

Personal Branding of Politicians through Social Media as Political Communication in Attracting Gen-Z People

I Komang Widya Purnama Yasa

Institut Agama Hindu Negeri Gde Pudja Mataram

Jln. Pancaka No.7 B Mataram 83126 West Nusa Tenggara - Indonesia

*Corresponding author: komang.yasa1990@gmail.com

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Abstract

Personal branding of politicians through social media as political communication in attracting Gen Z people will provide insight into what Gen Z people want with personal branding owned by politicians on social media. The research method uses a descriptive qualitative approach with primary data sources obtained from Mataram City politicians, the General Election Commission and Gen Z people. The location of this research is Mataram City. This research discusses Social Media as Political Communication of Politicians Ahead of the 2024 Election, Personal Branding of Politicians Through Social Media, The Role of Social Media as a Source of Political Information in Increasing Gen Z Support and Gen Z Perception and Response to Political Communication of Politicians. Data obtained from the General Election Commission shows that 18 political parties will compete in the Mataram City area with a total of 534 candidates. The importance of this matter is discussed to provide views to politicians in Mataram City regarding the political communication desired by Gen Z people through social media platforms ahead of the 2024 Election.

Keywords: Gen Z; Political Communication; Social Media; Personal Branding; Politicians.

Introduction

In the era of increasingly advanced digital information, political communication has undergone a significant transformation (Alam, 2021). Social media has become a vital tool in politicians' efforts to reach voters and influence public opinion (Suardana, 2020). One increasingly influential group of voters is Generation Z (Gen Z), which consists of individuals born around the mid-1990s to early 2010s. This generation has grown up amidst advances in digital technology and unlimited internet connectivity. Gen Z has unique characteristics in terms of communication preferences, values, and demands on politicians who represent them. Gen Z tends to be sceptical of traditional political authority, more open to inclusivity, and oriented towards climate change, equality, and social justice. In this context, politicians

need to have a deep understanding of Gen Z and relevant communication strategies to win their support.

A communication strategy increasingly gaining attention is the personal branding of politicians through social media (Ariska, 2022). Personal branding is a process by which politicians create and promote their image as credible, authentic, and relevant leaders in the eyes of Gen Z (Yasa, 2022). Communication strategy has two stages, planning and management, to achieve a goal. It involves various aspects, including the intelligent use of social media to deliver political messages, build a strong identity, and interact directly with voters. In politicians' branding, social media is not only a tool for disseminating information but also a platform for dialogue, listening, and responding to Gen Z's hopes and concerns. Politicians who successfully build solid

personal branding on social media can influence Gen Z's views and attitudes towards political issues, encouraging them to participate in the democratic process actively. The biggest problem in self-branding by politicians is adjusting passion according to the style of Gen Z people.

In the environment of Mataram City, personal branding of politicians on social media is very intensively carried out. The number of temporary candidate lists for the Mataram City Local People's Representative Council (DPRD) that have registered themselves at the General Election Commission (KPU) is quite a lot, namely 534 people to compete in the city of Mataram, which is a challenge for Gen Z to make the right choice. However, the personal branding of politicians through social media also presents complex challenges. Gen Z are intelligent and critical voters who not only value authenticity but also demand transparency and accountability. Therefore, politicians must understand how to build convincing and trustworthy personal branding in this fast-paced digital world.

There have been many studies on personal branding, both in political communication styles and personal branding on social media. This is like the research conducted by Festy Rahma Hidayati (2021) on Political Communication and Branding of Political Leaders through Social Media: A Conceptual Paper (Hidayati, 2021). This research is a conceptual paper that analyzes the concept of branding in politics in the era of digital political communication by utilizing social media. The limitations of this research are only limited to the political communication side carried out on social media without seeing the response of today's modern voters, which we know is dominant towards Gen Z people. From the understanding of the literature, the author will adopt the interest of Gen Z people in the personal branding of politicians on social media. It is known that in 2024, the highest voter benchmark is in the Gen Z axis. This is because Gen Z wants a change that leads to modernization, so it needs a leader who wants to hear the issues of change. This

group is dominant in social media by conveying contemporary issues in society, culture, politics and so on.

