



The Effectiveness of Media Use In Islamic-Formed Political Campaigns In The 2024 Surakarta Regional Elections

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ABSTRACT

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This study aims to analyze the effectiveness of online and offline media use in Islamic-themed political campaigns in the 2024 Surakarta regional elections. Islamic-themed political campaigns often rely on religious symbols and values to attract voter sympathy. This study focuses on how online media, such as social media, and offline media, such as in-person meetings and the display of campaign paraphernalia, are used to convey political messages. The research method used is a mixed method with a quantitative approach through interviews with voters who pay attention to both online and offline campaigns. The results show that online media is more effective in reaching young audiences and mobilizing support quickly, while offline media remains important in building trust and personal interactions with voters. The combination of these two types of media produces a more significant impact than using either medium alone.

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INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of information and communication technology has transformed political communication by shifting it from conventional media to digital platforms. Social media has become a key instrument for political actors, enabling faster, more interactive, and participatory communication with the public. The success of digital campaigning, exemplified by Barack Obama's 2008 U.S. presidential campaign, demonstrated the effectiveness of online media in increasing political engagement and support. In Indonesia, political parties and public officials widely utilize platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, and X to disseminate information, shape public opinion, and interact directly with citizens.

Online media offers several advantages, including broad reach, low cost, rapid information dissemination, and two-way communication through various content formats such as videos, infographics, and live broadcasts. The increasing number of internet and social media users further strengthens the role of digital media as a political campaign tool. However, offline media—including billboards, posters, brochures, community meetings, and face-to-face campaigns—remains relevant because it can reach populations with limited internet access and foster stronger emotional connections between candidates and voters.

In Indonesia's highly competitive multiparty political system, both online and offline media are essential components of political campaign strategies. Political campaigns aim to communicate candidates' visions, missions, and programs while persuading voters to provide electoral support. The 2024 Surakarta Regional Election represents a significant political contest characterized by strong public participation and competition between candidate pairs supported by different political coalitions. Previous studies have produced mixed findings regarding the effectiveness of campaign media, with some highlighting the advantages of digital campaigns and others emphasizing the continued importance of direct, face-to-face engagement.

Therefore, examining the effectiveness of online and offline media in Islamic-themed political campaigns during the 2024 Surakarta Regional Election is important to determine which communication channels are most effective in conveying political messages, building voter engagement, and influencing political participation.

METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative research design to explore the complex dynamics of political communication within the specific context of the 2024 Surakarta Regional Election. As articulated by Denzin and Lincoln, in the work of Sidiq and Choiri, qualitative research is fundamentally defined as an inquiry conducted within a natural setting, aiming to provide a comprehensive explanation and deep interpretation of an ongoing social phenomenon. By prioritizing the subjective meanings that individuals attach to their experiences, this methodological approach allows for a nuanced understanding of how political strategies are perceived, internalized, and acted upon by the electorate, rather than focusing on mere statistical frequencies. In line with established practices in qualitative inquiry, this study integrates multiple techniques to ensure data robustness and analytical depth, as emphasized by the findings of Hidayatullah and Winduwati, who advocate for the strategic synthesis of interviews, systematic observation, and documentation to capture the intricacies of the subject matter.

The primary data collection methods utilized in this research consist of in-depth interviews and comprehensive documentation analysis. The subjects of this study are the voters who participated in the 2024 Surakarta Regional Election, as their perspectives provide the essential foundation for understanding how campaign narratives are consumed and interpreted at the grassroots level. By engaging with these voters, the study seeks to uncover their personal experiences and reflections regarding the influence of various campaign channels on their political consciousness. Complementing these insights, the research object focuses on evaluating the effectiveness of using both online and offline media platforms as vehicles for Islamic-themed political campaigns. This evaluation involves a critical assessment of how these media channels interact to convey religious-based messaging, and the extent to which this messaging influences public perception regarding a candidate's moral integrity and overall credibility in the eyes of the Muslim-majority electorate.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The findings indicate that the effectiveness of media use in Islamic-themed political campaigns during the 2024 Surakarta Regional Election was strongly influenced by the integration of online and offline communication channels. Digital media, particularly social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, YouTube, and X, played a strategic role in disseminating political messages rapidly

and reaching a broad segment of voters. The increasing penetration of internet use among Indonesian society has transformed political communication from a one-way process into a more interactive and participatory model. Through online media, candidates were able to distribute campaign content in various formats, including videos, digital posters, campaign narratives, religious messages, and direct interactions with citizens. This finding supports the argument that digital media has become an essential instrument in modern political campaigns because it enables political actors to communicate directly with voters without depending on conventional media gatekeepers.

