Al'adzkiya International of Education and Sossial (AIoEs) Journal
Vol. 2, No. 2, Oktober 2026 pp. 63~69
ISSN: 2721-8716, DOI: 10.55311/aioes.v7i2.418

The Effectiveness of Using Digital Media as a Communication Channel for PAN in Mobilizing Millennial Voter Support in North Sumatra

Zulfahmi
[1,]Department of Communication Science, Universitas Muhammadiyah Sumatera Utara, Indonesia

ABSTRACT

Millennial voters play a significant role in securing votes for PAN, particularly in North Sumatra. PAN has demonstrated its resilience within the Indonesian political landscape, specifically in North Sumatra's political arena. This success stems from the party's continuous efforts to cultivate its public image, both in the lead-up to elections and during the post-election period. Accordingly, this article examines the effectiveness of digital media as a communication channel for PAN in mobilizing millennial support in North Sumatra. The study employs a descriptive approach, focusing on qualitative data to analyze how PAN utilizes digital media to garner votes from the millennial demographic. The research subjects and key informants comprise the executive leadership of the PAN Regional Leadership Council (DPW) in North Sumatra. The effectiveness of this digital media strategy is evident in PAN's ability to produce engaging visual content such as infographics, short videos, and memes that simplifies complex political messages, making them more accessible to millennial voters. Furthermore, the party fosters two-way interaction on social media, allowing it to listen to voter expectations, provide direct responses, and adjust campaign strategies based on the feedback received. The use of digital analytics also enables PAN to gauge voter engagement levels, allowing for the continuous refinement and optimization of communication strategies to achieve better results.

Keyword: Effectiveness, Digital Media, Communication Channels, Millennial Voices

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

Corresponding Author:
Zulfahmi
Department of Communication Science,
Universitas Muhammadiyah Sumatera Utara,
Jalan Kapten Muktar Basri No 3 Medan 20238, Indonesia.
Email: zulfahmi@umsu.ac.id

INTRODUCTION

Political parties serve as vital institutions underpinning representative democracy in Indonesia (Majid, 2023; Munthe & Lubis, 2022; Pratiwi, 2019). The representative democracy mandated by the 1945 Constitution functions to maintain political stability within the country. Political parties are a crucial element of this democracy, acting as drivers for realizing popular sovereignty and shaping public political perspectives. Beyond serving as political vehicles for attaining power, parties act as a bridge between formal political structures and the pursuit of legitimate power within both the executive and legislative branches (Simanjutak et al., 2024). Their existence is an inseparable part of Indonesia's political system (Djufri, 2022).

Political parties are not components of the bureaucracy, judiciary, or parliament utilized by the state for repressive purposes; rather, they symbolize the political transformation of the people in legitimately attaining power (Ansor, 2024; Oktaryal & Hastuti, 2021; Salahudin et al., 2020). In the context of contemporary democracy, political parties serve as primary instruments for citizens to secure positions in the legislature, the presidency and vice-presidency, and various other strategic roles. The participation of political parties in national politics has also shifted the circulation of political elites from a closed system to a more open one, thereby protecting the public and enabling them to exercise their political rights through these parties (Simanjutak et al., 2024).

The development of political parties in Indonesia has continued to evolve from one election to the next. Parties with diverse ideological backgrounds have emerged, supported by regulations established under the Political Party Law (Brady et al., 2019). According to various studies, the functions of political parties continue to change and undergo transformation (Pan et al., 2023). There are three

main components of political parties: the party in the electorate, the party as an organization, and the party in government (Green et al., 2020). The growth of political parties in Indonesia reflects these dynamics, although it is often difficult to distinguish the ideologies of the individual parties.