Based on the explanation above, the author will discuss the personal branding of politicians through social media as political communication in attracting Gen Z people. This research is a very relevant and essential topic in facing the challenges of modern political communication today. The purpose of this research is to find out the suitable choices by the thinking of Gen Z people towards personal branding carried out by Mataram city politicians through social media.

Theoretical Framework

Personal branding carried out by politicians is a unique attraction for Gen Z people. The change in thinking patterns owned by this group can be seen in how politicians communicate. Various maneuvers carried out on social media to attract the interest of these people are felt. Personal branding is the foundation for conveying the political style carried out by politicians.

From the social perspective of modern society, political communication is the relationship between politicians and the current generation through technology or what is known today as Gen Z people. Political communication is closely related to General Election activities. At this time, the dominant voters are Gen Z people. According to Blumler and Gurevitch, in the political communication system, there are several components of concern, namely: (1) The passion for politician communication; (2) Media as a forum for delivering political communication; (3) Implications for communication; (4) Relevant perceptions of political communication. Looking at these components, social media cannot be separated from political communication in the general election era.

The concept of political communication addresses the interaction between communication and political processes. It involves studying how political messages are composed, delivered, received, and understood by the public in governance,

public policy, political campaigns, and interactions between government and society. The concept includes the use of media and the analysis of political issues, narratives, framing, and communication strategies used to influence public opinion and political behavior. The main objective of political communication is to understand how political information is disseminated and how communication affects political decision-making processes and societal power dynamics. This involves the study of the power of messages, audiences, mass media, and political institutions in shaping the political views and attitudes of individuals and society as a whole.

The concept of political Communication has various points of view. Political Communication is only a factor of interest before the election, political Communication is a negotiation between politicians and voters, and political Communication is a process of attraction to politician branding. From this concept, political Communication is very influential on the index of the increase in voter polls against politicians. According to political communication theory, politicians should understand the concept of ethics in politics because, in modern society, the point of view regarding personal branding is very intense in the spotlight. Therefore, political Communication can build relationships with individual politicians.

This research framework will describe politicians by delivering political communication through social media by answering various developing issues. Politicians will show their branding on social media with their respective political ethics. Then, from looking for political communication and personal branding, Gen Z will have perceptions that are influenced by the contact displayed by politicians on social media. This exposure can be seen in the following figure:

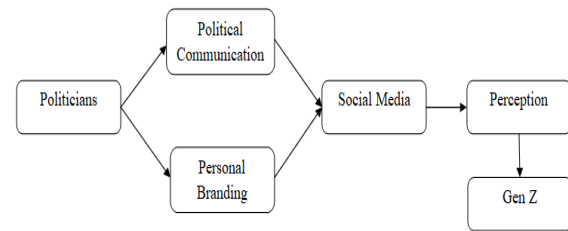


Figure 1: Research Framework Concept

Material and Methodology

The method used in this research is a descriptive qualitative approach that aims to describe and understand the perceptions, views, and experiences of subjects related to the topic under study. The location of this research is within the scope of Mataram City, with an interview object of 10 politicians who have registered themselves at the KPU. This observation was carried out for two months with the focus on the problem of how to brand themselves as politicians to attract Gen Z people on social media because, in the current era, they are the masters of digital technology with various issues raised. In addition, participatory observation will be used to gain a broader and contextual understanding of the research topic (Ansori, 2020). The data collected will be analyzed thematically, allowing the identification of patterns and themes that emerge from interviews and observations. The results of the data analysis will be used to describe and interpret the findings, as well as draw relevant conclusions related to this research topic.

Result and Discussion

Political communication in attracting Gen Z people will discuss social media as political communication of politicians ahead of the 2024 election; personal branding of politicians through social media; the role of social media as a source of political information in increasing Gen Z support and Gen Z perceptions and responses to political communication of politicians.

Social Media as Political Communication for Politicians ahead of the 2024 General Election

In the ever-evolving digital era, social media has become the leading platform on which politicians build and strengthen connections with voters (Alam, 2021). Using social media to convey emotional information and personal stories allows politicians to create bonds with voters. Regularly uploaded photos, videos, and stories provide a more intimate view of politicians' daily lives, making them appear more human and connected to voters' realities. Direct interactions with voters, such as responding to comments or holding online Q&A sessions, strengthen engagement and bring politicians closer to their constituents. In addition, social media provides a platform for politicians to demonstrate relevance and responsiveness to issues that voters consider essential before the 2024 elections. By adopting a communication style that matches voters' habits on social media, politicians can reach a broader and more diverse audience.

