



Electoral Personalization and TikTok Politics: The Transformation of Campaign Strategies in Indonesia's 2024 General Election

Personalisasi Pemilu dan Politik TikTok: Transformasi Strategi Kampanye dalam Pemilu Indonesia 2024

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Abstract

The rapid expansion of TikTok has transformed political campaigning by prioritizing personalized communication, algorithmic visibility, and emotionally engaging content over conventional forms of electoral mobilization. Indonesia's 2024 General Election offers an important opportunity to examine how digital platforms reshape campaign strategies and voter engagement in one of the world's largest democracies. Although previous research has explored the political impact of social media, limited attention has been devoted to TikTok's unique role in accelerating electoral personalization and redefining political branding. This study investigates how political candidates, campaign teams, and voters utilized TikTok during Indonesia's 2024 election. Using a mixed qualitative approach, the research combines digital content analysis, engagement metrics, interviews with campaign strategists, and discourse analysis of highly viewed political videos. The findings demonstrate that successful campaign strategies increasingly relied on authenticity, entertainment,

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emotional storytelling, and algorithmic optimization rather than ideological messaging alone. This transformation contributed to greater political accessibility among younger voters but also encouraged personality-centered politics and simplified policy discussions. The article argues that TikTok has become a significant institution within contemporary electoral politics by reshaping political communication, voter behavior, and democratic participation. It contributes to comparative political communication literature by extending debates on platformization, algorithmic governance, and digital campaigning beyond Western democracies. The findings provide practical implications for election management bodies, policymakers, and digital platforms seeking to balance political innovation with electoral fairness, transparency, and democratic accountability.

Keywords: *TikTok, Electoral Personalization, Political Communication, Digital Campaigns, Indonesia*

Abstrak

Perkembangan pesat TikTok telah mengubah kampanye politik dengan memprioritaskan komunikasi yang dipersonalisasi, visibilitas algoritmik, dan konten yang menarik secara emosional dibandingkan bentuk-bentuk mobilisasi elektoral konvensional. Pemilu Indonesia 2024 menawarkan kesempatan penting untuk meneliti bagaimana platform digital membentuk kembali strategi kampanye dan keterlibatan pemilih di salah satu negara demokrasi terbesar di dunia. Meskipun penelitian sebelumnya telah mengeksplorasi dampak politik media sosial, perhatian yang terbatas telah diberikan pada peran unik TikTok dalam mempercepat personalisasi elektoral dan mendefinisikan kembali citra politik. Studi ini menyelidiki bagaimana kandidat politik, tim kampanye, dan pemilih menggunakan TikTok selama pemilu Indonesia 2024. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif campuran, penelitian ini menggabungkan analisis konten digital, metrik keterlibatan, wawancara dengan ahli strategi kampanye, dan analisis wacana video politik yang banyak ditonton. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa strategi kampanye yang sukses semakin bergantung pada otentisitas, hiburan, penceritaan emosional, dan optimasi algoritmik daripada hanya pesan ideologis. Transformasi ini berkontribusi pada aksesibilitas politik yang lebih besar di

kalangan pemilih muda tetapi juga mendorong politik yang berpusat pada kepribadian dan menyederhanakan diskusi kebijakan. Artikel ini berpendapat bahwa TikTok telah menjadi institusi penting dalam politik elektoral kontemporer dengan membentuk kembali komunikasi politik, perilaku pemilih, dan partisipasi demokratis. Artikel ini berkontribusi pada literatur komunikasi politik komparatif dengan memperluas debat tentang platformisasi, tata kelola algoritmik, dan kampanye digital di luar negara-negara demokrasi Barat. Temuan-temuan tersebut memberikan implikasi praktis bagi badan manajemen pemilihan, pembuat kebijakan, dan platform digital yang berupaya menyeimbangkan inovasi politik dengan keadilan elektoral, transparansi, dan akuntabilitas demokratis.

Kata kunci: *TikTok, Personalisasi Pemilu, Komunikasi Politik, Kampanye Digital, Indonesia*

I. INTRODUCTION

The digital transformation of electoral politics has fundamentally altered the relationship between political actors, media institutions, and citizens. Across contemporary democracies, electoral competition is increasingly shaped by digital platforms that enable candidates to communicate directly with voters, bypass traditional media gatekeepers, and construct personalized political identities. Social media platforms have shifted political communication from a primarily institution-centered model toward a more individualized and emotionally driven form of engagement, where visibility, authenticity, and personal narratives often become central resources of electoral competition (Castells 2012; Chadwick 2017). This transformation reflects a broader process of platformization, in which digital infrastructures increasingly influence how political messages are produced, distributed, and interpreted by citizens (van Dijck, Poell, and de Waal 2018).