From the voters' perspective, the variation in preferences for large and small political parties reflects diverse segmentation (Sagalane, 2024; Simanjutak et al., 2024). Voters hold distinct ideological leanings, such as nationalist-religious or nationalist-Islamic. In the 2019 election, millennial voters aged 17 to 35 accounted for 41.48% of the total electorate, representing approximately eighty million out of the 192,828,520 registered voters (KPU, 2019). This millennial cohort played a pivotal role in the election, as their significant numbers held the potential to shape the nation's future direction. In the 2024 election, Generation Z and millennial voters dominated the electorate, totaling 113 million people or 56.45% of all voters. Given this significant figure, political parties such as the National Mandate Party (PAN) have targeted this demographic. PAN has sought to capture approximately 1.5 million millennial voters by employing campaign strategies that resonate with the preferences of the younger generation, such as interactive digital campaigns and persuasive outreach (Beltim et al., 2021; Zuhdi, 2021). Millennial support is crucial to PAN's electoral success, particularly in meeting the 4.0% parliamentary threshold mandated by election law. As a party born of the reform movement, PAN reaffirms its commitment to openness, religious morality, humanitarian values, and diversity, aiming to foster national enlightenment (Beltim et al., 2021; Zuhdi, 2021). Consequently, support from millennial voters has the potential to be a decisive factor in PAN's success in the 2024 election.

A study by Aydil and Zuhri (Aydil & Zuhri, 2023) highlights PAN's use of political marketing specifically a jingle-creation strategy during its 2024 election campaign. Their findings indicate that PAN employed a creative approach to capture the attention of young voters through music and social media. However, the study did not specifically examine political communication involving direct interaction between PAN and millennial voters, particularly in North Sumatra. Furthermore, the research focused more on marketing strategies than on systematic efforts to build ideological or relational support among millennial voters. Thus, there is a gap in understanding how PAN communicates directly with millennial voters at the local level.

In the 2004 election, across 11 electoral districts, PAN secured 313,555 votes and won 8 seats (7.08%) in the North Sumatra Regional House of Representatives (DPRD), placing the party fifth overall. In 2009, PAN again ranked fifth, garnering 248,975 votes and securing 7 seats in the North Sumatra DPRD. In the 2014 election, PAN obtained 420,447 votes and secured 6 seats in the North Sumatra DPRD, indicating a decline in the party's parliamentary representation. In the 2019 election, PAN North Sumatra regained 8 seats in the provincial legislature. Nevertheless, this figure did not signify a decline relative to other Islam-based parties, such as PPP and PBB, which continued to trail PAN in vote counts. In the most recent 2024 election, PAN successfully secured 6 seats in the North Sumatra DPRD. Although the seat count suggests a decline, the vote tally reveals that PAN has actually experienced growth across successive elections; the fluctuation in seat numbers was influenced by the expansion of electoral districts to 12.

