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The Role of Media in Shaping Public Opinion (Case Study: Digital Platform and the Prabowo-Gibran Victory)

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*doi: 10.33472/AFJBS.6.6.2024.7454-7464***ABSTRACT:**

This study aims to analyse the role of digital media in shaping public opinion to win Prabowo-Gibran in the election. The digital platform is one of Prabowo-Gibran's campaign media in narrating and describing his political image and ideals. The technique of writing this article uses descriptive-qualitative with data obtained from document search results. The data analysis technique uses the Miles and Huberman model data analysis technique by analysing the case using agenda setting theory. The Prabowo-Gibran political campaign is an interesting example of how digital media, such as Instagram, can be utilised effectively to gain public support in the modern political context. Through a well-planned strategy, the campaign successfully harnessed the power of social media to reach potential voters, disseminate campaign messages and mobilise support. The use of engaging visual content, strong narratives, and direct interaction with voters have been key to the campaign's success. However, the success of a political campaign depends not only on the use of digital media, but also on the quality of the candidate's political vision, policies, and leadership. Thus, the Prabowo-Gibran political campaign through digital media is an example that illustrates the great potential of information technology in gaining public support in an increasingly digitalised political era. Agenda setting theory states that mass media has the ability to set an agenda, or a list of issues that are considered important by society. In the context of the Prabowo-Gibran campaign, it appears that the campaign actively set their political agenda through digital platforms by selecting issues that they wanted to emphasise and push to the public's attention. They also respond to the agenda set by the media and their political competitors by providing appropriate responses through social media.

Keywords: Media, Public Opinion, Agenda Setting, Digital Platforms

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1. Introduction

Mass media has long been an inescapable force in shaping public opinion. From print to broadcast television, media platforms have been the battleground for influencing people's views on political and social issues. However, in the growing digital age, the role of social media has become increasingly important in playing this role.

The interests of media industry owners are one of the strong factors in shaping public opinion [1]. The public seems to be led in the direction that the media owners want. Not only as a means of imaging for oneself, the media is also used to bring down political opponents. As happened during the presidential election held in Indonesia. Media owners who are pro one of the candidate pairs try to bring down their opponents in various ways [2]. Starting from criticising all the programs proposed by their opponents to repeatedly playing slanted statements from national figures about their political opponents [3]. This method shows that the television station is trying to form a public opinion that its political opponent is a candidate who is not worthy of being elected, because its own representative criticises it.

On the other hand, political opponents who feel their interests are threatened by the news, also use broadcast media as a counter propaganda tool to improve the image that grows in society by presenting news that is inversely proportional to what is conveyed by the opposing media. This of course aims to counter the public opinion generated by the news presented by the supporting media. Media as a propaganda tool is also proven by presenting the same news but in a different way [4]. The goal is to foster the opinion that the media owner wants, which when the election is pro to one of the candidate pairs. Finally, whichever media packs more interesting news, it will become the most watched media. During the general election, the pair supported by the most watched media will be the winner [5].

In addition to the country, the role of the media in shaping public opinion is also found in the world's largest democracy, the United States [6]. During the Cold War, the United States tried to conquer Vietnam in the Vietnam War. However, the war was won by Vietnam, which made the Carter administration try to shape public opinion through the Hollywood film industry by showing the film Rambo in the 1970s [7]. In the film, Rambo as a US citizen won the battle and managed to free his home country's prisoners of war in Vietnam during the Vietnam War [8]. As a result, the public who were initially disappointed with the defeat of the United States in the Vietnam War were reluctant to return to the Carter administration with the symbol of Rambo as a superhero or saviour of the United States.

In addition, the 9/11 incident in 2001 at the World Trade Centre in New York, which was propagated by the US and international media, was a terrorist plot that cornered one religion [9]. The stigma that one of these religions is synonymous with terrorism is part of the grand design of the CIA and Mossad campaign involving world-class mass media such as the New York Times newspaper, Washington Post, Wall Street Journal, Time magazine, Newsweek, US News, World Report, CNN, ABC, CBS, and NBC [10]. From some of the examples presented above, it has proven that the media has a very large role in shaping public opinion. However, it cannot be denied that the conglomeration that occurs in the media industry is the most important factor in shaping public opinion.