In the turbulent digital era (Ardial, 2016), the political communication strategies of Mataram city politicians on social media have become a crucial aspect in shaping their image, maintaining support, and engaging directly with voters. Through authentic storytelling techniques, politicians share their personal moments, challenges, and values, creating a more profound sense of connection. Social media has become the main stage where politicians can hold Online Q&A Sessions and Interactive Forums with Gen Z about the right leaders ahead of the 2024 elections. Social media platforms not only provide a platform to disseminate political information but also facilitate direct interaction between politicians and the public. Through Online Q&A Sessions, politicians can respond to direct questions from voters, create opportunities to provide clarifications, and explain their positions on specific issues.

Interactive forums on social media open up space for more in-depth discussions. Politicians ready to contest the 2024 General Election, especially in the Mataram City

region, can start or join conversations about policies, political visions, or other vital issues. Voters who are Gen Z people express their views, provide feedback, and even share personal experiences. According to observations from KPU institutions, 48% of the total registered candidates have approached Gen Z through social media by listening to people's aspirations, seeing concerns about the implementation of government programs, and direct expectations from the community. The results of the response from voters are that Gen Z people have an immediate opportunity to communicate with prospective leaders. Active involvement in such discussions can strengthen the relationship between politicians and voters, increase trust, and build the image of politicians as figures who listen and care about the people's interests. Utilizing interactive features is also a means of digital democracy that enables more public involvement in forming policies and political views.

In the age of social media, rapid response to contemporary issues has become one of the critical aspects of political communication strategy. Along with the speed of information dissemination in the digital era (Artana & Suardana, 2022), the ability to respond quickly helps Mataram City politicians to maintain control over the narrative and avoid the emergence of wrong interpretations in society. Social media can also conduct surveys and polls of people's wishes (Hayat, Muzahid Akbar, 2021). The importance of using surveys and polls on social media today lies in the ability of Mataram city politicians to build voter engagement and participation in the political process. By allowing voters to actively participate in formulating policies or determining the direction of a campaign, politicians can create stronger bonds with their voters. In addition, the results of surveys and polls can also be used to direct the political agenda and help politicians identify the most relevant and significant issues for the community. Utilizing social media, politicians can build an image as leaders who listen, are responsive, and are

committed to representing the interests of the people. Surveys and polls on social media are practical tools in creating a more inclusive and democratic politics, where voters' voices have a critical role in the political decision-making process.

Personal Branding of Politicians through Social Media

Social media has become a very effective platform for building and managing personal branding, especially for politicians. Each venue, such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram, provides a space where politicians can shape their image and communicate directly with voters (Ariska, 2022). One of the critical aspects of using social media as a unique branding platform is the ability to deliver short and direct messages. Twitter, for example, allows politicians to communicate directly and responsively with voters through short tweets. Facebook, on the other hand, provides a broader platform for sharing personal stories and moments. Politicians can utilize long posts, photo galleries, and videos to build a more in-depth narrative about who they are and their values. In addition, Facebook also allows for more in-depth interactions through comments and private messages. Instagram, with its focus on visual storytelling, will enable politicians to build an image through images and videos. Politicians can share everyday moments, community visits, or other activities to create an emotional bond with voters.

The utilization of emotional messages is critical in the personal branding carried out by Mataram City politicians through social media. Politicians can use this platform to deliver resonant messages, build emotional bonds with voters, and form an authentic and trustworthy image. Overall, (Asri et al., 2020), social media serves as an arena where politicians' branding is not only built but also actively carried out. By utilizing the unique features of each platform, politicians can create a personal image that is strong and deep and can connect directly with voters.