Millennial voters played a significant role in boosting PAN's vote tally in North Sumatra. PAN has demonstrated its resilience within the Indonesian political landscape, particularly in North Sumatra. This success stems from the party's continuous efforts to cultivate its political image among the public, both before and after elections. Through various political events, PAN has showcased its identity as an inclusive party that champions both nationalism and religiosity. The party's image-building strategies such as the approach adopted by Hatta Rajasa, who branded PAN with the slogan "PAN Merakyat" (PAN: A Party for the People) have served as a means to sustain the party's existence. The same applies to the "Change" slogan championed by Zulkifli Hasan during his tenure as PAN Chairman (2015–2020). PAN's support base and vote tally are inextricably linked to the support of millennial voters. In North Sumatra, data from the 2020 Indonesian Population Census indicates that millennials constitute approximately 25.83 percent of the province's total population of 14,799,361 (BPS, 2020). This study examines the millennial voter turnout for PAN in the 2024 election, employing a political communication approach to analyze the effectiveness of digital media as a communication channel for mobilizing millennial support in North Sumatra.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study is classified as qualitative research. It focuses on collecting data in the form of words and images, excluding numerical data. The data obtained are likely to hold the key to understanding the subject of the study (Tracy, 2019). Qualitative research methods are also characterized by their emphasis on naturalistic settings (Darlington & Scott, 2020). The research was conducted at the North Sumatra DPW PAN (Provincial Leadership Council of the National Mandate Party) Secretariat on Jalan D.I. Panjaitan, Medan, as well as at various DPD PAN (Regional Leadership Council) secretariats across several regencies and cities in North Sumatra. Two types of data sources were utilized: primary and secondary. Primary data constitute the core material subjected to analysis (Miles, M.B., 2014). Primary data sources for this study included officials from the North Sumatra DPW and DPD PAN, as well as PAN officials at the regency and city levels within the province. The executive leadership of the North Sumatra DPW PAN served as both the research subjects and key informants, expected to provide the data necessary to meet the study's objectives. Data collection involved in-depth interviews conducted directly with the research informants. These interviews were held with executive officials of the North Sumatra DPW PAN serving the 2024–2028 term. Observations were carried out through both direct engagement with the subjects (participant observation) and indirect observation (non-participant observation) of 92 daily activities undertaken by the North Sumatra DPW and DPD PAN during recruitment efforts aimed at securing millennial votes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The National Mandate Party's (PAN) use of digital media as a communication channel in its political campaigns has proven effective, particularly in reaching millennial voters. This effectiveness stems from the capacity of digital media especially social media platforms to disseminate information rapidly and interactively. PAN favors platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and WhatsApp due to their popularity among millennials and features that facilitate the delivery of concise, clear, and engaging messages. Social media also enables PAN to interact directly with voters through comment sections, direct messages, or live streaming features thereby fostering a more dynamic dialogue between the party and the electorate. Such interaction is crucial, as it allows PAN to gain a better understanding of millennials' aspirations and concerns. PAN leverages social media to convey campaign messages that resonate with the daily lives of millennial voters; for instance, issues such as education, employment, entrepreneurship, and the environment are frequently presented through compelling visual content. Instagram and TikTok, with their emphasis on image- and video-based content, serve as highly effective platforms for communicating these messages. Infographics and short videos that distill complex political messages into accessible formats act as powerful tools for capturing the attention of voters who might otherwise be uninterested in traditional political campaigning. Furthermore, the use of humorous political memes allows PAN to convey messages that are lighthearted yet informative. Visual and audiovisual content plays a pivotal role in attracting the attention of millennial voters.

Younger generations tend to gravitate toward visually presented information, as they consume media rapidly and prefer content that is not overly text-heavy. By utilizing infographics, short videos, and memes, PAN can communicate complex messages in a simplified, easily understandable format. Short yet impactful campaign videos often elicit a positive response from millennial voters. This reinforces PAN's strategy of creating engaging and informative content, thereby attracting a wider young audience. Additionally, the audiovisual content produced by PAN frequently incorporates distinctive creative elements. For instance, videos featuring trending TikTok music or the use of animations in Instagram infographics make the content more shareable for users.

Content that goes viral on social media has the potential to exponentially expand the reach of PAN’s campaign. Millennials tend to be active in sharing content they find engaging or relevant, thereby helping PAN disseminate its message more quickly and effectively. Strategies for engaging with voters via digital media are also a key focus for PAN. By adopting a more participatory approach, the party hosts various open discussions and online Q&A sessions. These sessions allow voters to directly voice their questions, concerns, or even criticisms to PAN figures. In this way, PAN acts not merely as a source of information but also as an entity that listens to and addresses voters' needs. Active engagement in such discussions fosters a closer bond between the party and the electorate while helping PAN identify the issues most relevant to millennials. PAN’s online discussion sessions typically take place on social media

platforms featuring live streaming capabilities, such as Instagram Live or Facebook Live. These sessions frequently feature party figures who provide direct responses to questions from voters.

