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Political Communication Strategy Through Instagram: A Study of the @dpwpkbjatim Account

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Abstract

Background This study aims to analyze the political communication strategy implemented by the East Java Regional Leadership Council (DPW) of the National Awakening Party (PKB) through the Instagram account @dpwpkbjatim and identify supporting and inhibiting factors in its use as a political communication medium.

Methods This study uses a qualitative method with a case study approach. Data were obtained through interviews, observations, and documentation. The research analysis uses Anwar Arifin's Political Communication Strategy theory, which includes aspects of knowing the audience, composing messages, determining methods, and selecting communication media.

Results The results show that the Instagram account @dpwpkbjatim is used to convey information about party activities, build a political image, and establish communication with the public through various Instagram features. Supporting factors for Instagram use include the high number of users, interactive features, organizational support, and the development of digital technology. Inhibiting factors include consistency in content production, diversity of audience characteristics, changes in the Instagram algorithm, and limited resources.

Conclusion This study shows that Instagram has become an important medium in supporting the political communication of the East Java PKB DPW in the digital era.

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Keywords
Key words: Political Communication Strategy; Politics; Instagram; DPW PKB of East Java; Indonesia

Introduction

This study examines the political communication strategy of the East Java Regional Leadership Council (DPW) of the National Awakening Party (PKB) through the Instagram account @dpwpkbjatim. PKB is a party with a relatively large mass base and a distinctive ideological character. Institutionally, PKB adopts Pancasila as the party's foundational principle. Nevertheless, PKB cannot be separated from its historical background as a party that emerged from Indonesia's largest Islamic organization, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU). The combination of its identity as a nationalist party and its Islamic historical roots is an important element in understanding PKB's character and position within the dynamics of Indonesian politics (Munhanif & Ihsan, 2023).

In the 2024 election, PKB secured 16,115,665 votes nationally. PKB increased its seats in the House of Representatives of the Republic of Indonesia from 58 in the 2019 election to 68 in the 2024 election. Similarly, in East Java, PKB emerged as the party with the highest number of votes, totaling 4,517,228 votes. These votes were converted into 27 seats in the East Java Regional House of Representatives (DPRD). This represented an increase compared with the 2019 election, when PKB received 4,380,739 votes and secured 25 seats in the East Java DPRD (Herdiansah et al., 2026). This political dominance and strength encourage PKB to continue developing adaptive political communication, including the use of Instagram as a medium for conveying political messages to the public.

PKB's political strength in East Java cannot be separated from its close relationship with Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), which has a substantial nahdliyin base in the region. PKB is known to have historical and ideological ties with NU because it was born from the organization (Ramdlani et al., 2026). PKB's political dominance in East Java has therefore encouraged the party to continue developing adaptive political communication through the use of social media, particularly Instagram, as a means of conveying political messages, publicizing party activities, and building its political image among the public.

The various achievements attained by PKB in East Java, along with the challenges it faces, demonstrate the importance of careful planning in maintaining and retaining constituents. Therefore, effective, directed, and systematic communication-strategy management is required. This study was conducted to identify and assess the extent to which PKB implements its political communication strategy. The study is relevant because social media platforms have a broad reach and can connect with diverse segments of society. This condition provides political parties with a major opportunity to use social media as a medium for political communication.

Active social media users in Indonesia reached approximately 143 million at the beginning of 2025, equivalent to 50.2% of the country's total population (Zulfikar et al., 2026). According to Thierry Vedel, the use of the internet in political communication fundamentally produces positive effects, both materially and non-materially. From a material perspective, the internet and social media can reduce communication costs. From a non-material perspective, the use of digital media can increase a sense of belonging and engagement among members (Bai & Wang, 2026).

