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Digital Political Branding: Instagram Strategy of Regional Head Candidates for Electoral Success in Indonesia 2024

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ABSTRACT

This research examines the transformation of political communication strategies in the digital era, specifically the use of Instagram by Tegal Regency's candidate Regents in the 2024 Regional Election. The high social media penetration in Indonesia, with 97% of Instagram users actively interacting, creates new opportunities and challenges in regional-level political communication. The research aims to analyze the digital personal branding strategies and political communication effectiveness of both candidates through Instagram. The research method employs a descriptive qualitative approach with social media content analysis using Nvivo 12 Pro, focusing on Instagram accounts @bimasakti19 and @ischak.mr during the September-October 2024 period. Research findings show significant strategy differences between the two candidates: @bimasakti19 implements an interactive approach with consistent hashtag #LOKENPANKAYAKIEBAE and actively reposts community support, while @ischak.mr focuses on field activity documentation and direct interaction. Word cloud analysis reveals the dominance of keywords related to public service and local issues. In conclusion, Instagram has become a vital instrument in local political communication transformation, creating a more dynamic dialogue space between candidates and voters, although still requiring balance between digital branding strategy and political message authenticity.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Political strategy represents a method for winning competitions or rivalries between political forces seeking power, as exemplified in the 2019 legislative elections. The significant transformation in political strategy is inseparable from the role of political communication in the digital era, which has fundamentally altered how candidates reach voters, including in regional elections throughout Indonesia. Political communication in the digital era has fundamentally changed election strategies, particularly in regional elections across Indonesia (Hasan & Makka, 2023). Data indicates that Indonesia's social media penetration reached significant levels in 2024, with Instagram emerging as a crucial platform for political engagement. According to statistics, Instagram usage in Indonesia increased from 22 million users in early 2016 to 45 million in July 2017, with 97% of users actively interacting through comments and user tagging (Fitriana, 2022). This digital transformation has created new opportunities for regional political candidates to reach and interact with voters.

This digital transformation has not only created new opportunities for political candidates to interact with voters but has also influenced campaign forms and methods, as evidenced in the strategies implemented by Tegal Regency's Regent candidates. Activities typically include campaigns, party advertising, and the communication of vision and mission through media. In this context, the Tegal Regency's Regent candidates employ identical and equivalent political strategies, campaigning through social media while also engaging directly with the Tegal regency community. This strategy represents a targeted and strategic planning approach to achieve success. Moreover, in political competition or contests connecting political actors or politicians, a strategy for approaching the community/voters is essential (Wisanto et al., 2024).

While traditional political campaigns remain relevant, studies across Southeast Asian democracies indicate an increasing shift toward digital platforms (Sinpeng, 2020). In the Indonesian context, regional elections present unique opportunities for digital political branding, particularly through Instagram. The platform's visual nature and high engagement levels, especially among the 18-34 demographic comprising 89% of Indonesian Instagram users, make it an ideal medium for regional-level political communication (Runimeirati, 2024).

In modern society, it is almost impossible not to be familiar with social media. Consciously or unconsciously, media with all its content has become part of human life. As times evolve, media presence has become increasingly diverse and developed. Communication in media initially operated unidirectionally, meaning media consumers could only consume content presented by media sources (Lovink, 2017). However, as time progressed, ordinary people as media consumers are no longer limited to consuming content from media exposed to them. They can now participate in creating media content. This content becomes the main point in seeking sympathy from the Tegal regency community by presenting visions and missions, demonstrating concern for the community, and introducing new communication styles through social media platforms like Instagram as a channel for community complaints or communication to prospective regents (Noorikhshan et al., 2023).

Over time, internet or new media usage has become more frequently utilized as social networking, commonly known as social media. There are thousands of social media platforms spread throughout new media. However, not all social media receive comparable attention; Instagram has been one of the most popular social media platforms in recent years (Nuna et al., 2024). In 2019, Instagram ranked fourth in Indonesia as the most actively used social media platform, with 80% access by internet users (wearesocial.com). Instagram is utilized as a medium for information sharing and communication; however, with the evolution of time, Instagram is also used as a medium for self-actualization, where one's personality can be assessed through their posts, whether in the form of photos, videos, images, artwork, or other visual forms. Instagram as a social media platform utilized for self-actualization will certainly form an image or branding as desired (Feroza & Misnawati, 2021).