Furthermore, PAN actively conducts online polls and surveys to gather voter feedback on its proposed programs. Active voter participation in these polls provides PAN with valuable information for formulating more targeted campaign strategies. The party then uses this data to tailor its campaign messaging to better align with the expectations and needs of millennial voters. The success of PAN's digital campaign in North Sumatra is evident in the increased engagement of millennial voters on social media. Active interactions in comment sections, along with likes, shares, and positive responses to PAN's content, demonstrate that this digital strategy has hit the mark. PAN's digital campaign has also succeeded in raising broader awareness of the party's programs, particularly among young voters who are harder to reach through traditional campaign media such as billboards or television advertisements. Digital media offers the advantage of allowing PAN to connect with millennial voters on a more personal level and in a manner preferred by this generation. Although PAN's digital campaign has proven effective, the party faces challenges regarding uneven internet infrastructure in North Sumatra. In certain areas especially rural regions slow or limited internet access makes it difficult for voters to engage with the digital campaign. This is an obstacle PAN must address to ensure its campaign message reaches all voter segments, including those in remote areas. PAN needs to consider combining digital campaigns with traditional methods in regions where digital infrastructure remains limited. Beyond infrastructure challenges, PAN must also navigate the rapidly shifting dynamics of social media. Trending topics can change quickly, requiring the party to adapt and adjust its campaign strategies with agility.

Content deemed relevant today may no longer capture voters' attention tomorrow. Therefore, flexibility and the ability to respond to shifting trends are key to the success of PAN's digital campaign. By continuously monitoring social media trends, PAN can maintain its relevance and sustain the interest of millennial voters. PAN also leverages local influencers and young figures with significant social media influence to help disseminate campaign messages. These influencers often possess a strong following among millennials, making them effective tools for amplifying PAN's campaign message. Engaging influencers enhances the campaign's credibility and appeal, as millennial voters tend to place greater trust in information shared by figures they recognize and respect on social media. This serves as a crucial strategy for attracting younger voters and expanding the campaign's reach.

Using social media as the primary platform for PAN's campaign in North Sumatra has also enabled the party to leverage digital analytics. Through analytics features provided by platforms like Instagram and TikTok, PAN can monitor campaign performance in real time. They can track interaction levels, the demographics of engaged voters, and the types of content that generate the most interest. This information is crucial for identifying the most effective strategies and areas requiring improvement. With this data driven approach, PAN can continuously refine its campaign and ensure it remains on the right track to capture the attention of millennial voters. When examining the effectiveness of PAN's use of digital media in its North Sumatra political campaign, various political communication theories help explain how social media serves as a key tool for reaching millennial voters. In *The New Media Nation*, highlights how indigenous communities utilize new media to convey political messages and preserve their identities within a global communication landscape (Alia, 2022). In the context of its political campaign, PAN employs social media for similar purposes: disseminating political messages that resonate with millennials and reinforcing a party identity aligned with the aspirations of the younger generation. Platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and WhatsApp allow PAN to reach a broader audience and engage directly with voters through more personal and participatory formats. Alia's research is relevant to PAN's use of visual and audiovisual content to enhance campaign appeal. As explained in Mass Media and American Politics, visual media plays a vital role in simplifying complex political messages, making them more accessible to a wider audience particularly young people (Dunaway & Graber, 2022). PAN capitalizes on this by incorporating infographics, short videos, and memes that are easily shareable across social media. This reflects a shift from traditional political communication toward the use of more interactive and visual digital content a trend in modern political campaigns highlighted by Dunaway and Graber.

In the context of political engagement, (Sahly et al, 2019) examined the use of social media in the Trump and Clinton political campaigns and its impact on audience engagement. They found that frame building and effective message delivery via social media could significantly boost voter engagement. PAN's strategy of utilizing local influencers and public figures to convey political messages can be viewed as a form of frame building designed to capture the attention of millennials. By involving figures known and trusted by young audiences, PAN creates a more personal and relevant campaign narrative, mirroring the approaches taken in the Trump and Clinton campaigns.

