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Submission date: 20-Feb-2026 02:03PM (UTC+0700)

Submission ID: 2883827967

File name: DYNAMICS_OF_POLITICAL_COMMUNICATION_IN_THE_2024_BATU_MAYORAL_ELECTION_.pdf
(450.71K)

Word count: 6527

Character count: 40709



JURNAL POLITIK PEMERINTAHAN DHARMA PRAJA
e-ISSN 2721-7043 ISSN 1979-8857
Website: <http://ejournal.ipdn.ac.id/JPPDP>
Faculty of Politics Governance, Institut Pemerintahan Dalam Negeri (IPDN)

JPPDP, Vol 18 No. 2
Doi: <https://doi.org/10.33701/jppdp.v18i2.5303>

DYNAMICS OF POLITICAL COMMUNICATION IN THE 2024 BATU MAYORAL ELECTION

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Abstract

This article examines the dynamics of political communication in the 2024 Batu City mayoral election by focusing on the communication strategy of the Krisdayanti–Kris candidate pair. The study aims to explain why a campaign supported by high popularity and intensive digital media use did not result in electoral victory. Using a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach guided by the PRISMA protocol, this study synthesizes 168 peer-reviewed articles indexed in Scopus that discuss political communication dynamics, local elections, digital campaigning, and voter behavior in Indonesia. The findings show that political communication effectiveness in local elections is highly contextual and cannot be explained solely by celebrity status, popularity, or digital visibility. Although the Krisdayanti–Kris campaign successfully built a strong political image and achieved broad exposure through conventional and digital media, these efforts were insufficient to generate decisive voter support. The analysis indicates that weak resonance with local issues, limited integration with local political networks, and insufficient grounding in community-based political structures constrained the effectiveness of their communication strategy. The study contributes theoretically by reinforcing the non-linear relationship between political image, public opinion, and political participation in local electoral contexts. Practically, it highlights the importance of a holistic political communication strategy that balances symbolic appeal, substantive local policy communication, digital outreach, and strong engagement with local political and community dynamics in regional elections.

Keywords: *Campaign Strategy, Political Communication, Regional Elections, Voter Participation.*

Abstrak

Artikel ini mengkaji dinamika komunikasi politik dalam Pemilihan Wali Kota Batu tahun 2024 dengan fokus pada strategi komunikasi pasangan calon Krisdayanti–Kris. Penelitian ini bertujuan menjelaskan mengapa strategi kampanye yang didukung popularitas tinggi dan pemanfaatan media digital secara intensif tidak berujung pada kemenangan elektoral. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan Systematic Literature Review (SLR) dengan pedoman PRISMA terhadap 168 artikel terindeks Scopus yang membahas komunikasi politik, Pilkada, kampanye digital, dan perilaku pemilih di Indonesia. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa efektivitas komunikasi politik dalam Pilkada bersifat sangat kontekstual dan tidak dapat dijelaskan hanya melalui popularitas figur, status selebritas, atau visibilitas digital. Meskipun pasangan Krisdayanti–Kris berhasil membangun citra politik yang kuat dan memperoleh eksposur luas melalui media konvensional dan digital, upaya tersebut tidak cukup untuk mengonversi dukungan simbolik menjadi suara elektoral. Lemahnya resonansi isu lokal, keterbatasan integrasi dengan jejaring politik lokal, serta kurangnya keterlekatan dengan struktur komunitas menjadi faktor utama yang membatasi efektivitas strategi komunikasi politik mereka. Secara teoretis, penelitian ini menegaskan hubungan nonlinier antara citra politik, opini publik, dan partisipasi politik dalam konteks Pilkada. Secara praktis, temuan ini menekankan pentingnya strategi komunikasi politik yang holistik, yang menyeimbangkan pencitraan, substansi kebijakan lokal, kampanye digital, dan keterlibatan mendalam dengan dinamika politik serta komunitas lokal.

