

Transformation of political campaigning in the digital era: The impact of social media and digital communication

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Abstract

The digital era has brought about a revolution in various aspects of life, including the realm of political campaigning. This study examines the transformation of political campaign strategies in the context of the influence of social media and digital communication. Utilizing a qualitative approach, this research investigates how digital platforms and social media have impacted campaign approaches, altered the interaction dynamics between candidates and voters, and influenced voter behaviour. The findings indicate that social media is central to informing, engaging, and mobilizing the masses, especially among the younger generation. Moreover, digital communication allows for more personalized, real-time, and data-oriented campaigns. However, the potential for disinformation and polarization also increases with the presence of social media as a campaign medium. This study provides insights into the importance of adapting political campaign strategies in the digital era and the necessity for a balanced approach between utilizing technology and considering ethics in communication.

Keywords: political campaign; social media; digital communication; disinformation

INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary era dominated by digital technology, political campaigning has undergone a significant transformation. Technological advancements have opened new doors for candidates and political parties to interact with their voters. In the past, political campaigns often relied on traditional media, such as television, radio, and print, as the primary channels for delivering their political messages. However, there has been a major shift in how political campaigns are conducted in recent years. The key to this change is the increasingly widespread and easy access to the internet, which has given political candidates and parties the ability to reach voters directly through online platforms. This transformation has changed how political messages are conveyed and how voters receive and respond to them.

In a global context, digital technology and social media development allow political campaigns to impact beyond national boundaries. Political candidates can reach voters worldwide through the internet and social media, which can have significant implications for international politics and foreign relations. Overall, the development of digital technology and social media presence has fundamentally changed the landscape of political campaigning. This transformation brings many opportunities but also challenges that need to be addressed. The changes affect the dynamics of political parties, which must adapt to digital technology to remain relevant in modern political campaigns. They need to understand how to leverage social media, develop digital communication strategies, and engage voters effectively through online platforms. Political parties

must also consider how digital technology can change how they gather campaign funds and organize support.

Social media, in particular, has become a focal point in transforming political campaigning. Platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube have given political candidates unprecedented access to their voters. They can easily share information, upload campaign videos, and interact directly with voters through comments and private messages. Social media also allows political campaigns to gather valuable voter data to understand better who their potential voters are and what they care about. Additionally, social media facilitates interactions among voters. Voters can use social media to organize their support, mobilize the masses, and even raise funds for the political campaigns they support.

The changes in how political campaigns are conducted can affect voter engagement. There is an argument that using social media and digital communication can increase voter engagement, especially among younger voters who are more familiar with technology. Voters now have greater access to political information and candidates through the internet and social media. They can share information about political candidates, parties, and issues through these platforms. They can also easily compare political platforms, review candidates' track records, and participate in online political discussions. This can influence voters' perceptions of political candidates and affect their decisions. It allows political campaigns to spread quickly and create a domino effect among voters with the same political views.

This study aims to investigate the impact of social media and digital communication in political campaigning and understand how these changes affect the political process, political parties, voters, and society. By understanding these changes, we can better understand how digital technology shapes our politics today and in the future. The research question focuses on "How do the development of social media and digital communication affect strategies, voter behaviour, and outcomes of political campaigns in the digital era?" This study aims to explore the impact and changes that have occurred in the world of political campaigning due to the development of digital technology and social media presence.

Political Campaigns

The essence of a campaign is a form of political communication aimed at persuading voters to garner public support (Arianto & Anggraini, 2019). According to Rogers and Storey, a campaign is a series of organized communication activities with the objective of creating a specific effect on the target audience continuously over a certain period (Ruslan, 2020). To strengthen the theoretical framework and critical analysis, this article would benefit from integrating clear theoretical perspectives, such as agenda-setting theory or network theory, to explain the mechanisms driving changes in political communication. Including these theories could also facilitate a comparative analysis between traditional and digital campaigns, offering richer insights into how these dynamics evolve across different electoral contexts. Referring to the definitions above, every campaign activity should contain at least four elements: (1) the action of the campaign is aimed at creating a specific effect; (2) it targets a large audience; (3) it is usually concentrated within a specific time frame; and (4) it involves a series of organized communication actions. The International Freedom of Expression Exchange (IFEX) defines a campaign as an activity with practical goals pursuing public social change, and all campaign activities impact influencing through expecting two-way communication. Decision-makers have two choices: direct influence and indirect influence, the latter through certain media channels that shape public opinion and then provide support for the campaign activities (du Plooy, 2022). In short, a campaign is not just about delivering messages, it's about influencing minds, shaping opinions, and driving change through strategic, well-organized communication efforts.