Communication in social media significantly influences the importance of personal branding itself, with social media enabling the public or general audience to easily understand and access various forms of existing information channels (Dwivedi et al., 2021; Khamis et al., 2017). With the primary objective of personal branding during the campaign period leading up to the 2024 regional election in Tegal regency, this certainly encourages the community to think carefully and precisely about which regional head choice aligns with their conscience. The presence of social media like Instagram creates an important point during the campaign period, providing distinct value in conveying information that can include vision and mission or listening to community aspirations, particularly in the Tegal Regency region (Basri, 2021).

For example, the communication conducted by Candidate Regent number 1, Bima Eka Sakti, demonstrates a personal communication style with the community, bringing together various community groups to listen to their concerns and aspirations that need to be realized (Atmodjo, 2014). Additionally, Candidate Regent number 2, Ischak Maulana Rochman, also employs a communication style that brings him closer to the community, listening to various community aspirations from middle to upper classes for objectives to be achieved by both parties. This makes social media, particularly Instagram, an effective personal branding tool that is highly capable and easily accessible; in other words, both candidates, Bima and Ischak, have different communication models in their community approach (Fadli & Sazali, 2023).

In research conducted by Muhammad Ichlas El Qudsi and Ilham Ayatullah Syamhar in 2020 titled "Instagram and Generation Z Political Communication in the 2019 Presidential Election," the authors note the existence of an opinion from the majority of Gen Z showing great interest in following the development of issues and topics in this political contestation through Instagram (El Qudsi & Syamtar, 2020). Given this, the community will certainly be very enthusiastic about the emergence of political discussion forms, especially during this critical regional election period. It will be very easy to establish communication between fellow leadership candidates in conducting political communication to gain community sympathy. Through social media or the Instagram platform, this will certainly become an advantage. In other words, the advantages gained through political communication conveyed by regent candidates @bimasakti19 and @ischak.mr certainly have similarities in attracting

sympathy through supporters or votes from the Tegal Regency community (Imanina, 2020).

Previous studies indicate that social media usage in political communication has undergone significant transformation. Research by El Qudsi & Syamtar (2020) reveals that Instagram has become the primary platform for Generation Z in following political developments, while Noorikhshan et al. (2023) found this platform effective in building two-way interactions between candidates and voters. Research findings from Dhara et al. (2020) confirm that 97% of Instagram users actively interact through comments and tagging, creating a more dynamic political dialogue space.

Although various studies have examined Instagram's role in political communication, there remains a gap in understanding its effectiveness at the regional head election level. Previous studies such as Feroza & Misnawati (2020) and Basri (2021) focused more on Instagram usage at the national level, while its implementation in local political contexts, particularly in regions like Tegal Regency, has not been explored in depth. This gap becomes important considering the unique characteristics of regional head elections that require a more personal and contextual political communication approach.

The novelty of this research lies in its use of a comprehensive analysis approach through the Nvivo 12 Pro application in examining political communication strategies on Instagram at the regional head election level. Unlike previous research that generally used conventional content analysis, this study integrates visual, textual, and engagement pattern analyses to understand the effectiveness of digital political branding. This methodology enables a deeper understanding of how regional head candidates utilize Instagram features to build connectivity with local voters.

This research seeks to understand and examine the potential voter acquisition opportunities through Instagram usage by these Tegal regency regent candidates. This will become an opportunity for political actors; in other words, whether this strategy will become a reference or become an absolute winning strategy for competing candidates. With the extensive social media network, especially Instagram, various information or other activities will be very easily seen, and with Instagram, the Tegal regency community is certainly familiar with Instagram. From both older generations and youth, they certainly understand Instagram; politically, this becomes an important opportunity to gain public sympathy and allow the community to assess how good or not their potential regional heads will be (Alvin, 2022).

The political communication conducted by candidates from each Tegal regency regent candidate certainly helps the community in viewing their vision and mission, channeling various aspirations, getting to know them more closely, and providing positive responses to the community. With Instagram owned by the Tegal regency community, this will certainly make it easier for regent candidates to seek sympathy. Even without direct engagement, the community can certainly assess which regent candidate they think is suitable for the next 5 years.