In branding themselves, politicians have their way, as well as politicians in Mataram City who try hard to appear to attract Gen Z people. In the 2024 elections, there was an increase in candidate registrants at the General Election Commission. Based on the data from the recapitulation of politicians who have registered at the General Election Commission, the following details are obtained: Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa (PKB) with 40 people, Partai Gerakan Indonesia Raya (Gerindra) with 40 people, Partai Demokrasi Indonesia Perjuangan (PDI-P) with 40 people, Partai Golongan Karya (Golkar) with 40 people, Partai Nasional Demokrat (Nasdem) with 40 people, Partai Buruh with 6 people, Partai Gelombang Rakyat Indonesia (Gelora) with 23 people, Partai Keadilan Sejahtera (PKS) with 40 people, Partai Kebangkitan Nusantara (PKN) with 40 people, Partai Hati Nurani Rakyat (Hanura) with 35 people, Partai Garda Republik Indonesia (Garuda) with 4 people, Partai Amanat Nasional (PAN) with 40 people, Partai Bulan Bintang (PBB) with 20 people, Partai Demokrat with 40 people, Partai Solidaritas Indonesia (PSI) with 6 people Partai Persatuan Indonesia (Perindo) with 32 people, Partai Persatuan Pembangunan (PPP) with 40 people, Partai Ummat with 8 people so that the total of the entire list of political candidates who have registered with the General Election Commission (KPU) is 534 people.

One striking case study of successful personal branding through social media is that of PDI-Perjuangan politician Mr. IMY, a leader who built his credibility on voters' loyalty. Through Twitter, this politician consistently delivers sharp and relevant messages on essential issues. He also actively interacts with his voters, responding to questions and holding regular online Q&A sessions. This strategy builds an image that the PDI-Perjuangan politician is a leader who listens and cares about the people's aspirations.

In contrast, the case study of Nasdem politician Mr. INS shows innovation in using social media to win support. This politician actively utilizes live streaming on Instagram and Facebook to share in-depth insights into

his policies. By presenting himself live online, the politician known as Mr. Ical managed to create high engagement and gain media attention. This strategy not only established an image as a transparent leader but also accommodated the preferences of voters who tend to connect through visual and interactive content. These two case studies illustrate that successful personal branding of politicians through social media involves consistency in messaging, direct interaction with voters, and innovation in utilizing the features of social media platforms. By creating an authentic and engaged image, these two politicians managed to win voters' support and prove that social media is not only a communication tool but also a strategic platform to build and strengthen personal branding in politics.

Challenges and ethics in the personal branding of Mataram City politicians on social media are an integral part of efforts to build an authentic and trusted image (Junaedi, 2019). One of the main challenges is the risk of disinformation that can arise through the spread of false or manipulative information. Politicians must consider the ethics of disseminating information, verify facts, and ensure that the messages conveyed do not harm the public interest. In addition, inequality of access and participation in the use of social media can be a barrier. Not all levels of society have equal access to technology and social media. Therefore, politicians must ensure that their branding efforts do not leave out a large section of society and still include various social groups.

Ethical questions also arise regarding the boundaries of privacy. Politicians need to decide to what extent they will share personal information (Astuti, 2016). Although personal branding involves authenticity, politicians must consider the boundaries that must be maintained to maintain personal integrity and family life. In addition, the polarization on social media can present challenges in building an image that can embrace all levels of society. Politicians must consider the dangers of following polarizing trends that can harm

efforts to build unity and support inclusiveness. In the face of this challenge (Rahmah, 2021), politicians need to follow strict ethical standards and ensure that their branding aligns with the values of democracy, transparency, and justice. By understanding and responding to these challenges, politicians can ensure that their branding on social media is not only tactically successful but also contributes to a healthy and inclusive democratic process.

The implications and impacts of personal branding of Mataram City politicians on social media cover various aspects involving public opinion, democracy, and overall political dynamics. First of all, (Rahmah, 2021), successful personal branding can have a positive impact on public opinion towards a politician. A strong, consistent, and trustworthy image can build public trust, shape positive perceptions, and increase the attractiveness of the politician. Another impact is increased voter engagement. Through direct interaction and relevant content on social media, politicians can build closer relationships with voters. Personal solid branding can motivate voters to engage more actively in the political process, such as providing support, joining campaigns, or engaging in online political discussions.

