

DEVELOPMENT OF POLITICAL COMMUNICATION THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA

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Abstract: This study explains how the process of political communication that is still conventionally transformed through social media. A descriptive qualitative research method is followed. The results of this study show that the use of social media by politicians in the practice of political communication has a significant impact on people's political behaviour. The development of communication technology has penetrated the lives of humanity. One form of development of communication technology is new media that then gave birth to social media. The presence of social media also affects the political field. We can interpret this phenomenon as, the power of social media in the victory in the pursuit of political power in an area or in a country. Politically, if social media is negatively run, then bad consequences might happen. The community, that uses social media, must be able to act decisively if someone uses social media in a way that is not good. Because not only a handful of people will lose, what can result from the wrong use of social media will have an impact on the wider community.

Keywords: Political communication, Social media, New media, Information technology.

1. Introduction

Literally, political communication is commonly associated with political talks or the delivery of verbal and non-verbal political messages that can affect people and government in a political system, or it can be simply stated that political communication is the delivery of politically charged messages from a source to the recipient to create understanding of shared meanings. Given that communication is inherent in every person as, according to [Bower and Bradac, \(1982\)](#), "humans are beings who cannot not communicate", then every human behavior, including when silent, and does not respond to political messages from a the source, still raises meaning related to political nuances. In relation to the life of the nation and state, "political communication is the process of expressing opinions, attitudes and behaviour of people, institutions or political forces in order to influence political decision making, while what is meant by politics is nothing but state life" ([Setiawan, 1990](#); [Saahar, Sualman, Hashim, &](#)

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[Mohamed, 2017](#)). [Nimmo \(2007\)](#) states that, "political communication is communication that refers to political activities" (p. 8). Thus, all political activities carried out by the government, or state powers along with supporting institutions as well as those carried out by the people in general, are a form of political communication.

Related to earlier political socialisation, [Krech \(1962\)](#) explained the importance of understanding this, at least through some of his theories regarding the process of socializing political messages. In this theory of socializing political messages, Krech at least mentions two important things that are involved in the communication process: first, individual similarity in the aspects of cognition (cognitions), will (wants), and attitudes (attitudes). Second, language, in this case, is a symbol of communication that includes words, which Krech calls the control of one's own behaviour and the behaviour of others. In the context of political socialisation, specifically this theory further explains that the process of political socialisation includes political aspects of how a person learns politics, political institutions, and how one finally behaves in a particular political manner. Social media is growing rapidly in line with the growth and ease of access to information supported by the power of communication technology. Social media has 79 million active users. Indonesia is one of the most active countries in social media ([Global Media Statistics, 2016](#)). The development of communication technology has entered into people's lives. One form of development of communication technology is new media, which then descends is social media. The presence of social media also affects the political field. Studies in the United States show that social media is an effective campaign tool. Before the era of social media, politicians in the land of Uncle Sam had used the internet for campaigning media ([Chavez, 2012](#); [Polat, Subay, & Ulutürk, 2018](#)). In Ghana, two presidential candidates used SMS and Twitter to gain votes. This is the first time social media has been used to campaign in the country. In Zimbabwe, opposition parties use websites to spread messages condemning the ruling government. In addition, NGOs established a network to monitor voting in 11 thousand voting booths via SMS and MMS. The result was incumbent candidate Robert Mugabe lost, but Mugabe's intervention made the election repeated and he won ([Riaz, 2010](#)).

We can interpret this phenomenon as the power of social media in the victory in the hunt for political power in a region or in a country. If used positively, the results will be good, but if run negatively, the results will not be good too. It is the community who use social media that must be able to act decisively if someone uses social media in a way that is not good. Because not only a handful of people will lose, what can result from the wrong use of social media will have an impact on the wider community.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Political communication

In political communication, every aspect actually has its own role, although it still has a direct or indirect relationship in its application. The five components of political communication involve

(1) political communicators, (2) political messages (3) media used in political communication, (4) political communication audiences, and (5) consequences arising from communication in politics ([Nimmo, 2007](#)). Political communicators are people who have the ability to carry out political communication. Attached to it is a strategic position as a "politician", who maintains the credibility and branding of the individual, or the institution where the communicator is sheltered. As a politician, he can be inside or outside government positions, but must maintain national integrity.