Digital Communication and Social Media

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is a broad umbrella of terminology that encompasses all technical equipment for processing and conveying information. The rapid development of information and communication technology has increasingly facilitated people to interact and communicate remotely, making electronic communication tools a dominant part of our daily lives. Communication is the process of delivering a message from one person to another to inform or change attitudes, opinions, or behaviour, either verbally or indirectly through media (Ruben, 2016). This definition implies the purpose of informing or changing attitudes, opinions, or behaviour. Another opinion views communication as an instrument of social interaction useful for understanding and predicting every individual and for understanding one's existence in creating social balance (Karyaningsih, 2018). This close relationship between communication and technology has given rise to new forms of interaction, particularly digital communication, which continues to evolve alongside technological advancements.

In the domain of communication, technology has become a crucial instrument for disseminating information and enabling communication that is fast and not limited by distance and time. Digital communication is a form of interaction that occurs without direct meeting, where it utilizes digital devices such as computers, smartphones, or other technologies supported by applications (Kurniawan, 2021). Digital communication occurs online and virtually, with concepts that continually change and evolve along with the discovery of internet-based devices or applications (Puspitaningrum, 2021). One of the most prominent outcomes of digital communication advancement is the emergence of social media as a key platform for interaction and information exchange.

In the digital era, social media plays an important role as a forum where individuals can interact with each other and share thoughts (Trisnani, 2018). Nasrullah (2015) states that social media is a media platform that focuses on user existence and facilitates them in activities or collaboration. Therefore, social media can be seen as an online medium (facilitator) that strengthens the relationship between users and, at the same time, a social bond. This platform facilitates discussions among individuals about various topics and allows the formation of assumptions, emotions, and beliefs based on other people's perspectives (Trisnani, 2018). From the perspective of Vernia (2017), social media combines aspects of sociology and technology to transform communication from one-way to two-way, allowing individuals to be not only consumers but also producers of content. According to Beheshti-Kashi and Makki (2015), social media is an internet-based platform that allows users to share opinions and experiences. Meanwhile, according to Vernia (2017), social media meets consumer information needs by providing authentic information that can be obtained from sources outside their social environment. Nasrullah (2015) adds that various types of social media facilitate communication, such as social networking, blogs, microblogging, media sharing, social bookmarking, and wikis, all of which facilitate connectivity among users without the barriers of space and time.

METHOD

This study employs a descriptive method with a qualitative approach to understand the transformation of political campaigns in the digital era, particularly examining how social media and digital communication affect the dynamics of campaigning. As described by Moleong (2013), qualitative research is interpretative, relies on the natural environment as a source of information, and delves into events based on participation. The descriptive method, according to Babones (2016) and Sugiyono (2016), is used to provide a detailed description of existing phenomena and to examine data in its true form.

In this research, the primary data collection technique is through literature study. Relevant literature sources are extracted from various mediums, including books, academic journals, research reports on technology and politics, and reliable online sources that discuss the

phenomenon of political campaigns in the digital era. The focus of the literature search is directed at works published up to the year 2023. After the literature sources are collected, a data reduction process is carried out to select the information most relevant to the research focus. With a qualitative approach, this research produces an in-depth description of how social media and digital communication transform political campaigns and how these two elements influence the strategies, tactics, and dynamics of contemporary political campaigning. The conclusions from this study are expected to contribute to academic discussions regarding the evolution of political campaigns in the digital era. Furthermore, the findings of this research can also offer recommendations for political practitioners, communicators, and other stakeholders in designing and executing effective political campaigns amidst the current dominance of social media and digital communication technology.