The implications for political dynamics in Mataram City and democracy are also significant (Rubiyanto, 2021). Effective personal branding can contribute to the public's understanding of political and policy issues, thus creating a more informed discussion. However, conversely, too much focus on personal image without policy substance can lead to a politics that is more focused on appearance than substance. The impact of personal branding on political integrity and ethics cannot be ignored (Suprayitno, Dede, 2023). Politicians must ensure that their branding aligns with democratic values, transparency, and responsibility. Otherwise, the risk of public distrust and social division may increase. Therefore, politicians must understand the responsibilities and impacts of their branding efforts to ensure that it leads to positive renewal in the democratic process.

The Role of Social Media as a Source of Political Information in Increasing Gen Z Support

The transformation of social media has led to a revolution in how we access, disseminate, and shape political information (Hayat, Muzahid Akbar, 2021). New features and evolving platforms play a crucial role in changing the paradigm of political communication. The development of new features on social media not only includes more dynamic presentation of information but also enables more active interaction between users and political content. Live streaming, stories, and polling features effectively increase political engagement and participation among social media users. The integration of political content on these platforms gives a new dimension to the way politicians and political campaigns communicate (Heryanto, 2018). With a visual storytelling approach, political messages can be delivered more concisely and appealingly to the preferences of Gen Z people, who are responsive to visual content.

While this transformation has had a positive impact, it must be recognized that there are algorithms and bubble filters in social media that have a significant effect. Personalized algorithms can limit users' exposure to information that matches their views, creating a narrow and isolated information environment. This impact raises questions about the diversity of political opinions and the risk of polarized groups forming. Overall, the transformation of social media creates a more dynamic, interactive, and sometimes complex political information landscape (Budiarjo, 2016). The impact on political participation, the way information is presented, and the formation of political opinions are reflections of the central role of social media in shaping political dynamics in this digital era. Algorithms and bubble filters in social media are critical in shaping users' political opinions and worldviews. Algorithms that are personally customized by social media platforms tend to present content that matches users' preferences and beliefs, forming what is known as a "filter bubble"

or information bubble. In a political context, this can result in a situation where users are exposed primarily to views that align with their own beliefs.

The impact of algorithms and filter bubbles on the formation of political opinions creates significant challenges in promoting inclusive discussion and balanced understanding. It is essential to be aware of this impact, encourage diversity in information sources, and participate in discussions considering diverse viewpoints. Through a better understanding of how algorithms work and efforts to engage multiple sources of information, we can create an environment that supports the development of broader and more informed political opinions (Susanto, 2017). Social media has become a very effective tool to increase political participation among the public. Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram provide a platform that allows individuals to voice their political views, share information, and engage in relevant discussions. One of the critical aspects of political participation through social media is the ability to create and disseminate political content instantly.

Social media has also taken on a role to participate in public discussions and taking a stance on contemporary issues, making social media an effective tool in designing politicians' images and strengthening voter support. The significant role of social media in the political communication of politicians ahead of the 2024 elections includes (1) Increasing Reach and Engagement; politicians can utilize social media to expand the reach of their messages and campaigns. With a broader audience reach, politicians can more easily connect with potential voters; (2) Direct Information Provision: Social media allows politicians to provide direct and real-time information to the public. They can provide updates, speeches, or respond to critical issues directly to voters; (3) Building Image and Personal Branding; politicians can use social media to build their image and personal brand. They can showcase their qualities, vision, and commitment through shared content, such as videos, stories, or photos; (4) Interaction and

Engagement with Voters: Social media facilitates two-way interaction between politicians and voters. Politicians can listen to voters' opinions and concerns and respond directly, helping to strengthen relationships with voters; (5) Political Campaigns and Voter Mobilization: Politicians can use social media to plan political campaigns, spread campaign messages, and even mobilize voters to support them; (6) Influence and Use of Data: Through social media, politicians can understand voters' preferences and needs better. They can use data and analysis to devise more effective strategies in line with voters' needs; (7) Public Opinion Formation: Social media allows politicians to influence and shape public opinion by disseminating information, arguments, and their views on specific issues. Thus, social media is not just a tool for sharing information but an interactive window through which politicians and voters can connect (Suratno, 2020). To build strong connections with voters, politicians need to understand the dynamics of social media, utilize effective communication strategies, and remain open to changes in communication patterns demanded by modern society.

