

Political Communication Strategy in the 2024 East Java Gubernatorial Election: An Analysis Based on Harold Lasswell's Communication Model

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Abstract

This study examines political communication strategies in the 2024 East Java gubernatorial election using Harold Lasswell's Communication Model as the analytical framework. A qualitative descriptive approach was employed through in-depth interviews, field observations, and document analysis. The findings show that effective political communication is built on social trust, cultural values, and adaptability to digital media. Candidate campaign teams combined face-to-face interactions with online media to deliver their messages. Analysis of Lasswell's five elements—Who, Says What, In Which Channel, To Whom, and With What Effect—demonstrates that campaign success depends on communicator credibility, message relevance, and emotional connection with the public. The results align with previous studies emphasizing the importance of integrating online and offline communication to enhance political participation. Overall, the study highlights that political communication success goes beyond message strength; it also relies on authenticity, ethics, and public engagement. These findings expand Lasswell's theory by showing its relevance in the digital era and its contribution to strengthening local democracy in Indonesia.

Keywords: Political Communication; Lasswell Model; Campaign Strategy; Hybrid Media; Local Election; Campaign Team

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Strategi Komunikasi Politik dalam Pemilihan Gubernur Jawa Timur 2024: Analisis Berdasarkan Model Komunikasi Harold Lasswell

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis strategi komunikasi politik dalam Pemilihan Gubernur Jawa Timur 2024 dengan menggunakan Model Komunikasi Harold Lasswell. Pendekatan yang digunakan adalah kualitatif deskriptif melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi lapangan, dan analisis dokumentasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa strategi komunikasi yang efektif berakar pada kepercayaan sosial, nilai budaya, dan kemampuan beradaptasi dengan perkembangan media digital. Tim pemenang kandidat menggunakan kombinasi komunikasi tatap muka dan media daring dalam menyampaikan pesan politik. Analisis terhadap lima elemen model Lasswell—Who, Says What, In Which Channel, To Whom, dan With What Effect—menunjukkan bahwa keberhasilan kampanye politik sangat ditentukan oleh kredibilitas komunikator, relevansi pesan, dan kedekatan emosional dengan publik. Hasil ini sejalan dengan temuan penelitian terdahulu yang menegaskan

pentingnya sinergi antara komunikasi daring dan luring dalam meningkatkan partisipasi politik. Penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa keberhasilan komunikasi politik tidak hanya ditentukan oleh kekuatan pesan, tetapi juga oleh kredibilitas komunikator dan kedekatan emosional dengan audiens. Temuan ini memperluas penerapan teori Lasswell dengan menekankan pentingnya nilai sosial, etika komunikasi, dan partisipasi publik dalam membangun demokrasi lokal di Indonesia.

Kata Kunci: *Komunikasi Politik, Model Lasswell, Strategi Kampanye, Media Hibrida, Pilkada, Tim Sukses*

INTRODUCTION

General elections in Indonesia serve as a democratic mechanism for the legitimate transfer of political power. As stipulated in Article 22E Paragraph (1) of the 1945 Constitution (as amended), elections are conducted “directly, publicly, freely, confidentially, honestly, and fairly every five years” (UUD 1945). Elections in Indonesia are divided into two main categories: the first for the election of the President and Vice President, members of the DPR, DPD, and regional legislative councils (DPRD at the provincial and regency/city levels); and the second for regional head elections (Pilkada), including governors, regents, and mayors along with their deputies. The implementation of regional elections is governed by Article 18 Paragraph (4) of Law No. 8 of 2015, which states that “Governors, Regents, and Mayors, as heads of provincial, regency, and city governments, are elected democratically” (UU, 2015).

The 2024 regional elections (*Pilkada Serentak*) were scheduled for November 27, 2024, in accordance with Article 201 Paragraph (8) of Law No. 10 of 2016. According to the Chairperson of the Indonesian General Elections Commission (KPU), Hasyim Asy’ari, the 2024 *Pilkada* was conducted simultaneously in 37 provinces, with the Special Region of Yogyakarta as the only exception—based on Law No. 13

of 2021 concerning Yogyakarta’s special status, where the governor and deputy governor are appointed rather than elected (Putri & Nugroho, 2024).

The 2024 East Java gubernatorial election represents one of the most significant moments in Indonesia’s local political dynamics. In the context of electoral democracy, political communication plays a strategic role in shaping public opinion, directing voter behavior, and creating political legitimacy for candidates. The competition among the three major candidates—each supported by a distinct campaign team (TPP 01, TPP 02, and TPP 03)—illustrates the complexity of communication strategies amidst changing media landscapes and voter preferences.

Political communication is a fundamental element in modern democratic systems. Through communication, political actors not only convey ideas and policy programs but also construct perceptions, build trust, and influence voter behavior. In the 2024 East Java election, political communication practices reflected complex interactions between local cultural values, social networks, and the use of digital media technologies. East Java’s *Pilkada* is particularly significant due to its diverse sociopolitical characteristics, including a strong base of religious voters, widespread *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools), and rapid urbanization. Such diversity requires communication strategies that are not

only informative but also emotionally and culturally resonant.

The evolution of political communication in Indonesia mirrors global trends emphasizing the integration of online and offline interactions. Trumm (2022) argues that balancing digital and face-to-face campaign strategies strengthens voter trust and participation. Similarly, Liu (2019) notes that the impact of online communication on political knowledge and participation depends on geographical and social contexts. Schwitter (2025) further highlights that offline social ties remain essential in shaping political decisions despite the dominance of digital platforms. Afonso et al. (2025) demonstrate that political communication activities on social media—such as Twitter—can predict electoral outcomes, while Reveilhac (2025) emphasizes that communication style and message consistency significantly affect a candidate's visibility and public perception.

These findings suggest that political communication studies must be situated within both digital and social contexts. Accordingly, this study connects the local context of East Java with global scholarly debates on political communication strategies in the digital era, employing Harold Lasswell's Communication Model as an analytical framework that remains relevant and adaptable to contemporary changes.

According to McNair (2017), political communication is the process by which political actors and institutions convey messages to the public to shape perceptions and influence political decisions. This process involves symbols, discourse, and media tailored to the audience's

sociocultural context. In Indonesia, Effendy (2020) emphasizes that effective political communication requires a balance between message rationality and the emotional proximity of the communicator to the audience. This aligns with East Java's political culture, which is deeply influenced by religious values, social patronage, and personal relationships between candidates and voters.

One conceptual framework suited to understanding this phenomenon is Harold Lasswell's (1948) Communication Model. Lasswell views communication as a systematic process comprising five core components: *Who* (communicator), *Says What* (message), *In Which Channel* (medium), *To Whom* (audience), and *With What Effect* (impact). This model provides a strong analytical structure for examining how political communication strategies are designed, implemented, and evaluated within electoral campaigns.