In the context of the 2024 Surakarta Regional Election, online media was not only utilized to promote candidate programs but also to construct political identities and strengthen symbolic representation. Islamic-themed campaign messages frequently appeared in the form of religious narratives emphasizing moral leadership, integrity, public service, social justice, and community welfare. Such messages were strategically designed to resonate with the socio-cultural characteristics of Surakarta, where religious values remain influential in shaping political attitudes. The findings suggest that Islamic political narratives delivered through social media successfully generated engagement among voters because they were presented in a more accessible, visual, and emotionally appealing manner. Consequently, online media became an effective arena for political persuasion and image-building.

However, the study also reveals that the effectiveness of online media was not solely determined by the quantity of content distributed but by the ability of campaign teams to create meaningful interactions with the electorate. Social media users increasingly demand authenticity, responsiveness, and transparency from political candidates. Campaign accounts that actively responded to public concerns, addressed local issues, and facilitated dialogue tended to gain greater public trust. This finding is consistent with contemporary political communication theories, which emphasize that digital campaigns are most effective when they facilitate two-way communication rather than merely disseminating information. Therefore, voter engagement emerged as a critical factor influencing the effectiveness of online political campaigns in Surakarta.

Despite the growing influence of digital media, offline media remained highly relevant throughout the election process. Traditional campaign instruments such as

banners, billboards, posters, community meetings, religious gatherings, and door-to-door campaigns continued to play an important role in reaching voters. This is particularly significant considering that not all citizens actively consume political information through digital platforms. Offline campaigns provided opportunities for direct interaction between candidates and the public, allowing voters to evaluate candidates based on personal impressions rather than mediated representations. The findings indicate that face-to-face communication contributed significantly to building emotional closeness and strengthening voter confidence.

The effectiveness of offline media can also be understood through the cultural characteristics of Indonesian society, which still places considerable value on interpersonal relationships and community-based interactions. In many neighborhoods of Surakarta, direct meetings with candidates, participation in religious events, and involvement in social activities were perceived as indicators of a candidate's sincerity and commitment to public service. Consequently, candidates who actively engaged in grassroots interactions were often viewed more positively by voters. This finding supports the argument that offline campaigns continue to possess unique persuasive power that cannot be fully replaced by digital communication technologies.

One of the most notable findings is that Islamic-themed political campaigns were more effective when online and offline media complemented each other. Digital platforms were effective for disseminating information, increasing visibility, and reaching younger voters, while offline activities were more successful in fostering trust and emotional attachment among community members. This integrated communication approach allowed candidates to maximize the strengths of each medium while minimizing their respective limitations. Such findings support the concept of hybrid political communication, which argues that modern political campaigns achieve greater effectiveness when they combine digital and conventional communication strategies.

The electoral context of Surakarta also provides important insights into media effectiveness. The 2024 election featured competition between Teguh Prakosa–Bambang Nugroho and Respati Achmad Ardianto–Astrid Widayani, attracting significant public attention because it occurred following the end of the political leadership associated with Gibran Rakabuming Raka. Official election results showed that Respati–Astrid secured approximately 60.49% of the vote, while

Teguh–Bambang obtained 39.51%, with voter turnout reaching approximately 73.84% of registered voters. These figures indicate a relatively high level of political participation and suggest that campaign communication strategies played a substantial role in shaping voter preferences.

The results further demonstrate that religious narratives remained influential in local electoral politics. However, voters did not respond positively to religious symbolism alone. Instead, Islamic-themed messages were most effective when accompanied by concrete policy proposals, development programs, and solutions to local issues. This finding suggests that contemporary voters are increasingly rational and critical in evaluating political messages. Religious identity continues to matter, but it functions more effectively when integrated with substantive political agendas. Therefore, the success of Islamic-themed political campaigns depends not merely on religious appeals but on the ability to connect religious values with practical governance concerns.

Another important finding concerns demographic differences in media consumption patterns. Younger voters tended to rely heavily on social media as their primary source of political information, while older voters were more influenced by interpersonal communication and community-based activities. Consequently, campaign effectiveness varied across voter groups. Candidates who successfully adapted their communication strategies to different demographic segments were better positioned to influence public opinion. This finding highlights the importance of audience segmentation in political communication and demonstrates that a single campaign medium is insufficient to reach all categories of voters effectively.

