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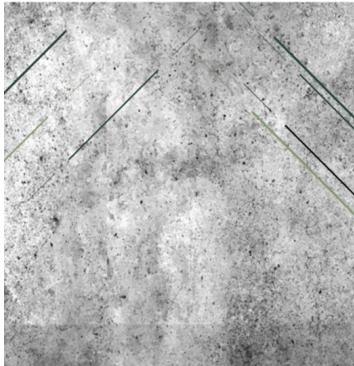
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Digital Technology in Politics: To What Extent Indonesian Political Parties Use Social Media to Maintain Existence and Relevance

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Digital Technology in Politics: To What Extent Indonesian Political Parties Use Social Media to Maintain Existence and Relevance

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Abstract

This research aims to explain the extent to which Indonesian political parties use social media to maintain their existence and relevance in the political arena. This study uses a qualitative method with a case study approach. The case studies are the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDIP), the Golkar Party, and the Gerindra Party. The findings of this study explain that political parties in Indonesia today must carry out organizational transformation to remain relevant and exist in the present and future. This has begun to be done by political parties that utilize digital technology facilities, namely social media by creating accounts and posting professionally packaged content to attract the attention of netizens. PDIP, Golkar, and Gerindra, the top three parties in Indonesia, have actively utilized Instagram and TikTok social media for their party branding needs and to face the 2024 elections by promoting their candidates. In the context of the 2024 Presidential Election, the three political parties are dominant in creating content on Instagram and TikTok regarding the presidential and vice presidential candidates being promoted rather than the political parties themselves. This is an effort by political parties to utilize social media to garner more individual popularity, which leads to the interest in electoral contestation. Political parties that manage their social media professionally are directly proportional to their electoral presence in the community.

Keywords: Political Parties; Digital Technology; Social Media

Introduction

This research is motivated by the use of digital technology in political infrastructure today, especially political parties. The Democratic System has a political infrastructure, one of which is a political party. Neumann & Barghoorn (1956) explains that political parties are groups of political activists who seek to control the government and gain public support. They do this by competing with other groups that have different perspectives. The view of Sartori (2005) explains the important role of political parties as a link between the state and the needs of society. Political parties are an important component of democratic governance and a tool for people to express their wishes. Furthermore, Mainwaring (1991) explains that politicians created political parties to bring together the interests of civil society, in this case, the community, with the government.

However, in practice, political parties in the Indonesian context experience serious problems in carrying out their main function. Indonesian political parties are struggling with internal problems, ranging from institutional personalization and oligarchy to management dualism that leads to conflict (Budi, 2016; Budiatri et al., 2018). Moreover, another fundamental problem is the non-transparency of political parties in carrying out activities often referred to as operating like a "black box". Over the years, political parties in Indonesia have been considered closed and intolerant of change in their structures and figures. The establishment has become the main priority for political parties, so they are slow to move and only play in elite territory (Subekti, 2023). Furthermore, political parties are less responsive to the latest public issues. These problems

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have made Indonesian political parties inefficient in carrying out their responsibilities to the community. Political parties are the link between the state and the community's interests, but this is not maximally implemented because they are still not finished with their internal problems (Subekti & Al-Hamdi, 2023).

Indonesian political parties will face very tough challenges in the future. The rapid changes of the times with the entry of technology and accompanied by the dynamism of people's habits, especially the younger generation today, require all things related to adapting, including political parties, automatically. Because political parties are the breath of democracy, they can facilitate the public's ability to articulate their aspirations. The younger generation in Indonesia today has a very important role, this is because this generation has dominated the composition of the Indonesian population (Subekti et al., 2022).

Statistical data released by the Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS) shows the composition of Indonesia's population by age group. The 2020 Population Census produced data on the Generation Z group, born between 1997 and 2012, accounting for around 74.93 million people, or 27.94% of the total population. This generation is young teenagers or early adolescents. This dominance raises expectations for the future. The group known as millennials consists of individuals born between 1981 and 1996 and accounts for approximately 69.38 million people, with millennials coming in second with 25.87% of the total population (bps.go.id, 2020).

Hasanuddin Ali from Alvara Research stated that most Generation Z use the internet. Their dependence on the internet, known as the mobile generation, reaches 93.9 percent. Millennials have an internet dependency rate of around 88.4 percent and struggle to advance their careers. In contrast, this generation's life is more cheerful. Hasanuddin stated that these young people are very valuable in politics and are targeted by political parties. This is because Generation Z and the Millennial Generation are forces that must be utilized to gain votes in elections, be it for the election of heads of state, regional heads, or representatives of the people (Kominfo.go.id, 2021).