In the 2024 East Java gubernatorial election, each campaign team adopted distinct approaches: TPP 01 emphasized gender equality and inclusive leadership; TPP 02 highlighted stability and faith-based development; and TPP 03 utilized social media to project an image of integrity and modern governance. These differences illustrate the adaptation of political communication strategies to Indonesia's evolving digital environment. However, as Schwitter (2024) observes, while digitalization extends campaign reach, the effectiveness of political messaging still relies on offline social relations that foster public trust. Thus, the effectiveness of political communication in Indonesia remains closely linked to interpersonal and

symbolic communication rooted in local political culture.

Therefore, this study aims to provide a deeper understanding of how Lasswell's communication model can be applied to regional elections in Indonesia. The analysis contributes not only theoretically to the development of political communication studies but also practically to designing political campaign strategies that are more contextual, ethical, and effective within a pluralistic and increasingly digital society.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Political Communication

Political communication is derived from two concepts—"communication" and "politics." The term *politics* was first introduced in Europe by Jean Bodin in 1576, referring to the "science of the state," as described in early continental European scholarship emphasizing institutional and juridical dimensions (Muslimin, 2020). The English term *politics* denotes both the art and practice of governance, while in Indonesian, the word *politik* encompasses several meanings: the science of statecraft, affairs concerning government relations—both domestic and foreign—and methods or policies of governance (Muslimin, 2020).

The term *communication* originates from the Latin *communicatio*, derived from *communis*, meaning "to share" or "to make common." Communication is the process of transmitting messages from one individual to another, either directly or indirectly, with the aim of informing or changing attitudes, opinions, or behaviors (Heryanto, 2010).

Political communication can therefore be defined as the process of transferring symbols or messages containing political

meaning from an individual or group to others, with the goal of shaping perspectives, expanding understanding, and influencing political behavior. According to Michael Rush and Philip Althoff, political communication refers to the process through which relevant political information is transmitted from one part of a political system to another, as well as between political and social systems. This process involves the exchange of information among individuals and groups at all levels (Rush & Althoff, 1997).

Brian McNair (1994) identifies three dimensions of political communication:

1. Communication conducted by political actors to achieve specific political objectives;
2. Communication directed toward politicians by non-political actors, such as voters and journalists; and
3. Communication about political actors and their activities, including news coverage, editorials, and other forms of public discourse.

In essence, political communication encompasses all communicative processes involving political messages, actors, and institutions, including the exercise of power, governance, and public policy.

Harold Lasswell's Communication Model

Harold D. Lasswell's (1948) communication model remains one of the foundational paradigms in communication studies and continues to be relevant, particularly in the analysis of political communication. Lasswell conceptualized communication as a systematic process that can be explained through five core components: *Who, Says What, In Which Channel, To Whom, and With What Effect*.

This model not only illustrates the linear flow of communication but also provides a framework to analyze the social structures, power relations, and political effects embedded in communicative processes. In political contexts, *Who* refers to the communicator—either an individual (e.g., a candidate or spokesperson) or an institution (e.g., a political party or campaign team). *Says What* concerns the construction of political messages intended to shape public opinion. *In Which Channel* highlights the medium used, ranging from face-to-face interaction to digital platforms. *To Whom* identifies the target audience or voter segments, and *With What Effect* assesses the outcomes in terms of attitude, opinion, or behavioral change.

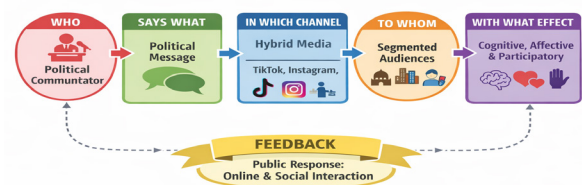
Effendy (2020) argues that Lasswell's model provides a logical and empirical framework for understanding political communication as a structured social system. Using this model, researchers can examine the relationships among communication components to determine which factors most influence message effectiveness. McQuail (2010) adds that the strength of Lasswell's model lies in its simplicity, which enables the analysis of complex communication processes without disregarding social and cultural contexts.

In this study, Lasswell's model serves as the main analytical tool to examine the communication strategies of three campaign teams (TPP 01, TPP 02, and TPP 03) in the 2024 East Java gubernatorial election. The model enables a detailed analysis of the roles of communicators, messages, media, audiences, and the effects of political communication practices at the local level.

To strengthen the relevance of Harold Lasswell's communication theory in the context of modern political communication, this study adapts the classic one-way communication model into a hybrid communication form that better suits the interactive nature of digital campaigns.

This model is no longer linear, but rather circular and participatory, where the public is not merely a recipient of messages but also a producer of political meaning. The "In Which Channel" element now encompasses a variety of digital and face-to-face media, such as TikTok, Instagram, YouTube, and direct social activities on the ground. The structure of Lasswell's updated communication model is depicted as follows:

Figure 1. Lasswell's Communication Model in A Digital and Hybrid Context



Source :Processed by Researchers

This model demonstrates that political communication in the digital era is circular, with public feedback being an integral part of the process of opinion formation and political legitimacy.

Political Communication and Public Opinion Formation

According to McNair (2017), political communication is the process through which political actors, institutions, or groups deliver messages to the public with the

intent of shaping opinions, strengthening support, or influencing political behavior. It involves not merely the dissemination of information but also the construction of meaning and the legitimization of authority. In Indonesia, Effendy (2020) emphasizes that effective political communication must integrate both cognitive (rational message content) and affective (emotional audience engagement) dimensions.

Canel and Sanders (2021) note that in the digital era, political communication has evolved toward *hybridization*, where face-to-face and digital strategies function complementarily rather than separately. In electoral contexts, visibility on social media alone is insufficient; authentic interpersonal interaction is crucial for establishing emotional resonance with voters. This view aligns with Schwitter (2024), who asserts that offline interaction remains fundamental to building public trust, even as campaigns increasingly shift to digital spaces.

Furthermore, McCombs and Shaw's (1972) *agenda-setting theory* supports and enriches Lasswell's model by explaining how media prioritize and frame political issues. Through issue selection and thematic emphasis, media outlets shape public perceptions of what is important. In political campaigns, this mechanism enables campaign teams to direct voter attention toward key topics such as integrity, competence, and morality.

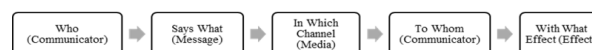
In summary, Lasswell's paradigm—introduced in *The Structure and Function of Communication in Society*—posits that communication can be systematically analyzed by asking five questions: *Who says what, in which channel, to whom, and*

with what effect? (Heryanto, 2010). Although Lasswell's model is linear, primarily describing one-way communication, it remains useful for analyzing how political messages are designed, transmitted, and received by the public. Originally developed for mass communication and propaganda studies, it remains highly relevant for understanding modern political communication, particularly within the context of electoral strategy and public persuasion.