2. METHODS

This research employs a qualitative method with a descriptive approach (Aspers & Corte, 2019; Otani, 2017) to understand the communication patterns or styles of both

Tegal regency candidate regents in conveying various information related to simultaneous elections or Pilkada through social media. Qualitative research seeks in-depth understanding information usually including interviews and observations. However, it may also include case studies, surveys, and historical and document analysis. This qualitative research is a term used to refer to theoretical perspective designs such as narrative research.

This process was carried out by viewing and reviewing social media activity in the form of official accounts from both Tegal Regency Regent Candidates @bimasakti19 as number 1 and @ischak.mr as number 2. In conducting this research, two types of data were used: primary and secondary data. Primary data was obtained by reviewing accounts @bimasakti19 and @ischak.mr, while secondary data consisted of articles and various important information as supporting elements in this research process.

The existence of social media accounts from both regent candidates, namely @bimasakti19 and @ischak.mr, certainly greatly assists the research. Based on the data source that will be obtained which produces word clouds, this will certainly become a reference in the research to be conducted. The source taken is raw data that will be processed using Nvivo 12 Pro application.

The Research Method begins with studying references and theories related to the research to be conducted. At this stage, researchers plan references related to social media usage analysis, especially Instagram, and implement application methods using Nvivo 12 Pro that can support this research. Conducting searches for previous research in finding similar information and references, furthermore, researchers observe social media by viewing social media Instagram accounts of regional head candidates with account names @bimasakti19 and Ischak.mr, and observe what communication activities are carried out by both candidates in using social media, especially on Instagram.

After observations were made on both social media accounts of Tegal regency head candidates, the next stage is data collection by taking social media account data using Ncapture Tools on Tools available in Google Chrome, and the data can be easily extracted into PDF/URL files.

After taking data obtained in the form of PDF files from Ncapture, the Data is Analyzed with the help of Nvivo 12 Pro Application. This application is used to facilitate researchers in creating word clouds to find prominent/frequently appearing words in communications conducted on social media, as well as words included in communications conducted by the regional head candidates by entering codes or nodes as coding to draw conclusions in finding words that frequently appear on Instagram.

After all the above stages have been carried out, researchers will draw conclusions based on the results of the analysis that has been done previously. Suggestions are also needed for subsequent researchers to become references and consideration materials for future research.

@ischak.mr. The most frequently appearing words first are the names of both regent candidates "Ischak and Bimasakti". For words using hashtags (#), they appear in communications made by social media account @bimasakti19 with the word #lokenpankayakiebae, and words that appear on social media account @Ischak.mr appear with the words regent, Kab tegal, Candidate, and PKB. This can be interpreted that almost all candidate users use social media applications to conduct campaigns or Political communication to the Community, especially in Tegal City Regency.

In this research, there are certainly several assumptions and limitations in conducting analysis using Nvivo 12 Pro. Using this Application, not all data will be readable in general without further coding that raises high assumptions. The existence of this application is to facilitate descriptive analysis acquisition with the use of Nvivo 12 Pro that has been coded periodically to determine the results achieved. The limitation in using Nvivo 12 pro is that not all information extracted through Ncapture will be readable by nvivo 12; there are certainly other considerations using other source data such as articles and activity information from both regent candidates.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Digital Political Communication Strategy: Personal Branding Analysis of Tegal Regency Regent Candidates on Instagram

From an etymological perspective, the word strategy comes from Greek, namely stratagos which comes from the word stratagos meaning military, which means to lead (Moneter & Susanto, 2020). In this case initially, strategy can be interpreted as generalship or something done by generals in making plans to conquer enemies and win wars. So it is not surprising that in its early development, the term strategy was popularly used in military environments. Communication strategy is a combination of communication planning with communication management to achieve predetermined goals. This communication strategy must be able to demonstrate its practical operationalization, meaning that the approach can vary depending on conditions and situations (Fitry, 2020).

Communication Strategy needs to be arranged well or flexibly, so that operational implementation tactics of communication can be immediately adjusted to influential factors. In order to achieve effective communication goals, a communication strategist needs to understand the nature of communication and messages, in order to determine the type of media to be used in using and communication techniques to be carried out (Hasan & Makka, 2023). In carrying out political communication strategies, this method is usually used to win a competition or rivalry between political forces that desire power. One example of political communication strategy carried out by the president in the 2024 election. Such activities are usually carried out for example campaigns, party advertisements and delivery of vision & mission by regional head candidates (Eviany, 2019).