However, it should be noted that (Fitriyani, 2023). while social media can increase political participation, it also poses challenges related to disinformation, echo chambers, and polarization of opinions. Therefore, it is crucial to develop digital and critical literacy among social media users to ensure informed and impactful political participation. Overall, social media provides excellent potential to strengthen political involvement, build solid political communities, and facilitate democratic dialog in the digital age. Gen Z people, especially in Mataram City, have played an increasingly active role in voicing political opinions through various platforms, primarily social media (Suprayitno, Dede, 2023). This generation, accustomed to digital technology from an early age, uses its technological expertise to express its views on political and social issues that are considered essential. One of the distinctive features of Gen Z's political participation is

their creativity and active engagement in various forms of expression.

Social media, such as Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter, are the main channels for Gen Z people to voice their political opinions. They create visual content, memes, and short videos that not only communicate political messages but also reflect the uniqueness of this generation's digital culture. Gen Zers can utilize visual appeal and relevant language to communicate their thoughts quickly and engagingly. The online activism movement emerging from Gen Z also reflects their active role in politics. They engage in fundraising campaigns, online petitions, and other collaborative actions to advance the political causes they support. Hashtags and trends on social media are often used to unify their voices and create awareness on specific issues.

The active role of Gen Z people in the Mataram City area in voicing political opinions reflects their passion to shape a more inclusive and sustainable future. With their ability to utilize social media and various digital tools, these Gen Z's have created a new and energetic way of participating in the political sphere, demonstrating that youth voices have a significant impact in shaping the current and future political order. The rise of political support through social media reflects a fundamental shift in how politicians and political campaigns interact with voters. Social media has become a highly effective tool in building and expanding political support bases. One of the critical aspects of this phenomenon is the ability of social media to connect politicians directly with voters without geographical restrictions. Politicians use these social media platforms to spread campaign messages, communicate policies, and share everyday moments that can make them more personally connected with voters. Live videos, stories, and visual posts allow politicians to deliver their messages directly and unfiltered. As such, social media creates an opportunity to build more authentic and immersive narratives, which can inspire and motivate voters.

Overall, (Asri et al., 2020), social media has played an essential role in

democratizing the political process, providing more comprehensive access to voters, and creating a more inclusive forum for participation. With the continued development of technology and changes in voter behavior, the role of social media in politics is expected to continue to increase in forming a modern political order (Rahmah, 2021). The influence of endorsers and public figures on social media has a significant impact on shaping user opinions and behavior. Endorsers, who are often well-known or influential individuals, can provide recommendations or support for certain products, services, or even issues. Their presence on social media provides direct access to their followers, who tend to respond positively to messages or recommendations delivered by figures they admire.

Public figures, such as political figures, celebrities, or opinion leaders, also greatly influence social media. Their messages or views can quickly spread and influence public opinion (Rahmah, 2021). The involvement of public figures in specific issues can strengthen or change the public's perception of the topic. Their presence on social media creates a powerful platform to voice their views and mobilize support or change. While the influence of endorsers and public figures on social media is often positive, it is also essential to recognize that this power can be misused or can encourage unethical promotion. Therefore, social media users need to maintain good digital literacy, be able to filter information, and have the ability to understand the context behind messages delivered by endorsers or public figures.

Ethical aspects are also a severe concern in using social media for political information. Political campaigns that use manipulative or disinformation strategies can undermine democratic processes and manipulate public opinion. Social media users need to be aware of practices that involve lying or working information in a political context. In addition, user privacy is often an ethical consideration when using social media to access political information (Astuti, 2016). Personal data collected by

social media platforms can be used to direct political campaigns or present customized content, raising ethical questions related to individual privacy. As such, social media users need to develop digital and critical literacy, verify sources of information, and remain open to different viewpoints. At the same time, social media platforms and policymakers need to work to address these challenges through thoughtful regulation, promotion of digital literacy, and efforts to reduce the spread of disinformation. Ethics in the use of social media for political information is an essential element to ensure informed and healthy participation in democratic processes.

Disinformation and controversy on social media is a pervasive phenomenon that has a significant impact in various contexts, including political, social, and cultural. Disinformation, or disseminating false information intending to mislead, can spread rapidly through social media platforms (Asri et al., 2020). Content that is controversial or provocative often receives greater attention, accelerating the spread of disinformation and creating an environment where facts and opinions are difficult to distinguish. Social media provides a massive platform for disinformation and controversy. Features such as algorithms that customize content, the sharing of fake news, and the ability to quickly create and disseminate content fuel the rise of disinformation. This creates challenges in shaping fact-based public opinion and can destabilize politics and society.