Lasswell's communication model is linear or one-way, where the communicator actively delivers the message, while the recipient merely receives the message without providing any feedback. This model was originally developed to analyze mass communication, particularly propaganda media, but it can also be applied to political communication to understand how political messages are conveyed and received by the public.

Lasswell's communication model provides a useful framework for analyzing political communication strategies, particularly in understanding how political messages are conveyed and received by the public. If Lasswell's communication model were depicted through a system, it would look like this:

Chart 1 Lasswell's Communication Model



Source :Processed by Researchers

The Lasswell Communication Model illustrates the complexity of the communication process, wherein the key elements—*Who, Says What, In Which Channel, To Whom, and With What*

Effect—function as an integrated system. Communication becomes effective when all five elements interact coherently within the process.

Since its formulation, Lasswell's model has undergone significant theoretical and practical development. Initially designed for the analysis of mass communication through traditional media such as radio, television, and newspapers, it has since been applied to new forms of media communication, including the internet, computer animation, and video games. The model's adaptability has enabled its use across multiple disciplines, expanding beyond its original purpose.

In recent decades, Lasswell's communication model has been widely utilized in political communication research, with applications in mass communication analysis, public diplomacy, and strategic communication development. Its linear yet systematic framework allows scholars to trace how political messages are constructed, transmitted, and interpreted within various sociocultural and media contexts.

The Context of Political Communication in Indonesia

Political communication in Indonesia is deeply rooted in the country's collective and religious social structure. Local political communication patterns are often influenced by community leaders, religious figures, and socially embedded networks (Arifin, 2022). Consequently, interpersonal communication remains the primary channel for building political trust, particularly in regions with strong *pesantren* (Islamic boarding school) traditions and religious organizations such as East Java.

Rahmawati (2023) found that audience segmentation strategies that account for cultural and religious factors are significantly more effective than those based solely on demographic characteristics. This finding highlights the need for context-sensitive communication approaches that align with Indonesia's sociocultural realities.

Accordingly, the application of Lasswell's Communication Model in the context of the 2024 East Java gubernatorial election provides not only a theoretical analytical framework but also a means to understand the social and political dynamics of Indonesia. This approach integrates traditional interpersonal communication practices with modern digital technology, reflecting the hybrid nature of Indonesia's contemporary political communication landscape.

Such integration is expected to contribute to the advancement of political communication theory, particularly by promoting more contextually grounded and culturally relevant analyses within Indonesian communication studies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Previous studies demonstrate that political communication theories—particularly Harold Lasswell's Communication Model—remain highly relevant and widely applied to analyze the dynamics of political communication in diverse contexts. However, most existing research tends to be descriptive and has yet to comprehensively integrate strategic dimensions and digital media developments into contemporary political communication analysis.

This study seeks to address this gap by integrating Lasswell's model into a strategic and context-adaptive political communication framework. This approach positions political communication not merely as message transmission but as an arena of social interaction and value competition among political actors. Consequently, the study contributes both theoretically and empirically to the development of political communication research that reflects Indonesia's sociocultural and digital realities—particularly within the context of the 2024 East Java gubernatorial election.

Siregar and Rahman (2024), in *JETISH: Journal of Ethics and Social Humanities Technology*, conducted a study titled “*The Transformation of Political Communication in the Digital Era: An Analysis of the Role of Social Media in Shaping Public Opinion.*” Their research explains how social media has transformed political communication from a top-down model into a participatory one. It highlights how public engagement on social media platforms serves as a primary arena for opinion formation and image-building. However, their analysis treats social media mainly as a message distribution tool, without exploring strategic interactions among political actors. This gap indicates the need to integrate classical communication theories—such as Lasswell's model—with digital dynamics for a deeper understanding of political interaction patterns.

Similarly, Putra and Lestari (2023), in *Jurnal Mukasi: Media Komunikasi dan Sosial Interaktif*, explored “*Collaborative Political Communication Models in Simultaneous Elections.*” Their study underscores the

importance of cross-actor collaboration among politicians, media, and civil society in building adaptive communication ecosystems. The findings reveal that combining interpersonal and digital communication strategies enhances the effectiveness of political messaging, particularly among young voters. Nonetheless, their research lacks a strong theoretical framework like Lasswell's model, leaving room for future studies to bridge classical and digital approaches in political communication.

In addition, a study published by Emerald Publishing (2023) in the book chapter “*Organization Systems and Their Social Environments*” highlights the relationship between organizational systems, communication, and social environments in maintaining socio-political sustainability. It emphasizes that effective communication within political organizations depends not only on message clarity but also on their adaptability to social and technological changes. This perspective resonates with Indonesia's political communication landscape, where campaign success depends on both message content and organizational responsiveness to socio-cultural and digital transformations.

Kusmala et al. (2024) examined the communication strategies of the Mataram City General Election Commission (KPU) in increasing youth voter participation. Their study found that utilizing multiple communication channels—including social media and direct community engagement—effectively raised awareness among first-time voters. However, the analysis remains descriptive, lacking exploration of inter-

actor strategic interactions or long-term political impacts.

Similarly, Muhtaram et al. (2024) analyzed the communication strategies of the Sukoharjo District Election Commission in reducing voter abstention among Generation Z. Their findings indicate that a collaborative approach through digital communication and political education successfully decreased abstention rates by five percent. Nonetheless, the study does not fully assess the cross-platform effectiveness or message consistency of political communication efforts.

Collectively, these five studies reaffirm that political communication in the digital era must be understood as an adaptive system involving dynamic relationships among actors, media, and the public. However, few studies have successfully integrated the theoretical dimensions of Lasswell's communication model within the context of Indonesia's local political communication. Therefore, this research aims to bridge that gap by applying Lasswell's analytical framework in combination with hybrid communication dynamics and the social values embedded within East Javanese society.