In line with national political contestation, a "professional political communicator" has emerged that utilizes mainstream media and alternative media to influence the masses. Political communicators may come from "activists" of certain interest groups and opinion leaders who have a special position in society. Essentially politicians, professional communicators and activists as political communicators, must have the ability to carry out political communication so that they have the opportunity and have the capacity as leaders who are able to organize messages to the public well. Political messages are associated with symbols or symbols, language and public opinion. These three factors are always inherent in political information disseminated by communicators to the public to achieve political goals. Symbols can also communicate concepts, general ideas, simple forms of understanding of meaning, and easy to understand in the relationship between political communicators and audiences. At least based on online data searches via google, there were around 1,090,000 articles containing the word elite political communication in the 2014 election ([Kominfo, 2012](#)). In delivering political messages, "persuasion strategies" are used as techniques for delivering messages through campaigns, propaganda and raising public opinion. According to [Nimmo \(2007\)](#), the persuasion strategy is a tool used by organised groups, to reach individuals who are psychologically manipulated and integrated into organisations.

Digital media opens space for communication and political participation by increasing the possibility of interaction between important elements in it, namely parties and state institutions that are referred to as citizens and non-elites. This is based on a new character of the Internet that is not possessed by traditional mass media, namely interactive, active and creative, direct, guaranteeing equality and networking ([Dijk, 2013](#)). Supporting this statement, [Tsagarousianou \(1999\)](#) made 3 positive claims about the role of the International for the past 25 years in the democratic process of opening up spaces for exchange and confirmation of information, encouraging public debate and deliberation formation and citizen participation in political decision making.

Referring to Tsagarousianou's view, political communication is an important part of the democratic process. In the context of discussions about internet and democracy, [Dahlberg and Siepera \(2007\)](#) brought a big idea about radical democracy, namely democracy that focuses on conceptualizing the democratic process in the perspective of classical democracy, namely equality and freedom (liberty) which Internet can be facilitated. Here political communication as one of the crucial things in the democratic process is also undergoing transformation. The

internet as a new media raises the consequence of the practice of political discussion that not only takes place in real space but also communication mediated by cyberspace. For example, political activities now mediated by the internet or so-called cyber politics (cyber politics) include e-voting, e-petition, e-mail, e-polls ([Dahlberg & Siepera, 2007](#)) and e-participation ([Dijk, 2013](#)). With the internet, demonstrations by mobilising the masses on the streets are replaced with e-petitions, direct voting is carried out with e-polls and public participation in policymaking can be done by e-participation. in the open field, but mediated by the Internet through social media such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube in the form of campaigns in cyberspace (cyber-campaigns).

3. Research Method

The research method used in this study is a qualitative research method. Qualitative was chosen because the research will describe holistically every event that exists in the development of communication patterns of tourism based on local wisdom. [Cresswell \(1998\)](#) states that qualitative research is research in the natural setting, place and time, the researcher is an instrument of collecting data and then the data is analysed inductively and then explains the process being examined expressively.

[Bogdan and Taylor \(1975\)](#) state that qualitative research methodology is a research procedure that produces a number of descriptive data, both written and oral, from the people and the observed behaviour. In this case, the individual or organisation must be seen as part of a whole. In addition, qualitative methodology refers to the research procedures that a person has or conversations that use words or observations of behaviour.

Characteristics in qualitative research are descriptive. In this case the data collected is in the form of words, pictures and not numbers. This is caused by the application of qualitative methods. In addition, everything that is collected is likely to be the key to what has been studied ([Moleong, 2002](#)).

4. Discussion

4.1. Conceptualization of political communication

Stephen W. Littlejohn, said that there are some basic dimensions used to define communication ([Mufid, 2009](#)). First, is the level of observation or the level of abstractness, that is, some definitions are broad and inclusive (open) while others are actually limited. For example, the definition which states "communication is the process of connecting parts of the world to each other" is certainly general whereas communication as "the process of sending military messages and orders by telephone" is a limited definition.

Second is the level of intentionality (intentional). Some definitions of communication emphasise intentional delivery of messages, while others do not limit this intentional aspect. The first example is communication as "a situation where the source conveys a message consciously to

influence the behaviour of the recipient of the message". Whereas the second example is, "communication is seen as a process of distributing the monopoly of information to others". Third is the dimension of normative assessment. Some definitions require success or accuracy such as "communication is verbal exchange of thoughts", while some do not like "communication is the process of transmitting information".

From some basic dimensions to define communication above, basically we can draw the following common thread; (1) Communication is the process by which individuals in relationships with other people, groups, organisations or communities respond and create messages to connect with the environment and others; (2) Communication is the process of exchanging information, usually through a generally accepted symbol system, with varying quality; (3) Communication takes place through many forms, ranging from two people who talk face to face, hand signals, to messages sent globally throughout the world through telecommunications networks; (4) Communication is a process that allows us to interact (associate) with others. Without communication, we would not be able to share knowledge or experience with others. The process of communicating in this case can be through speech, writing, gestures, and broadcasting.