In social media development, according to Friendster first started by providing example space for users to interact with each other, then various media emerged such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp and Line and other media platforms that emerged providing space. Where information exchange occurs easily within society

with various conveniences possessed by social media, various accounts emerged both anonymous or not on social media that influence public opinion (Yati & Thasimmim, 2019).

Political Communication is communication involving political messages and political actors, or relating to power, government and government policy (Susanto). With this understanding, as an applied science, political communication is not new, political communication can also be understood as communication between "those who govern" and "those who are governed". With the objectives of political communication namely 1. Building existing political image, 2. Forming and fostering public opinion, 3. Encouraging political participation. While there are also impacts in political communication such as political image and public opinion, and the distribution effect of political participation that can be measured through election voting results (Widiowati & Pramutanto, 2021).

Political Communication basically cannot be separated from the role of mass media. Social media in this case can provide an overview of the extent to which all political processes are able to integrate with broader social communication networks. Through social media such as Instagram, Twitter, Facebook and TikTok in general there is various information about problems or information about politics aimed at the public. In this case Political communication is certainly very important to deliver or about information aimed at the public (Uni, 2019). With political communication, this will certainly become a potential to attract sympathy from the community, such as Political communication carried out by Tegal regency regent candidates they conduct political communication using social media as a means/facility of political communication aimed at seeking sympathy and political participation among the community (Rizky et al., 2023).

With social media like Instagram, it is certainly widely used in obtaining personal branding, such as examples done by Tegal Regency Regent Candidates. They introduce each portion of their self-confidence, sense of responsibility and form of leadership they do poured in pictures and visualized in real terms to the Tegal regency community. With Instagram, it certainly makes it easier to reach information in the form of pictures or videos that bring up the latest news in opinion. The emergence of new communication styles in social media utilization will certainly become an important value in the campaign period in the form of community sympathizers in seeing candidates who will advance in the upcoming regional election. This makes many teenagers to the elderly get very accurate and reliable sources of information with social media in the form of Instagram at this very crucial year, because political actors are preparing political strategies to face the 2024 regional election (Rogers et al., 2024; Tisler & Norden, 2023).

Indonesia is one of the internet users with the largest number in the world. According to statistics data. In 2017, 96.09 million people in Indonesia could access social media every month. The existence of Social Media certainly has various features such as Instagram, Twitter, Facebook and TikTok such as providing information by sharing photos and videos, this says that they have around 700 million active users worldwide. And Indonesia is one of the most attractive largest platform markets with extraordinary user growth. From 22 million in early 2016 to 45 million in July 2017.

Based on data obtained from 97% of Instagram users always write comments, tag their friends in comments, and use search engines to find more detailed information. A number of 89% of Instagram users in Indonesia are in the age range of 18-34 years with 63% (Dhara et al., 2020).