In summary, the existing literature highlights the growing significance of integrating classical communication theories with the dynamics of digital political interaction. However, most prior studies remain confined to either theoretical exposition or descriptive accounts of media use, without exploring how traditional communication models function within contemporary electoral contexts. Unlike previous works that treat political communication as a linear process

or focus solely on digital engagement, this study applies Harold Lasswell's Communication Model as an analytical tool to examine the interplay between actors, messages, and audiences in a hybrid media environment. By situating the model within Indonesia's local socio-cultural framework—particularly in the 2024 East Java gubernatorial election—this research provides a contextualized understanding of how trust, cultural values, and media convergence shape modern political communication strategies. This analytical integration aims to contribute not only to the theoretical refinement of Lasswell's framework but also to the broader discourse on strategic political communication in emerging democracies.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach with a case study design aimed at providing an in-depth understanding of the political communication strategies implemented by the three main campaign teams in the 2024 East Java gubernatorial election. This approach was chosen because it enables the exploration of meanings, strategies, and communication processes that cannot be explained solely through quantitative methods (Creswell, 2014; Creswell & Creswell, 2017). It allows the researcher to interpret political communication phenomena within a complex socio-cultural context, where interactions among communicators, messages, media, and audiences involve elements of value, trust, and adaptive strategy. The case study design was applied to analyze the communication practices of the three

main campaign teams—TPP 01 (Luluk–Lukman), TPP 02 (Khofifah–Emil), and TPP 03 (Tri Risma–Gus Hans)—in the dynamic political landscape of East Java. The descriptive approach was used to portray the patterns and tendencies of political communication strategies without manipulating research variables.

The data used in this study consist of primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained through in-depth interviews with members of each candidate's campaign team, campaign volunteers, and selected voters across several regions of East Java. Secondary data were derived from campaign documents, independent survey results from organizations such as POLTRACKING, ARCI, and KIC (2024), as well as news publications and official social media archives. Primary data were utilized to uncover the practical implementation of political communication strategies, while secondary data served to enhance the validity of analysis through triangulation across multiple information sources.

Data collection was conducted through three main methods: in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document study combined with content analysis. The in-depth interviews involved six key informants representing the three campaign teams and four additional informants from academia and local political observers. The interviews focused on communication strategies, message construction, media selection, and audience segmentation. Participatory observation was carried out by directly attending campaign events such as community meetings, social activities, and online campaigns to observe communication

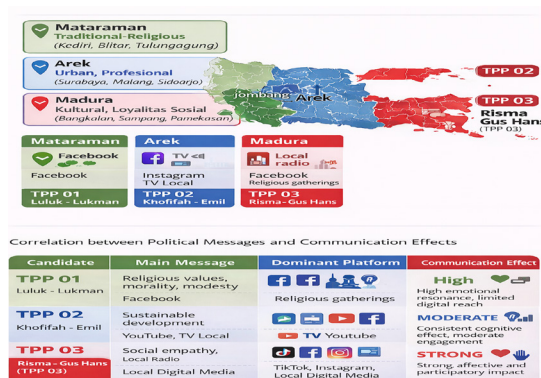
dynamics in real settings. The document study involved collecting and analyzing campaign materials, online news reports, campaign videos, and official social media content from each team. Content analysis was applied to identify recurring themes, symbols, and dominant messages in the candidates' political communication.

Informants were selected using purposive sampling based on specific criteria: residence in East Java, active involvement in the candidate's campaign team, direct knowledge of communication strategies, and willingness to participate in interviews. Selected informants were individuals who played significant roles in campaign activities and possessed an understanding of field-level communication dynamics.

To provide an empirical overview of the reach of political communication, this study maps the geographic distribution of audiences based on the main cultural regions in East Java: Mataraman, Arek, and Madura.

This map shows the distribution of support bases and campaign activities for each winning team:

Figure 2. Voter Distribution Map and Campaign Activities in East Java



Source :Processed by Researchers

This visualization demonstrates that political campaigns are not conducted in a homogeneous manner, but are tailored to the socio-cultural context and local media characteristics. This region-based approach allows the winning teams to tailor their messages and media to suit local values and preferences.

Data analysis employed a thematic approach grounded in Harold Lasswell's communication model, which includes five key elements: *Who, Says What, In Which Channel, To Whom, and With What Effect*. The analytical process followed the three stages proposed by Miles and Huberman (2014): data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction was carried out by classifying and organizing data according to Lasswell's elements. The data display was presented through thematic tables and analytical narratives combining findings from interviews, observations, and documentation. Conclusion drawing involved identifying relationships among communication components to determine patterns of strategy and communication effectiveness implemented by each campaign team. This approach enabled a comprehensive understanding of political communication as an interactive process involving actors, messages, media, audiences, and effects within an integrated political system.

The validity of the data was ensured through both source and method triangulation. Source triangulation was achieved by comparing findings from interviews, field observations, and media documentation, while method triangulation combined in-depth interviews, direct observation, and content analysis to

ensure consistency in research results. Member checking was also conducted with key informants to validate the interpretation of findings and ensure alignment between empirical data and the real context of political communication. Additionally, the validity of the study was strengthened through empirical triangulation by comparing analytical findings with electability survey data from POLTRACKING, ARCI, and KIC, thereby enhancing the reliability of the research conclusions.

The main analytical focus of this research is to examine how Lasswell's communication model elements are concretely applied in the practice of political communication in East Java. The analysis explores who the main actors are and how their credibility is constructed, how political messages are framed, which communication channels are most dominantly used, who the target audiences are, and what effects are generated in shaping public perception and candidate electability. This systematic approach allows a comprehensive mapping of the political communication strategies used by each campaign team and provides an in-depth understanding of how effective communication contributes to campaign success within East Java's local sociopolitical context.

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

Who (The Political Communicator)

In the context of political communication during the 2024 East Java gubernatorial election, the "*Who*" element in Lasswell's model focuses on identifying the primary communicators: the candidates and their respective campaign teams as the

sources of political messages. Based on the results of interviews and documentation, the political communicators in this study consist of three Provincial Campaign Teams (TPP): TPP 01 (Luluk–Lukman), TPP 02 (Khofifah–Emil), and TPP 03 (Tri Risma–Gus Hans). Each campaign team exhibits distinct communicator characteristics that align with the image and leadership style of the candidates they represent.

TPP 01 constructed the image of Luluk–Lukman as religious and grassroots-oriented leaders by emphasizing Islamic values and simple moral messages. This strategy positioned the communicator as a *moral leader* capable of reaching lower social strata through emotional resonance and religious appeals. In contrast, TPP 02 highlighted Khofifah–Emil as rational and experienced leaders. The communicator’s credibility in this team was built through Khofifah’s leadership record as an incumbent governor and Emil Dardak’s image as an innovative young technocrat. This approach reflects a *trust-based communication model*, where political messages are closely tied to reputation and past performance.

Meanwhile, TPP 03, which supported the Tri Rismaharini–Gus Hans pair, adopted a more dynamic and populist communication style. Risma, known for her assertive yet empathetic leadership, was portrayed as a sincere and people-oriented figure, while Gus Hans functioned as a bridge to religious communities and Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*). The combination of both figures reinforced the communicator’s image as a balanced representation of moral authority and social empathy.