While the current methodology provides a solid theoretical foundation, the lack of primary data collection limits the depth and practical applicability of the findings. Incorporating primary data through interviews with political practitioners, campaign strategists, or voters actively engaged in digital campaigns could enrich the analysis by providing firsthand insights into the dynamics of digital political campaigns. Surveys targeting voters from various demographics could also offer valuable quantitative data to complement the qualitative approach. These methods would strengthen the study's empirical basis and enhance its relevance to real-world political practices.

Future iterations of this research could consider employing a mixed-method approach, combining literature review with primary data collection techniques. This would allow the study to capture theoretical and practical dimensions, offering a more comprehensive understanding of the transformation of political campaigns in the digital era.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Emergence of the Digital Era in Political Campaigning

In democratic countries like Indonesia, general elections for leaders at various levels of government are mandatory, especially since the reform era. Democracy in this archipelago nation has been operating with various dynamics colouring it. In preparing for such elections, it is well-known that each candidate prepares for the 'political contest', considering there is usually more than one candidate for leadership positions. Each competes to win the election. They strive to attract voters' attention to choose them. As a form of democratic practice, the voters' voice certainly determines victory. In short, the more votes or support obtained, the more likely it is to win the election. Consequently, the winner will obtain a seat of power in the government.

Over the last few decades, the digital revolution has shaken many sectors, including politics. Political campaigns, which traditionally relied on old methods such as face-to-face meetings, public orations, and print ads, now have to adapt to a new landscape dominated by digital technology. We are witnessing a shift in medium and a drastic change in tactics, strategies, and approaches used in the world of campaigning. Social media has become the centre of this transformation. Platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram have evolved from tools for sharing photos or the latest news into strategic battlegrounds for politicians and their campaign teams. The ability to reach millions of people in seconds offers unprecedented opportunities. Observing this phenomenon, many politicians seize the opportunity to use social media as their political campaign platform. Thus, they can increase awareness, alter attitudes, and ultimately influence the behavioural intentions of Millennials to vote. This is significant, given the considerable contribution of Millennials to the total voter population.

Beyond transforming campaign mediums, data-driven strategies have become a cornerstone of modern political campaigns. Campaign teams utilize sophisticated data analytics to segment voter groups, personalize campaign messages, and optimize advertisement placements. This approach allows for highly targeted and efficient campaigns yet raises ethical

questions concerning voter privacy and data transparency. The precision of these methods often highlights disparities in digital literacy and access, potentially excluding certain voter groups from the broader campaign narrative.

Furthermore, the algorithmic nature of social media platforms has amplified political polarization, particularly at the grassroots level. Algorithms prioritize content that aligns with user preferences, creating echo chambers that reinforce existing beliefs and limit exposure to alternative perspectives. This phenomenon was evident in Indonesia's 2014 and 2019 presidential elections, where the rapid dissemination of polarizing narratives intensified divisions among voters. Addressing these challenges requires innovative solutions that promote critical thinking and inclusive dialogue in political campaigns.

Digital analytics has provided an additional advantage for political campaigns. In the past, measuring the effectiveness of a campaign was a confusing task, often involving time-consuming face-to-face surveys or phone calls. With sophisticated analytics tools, campaigns can see voter responses in real time. They can identify which messages resonate, which platforms are most effective, and even voter demographics with incredible detail. Moreover, the ability to target ads to specific voter segments has transformed the way campaigns view advertising. With available data, campaigns can create tailored messages for various groups, from young voters to more specific demographic groups based on interests or geography. This allows unprecedented efficiency and effectiveness in campaign marketing strategies.

According to Ardha (2014), social media has four benefits for politicians as a campaign platform, covering information aspects, services, access to power, and political space. Meanwhile, Hagar (2014) stated that social media could contribute positively to achieving political goals. Hence, social media allows political candidates to interact with potential voters on a scale and intensity challenging to achieve through conventional campaigns, such as door-to-door campaigning, distributing brochures, or coverage in print and television media. Conventional media only allows candidates to communicate in one direction. Conversely, social media enables two-way or even multi-directional communication. In his research, Tănase (2015) noted that the opportunity for multi-directional communication with voters is a valuable asset for garnering support in elections. Active engagement occurs on the social media accounts of candidates, and supporters can spread campaign materials to members of their circles on social media. Furthermore, the cost of political campaigning through social media is much more economical compared to conventional media.