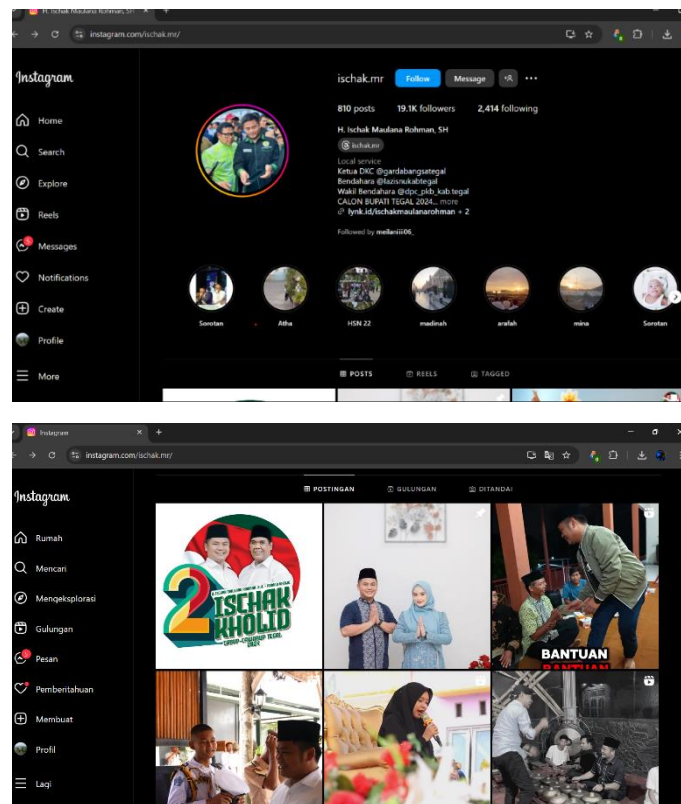


Figure 3. Instagram Account of Tegal Regency Regent Candidate @Ischak.mr

In figure 3, we can see that the homepage or Feed display from the @Ischak.Mr account conducts branding by presenting himself on social media as a candidate for Tegal regency regent. On that page, the Instagram account @ishack.mr contains several posts indicating the readiness of candidate number 2 in the existing political process. Ischak does branding by displaying vision and mission in the upper left corner with his partner Kholid; this will certainly become the main sympathy for his posts. This certainly makes it an advantageous strategy with the information about vision and mission, certainly the community can assess what is contained in these posts, while for the next posts. Displaying social service activities or activities that directly engage with the community to seek aspirations of the Tegal regency community and create superior and capable personal branding. With the steps taken by Ishack, this certainly becomes the sympathy of the Tegal regency community by reviewing and assessing the regional head candidates who will be determined later.

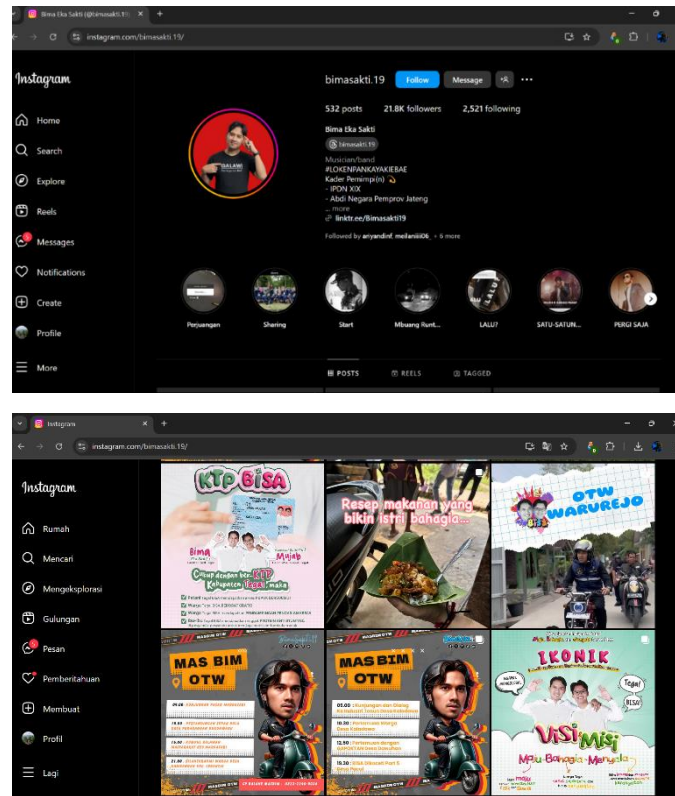


Figure 4. Instagram account of Tegal Regency Regent Candidate @bimasakti19

In figure 4, it can be seen that the @bimasakti19 account performs similar personal branding with only slight differences from the @ischak.mr Instagram account by highlighting the form of vision & mission from feed posts in general for what purposes the candidate's activities are carried out. The @bimasakti19 account also does not forget to post Stories every day and repost comments from the community or forms of support given by the community on the @bimasakti19 account. This is a form of communication to the public/community using Instagram social media, which certainly makes it easier for the regent candidate to provide information and channel the form of vision and mission accurately. By using Instagram, certainly these two Regent Candidates have an understanding of branding strategy in utilizing existing social media and internet networks.

The purpose of both regional head candidates is personal branding in facing various existing political issues. They dare to be criticized so they dare to create a campaign media that is rarely found anywhere. The communication carried out is indeed only one-way with the aim that the community can read and observe carefully. This also makes an important value to attract readers or just look at information about the existing Tegal regency regent candidates (Mahsun et al., 2021).