Furthermore, (Stier et al, 2020) highlighted the importance of "network media logic" when studying political news on social media. They noted that in a media environment abundant with choices, individuals tend to consume political news from trusted sources and through their chosen social media networks. This is relevant to PAN's campaign, as millennial voters are more likely to learn about politics through the social media platforms, they follow than through traditional news sources. By leveraging interactive, influencer-backed content, PAN can foster a political learning environment that is more engaging for millennials. Meanwhile, research by (Zarouali et al, 2022) on political microtargeting indicates that using algorithms to tailor political advertisements to voters' personality profiles can enhance social media campaign effectiveness. Although PAN may not have explicitly employed this specific strategy, their data-driven approach to identifying the trends and preferences of millennial voters in North Sumatra reflects the fundamental principles of political microtargeting. By monitoring voter interactions and engagement via social media analytics tools, PAN is able to formulate more targeted and relevant campaign strategies.

Feedback management is also a crucial aspect of formulating PAN's campaign strategy. Online interaction between candidates and voters fosters a dynamic dialogue in which voters feel heard and acknowledged (Sahly et al, 2019). PAN utilizes social media not merely as a one-way information channel but as a platform for two-way dialogue, allowing voter feedback to be addressed immediately and integrated into the campaign strategy. Consequently, PAN's approach aligns with findings that active social media engagement enhances voter trust and connection. Research by (Alia, 2022) also highlights how indigenous communities utilize digital media to build robust virtual communities. In PAN's case, the campaign strategy focuses not only on conveying political messages but also on cultivating a solid digital community. The party strives to establish more personal and close relationships with millennial voters through online discussions, Q&A sessions, and content relevant to the daily lives of young audiences. This fosters a stronger bond between the party and the electorate, with digital engagement serving as the foundation for building the party's trust and credibility. Dunaway and Graber (Dunaway & Graber 2022) also emphasize the media's role in shaping public opinion and political perceptions; similarly, social media plays a pivotal role in PAN's campaign by fostering a positive perception of the party among millennials.

Through creative, engaging content and a personalized approach involving local influencers, PAN has successfully cultivated an image as a party responsive to the needs of young voters. This aligns with Dunaway and Graber's findings, which demonstrate that social media can be a powerful tool for influencing political views and garnering public support. Overall, the combination of social media usage, active voter engagement, and responsiveness to feedback has enabled PAN to devise a campaign strategy that is both more effective and better aligned with the needs of millennial voters. This strategy not only reflects global trends in political communication as discussed by Alia, Dunaway, and other researchers but also demonstrates the potency of digital media in fostering deeper political engagement among the younger generation.

CONCLUSION

PAN effectively utilizes digital media as a primary channel to convey its political campaign to millennial voters. Platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and WhatsApp are leveraged to reach this digitally connected demographic. The effectiveness of this digital approach is evident in PAN's ability to create engaging visual content including infographics, short videos, and memes that simplifies complex political messages, making them more accessible to millennial voters. The party also employs two-way interaction on social media to listen to voter aspirations, provide real-time responses, and adjust campaign strategies based on the feedback received. Furthermore, the use of digital analytics enables

PAN to measure voter engagement, allowing for the continuous refinement and improvement of communication strategies to achieve more effective results.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS
The author extends sincere gratitude to those who assisted throughout this research process, from data collection to the analysis of the findings. It is hoped that this article will make both academic and practical contributions to the advancement of communication studies, particularly within the fields of digital and political communication.

REFERENCES

Alia, V. (2022). The New Media Nation: Indigenous Peoples and Global Communication. https://doi.org/10.1515/9781845457822

Ansor, M. (2024). Kuasa Survey Dalam Politik Elektoral Indonesia: Studi Kasus Proses Rekrutmen Calon Kepala Daerah Pada Partai Golkar Di Riau. Journal of International Multidisciplinary Research, 2(7), 11-25.

Aydil, M., & Zuhri, A. (2023). Political Marketing: Strategi PAN pada Pemilu 2024 Dalam Menyukseskan Agenda Politik Melalui Pembuatan Jingle. In Jurnal Sains Riset. academia.edu

Beltim, F. N., Ranto, R., & Saputra, P. P. (2021). Motivasi Keterlibatan Calon Legislatif Perempuan Pada Pemilu 2019 di Kota Pangkalpinang. Jurnal Sosial dan Sains, 1(8), 751-757.

