

## Ridwan Kamil: The Result of Media Power in West Java

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**Abstract:** *This research discusses the communication patterns of political actors experiencing development over time. After reform and experiencing information openness, Indonesia experienced the rapid development of information technology. The new media are widely used by various parties as a means of communication, not least by political actors to conduct political communication. This communication is concerned with the context of communication that is carried out to a large number of people through the mass media. This study will explain Ridwan Kamil's communication patterns as a political actor and regional head. The communication studied is communication conducted through Ridwan Kamil's personal Instagram page. This research uses qualitative methods, and the data collection techniques used are with primary and secondary data sources. In addition, researchers use theories by Rogers in Anis Hamidati to identify three basic traits that characterize the presence of new current media communication technologies, namely interactivity, de-massification, and asynchronous uses to support this research, such as political communication theory and current media theory.*

**Keywords:** *Ridwan Kamil, New Current Media, Communication Patterns*

### Introduction

Freedom of information has grown steadily since Indonesia's reform in 1999. Initially, the information is limited to political information. Indonesian politics and government experience developments and dynamics in such a way, but along with the development of technology, the information displayed is increasingly diverse. This makes political and governmental discussions that were originally limited to being widespread in private spaces widespread in public spaces. More than that, the public can already express opinions to criticise the government and policies. The media used to convey or talk about political

things is also diverse. Originally, there was only television and newspapers, or old media (old media). Both media tend to be one-way, and there is no direct communication between the communicator (the person delivering the message) and the communicant (the person receiving the message).

Political communication is a process or procedure of activities that shape political behaviour and attitudes. Political communication involves three things: communicators; messages; and communication systems. Communicators are referred to as political actors who act as the subjects of communication. Messages are interpreted as something that is charged

with political issues. The communication system is made to integrate it into the political system (Sumarno, 1989). The development of information technology has introduced a new colour in Indonesia. New media is multiplying, ranging from news-based media and the latest information, written media, to media containing photo and video content. The main feature distinguishing the use of new media from old media lies in its application. Technically, new media is controlled by a network, e.g. an internet or cable network and satellite broadcast to connect between networks. In addition, another difference is the existence of communication that is two-way and reciprocal processes occur.

Furthermore, the distinguishing feature is a decentralised process or a process where the development of information technology presents a new colour in Indonesia. New media is multiplying, ranging from news-based media and the latest information, written media, to media containing photo and video content. The main characteristic is that it distinguishes between the use of news and information. With the development of technology and the internet and the number of users in Indonesia, including social media users such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube, it makes sense that online communication tools play an important role in shaping public opinion and setting a political agenda (Wolley, 2010). Politicians, citizens, and journalists are increasingly adopting social media such as Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube to support their political goals, other stakeholders in the political public sphere, campaigns to disseminate or retrieve information, or contribute to

critical rational approaches (Habermas, 2000).

Through new media, news and political information are massive and interactive to involve the public in political discussions. Its interactive nature makes new media widely used by various parties as a means of communication, not least by political actors to conduct political communication. This communication is concerned with the context of communication that is carried out to a large number of people through the mass media. In general, communication through current media is carried out to reduce societal barriers and create important changes. The changes in question are in politics, commerce, education, and the accessibility of the community (De Fleur & Rokeach, 1982).

McLuhan argues that the medium used as a means of communication extends the human senses, particularly the extension of the sense of sound, vision, and touch. Furthermore, the structure of reality presented to one will determine the nature of the human mind; based on this, communication and the impact of such communication will be formed. The language used by political actors when conducting political communication also influences the abstract form of communication that has been formed before. Communication that is well established between political actors and the masses will produce a culture of social familiarity. The masses will rely on the continuity of communication on social media as part of the inherent characteristics of social creatures today (McLuhan, 1964).

The use of new contemporary media by political actors can be seen in the last 10-15 years. Politicians currently

have various social media platforms ranging from Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram to YouTube accounts. In addition to politicians, political party institutions also create social media accounts on various platforms. The main purpose of using new media is political communication. With the help of social media, communication to such an audience is not limited by space and time. Two-way communication is easier to do to minimise the various things that the old media flow cannot do and to reduce public misunderstandings and the cost of accessing information. The influence of social media on the communication of political actors is enormous. Social media is widely used as part of an ideal information base to be further used to find out political positions and the right public policy to be used in the future. Many politicians already use social media as a political campaign tool. In addition, they also use it to establish relationships with political constituents and conduct dialogue until political discussions. This makes novice voters interested in knowing more about the political conditions of the politician's profile. Social media promises an open forum for developing interest groups and media distributors of public opinion (Stieglitz & Dang-Xuan, 2012).