Kata Kunci: Komunikasi Politik, Partisipasi Pemilih, Pilkada, Strategi Kampanye.

INTRODUCTION

Regional elections in Indonesia are an important arena for political communication practices that are not only electoral in nature, but also reflect social, cultural, and power dynamics at the local level. A number of studies show that political communication in regional elections is increasingly influenced by the development of mass media and digital media, which shape public opinion quickly and massively (Anggoro & Amin, 2018). However, the effectiveness of political communication cannot be separated from the local context that surrounds it, including the social structure of voters,

patronage relations, and everyday issues in the community. In many cases, political communication strategies that are successful at the national level cannot always be replicated effectively at the city or regency level.

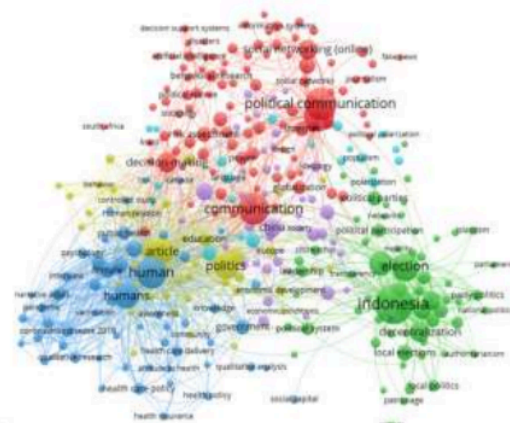
This shows that political communication in regional elections is contextual and requires more specific empirical analysis at the local level (Werdiono, 2024). Regional elections in Indonesia involve various fairly complex processes. Each regional head candidate must meet certain requirements. It is necessary to have support from political

parties or coalitions and must meet administrative and legal quality. In addition, the need for public participation in regional elections can show the level of political awareness. In the 2024 regional elections, data shows that voter participation has decreased significantly. With an estimated attendance rate of below 70% from 76.09% in the 2020 regional elections (Vitorio Mantalean, 2024).

The literature on political communication in regional elections in Indonesia generally highlights several key aspects, such as the role of the media in shaping political framing, the use of social media to influence voter perceptions, and the analysis of public sentiment based on digital data (Andinny & Setiawan, 2025). In addition, other studies emphasize the strong influence of identity politics, religion, and cultural symbolism in shaping local voter preferences (Azhar et al., 2025; Ibrahim et al., 2024). However, most of these studies are still separate and do not fully explain how these various elements of political communication interact in the context of a particular local election. As a result, understanding of the dynamics of candidate political communication at the city level remains partial. This limitation opens up space for research that is more focused on a single local case with a more integrated analysis (Adolph, 2016).

The results of bibliometric analysis

using VOSviewer on publications with the keywords political communication and local elections in Indonesia show that studies of political communication in the context of local elections in Indonesia have developed into several main thematic clusters (Haryanto et al., 2024; Iannone, 2022). The largest cluster centers on the concepts of political communication, communication, and the internet, which are closely linked to issues of social media, online networks, disinformation, and political polarization (Azis & Pratama, 2020; Bakir, 2017; Grover & Kuo, 2023; Haryanto et al., 2024). This cluster confirms that contemporary political communication is increasingly understood as a mediatized and digital process that shapes public perception through interactions between political actors, the media, and citizens.



VOSviewer

Figure 1. Results of VosViewer's Observation of "Political Communication Dynamics" and Local Elections in Indonesia

Figure 1 above also shows that another prominent cluster links elections, Indonesia, local elections, and decentralization, indicating that the context of political decentralization in Indonesia is an important arena for the study of local political communication. The interconnection between these clusters indicates that the study of political communication in regional elections in Indonesia does not only focus on messages and media, but also on the dynamics of local power, political participation, and voter behavior (Handayani et al., 2020; Satriadi et al., 2023; Savaşkan, 2021). However, the bibliometric map also shows that the relationship between candidate communication strategies, political figures (including celebrity politics), and specific local contexts is still relatively rarely analyzed in depth in a single case study, thus opening up space for research that integrates the dimensions of communication, actors, and local political dynamics simultaneously (Ahmad, 2020; Prasad & Srihari, 2017)).