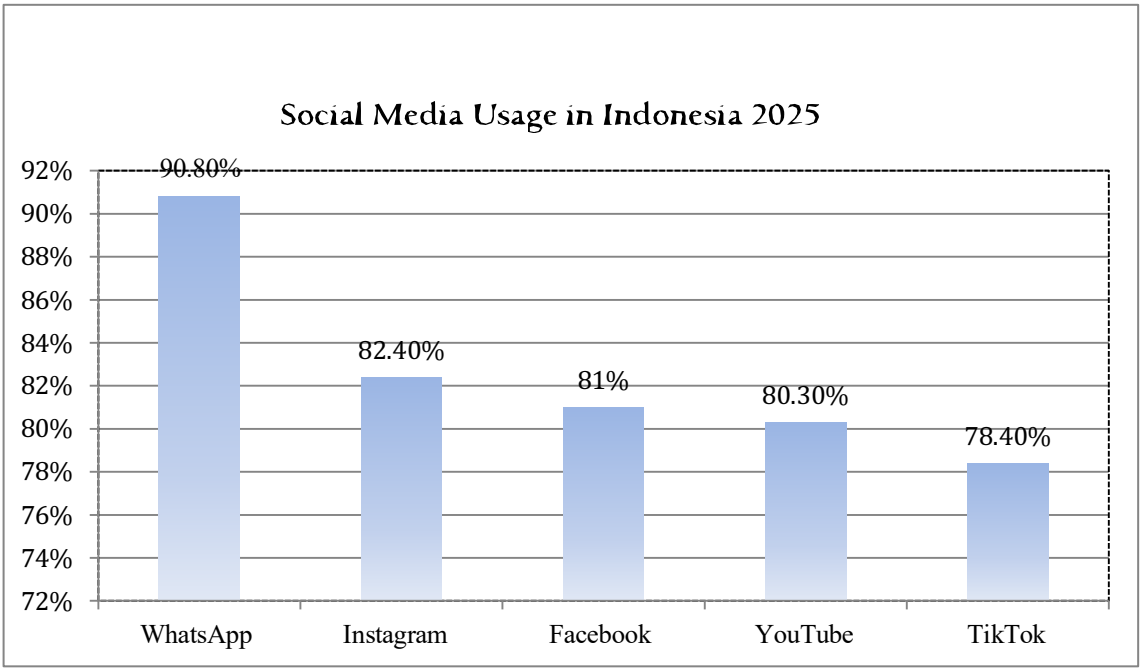


Figure 1. Social Media User Data in Indonesia, 2025

Source: DataReportal

The data above show the level of social media use in Indonesia in 2025. According to (Fransisca & Ningsih, 2023), WhatsApp is the most widely used social media platform among Indonesians, with a usage rate of 90.8%. It is followed by Instagram at 82.4%, Facebook at 81%, YouTube at 80.3%, and TikTok at 78.4%. Based on these data, the researcher selected Instagram as the object of the study. YouTube places greater emphasis on video content, while WhatsApp primarily functions as a message-based communication medium. Instagram, meanwhile, focuses on sharing photos, videos, lifestyle content, and various other forms of visual content, making it relevant as a medium for political communication in the digital era.

Several previous studies have discussed political communication strategies related to the use of social media. These include studies on the political communication strategy of the Prosperous Justice Party in West Java Province, the use of Facebook as a political communication strategy, the use of social media as the Golkar Party's political communication strategy for political educatio, digital strategy of political communication media on social media, and the political communication strategy of PKS in the 2019 General Election in Pekanbaru City (Lim, 2017; Prayitno & Khoirunurrofik, 2020; Saud & Margono, 2021).

Research on the use of social media as the Golkar Party's political communication strategy shows that social media functions not only as a means of disseminating information but also as a medium for political education and party-image formation in society. In line with this study, other research explains that the development of social media has driven the transformation of political communication into the digital sphere. Through appropriate digital communication strategies, social media can broaden the reach of political messages, increase interaction with the public, and strengthen political identity in the digital public sphere (Putra Kurniawan et al., 2025).

