Framing Theory on Cyber Politic Analysis: Candidate for Governor of North Sumatera on Instagram

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the utilization of Instagram as a social media platform in political campaigns during the Medan Governor Election, applying the principles of framing theory. The primary aim is to investigate how gubernatorial candidates construct and disseminate their political messages through visual and textual content to shape voter perceptions. Anchored in Erving Goffman's (1974) framing theory, the study examines how candidates selectively emphasize and organize information to influence audience interpretation. By employing Instagram features such as posts, stories, and interactive elements, candidates seek to craft their public image, underscore key issues, and engage voters effectively. The findings indicate that Instagram functions as a pivotal tool for shaping public opinion and increasing candidates' visibility in the context of digital media-driven political campaigns. This research underscores the importance of strategic social media use in modern political communication, highlighting its potential to redefine voter engagement and public discourse.

INTRODUCTION

The digital era has transformed political communication, positioning social media as a critical medium for shaping public opinion. Platforms such as Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook enable politicians to convey messages directly to voters, bypassing traditional media gatekeepers. This shift underscores the need to understand how audiences create, disseminate, and interpret political content. Goffman (1974) defines framing as the process by which individuals or groups present information to shape audience perceptions. In the digital age, where information is disseminated rapidly and widely, framing becomes even more pivotal. Through this lens, communication is structured to emphasize certain elements while omitting others, allowing politicians to influence public perceptions strategically.

The agenda-setting theory, proposed by McCombs and Shaw (1972), highlights how media shapes the public's perception of issue importance. Social media amplifies this capability, enabling politicians to not only influence public opinion but also prioritize topics dominating public discourse. Together, these theories form a robust framework for analyzing how politicians utilize social media to construct their public image and sway voters. Instagram's interactive

features, such as polls, stories, and direct messaging, facilitate instant voter engagement, fostering a personalized connection. This two-way communication allows candidates to refine their messaging based on audience feedback, enhancing their image as responsive and accountable leaders while reinforcing their framing strategies.

In the digital era, Instagram provides political candidates with novel framing opportunities. A frame, as described by Entman (1993), serves as a fundamental structure for adding meaning to events or issues, encompassing problem identification, cause diagnosis, moral judgment, and solution proposals. Instagram's visual content enables candidates to highlight key themes such as competence, integrity, and empathy. Its unique blend of text and imagery supports effective framing, allowing candidates to project leadership qualities and align with issues or values that resonate with voters. Carefully curated visuals help establish candidates' characters, priorities, and values in ways that text alone cannot achieve.

Globally, politicians increasingly use social media to engage voters directly, bypassing traditional media filters and fostering immediate, personal communication. As Chadwick (2013) notes, social media facilitates new forms of public discourse, transforming political landscapes by enabling candidates to craft and control their narratives more effectively. Instagram, with its emphasis on images and short videos, is central to this transformation. Unlike Twitter or Facebook, Instagram's focus on visual storytelling creates opportunities for emotionally engaging and relatable content. Visual framing is particularly impactful because imagery and video are perceived as authentic and resonate strongly with audiences.

Instagram's popularity in Indonesia, especially among younger voters, underscores its importance in political campaigns (Sulastri et al., 2024). With Indonesia ranking among the largest Instagram markets globally, the platform's relevance to political communication is evident. This research investigates the Instagram accounts of two North Sumatra gubernatorial candidates, Bobby Nasution and Edy Rahmayadi, comparing their use of framing and agenda-setting strategies. By analyzing their digital political communication tactics, the study aims to uncover the effectiveness of these strategies in shaping voter perceptions.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The role of social media in political communication, particularly through framing and agenda-setting, has been extensively discussed in academic research. Goffman's (1974) framing theory provides a critical framework for understanding how political messages are constructed to influence public perceptions. Goffman describes framing as the strategic presentation of information to guide audience interpretation of an issue. This is especially pertinent in political contexts, where politicians craft narratives that emphasize specific aspects of an issue while downplaying others. In the digital era, platforms like Instagram empower politicians to directly engage with their audience, bypassing traditional media gatekeepers. Bruns (2013) introduces the concept of "produsage," highlighting how social media enables audiences to actively participate in the creation and interpretation of content, thereby amplifying the impact of framing. With the rapid dissemination of information on these platforms, politicians can shape their public image and influence public opinion by strategically curating messages and visuals.

In addition to framing, the agenda-setting theory proposed by McCombs and Shaw (1972) elucidates how media shapes public perceptions of issue importance. Social media platforms such as Instagram allow politicians to influence not only public opinion but also the topics that dominate the public agenda. Dahlgren (2009) characterizes social media as a "public sphere" where political actors can directly engage with the public, offering innovative opportunities for interaction and influence. Instagram's interactive features, including polls, stories, and direct messaging, enable politicians to tailor their messages based on real-time audience feedback. This dynamic fosters a personalized communication approach, making candidates appear more accessible and responsive. Consequently, social media emerges as a potent agenda-setting tool, enabling politicians to spotlight issues they wish to prioritize in public discourse.