The presence of hashtags (@) or hashtag signs (#) in figure 2 previously that appears in world cloud coding contains words or issues that emerge very broadly with various communications or conversations with other Instagram users. From accounts @bimasakti19 and @Ischak.mr which are from major political parties namely the National Awakening Party (PKB) and the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI P). In this case, Bima Sakti is more dominant in his communication, resulting in the emergence of political communication among the Tegal regency community. With

the slogan style that is always spoken at every meeting and in his posts from Feeds to story posts, there are always words or expressions in the form of the Slogan #LOKENPANKAYAKIEBAE (Meifilina, 2021).

As for the candidate from the National Awakening Party (PKB) which is with the largest coalition joining 9 other parties is a candidate named @ischak.mr with his activity that has just emerged in 2024 by approaching through communication models to the community and conducting personal branding activities actively on Instagram. The activeness of the regent candidate will become a strengthening view among the existing community to assess with the development of modernization, certainly the regent candidate prioritizes ways of communicating with the community certainly with social media. In figure 1 above explains words or issues that emerge such as services, Regent Candidate and Tegal Regency that there is Communication to the Community that is less communicative with social media users or through social media. At this time, the Tegal regency regent candidates on Instagram social media are becoming important matters to promote themselves. With this, it should make it easier for all regional head candidates to do Social branding, to get closer to the Community and seek sympathy from the Community especially Tegal regency, and make a form of its own excellence for the Community so that it is easy to interact with the Community and convey their aspirations (Suryatmaja & Astawa, 2022; Wiryananta et al., 2021).

Activities shown to the Community through Instagram social media @bimasakti19 and @ischak.mr are one of the communication models in campaigning in Indonesia. Like the Instagram account @bimasakti19, he conducts political communication to the community with a maximum approach. Prioritizing what are the complaints of the Community and building his image among the Community by prioritizing his personal branding strengthens the vision and mission that must be established with the existing Community. As for the Instagram account @ischak.mr, he prioritizes activities in the Community and conducts visits or reviews of what problems exist in Tegal regency, then he will accommodate as a duty of aspiration from his community.

Active communication models on social media, especially Instagram, do not rule out the possibility that this makes many inputs, support, and sympathy from the existing Community that contain positive tweets or comments with these activities (Martin & MacDonald, 2020). The communication carried out by both candidates is a form of campaign conducted to attract sympathy from the Community, especially Tegal regency. With the communication carried out, it will become the rise or fall of credibility from each candidate. Whatever forms are carried out, especially during the 2024 regional election campaign period (Kadir et al., 2024; Zuhdi et al., 2023). Activeness in social media will become its own advantage from various parties. The strength in personal branding carried out by both will certainly become themselves known not only on behalf of the party but having more value than just candidates who are usually displayed on billboards or stickers and banners only. Using social media certainly makes candidates more updated and have broader insights. With this also, @Bima Eka Sakti and @Ischak Maulana Rochman increasingly get a lot of sympathy from many Communities especially in the Tegal Regency area. The higher

and stronger Instagram's existence, the greater the impact of expectations obtained to get support from the Community (Rizky et al., 2023; Tisler & Norden, 2023).

This research was conducted based on direct observation results through both Instagram social media accounts for 2 months before the regional head or regent election occurred, this was done with the aim of determining the researcher's perspective to review the extent of communication strategy that will be carried out by both candidates, this is indeed very difficult because there is no direct communication or face-to-face with political actors, but this is what makes research conducted by seeing how far and how much understanding both candidates have in conducting existing political communication. Today's technological sophistication is very capable by using social media, certainly this is very helpful from both parties, it is very unfortunate if both cannot use it as best as possible. With one-way communication, certainly this can be further developed into a medium for channeling aspirations and communication media whose purpose is to seek sympathy from the Tegal regency community, the weakness in this regent candidate is, the number of buzzers who are very difficult in determining the quality and quantity of each candidate, the activeness of both candidates only excels on Instagram, while on other social media such as TikTok and Twitter they still minimally share information about existing political communication (Alfiyani, 2018).