Another study on PKS's political communication strategy in the 2019 General Election in Pekanbaru City found that social media is an important instrument for conveying political messages and building closeness with constituents. Social media has also developed into an effective political communication medium because it enables faster and more interactive communication and reaches broader audiences than conventional media. Nevertheless, these studies generally focus on political communication strategies in general, political communication in electoral contexts, and the use of social media by particular political parties (Maulana & Djuyandi, 2023).

However, these studies generally focus more on political communication strategies in general, political communication during electoral periods, the use of social media platforms other than Instagram, or communication strategies involving particular political figures and parties. Research on political communication strategies through Instagram on official regional-level political party accounts remains relatively limited, particularly regarding the @dpwpkbjatim account of the East Java Regional Leadership Council of the National Awakening Party. Therefore, this study examines how political communication strategies are implemented through the Instagram account @dpwpkbjatim, as well as the supporting and inhibiting factors affecting its use as a political communication medium.

This gap indicates that studies of digital political communication still require more specific analysis of party communication practices at the regional level and during periods outside electoral campaigns. In this context, the novelty of this study lies in its focus on the official @dpwpkbjatim account as a communication channel of a provincial-level political organization and in the use of Anwar Arifin's four elements of political communication strategy knowing the audience, composing messages, determining methods, and selecting media to examine everyday digital communication practices. Thus, this study not only describes the use of Instagram by a political party but also explains how the strategy is implemented, the factors that support it, and the obstacles that limit the effectiveness of digital political communication at the regional.

Methods

This study uses a qualitative research method with a case study approach (Anas & Ishaq, 2022; Merriam, 2022). The method was selected based on the alignment between the research focus and the characteristics of the case study approach. A qualitative case study is characterized by an inquiry bounded by a specific context, such as time, place, or a particular object. In addition, this approach aims to obtain an in-depth understanding of the case under study. In this research, the object of study is specifically defined as the East Java Provincial DPW PKB.

The data sources in this study are divided into two types: primary data and secondary data. Primary data are obtained directly from research informants through interviews. Secondary data are not obtained directly from informants but remain relevant to the research topic. Secondary data were obtained from various written sources, such as journals, newspapers, books, and statistical data related to social media, particularly the social media activities of the East Java DPW PKB.

Interviews are one of the data-collection techniques commonly used in qualitative research. In addition to observation, interviews were used to obtain in-depth information related to

the research object. This study employed one-on-one interviews so that the information obtained could be more detailed and comprehensive. Informants were selected using purposive sampling because this technique enabled the researcher to select individuals considered capable of providing data in accordance with the needs and objectives of the study.

This study is analyzed using Anwar Arifin's Political Communication Strategy theory. This theory was selected because it can explain the political communication process carried out by political actors or organizations in conveying messages to audiences through particular media. Political communication strategy includes several important aspects: knowing the audience, composing political messages, determining communication methods, and selecting appropriate communication media (Kreiss et al., 2018).

Data analysis is an important stage in the research process after data have been collected from informants. In general, data analysis begins with data organization, followed by data reduction and data presentation. In this study, data analysis was conducted through several stages: organizing the data, preparing analytical memos or notes, classifying the data into specific codes and themes, interpreting the data, and presenting and visualizing the research findings.

Results and Discussion

Based on the interview findings, the political communication strategy implemented through the Instagram account @dpwpkbjatim involves presenting information on party activities, work programs, and the party's political positions in an informative manner that is easy for the public to understand. Informants explained that the political messages conveyed are determined by the party's programs, emerging issues, and the public's information needs.

The uploaded content is also dominated by themes related to party activities, work programs, social issues, public policy, and activities associated with public aspirations. These findings indicate that Instagram is used not only as a medium for organizational publicity but also as a means of conveying political messages to the wider public. Thus, the @dpwpkbjatim account functions as a political communication medium that connects the party with the public through the continuous dissemination of information.