From this common thread, communication anatomy can be identified. Basically, communication has the following six elements; (1) Communication involves one's relationship with others or one's relationship with the environment, both in the context of regulation or coordination; (2) The process, which is non-static activity, is continuous. When two people talk, of course they do not say anything. In it there is planning, setting the tone, creating new messages, interpreting messages, responding or changing body positions so that there is a match with the other person; (3) Message, i.e. the sign (signal) or combination of signs that serves as a stimulus (trigger) for the recipient of the sign. The message can be a sign or symbol. Some of the signs can be universal, that is understood by most people throughout the world, such as a smile as a sign of pleasure or smoke as a sign of fire. Signs are more universal than symbols. This is because the symbol is made based on agreement. Because they are formed through agreement, symbols are neither natural nor universal; (4) Channels (channel), is a vehicle where the sign is sent. Channels can be visual (can be seen) or can be heard; (5) Disturbances (noise), everything that can make a message distorted, or anything that can interfere with the receipt of a message. Noise can be physical, psychological (psychological), or semantic (misunderstanding); (6) Change, i.e. communication results in changes in the knowledge, attitudes or actions of people involved in the communication process.

In a political context, political activity is basically an activity that cannot be separated from various forms of human activity. Either directly or indirectly, humans will always be in contact with political activity. Moreover, when the democratic climate such as in Indonesia is wide open, political activity increases simultaneously as one of the effects of political products that require direct elections in every level starting from the legislative choice, presidential choice, governor's choice, and the choice of mayor or regional head choice .

The author identifies many definitions of classical political communication. But basically these theories are rooted in the views developed by [Lasswell \(1927\)](#) in his dissertation that studies propaganda. He defines political communication with the basic question of who says what to whom - via which channels - with what effects as shown in Figure 1 below.

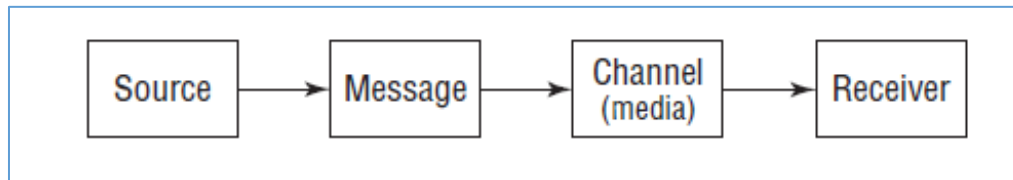


Figure 1: Classical Political Communication Model

The views of Denton and Woodward can shed more light on this general theory. They define political communication briefly as communication that has political objectives, including; 1) all forms of communication carried out by politicians and other political actors for special purposes; 2) communication aimed at political actors by non-political actors such as voters and columnists; and 3) communication related to political actors and their activities covered by the media, discussed in the editorial and discussed in various formats of discussion in the media. The model of political communication as presented by Denton and Woodward is a political communication mediated by traditional media such as television, radio, newspapers or magazines. This political communication has a pattern of political communication going in one direction (one way communication), centralised and positioned the public as passive recipients of messages.

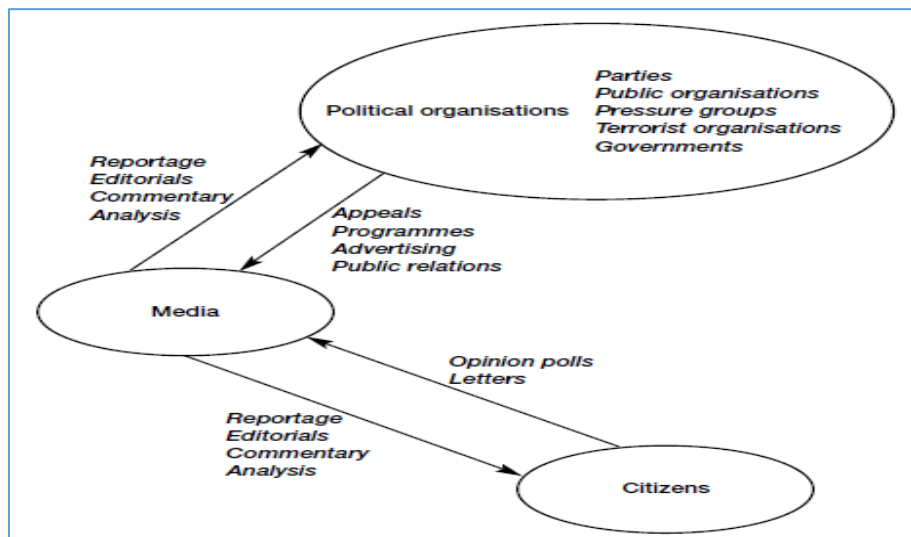


Figure 2: Political Communication Mediated by Traditional Media

Figure 2 illustrates how elements in the process of political communication interact with one another. The elite which consists of political organisations such as parties, public organisations, the government uses the media as a tool to deliver political programs to be submitted to the