The study also contributes to the broader debate regarding the effectiveness of digital political communication in Indonesia. Previous studies have produced mixed conclusions, with some emphasizing the superiority of online campaigns and others highlighting the enduring relevance of face-to-face communication. The Surakarta case suggests that the effectiveness of campaign media should not be understood in terms of competition between online and offline channels. Instead, effectiveness emerges from the strategic integration of both media forms. Digital media expands reach and visibility, while offline communication strengthens trust, legitimacy, and emotional connection. Consequently, the most successful political campaigns are those

capable of creating synergy between technological innovation and traditional community engagement.

From a theoretical perspective, these findings support the evolution of political communication from a mass communication model toward a networked communication model. In the digital era, political influence is increasingly generated through interactions within online and offline networks rather than through centralized information dissemination. Political actors who successfully mobilize both digital communities and real-world social networks are more likely to achieve electoral success. The Surakarta Regional Election demonstrates how Islamic-themed political communication can adapt to this changing media environment while maintaining relevance within local cultural and religious contexts.

Overall, the findings indicate that the effectiveness of Islamic-themed political campaigns in the 2024 Surakarta Regional Election was determined not by the dominance of a single communication medium but by the complementary use of online and offline media. Online media proved effective in increasing visibility, engagement, and information dissemination, while offline media remained essential for building trust, emotional attachment, and political legitimacy. Therefore, the study concludes that a hybrid campaign strategy combining digital communication with direct community engagement represents the most effective approach for Islamic-themed political campaigns in contemporary local elections in Indonesia.

The Transformation of Islamic Political Campaigns in the Digital Era

One of the most interesting aspects emerging from the 2024 Surakarta Regional Election is the transformation of Islamic political campaigning from identity-based mobilization toward value-based political communication. Historically, religious narratives in Indonesian politics have often been associated with efforts to mobilize voters through religious identity and symbolic representation. However, the findings from Surakarta suggest a significant shift. Rather than emphasizing exclusive religious identities, campaign messages increasingly focused on universal Islamic values such as honesty (*amanah*), justice (*'adl*), public welfare (*maslahah*), social solidarity (*ukhuwah*), and ethical leadership. This indicates that contemporary voters,

particularly in urban areas such as Surakarta, are becoming more responsive to substantive political messages than to symbolic religious appeals alone.

The growing influence of social media has accelerated this transformation. Digital platforms create a highly competitive information environment where political actors must continuously compete for public attention. In such circumstances, merely displaying religious symbols or slogans is insufficient to maintain voter engagement. Instead, candidates must demonstrate how Islamic values are translated into practical policies and governance programs. This phenomenon reflects what scholars describe as the "rationalization of religious politics," where voters increasingly evaluate political actors based on their competence, credibility, and policy performance rather than solely on religious affiliation. Consequently, the effectiveness of Islamic-themed campaigns depends not only on religious legitimacy but also on the ability to connect religious values with tangible solutions to societal problems

Another important dimension is the role of digital media in reshaping political authority. Traditionally, religious authority in political campaigns was often mediated through respected religious leaders, Islamic organizations, and community institutions. In the digital era, however, authority is increasingly decentralized. Political messages can spread rapidly through influencers, content creators, community groups, and ordinary citizens. This shift creates both opportunities and challenges. On one hand, candidates can communicate directly with voters without relying exclusively on traditional political or religious intermediaries. On the other hand, the decentralization of information increases the risk of misinformation, disinformation, and political polarization. Therefore, the effectiveness of Islamic-themed political campaigns increasingly depends on the credibility of information sources and the ability of candidates to maintain public trust in a highly fragmented digital environment.

The Surakarta case also demonstrates the growing importance of political branding in contemporary elections. Political branding refers to the strategic construction of a candidate's image, identity, and reputation in the minds of voters. Islamic-themed campaigns frequently incorporated visual elements, religious narratives, community engagement activities, and personal stories to create a coherent political identity. Social media platforms amplified these efforts by allowing campaign teams to curate and disseminate carefully designed content. Interestingly, successful

political branding in Surakarta did not rely on overt religiosity alone. Instead, candidates who were perceived as combining religious values with professionalism, inclusiveness, and administrative competence appeared to gain broader public acceptance. This finding suggests that modern voters prefer political leaders who embody both moral integrity and practical capability.

Furthermore, the effectiveness of campaign media cannot be separated from generational differences among voters. Younger voters, particularly members of Generation Z and Millennials, consume political information differently from older generations. They tend to prefer short-form videos, interactive content, memes, and visually appealing messages rather than lengthy political speeches. As a result, Islamic political messages were often repackaged into digital formats that aligned with contemporary media consumption habits. Religious values were communicated through motivational videos, inspirational quotes, podcasts, and interactive discussions rather than conventional campaign rhetoric. This adaptation demonstrates how political communication strategies evolve in response to changing audience preferences and technological developments.