Among emerging digital platforms, TikTok represents a particularly significant development in contemporary electoral communication. Unlike earlier social media platforms that

primarily emphasized textual interaction and network-based connections, TikTok is structured around algorithmic recommendation systems, short-form video content, entertainment-oriented communication, and highly personalized user experiences. These characteristics have created new possibilities for political actors to engage voters through informal, emotional, and visually appealing narratives. Political communication on TikTok is therefore not only about disseminating policy information but also about constructing political personas that appear authentic, relatable, and socially accessible (Kaye, Chen, and Zeng 2021). As a result, electoral competition increasingly involves the management of digital visibility and personal branding within algorithmically organized environments.

Indonesia provides an important case for examining the relationship between TikTok, electoral personalization, and democratic transformation. As the world's third-largest democracy and one of the countries with the highest levels of social media penetration, Indonesia has experienced a rapid expansion of digital political participation. The 2024 General Election represented a critical moment in this transformation, particularly because younger voters constituted a substantial proportion of the electorate and demonstrated high levels of engagement with digital platforms. Political candidates and campaign organizations increasingly adopted TikTok as a strategic tool to reach voters through creative content, entertainment-based communication, and personalized storytelling rather than conventional ideological campaigning.

The increasing importance of TikTok in Indonesian electoral politics reflects a broader shift from party-centered mobilization toward candidate-centered politics. Electoral personalization refers to the process through which individual politicians become the primary focus of political competition, while parties, ideological programs, and institutional platforms become relatively less dominant (Rahat and Sheafer 2007). Previous research has

demonstrated that personalization has become a widespread feature of contemporary democracies, driven by media commercialization, declining party identification, and the expansion of candidate-centered communication channels (Karvonen 2010; McAllister 2007). Digital platforms have accelerated this process by enabling politicians to directly cultivate personal relationships with voters and transform private characteristics, lifestyles, and emotional expressions into political resources.

Existing scholarship has provided important insights into the relationship between social media and electoral politics. Research on digital campaigning has demonstrated that social media platforms enhance political participation, facilitate direct communication, and allow candidates to mobilize supporters beyond traditional organizational structures (Gibson and McAllister 2015; Kreiss 2016). Studies of political personalization have further shown that digital media environments encourage candidates to emphasize personality, authenticity, and individual narratives as mechanisms for electoral appeal (Enli and Skogerbø 2013). Similarly, scholarship on platform politics has highlighted the growing influence of algorithms in determining political visibility and shaping patterns of public attention (Gillespie 2014; Bucher 2018).

However, previous studies remain limited in several important ways. First, much of the existing literature on digital campaigning and electoral personalization has focused on Western democracies, particularly the United States and European political systems. These studies provide valuable theoretical foundations but offer limited explanations regarding how digital personalization operates within hybrid or rapidly transforming democracies in the Global South. Indonesia's electoral environment differs significantly due to the coexistence of strong personalistic politics, fragmented party structures, youthful digital populations, and evolving democratic institutions. Therefore, examining TikTok

politics in Indonesia contributes to expanding comparative political communication research beyond established Western cases.

Second, existing studies have largely examined social media platforms as general communication environments, while limited attention has been devoted to TikTok's specific technological and cultural characteristics. Unlike Facebook or Twitter, TikTok's algorithm-driven content distribution system reduces the importance of existing social networks and increases the role of algorithmic recommendation in determining political exposure (Kaye, Chen, and Zeng 2021). This creates a new form of political competition in which candidates must optimize not only messages but also visual styles, emotional appeal, entertainment value, and platform-specific engagement strategies. The political consequences of this algorithmic environment remain insufficiently explored, particularly in electoral contexts outside Western democracies.

Beyond academic gaps, the rise of TikTok politics also creates significant social challenges. The personalization of electoral communication may increase political accessibility by allowing candidates to appear closer and more relatable to citizens, particularly younger voters. However, it may also encourage the simplification of political discourse, where complex policy debates are replaced by personality-driven narratives, emotional appeals, and viral content strategies. Previous research has warned that digital personalization can contribute to the rise of image-based politics, weakening programmatic competition and increasing dependence on individual charisma (Mazzoleni and Schulz 1999). In the Indonesian context, this raises important questions regarding whether TikTok strengthens democratic participation or reinforces superficial forms of political engagement.