In the era of rapid and evolving digital information, the role of mass media in shaping public opinion has become increasingly significant [11]. Mass media is not only the main source of information, but also serves as a unifying and dividing force in society [12]. With the emergence of social media and other digital platforms, access to news and diverse views is increasingly accessible to the public [13]. However, this diversity also brings new challenges. Social media, with its algorithms and special features, has great potential to influence public opinion quickly and widely [14]. Information spread on these platforms is often not

thoroughly verified, and the narratives that develop can reinforce existing biases or misconceptions [15].

Therefore, research on the role of the media in influencing public opinion is very important. By understanding how mass media, including social media, influence people's views and perceptions on certain issues, we can identify patterns of behaviour, strategies and the impact of different types of information presented. In addition, this research is also important to help people gain a better understanding of how they receive and process information from the media. With a better understanding of how mass media influences their thoughts and attitudes, individuals can be more critical and sceptical of the information they receive, and can make more informed decisions.

Especially in the context of politics, where the battle of ideas and views is an integral part of the democratic process, understanding the role of the media in shaping public opinion has profound implications. Understanding how the media influences people's political choices can help identify political trends, predict election outcomes, and formulate more effective campaign strategies.

In the Indonesian context, the political campaigns of Prabowo Subianto and Gibran Rakabuming Raka have taken centre stage. These two figures represent different political dynamics and demonstrate how an effective social media strategy can be the key to success in gaining public support. Through digital media platforms, political messages can reach millennials quickly. Prabowo-Gibran's campaign through digital platforms was one of the factors that made them win the presidential and vice presidential elections through shaping public opinion that influenced voter behaviour.

This paper will analyse the role of social media in shaping public opinion, with a particular focus on their role in winning political candidates such as Prabowo-Gibran. Using case studies of political campaigns, it will explore how social media has become a key tool for candidates to reach and influence voters. In addition, by analysing the strategies, narratives and interactions that took place on social media during the campaign, it is possible to understand how these platforms are not only a channel of information, but also a platform for strong opinion formation.

2. Method

This research is a qualitative study using the descriptive-analytical method with the aim of analysing the role of the media in shaping public opinion, a case study of Prabowo-Gibran's victory through campaigning on digital platforms. Data was collected through literature review. The literature used as reference material is in the form of scientific articles; official websites that contain related data. Data analysis in this study used the Miles and Huberman model data analysis technique. The first stage of data analysis in this research is data reduction, where the data is separated which ones support and are related to the research and which ones are not. The data reduction stage also helps researchers to focus more on data related to the research issues raised. The second stage is data display or data presentation. Data related to waste management policies and waste issues in Makassar City were obtained and presented through descriptive descriptions. The third step is conclusion drawing, where after the data has been successfully analysed using fact analysis and process analysis, a conclusion is drawn.

3. Result and Discussion

The media plays a role in shaping public opinion through the dissemination of information and the way news is disseminated to the public. The influence of the media in shaping public

opinion is described in agenda setting, which is one form of theory in political communication. Agenda setting theory is a theory of mass communication, which sees the effects of mass media on the people who consume the media [16]. Starting with selectively filtering news, information, writings or articles by gatekeepers, which things must be informed which things must be hidden [17]. Every event or issue that is raised will be given a certain weight in its presentation to the public.

The agenda setting function by Donald Shaw and Maxwell McCombs who wrote that, there is a large body of evidence that has been collected that editors and broadcasters play an important part in shaping our social reality when they carry out their daily tasks in selecting and displaying news [18]. This influence of mass media, the ability to influence cognitive changes among individuals to structure their thinking, has been named the agenda-setting function of mass communication. Herein lies the most important influence of mass communication, its ability to mentally order and organise our world for ourselves. In short, mass media may not succeed in telling us what to think, but they are surprisingly successful in telling us what to think. Or in other words, agenda setting shapes the images or issues that matter in people's minds [19].