The city of Batu is an interesting local context to study because it has distinctive socio-political characteristics (Susilo, 2024). As a tourist city, Batu has a relatively heterogeneous society, with a high level of social mobility and digital media penetration. At the same time, social relations in Batu are still characterized by close-knit communities, informal networks, and

emotional ties between the local elite and the community (Anwar, 2024). These conditions mean that political communication takes place not only through formal media, but also through direct social interaction and local symbols that are meaningful to voters. Therefore, the Batu City regional elections provide a relevant empirical space for understanding how political communication strategies work or, conversely, experience limitations in a local context (Nuraliza et al., 2024).

The phenomenon of the Krisdayanti–Kris pair in the Batu City regional election shows political communication dynamics that don't totally match theoretical assumptions about popularity and electability (Sumardiko & Rakasiwi, 2024). Krisdayanti, as a national public figure, has strong symbolic capital, both through her personal popularity, celebrity image, and high visibility in the mass media and social media. In the literature on political communication, celebrities are often assumed to be able to build emotional closeness with voters and increase electoral appeal (Arriane et al., 2024). However, the results of the Batu City regional election show that the popularity capital and intensity of political communication of the Krisdayanti-Kris pair did not automatically lead to electoral victory. This fact raises empirical questions about the limits of the effectiveness of figure-based political

communication in local elections.

Empirically, the failure of Krisdayanti and Kris to convert their popularity into decisive electoral support indicates a mismatch between the political message conveyed and the needs of local voters. Several studies show that voters in regional elections tend to consider factors such as proximity, local track records, and substantive issues directly related to their welfare, rather than simply the image or popularity of candidates (Komarudin et al., 2025). In the context of Batu City, local issues such as tourism management, the community's economy, and the candidates' relationships with local elites have the potential to be more decisive in voters' choices. Political communication strategies that place too much emphasis on national figures risk neglecting these local dimensions. Thus, the case of Krisdayanti and Kris reflects the tension between image-based political communication and the reality of local voters' needs (Lopulalan, 2023).

Although studies on political communication in regional elections in Indonesia continue to develop, there is still a significant research gap. Most studies focus on media analysis, public sentiment, or identity politics separately, without directly linking them to candidate communication strategies in a specific local case (Anggoro & Amin, 2018; Andinny & Setiawan, 2025). In

addition, relatively few studies empirically explain why candidates with high popularity capital experience limitations in gaining electoral support at the local level. This void indicates the need for a case study approach that is able to simultaneously link political communication strategies, the local socio-political context, and voter responses. Thus, this study is positioned to fill this gap (Noorikhsan et al., 2023).

Based on the above description, the research problem in this study is formulated as follows: what are the dynamics of Krisdayanti–Kris' political communication in the Batu City regional election, and what factors limit the effectiveness of their political communication strategy? The focus of this study is on analyzing Krisdayanti–Kris' political communication strategy, the communication channels used, and their interaction with the local socio-political context of Batu City. The purpose of this study is to empirically explain why figure-based and popularity, based political communication does not always result in electoral victory in city-level elections. Theoretically, this study is expected to enrich the study of local political communication in Indonesia. Practically, the findings of this study can serve as a reflection for candidates and campaign teams in designing political communication strategies that are more contextual and oriented towards the needs of local voters.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK/ LITERATURE REVIEW

Political Communication

Political communication is basically a study of various aspects and political processes that allow communication interactions to occur (Kitschelt & Tworzecki, 2003). Simultaneously, this study also analyzes the process of delivering, receiving, and processing information, along with its impact on attitudes, opinions, beliefs, value systems, and individual behavior in a political context, both through the media and directly without media intermediaries. The purpose of political communication is closely related to the message conveyed by the communicator (Priadji & Rusadi, 2023; Solihat & Nursanti, 2019). In accordance with the principles of communication, the purpose of political communication can include conveying information about politics, forming a political image, influencing public opinion, and countering or responding to statements from the opposing party. In addition, political communication also aims to attract public sympathy in order to increase political participation in accordance with the interests to be achieved (Wahyono & Aditia, 2022).