Instagram's visual-centric design provides a unique platform for political candidates to employ framing techniques that resonate with their audience. Entman (1993) defines framing as the process of selecting specific aspects of an issue, assigning moral judgments, and proposing solutions that align with the audience's values. Instagram's image-based approach allows politicians to portray themselves as competent, empathetic, and trustworthy. The platform's visual nature enhances its effectiveness in conveying authenticity, as images and videos are often perceived as more relatable and impactful than text alone. Spanje and Azrout (2022). the significance of visual framing in politics, noting that it fosters emotional connections with the audience, thereby increasing the memorability and influence of political messages. Additionally, Instagram's interactive features, such as stories, polls, and direct messaging, provide immediate voter feedback, enabling politicians to adapt their communication strategies to address voter concerns effectively.

As social media platforms like Instagram gain prominence in political communication, they offer politicians a powerful medium to shape public discourse, foster engagement, and bolster their public image (Larsson, 2023). In Indonesia, where Instagram ranks among the most widely used platforms globally, its significance in political campaigns is undeniable. As of 2024, Indonesia's substantial Instagram user base, dominated by younger voters, underscores the platform's critical role in political communication. This highlights Instagram's utility in framing and agenda-setting strategies, particularly in targeting younger demographics and engaging them in the political process.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach, utilizing content analysis to investigate how candidates in the Medan Governor Election used Instagram to frame their political messages. Content analysis, as described by Krippendorff (2004), is a robust method for analyzing both textual and visual materials in communication studies. The primary objective of this research is to explore how gubernatorial candidates framed their messages through Instagram posts, visuals, and interactive features, and how these strategies influenced voter perceptions. The study focuses on two prominent candidates, Bobby Nasution and Edy Rahmayadi, who were chosen due to their significance as key contenders in the election.

Data collection for this study was conducted through non-participatory observation of the candidates' official Instagram accounts during the campaign period, spanning from September 1 to December 9, 2024. As noted by Clark et al. (2009), non-participatory observation is particularly suitable for qualitative studies, as it allows researchers to gather detailed insights without direct involvement. Relevant data were collected from Instagram feed posts, including photos, videos, and text captions shared on the candidates' accounts. These data sources provided a comprehensive overview of how Instagram was utilized as a campaign tool.

The data analysis was guided by theoretical frameworks centered on communication and political strategies, particularly Goffman's (1974) framing theory. This theory was applied to analyze how candidates structured their messages to emphasize specific issues and values while downplaying others, a process that shapes voter perception by controlling the elements that are highlighted (Entman, 1993).

The units of analysis in this study included three main categories: textual content, visual content, and interactive features. Textual content encompassed captions, hashtags, and other written narratives accompanying posts, such as campaign-specific hashtags like #BobbyForMedan and #EdyRahmayadi2024. Visual content focused on images, videos, and other multimedia elements in the posts, while interactive features examined engagement activities such as likes, views, and other metrics on Instagram. By analyzing these elements, this study aims to provide a detailed understanding of how Instagram was used to frame political messages. The methodological approach ensures a comprehensive examination of Instagram as a tool for political messaging and framing within the context of the Medan Governor Election.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION
Framing Theory and Its Application in Cyber Politics

Table 1. Comparative Analysis of Framing Strategies of Bobby Nasution and Edy Rahmayadi

Aspects	Bobby Nasution	Edy Rahmayadi
Framing Themes	Youthful, modern, and community-connected leader	Experienced, assertive, and loyal leader
Central Focus	City development, neighborhood connections, and national linkages.	Regional development, governance stability, and public welfare.
Critical Frames	Visionary Leader, Local Leader, Connected Candidate.	Regional Leader, Public Welfare Advocate.
Vision Theme	Relatable and modern visuals showing casual dress, community events, and innovation.	Formal and authoritative visuals focusing on discipline and governance.
Audience Targeted	Millennials, progressives, and change-oriented citizens.	Older voters, traditionalists, and stability-seekers.
Campaign Focus	Infrastructure modernization, community involvement, education programs.	Governance achievements, infrastructure, and welfare initiatives.

According to Table 1, the rapid rise of social media platforms has altered the political environment, notably in Indonesia, where platforms such as Instagram have become integral to election campaigns. For example, Bobby Nasution and Edy Rahmayadi, two notable candidates for governor of North Sumatra (with Medan as its capital), use Instagram to shape their public personas and political narratives. Framing theory, introduced by Erving Goffman in his seminal work Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience (1974), posits that media frames influence how people perceive and understand events, topics, and individuals. The concept of a "frame" pertains to how information is presented and received. In politics, framing enables politicians to strategically emphasize certain aspects of their identities or programs while downplaying others. This allows candidates to control the narrative surrounding their campaigns and develop an image that appeals to voters. However, deeper reflection on how these framing strategies impact audience interpretation could provide greater insight into their effectiveness in shaping public perception.