Brady, W. J., Wills, J. A., Burkart, D., Jost, J. T., & Van Bavel, J. J. (2019). An Ideological Asymmetry in the Diffusion of Moralized Content on Social Media Among Political Leaders. Journal of Experimental Psychology: General, 148(10), 1802.

Darlington, Y., & Scott, D. (2020). Qualitative Research in practice: Stories from the Field. taylorfrancis.com. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003117025

Djufri, D. (2022). Sistem Politik dan Pemilu di Indonesia. Jurnal Ekonomi, Sosial & Humaniora, 3(10), 88-97.

Dunaway, J., & Graber, D. A. (2022). Mass Media and American Politics. SAGE Publications

Green, J., Edgerton, J., Naftel, D., Shoub, K. (2020). Elusive Consensus: Polarization in Elite Communication on The Covid-19 Pandemic. Science Advances. https://doi.org/10.1126/Sciadv.abc2717

Majid, N. (2023). Strategi Komunikasi Politik Dalam Pemilihan Umum di Era Digital. PERSEPTIF: Jurnal Ilmu Sosial Dan Humaniora. pdfs.semanticscholar.org.

Miles, M.B, A. H. & J. S. (2014). Qualitative Data Analysis, A Methods Sourcebook, Edition 3 (U.-P. Tjetjep Rohindi Rohidi (ed.)). Sage Publication.

Munthe, N. K. B., & Lubis, D. A. (2022). Pemasaran Politik Dalam Media Sosial (Studi Political Marketing Pilkada Serdang Bedagai 2020 melalui Facebook). Hijaz: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Keislaman, 1(4), 1-5. Oktaryal, A., & Hastuti, P. (2021). Desain Penegakan Hukum Korupsi Partai Politik di Indonesia. Integritas: Jurnal Antikorupsi.

Pan, L., Xiong, H., & Sun, Y. (2023). Research on The Integration of College Students' Ideological and Political Education and Student Management Under the Background of Internet Plus. Advances in Educational Technology and Psychology, 7(7), 30-34

Pratiwi, A. M. (2019). The Policies, Practices, and Politics of Women Representation in Political Parties: A Case Study of Women Members of Parliament in Regency/City-level Legislative Council Period 2014-2019. Jurnal Perempuan, 24(2), 151-163

Sagalane, A. B. (2024). Implikasi Hukum Penyelenggaraan Pemilu Legislatif Terhadap Keberlangsungan Sosial Politik Generasi Muda Dalam Partai Politik. Journal of Scientech Research and Development

Sahly, A., Shao, C., & Kwon, K. H. (2019). Social Media for Political Campaigns: An Examination of Trump's and Clinton's Frame Building and its Effect on Audience Engagement. Social Media Society. https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305119855141

Salahudin, Nurmandi, A., Jubba, H., Qodir, Z., Jainuri. (2020). Islamic Political Polarisation on Social Media During the 2019 Presidential Election in Indonesia. Asian Affairs. https://doi.org/10.1080/03068374.2020.1812929

Simanjutak, R. S. R., Raya, R. R., & Al Birra, R. (2024). Analisis Pengaruh Partai Politik Terhadap Pembangunan Demokrasi di Indonesia. Jurnal Ilmiah Penelitian Mahasiswa, 2(3), 269-288.

Stier, S., Bleier, A., Lietz, H., & ... (2020). Election Campaigning on Social Media: Politicians, Audiences, and The Mediation of Political Communication on Facebook and Twitter. Studying Politics Across. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429202483-4

Tracy, S. J. (2019). Qualitative Research Methods: Collecting Evidence, Crafting Analysis, Communicating Impact. Wiley-Blackwell

Zarouali, B., Dobber, T., De Pauw, G., & De Vreese, C. (2022). Using a Personality Profiling Algorithm to Investigate Political Microtargeting: Assessing the Persuasion Effects of Personality Tailored Ads on Social Media. Communication Research, 49(8), 1066-1091. https://doi.org/10.1177/0093650220961965