Interview findings show that Instagram is used to build the image of East Java PKB by consistently presenting party activities, programs, and values in a positive manner. Through the publication of various party activities, the @dpwpkbjatim account seeks to strengthen the party's presence while building a positive public perception. This strategy is consistent with the function of political communication, which not only conveys information but also shapes the political image of an organization. Through posts featuring the activities of cadres, legislators, and programs that directly engage with the public, PKB seeks to strengthen its identity as an organization that is close to the public interest.

Another political communication strategy involves efforts to build interaction with the public. Informants explained that the Instagram account is used to provide information regularly, respond to comments and direct messages, and use public feedback as material for evaluating the party's communication.

These findings are reinforced by interviews with followers of the @dpwpkbjatim account, who stated that the account actively interacts with the public and helps them obtain

information about the activities and programs of East Java PKB. This indicates that Instagram is used not only as a one-way communication medium but also as a means of building two-way communication between the party and the public.

To reach a broader audience, particularly younger generations, the East Java DPW PKB employs a strategy of using creative content, engaging visuals, and various Instagram features such as Reels, Stories, Live, and Carousel. According to informants, these features are used to convey information in a more engaging, interactive, and easily understandable manner. The content-production process also involves determining themes, adjusting content to emerging issues, preparing publication materials, and conducting internal coordination before publication. This strategy indicates that the management of the @dpwpkbjatim account has adapted to the characteristics of digital communication, which demand speed, creativity, and content relevance to attract social media audiences. Interviews with the managers of the @dpwpkbjatim Instagram account also identified several factors that support the use of Instagram as a political communication medium by the East Java DPW PKB. One of the main supporting factors is the large number of Instagram users in Indonesia, particularly among younger people, who constitute a strategic group in political communication. This provides the party with an opportunity to reach a wider audience at a relatively lower cost than conventional media. In addition, Instagram's visual-based characteristics are considered to facilitate the delivery of political messages in a more attractive and understandable way. Features such as Reels, Stories, Live, and Carousel enable information to be delivered more creatively and interactively and in line with current trends in digital communication.

Analytically, these findings show that the @dpwpkbjatim strategy performs three interrelated functions: an informational function through the publication of party activities and positions, an image-building function through the positive presentation of organizational activities and values, and a relational function through efforts to interact with followers. However, the evidence also indicates that the relational function is not as strong as the informational and image-building functions because responses to comments and two-way communication can still be improved. Thus, the use of Instagram's interactive features does not automatically create fully dialogical political communication; its effectiveness still depends on consistency in responding and the capacity of account managers.

Another supporting factor is organizational support for the management of the party's social media. Based on interview findings, the East Java DPW PKB has established a team specifically responsible for managing the Instagram account, from content planning and production of publication materials to uploading and evaluating content. The availability of human resources with an understanding of social media management is an important aspect of sustaining political communication in digital spaces. In addition, developments in information technology also support the effectiveness of Instagram as a political communication medium. Easier internet access and the increasing use of digital devices allow the public to obtain political information quickly and in real time. With technological support, human resources, and Instagram's interactive characteristics, the @dpwpkbjatim account can be used as a means of disseminating information, building the party's image, and strengthening relationships between the party and the public.

In addition to these supporting factors, the use of Instagram as a political communication medium also faces several obstacles. Based on the interviews, one of the main challenges is the demand to continuously produce content that is engaging, informative, and relevant to

emerging issues. In practice, social media management requires high levels of creativity and consistency to keep audiences interested in the information being conveyed. This creates a particular challenge because the need for continuous content must be balanced with the team's capacity to produce high-quality communication materials. In addition, the diversity of audience characteristics also creates obstacles to the delivery of political messages. Differences in educational background, age, experience, and information preferences mean that messages conveyed through Instagram are not always received and understood in the same way by all users.