Based on the paragraph above, it can be said that how strong the influence of the media is on what the audience thinks. The media may not necessarily succeed in changing the attitudes of its audience, but the media will be enough to influence what is thought [20]. In other words, the media is able to influence or even lead the perception of its audience.

A recognisable symptom of the explosion of media participation in the current maelstrom of political issues is the birth of retribalisation. The concept of retribalisation states that the media shapes certain dispositions and behaviours [21]. In the days when print media was the mainstream, the culture was one of diligence in analysing, patience in examining, and depth in reasoning according to the form of information in the book [22]. Nowadays, when electronic media and the internet become the commander, the media culture that is born is: instant; impatient; shallow; and discarding deep reasoning [23].

In the level of the communication process, there is always a stage of internalisation of the message, namely personal reflection in capturing an issue, then entering the next stage, namely disseminating the message [24]. In this stage, there is a gap to select, edit, sort, and calculate the impact of a message or information selection function. In communication, the media factor plays a very important role in the process of spreading messages [25]. It can even be said, a message can be effective or not, widespread or not depends on the accuracy in choosing the media. According to Nurudin, choosing the wrong media will certainly result in the message being delivered less effectively, so using multiple media can reduce the shortcomings in question [26]. So to use many media, knowledge of the various types of media is required.

One of the types of media that functions in disseminating messages and influencing public opinion is media settings [27]. The media, which actually has a function as a vehicle for information, has now shifted as a provider of imitation information that is oriented towards the material benefits of media owners alone [28]. Research conducted over several years has shown that the majority of the American public turns to television as their source of news and viewers rank television news as the most reliable source of news [29]. Television news can be fast-paced and dramatic, especially if the event being covered has visual images. TV workers are so driven to get the picture that this often leads them to cross ethical boundaries when news staging, which is recreating an event that is believed to have happened. This practice is common in almost all television news programmes in the United States [30].

In addition, the emergence of public opinion includes two causes, namely planned and unplanned. An unplanned public opinion is issued because it does not have a specific purpose and target. It is simply to inform the public of an issue that they should know about. This

opinion may also not be issued by a particular organisation or institution. In essence, it arises naturally. Therefore, it also does not need an effective channel for it to become public opinion.

It is different with planned public opinion. Because it is planned, the organisation, media, and specific targets are clear. It arises because it is to influence public opinion that has developed in society or deliberately to counter other public opinions that are already believed by the public.

An opinion is formed indeed there are no special conditions, who, where, and when can be raised [31]. Of course, in this position public opinion plays a very important role in influencing people's attitudes and behaviour. An opinion is declared true, if a general agreement has been reached about the truth of an opinion. Meanwhile, to reach an agreement requires a process or stages [32].

Therefore, it cannot be denied that public opinion is full of personal and group interests. Even public opinion is deliberately created for the purposes desired by individuals or groups in achieving their goals [33]. This can be shown how an individual is keen to issue a statement in the mass media (or hold a press release) about his or her non-involvement to influence public opinion that tends to have cornered him or her.

In recent decades, we have witnessed a dramatic shift in media consumption, with internet digital media increasingly taking a leading role in everyday life [34]. This shift has fundamentally changed the way we access, consume and interact with information and entertainment. Internet digital media also offers a much greater diversity of content than television media [35]. From videos, articles, podcasts, to social media platforms, there are various formats and types of content available for users to choose from [36]. This gives individuals greater freedom to choose content that suits their interests and preferences.

This shift has also had a major impact on politics and the formation of public opinion. The digital medium of the internet enables the rapid and widespread dissemination of information, allowing political campaigns to reach voters in a more direct and effective way. In addition, social media platforms have also become the main arena where political discussions and exchange of views take place, influencing public attitudes and opinions.

Such is the case with the digital platform for Prabowo-Gibran's campaign media in changing public opinion. The digital platform called @politikin.aja which is on Instagram, TikTok, Facebook and YouTube. One of the platforms discussed in this paper is the @politikin.aja Instagram account which has attracted the attention of the virtual world community since its appearance on 18 December 2023 [37]. The account has been followed by 482 thousand and only follows 3 accounts with a total of 84 posts. What is interesting is that the accounts followed by @politikin.aja are the official accounts of Prabowo and Gibran. In addition, of the 84 posts, only 4 posts are photos. The rest are posts in the form of reels (short 60-second videos).