The social implications are particularly significant among younger voters, who represent one of the most active groups of digital political consumers. While TikTok provides new opportunities for political expression and participation, it also exposes citizens to risks associated with misinformation, political

manipulation, echo chambers, and emotionally charged content. Algorithmic recommendation systems may amplify certain political narratives based on engagement incentives rather than democratic deliberation, creating challenges for informed citizenship and electoral accountability (Sunstein 2018). Thus, the emergence of TikTok politics requires not only analysis of campaign innovation but also examination of its implications for democratic quality.

In addition to social challenges, TikTok-based campaigning generates important legal and regulatory questions. Traditional electoral regulations were primarily designed around offline campaigns, broadcast media, and formal political advertising, while digital platforms introduce new complexities regarding transparency, algorithmic accountability, sponsored political content, and data governance. In Indonesia, regulations concerning digital political campaigns continue to face challenges in addressing platform-based campaigning, influencer involvement, coordinated digital messaging, and the monitoring of political content circulation. The absence of comprehensive governance mechanisms creates uncertainty regarding how electoral fairness can be maintained within algorithmically mediated environments. This legal gap reflects a broader global challenge in adapting democratic institutions to rapidly changing digital technologies (Kreiss and McGregor 2018).

Therefore, understanding TikTok politics requires an interdisciplinary approach that connects electoral studies, political communication, platform governance, and digital democracy. This article addresses these gaps by examining how TikTok transformed campaign strategies during Indonesia's 2024 General Election. Specifically, it investigates how candidates and campaign organizations utilized TikTok to construct political identities, engage voters, and optimize algorithmic visibility. The study argues that TikTok has become more than a communication channel; it has emerged as a significant political institution that

reshapes electoral competition by privileging personalization, emotional storytelling, and algorithmic performance.

By analyzing TikTok-based campaign practices in Indonesia, this research contributes to three broader debates. First, it extends theories of electoral personalization by demonstrating how platform architectures intensify candidate-centered politics in emerging democracies. Second, it contributes to digital political communication literature by examining TikTok as a distinct algorithmic environment rather than simply another social media platform. Third, it provides policy insights regarding how democratic institutions can respond to the opportunities and risks created by platform-based electoral communication. Ultimately, the Indonesian case illustrates that the future of democratic campaigning will increasingly depend on the interaction between political strategies, technological infrastructures, and regulatory frameworks governing digital public spaces.

II. TIKTOK AND THE RISE OF PERSONALIZED ELECTORAL COMMUNICATION IN INDONESIA'S 2024 GENERAL ELECTION

The emergence of TikTok as a central platform for electoral communication during Indonesia's 2024 General Election reflects a broader transformation in the nature of political competition. Rather than functioning merely as a technological tool for message distribution, TikTok has become a political communication environment that reshapes how candidates construct identities, establish relationships with voters, and compete for public attention. This transformation represents a significant shift from traditional campaign models, where political parties, ideological platforms, and formal campaign organizations played dominant roles, toward a more personalized form of electoral politics centered on individual candidates and their mediated performances.

Electoral personalization has become one of the defining characteristics of contemporary democratic politics. Rahat and Sheaffer (2007) conceptualize personalization as the increasing importance of individual political actors relative to collective institutions, particularly political parties. This process has been strengthened by changes in media systems, declining party identification, and the expansion of communication technologies that allow politicians to directly engage citizens (Karvonen 2010). In the Indonesian context, this development interacts with existing patterns of personalistic politics, where candidates' personalities, leadership images, and symbolic representations have historically played important roles in electoral competition.

TikTok has intensified this personalization process by providing candidates with a platform where political identity can be constructed through everyday performances rather than formal political communication. Unlike conventional campaign advertisements that emphasize policy statements, speeches, or party platforms, TikTok encourages short, visually engaging, and emotionally resonant content. Candidates are increasingly required to present themselves not only as political leaders but also as relatable individuals who can connect with voters through humor, personal stories, informal interactions, and lifestyle-oriented content. This reflects what Enli and Skogerbø (2013) describe as the increasing importance of authenticity as a political communication strategy in digital environments.