An interesting case study of the transformation of political campaigns in the digital era, particularly the influence of social media and digital communication in Indonesia, is the presidential elections in 2014 and 2019. In these two presidential elections, a significant change in campaign strategies used by candidates and political parties was evident. In the 2014 presidential election, Joko Widodo (Jokowi) and Prabowo Subianto were the main contenders. Jokowi was a candidate who strongly embraced social media and digital communication. His campaign team was active on platforms like Twitter and Facebook, uploading relevant content and directly interacting with voters. They relied on online campaigns to garner support from young voters active on social media.

On the other hand, Prabowo Subianto also used social media, but his strategy was more focused on conventional campaigning through television and print media. Nevertheless, his role in shaping the political candidate's image on social media was also significant. The 2014 presidential election was one of the first campaigns in Indonesia where social media played a significant role in defining the political narrative and mobilizing voters. The 2019 presidential election continued this trend. Jokowi again established a strong presence on social media with a more structured and organized campaign. He used platforms like Instagram and YouTube to communicate with voters. Conversely, Prabowo maintained his use of social media in his campaign and expanded his presence on these platforms.

This case study shows that social media and digital communication have become integral parts of political campaigns in Indonesia. They are used to communicate political messages and mobilize the masses, organize campaign events, and raise funds. In these presidential elections, the use of social media can be linked to increased voter participation, especially among younger voters who are more connected with technology. However, this case study also underscores the challenges in using social media for political campaigns, including the spread of false information and political polarization. Therefore, careful monitoring and regulation of social media use in politics are increasingly important to ensure the integrity of the political process and fair representation of voters. Thus, this case study is a concrete example of how the transformation of political campaigns in the digital era has affected Indonesian politics in terms of campaign strategies, voter participation, and the challenges that arise in the process.

Political Campaign Strategies in the Digital Era

In the era of globalization and rapid information technology, the landscape of political campaigning has undergone a profound transformation. Gone are the days when political campaigns solely depended on face-to-face meetings, brochures, and television broadcasts. Today, the digital world has expanded the scope, speed, and dynamics of political communication, creating new opportunities and challenges that have never been encountered. The internet, social media, and other technologies now play a central role in shaping public opinion, mobilizing support, and influencing election outcomes. The role of media in election campaigns is extremely important. There is hardly any political party that does not use media in the socialization and campaigning of the party (Subiakto, 2019). These developments highlight the need to understand how political campaign strategies have adapted to the digital era.

In this context, understanding the strategies of political campaigns in the digital era is not just optional but a necessity for political actors who want to stay relevant and effective. Political campaign strategies in the digital era have undergone significant evolution, with a focus shifting from traditional media to digital platforms. Here are some of the key political campaign strategies adopted in the digital era

Social media has revolutionized the way political campaigns communicate with voters. With their global reach and interactivity, platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram have become vital tools for advocacy, education, and mobilizing voters. Additionally, features such as trends, hashtags, and sophisticated algorithms allow campaigns to maximize the visibility and resonance of their messages. However, social media also comes with its challenges. In this rapidly changing landscape, campaigns must continuously monitor and adjust their strategies to stay relevant. Misinformation and personal attacks can spread quickly, requiring campaigns to respond proactively and manage narratives about their candidates and platforms.

To enhance the novelty of this research, a deeper focus on underexplored aspects, such as the ethical dilemmas in voter data usage or the comparative effectiveness of digital campaigns across political contexts, can significantly strengthen the study's unique contributions. Besides its role as a communication platform, social media enables data-driven campaigns that tailor political messaging to specific voter demographics. Through voter data analysis, campaigns can predict voter behavior and craft messages that resonate with target groups. This approach was particularly evident in Indonesia's 2019 presidential election, where candidates leveraged platforms like Instagram and YouTube to personalize outreach efforts. However, this heavy reliance on data also raised concerns about privacy violations and the ethical use of voter information.

In the digital era, data has become the most valuable currency. Data analysis allows campaigns to delve into in-depth information about voters, such as political preferences, demographics, and behavioral patterns. With these insights, campaigns can tailor their messages, strategies, and tactics to target voters more efficiently and effectively. While data

analysis provides strategic advantages, ethical considerations must be considered. Voter data privacy and transparency in its use are crucial. Campaigns must ensure that the data collected and used is collected ethically and according to applicable regulations and laws.