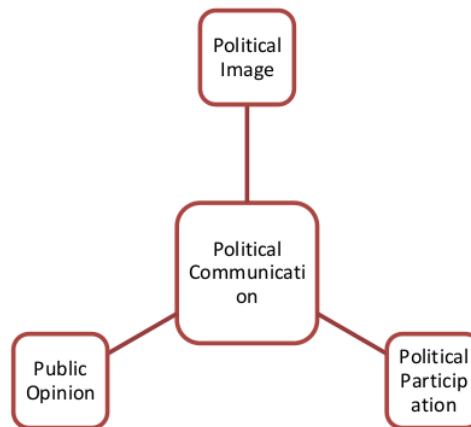


Figure 2. The Purpose of Political Communication

Source: Processed From Cecep Suryana, 2019.

Figure 2 explains that political image, public opinion, and political participation are three main elements in the concept of interrelated political communication. Political image refers to the public's perception of political figures formed through information received, either directly or through the mass media (Anggoro & Amin, 2018; Noorikhshan et al., 2023; Nurhayati, 2023). This perception plays an important role in the formation of public opinion, because effective political communication can influence the way people organize their views on the political environment. Public opinion itself is formed when political ideas or messages conveyed by political communicators become the subject of discussion in society, which ultimately results in collective views that can influence policy and political direction (Raile

et al., 2014).

Political Communication in Regional Elections

Political communication is classically understood as the process of conveying messages related to power, policy, and the distribution of values in society through various communication channels (McNair, 2018). In the context of regional elections, political communication involves not only candidates and political parties as message senders, but also the mass media, digital media, and voters as active actors who interpret messages selectively. Therefore, political communication in regional elections is multidirectional and no longer linear, as political messages are continuously negotiated in public and digital spaces.

Table 1. Key Aspects of Political Communication in Regional Elections

No.	Aspect	Details
1.	Role of media	Traditional and online media shape public opinion; media owners in politics
2.	Social media	Sentiment analysis on platforms like X to gauge voter sentiments
3.	Identity politics	Manipulation of identity for electoral advantage leads to polarization
4.	Religious Influence	Ulama influence through religious forums and digital platforms
5.	Coalition Building	Effective strategies enhance voter engagement; fragmented alliances lead to defeats
6.	Vote Buying	Financial incentives significantly influence electoral outcomes

Source: Processed by author, 2025.

Table 1 above shows that the dynamics of political communication in regional elections in Indonesia are multifaceted, involving the influence of the media, analysis of social media sentiment, identity politics, the influence of religion, coalition dynamics, and vote buying practices. These elements collectively shape the electoral landscape, impacting voter behavior and the democratic process.

In regional elections, the main functions of political communication include creating a candidate's image, conveying their vision and program, and mobilizing voter support (Nuraliza et al., 2024). However, the effectiveness of political communication is highly dependent on the suitability of the message to the local socio-political context. Studies of regional elections show that political messages that are too general or nationalistic are often ineffective when they are not connected to concrete local issues (Anggoro & Amin, 2018). Thus, the theory of political communication in regional elections needs to be understood as a contextual process influenced by local social structures, political culture, and power relations at the regional level.

In the case of the Batu City regional election, the political communication of the Krisdayanti–Kris pair took place in a local space with its own social characteristics. The popularity of national figures interacts with

the expectations of local voters who place greater emphasis on social proximity, local track records, and the capacity to manage regional issues. Therefore, political communication theory is used in this study to analyze how political messages are constructed, conveyed, and received in the context of local elections, as well as why these messages do not always result in the expected electoral support.