The 2024 Indonesian election demonstrated how candidates and campaign teams utilized TikTok to create personalized political narratives. Successful political content often relied on portraying candidates as approachable, youthful, humorous, and socially connected. Campaign strategies frequently incorporated behind-the-scenes activities, personal moments, interactions with ordinary citizens, and simplified explanations of political messages. Such approaches transformed political communication from a one-directional process of persuasion into a form of mediated relationship-building between candidates and voters.

This development is particularly significant in Indonesia due to the characteristics of its electoral landscape. Indonesian elections have historically combined institutional competition among political parties with strong candidate-centered dynamics. Although political parties remain essential actors in electoral mobilization, voters often evaluate candidates based on personal characteristics such as leadership style, moral image, charisma, and perceived closeness to ordinary citizens. Digital platforms have amplified these tendencies by enabling candidates to cultivate direct emotional connections with voters without relying exclusively on party structures.

From the perspective of political communication theory, TikTok represents a further stage in the mediatization of politics. Mazzoleni and Schulz (1999) argue that political actors increasingly adapt their strategies to media logic, where visibility, performance, and audience engagement become central elements of political success. TikTok expands this logic through algorithmic systems that reward content capable of generating attention, emotional responses, and repeated engagement. As a result, political actors must not only communicate political messages but also understand the cultural and technological conditions that determine digital visibility.

However, the personalization of political communication also creates important democratic tensions. On one hand, personalized TikTok campaigns may reduce psychological distance between politicians and citizens. The informal communication style of TikTok can make politics appear more accessible, particularly for younger voters who may feel disconnected from traditional political institutions. By presenting candidates as ordinary individuals rather than distant elites, TikTok can encourage political interest and participation among previously disengaged groups.

On the other hand, excessive personalization risks shifting electoral competition away from substantive policy debates toward image management and emotional appeal. When political success

becomes strongly associated with online popularity, candidates may prioritize symbolic performances over detailed policy discussions. This concern aligns with previous research suggesting that personalized political communication can weaken collective political accountability by focusing attention on individual personalities rather than institutional programs and ideological alternatives (McAllister 2007).

In Indonesia's TikTok-based campaign environment, this tension is particularly visible because platform incentives encourage simplified and highly engaging content. Complex policy issues often need to be transformed into short videos that can attract immediate attention. While this format increases accessibility, it may also reduce opportunities for nuanced political deliberation. Political communication becomes shaped by the requirements of the platform itself, where entertainment value, emotional intensity, and shareability may become more important than informational depth.

Furthermore, TikTok personalization is not solely produced by candidates; it is also co-created by users, influencers, and digital communities. The participatory nature of the platform allows voters to reinterpret, remix, and redistribute political messages, creating new forms of political engagement. This differs from traditional campaign communication, where candidates largely controlled message production. In TikTok politics, political meaning emerges through interaction between campaign actors, platform algorithms, and user communities.

Nevertheless, the increasing role of personal branding raises questions about the future relationship between citizens and political institutions. If electoral competition becomes increasingly organized around individual visibility and emotional connection, political parties may experience further challenges in maintaining programmatic identities. Candidates who successfully build strong digital personas may become more influential than the institutions that formally represent them. This dynamic reflects broader concerns regarding the personalization of democracy and the

transformation of political authority in digital societies (van Dijck, Poell, and de Waal 2018).

Therefore, TikTok's influence on Indonesia's 2024 election should not be understood simply as a new campaign technique but as part of a deeper transformation in electoral politics. The platform has accelerated the personalization of political communication by changing how candidates construct legitimacy, how voters encounter political information, and how electoral competition is organized. While TikTok expands opportunities for political accessibility and youth engagement, it simultaneously creates risks of personality-centered politics and reduced policy-oriented deliberation.

The Indonesian case demonstrates that digital platforms do not merely facilitate existing political strategies; they actively reshape the incentives, practices, and meanings of electoral communication. TikTok has become a significant arena where political identity, voter engagement, and democratic competition are continuously negotiated through the interaction between candidates, citizens, and algorithmic systems.

III. ALGORITHMIC VISIBILITY, POLITICAL BRANDING, AND YOUTH VOTER ENGAGEMENT ON TIKTOK

The rise of TikTok in Indonesia's 2024 General Election demonstrates that contemporary electoral competition is increasingly shaped not only by political strategies but also by the technological infrastructures that determine political visibility. Unlike traditional media environments, where exposure was largely controlled by journalists, editors, and broadcasters, TikTok operates through algorithmic systems that continuously rank, recommend, and distribute content based on patterns of user interaction. Consequently, political communication has entered a new phase in which electoral success depends not only on the

ability to produce persuasive messages but also on the ability to adapt to algorithmic logics of attention, engagement, and virality.