Posts on the @politikin.aja account are very timely for political issues during the campaign period. An example is the posting of the results of the provisional vote count for the president and vice president which is packaged through 3 published photos. In addition, most of the posts display the image of candidate pairs other than Prabowo-Gibran with a bad image by raising issues that make other candidate pairs look less in the eyes of the public.

Although the account @politikin.aja wrote a description that the account was not a political account, it was very clear that the account supported only one candidate, namely Prabowo-Gibran. The main character featured in the account is not Prabowo or Gibran, but Ganjar with the stage name Gahar Pratomo. He is portrayed as a director candidate who failed to lead a company because he lost the director election to the actor representing Prabowo-Gibran. The portrayal of each actor's character and appearance is very similar to the original character. The main character Gahar is portrayed as a director candidate who failed to gain votes despite

his many efforts during the campaign period. On the other hand, the Anies-Muhaimin candidate is portrayed as a cunning candidate for director and has many scandals as in the post on 31 January 2024 with reels entitled 'The State Can Be Threatened If...'[37].

Evidence that the @politikin.aja platform is a campaign to win Prabowo-Gibran in the election can be seen in the reels post on 1 February with the title 'Drop the Opponent'. The post shows the character Gahar having a dialogue with his aide to bring down the opponent with serial number 02. As is known, serial number 02 is Prabowo-Gibran. The end of the video shows that candidate 02 has no weaknesses at all.

One of the key aspects of social media's role in shaping public opinion is its ability to spread information quickly and widely. A viral content can reach millions of users in a short period of time, influencing the way they perceive a particular issue or event. Social media also has the power to influence individual opinions and attitudes towards various issues. Through coordinated information campaigns or the use of powerful narratives, social media can shape people's perceptions of a topic, including politics, the environment, and culture.

As in the Instagram account @politikin.aja which is a campaign media supporting Prabowo-Gibran. The reason the author says this is because the portrayal of the characters in the account content presents Prabowo and Gibran as good characters, helpers and agents of change if they are elected as company directors. This is different from the character of Gahar and the character who represents Anies-Muhaimin. Although Gahar is close to the company owner, he did not get the most votes from employees, who represent the Indonesian people.

Social media is also a major platform where public discussions and debates take place. Through comments, responses and information sharing, social media users can interact directly with each other, broaden their horizons on relevant issues and influence their views.

The @politikin.aja account has become a forum for public discussion and debate as seen in netizen comments. Public discussion seems to increase in every content uploaded on the account. Public discussion is contained in the 'comments' feature on the Instagram platform, where netizens can easily write their ideas and criticisms of the content they have seen and heard. This shows that the function of social media, in this case digital platforms, is to shape public opinion and influence voter behaviour in the context of political campaigns.

In the political context, social media has become a key tool for candidates and political parties to create effective campaigns. They can communicate their messages directly to voters, interact with them directly, and utilise user data to target their campaigns more precisely.

Agenda setting theory states that the mass media has the ability to select and set an agenda, or a list of issues that society considers important. The following is a description of how agenda setting theory plays a role in the campaign:

1. Setting the Agenda

The Prabowo-Gibran campaign uses the digital platform @politikin.aja to set their political agenda. They actively select issues that they want to emphasise and push to the public's attention through the content they share. In doing so, they seek to control the narrative that develops on social media and influence the topics discussed by voters.

2. Responding to the Media Agenda

Besides setting their own agenda, the Prabowo-Gibran campaign also responds to the agenda set by the media and their political competitors. They used digital platforms to respond to news and issues that were going viral or making headlines on social media. In doing so, they sought to amplify or reduce the importance of certain issues according to their campaign interests.

3. Prioritising Political Issues

Through the content they share on the @politikin.aja digital platform, the Prabowo-Gibran campaign also seeks to prioritise political issues that are considered important by the public. They use effective communication strategies to highlight certain issues that are considered relevant to their political vision, thus influencing voters in determining their political preferences.