METHODS

This paper comprehensively and thoroughly examines the theme of political communication dynamics and regional elections conducted by the Indonesian government from various aspects and concepts related to the theme. This paper uses a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach. The SLR approach was chosen because it has advantages in identifying, evaluating, and synthesizing scientific study results in a structured, systematic, and evidence-based manner. This paper adopts the internationally recognized PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) protocol to ensure research transparency. Several crucial stages in the literature review process, according to Kaaffah et al. (2023), include:

a) Identification

Article identification was conducted to identify articles containing keywords related to the topic or theme of the study. The search

database used was Scopus. The search was conducted by entering several keywords for each aspect and theme, as shown below:

Table 2. Article Identification Process

No.	Aspect	Keyword	Total
1	Political Communication Dynamic	communication dynamic; political communication; political branding; election; local election; digital campaign; social media.	1274 article
2	Local Election in Indonesi a	elections; political communication; decentralization; digital campaigning; voter behavior; Indonesia	340 article
Total articles identified			1614 article

Source: Process by author, 2025.

b) Screening

After obtaining the results of the article identification, the next step is to conduct screening. Article screening, also known as data selection, is to select articles that are most relevant to the topic being researched. Articles are screened using inclusion and exclusion criteria, with the following criteria:

Table 3. Article Screening Process

No.	Aspect	Criteria	Inclusion	Exclusion
		Articles published in the last 5 years (2021-2025)	502	772
1.	Political Communication Dynamic :1274 article	Articles relevant to the field of social sciences	314	502

	Document type: article	224	188	
	Articles in English	191	4	
	Articles freely accessible	103	2	
	Articles published in the last 5 years (2021-2025)	157	182	
2.	Local Election in Indonesia	Articles relevant to the field of social sciences	128	35
	Document type: article	114	15	
	Articles in English	107	0	
	Articles freely accessible	65	0	

Source: Process by Author, 2025.

From the screening process above, the results show that the final number of articles that have passed the screening process to the final stage, namely the criteria for articles that can be accessed freely (open access), is 103 articles for the theme of Political Communication Dynamics in Social Sciences and 65 articles for the theme of Local Elections in Indonesia. The accumulated list of articles for the entire paradigm amounts to 168 articles.

This approach allows researchers to gain

a broader and deeper understanding of existing concepts, theories, and empirical findings. Thus, this study can connect various theories of political communication with the realities that occur in the Batu City Pilkada. Literature review also helps in identifying research gaps and providing new perspectives on how regional head candidate communication strategies influence election results (Putra & Sajida, 2023).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Patterns of Political Communication Dynamics in Indonesian Local Elections

Based on a systematic synthesis of 168 peer-reviewed articles selected through the PRISMA protocol, this study identifies that political communication in Indonesian local elections has evolved into a multidimensional and context-dependent process. The literature consistently shows that local electoral communication is not merely a transmission of campaign messages but a relational interaction shaped by social structures, political institutions, and local cultural norms. Studies emphasize that the effectiveness of political communication depends on the alignment between campaign narratives and the everyday realities faced by local voters (Nuraliza et al., 2024; Satriadi et al., 2023; Yandri, 2017). Consequently, communication strategies that rely on national-level framing or generalized political messaging often encounter

limitations when applied to subnational electoral contexts. This finding reinforces the argument that local elections require tailored communication approaches sensitive to place-based political dynamics.

The reviewed literature also highlights the increasing role of digital media in reshaping political communication at the local level. Social media platforms provide candidates with opportunities to bypass traditional media gatekeepers and engage directly with voters, particularly younger demographics (Andinny & Setiawan, 2025). However, the literature simultaneously cautions against equating digital visibility with electoral effectiveness. High levels of online engagement do not necessarily translate into voting behavior, especially when digital communication is not embedded within local political networks. Thus, political communication in local elections is best understood as a hybrid process that integrates digital strategies with traditional political mobilization mechanisms.