Digital marketing offers campaigns a range of tools to reach voters more cost-efficiently. Techniques like pay-per-click (PPC) advertising allow campaigns to display their messages precisely when voters search for related information. Search engine optimization (SEO) also helps campaigns increase their visibility in search results. Although considered an older method than other digital marketing techniques, email marketing remains an effective tool. With personalized content and timing, campaigns can send resonant messages directly to voters' inboxes, building personal connections and enhancing engagement.

In the digital era, candidates' and campaigns' online reputations can be built or destroyed in seconds. With social media and online news platforms, positive or negative narratives can spread quickly, impacting public perception. To address this challenge, campaigns require a dedicated team to monitor and respond to comments, reviews, and news that emerge on the web. It's about extinguishing fires when scandals arise and proactively building and maintaining a positive image, showcasing achievements and the candidate's vision.

Valuable and relevant content is not just about informing voters but also about building credibility and trust. With well-crafted articles, videos, infographics, and podcasts, campaigns can stand out as trustworthy sources of information on issues most important to voters. Additionally, high-quality content enables campaigns to optimize their visibility in search engines. Content that receives much attention and is widely shared on social media enhances the campaign's domain authority, boosting SEO rankings.

Direct interaction with voters allows one to build deeper and more personal relationships. Platforms like Instagram Live or webinars enable candidates to be in front of voters, answering their questions in real time and discussing important issues. Moreover, this format allows campaigns to collect direct feedback from voters, providing valuable insights into their primary concerns. With this information, campaigns can adjust their strategies and messages to better meet voters' needs and desires.

Combining the power of digital technology with grassroots energy and enthusiasm is a powerful strategy. Digital tools enable campaigns to mobilize, train, and coordinate volunteers efficiently. Specialized apps or online platforms can assist supporters in organizing events, sharing content, or even fundraising. However, the success of digital grassroots mobilization is not just about technology. It requires campaigns to build and maintain authentic relationships with their base, provide them with the tools and resources they need to succeed, and give them a sense of ownership in the campaign's success.

In today's information landscape, disinformation can instantly damage reputations and campaigns. Campaigns must proactively identify, address, and refute false information about their candidates or platforms. To combat disinformation, campaigns can collaborate with fact-checking organizations, use social media monitoring tools, and educate voters on distinguishing between authentic and fake news. Additionally, building a reputation as a trustworthy source of information is crucial to prevent the spread of fake news.

Cybersecurity threats are an unavoidable reality in the digital era. With their extensive voter databases and other sensitive information, political campaigns are prime targets for hackers. To protect their data and information, campaigns must invest resources in advanced security technology and best practices. In addition to implementing technological solutions, campaigns must ensure that their entire team receives training on basic security practices, such as regularly changing passwords, avoiding suspicious links, and not sharing personal information on unsecured platforms.

Technology evolves astonishingly, and successful campaigns can adapt and adopt the latest innovations. Technologies like augmented reality or virtual reality can create immersive and

engaging experiences for voters, leaving a lasting impression. However, campaigns must ensure that the technologies they adopt are relevant to their message and audience. Inappropriately applied or misused technology can feel forced or alienating, so campaigns must understand and consider voters' needs and preferences before adopting new technologies.

Challenges and Potential Issues in the Use of Social Media in Politics

Amidst technological and informational advancements, the digital era has redefined how society communicates and interacts. Specifically, social media has become an unstoppable force, transforming the global communication landscape and influencing nearly every aspect of human life. From everyday social life to business, education, and politics, social media has revolutionized how information is spread and public opinion is formed. Particularly in politics, social media has become an extremely effective tool for rallying support, disseminating information, and stirring public participation. Leaders and political candidates use it to approach voters, while activist groups organize actions and voice aspirations. However, like a coin with two sides, using social media in politics also comes with challenges and potential problems. How this technology affects political dynamics, both locally and globally, is an important question that needs further exploration.