At the beginning of the emergence of social media, Barack Obama in the United States used various social media to campaign. This refers to trends and results that are quite positive. About 30% of his campaigns are conducted on social media. In addition to Obama, many lawmakers across the country are using social media to campaign. In addition to campaigning, they also communicate by transferring ideas to the community and

vice versa (Guervitch, Coleman, & Blumler, 2009).

Political communication through social media about political matters is part of political communication. Political communication considers many things as the deciding factor. Sociologist J.D. Halloran reveals that the situations in which communication begins, takes place, and develops are part of a social situation, and the relationship between communicators and communicants is part of an integrated social system. Political actors, in this case, play a leading role, especially in the process of forming public opinion. Although everyone has the same opportunity to shape public opinion, political actors dominate the built-in communication relationships (Halmos, 1969). In addition to Halloran, Karl Popper revealed that the pioneer of public opinion was a leader. He explained how building public opinion, which was originally the idea of a leader rejected, was then considered and finally accepted by the public. This is in the process of forming public opinion. Popper also explained that the formation of public opinion is also closely related to policymaking. This is concerned with a leader's potential to influence the audience (Jenks, 1972).

The presence of social media becomes a new offer in the world of communication, especially when viewed from the point of view of mass communication and political communication. They do not want to miss the new offer. The opportunity to get a wider range is increasingly wide open. If only we carried out the original political campaign in the run-up to the general election, then currently, political campaigns and political communication

can be carried out anytime and anywhere without any longer seeing the limitations of distance, space, and time. The need for people to be greeted and listened to is no longer a difficult thing and a waste of time and money. Through social media, political actors can easily reach the masses. In addition to the function of social media in expanding its reach to the masses, social media also offers another advantage, namely branding. With its effective and efficient nature in spreading the message, political actors can easily feel the impact provided by social media. The success of branding and political communication through social media will be obtained if done consistently and continuously and through good social media governance (Lipiainen & Karjaluo, 2013).

In the era of the digitalisation of media, everything becomes possible through media intermediaries, including the development of political communication, for example, from leadership candidates to the public at large. In addition, many prospective legislators are using the media as an alternative way of campaigning while heading to the general election. They can do this in the old way, such as by wearing billboards, banners, and brochures, or the new way, by using current media and various social media accounts to promote themselves and seek community support. So they cannot deny that social media offers many things for political actors to do to network with voters and interact with the public digitally. Communication will eventually form a pattern used to gain votes and build a mass base when elected to public office.

In Indonesia, social media as a campaign medium has begun to be

widely used in the last ten years. For example, in the momentum of the Jakarta Governor's Election in 2012, the campaign teams of Joko Widodo and Basuki Tjahaja Purnama utilised social media to the fullest. They use creative campaign videos as a medium of communication with the public. They also utilise online games with the main character Joko Widodo to introduce candidates for governor of DKI Jakarta to the public. But that way, at the beginning of the use of social media as a campaign medium, also had some obstacles. Among them is the campaign through social media, sparking public debate. If it is not used properly by the community, it will have many negative impacts, including the spread of hate speech and defamation. The reason is that social media was similar to the jungle at that time, so there were no rules in it (Fitch, 2009).

The parasocial theory argues that mass communication is useful for driving human needs as social beings. This will happen when it involves people who cannot meet in person but can currently communicate directly through the intermediary, namely social media. This can be seen previously through the artist's communication with his fans in various places. In the United States, John F. Kennedy interactively talked to his supporters through television performances. In Indonesia, this can be seen today in the relationship of public officials with the public on various social media (Rosengen & Windahl, 1972). The two stages in communication through social media can be seen in political actors' messages. The effect of communication may not occur directly but through the intermediary of an opinion leader. They typically interpret

the message conveyed to the masses by political actors, and they become extremely influential in persuading the masses to change their attitudes and behavior (Effendy, 2011).