Moreover, the synthesis indicates that successful local political communication requires coherence between symbolic appeal, policy substance, and institutional support. Candidates who fail to integrate these elements often experience difficulties in converting public attention into electoral support. This pattern is consistently observed across multiple local election cases in

Indonesia, suggesting that communication effectiveness is contingent upon structural and contextual factors rather than media exposure alone. These findings provide a foundational framework for analyzing the political communication strategy of the Krisdayanti–Kris candidate pair in the Batu City mayoral election.

Political Communication Strategy of Krisdayanti–Kris in Batu City

The political communication strategy adopted by the Krisdayanti–Kris pair reflects a figure-centered approach strongly associated with celebrity politics and political branding. Drawing on political communication theory, such a strategy prioritizes image construction and emotional appeal to shape voter perceptions (Azhar et al., 2025; Lampoltshammer et al., 2023; Samalis et al., 2023). Krisdayanti’s status as a nationally recognized public figure provided significant symbolic capital, enabling rapid recognition and extensive media coverage. In theoretical terms, celebrity candidates are often assumed to benefit from heightened visibility and emotional resonance with voters (Antlöv, 2021; Farazian & Paskarina, 2021). However, the effectiveness of this strategy is highly contingent upon contextual alignment with local political expectations.

In the context of Batu City, the literature suggests that voters place substantial

importance on candidates' familiarity with local issues, governance capacity, and embeddedness within community networks. Political communication that emphasizes celebrity status without sufficiently articulating localized policy solutions risks being perceived as superficial or disconnected from local needs. The SLR findings indicate that voters in local elections tend to differentiate between popularity as a cultural figure and credibility as a political leader (Komarudin et al., 2025). This distinction helps explain why the strong personal branding of Krisdayanti did not automatically translate into electoral trust among Batu City voters.

Furthermore, the Krisdayanti–Kris campaign demonstrates the limitations of political branding when it is not reinforced by strong local legitimacy. While branding strategies can simplify political messages and enhance recall, they must be grounded in locally relevant narratives to be effective. The literature underscores that branding disconnected from local governance issues often fails to mobilize decisive electoral support (Nuraliza et al., 2024). Thus, the case of Krisdayanti–Kris illustrates how a symbolically strong communication strategy can become structurally weak in a local electoral setting.

Digital Campaigning and the Illusion of Electoral Effectiveness

Digital campaigning constituted a central pillar of the Krisdayanti–Kris communication strategy, reflecting broader trends identified in the literature on contemporary political communication. Social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube were used to disseminate campaign messages, engage voters interactively, and project a modern political image. The SLR findings confirm that digital platforms are effective tools for increasing campaign visibility and reaching younger voters (Bakir, 2017; Noorikhshan et al., 2023). However, the literature also emphasizes that digital engagement metrics should not be interpreted as direct indicators of electoral support.

Several studies caution against the “illusion of effectiveness” created by high levels of online interaction. Likes, shares, and positive comments often represent symbolic participation rather than concrete political commitment (Grover & Kuo, 2023). Without methodological rigor and triangulation, such indicators risk producing overstated claims about voter support. In the case of the Batu City election, the absence of validated data linking digital engagement to voting behavior limits the explanatory power of digital campaign success. This aligns with the broader literature warning against overreliance on social media metrics in electoral analysis.

Moreover, the effectiveness of digital

campaigning in local elections depends heavily on its integration with offline political structures. Studies consistently show that digital strategies function most effectively when combined with grassroots mobilization, party machinery, and local leadership endorsement (Handayani et al., 2020). The Krisdayanti–Kris campaign, while digitally intensive, appears to have faced constraints in translating online enthusiasm into offline mobilization. This disjunction highlights the structural limits of digital campaigning in local political contexts (Ahmad & Popa, 2014; Sanofi et al., 2025)

Instagram	Twitter	Tiktok	Youtube
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infographics • Campaign Picture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Campaign hashtags • Public Engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short Videos • Viral Trends 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Campaign videos • Live streaming videos

Figure 3. Utilization of Social Media in Campaigns

Source: Process by author, 2025.