Algorithmic visibility has become a central dimension of digital political competition. Gillespie (2014) argues that algorithms are not neutral technical mechanisms; they actively shape what information becomes visible, accessible, and influential within digital environments. In the context of electoral politics, platform algorithms function as implicit gatekeepers that influence which candidates, narratives, and political performances receive public attention. TikTok's recommendation-based architecture, particularly its "For You" system, creates a political communication environment where visibility is not determined exclusively by follower networks or institutional authority but by algorithmic evaluation of content performance.

This represents a significant transformation from earlier social media campaigning. Platforms such as Facebook and Twitter traditionally relied more heavily on existing social networks, where political communication was often organized around followers, communities, and established political connections. TikTok, by contrast, allows political content from relatively unknown accounts to reach large audiences if it satisfies algorithmic criteria related to engagement, viewing duration, interaction, and audience response (Kaye, Chen, and Zeng 2021). This creates new opportunities for political actors but also introduces new uncertainties regarding how electoral influence is generated.

In Indonesia's 2024 election, campaign teams increasingly adapted their strategies to TikTok's algorithmic environment. Rather than simply uploading conventional campaign materials, political actors adopted platform-specific communication techniques designed to maximize visibility. These included the use of trending audio, short narratives, humor, visual symbolism, informal language, and emotionally engaging storytelling. The objective was not only to communicate political messages but also to produce content that could compete within TikTok's attention economy.

This transformation demonstrates the growing importance of political branding in contemporary elections. Political branding refers to the strategic construction of political identities through symbolic associations, emotional narratives, and recognizable personal characteristics (Scammell 2015). In digital environments, political branding extends beyond policy positions and institutional affiliations; it includes lifestyle representation, communication style, personality traits, and perceived authenticity. Candidates increasingly function as brands whose electoral value depends on their ability to generate recognition, trust, and emotional connection among voters.

TikTok provides particularly favorable conditions for this type of political branding because the platform encourages informal and personal forms of communication. Candidates are able to present themselves through everyday situations rather than traditional political performances such as speeches, debates, or campaign rallies. This creates what Abidin (2016) describes as a form of perceived intimacy, where digital audiences develop feelings of familiarity and closeness toward public figures through repeated exposure to personal content.

The emphasis on authenticity has become a central feature of TikTok-based political communication. Digital audiences, particularly younger voters, often respond positively to political figures who appear spontaneous, approachable, and culturally relevant. However, authenticity in digital politics is not necessarily a direct reflection of private identity; rather, it is a strategic performance constructed through platform practices. Candidates and campaign teams carefully design digital personas that appear natural while simultaneously serving electoral objectives. Thus, authenticity becomes a political resource that must be managed within the logic of platform visibility.

The relationship between TikTok and youth voter engagement is particularly important in the Indonesian context. Young voters represented a substantial demographic force in the 2024 election, making digital platforms essential spaces for political

communication. Unlike previous generations who primarily encountered political information through television, newspapers, and formal campaign activities, younger voters increasingly consume political content through algorithmically curated digital environments. This creates new opportunities for political inclusion by allowing young citizens to encounter political information through platforms integrated into their everyday media practices.

From a democratic perspective, TikTok can contribute to political participation by lowering barriers between citizens and political actors. Short-form videos, interactive comments, and user-generated responses enable forms of engagement that are more participatory than traditional campaign communication. Citizens are not merely passive recipients of political messages; they actively comment, remix, share, and reinterpret political content. This participatory culture reflects broader transformations in digital democracy, where political communication becomes increasingly interactive and decentralized (Castells 2012).

However, increased engagement does not necessarily guarantee increased political understanding. The same algorithmic mechanisms that enhance participation may also prioritize emotionally stimulating content over substantive political information. Research on digital platforms has shown that algorithms often reward content generating strong reactions, which can amplify sensationalism, polarization, and simplified narratives (Sunstein 2018). In electoral contexts, this creates the possibility that candidates who master attention-oriented communication may gain advantages even when their policy discussions remain limited.