The analysis reveals that the credibility of political communicators across all three campaign teams was constructed through three key components: competence, integrity, and emotional closeness. This finding aligns with Lasswell’s assertion that the effectiveness of political communication is determined by the communicator’s ability to establish symbolic legitimacy in the eyes of the public. In this context, the communicator serves not only as a transmitter of messages but also as a shaper of social perception, reinforcing the candidate’s political identity within the public sphere.

Table 1. Profile of Political Communicators and Credibility Strategies

Winning Team	Characteristics of Communicators	Credibility Building Strategy	Expected Image
TPP 01 (Luluk-Lukman)	Religious, simple, close to the people	Islamic value approach, social preaching, moral messages	Spiritual and people's leader
TPP 02 (Khofifah-Emil)	Rational, experienced, technocratic	Strengthening track record, performance narrative, policy innovation	Visionary and professional leader
TPP 03 (Risma-Gus Hans)	Populist, emotional, religious	Empathetic communication, symbol of sincerity, support from Islamic boarding schools	A firm, caring, and spiritual leader

Source :Processed by Researchers

In the context of the 2024 East Java gubernatorial election, the “*Who*” element of Lasswell’s model emphasizes the role of political actors and the communicator’s credibility in shaping public perception. The three main campaign teams—TPP 01 (Luluk–Lukman), TPP 02 (Khofifah–Emil), and TPP 03 (Risma–Gus Hans)—demonstrate distinct communication strategies in building social trust and symbolic authority for their respective candidates.

The findings reveal that communicator credibility is determined not only by one’s formal political position but also by the

ability to create emotional closeness and embody values trusted by the public. TPP 01, for instance, highlighted the candidates' religious and modest image, portraying the communicator as a *moral representative* closely connected to the *pesantren* (Islamic boarding school) community. Meanwhile, TPP 02 emphasized rationality and professionalism through the leadership track record of Khofifah and Emil Dardak. In contrast, TPP 03 adopted a populist approach that combined social empathy with Risma's assertive character, reinforced by the religious stature of Gus Hans.

These findings confirm that the *ethos* of the communicator plays a crucial role in building political trust. This aligns with Reveilhac (2025), who asserts that a candidate's communication style directly influences their visibility and public acceptance in both online and offline settings. Similarly, Afonso et al. (2025) highlight that communicator credibility can be strengthened through *digital performance*—namely, the extent to which a candidate's online interactions reflect authenticity and consistency in their political messaging. In this regard, the communication strategies of TPP 02 and TPP 03 demonstrate how personal branding and public reputation are systematically utilized to enhance political legitimacy in the digital era.

Theoretically, the *Who* element in this study reinforces that the success of political communication is not merely a matter of message delivery but also of *who* delivers it and how that figure is constructed through social values and lived experience. Credibility, morality, and authenticity emerge as the three fundamental pillars

of effective political communication at the local level.

Says What (Political Message)

The "Says What" element in Lasswell's communication model refers to the content of political messages conveyed by communicators to their audiences. In the context of the 2024 East Java gubernatorial election, political messages served as the primary instruments for constructing narratives, shaping public perception, and affirming candidates' ideological positions amid electoral competition. The analysis reveals that each campaign team developed its political messages using distinct approaches that corresponded with the candidate's image, vision, and target voter segment.

TPP 01 formulated its political messages based on religious values and public morality. The constructed narrative emphasized honesty, simplicity, and dedication to public service. Central slogans such as "East Java with Dignity and Blessings" symbolized a form of political communication imbued with spiritual and ethical nuance. This strategy sought to foster emotional proximity between candidates and voters through appeals to religious values and collective social awareness.

By contrast, TPP 02 emphasized rational and programmatic messages. The campaign's primary focus was on policy continuity, innovation, and socio-economic stability. Narratives such as "Continuing the Good, Improving the Inadequate" reinforced a sense of administrative consistency between past performance and future governance. This approach reflects

a policy-based communication style, in which political messages are crafted to strengthen voters' trust in the candidates' leadership capability and institutional credibility.

Meanwhile, TPP03 adopted a populist and emotionally resonant messaging strategy. The campaign narrative focused on the candidate's close relationship with the grassroots, emphasizing issues such as poverty and social justice. Expressions like "Real Work for the Common People" projected the candidate as a grounded, empathetic, and responsive leader. This strategy intertwined symbolic and moral dimensions, portraying Tri Rismaharini as an emblem of sincerity and social empathy.

The analysis of message construction indicates that political messages serve not only to inform voters of a candidate's vision and programs but also to build a system of meaning that reflects the political identity and values espoused by each campaign. In essence, political messaging functions as a form of symbolic communication that connects social reality with public perception through structured and purposeful narratives.

Table 2. Characteristics and Focus of Political Messages of Each Winning Team

Winning Team	Types of Political Messages	Main Narrative Focus	Approach Used
TPP 01 (Luluk-Lukman)	Moral and spiritual values	Simplicity, honesty, social blessings	Value-based and religious communication
TPP 02 (Khoifah-Emil)	Rational and programmatic	Sustainable development, economic stability	Policy-based communication
TPP 03 (Risma-Gus Hans)	Populist and emotional	Social concern, real work, empathy towards the people	Symbolic and emotional communication

Source :Processed by Researchers

The "Says What" element highlights the construction of political messages as a means of shaping meaning and establishing

social legitimacy. The messages articulated by each campaign team demonstrate variations in communication style that align with the candidates' image and the sociocultural context of their target voters.

TPP 01 centered its messages on moral and religious values, emphasizing slogans such as "*East Java with Dignity and Blessings*" to reinforce religious identity while building emotional resonance. TPP 02 delivered rational and programmatic messages, focusing on development continuity and economic stability. In contrast, TPP 03 employed populist, empathy-driven messages, highlighting sensitivity to poverty and social justice through slogans such as "*Real Work for the Common People.*"

This message construction aligns with Liu's (2019) analysis, which argues that effective political messages are those that connect public narratives with voters' political knowledge and social participation. In this sense, messages are not merely informational but serve as representations of shared values that strengthen the emotional bond between candidates and society.

Furthermore, these findings support Trumm's (2022) assertion that campaign success does not depend on the complexity of messaging but on the consistency between *offline* and *online* narratives. For instance, TPP 02 demonstrated coherence between its policy-based messages disseminated through mass media and its digital content on social media, thereby reinforcing the candidate's image as credible and reliable.

Thus, effective political messages are not only persuasive but also capable of affirming political identity and facilitating

voter participation through inclusive and value-oriented narratives. Theoretically, these findings reaffirm Lasswell's view that messages function as the central medium for meaning-making and perception formation. In this context, political messages operate not merely as instruments of persuasion but as ideological reflections that assert the candidate's moral and strategic positioning within the public sphere. Consequently, the effectiveness of political communication depends on the message's ability to evoke both emotional and rational resonance among audiences.

