



The Transformation of Political Campaigns from Conventional to Digital Political Campaigns (A Study in Mojokerto District)

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Abstract. Entering the digital era, political campaigns have undergone significant changes from conventional media to digital campaigns that rely more on social media and the internet. Digital campaigns are considered more effective in targeting the millennial and Generation Z populations, which number over 100 million in Indonesia. This study employs qualitative descriptive research with a strong emphasis on information as an investigative process to thoroughly understand the social phenomena at hand. The results of this research indicate that although campaigns in the digital era can provide advantages, effective political campaigns also require the right strategies, namely delivering clear and targeted messages to the appropriate audience, building good relationships with voters, and gaining their support. Meanwhile, conventional political campaigns are still used by candidates or political parties and are considered effective in building good relationships with voters through direct interactions, despite limitations such as limited time, resources, and manpower, as well as dependence on uneven support from traditional mass media.

Keywords: Political Campaigns, Campaign Paradigm, Digital, Conventional democratic

1 Introduction

Entering the rapidly evolving digital era, political campaigns have undergone significant transformations. In the past, political campaigns heavily relied on conventional media such as banners, billboards, television, and radio advertisements, often coupled with direct interactions with constituents. However, contemporary political campaigns have shifted towards digital platforms, increasingly leveraging social media and the internet.

While some critics still question the effectiveness of campaigns in the digital age, many believe that digital campaigns offer substantial advantages for political candidates. This trend is evidenced by the growing number of candidates utilizing social media and online platforms for their political campaigns. Digital campaigns are not only cost-effective and easily accessible, but they are also considered an efficient

way to target millennials and Generation Z, a demographic estimated to exceed 100 million in Indonesia [1].

Campaigns in the digital age have proven to be more effective due to their ability to reach a wider audience simultaneously [2]. However, while digital campaigning can yield benefits, it is essential to remember that effective political campaigns demand a well-considered strategy. An effective campaign must deliver a clear and targeted message to the appropriate audience, while also establishing a positive rapport with voters to secure their support.

In contrast, conventional campaigns continue to coexist with their digital counterparts, despite the advent of the digital era. Conventional political campaigns involve direct interactions between candidates and voters, including face-to-face meetings, political debates, mass media advertisements, door-to-door canvassing, and the placement of posters and banners in strategic locations. Conventional campaigns offer a personal touch, showcasing candidates' dialogue skills, persuasive abilities, and knack for engaging potential voters.

Nevertheless, conventional campaigns have their limitations, including constraints in terms of time, resources, manpower, and reliance on uneven traditional mass media support. Additionally, they can lead to environmental and public order issues when posters or banners are displayed in restricted areas or disrupt traffic flow.

Given this backdrop, the research aims to compare digital and conventional campaigns during the 2019 election, the 2020 regional election, and the preparations for the 2024 election. The research question pertains to voter participation amidst the shift from conventional to digital political campaigns in the lead-up to the 2024 election in Mojokerto district.

2 Methods

This research employs a qualitative approach, which emerges as a response to both positivist and post-positivist traditions. Qualitative research involves multiple methods, combining a bricoleur approach to interpret empirical phenomena [3]. Additionally, Creswell views qualitative research as a "process" for comprehending social issues and testing hypotheses based on existing assumptions[4]. The research employs inductive logic to derive information without predetermined identification, facilitating a comprehensive understanding of evolving social phenomena [4].

The research method employed is descriptive-analytical, aiming to present a clear picture or situation of the subject under study without imposing any specific treatment [5].

Researchers employ the qualitative approach due to the dynamic, ambiguous, and multifaceted nature of the problem, making it impractical to capture social data through quantitative methods like questionnaires. The qualitative approach seeks to comprehensively and deeply describe various societal or research-targeted conditions and situations. Employing the interpretative method is necessary to discern meanings that hinge on the phenomena observed. This involves categorizing and defining criteria

for these categories. Qualitative research adopts a more descriptive-analytic analysis, systematically interpreting content.

3 Result And Discussions

3.1 Conventional and Digital Political Campaigns

The ideal electoral campaigns encompass delivering political messages, one of their core functions being political education for the community. Parties strive to sway voters through various agendas perceived to benefit society. Hence, parties endeavor to recruit effectively, with mass media serving as a relatively potent channel. Conventional methods are waning as political parties seize opportunities offered by media platforms. Elite presentation of political messages is becoming more diverse and vivid. Media, be it print or electronic, is now a tool for rallying the masses, connecting political interests vertically and horizontally, intertwining political and public life.

In the 2019 presidential and vice-presidential elections, online media came to the forefront. These platforms often broadcast notifications about candidates. Traditional media like television, radio, and print are changing due to the ascendancy of social media and online platforms. The art of political spin is used to secure electoral success, manipulating media to steer public opinion.

Online media plays a crucial role in the political process, even assuming a prominent position within the political arena. It possesses the power to elevate or tarnish an individual's political career. Media functions beyond information dissemination. The 2019 election campaign relied on both conventional and social media for propaganda purposes.

Numerous campaign platforms are exploited, with online media serving as a prominent contender. Since the 2014 Presidential Election, the ascent of social media and online platforms as political campaign tools in Indonesia has been pronounced. Social media offers distinct advantages compared to traditional media, such as banners, billboards, leaflets, newspapers, TV, radio, or mass gatherings[6].