One of the social media platforms with the most users in Indonesia is Instagram. Recorded until October 2021, Instagram active users reached 91.01 million users. Political parties and actors do not miss such great opportunities to conduct political communication, branding, and political campaigns. Political actors are active on social media, especially Instagram. However, if you look at the popularity in general, some regional heads can be seen who use Instagram as a means of political communication. Active regional heads like Ganjar Pranowo, Ridwan Kamil, and Anis Baswedan are some of the names of active regional heads who take advantage of political communication opportunities through Instagram social media. Political victory in becoming the head of the region to carry out the mandate as the regional head remains inseparable from social media. The three regional heads utilised Instagram social media on various occasions, such as socialization of work programs, education of activities to the community, handling problems in the regional environment, and polls to promote community-owned Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) to develop. All this is done to maintain communication with the community.

The researchers' findings related to the influence of social media on the popularity of political actors can be seen in some survey results. For example, Saiful Mujani Research and Consulting surveyed the public's introduction to several political actors. Ridwan Kamil

ranked in the top five in the category of figures known and liked by the public. Ridwan Kamil earned 66% of the public's knowledge and was liked by 80% of the community. The implication of the presentation of the public's knowledge and fondness is the increase in the electability of political actors in various momentums, such as presidential and vice-presidential elections. Unlike the previous survey, the survey conducted by Indikator showed Ridwan Kamil came second, reaching 15.3%, just below Sandiaga Uno, who occupies 25%.

Denis McQuail put it succinctly: "new media" or "new current media." According to him, the new current media is an electronic technology device. The electronic media in question includes a variety of technological systems such as miniaturisation systems, transmit systems (via cables or satellites), storage and information search space systems, image presentation systems (via text and graphics combining), and control systems that are simple to use when connected to computer networks (McQuail, 2000).

Rogers in Anis Hamidati describes three basic traits that characterize the presence of new current media communication technologies, namely interactivity, de-massification, and asynchronous. Interactivity is the ability of a new communication system whose bias contains a computer device as a component to send feedback to its users. De-massification means that new media communication is mass; therefore, anyone involved can gain control over communication patterns. While asynchronous means that new current media communication technology can receive and send messages or content at the desired time

of everyone who wants to be involved. Interactions in new current media are interactive and nearly identical to traditional interface communication (Hamidati, 2011).

Coutts and Gruman argue about the target of political communication through the media, namely the participants or masses. When communication is mediated with computer media or the internet, then the mass will get a greater opportunity for communication equality than face-to-face communication directly. Political actors are important to realise that they are not the sole determinant of the course of good and smooth communication. The interlocutor may criticize or intervene with political actors.

Previously, research on the use of social media as a means of conducting political communication to the masses has been done. The research is titled "Public Relations Strategy of the Ministry of Cooperation and Small and Medium Enterprises in Social Network Management," and was written by Azeem and Toni in 2018. The research shows a two-way communication pattern carried out by the Ministry of Cooperation and RI MSMEs in social media in two directions. What is conveyed by the Ministry of Cooperation and MSMEs is information, program development, and feedback to the community.

## **Method**

To dissect the problem of political communication, qualitative methods were used in this study. In Ridiwan Kamill's research on media authority in West Java, data was collected from direct

interviews with primary and secondary sources.

In addition, the data is also obtained secondary, namely collected from the social media of the West Java government, the social media of Ridwan Kamil, and the social media of supporters of Ridwan Kamil. The survey results from the 2020-2021 period from research institutions such as SMRC, Indikator, IPRC, etc. are also a reference to see how far the success of social media has driven Ridwan Kamil's popularity. The collected data is then processed by confirming the main informants and political observers, who are the resource persons in this research.

## **Result and Discussion**

Man as a social creature who has his communication development proves an axiom "we cannot communicate" (Brent D Ruben). The communication process is limited to verbal communication forms, but there are also various forms of nonverbal communication. Technology is present and evolving day by day. One of the roles and functions of technology is to help facilitate human communication and facilitate it. One of the most frequently used means of communication in the past decade has been social media. Social media certainly has various types and functions. Let's say Facebook and Instagram, which are social media with various types of content and images; YouTube, YouTube which is social media with video content; Skype and Zoom are social media based on direct video communication; and various other types of social media.

As one of the new media, social media is utilised as much as possible by the community. The definition of social

media is "... *social networking sites as web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system. The nature and nomenclature of these connections may vary from site to site...*" (Boyd & Ellison, 2007).