In Which Channel (Media and Communication Platforms)

The "In Which Channel" element in Lasswell's communication model describes the communication channels used by political communicators to deliver messages to their audiences. In the context of the 2024 East Java gubernatorial election, the findings show that each campaign team adopted a hybrid communication approach that combined traditional and digital media to reach socially and demographically diverse audiences.

TPP01 (Luluk–Lukman) placed greater emphasis on traditional communication channels such as *pengajian* (religious gatherings), community meetings, and social–religious events. This strategy corresponded with the candidate's strong support base among *pesantren* communities and religious networks. The use of digital platforms such as Facebook and WhatsApp was relatively limited and served primarily as tools for documenting activities and disseminating moral and religiously themed messages. This communication

channel proved effective in reinforcing emotional closeness and shaping the candidate's image as a religious leader who remained connected to the people.

In contrast, TPP 02 (Khofifah–Emil) implemented a multichannel communication strategy that leveraged both mainstream mass media—such as television and newspapers—and modern digital media, including Instagram, YouTube, and X (Twitter). The team actively managed visual content highlighting policy achievements, development programs, and innovation. This approach reflected a shift toward strategic media management, in which political messages were systematically constructed to foster perceptions of continuity, professionalism, and stable leadership.

Meanwhile, TPP03 (Risma–Gus Hans) adopted a more dynamic and interactive communication model through digital platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and local online media. This strategy capitalized on Risma's strong public persona on social media as an empathetic and outspoken leader on social issues. The team also combined online engagement with offline community actions—such as neighborhood clean-ups, social service programs, and community visits—demonstrating that digital media functioned not merely as channels of message distribution but also as spaces for social interaction that strengthened perceptions of authenticity and personal closeness between candidates and voters.

The analysis indicates that political media serve not only as tools for disseminating messages but also as arenas for meaning-making and political

interaction. The effectiveness of political communication in the digital era depends on the campaign team's ability to contextually integrate traditional and digital platforms. The hybrid communication strategy thus enables political messages to reach diverse segments of society—from conservative rural voters to digitally active urban youth—bridging generational and cultural divides through adaptive media engagement.

Table 3. Media Usage Patterns and Hybrid Communication Strategies

Winning Team	Dominant Media Type	Characteristics of Media Use	Strategic Objectives
TPP 01 (Luluk-Lukman)	Traditional media (religious studies, community meetings)	Focus on moral messages and socio-religious activities	Building emotional closeness and social trust
TPP 02 (Khofifah-Emil)	Mass and digital media (TV, Instagram, YouTube)	Strengthening professional image, development achievements	Strengthening leadership legitimacy and program continuity
TPP 03 (Risma-Gus Hans)	Interactive social media (TikTok, Instagram) and social activities	Community-based empathetic and participatory communication	Building a populist image and emotional closeness with the public

Source :Processed by Researchers

The “*In Which Channel*” element in Lasswell’s communication model refers to the selection of communication channels used to convey political messages to audiences. The findings reveal that all campaign teams adopted a hybrid communication approach, combining face-to-face (offline) interactions with digital (online) media.

TPP 01 continued to rely primarily on traditional communication channels such as community meetings, *pengajian* (religious gatherings), and social activities to reach *pesantren* communities and rural voters. Meanwhile, TPP 02 and TPP 03 actively utilized digital platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube to engage younger voters and urban populations. This pattern demonstrates that digital

media function not only as spaces for information dissemination but also as arenas of political interaction that shape public opinion in real time.

These findings align with Schwitter’s (2025) argument that offline social relationships remain essential in reinforcing the impact of online political communication. Similarly, Trumm (2022) emphasizes that effective communication strategies are those capable of integrating physical and digital interactions to produce stronger persuasive effects on voting behavior.

In the East Java context, the combination of traditional and digital media reflects an effort to adapt communication strategies to a socially diverse structure. Political campaigns that rely exclusively on digital media risk losing emotional closeness with grassroots voters, whereas entirely conventional strategies may struggle to penetrate public discourse in digital spaces. Therefore, the effectiveness of political communication in the contemporary era depends on the ability to manage cross-channel communication adaptively and continuously.

Conceptually, these findings reaffirm the relevance of Lasswell’s theory in the digital communication era, where the “channel” is not merely a technical conduit but also a social space that mediates the relationship between message and receiver. Within the context of local politics, the success of political communication is determined by the campaign team’s ability to manage diverse communication channels in accordance with audience characteristics. Consequently, the utilization of hybrid media serves as an effective strategy

for broadening message reach while deepening political resonance across different segments of East Java's society.

To Whom (Audience and Voter Segmentation)

"*To Whom*" element in Lasswell's communication model refers to the identification of target audiences and the extent to which political messages are tailored to the social, economic, and cultural characteristics of voters. In the context of the 2024 East Java gubernatorial election, the three campaign teams demonstrated distinct strategies in recognizing and engaging with their respective voter bases.

The effectiveness of political communication depends largely on the communicator's ability to understand the audience's characteristics, needs, and preferences. Each campaign team applied a specific segmentation strategy that aligned with social class, age, cultural values, and media consumption patterns among East Java's electorate.

Based on field data, three primary voter segments emerged as the main targets of political communication:

1. Religious-traditional voters,
2. Young and digital-native voters,
3. Women and middle-class families.

Each of these segments exhibits unique communication behaviors, requiring distinct approaches in message design and channel selection.

TPP 01 (Luluk–Lukman) focused primarily on the religious community, particularly pesantren circles, traditional Muslim groups, and rural populations. Their communication strategy centered on moral and spiritual values, employing

personal and relational methods through local religious leaders (kyai) and community gatherings. This segment highlights that social proximity and cultural trust remain key factors in ensuring the effectiveness of political communication.

In contrast, TPP 02 (Khofifah–Emil) targeted rational and educated middle-class voters such as civil servants, entrepreneurs, and young professionals. Their political communication emphasized policy continuity, economic development, and governance performance. The team relied heavily on mainstream media and digital platforms, illustrating that rational voters are generally more responsive to data-driven, policy-oriented, and performance-based messages.

Meanwhile, TPP 03 (Risma–Gus Hans) adopted a broader and more heterogeneous audience segmentation strategy, targeting both urban and marginalized groups, including laborers, small traders, and community networks. The political messages were framed around empathy and emotional engagement, portraying Risma as a compassionate and responsive leader. This approach reflected a populist communication style that sought to build emotional bonds with voters through simple and accessible language.

The analysis indicates that the effectiveness of political communication is highly influenced by the campaign team's ability to align messages and media channels with audience characteristics. In the socially and culturally diverse landscape of East Java, **message personalization** becomes a crucial factor in achieving political resonance.