Some relevant previous research. Research from Barberà et al (2021) focuses on discussing how mainstream parties and new parties build their digital platforms and transition from traditional (offline) organizations to digital ones. Likewise, research from Gerbaudo (2020) focuses on explaining that the digital era has witnessed the emergence of new forms of business and consumption and new social movements, such as the social media-driven protests of the Occupy wave. It has also ushered in a new generation of political parties integrating new forms of digital-age organization and communication. This organizational transformation offers great potential for the democratization of political parties but also carries significant risks of plebiscitarianism that need to be carefully examined. Then, research from Raniolo et al (2021) focuses on discussing whether and how ICT impacts the organizational model of political parties. The findings explain that left-wing parties use ICT more frequently and as a means to promote greater internal democracy compared to center-right parties. Furthermore, research from Oross & Tap (2023) how parties in Hungary expand their members' participatory repertoire in intra-party democracy with the help of information and communication technology. The findings show that top-down communication dominates party practice in Hungary, and social media is very popular and used for both external and internal reasons.

Based on the discussion of previous research, it illustrates that political parties and digital technology have become a new phenomenon in world politics. Therefore, this research position wants to strengthen the study of political parties and digital technology. However, This research offers novelty by focusing on the activities of political parties in using social media for the benefit of electoral existence. Thus, this study aims to explain the extent to which Indonesian political parties use social media to maintain their existence and relevance in the political arena.

Declining citizen engagement has been one of the most significant concerns associated with the development of modern democracies (Morrow & Scorgie-Porter, 2002). However, some are optimistic and consider that information, communication, and technology (ICT) have the ability to overcome this (Barber, 2003). Potentially, technology can be a solution to this problem by empowering people and creating new spaces for interaction. The Internet has basic networking fea-

tures that have undoubtedly generated new possibilities for association, mobilization, and political action (Evans, 2019; Fenton, 2016; Oparaugo, 2021).

Couldry (2015) summarizes the democratic potential of the internet as interactivity, co-presence, disintermediation, reduced costs, speed, and absence of boundaries. The public can now meet and organize politically with people they do not know and cannot see at high speed across local, regional, and even national boundaries. Some see this as the beginning of a new, more conversational, and less formal way of doing politics; others are more skeptical. Either way, there are new mechanisms of political socialization that need to be investigated. These basic facts about the digital conditions for politics have led some researchers to build a larger theory of digital politics. They argue that Web 2.0 has changed the larger configuration of individuals, groups, and institutions that shape public culture, including political culture.

Theoretical claims about how to understand the application of ICTs in political processes are often summarized in concepts such as "e-democracy", "digital democracy", or "e-participation". In a review of definitions of the concept of e-democracy, Coleman & Norris (2005) The starting point of the definition is that e-democracy is concerned with using ICTs to improve democratic structures and processes. Several alternatives try to narrow its scope. Chadwick (2003) separates two alternatives, where information dissemination and some features of the deliberative process are made available to the public, while the other ambitions to be a virtual public sphere involving the civil sector. Instinctively, Chadwick's (2003) strategy seems to make sense, separating the vertical relationship between citizens and government from the horizontal relationship among citizens in civil society. More specifically, it is about maintaining the channels that are prerequisites for citizens to engage in digital forms of politics.

Moreover, a review of the literature reveals a compelling argument that emphasizes the advantages of viewing digital politics from a procedural perspective (GrÖNLund, 2003; Macintosh, 2004; Vedel, 2006). As Vedel (2006) argues that this concept should be incorporated into democratic theory, which would add core issues that shape the structure of e-democracy. The most explicit perspective is that defined by GrÖNLund (2003), who states that the term e-democracy is simply a convenient shorthand for ICT used in democratic processes. Both Macintosh (2004) and Vedel (2006) elaborate on this by referring to how the perspective can be applied to all elements of the policy process, from activities related to information provision to discussion and decision-making.

Based on these persuasive arguments, digital politics is defined here as the use of ICTs in democratic political processes relating to information, discussion, and decision-making. Digital politics is a term for how internet technologies have enhanced the complex interactions between political actors and their constituents (Vaccari, 2013). The term describes how the digital revolution is disrupting politics and changing political institutions and modes of political communication (Coleman & Freelon, 2015; Miller, 2016).