In the context of campaign practices in Mojokerto Regency, the distinction between conventional and digital campaigns spans several aspects. Conventional campaigns utilize traditional media like banners, billboards, and stickers distributed to the public. Due to the KPU not having verified candidate data during the research period, the use of conventional technology like TV or radio was not observed. Candidates, aside from employing campaign media, also engage in direct interactions with voters and their support teams.

Digital campaigns harness online platforms and social media. Popular choices include WhatsApp, Facebook, and Instagram. However, other online media like YouTube and TikTok are less frequently employed.

The target of Conventional Political campaigns are Generation X and Baby Boomers, as they might have limited access to information and social media. Hence, these campaigns aim to acquaint them directly through door-to-door interactions or billboards. On the other hand, digital campaigns hold the potential for broader reach,

leveraging unrestricted geographical interactions to disseminate information more easily.

3.2 Candidate Campaigns and Fading Party Identity

Campaigns often exude splendor and allure. However, post-election, the excitement wanes, and the promised programs often remain unrealized. Political parties should communicate their programs and plans effectively, even binding commitments to ensure promises are fulfilled. In reality, party programs frequently get overshadowed by campaign fervor, leaving them forgotten post-election.

Some parties manage to retain voter support not due to compelling campaigns but rather the loyalty of their followers. Such loyalists overlook the party's actual program and plans. This dynamic contributes to the stagnation of democracy's maturity and intelligence within the country.

KPU Regulation Number 33 of 2018 on the Second Amendment to KPU Regulation Number 23 of 2018 on General Election Campaigns permits parties to self-promote by displaying flags and sequence numbers as election participants, albeit within their own ranks. Parties can also conduct limited meetings with prior written notice to KPU and Bawaslu. The regulation forbids campaign activities involving special characteristics, personal or party identity, both in public places and on social media. Additionally, campaign materials cannot be published in print or electronic media outside the designated campaign period.

During the research observation, campaign paraphernalia in the form of banners have been erected in many locations since the Temporary Candidate List (Daftar Calon Sementara or DCS) had yet to be finalized. These banners are typically placed at road intersections and busy public places like markets, town squares, and recreational areas. They also adorn nearly all village entry points and borders of administrative districts. In addition to candidate banners, political party flags are seen lining the streets and bridges.

An interesting aspect observed regarding campaign paraphernalia is that the top three parties securing the most votes successively—PKB, PDIP, and Demokrat—adopted similar patterns in their political campaigns. As the winning party, PKB not only displayed party flags with candidate numbers but also featured images of PKB's party leader, Muhaimin Iskandar, alongside candidate images. For PDIP's candidate banners, including those for the national parliament (DPR-RI), regional parliament (DPRD Provinsi), and district/city parliament (DPRD Kabupaten/Kota), they incorporated images of the candidates as well as Ganjar Pranowo, the presidential candidate endorsed by PDIP. Meanwhile, the Demokrat party displayed images of its party leader, Agus Harimurti Yudhoyono, along with the leader of the Demokrat Kabupaten Mojokerto and the aligned candidates.

The practice of placing images while concurrently featuring both the party's chairman and the presidential or local party leader is not an individual initiative by the candidates. There's a directive from the political parties to showcase their figures for the 2024 agenda. This dual effect impacts not only the candidates but also the parties and their figures. Parties that remain distant from the people and exclusive will

gradually be abandoned by the voters. This paints a clear picture of the weakening of party identity in Indonesia post-reformation. Examining the data on political party vote acquisition since the early reformation period until now, the votes garnered by the winning party in elections have been decreasing. In the first post-reformation election in 1999, the PDIP managed to secure 33.74% of the votes. Subsequent elections saw the victorious party's votes diminishing, with Golkar securing 21.58% in 2004, Demokrat with 20.85% in 2009, and PDIP's votes dipping below 20% in both 2014 and 2019.

Referencing pre-reformation and post-reformation electoral patterns, political campaigns often centered on reinforcing party identity. Political parties held distinct perspectives and ideologies, and their campaigns aimed to promote these values to voters. Voters identifying with a particular party tend to support candidates from the same party, irrespective of individual candidates. However, since 2004 up to the present, campaign patterns have started to change. With more rational and critical voters, candidates are expected to pay closer attention to concrete work plans, personal stances on crucial issues, and their qualifications and experience for public responsibilities. Consequently, the resulting effect is strengthening the personal figure of the candidate rather than the party identity.

The waning of party identity in campaigns can also be linked to public frustration with excessive partisanship and inter-party confrontations. Rational voters are averse to overly polarized politics, leading to demands for more pragmatic and collaborative solutions.

The fading of party identity in campaigns can also be seen as an opportunity for political parties to redefine their perspectives, adapting to social dynamics and the needs of modern voters. The rise of rational voters is directly proportional to the weakening of party identity in candidate campaigns. Voters inclined to be critical and receptive to information require campaigns that focus more on individuals, qualifications, and candidates' work plans. Hence, political parties must acknowledge this change and adapt to meet the demands of modern, rational, and critical voters.

4 Conclusion

General election campaigns have undergone shifts in focus and strategy, where campaign usage doesn't solely rely on either conventional or digital methods but rather tends towards mapping voter potential.

Political campaigns mirror the changing dynamics of modern politics. The decline in party identity and the shift in campaign focus reflect the changing demands and preferences of modern, rational, and critical voters. With the influence of social media and technology, political parties must continuously adapt to meet the expectations and demands of society in a more transparent, rational, and high-quality political process.

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Autors' Contribution

The author consists of 3 members who have shared research work jobs. Among the stages of data collection, are data analysis to research reports submitted to reviewers.

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