Another obstacle concerns changes in Instagram's algorithm, which can affect the reach of published content and the level of audience engagement. Algorithm changes often prevent posts from reaching all account followers, thereby reducing the effectiveness of information dissemination. In addition, although a dedicated social media team is available, limitations in human resources and budget remain challenges in optimizing the management of the Instagram account. These limitations can affect the frequency of content production, the quality of publication design, and the development of more innovative social media strategies. Interviews with several followers of the @dpwpkbjatim account also indicate that interaction between the account and its audience can still be improved, particularly in responding to comments and building more intensive two-way communication. Therefore, these obstacles require attention from the East Java DPW PKB in its efforts to optimize Instagram as an effective political communication medium in the digital era. According to Anwar Arifin, political communication strategy includes four main aspects: knowing the audience, composing political messages, determining communication methods, and selecting communication media. Based on the findings, the East Java DPW PKB has applied all four aspects in managing the @dpwpkbjatim Instagram account as a political communication medium (Gunawan et al., 2024).

The findings on supporting and inhibiting factors reveal a dual dependence on organizational capacity and platform characteristics. A large user base, visual and interactive features, team support, and technological development expand opportunities for political communication; conversely, demands for continuous content production, audience heterogeneity, algorithm changes, and limited resources can reduce message consistency and reach. This means that successful digital political communication requires more than simply selecting Instagram as a medium; it also requires content governance, division of labor, evaluation of audience engagement, and the ability to adapt to platform changes.

Knowing the Audience (Audience)

The first aspect of political communication strategy is knowing the audience targeted by the communication. Anwar Arifin explains that the effectiveness of political communication is strongly influenced by the communicator's ability to understand the characteristics of the intended audience. Based on the interviews, the East Java DPW PKB's use of Instagram is based on the consideration that the platform has a large number of users, particularly among younger generations. In addition, the @dpwpkbjatim account targets not only party cadres and sympathizers but also members of the general public who actively use social media.

These findings indicate that the East Java DPW PKB has considered audience characteristics in determining its communication strategy. The selection of Instagram as a political communication medium demonstrates the party's effort to adapt its communication patterns

to changing public behavior, as people become increasingly active in digital spaces. Thus, the strategy of knowing the audience has been implemented through the identification of target audiences that correspond to the characteristics of Instagram users.

Nevertheless, the audience identification found in this study remains relatively broad—young people, cadres, sympathizers, and the general public. This finding indicates that the audience-identification aspect has been implemented, but there remains room for strengthening it through more detailed segmentation based on user characteristics, information needs, and engagement patterns. More specific segmentation would help the organization adapt its language, format, and issue selection to different target groups so that political messages not only reach audiences but are also more relevant to them.

Political Message Formulation

The second aspect is political message formulation. According to Anwar Arifin, political messages should be designed in accordance with the communication objectives to be achieved. The findings show that content uploaded through the @dpwpkbjatim account is dominated by information on party activities, work programs, social issues, public policy, and public aspirations. In addition, the messages are packaged in visual and narrative forms that are easy for social media users to understand.

These findings indicate that the political messages conveyed by the East Java DPW PKB are not solely oriented toward the party's internal interests but also seek to build closeness with the public through issues relevant to public life. This type of message formulation is consistent with Anwar Arifin's concept, which emphasizes the importance of aligning messages with audience needs and interests so that political communication can operate effectively.

From the perspective of message formulation, the strength of the strategy lies in the connection between content and party activities, work programs, social issues, public policy, and public aspirations. However, this study does not directly show how each type of message is received by different audience groups. Therefore, message-audience alignment should be interpreted as a finding concerning communication design rather than as causal evidence that the messages have increased political support. Evaluating audience responses for example, through comment patterns, engagement, or follower perceptions could serve as a subsequent stage for assessing message effectiveness in greater depth.

Political Communication Methods

The third aspect concerns the communication methods used to convey political messages. Based on the interviews, the East Java DPW PKB uses various Instagram features such as Reels, Stories, Carousel, and Live to communicate information to the public. The use of various content formats demonstrates an effort to adapt communication methods to the characteristics of social media, which emphasize visual presentation, creativity, and interactivity.