Controversy on social media can also create societal divisions. Controversial issues often attract attention and spark intense debate, dividing society into conflicting groups. Filter bubbles, where social media users are exposed primarily to views that align with their beliefs, reinforce this division and inhibit constructive dialog. It is essential to understand that disinformation and controversy on social media are not just technical issues but also cultural and social issues. Social media users must have good digital literacy to distinguish between accurate and inaccurate information. In addition, social media

companies, governments, and the general public are needed to tackle the spread of disinformation and promote a better understanding of controversial issues. Through a holistic approach, a healthier and more constructive social media environment can be created.

The increasing use of social media as a primary source of political information reflects a fundamental change in how people access, disseminate, and participate in the political sphere. The speed and ease of access enabled by social media make it a prevalent source for keeping up with day-to-day political developments. Users can quickly get up-to-date information through their news feeds, follow political news accounts, and participate in online conversations around current issues. This creates a faster and more interactive information dynamic compared to traditional media. Overall, the increasing use of social media as a primary source of political information reflects a transformation in the modern political information and participation landscape. While providing greater access, it requires a concerted effort to manage the challenges that arise and ensure that the information consumed and disseminated through social media is accurate, credible, and has a positive impact on the democratic process.

Gen Z's Perception and Response to Politicians' Political Communication

Generation Z, which grew up amidst rapid technological advancements and social media penetration, has uniquely shaped how they receive and respond to political information. Accustomed to technology and social media from an early age, this generation has instant access to various sources of political information worldwide. These platforms are not only tools for social interaction but also the primary source of political news and updates. Early use of technology and social media gives Generation Z the ability to respond to political information in real time. They can engage in online discussions, voice their opinions, and respond quickly to unfolding political events. In an environment saturated

with brief information, images, and videos, Generation Z preferred quick and easy-to-digest information consumption.

In addition, social media also gives Generation Z a platform to express their political identity. They often identify with specific social movements or issues and use social media as a tool to fight for their political values and goals (Hayat, Muzahid Akbar, 2021). Online activism, online petitions, and the formation of political communities through social media are forms of political participation that are highly relevant to this generation. However, while technology opens the door to greater political engagement, challenges exist. Generation Z faces the risk of disinformation and a need for critical skills in assessing the integrity of online information. Therefore, amidst all the conveniences that technology offers, digital literacy and a deep understanding of politics are crucial to ensuring effective participation and accurate information from Generation Z.

In the digital era dominated by Generation Z, high digital literacy is critical to accessing and managing various sources of information instantly. Their ability to understand and adapt to technology provides unlimited access to data from multiple sources, shaping a deep understanding of critical issues affecting society. However, technological sophistication also challenges politicians to communicate effectively in an environment full of visual stimuli and brief information. Generation Z tends to be accustomed to content presented in graphical form, such as images, videos, or graphics. Therefore, politicians need to rethink the way they deliver political messages and ideas (Wahid, 2016). Using visual elements that are attractive and easy to understand can strengthen the appeal of political communication. Visual stimuli such as infographics or short videos can be practical tools to capture the attention of Generation Z, who live in a fast flow of information.

The challenge for politicians in Mataram City with an understanding of Generation Z is to not only convey information quickly but also to ensure that their messages remain substantial and

understandable (Mondry, 2016). This social media also has a beneficial impact on politicians as long as politicians provide information and responses to current issues to the audience or the wider community. In this world of short and fast communication, politicians must formulate their messages briefly and clearly without sacrificing the complexity of the issues they communicate.

Mastery of social media platforms, with all their limitations in character count or video duration, becomes an indispensable skill. As a result, Generation Z's high digital literacy has consequences for how politicians communicate. While utilizing the speed and access offered by technology, politicians are also expected to innovate in presenting information to remain relevant and practical amidst the digital information frenzy.