One key challenge in using social media for political campaigns is the increasing reliance on data analytics to shape campaign strategies. While data-driven campaigns allow for more precise targeting of voter groups, they also raise ethical concerns about voter privacy and transparency. Campaigns leveraging voter data can inadvertently exacerbate inequalities in political participation, particularly when marginalized groups are overlooked or excluded from tailored messaging due to limited digital access or representation.

Social media algorithms have also significantly contributed to political polarization, particularly at the grassroots level. By prioritizing content that aligns with users' preferences, these algorithms create isolated echo chambers where individuals are exposed predominantly to viewpoints that reinforce their existing beliefs. This reduces exposure to diverse perspectives, fosters mistrust, and deepens divisions among different political factions. To mitigate these issues, political campaigns and platforms must adopt strategies that promote cross-group dialogue and combat the fragmentation of public discourse.

In the past, political communication was more linear and centralized. Political parties, candidates, and other interest groups relied on mass media, such as television, radio, and newspapers, to convey their messages to the public. Access to these platforms was limited and expensive, meaning only a handful of well-resourced actors could dominate the public conversation. As such, the general public played a more passive role as recipients of political information. Social media has dramatically shaken this status quo. Now, every individual with internet access can become a sender of information, and every message, regardless of the sender, has the potential to go viral and influence millions. Social media has democratized the information landscape, empowering ordinary individuals to influence political agendas and spark change. This is evident from various social and political movements that started from a small group of individuals but quickly gained massive support by spreading information through social media.

However, this power also comes with responsibility and risk. On one hand, the ability of individuals and groups to easily spread information has allowed previously marginalized voices to be heard. On the other hand, this ease also leads to issues related to information credibility, narrative authenticity, and potential manipulation. In the political context, where information can be a weapon, the use of social media can be a double-edged sword. Fake news, misinformation, polarization, and cyber-attacks present new challenges in the political communication landscape of the digital era. With the great potential that social media brings in changing the way political communication is conducted, policymakers, political practitioners, and the general public need to

understand the challenges and potential issues that may arise. It is a collective responsibility to ensure that this technology is used in a way that strengthens democracy and promotes constructive dialogue, not the opposite. With a deep understanding, we can harness social media as a positive tool in the political world while remaining vigilant against its potential dangers.

In an increasingly complex world, diversity of opinions and perspectives should be the foundation of a civilized and democratic society. The strength of the information era lies in its ability to present a variety of information sources that can enrich our understanding. However, ironically, the same tools that are supposed to encourage this plurality (such as social media) now have the potential to reduce it. Algorithms that control what we see on our timelines, initially designed to increase user content relevance, now risk isolating us in information bubbles.

Echo chambers have become an increasingly prominent phenomenon in discussions about social media. Behind the screen, the complexity of algorithms works in a puzzling way: by learning what we like, who we follow, and what content we often interact with, the platform then presents more similar content. Indirectly, we continue to be fed an excessive portion of what we agree with or align with our beliefs, while alternative or contradictory views diminish. The long-term effect of this phenomenon is creating a fragmented society where groups with different views live in different information realities, with little or no interaction with other groups. The impact of this phenomenon is more than just a lack of exposure to different views. When individuals are consistently only given views that reinforce their beliefs, there is a risk that they become less critical and less open to new information. Moreover, when different groups no longer dialogue or interact, misunderstandings and prejudices can grow and deepen, creating a more polarized and potentially conflictual environment. To address this challenge, there is an urgent need for innovation in technology and media education approaches that promote cross-cultural understanding and critical thinking amid this fast-paced information era.

The rapid spread of information through social media changes how society accesses and consumes news. Social media platforms, designed to maximize user interaction through sharing and commenting, have created an environment where news (regardless of its truth) can go viral quickly. This is exacerbated by the current consumer behaviour of information, which often only reads headlines without further investigating the content or sources. In such conditions, fake news or misinformation has the same potential to go viral as accurate and verified news. The impact of disinformation is far more serious than just spreading incorrect information. Disinformation can be used to manipulate public opinion, push certain political agendas, or even destabilise social stability. When society is bombarded with conflicting information, trust in traditional institutions such as mass media, government, or academic institutions can erode. This loss of trust can then lead to skepticism and apathy, making society less participative in the democratic process.