The strategy of political communication using social media is closely related to efforts to influence public opinion. In the current era of democracy, social media has become a public space in a democratic arena. In social media, communication contributes and feedbacks openly to the messenger and the recipient of the message. Such contributions or feedback can be shaped into various forms, such as information, criticism, suggestions, and other forms of communication output.

Actors and political parties that use social media cannot be separated from efforts to build communication with the masses of supporters and targets of supporters. Ridwan Kamil is one of the heads of the region, which is active and utilises social media incessantly to establish communication with his community. Ridwan Kamil has a fair number of activists on his social media. On Instagram, he has 19.9 million followers. Taking this opportunity, he made the most of it. Ridwan Kamil's Instagram account is used for various content such as political activities, daily activities, policy socialisation, and handling COVID-19 for the promotion of west Java community businesses. Communication takes place in two directions. The use of social media has dispelled various obstacles, especially

concerning space and time. Political communication through social media conducted by Ridwan Kamil becomes more effective and efficient.

A person who has a large following on their social media accounts has the power to carry out propaganda. The power of propaganda cannot be separated from interpersonal communication. In communication, interpersonal communication has a huge impact. It's made easier nowadays, especially since the presence of social media. Everyone is entitled to equal communication regardless of anything, such as the level of position, capital used, and many more. When a person uploads content on social media, he is considered media. This is called media convergence technology, or the integration of media functions. Usually, it refers to the development of technology and communication of new current media that is possible with the convergence of networks. Mass communication carried out by political actors can be seen through three basic characteristics, namely first, mass communication is directed at a relatively large, anonymous and heterogeneous audience. Second, messages are generally conveyed and often biased to achieve as many relationships as possible simultaneously. Third, the communicators (political actors) tend to conduct complex communication that requires a large cost (Wright, 1989).

As one of the heads of regions familiar with all the circles and groups, Ridwan Kamil uses Instagram flexibly. In terms of language, Ridwan Kamil uses semi-formal sentences that can be understood easily by various parties and circles. But on several occasions, he also used formal language. If categorized into

several types of content, it can be seen as follows:

1. Photo content: Photos on Ridwan Kamil's Instagram account range from photos of formal to non-formal activities. The photos made dynamic and not monotonous make followers feel unsaturated with Ridwan Kamil's Instagram content and make Ridwan Kamil's branding seem stiff.
2. Video content: The videos contained on Ridwan Kamil's Instagram account are diverse and packaged simply and interestingly. Video content also contains a variety of formal and non-formal activities, ranging from policy socialisation and appeals to the community to activities with family and interaction with the community.
3. *Caption*: Various caption styles are found in the content of photos and videos of Ridwan Kamil's Instagram account. The *caption* will adjust the type of content uploaded. In addition, the caption also uses language that is easily understood by all circles. He infrequently uses simple language, considering Ridwan Kamil touched many young people's lives through his political activities.

With various language-style methods and the type of content uploaded, Ridwan Kamil has many followers and attracts the attention of various parties. In addition, the two-way communication pattern carried out by Ridwan Kamil through the comments field is a plus in political communication. Political actors explore a space equivalent to a communicant or the target of communication itself. No wonder Ridwan Kamil's popularity is increasing and he is no longer known as

a rigid leader but better known for his humanist nature.

Based on the researchers' observations, Ridwan Kamil more often uses powerful speech in his captions on Instagram. The characteristics of powerful speech are that they are binding on the speaker's subject about the existence of the truth expressed in the caption. So the personal brand that grows in Ridwan Kamil is high integrity and being a strong person. Ridwan Kamil more often reported the events that occurred in West Java. It is not surprising to see it concerning the policies he made. The content uploaded by Ridwan Kamil contains facts and data because he has previously reviewed it directly in the field. The next type of speech often used is speech with expressive and declarative properties. Posts indicate complaints, thanks, praise, and congratulation for an expressive speech. In comparison, declarative speech is indicated by solicitation and attitude statements.

A lifestyle is one way to attract the attention of the masses quickly. The message featured in Ridwan Kamil's Instagram content is like a healthy lifestyle. He displayed the impression of a man who lived a healthy lifestyle, as shown by his post that he was exercising. In addition, it is also shown the other side, namely as a man who takes care of himself. It is shown by his posts that he often uses skincare. People, as an audience, are interested in the other side shown by Ridwan Kamil's character. No wonder his post gets many comments from the public, especially on posts that display the other side of Ridwan Kamil's personal.