According to Anwar Arifin, communication methods should be adapted to audience conditions and the media used so that messages can be received optimally. In this study, the use of engaging visual content and Instagram features represents an adaptive communication method in response to developments in digital technology. This strategy allows political messages to be delivered in a more engaging manner than conventional political

communication methods.

The use of Reels, Stories, Carousel, and Live demonstrates a diversification of communication methods in accordance with Instagram's characteristics. However, format variation should be distinguished from the quality of communication itself. Interactive features will produce meaningful engagement only when accompanied by response management, narrative continuity, and evaluation of the types of content most suited to audience needs. Thus, the digital communication methods in this case can be considered adaptive, but their effectiveness still requires consistent interaction management.

Selection of Communication Media

The final aspect is the selection of communication media. Anwar Arifin states that the chosen medium should be able to reach the communication target effectively. Based on the findings, Instagram was selected because it has a wide reach, is easily accessible, and allows information to be disseminated quickly to the public. In addition, this medium provides space for interaction between the party and the public through comments and direct messages.

The selection of Instagram as a political communication medium indicates that the East Java DPW PKB is attempting to adapt its communication strategy to developments in digital media. The presence of social media has transformed political communication from a previously one-way pattern into a more interactive one. Therefore, the use of Instagram as a political communication medium can be viewed as a form of party adaptation to changes in the political communication environment in the digital era. Based on an analysis using Anwar Arifin's political communication strategy theory, it can be concluded that the political communication strategy implemented through the @dpwpkbjatim Instagram account reflects the four principal elements of political communication strategy: knowing the audience, composing political messages, determining communication methods, and selecting appropriate communication media. These four elements are implemented through the identification of target audiences, the preparation of content relevant to the public, the creative use of Instagram features, and the selection of Instagram as a political communication medium capable of reaching a broad public. Thus, the @dpwpkbjatim account functions not only as a party-publication medium but also as a political communication instrument supporting message delivery, party-image building, and interaction with the public in the digital era.

The selection of Instagram also carries strategic consequences in the form of dependence on platform rules and algorithms. Wide reach and rapid access are major advantages, but the distribution of political messages is not entirely under the organization's control because content visibility is influenced by algorithm changes and user behavior. Therefore, media selection in political communication strategy should be understood not merely as a decision to choose a popular channel, but also as a decision to manage platform risks, continuity of content production, and the quality of interaction with the public.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that the political communication strategy implemented by the East Java DPW PKB through the Instagram account @dpwpkbjatim uses social media as a means of conveying political messages, publicizing party activities, building

a political image, and interacting with the public. The political communication strategy includes communicating information about party programs and activities, strengthening the party's image through the publication of organizational activities, developing two-way communication with the public, and using various Instagram features to reach a broader audience. Based on the analysis using Anwar Arifin's Political Communication Strategy theory, this strategy reflects four principal elements: knowing the audience, composing political messages, determining communication methods, and selecting appropriate communication media.

Conceptually, this study shows that Anwar Arifin's four elements of political communication strategy are interconnected in digital communication practice. Knowledge of the audience influences message formulation; message characteristics determine the delivery method; and Instagram's characteristics shape both the opportunities and limitations involved in implementing the strategy. These findings confirm that political communication through social media is not merely a publication activity but an organizational process that requires content planning, platform adaptation, and continuous management of relationships with audiences.

This study has limitations because it focuses on a single official political party account at the provincial level and uses a qualitative approach; therefore, the findings are not intended to be generalized to all party organizations or all social media platforms. The study also does not quantitatively measure the relationship between content strategy, levels of user engagement, and changes in political support. Future research could compare party accounts across several regions, conduct content analysis over defined periods, and combine interview data with digital engagement metrics to assess the relationships among communication strategy, audience response, and political communication effectiveness more comprehensively.

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