Method

This research uses qualitative methods Creswell & Creswell (2017) with a case study approach (Flyvbjerg, 2011). The case studies are the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDIP), the Golkar Party, and the Gerindra Party. The reason for taking these three political parties as case studies is because they are the political parties with the largest votes in the last election in 2019. This simply illustrates that the three political parties are the largest, measured from the last election, in terms of getting legislative seats. Then, for the 2024 elections, PDIP, Golkar, and Gerindra also occupy the top three in surveys conducted by Poltracking Indonesia for the period January 1-7, 2024, Indonesian Political Indicators for the period December 23-24, 2023, and Politika Research and Consulting (PRC) for the period December 20-27, 2023. So, it can be said that the three political parties are still fairly high in existence among the public, as evidenced by their level of electability.

Then, this research data collection technique is a literature study. Therefore, the source of data for this study comes from the three political parties' Instagram and TikTok social media acco-

unts. The data is then further elaborated with data obtained through credible and reputable online news sources such as Kompas.com, detiknews.com, liputan6.com, Tempo.co, and cnnindonesia. The time period for data collection in this study is January 2023-January 2024. Furthermore, this study uses the Nvivo 12 plus tool in analyzing data. This aims to obtain more detailed and comprehensive analysis data related to the case study discussed. The features used in Nvivo 12 plus are crosstab queries to display social media utilization analysis and content analysis.

Results

Utilization of Social Media by Political Parties

These days, social media such as Instagram and TikTok are on the rise. Figure 1 shows PDIP's activity using these two social media, as seen from the number of posts, followers, and following.

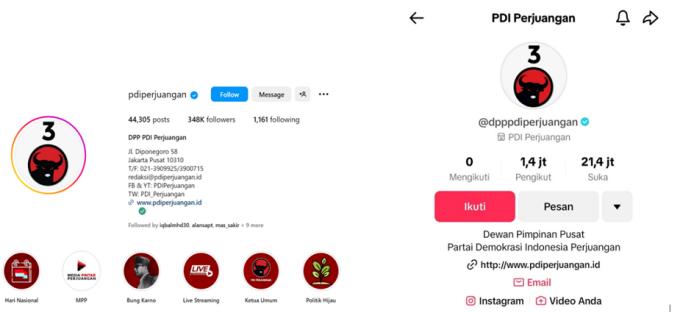


Figure 1. PDIP Instagram and Tiktok Social Media Accounts

Figure 1 shows that PDIP has more followers on TikTok social media as many as 1.4 million. Meanwhile, on Instagram, PDIP only has 448 thousand followers. However, it literally cannot be interpreted that PDIP is very active on TikTok compared to Instagram because the algorithms of the two social media are different. However, it can be simply analyzed that PDIP has so far utilized technology, in this case social media, with the aim of reaching a wider community and attracting the attention of netizens who use the two platforms. This is PDIP's effort in branding itself for the community to get closer and know in real time its activities so far. especially ahead of the 2024 elections, PDIP is very aggressively utilizing these two social media platforms to attract public interest.

A tangible form of PDIP's activity in documenting activities and branding on social media is the number of uploads or posts made. On the PDIP Instagram, 44,305 posts have been uploaded so far. This number is very large when compared to the two following parties, namely Gerindra and Golkar. Likewise, the number of likes on TikTok social media has reached 21.4 million. This indicates that PDIP actively and greatly maximizes Instagram to brand and convey information related to itself to the virtual audience.

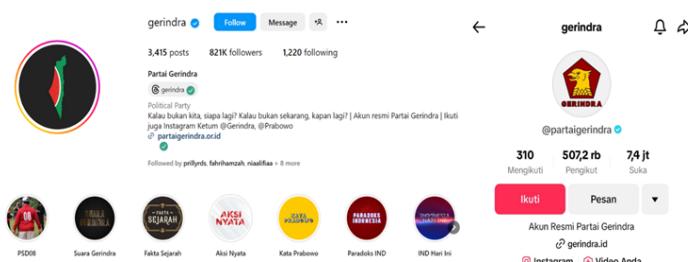


Figure 2. Gerindra Party Instagram and TikTok Social Media Accounts

Figure 2 shows the Gerindra party's Instagram and TikTok accounts. Gerindra's Instagram account has 821 thousand followers, with 1,220 thousand following. The number of posts is also

very large, amounting to 3,415 posts. Likewise, the TikTok account has 507.2 thousand followers with 310 following. Coupled with the number of likes with uploaded content totaling 7.4 million. This data explains that the Gerindra party has also been very active in using these two social media platforms so far. Gerindra Party is also aware that today, digital platforms, such as social media, are very important in the political context. Social media today is widely used for political purposes, branding candidate pairs and parties to be known by the public with a wider reach to increase popularity and electability.