voters (citizens) (citizens). The message is usually packaged by traditional media in the form of coverage, editorials, comments and news analysis to be conveyed to the public. On the other hand, the media also facilitates citizens (citizens) to convey their opinions to the elite. In practice, political communication mediated by traditional media allows barriers in the form of power practices carried out by elements of political communication. The elements of political communication namely the media, the elite and the public are not in a vacuum. Each element has a control function that will affect the effects of messages built in political communication. Those who control are the group with the most control over resources, especially the medium (channel). For example in the Indonesian context, the media in the process of political communication is often expected to become a public space that gives free space to the public to express their opinions. But in reality these expectations were not fulfilled because of the mastery of the elite over the mass media in Indonesia. In the end there was a weakening of the role of the media as a space for public participation because the media was more used as an elite tool to achieve power. The media no longer mediates the public to express their opinions to the elite, instead the media becomes a space controlled by the elite to control the public. Related to the problem of the process of political communication mediated by traditional media, it becomes important to see alternative channels that can facilitate the process of political communication with better quality, namely the Internet. In the communication process, online political communication is included in the discussion of Computer Mediated Communication (CMC). The internet offers new characters and patterns in communication that is direct, decentralised , two-way, interactive and networking. With this internet usage, Figure 2 can be modified to Figure 3 below.

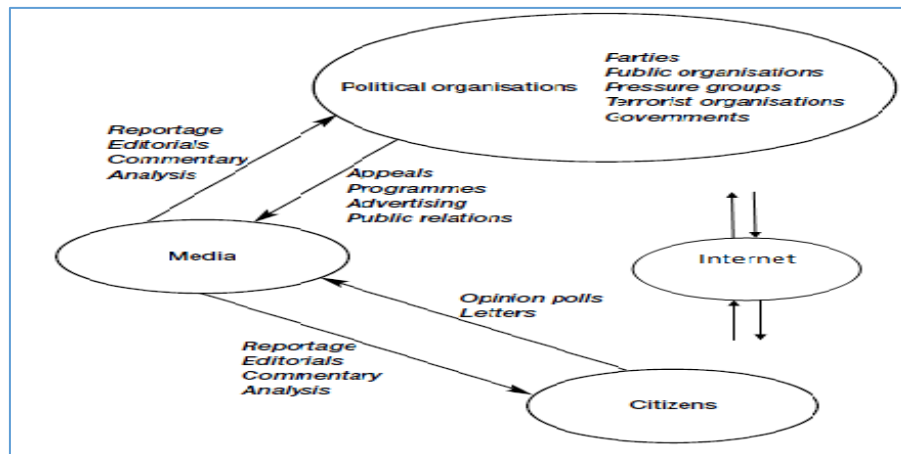


Figure 3: Political Communication in the Internet Era

The internet opens a channel of direct communication between the public (citizens) and the elite which originally had to be mediated by press institutions. The internet in this article is focused on social media with interactive characters because it is based on Web 2.0. The character is different from traditional media (print, electronic, online) as stated by [Holmes \(2005\)](#) which parses the difference between internet and television characters, which in this case can represent traditional media. First, the internet has a decentralised character while television is centralised.

This character changes the process of political communication that was previously from one person to many people (one to many) has now become from many people to many people (many to many). This character reduces the power of the elite who initially became an active communicant, and emancipated the public that has now become an active public. A public who can gather power uses the Internet to fight for its interests. Citizens (citizens) can form social networks that allow them to coordinate, open up political debate space, build interactive public spaces, mobilize and coordinate collective action. Second, the internet opens two way communication (two way of communication) while television is only one way (one way communication). Social media, for example, is a space that allows democratic actors to communicate directly in two directions that were not previously done on television. Even now the public can talk directly with the president through social media accounts. Third, the internet has the ability to avoid certain power controls, while television is easily controlled. People on the internet network society (network society) who build unlimited inter-network that cannot be censored easily. The network can be in the form of information networks, civilian networks, corporate networks, etc. While television is an electronic media that is still easily controlled by a handful of people, for example in the case of Indonesia, which is a conglomerate that has media. [Vedel \(2003\)](#) explains more about how Information Communication Technology (ICTs) in this case the Internet has an effect on political communication. Some have similar issues with [Holmes \(2005\)](#) related to the strengths of the Internet, but they also provide assumptions about the accompanying problems (see Table 1).