Addressing the challenges posed by disinformation and polarization requires stronger regulatory frameworks. In Indonesia, existing regulations like the ITE Law (Law on Electronic Information and Transactions) aim to curb the spread of false information. However, the law has been criticized for its broad interpretation and potential misuse, highlighting the need for more precise and balanced policies that protect freedom of expression while combating disinformation. Comparative analysis with countries like Germany's Network Enforcement Act (NetzDG) demonstrates a more structured approach to holding platforms accountable for harmful content while maintaining user rights.

Furthermore, Indonesia's challenges in managing digital campaigns are unique due to its vast geographic and demographic diversity. Compared to countries like the United States or India, where digital campaigning also plays a significant role, Indonesia faces additional hurdles such as unequal digital literacy and internet penetration. While the U.S. and India have implemented targeted regulatory measures to address misinformation and promote fair campaigning, Indonesia's regulatory landscape is still evolving. This highlights the research gap in

understanding how Indonesia can develop tailored solutions for its sociopolitical and technological context.

The increasingly integrated digital world in our lives has opened opportunities for actors with malicious intentions to exploit its vulnerabilities. Cyberattacks are not just a technology issue; they profoundly impact society's social, economic, and political aspects. Hacking targeting individuals can result in losing personal data and confidentiality, while attacks on critical infrastructure can cause widespread disruption of public services and even trigger national crises.

In the context of political campaigns, cyberattacks have the potential to damage the integrity of the election process. For instance, if voter data is leaked or the voting system is sabotaged, it can question the legitimacy of the election results and shake public confidence in the democratic process. Besides hacking, manipulating public opinion through bots and trolls is also a serious threat in the digital era. Bots, or computer programs that automatically generate content, and trolls, individuals who deliberately spread propaganda or false information, can be used to create the illusion of massive public support for certain issues or candidates. This phenomenon, known as "information warfare," can undermine the foundations of democracy based on accurate information and healthy public discussion. The challenges emerging in the digital era demand that policymakers, election organizers, and the public heighten vigilance and digital literacy. In addition to strengthening cybersecurity, it is also important to raise public awareness of how to identify and counteract fake information and propaganda. The future of democracy in the digital era depends on our ability to confront and overcome these challenges wisely.

The digital era has presented new capacities in the organization and mobilization of society. Through social media, messages can spread quickly, creating waves of solidarity and collective action within hours. Social media has often become a tool to raise awareness, as seen in various global social movements. However, this potential has two sides. On the one hand, when used correctly, social media can be a powerful instrument for positive social change. On the other hand, this platform can also be misused by certain groups to spread propaganda, mislead the public, or trigger unrest. The ability of social media to mobilize masses quickly, backed by information that is not always accurate, can result in uncontrollable situations, disrupting social order and political stability.

With the sophistication of the digital era, the expectation that everyone will benefit from this technology is increasing. However, reality shows that inequality in access and utilization of technology still exists. While some of society enjoys high-speed internet, advanced social media platforms, and access to information in an instant, many groups are still marginalized from the benefits of the digital revolution. Limitations in infrastructure in rural areas, lack of digital literacy, and economic barriers are why parts of society are disconnected from the global information network. Consequently, some parts of society do not get the same opportunity to participate in political and social discourse in the digital era. This creates a gap that can threaten social cohesion and the integrity of the democratic process.

CONCLUSION

The digital era has significantly impacted political campaigns in Indonesia, with social media becoming crucial in shaping political narratives, mobilizing voters, and fundraising, especially during the 2014 and 2019 presidential elections. While social media offers opportunities for greater voter engagement, particularly among younger generations, it also presents challenges, such as disinformation, political polarization, and the need for stronger regulation to preserve democratic integrity. This study contributes uniquely to the literature by exploring the dynamics of digital campaigns in Indonesia, where digital access, social media usage, and regulatory frameworks are still developing. However, the reliance on secondary data limits the empirical depth, and future research should incorporate primary data, such as interviews

or surveys, and compare digital campaign strategies across Southeast Asia to better understand regional challenges. Additionally, issues like fake news, cyber threats, and unequal technology access highlight the need for efforts to ensure that digital platforms support, rather than undermine, democracy and open dialogue.

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