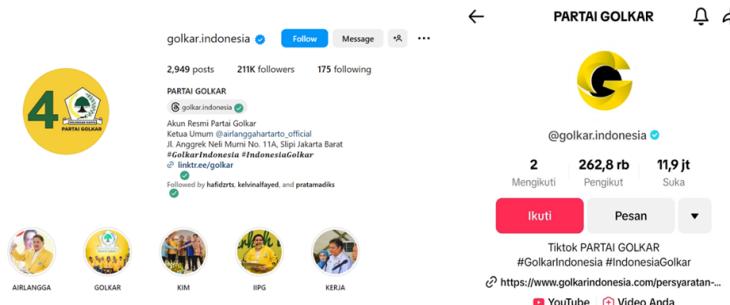


Figure 3. Golkar Party Instagram and Tiktok Social Media Accounts

Figure 3 shows that the Golkar party also uses or utilizes Instagram and TikTok social media for the purpose of attracting public attention. The Golkar party Instagram account has 211 thousand followers with 175 following. Followed by a very large number of content posts, namely 2949 posts. Likewise, the Golkar party tiktok account has 262.8 thousand followers with 2 following. And has a total of 11.9 million likes for its content. This data illustrates how active the Golkar Party is using these two social media accounts.

Political Party Social Media Content Activities

Figure 1 shows the content created and disseminated on the PDIP's Instagram and TikTok social media. The data in Figure 1 was processed using Nvivo 12 Plus.

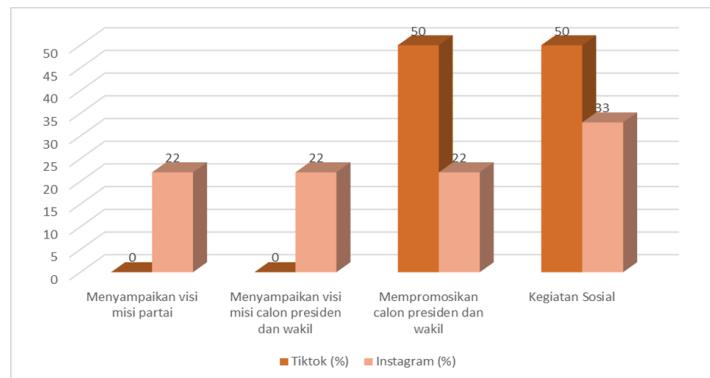


Figure 4. PDIP Social Media Content
(Source: Processed by the author using Nvivo 12 plus, 2024)

The data in Figure 4 shows that PDIP's Instagram social media content is consistently created and disseminated regarding the party's social activities at 33%, promoting presidential and vice-presidential candidates at 22%, conveying the vision and mission of the presidential and vice-presidential candidates at 22%, and conveying the party's vision and mission at 22%. The data in Figure 4 indicates that PDIP is dominant in creating and disseminating content about social activities conducted with the community on Instagram social media. The social activities referred to are the distribution of basic necessities, road repair assistance, and so on. These types of content have been frequently posted by the PDIP Instagram account over the past year. However content

about the presidential and vice-presidential candidates they support is also included in their posts. Posts about Ganjar Pranowo as the presidential candidate and Mahfud MD as the vice-presidential candidate in order to campaign in various places in Indonesia. Interestingly, the PDIP TikTok account's content only focuses on social activities and promoting the presidential and vice-presidential candidates. This illustrates that Instagram and TikTok indeed have their own algorithms, so PDIP sees that these two types of content suit TikTok. The party's vision and mission and the candidates it supports are not too focused on the content on PDIP's TikTok.

