuses on how discourse or language is used in political contexts to shape power, ideology, and social structures. Critical discourse analysis explores how political messages reflect and reinforce societal power relations.

#### 9. Mediatization Theory of Politics

This theory states that politics increasingly depends on how the media operate, communicate, and gain legitimacy. The media is not only a communication channel but also significantly influences how politics is packaged and perceived by the public.

Politicians who understand the dynamics of social media will tend to be more successful in their campaigns because they can control the narrative and build relationships with voters through digital platforms.

#### 10. Public Sphere Theory

Developed by Jürgen Habermas, this theory states that the public sphere is an arena where people can freely discuss and exchange views on public issues. The media plays a vital role in creating this public sphere, although particular interests often control this space. Social media can be a public space where people discuss political issues. Still, this space is usually limited by algorithms or platform policies that control what can and cannot be seen.

These political communication theories explain how political messages are delivered, received, and influenced by various societal factors. Understanding these theories helps us see the role of the media, politicians, and society in shaping political opinions and behavior (Mulyana, 2016).

1. **Anonymity and Freedom of Speech:** social media allows users to comment anonymously or under a fake identity. This anonymity often frees people to express their opinions without fear of consequences, including making mean, rude, or provocative comments.
2. **Echo Chambers and Polarization:** Social media algorithms tend to show content that aligns with a user's preferences and views. As a result, users often get trapped in "echo chambers," where they only interact with people who share their views. This reinforces their beliefs and makes them more likely to make harsh or judgmental comments about those who disagree.
3. **Use of social media as a Campaign Tool:** In a political context, supporters and opponents of candidates often engage in heated debates on social media. This can result in supportive and constructive comments, leading to personal attacks, slander, or hate speech against political opponents (Nugroho, 2018).
4. **Cyberbullying and Coordinated Attacks:** social media can also be an arena for coordinated attacks, where a group (such as a "buzzer" or "cyber army") intentionally attacks a specific individual, candidate, or political group. They may use malicious comments to tarnish a reputation or create a negative narrative.
5. **The Influence of Emotions and Quick Reactions:** social media is a platform that allows for instant reactions. In emotional political discussions, users tend to comment impulsively without thinking, which can lead to malicious comments, insults, or unnecessary provocations (Suwandi, 2018).
6. **Positive Comments and Support:** social media is also where users can express support, appreciation, or constructive criticism. In many cases, positive comments help lift spirits and boost morale for a particular candidate or issue.
7. **Public Participation Space:** Social media allows people to participate in political discussions and express their views. This is a positive part of democratizing communication, where everyone can be heard. However, the challenge is keeping this space healthy, inclusive, and accessible from hate speech.
8. **Moderation and Regulatory Challenges:** Social media companies continue to address the problem of hate speech and abusive comments through content moderation and community policies. However, the scale and speed of the comment battle on social media make moderation a significant challenge.

Some points that can be raised regarding this phenomenon are:

**Use of Media in Campaigns:** Banners and billboards are one form of visual communication that effectively conveys political messages to the public. With striking designs and concise messages, candidates try to display their vision,

mission, and work programs to influence public opinion (Bennett, 2012, pp. 739-768).

**The Role of Social Media:** Besides traditional media, candidates also use social media to campaign. Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok are essential for building images, spreading programs, and interacting directly with voters, especially the younger generation (Boulianne, 2015 pp. 1-20).

**Political Communication in Remote Areas:** Holding direct campaigns in remote areas of the country shows the candidate's efforts to get closer to the people and understand their needs and aspirations. This creates a more personal two-way interaction compared to campaigns through mass media.

**The Influence of Political Communication on Voters:** Political messages are often packaged persuasively to influence voters' perceptions and choices during the campaign. An effective communication strategy can help candidates become better known and trusted by the public.

**Ethics and Strategy in Campaigns:** Competition in regional elections often encourages the emergence of unethical campaign tactics, such as black campaigns, hoaxes, and politicization of sensitive issues. These challenges ensuring that the democratic process runs healthily and moderately.

The campaign phenomenon leading up to the regional elections shows how political communication is the primary tool in building an image and winning the hearts of voters.

Media and political communication are closely related and play important roles in the political process.

1. **Media in Political Communication:** Media, both traditional media (such as newspapers, television, and radio) and digital media (such as social media and online news sites), function as intermediaries that convey political information to the public. The media has a role in framing issues, shaping public opinion, and being a means of communication for politicians to communicate their messages to the broader community (McQuail, 2010).

2. **Political Communication:** Political communication is the process by which political messages are conveyed and exchanged between politicians, Government agencies, the media, and the public. It includes the strategies, rhetoric, and ways politicians build their image, influence public policy, and shape public perceptions of political issues.

3. **The Relationship Between Media and Political Communication:** The media plays a role as a "watchdog" in democracy by monitoring politicians' behavior and actions, but it can also be a propaganda tool when used to spread specific messages. In the digital era, political communication is increasingly dynamic because

politicians can interact directly with voters through social media, reducing dependence on traditional media (Kellner, 2005).

4. The Influence of Social Media on Political Communication: Social media has changed the landscape of political communication by enabling the rapid spread of information and providing a space for the public to participate in political discussions. This allows politicians to direct their messages to a more specific audience and offers the opportunity to communicate directly without going through the filter of traditional media.

This aspect is integral to the study of communication philosophy because it shows how media and political communication can shape understanding, reality, and societal power structures.

### **C. Conclusion**

Political battles on social media have become integral to modern political communication, offering excellent opportunities for politicians, political parties, and the public to engage in political discussions and campaigns more directly and efficiently.

Social media allows for the rapid spread of political messages and enables two-way interaction between politicians and voters, creating a more inclusive public space. However, this phenomenon also brings serious challenges, such as the spread of hoaxes, disinformation, hate speech, and the polarization of public opinion. Social media's anonymity and rapid nature often facilitate personal attacks and negative campaigns that can damage the quality of political discussions and democratic processes. Therefore, improving digital literacy, communication ethics, and proper regulation is essential to ensure that social media remains a healthy and constructive space for political participation.

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