The success of political information accessibility is also supported by cooperation with local influencers and digital communities in Batu City. These influencers function as opinion leaders who support the dissemination of political information to their followers. In addition, the use of popular campaign hashtags and interesting content contributes to increasing the visibility of political messages in digital media. This strategy has proven successful in reaching young voters, which is an important

segment of the overall voters in Batu City.

Local Issue Resonance and Voter Behavior

The SLR findings underscore that resonance with local issues is a decisive factor in shaping voter behavior in local elections. Voters tend to evaluate candidates based on their capacity to address context-specific problems such as local economic development, public service delivery, and sectoral governance priorities. In Batu City, issues related to tourism management, environmental sustainability, and local economic empowerment are particularly salient. Political communication strategies that fail to foreground these concerns risk losing relevance among voters.

In the case of Krisdayanti–Kris, campaign narratives emphasized general development themes and symbolic messaging rather than detailed policy differentiation tailored to Batu City’s specific challenges. The literature indicates that voters are more likely to support candidates who demonstrate concrete understanding of local governance complexities (Komarudin et al., 2025). When campaign communication lacks such specificity, voters may perceive candidates as insufficiently prepared to govern effectively. This perception can undermine the credibility of even highly visible candidates.

Additionally, voter behavior in local elections is influenced by pragmatic considerations rather than purely emotional appeal. Studies suggest that voters weigh perceived competence, track record, and local engagement more heavily than celebrity status (Nuraliza et al., 2024). The failure to align communication strategies with these evaluative criteria helps explain the limited electoral effectiveness of the Krisdayanti–Kris campaign. Thus, voter behavior analysis reinforces the importance of issue-based and contextually grounded political communication (Suatin, 2024).

Local Political Dynamics: Party Machinery and Community Networks

Another critical factor identified in the literature is the role of local political structures in shaping electoral outcomes. Party machinery, community organizations, religious leaders, and informal elites play a central role in mobilizing voters and legitimizing candidates. Effective political communication in local elections often depends on strong coordination with these actors (Satriadi et al., 2023). Without such coordination, campaign messages may fail to penetrate deeply into local social networks.

The Krisdayanti–Kris campaign appears to have prioritized media-driven communication over the consolidation of local political networks. While collaboration with digital influencers increased online

reach, the literature suggests that influencer-based strategies are insufficient substitutes for established political networks in local elections. Community leaders and party operatives often exert greater influence on voter decisions than digital opinion leaders. This structural imbalance likely constrained the campaign's ability to mobilize votes effectively.

Furthermore, the literature emphasizes that trust in local elections is often mediated through interpersonal relationships and community endorsement. Candidates perceived as outsiders or weakly embedded in local networks may struggle to gain voter confidence. The Krisdayanti–Kris case illustrates how limited integration with local political dynamics can undermine otherwise well-resourced communication strategies. This finding highlights the importance of institutional and relational embeddedness in local political communication.

Integrating Findings with the Political Communication Framework

The political communication framework presented earlier, which links political image, public opinion, and political participation, provides a useful analytical lens for interpreting the Batu City election. The findings indicate that while the Krisdayanti–Kris campaign successfully constructed a positive political image, this image did not consistently translate into

stable public opinion or voting behavior. The literature suggests that this transformation is mediated by contextual variables such as trust, local relevance, and institutional support (Raile et al., 2014) Consequently, political communication outcomes cannot be assumed to follow a linear progression.

The framework helps identify the points at which the communication process faltered. Image formation occurred effectively through media exposure and branding, but opinion consolidation was weakened by limited local resonance and structural support. As a result, political participation in the form of electoral support did not materialize as expected. This analytical integration demonstrates that the framework is not merely illustrative but explanatory in understanding communication failures.