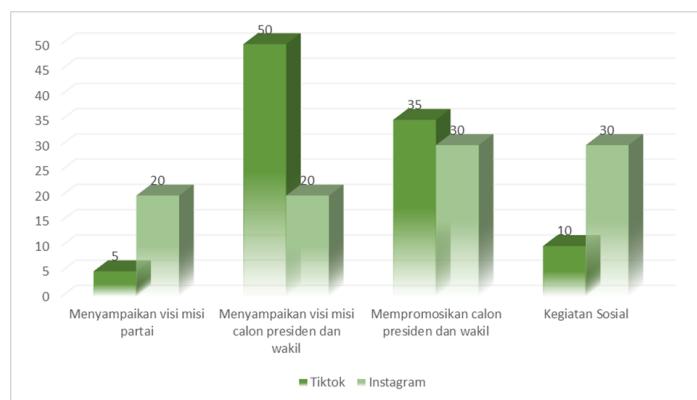


Figure 5. Gerindra Party Social Media Content
(Source: Processed by the author using Nvivo 12 plus,, 2024)

Figure 5 shows the social media content of the Gerindra Party on Instagram, which includes social activities at 30%, promoting the vision and mission of the presidential and vice-presidential candidates they support at 30%, conveying the vision and mission of the presidential and vice-presidential candidates at 20%, and conveying the party's vision and mission at 20%. This is different from their TikTok content, which includes conveying the vision and mission of the presidential and vice-presidential candidates they support at 50%, followed by promoting the presidential and vice-presidential candidates at 35%, then social activity content at 10%, and conveying the party's vision and mission at 5%.

Data collected by the Institute for Transformation Studies (Intrans) shows that the Indonesian Solidarity Party (PSI) and the Gerindra Party are the two political parties with the most liked social media content by the public. PSI has the highest number of likes at 637,000, most of which were uploaded to its Facebook account. The Gerindra Party, on the other hand, has a lower number of likes, totaling 637,000 (Achmad, 2023). Moreover, the power of social media has been understood and acknowledged by political party officials. As done by the Gerindra Party, which asked all its members to use mobile phones or telephones as a means of struggle to win the Gerindra Party Chairman Prabowo Subianto in the 2024 presidential election. On Wednesday, August 30, 2023, the Secretary-General of the Gerindra Party, Ahmad Muzani, conveyed the request while witnessing the consolidation of thousands of Gerindra Party cadres in Cilacap and Banyumas, Central Java districts. Muzani urged the cadres to like, respond to, and spread Prabowo's posts on social media and national media. In addition, he asked all members of the Gerindra Party to actively encourage their family members, neighbors, colleagues, and communities to vote for Prabowo. Prabowo's decision to run again as a presidential candidate in the 2024 presidential election is considered a calling to continue serving the people, the nation, and the country, said Muzani. Food sovereignty will be Prabowo's main program when he serves as president. The political parties supporting Prabowo in the 2024 presidential election include the Gerindra Party, Golkar Party, National Awakening Party, National Mandate Party, and Crescent Star Party (Achmad, 2023).

Hendri Satrio, a political observer from Paramadina University, said that efforts through social media are not enough to attract young voters because they are considered ineffective in increasing electability. According to Hendri, political momentum is the most important thing in attracting

the attention of young voters. On the other hand, Adi Prayitno, Executive Director of Parameter Politik Indonesia, stated that Gerindra must focus on engaging young voters and the entire demographic of voters (Fauzia, 2023).

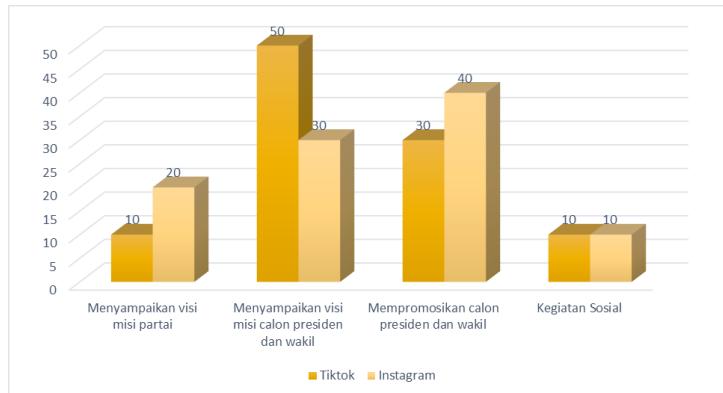


Figure 6. Golkar Party Social Media Account
(Source: Processed by the author using Nvivo 12 plus, 2024)

Figure 6 shows the social media content on Instagram by the Golkar party, which includes social activities at 10%, promoting the vision and mission of the presidential and vice-presidential candidates they support at 40%, conveying the vision and mission of the presidential and vice-presidential candidates at 30%, and conveying the party's vision and mission at 20%. This is different from their TikTok content, which includes conveying the vision and mission of the presidential and vice-presidential candidates they support at 50%, followed by promoting the presidential and vice-presidential candidates at 30%, then social activity content at 10%, and conveying the party's vision and mission at 10%.