Theoretically, these findings reinforce Lasswell's assertion that successful political communication depends not only on message clarity but also on a precise understanding of "*to whom the message is directed*." In this context, the adaptation of messages to audience identity and social background is essential for fostering political trust and participation.

Table 4. Audience Segmentation and Communication Approach Strategy

Winning Team	Key Audience Segments	Social and Cultural Characteristics	Communication Approach
TPP 01 (Luluk-Lukman)	Religious communities, Islamic boarding schools, village communities	Religious, traditional, based on moral values	Cultural and religious approach through local figures
TPP 02 (Khoifah-Emil)	Middle class, professionals, civil servants, business people	Rational, educated, pragmatic	A rational, policy-based and data-driven approach
TPP 03 (Risma-Gus Hans)	Urban and marginal communities	Heterogeneous, emotional, social empathy oriented	Populist and empathetic communication with simple language

Source :Processed by Researchers

The "*To Whom*" element in Lasswell's communication model focuses on identifying the recipients of political messages and understanding how their social, cultural, and psychological characteristics influence their responses. In the context of the 2024 East Java gubernatorial election, the political audience was divided into three main segments: traditional voters rooted in religious and *pesantren* communities, rational voters with a policy-oriented mindset, and young voters who actively engage in digital spaces.

Each campaign team demonstrated a distinct understanding of this audience segmentation. TPP 01 targeted religious voters through cultural and faith-based communication, utilizing *pesantren* networks and religious leaders as communication brokers. TPP 02 focused

on the urban middle class with a rational and performance-oriented approach, while TPP 03 emphasized social empathy and collective participation, appealing mainly to millennials and lower-income communities.

Public engagement in the campaign was influenced not only by social factors but also by geographic and technological contexts. Liu (2019) found that the impact of online communication on political knowledge and participation largely depends on local connectivity and contextual conditions. This pattern was also evident in East Java, where online engagement levels were higher in urban areas than in rural regions.

Similarly, Schwitter (2025) highlighted that offline social relationships remain a key determinant of political behavior, despite the growing dominance of digital campaigning. This finding explains why campaign teams in East Java continued to prioritize face-to-face interactions through social activities rather than relying solely on social media algorithms. In this sense, the audience is not merely a passive receiver of political messages but an active participant in the political communication network—interpreting, reshaping, and redistributing messages according to their values and interests.

Therefore, the "*To Whom*" element underscores that the effectiveness of political communication depends on the communicator's sensitivity to audience characteristics. Successful communication integrates both rational and emotional appeals, aligning messages with the voters' cultural values and social demographics.

Theoretically, these findings

demonstrate that political communication success in electoral contests is determined not only by the message itself but also by how effectively it aligns with the audience's context. Lasswell's model provides a robust analytical framework for understanding this dynamic, where the *To Whom* dimension serves as a bridge between message and effect. In the case of East Java, a segmental and context-based approach enabled each campaign team to optimize support across diverse social bases and strengthen political legitimacy in line with local aspirations.

With What Effect (Effectiveness and Impact of Political Communication)

With What Effect element in Lasswell's communication model highlights the outcomes of political communication, including changes in voter attitudes, shifts in electoral support, and the construction of public perceptions toward candidates. In the context of the 2024 East Java gubernatorial election, the communication effects produced by each campaign team varied significantly depending on the effectiveness of their message strategies, media usage, and the alignment between communicator characteristics and audience profiles.

Based on the analysis of interviews, observations, and documentation, the communication strategies adopted by the three campaign teams generated different impacts on electability and public perception. TPP 01 (Luluk–Lukman), which relied on religious and moral appeals, successfully strengthened its support base among *pesantren* networks and faith-based communities. However, its communication

failed to expand into urban and youth voter segments. The effects were primarily symbolic and emotional: the candidate was perceived as a modest and ethical leader but less prominent in terms of policy substance.

In contrast, TPP 02 (Khofifah–Emil) demonstrated high communication effectiveness in maintaining voter loyalty and reinforcing positive perceptions of the incumbent's performance. Its message strategy emphasizing continuity, stability, and policy innovation sustained a strong level of support among middle- to upper-class voters. The resulting effects were both cognitive and affective: voters not only understood the candidate's achievements but also developed confidence in their ability to continue the province's governance successfully.

Meanwhile, TPP 03 (Risma–Gus Hans) achieved notable emotional and digital impacts. Through the intensive use of interactive platforms such as TikTok and Instagram, this team effectively attracted sympathy from younger generations and grassroots communities. The effects were participatory, reflected in the growing online engagement and social involvement of supporters. However, the team also faced challenges in maintaining message consistency amid the fast-paced and fragmented nature of digital communication.

To support the analysis of communication effects (*With What Effect*), this study presents a comparison between political messaging strategies and the impact of public communication based on field observations and monitoring of digital activity.

Table 5. Correlation Between Political Messages and Communication Effects

Candidate	Main Message	Dominant Platform	Communication Effect
TPP 01 (Luluk-Lukman)	Religious values, morality, modesty	Instagram, Facebook, Religious gatherings	High emotional resonance, limited digital reach
TPP 02 (Khoirifah-Emil)	Sustainable development	YouTube, Local TV, Instagram, TikTok	Consistent cognitive effect, moderate engagement
TPP 03 (Risma-Gus Hans)	Social empathy, fairness	TikTok, Instagram, Local digital media	Strong affective and participatory impact

Source :Processed by Researchers

This table illustrates that the effectiveness of political communication is measured not only by the level of message dissemination, but also by public engagement and response. Strategies that combine moral values, rational messages, and social interaction have a broader impact on voter perceptions and behavior.

A comprehensive analysis reveals that the effectiveness of political communication depends not only on the strength of the message or the communicator's credibility but also on the campaign's ability to create resonance among values, media, and public perception. When these dimensions interact harmoniously, political messages are not merely received but also internalized by society. Therefore, effective political communication should generate **cognitive impact** (understanding), **affective impact** (emotional connection and empathy), and **behavioral impact** (active participation and tangible support).

Table 6. Effectiveness and Impact of Political Communication Strategies

Winning Team	Communication Effectiveness	Types of Impact	Empirical Indicators
TPP 01 (Luluk-Lukman)	Currently	Affective – formation of moral and religious image	Strong support in Islamic boarding school communities and religious groups
TPP 02 (Khoirifah-Emil)	Tall	Cognitive and affective – public trust in program performance and sustainability	Electability stability in the upper middle class
TPP 03 (Risma-Gus Hans)	High in digital space	Affective and participatory – public engagement through social media and social activities	Increase in digital interactions and online campaign engagement

Source :Processed by Researchers

The final element in Lasswell's model, *With What Effect*, refers to the influence of communication on public opinion, political perception, and voting behavior. Based on the findings, the effects of political communication in East Java can be categorized into three main dimensions: **cognitive effects** (understanding and political knowledge), **affective effects** (image formation and emotional attachment), and **conative effects** (voting behavior and political action).