By applying the framework systematically, this study illustrates how political communication effectiveness is contingent upon the interaction of symbolic, relational, and structural dimensions. The Krisdayanti–Kris case underscores the need to move beyond surface-level communication analysis toward a more comprehensive understanding of electoral dynamics. This contributes to a more nuanced application of political communication theory in local electoral contexts.

Implications

The findings of this study contribute to political communication theory by emphasizing the contextual and relational nature of communication effectiveness in local elections. The results challenge deterministic assumptions that popularity or digital visibility alone can secure electoral success. Instead, they highlight the importance of integrating political branding, celebrity politics, and digital campaigning within locally grounded political structures. This study also extends the literature on celebrity politics by demonstrating the limits of celebrity capital in subnational electoral contexts.

Moreover, the study reinforces the value of political communication frameworks that account for mediating variables such as trust, institutional embeddedness, and issue resonance. By applying an SLR-based approach to a local case, this research illustrates how theoretical insights can be synthesized to explain empirical outcomes. This contributes to a more context-sensitive understanding of political communication dynamics.

From a practical perspective, the findings suggest that candidates and campaign teams should avoid overreliance on popularity and digital strategies in local elections. Effective political communication requires sustained engagement with local communities, clear articulation of locally relevant policies, and strong collaboration

with party organizations and community leaders. Digital media should be positioned as a complementary tool rather than a substitute for grassroots mobilization.

For election organizers and policymakers, the study underscores the importance of fostering political communication practices that enhance substantive voter engagement rather than symbolic participation. Encouraging issue-based debates and strengthening local political institutions may improve the quality of democratic participation at the regional level. These implications provide actionable insights for improving the design and execution of political communication strategies in future local elections.

CONCLUSION

This study analyzes the dynamics of political communication in the 2024 Batu City mayoral election by focusing on the communication strategy of the Krisdayanti–Kris candidate pair using a systematic literature review approach. The findings demonstrate that political communication effectiveness in local elections cannot be reduced to popularity, celebrity status, or intensive digital campaigning alone. Although the Krisdayanti–Kris campaign successfully built a strong political image and achieved high visibility through conventional and digital media, these strengths were insufficient to secure electoral

victory. This confirms that political communication in local elections is a complex and context-dependent process shaped by social, institutional, and political structures at the local level.

The analysis further shows that the limited effectiveness of the Krisdayanti–Kris communication strategy was largely caused by weak resonance with local issues and insufficient integration with Batu City’s political and community networks. The literature consistently indicates that local voters prioritize candidates’ understanding of local governance challenges, policy relevance, and social embeddedness over symbolic appeal or national popularity. Campaign narratives that emphasize image and general development themes without clearly articulated, locally grounded policy solutions tend to fail in mobilizing decisive voter support. In addition, digital campaigning, while effective in increasing visibility and symbolic engagement, proved structurally limited when not supported by strong party machinery, grassroots mobilization, and local elite endorsement.

Theoretically, this study reinforces the argument that political communication in local elections operates through a non-linear relationship between political image, public opinion, and political participation. It contributes to the literature on political communication and celebrity politics by demonstrating the limits of celebrity capital

in subnational electoral contexts. Substantively, the findings highlight the need for a holistic political communication strategy that balances symbolic appeal, substantive policy communication, digital outreach, and deep engagement with local political dynamics. Future research may extend this analysis through comparative case studies or mixed-method approaches to further examine how communication strategies interact with local political structures in shaping electoral outcomes..

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PAGE 1

PAGE 2

PAGE 3

PAGE 4

PAGE 5

PAGE 6

PAGE 7

PAGE 8

PAGE 9

PAGE 10

PAGE 11

PAGE 12

PAGE 13

PAGE 14

PAGE 15

PAGE 16

PAGE 17

PAGE 18

PAGE 19