The Golkar party is indeed currently intensifying its political campaign in the digital world. According to the analysis by Litbang Kompas, the Golkar Party has the highest social media advertising costs in the past three months. Compared to other political parties, the amount is quite significant. According to Litbang Kompas, as quoted from the Kompas Daily edition Tuesday (4/7/2023), Golkar disbursed a total of IDR 3.75 billion. The Golkar Foundation, established on September 8, 2020, to assist party cadres, contributed almost all of those funds (Fauzia, 2023).

The Indonesian Solidarity Party (PSI) under Golkar spent 758.6 million rupiah on social media campaigns, followed by the National Awakening Party (195.7 million rupiah), the Gerindra Party (94.2 million rupiah), and the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (23,8 juta rupiah). Litbang Kompas stated that the small advertising costs reflect the political parties' efforts to increase their popularity on social media. The Golkar Party has spent a lot of money on advertisements, showing the party's desire to reach a wider audience, especially through its Facebook and Instagram accounts. According to Litbang Kompas, the Golkar 2024 Facebook account and the @golkar.2024 Instagram account have incurred advertising costs of Rp 2.8 billion in the past three months with 2,378 pieces of content displayed. Most of the content presented is visual, both images and videos. The Golkar 2024 YouTube link is also used to bind the video content. Litbang Kompas stated that Golkar's efforts demonstrate that utilizing the information ecosystem on digital platforms, especially social media, is key to increasing popularity and winning political competition (Fauzia, 2023).

Discussion

As one of the most widely used sources of information by people today, social media has four advantages for political campaigns of parties and candidates: information facilities, services, and access to political power. Hagar (2014) says that social media can help political victory because it allows candidates to interact with voters with an intensity and scale that conventional campaign methods such as brochures, door-to-door campaigning, and even print and television

media coverage cannot achieve. In this case, PDIP, Gerindra, and Golkar used social media to record and disseminate information related to their parties.

Political campaigns of political parties today and in the future can be done well with the help of social media. In addition, social media allows political parties to display their logos and icons to their voters and direct supporters. Quick count results then show that political parties use social media as part of their campaign to win elections (Woolley & Howard, 2018). Social media is essential for politicians and political parties, allowing them to gain support, encourage participation, and open and continuous dialog. Most importantly, social media allows highly motivated people to create an easier context in which less motivated people can be influential without having to become activists, creating the perfect environment for politicians to capitalize on. Emerging social media and its influence on the public and politics has changed the political process and campaign tactics. Politicians now use social media and the Internet and enable a new arena of grassroots politics (Narasimhamurthy, 2014). Both the ruling party and minority parties concentrate on promoting candidates. Meanwhile, opposition parties play a two-way strategy to promote their candidates while attacking the ruling party and its candidates (Bello et al., 2019).

The findings of this study explain that PDIP, Golkar, and Gerindra, as the top three parties in Indonesia, have actively utilized Instagram and TikTok social media, both for party branding needs and to face the 2024 elections by promoting their candidates. This is in line with research findings from Subekti et al. (2022) who explained that four social media are often used in political party campaigns: Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram. From 2018 to 2019, political party campaigns widely used Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube. Then Instagram is the viral social media used in political party campaigns in 2020-2021. This indicates that the social media used in political party campaigns has a period of use. The popularity of social media is one of the logical reasons that political parties consider using it in political campaigns. Instagram has recently become a viral social media used by the public, especially the millennial generation and Generation Z. This opportunity is seen by political parties. Political parties then see this opportunity to dredge up potential votes from young people by being active on Instagram.

Social media is a new type of information network and information technology that allows people to communicate through interactive content created and generated by others and build and maintain interpersonal relationships. Some examples of social media network services include web communities, online forums, and content-sharing (Harvey, 2013). Social media is one of the biggest changes in the way people communicate, allowing users to generate content and share it quickly and flexibly (Guess et al., 2019). Social media and the Internet inform voters about their government and political elites. In countries where many alternative sources of information have a direct impact on the behavior of politicians and political parties, who are certainly concerned about their image on social media (Zhuravskaya et al., 2020).