In contrast, older voters continued to place considerable importance on direct interpersonal communication. Face-to-face interactions during community gatherings, religious events, and neighborhood meetings remained influential in shaping political preferences. This highlights a critical insight: technological advancement has not eliminated the importance of human interaction in politics. Instead, digital communication and interpersonal communication function as complementary mechanisms. While social media can increase visibility and awareness, direct engagement remains essential for establishing emotional connections and reinforcing trust. This finding aligns with the theory of hybrid media systems, which argues that political influence emerges from the interaction between traditional and digital communication channels rather than from the dominance of either one.

The discussion also raises broader questions regarding the future of Islamic political communication in Indonesia. As internet penetration continues to increase and digital literacy improves, political campaigns are likely to become even more dependent on digital platforms. However, this development may also intensify

competition for public attention and increase the prevalence of information overload. In such a context, authenticity becomes a crucial political resource. Voters are increasingly capable of distinguishing between genuine political engagement and superficial image management. Therefore, the sustainability of Islamic-themed political campaigns will depend on the consistency between the values promoted during campaigns and the actions undertaken after candidates assume office.

From a democratic perspective, the findings reveal both opportunities and challenges. The integration of online and offline media has expanded opportunities for political participation by enabling citizens to access information, engage in discussions, and express opinions more easily than before. Social media has reduced barriers between political elites and ordinary citizens, creating new channels for democratic engagement. However, the same platforms may also facilitate the spread of hate speech, political manipulation, and sectarian narratives if not managed responsibly. Consequently, the effectiveness of Islamic-themed political campaigns should not be measured solely by electoral success but also by their contribution to democratic quality, social cohesion, and political education.

A particularly noteworthy finding is that Islamic values functioned more effectively as ethical frameworks rather than as instruments of political polarization. Campaign messages emphasizing social justice, public service, anti-corruption commitments, and community empowerment tended to resonate with broader segments of society, including voters from diverse religious and social backgrounds. This suggests that Islamic political communication in contemporary Indonesia may be moving toward a more inclusive model that emphasizes shared civic values rather than exclusive group identities. Such a development is significant because it demonstrates the potential for religion to contribute positively to democratic politics without undermining pluralism and social harmony.

Ultimately, the 2024 Surakarta Regional Election illustrates a broader transformation occurring in Indonesian political communication. The effectiveness of Islamic-themed political campaigns is no longer determined by the mere presence of religious symbols or campaign infrastructure. Instead, it depends on the strategic integration of digital innovation, interpersonal engagement, political branding, and

substantive policy communication. The election demonstrates that successful political campaigns in the digital era require candidates to balance moral credibility, technological adaptability, and programmatic substance. This balance enables political actors not only to attract voter support but also to foster meaningful democratic participation in an increasingly complex media environment.

CONCLUSION

The utilization of online media as a campaign instrument is increasingly regarded as more impactful and efficient than traditional offline methods. The current surge in internet penetration serves as a significant catalyst, providing candidate pairs with a powerful vehicle to disseminate their platforms to a vast audience. The inherent advantages of digital campaigning—most notably its expansive reach, ability to bypass geographical barriers, and substantial time-saving capabilities—make it an indispensable tool in modern political contests. Nevertheless, a purely digital approach risks alienating segments of the electorate. Offline media, including face-to-face engagements, town halls, and physical outreach, must remain a core component of the campaign strategy, as a considerable portion of the population continues to rely on traditional information channels for their daily needs. Consequently, a hybrid "omnichannel" strategy is essential to ensure comprehensive voter engagement.

In the specific context of the 2024 Surakarta Regional Election, both online and offline campaigns remain inextricably linked to Islamic-themed narratives. Given Surakarta's Muslim-majority demographic, political discourse is naturally interwoven with Islamic values. However, this reality places a greater burden of discernment upon the electorate. Voters, particularly those within the Muslim community, are expected to exercise heightened political literacy. The objective is to look beyond the surface-level usage of Islamic attributes, which can often be employed merely as strategic props to solicit votes, and instead identify candidates who genuinely uphold Islamic principles in their actions.

True political integrity, in this view, is measured by a candidate's alignment with moral and ethical standards that reflect the core tenets of a virtuous leader. Rather than viewing religious themes as mere electoral tools, voters should seek evidence of internal consistency—where a candidate's policies, integrity, and character serve as an authentic manifestation of their faith. Ultimately, for the citizens of Surakarta, the

intersection of digital reach and traditional connection, framed by an honest application of values, will be the decisive factor in selecting leadership that embodies both morality and effective governance.

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