4. Shaping Perceptions and Perspectives

The Prabowo-Gibran campaign also used agenda setting theory to shape people's perceptions and perspectives of the candidates and their political platforms. Through consistent repetition of campaign messages and emphasising certain issues repeatedly, they sought to shape public opinion about who they were as candidates and what they stood for.

Perceptions play a very important role in voter behaviour as they shape the way voters perceive candidates, political parties and political issues. Voters' perceptions of candidates and political parties can influence how they vote in elections. Positive perceptions about a particular candidate or political party may make voters more likely to support them, while negative perceptions may cause voters to choose not to support them.

Perceptions can also influence voters' preferences for certain political issues [38]. Voters tend to support candidates or political parties that they believe have views and solutions that are in line with their perceptions of these issues. Perceptions play an important role in voters' decision-making process. Perceptions about candidates, political parties and political issues can influence how voters weigh various factors and make decisions about how they will cast their votes in elections.

In addition, voters' perceptions of political candidates and parties can also influence their political identity formation [39]. Voters may identify with candidates or political parties that they believe represent their values and views, and these perceptions may reinforce their support for those political entities. Perceptions can also influence the level of political participation of voters [40]. Voters who believe that their vote has an impact and that a particular candidate or political party represents their interests may be more inclined to engage in the political process, including voting in elections.

Agenda setting theory plays an important role in Prabowo-Gibran's political campaign through the digital platform @politikin.aja by shaping the narrative, prioritising political issues, and shaping people's perceptions of the candidate and their political platform. This reflects their efforts to control the flow of information and influence voters' views and preferences through social media.

The Prabowo-Gibran campaign presented a strong and compelling narrative through digital platforms. They used engaging visual content, such as videos; images; and infographics to convey their campaign messages in an easy-to-understand and emotive way. The narrative included their political vision, work plan, and campaign promises. The Prabowo-Gibran campaign also actively engaged directly with voters through digital platforms. They responded to comments, questions and feedback from social media users, creating a strong sense of engagement and connectedness. This also allowed them to respond quickly to emerging issues and strengthen relationships with voters.

The Prabowo-Gibran campaign continues to monitor their campaign performance on digital platforms and continuously improve their strategy based on the data and feedback they receive. They use data analysis to evaluate the effectiveness of content, look for new opportunities, and identify challenges that need to be addressed.

By combining all these elements, the Prabowo-Gibran campaign through digital platforms managed to create an effective political campaign. They were able to harness the power of

social media to reach and influence voters in a more direct and broad way; raise awareness; gain support; and mobilise the masses efficiently.

5. Conclusion

The role of media in shaping public opinion is a complex and significant phenomenon in today's social and political dynamics. Through in-depth analysis, we can see that the mass media, including social media, has great power to influence people's views and attitudes towards various issues. Social media in particular has brought about major changes in the way information is disseminated, received and processed by society. However, with such power also comes a great responsibility to use media platforms wisely and responsibly. It is important to remember that while mass media has great influence, public opinion is also influenced by other factors such as education, personal experience and cultural values. Therefore, while the media can shape opinions, individuals also have a role in shaping their own thoughts. With a better understanding of the media's role in shaping public opinion, we can develop a more critical, sceptical and informed attitude towards the information we receive, and participate in the democratic process in a more responsible manner.

The Prabowo-Gibran political campaign has successfully utilised digital media @politikin.aja effectively to win the election. Through a well-planned strategy, the campaign was able to harness the power of social media to reach potential voters, spread campaign messages, and mobilise support. The use of engaging visual content, strong narratives, and direct interaction with voters have been key to the success of this campaign. In addition, by using user data to target the right audience, the Prabowo-Gibran campaign was able to optimise the efficiency and effectiveness of their campaign. However, it is important to remember that the success of a political campaign depends not only on the use of digital media, but also on the quality of the candidate's political vision, policies and leadership. As such, the Prabowo-Gibran political campaign through digital media is an interesting example of how information technology can be a powerful tool in gaining public support in the modern political context.

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