In democracies, online communication has become an integral part of political players. Every major political party has a website and is active on social media. Although political parties claim that they appreciate the potential of social media for discourse and mobilization, they mainly use it to disseminate election information and propaganda (Klinger, 2013). Social media does drastically change one's relationship with society. Social media is an excellent tool for disseminating general information and political thoughts to public networks. Politicians, political parties, political foundations, and other political organizations have started using pages or groups on social media platforms such as Instagram and Facebook to directly dialogue with voters and encourage more political conversations (Stieglitz & Dang-Xuan, 2013). This is in line with the findings in this study that the three political parties are more dominant in creating content on Instagram and TikTok related to their presidential and vice presidential candidates than the political parties themselves as a form of political communication. This is an attempt by political parties to utilize social media to gain individual popularity which leads to the interests of electoral contestation.

The theory of political communication is divided into five aspects, the first being political communicators, which include politicians, professional communicators, and activists with expertise

in political communication. Second, political messages relate to symbols, language, and public opinion. Success in conveying a political message is measured by the extent to which the public accepts the message and increases the number of followers or supporters. Third, the media used in political communication, including mass media such as print, electronic, and online. The use of these media aims to disseminate political messages to a diverse and broad audience. Fourth, the audience of political communication refers to the society or audience that is the target of the political message. Fifth, the consequences of communication in politics include the impact of political messages on the audience, such as the formation of public opinion, the increase in the credibility of political communicators, and the political participation of the public (McNair, 2017). In line with this, the three political parties, as communicators, use social media as a means to disseminate their political messages to the public. This aims to shape a positive opinion towards these political parties. Political parties can utilize social media to convey their views, policies, or current issues to their followers (Kalsnes, 2016; Stieglitz & Dang-Xuan, 2013). Political messages can be conveyed through visual content, captions, and stories to present the latest data and facts related to current political issues. The political party's social media account can utilize various forms of media on Instagram, such as IGTV for interviews or political discussions, Instagram Stories for quick updates, and regular posts for more in-depth content. Similarly, TikTok uses short video features to spread content through the For You Page (FYP) algorithm.

Political communication is important in both oral and written societal interactions. There are three main dimensions in political communication: structural, representational, and interactional. The structural dimension encompasses organizational aspects, such as ownership, control, regulation, and arrangements that influence the freedom of communication. In the representational dimension, social media provides a more inclusive platform. Various voices and political perspectives can be better represented through the active participation of the public in disseminating information and building political narratives. In the interactional dimension, social media creates a more dynamic space for interaction between political leaders, parties, and the public (Schill, 2012). In the context of new media, the transformation in political communication primarily occurs in the change of the structure of political communication itself. This change has a significant impact, especially on the position and influence of political actors, creating a better level of equality in participation and the discursive impact it produces (Subekti et al., 2023).

Conclusion

This research concludes that the three political parties have started to utilize digital technology facilities, namely social media, by creating accounts and posting professionally packaged content to attract the attention of netizens. This is a concrete effort by these political parties to follow the trend of today's society, which massively uses social media. PDIP, Golkar, and Gerindra, as the three major parties in Indonesia, have actively utilized social media platforms Instagram and TikTok for their party branding needs and to face the 2024 elections by promoting their presidential and vice-presidential candidates. In the context of the 2024 Presidential Election, the three political parties are dominant in creating content on Instagram and TikTok regarding the presidential and vice presidential candidates being promoted rather than the political parties themselves. This is an effort by political parties to utilize social media to garner more individual popularity, which leads to the interest in electoral contestation.

Furthermore, the implication of this research is that technology cannot be separated from politics. Technology has the facilities to effectively use by political actors to gain personal and group advantages. Both in the electoral context, which enhances popularity and electability, and in increasing interactions with the broader society with the aim of boosting existence and relevance. Political parties that manage their social media professionally are directly proportional to their electoral presence in the community. More than that, this research is an effort to strengthen and enrich the study of digital politics that has been developing in line with the advancement of digital technology in the world, especially in Indonesian politics. The limitations of this research only focus on analyzing content on two social media using qualitative methods. Therefore the rec-

ommendation for further research is to be able to analyze three social media, by looking at it using quantitative, namely the effect of social media activities on increasing the electability of political parties.

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