Among the three campaign teams, TPP 02 demonstrated the most consistent communication effects due to its ability to maintain coherence between policy messaging, candidate communication style, and communicator credibility. This consistency produced strong **cognitive effects**, allowing the public to clearly understand the candidate's policy direction and development agenda. Meanwhile, TPP 03 excelled in generating **affective effects**, successfully building emotional connections with voters through narratives of empathy and social engagement, especially toward marginalized groups. In contrast, TPP 01 exhibited stronger **conative effects**, as its solid religious base translated moral and faith-driven values into tangible political support.

These findings align with Afonso et al. (2025), who identified a positive correlation between the intensity and consistency of candidates' digital communication and increased electability. Similarly, Reveilhac (2025) emphasized that candidates' communication styles and authenticity directly influence online visibility and emotional engagement among voters.

Overall, the effects of political communication in East Java illustrate a pattern of **hybrid influence**, in which social media interactions reinforce rather than replace face-to-face engagement. This supports Trumm's (2022) argument that the success of modern campaigns depends on the ability to integrate offline and online narratives into a coherent political message.

From a theoretical perspective, the findings reaffirm the relevance of Lasswell's communication model in explaining the systemic relationship among actors, messages, media, audiences, and effects. However, it also suggests that the model should be expanded through the lens of **networked communication** to capture the participatory and circular nature of digital-era politics. In this environment, the public is no longer a passive receiver but an active co-producer of political meaning.

Thus, the study confirms that the effectiveness of political communication is not merely a matter of message delivery but a strategic process of constructing meaning, fostering trust, and mobilizing public participation. When applied to local political contexts, the Lasswell model remains a powerful analytical framework for understanding the interplay between communication structures, social values, and electoral behavior in East Java's political landscape.

By incorporating a theoretical model, voter distribution maps, and communication effects tables, this study not only confirms the relevance of Lasswell's model in a digital context but also provides empirical evidence that strengthens the validity of the qualitative findings. Each visual element helps bridge the gap between theoretical concepts and the

reality of political communication practices in East Java.

CONCLUSION

This study reaffirms the continuing relevance of Harold Lasswell's communication model in analyzing the dynamics of political communication within the 2024 East Java gubernatorial election, despite significant social and technological transformations. Each element of the model—*Who, Says What, In Which Channel, To Whom, and With What Effect*—plays a complementary role in designing, delivering, and evaluating local political communication strategies.

The findings indicate that the **credibility of the communicator (Who)** serves as the cornerstone of campaign success. Moral integrity, authenticity, and emotional proximity are decisive factors shaping public trust toward political messages. Meanwhile, the **construction of political messages (Says What)** that emphasize social values, justice, and collective welfare enhances public resonance and strengthens the symbolic identity of candidates.

The **choice of communication channels (In Which Channel)** also proves to be crucial. The use of hybrid strategies that combine online and offline media has become an effective adaptation to the changing behavior of digital voters. This supports Trumm (2022) and Schwitter (2025), who argue that the synergy between face-to-face and digital interaction increases message credibility and broadens political participation.

From the **audience perspective (To Whom)**, the study reveals that social

segmentation—based on age, education, and cultural affiliation—significantly influences how voters interpret and respond to political messages. Strategies that are sensitive to local values and demographic characteristics enhance the effectiveness of campaign communication. Finally, regarding the **effect dimension (With What Effect)**, political communication generates multidimensional outcomes: *cognitive* (awareness and understanding), *affective* (image and emotional attachment), and *conative* (voting behavior).

In summary, the success of political communication in the 2024 East Java gubernatorial election is determined by the integration of social trust, cultural values, and media strategy within a participatory communication framework. Political communication thus functions not merely as a tool of persuasion, but as a medium for building trust and reflecting the democratic values of Indonesian local politics.

Implications

Theoretical Implications

Theoretically, this study expands the application of Lasswell's model to the context of hybrid and digital political communication. The findings demonstrate that classical communication theory remains applicable to modern political interactions when integrated with **networked communication** and **digital engagement** perspectives. Consistent with Reveilhac (2025), this approach enables a more comprehensive analysis of the interplay between political messages, communication styles, and public visibility in online spaces.

Furthermore, the study highlights the need to extend Lasswell's framework to account for **two-way communication dynamics** that characterize participatory democracy. Contemporary voters are no longer passive recipients but active co-creators of political meaning. Thus, future models of political communication should integrate both linear and interactive dimensions to capture the transformation of communication practices in the digital democratic era.

Practical Implications

Practically, the study offers strategic insights for campaign teams, political parties, and electoral institutions. Effective communication strategies must be grounded in a deep understanding of audience characteristics and media dynamics. Campaign teams should prioritize authentic, value-driven, and adaptive communication, balancing digital engagement with direct interpersonal interaction.

The findings also underscore the importance of an **integrated communication strategy** that maintains message consistency across all communication channels. Candidates and their teams must construct a unified narrative between social media content, on-the-ground activities, and policy communication to establish a coherent and credible political image. As noted by Afonso et al. (2025), message consistency and digital authenticity directly enhance candidates' visibility and electability.

Ethical dimensions are equally essential in modern political communication. Unethical or manipulative use of digital platforms can erode public trust and

contribute to political misinformation. Therefore, political communication should not solely aim at electoral victory but also foster **civic education and democratic participation** among citizens.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

This study acknowledges several limitations. First, the number of informants was limited to specific regions within East Java, which may constrain the generalizability of findings. Second, the qualitative-descriptive approach, while rich in contextual insight, does not capture quantitative correlations between communication strategies and electability levels. Third, the rapid evolution of digital media continuously reshapes political communication patterns; hence, future studies should employ **mixed methods** or **longitudinal designs** to capture these dynamics more comprehensively.

Future research could also explore the role of ideology, media framing, and algorithmic influence in shaping public opinion. Cross-national comparative studies would further enrich understanding by positioning Indonesia's local political communication practices within a broader global context.

Ultimately, this study reinforces the enduring relevance of Lasswell's model in explaining the systemic relationship among political actors, messages, media, audiences, and effects. However, the findings also call for theoretical innovation to make the model more adaptive to the realities of digital-era communication. Integrating Lasswell's linear framework with a **hybrid communication perspective** opens new analytical pathways for understanding

politics not only as persuasion but also as a **social and moral process** grounded in public values and democratic ethics.

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