This challenge is particularly relevant in TikTok's entertainment-oriented environment. Political messages are often integrated with humor, trends, and popular culture, making politics more accessible but potentially reducing complex issues into easily consumable narratives. While this communication style may attract younger audiences, it raises questions regarding whether digital engagement translates into meaningful democratic deliberation. The transformation of political communication into a

competition for visibility risks prioritizing popularity metrics over policy evaluation.

Furthermore, algorithmic campaign strategies introduce concerns regarding unequal political visibility. Candidates with greater financial resources, professional campaign teams, and digital expertise may have advantages in optimizing content performance. Although TikTok theoretically provides opportunities for broad participation, algorithmic competition may reproduce existing inequalities by rewarding actors who possess greater technological and organizational capabilities. Thus, digital platforms can simultaneously democratize access and create new forms of political hierarchy.

The Indonesian case also highlights the emerging role of influencers and digital intermediaries in electoral communication. Political messages increasingly circulate through networks of creators, supporters, and online communities rather than solely through official campaign channels. Influencers may provide candidates with access to specific voter communities, particularly younger audiences, but their involvement also complicates traditional distinctions between political communication, entertainment, and commercial promotion. This raises important questions regarding transparency, accountability, and the regulation of political persuasion in digital spaces.

Therefore, TikTok's role in Indonesia's 2024 election illustrates a fundamental transformation in the structure of electoral communication. Political competition is increasingly shaped by the interaction between candidates, voters, and algorithmic systems. Candidates must not only articulate political positions but also develop digital identities capable of achieving algorithmic visibility. Voters, meanwhile, participate in political processes through increasingly personalized and entertainment-oriented forms of engagement.

The significance of TikTok politics lies precisely in this intersection between technology and democracy. The platform has expanded opportunities for political communication and youth

participation, but it has also introduced new challenges related to information quality, visibility inequalities, and the commercialization of political attention. Understanding contemporary electoral politics therefore requires recognizing algorithms not merely as technical tools but as influential actors that shape how democracy is practiced in the digital age.

IV. DIGITAL CAMPAIGN GOVERNANCE: LEGAL CHALLENGES, ELECTORAL INTEGRITY, AND DEMOCRATIC ACCOUNTABILITY

The increasing significance of TikTok in Indonesia's 2024 General Election demonstrates that electoral competition is no longer confined to traditional campaign spaces regulated by conventional electoral frameworks. Digital platforms have created a new political environment where campaign messages, voter interactions, and political influence operate through algorithmic infrastructures that extend beyond the direct control of electoral institutions. While TikTok provides opportunities for broader political participation and innovative forms of voter engagement, it simultaneously generates complex legal and governance challenges concerning transparency, accountability, and electoral fairness.

The regulatory challenges surrounding TikTok-based campaigning reflect a broader global difficulty in adapting electoral laws to rapidly changing digital communication environments. Traditional electoral regulations were primarily developed around clearly identifiable campaign actors, formal political advertising, broadcast media, and physical campaign activities. However, platform-based campaigning introduces new forms of political communication involving influencers, anonymous accounts, algorithmic amplification, and user-generated political content. These developments complicate existing legal categories regarding who constitutes a campaign actor, what constitutes political advertising, and how electoral violations should be monitored in digital spaces.

In Indonesia, electoral regulation has historically focused on managing campaign periods, political financing, media advertising, and candidate conduct through formal institutional mechanisms. However, the emergence of TikTok politics demonstrates limitations within existing regulatory frameworks. Political communication on digital platforms often occurs through informal formats such as entertainment content, influencer collaborations, memes, and personal narratives that may not appear as conventional campaign materials. Consequently, determining whether specific content represents political persuasion, personal expression, or coordinated campaign activity becomes increasingly difficult.

This regulatory ambiguity creates significant challenges for electoral oversight institutions. Election management bodies must balance two competing objectives: protecting electoral integrity while preserving freedom of expression and digital participation. Excessive regulation may restrict legitimate political discourse, particularly among younger citizens who engage with politics through informal digital cultures. Conversely, insufficient regulation may allow manipulation, undisclosed political advertising, and coordinated influence operations that undermine fair competition.

One of the central legal challenges concerns transparency in digital political advertising. Unlike traditional media advertisements, where sponsors and financial transactions are often easier to identify, digital political communication can be distributed through complex networks involving influencers, content creators, campaign supporters, and automated systems. The absence of clear disclosure mechanisms creates difficulties in determining the sources of political messaging and assessing the extent of campaign influence. This issue is particularly important because political persuasion increasingly occurs through content that appears organic rather than explicitly promotional.