Politicians who have been able to connect with Generation Z successfully have adopted an active and responsive approach to social media use. They are not only present on platforms but also interact directly with Gen Z. This includes responding quickly to current issues, participating in online trends, and sharing content that matches the preferences of Gen Z content consumers. This includes responding promptly to existing problems, participating in online trends, and sharing content that matches the preferences of Generation Z content consumers. Active use of social media gives politicians direct access to young voters and creates a two-way channel for communication (Trisnanto, Rurut Wahyu, 2020). Politicians can deliver their messages in a more personalized and emotionally evocative way, using language and formats that suit this generation's style. Adopting a relaxed communication style and following the flow of online conversations helps politicians become more identifiable and recognized by Generation Z.

A quick response to current issues is crucial as Generation Z tends to be actively involved in online discussions (Jamil, Husnul, 2023). Politicians who can respond and provide their views quickly show that they are not only listening but also understanding Generation Z's concerns and

priorities. This creates the perception that the politician cares and is relevant to the issues that young voters consider essential. By participating in social media-friendly language and humor, politicians can build a positive and familiar image among young voters. Thus, politicians who successfully connect with Generation Z through social media combine responsiveness to current issues, participation in online trends, and an active presence to form a positive and relevant image in the eyes of young voters. Generation Z, despite living in a constantly connected digital age, shows a high level of skepticism toward political narratives that are overly crafted or seem disingenuous. Accustomed to the rapid and diverse flow of information on social media, this generation can filter and assess knowledge carefully. Gen Z is not easily fooled by political messages that are overly manufactured or tailored to a particular image.

Generation Z's skepticism towards perceived dishonest political narratives reflects their drive for transparency and honesty from political leaders. They are more likely to support politicians who come across as authentic, human, and open about the challenges or imperfections they may face. This approach creates a more accurate and close relationship with Generation Z. Politicians who succeed in building trust with Generation Z on social media are those who provide transparent content, give clear reasons behind their political decisions, and are open to dialog with voters. Avoiding overly produced narratives and speaking directly in a language Generation Z can understand is critical to winning their hearts and trust. Generation Z's skepticism towards overly processed political narratives shows that, amidst easy access to information, they seek authenticity and openness from their leaders. Therefore, politicians who understand and respond to this need for honesty will be more successful in building solid relationships with Generation Z.

In the face of Generation Z's skepticism and desire for authenticity, politicians must prove their authenticity through consistency in communication, transparency, and genuine interest in issues

that this generation considers essential (Fitriyani, 2023). The primary key is consistency in conveying messages and values so politicians are not seen as just trying to achieve momentary popularity. Building trust starts with character in communication. Politicians need to maintain a consistent tone and message across different social media platforms and other communication channels. By staying true to their core values and vision, politicians can reinforce a sense of authenticity and consistency in their eyes. Generation Z values politicians unafraid to open up, admit mistakes when necessary, and convey information honestly. Politicians willing to share information about their decision-making process and policy background can build a more profound sense of trust.

In addition, politicians need to show a genuine interest in the issues that Generation Z considers essential. This involves listening carefully, responding to changes in this generation's demands and priorities, and voicing support for problems that do have an impact on them. Building solid relationships with Generation Z requires active and visible participation in the discussions and movements they value highly. By combining consistency in communication, transparency, and a genuine interest in the issues of this generation, politicians can win the hearts and trust of Generation Z. It's not just about being present on social media platforms but about forming authentic and relevant relationships with young voters.

Conclusions

Based on the results of research on politicians' branding through social media as a form of political communication in attracting Gen Z people, it can be concluded that the political communication strategy of Mataram city politicians ahead of the 2024 election on social media has become a crucial aspect in shaping images, maintaining support, and engaging directly with voters. The personal branding of these politicians consistently delivers sharp and relevant messages on essential issues. It actively interacts with its voters, responds to questions, and holds regular online question-

and-answer sessions. This strategy builds an image of a politician who listens and cares about the community's aspirations. Politicians can also actively utilize live streaming to share in-depth insights into their policies. This strategy can shape the image of a transparent leader but also accommodate the preferences of voters who connect through visual and interactive content.

Social media has also taken on the role of participating in public discussions and taking a stance on contemporary issues, making social media an effective tool in designing politicians' images and strengthening voter support. Gen Z's perceptions and responses are more likely to point to politicians who appear as they are, show their human side, and are open about their challenges. Politicians who have transparency and honesty in political communication are more successful in building Gen Z's trust and interest in the future of the new government.

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