Bobby Nasution's Instagram Campaign and Framing Strategy

Bobby Nasution's Instagram campaign is distinguished by the strategic use of imagery and messaging to convey a contemporary, youthful image. As President Joko Widodo's son-in-law, Bobby is well-positioned to leverage the strength of his family ties. However, his Instagram framing extends beyond his political connections to establish his identity as a leader focused on North Sumatra's future.

The Visionary Frame

Bobby's Instagram posts emphasize his vision for the city's development and infrastructure. He frequently shares photos of himself using technology, participating in urban planning discussions, and visiting recently completed or planned projects. Through these posts, Bobby creates the image of a "visionary leader" committed to modernizing and enhancing Medan's infrastructure. For instance, he shares photos of himself meeting with architects, urban planners, and inspecting construction projects, reinforcing the notion that he is actively striving to bring Medan into the modern era. This framing appeals to voters' aspirations for a forward-thinking candidate capable of initiating significant change.

The Local Leader Frame

In addition to emphasizing his vision, Bobby Nasution portrays himself as being closely connected to the people of Medan. Many of his Instagram posts show him attending local events with residents, performing community service, and participating in religious or cultural gatherings. Bobby uses these visuals to construct the frame of a "local leader" who understands the concerns of the people and is committed to improving their lives. Many posts include captions addressing issues such as poverty, health, and education, signaling that he listens to the community's voices and acts to address their needs. This frame attempts to depict Bobby as both an effective leader and a compassionate figure genuinely concerned with Medan's well-being.

The Connected Candidate Frame

Bobby's marriage to President Joko Widodo's daughter provides him with a significant advantage as a candidate. He cleverly frames this connection on Instagram by posting photographs that highlight his relationships with national officials and the president himself. These posts show Bobby participating in national-level discussions or meeting influential figures, positioning him as someone capable of bringing national support and resources to Medan. The underlying message of these posts is that Bobby has the political connections needed to secure funding and programs for Medan, benefitting both the city and its citizens.

Edy Rahmayadi's Instagram Campaign and Framing Strategy

Edy Rahmayadi, the incumbent governor of North Sumatra, uses Instagram to project himself as an authoritative and strong leader dedicated to developing the region. His framing focuses on his competencies in governance and leadership, bolstered by his background as a retired army general and former chairman of the Indonesian Football Association (PSSI).

The Authoritative Leader Frame

Edy Rahmayadi's Instagram posts frequently depict him in professional settings, such as meetings with prominent politicians, business leaders, and military personnel. These posts often reference Edy's military background, presenting him as a disciplined and authoritative leader who is unafraid to make tough decisions. For instance, Edy shares images of himself in uniform or meeting high-ranking officials to showcase his leadership capabilities and command of respect. This framing positions Edy as a leader capable of effectively addressing the province's development and security challenges, appealing to voters seeking expertise and strong governance.

Framing as a Regional Champion

Many of Edy's posts highlight the completion of significant projects and initiatives aimed at improving the lives of North Sumatra's citizens. These posts construct him as a defender and representative of the province's interests. By celebrating these achievements, Edy emphasizes his role as a champion for North Sumatra's development. Numerous posts include images of him attending groundbreaking ceremonies or visiting local schools, further solidifying his image as a hands-on leader invested in the province's growth.

The Defender of Public Welfare Frame

Edy also uses Instagram to demonstrate his commitment to public welfare, particularly in addressing poverty and education. He frequently posts images of himself engaging with locals, especially vulnerable communities. These visuals convey his empathy and determination to improve the lives of disadvantaged individuals. This framing portrays Edy as a caring leader who actively works with the community to tackle the region's most pressing challenges. By focusing on social welfare, Edy seeks to attract voters who prioritize reducing inequality and improving the

standard of living.

CONCLUSIONS

The use of Instagram as a political campaign tool in the Medan Governor Election provides an important overview of how candidates leverage social media to frame their political messages. This analysis demonstrates, through the lens of framing theory, that candidates selectively structure and present information using text and visuals to craft narratives that influence voter perceptions. By employing visual elements such as images and videos, candidates effectively communicate their values, identity, and vision, fostering engagement and emotional connections with their audience. However, this study is limited to the analysis of two gubernatorial candidates within a specific election period, which may not fully capture the broader use of Instagram in diverse political contexts or cultural settings. The findings suggest that Instagram is a powerful political marketing tool, enabling candidates to interact directly with voters and reach wider audiences. This has significant implications for modern political communication, emphasizing the need for strategic management of social media platforms in shaping public opinion. Future research could expand on this work by exploring how other social media platforms, or a broader range of candidates and elections, employ similar strategies, thereby providing a more comprehensive understanding of digital political campaigning.

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