Table 1: Impact of ICT in the Process of Political Communication

ICT Devices	Potential Advantages	Problems
Cheap	Easily produce messages Messages are not limited to the public (citizen)	Too much information
Direct (sender receiver)	- Direct communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risks of propaganda • Lack of mediators who can play an important role
Selected recipient	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can target the communicant • Special group communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Privacy issues

Speed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update quickly and frequently • Expand the reach of information search 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • System fee • Push button decision-making
Interactive	Direct interaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Privacy Issues
Decentralised	The possibility of creating an independent communication system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fragmented public space • Difficult regulation

Source: [Vedel \(2003\)](#)

Table 1 shows Vedel's views on the character of the Internet in common with [Holmes \(2005\)](#) such as direct, interactive and decentralised. Nevertheless, Vedel provides new insights such as cheap character, reaching the public, selected and global. In this section, the author will describe one by one the character of new media in facilitating the process of political communication, as well as providing various studies that have discussed the potential and weaknesses of the internet in facilitating political communication. Vedel's view can be a starting point for researchers to see the process of political communication from various points of view.

First, the Internet allows democratic actors to reduce the cost of producing political campaigns. Only by creating a social media account and website for example can a politician reach his public unlimitedly. According to Vedel, this pattern might dramatically change the process of political communication because previously it had to be mediated by the press. However, according to him, the character of the internet can cause various problems such as the flood of information that causes messages to the audience to be ineffective. The public is not concentrated on issues that are supposed to be important but might instead give attention to political talks that are not important.

Another problem is the social media algorithm that directs the audience to just one issue that they like. One study related to this problem, for example, was conducted by Grömping. He researched the process of political communication mediated by Facebook by exploring how partisan groups during the 2014 Thailand general election communicated. He uses several research methods including content analysis of messages posted on Facebook, network analysis and visualization of interactions between partisan groups on Facebook pages. The results of the study show how Social Networking Sites (SNSs) do not make online political discussion more deliberative because of unfocused messages. On the contrary, social media encourages the development of exclusive pockets of group thought that are isolated from other groups or what he later calls an enclave group. Political discourse that occurs in these enclaves is marked by the emergence of information that is inconsistent and contains errors. This research concludes that social media is

an 'echo chamber' that does not allow the exchange of ideas and critical reflection because participants are not in the process of finding information that is contrary to what they have but all information that supports their opinions. Echo chamber can appear on social media or when we surf looking for news on an online media. Facebook drags users into the echo room because social media implements the content selection algorithm on the Facebook homepage in such a way that what appears first on the newsfeed is posts that are tailored to the user's interests. The interest is based on the history of clicks, likes, shares, user comments on the Facebook homepage. In an algorithm like this it is certain that a Facebook user for example will only receive information about a particular issue from one perspective.

Through social media, political communication is no longer a linear dominance in one direction, but it is open interactive in cyberspace. This virtual communication appears as a picture of the power of social media as new media. The use of new media enables users to form broadest integrative networks, and can show a different identity from users in the real world (Flew, 2002). The use of social media for political purposes has the purpose of maintaining power or otherwise gaining power. Social media users have differences in the process of disseminating political information. The elite can not only act as a factual source of information, but they can also fabricate messages to gain support. At the mass level, using information from social media can strengthen group identity in communalism, sectarianism and sub-national zeal. There are ongoing political information transactions that occur vertically between the elite and the masses, or horizontally between the masses and between the elites in the political stratification of society. In the end, in the context of political communication, for example, a Facebook user who leaves a digital footprint in the form of consumption of information that is counter to certain potential leaders, tends to get negative information about the candidate, and vice versa. Likewise, when netizens consume online media, the algorithm will link all relevant information to what they are looking for rather than providing information that has diverse perspectives. On one side of the character of the algorithm that tries to provide comprehensive information about a case but has a weakness that is providing information from one perspective that inhibits critical discussion.

5. Conclusion

The development of communication technology from conventional systems to social media has penetrated the lives of humanity. One form of development of communication technology is new media (new media) which then gave birth to social media (social media). The presence of social media also affects the political field. We can interpret this phenomenon as, the power of social media in the victory in the pursuit of political power in an area or in a country. If used positively, the results will be good, but if run negatively, the results will not be good too. It is the community who use social media that must be able to act decisively if someone uses social media in a way that is not good. Because not only a handful of people will lose, what can result from the wrong use of social media will have an impact on the wider community.

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