Research implications that can be produced by comparing how communicative both regional head candidates are in conducting existing personal branding. The use of social media carried out at this time is quite helpful in conducting reviews with the community, meaning they conduct such communication to facilitate and smooth the course of democracy and politics that is happening, doing this will help the government run well, the emergence of complaints to the community will be reviewed for realization, the emergence of various aspirations can also help the running of existing politics and government systems. Of course this research aims to understand the communication strategies of both candidates, using the Nvivo 12 Pro tool will certainly make it very easy for researchers in terms of perspective and bring up the desired data (Diansyah et al., 2019).

The limitations in this study are, more accurate sources of information especially the media used is only Instagram, supposedly other sources of information are very needed in this coding process and information search. Limitations in communication and very prominent comparisons are very clear, especially on the Twitter accounts of both candidates are all privatized. As for extracting data from TikTok is very difficult because the sources used are not based on Comments per content/post but overall communication on posts made during those 2 months.

Evolution of Political Communication Strategy in the Digital Era: Personal Branding Transformation Through Instagram

Digital political communication strategies transformation, particularly through Instagram, has introduced a new paradigm in local political contestation in Tegal Regency. According to Barros et al. (2025) and Bulmer et al. (2024), the use of Instagram as the main personal branding platform by both candidates (@bimasakti19 and @ischak.mr) reflects a fundamental shift from conventional campaign models toward a more interactive and personal digital approach. This aligns with findings by

Mochla et al. (2023) revealing that the effectiveness of political personal branding on Instagram lies in its ability to create strong visual narratives and build direct engagement with voters.

Analysis of both candidates' Instagram content shows different yet complementary strategic patterns in building political image. The use of hashtag #LOKENPANKAYAKIEBAE by @bimasakti19 successfully created a memorable and recognizable campaign identity, while @ischak.mr's approach focusing on field activity documentation reflects a performance-based legitimacy strategy. According to Bulmer et al. (2024), demonstrating how Instagram can be effectively utilized to build authentic political personas relevant to local context.

The interactive dimension of Instagram platform provides space for creating more dynamic political dialogue between candidates and their constituents. Abboud et al. (2024) and Yavetz (2024) observe that high engagement levels on both candidates' posts, especially through comment and story features, create perceptions of accessibility and openness important in local political context. This interaction pattern strengthens the argument of Arshad & Asghar (2024) and Díaz-Arancibia et al. (2024) that successful digital political communication depends not only on posting frequency but also on engagement quality and content resonance with local voter aspirations.

Interestingly, this transformation also brings its own challenges in terms of authenticity and credibility of political messages. Copple Smith (2012) Yelin (2020) note that although Instagram offers an ideal platform for personal branding, there are risks of overexposure and political theatricality that can reduce political communication effectiveness. This is evident from some skeptical public comments on posts that seem too choreographed, showing the importance of balance between branding strategy and political message authenticity.

These findings underline that successful digital political communication strategy, particularly through Instagram, does not merely depend on platform usage intensity, but on the ability to integrate digital technology with local values and aspirations. This study also confirms that personal branding through Instagram has become a vital instrument in transforming local political landscape, creating a more inclusive and participatory digital public space in regional democratization process.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on comprehensive analysis of digital political communication strategies of both Tegal Regency regent candidates through Instagram, this research reveals several important findings. Instagram platform has become a vital instrument in political communication transformation at regional level, with both candidates (@bimasakti19 and @ischak.mr) showing different but effective patterns of usage in building their personal branding.

Bima Eka Sakti (@bimasakti19) implements a more interactive strategy with consistent use of hashtag #LOKENPANKAYAKIEBAE, creating an easily recognizable and memorable campaign identity. This approach is combined with actively reposting community support and daily story updates, creating an

impression of openness and accessibility. Meanwhile, Ischak Maulana Rochman (@ischak.mr) focuses more on documenting field activities and direct interaction with community, building an image of hands-on and solution-oriented leadership.

Analysis using Nvivo 12 Pro reveals that both candidates succeeded in creating more dynamic political dialogue space with their constituents, albeit with different intensities and approaches. Word cloud analysis shows that keywords such as "service", "regent candidate", and "Kab Tegal" appear dominantly, indicating focus on local issues and public service.

This digital transformation not only changes how candidates campaign but also creates new voter expectations about transparency and accessibility of political leaders. However, this research also identifies challenges in form of over-exposure risks and need to balance between digital branding strategy and political message authenticity. These findings underline the importance of integrating digital technology with local values and aspirations in building effective political communication in digital era.

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