The role of influencers represents a significant development in this context. Influencer-based political communication

challenges traditional assumptions about campaign actors because individuals without formal political affiliations can significantly shape electoral perceptions. Influencers may function as intermediaries between candidates and voters, particularly younger audiences who perceive them as culturally credible figures. However, the involvement of influencers also raises questions regarding transparency, political financing, and accountability. Without adequate disclosure requirements, voters may be unable to distinguish between genuine political expression and paid political promotion.

Beyond campaign transparency, algorithmic governance represents another major challenge for electoral accountability. TikTok's recommendation system determines which political content receives visibility, yet the criteria underlying algorithmic decisions remain largely opaque to users and regulators. As Bucher (2018) argues, algorithmic systems exercise power by shaping conditions of visibility and attention. In electoral contexts, this means that platforms indirectly influence political competition by determining which candidates, narratives, and issues receive greater public exposure.

The political implications of algorithmic governance are significant because electoral fairness traditionally assumes that political actors compete within relatively transparent communication environments. However, algorithmic systems introduce a new layer of invisible mediation. Candidates may receive unequal visibility not only because of differences in campaign resources or voter support but also because of platform-based ranking mechanisms. This creates concerns regarding whether digital elections are genuinely competitive when political attention is partially organized by private technological systems.

Data governance further complicates the relationship between digital platforms and electoral democracy. Social media platforms collect extensive information regarding user behavior, preferences, interactions, and content consumption patterns. Such data can potentially be used to optimize political communication

and target specific voter groups. While data-driven campaigning can improve political communication efficiency, it also raises concerns regarding privacy, manipulation, and voter autonomy. The use of personal data in political contexts has become a major democratic concern internationally because it may enable highly personalized persuasion strategies that operate beyond public scrutiny (Zuboff 2019).

The Indonesian context presents particular challenges because digital literacy, regulatory capacity, and platform governance mechanisms continue to develop simultaneously. Although Indonesia has introduced legal frameworks concerning electronic information, personal data protection, and electoral administration, rapid technological changes frequently outpace regulatory adaptation. This creates a governance gap where political actors and platforms may develop innovative campaign practices faster than institutions can establish effective oversight mechanisms.

Another critical issue concerns misinformation and disinformation. TikTok's algorithmic structure prioritizes engaging content, which may unintentionally amplify misleading or emotionally provocative political narratives. During election periods, false information can spread rapidly because short-form videos are easily reproduced, modified, and redistributed across digital networks. The challenge is not only the existence of misinformation but also the difficulty of distinguishing between harmful manipulation and legitimate political expression within highly dynamic online environments.

From a democratic perspective, these challenges reveal a tension between digital innovation and electoral accountability. Digital platforms have expanded opportunities for political participation by enabling citizens to access information, interact with candidates, and express political opinions. However, democracy requires more than participation; it also requires informed decision-making, fair competition, transparency, and institutional accountability. Therefore, the governance of TikTok

politics must address not only technological issues but also fundamental democratic principles.

The Indonesian experience suggests that effective digital campaign governance requires a multi-stakeholder approach involving election management bodies, lawmakers, technology companies, civil society organizations, and citizens. Regulatory frameworks should not focus solely on controlling digital content but should also promote transparency, accountability, and responsible platform governance. This includes clearer rules regarding political advertising disclosure, influencer participation, algorithmic accountability, and the protection of voter data.

Furthermore, strengthening democratic resilience in the digital era requires investment in digital political literacy. Citizens must develop the capacity to critically evaluate political content, recognize persuasive strategies, and understand how algorithmic systems influence information exposure. Digital literacy should therefore be considered an essential component of contemporary electoral governance rather than merely an educational initiative.

The case of Indonesia's 2024 General Election demonstrates that TikTok politics represents both an opportunity and a challenge for democracy. The platform has expanded political accessibility and created new forms of voter engagement, particularly among younger generations. However, without adequate governance mechanisms, algorithmic campaigning may intensify personalization, reduce policy-centered debate, and create unequal conditions of political visibility.

Ultimately, the transformation of electoral communication through TikTok requires a rethinking of democratic governance in the digital age. Electoral institutions must recognize that contemporary campaigns are shaped not only by political actors but also by technological infrastructures that influence how political information circulates. The future integrity of digital elections will depend on the ability of democratic systems to balance innovation with transparency, participation with accountability, and technological efficiency with democratic values.

V. CONCLUSION

The emergence of TikTok as a significant electoral communication platform in Indonesia's 2024 General Election demonstrates a fundamental transformation in the relationship between technology, political communication, and democratic competition. This article has argued that TikTok should not be understood merely as a new campaign tool but as a political infrastructure that reshapes how candidates construct identities, how voters engage with political information, and how electoral competition is organized. Through its algorithmic architecture, entertainment-oriented communication style, and participatory features, TikTok has introduced new forms of political visibility and interaction that differ substantially from conventional campaign practices.

The analysis demonstrates that TikTok has accelerated the personalization of Indonesian electoral politics by shifting campaign strategies toward candidate-centered communication. Political actors increasingly rely on personal narratives, emotional storytelling, authenticity performances, and informal interactions to establish connections with voters. This development reflects broader trends in contemporary democracies where political legitimacy is increasingly constructed through individual personalities rather than solely through party institutions or ideological programs. In Indonesia, where personalistic political dynamics have historically influenced electoral behavior, TikTok has amplified existing tendencies by providing candidates with direct channels to cultivate digital political personas.

Furthermore, this study shows that algorithmic visibility has become a central factor in contemporary electoral competition. TikTok's recommendation system creates a new form of political gatekeeping in which attention is determined not only by institutional power or campaign resources but also by platform-specific metrics of engagement and virality. Candidates and campaign teams must therefore adapt to algorithmic logics by

producing content that is emotionally engaging, visually attractive, and culturally relevant to platform users. This transformation demonstrates that digital campaigning involves not only political communication but also strategic negotiation with technological infrastructures that influence public visibility.

The findings also highlight the dual character of TikTok politics. On the one hand, the platform expands democratic opportunities by lowering barriers between political actors and citizens, increasing youth engagement, and enabling new forms of participatory political expression. Younger voters, in particular, encounter political content through formats that are integrated into their everyday digital practices, making politics more accessible and socially relevant. On the other hand, the personalization and entertainment-oriented nature of TikTok communication creates risks for democratic deliberation by encouraging personality-centered politics, simplified policy discussions, and competition based on popularity rather than substantive programs.

From a governance perspective, the study reveals significant legal and institutional challenges associated with digital electoral communication. Existing electoral frameworks remain insufficiently equipped to regulate algorithmic campaigning, influencer-based political communication, digital advertising transparency, and data-driven political persuasion. The Indonesian experience demonstrates that maintaining electoral integrity in the digital era requires regulatory approaches that move beyond traditional campaign supervision toward broader frameworks of platform accountability, algorithmic transparency, and digital political literacy.

Theoretically, this research contributes to the literature on electoral personalization, political communication, and platform politics in three ways. First, it extends debates on electoral personalization by demonstrating how algorithmic platforms intensify candidate-centered politics within an emerging democratic context. Second, it contributes to digital political communication studies by highlighting TikTok as a distinct

political environment shaped by algorithmic visibility, emotional engagement, and participatory culture. Third, it expands comparative democratic research by showing how digital campaign transformations operate beyond Western democracies, particularly in a Southeast Asian political context characterized by rapid technological adoption and evolving democratic institutions.

Empirically, the Indonesian case illustrates that digital platforms do not simply reflect existing political dynamics; they actively reshape the strategies, incentives, and practices of electoral competition. TikTok has become an arena where candidates, voters, influencers, and algorithms interact to produce new forms of political meaning and influence. Therefore, understanding contemporary elections requires attention not only to political actors and institutions but also to the technological systems that increasingly mediate democratic communication.

From a policy perspective, Indonesia and other democracies facing similar digital transformations need to develop governance frameworks that balance innovation with democratic accountability. Future regulatory efforts should prioritize transparency in political advertising, clearer standards for influencer participation, stronger protection of personal data, and greater accountability from digital platforms. At the same time, strengthening citizens' digital political literacy is essential to ensure that increased online participation contributes to informed democratic decision-making.

Ultimately, TikTok politics represents a broader transformation in the nature of electoral democracy. Digital platforms have expanded the possibilities of political participation while simultaneously introducing new forms of power, visibility, and inequality. The Indonesian 2024 General Election demonstrates that the future of democratic campaigning will depend on how societies manage the relationship between political innovation, algorithmic governance, and democratic principles. The challenge is not to prevent digital transformation but to ensure that

technological change strengthens rather than weakens the foundations of democratic accountability.

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