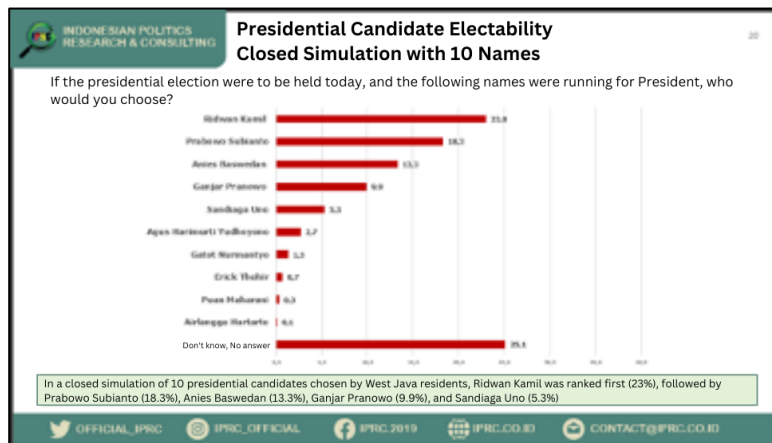
Two-way communication is carried out by Ridwan Kamil using a



simple method of replying to messages and comments made by the community. This simple method makes Ridwan Kamil close to his community even though it is only channeled virtually. The sentences used by Ridwan Kamil are positive and strongly describe his character as a leader and a Sundanese person, and his character is very close to the family.

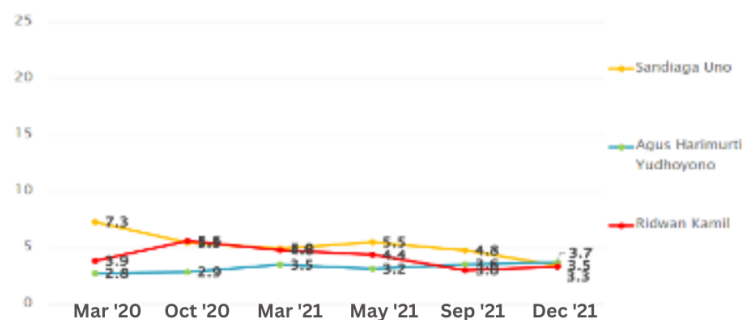
So far, social media as a means of political communication has supported the political activities of Ridwan Kamil. Ridwan Kamil's Instagram account can be considered responsive and very good

at managing media. This impacts the trust of communication between leaders and their communities. Ridwan Kamil never closes the comments field or restricts incoming private messages so that the public believes in communicating with its leadership, such as complaint services, seeking information or comments about the leader's activities both in the formal context of leadership and in a more personal context. They can accommodate public aspirations properly and complaints in the community can be handled quite well.



Picture 3. Electability of Ridwan Kamil in 2021 (IPRC, 2022)

**Semi-Open Trend: Who Is Elected As President When Election Now (%), Mar 2020-Dec 2021**



From March 2020 to December 2021, support for Sandiaga Uno tends to weaken from 7.3% to 3.5% while support for Ridwan Kamil and AHY has not changed much (change under 1%)



Picture 4. Electability of Ridwan Kamil (SMRC, 2021)

The pattern of communication that Ridwan Kamil has used is notable. In

several surveys regarding the electability of upcoming presidential

candidates, Ridwan Kamil always ranks in the top 3-5. Ridwan Kamil, along with other political figures and regional heads, in popularity. This proves that the public has enough confidence in Ridwan Kamil as a presidential candidate in the coming years. The community's trust does not come so easily but is influenced by several variables, such as performance and forms of communication. This form of communication will increase public confidence in public figures.

Today's rapid advancement of electronic technology has resulted in social media as a reliable source. In this case, Samuel L. Becker also called it a window on many world phenomena, which is why social media positions itself as a complex medium and is equipped with various qualified abilities in the communication process. On the other hand, social media often creates real movements or behaviors. The mass media act as a trusted institution to deliver information to the outside world.

### Conclusion

Social media has changed many of the communication patterns of today's society, including the pattern of community communication with its leaders. Before social media developed as a means of communication, the pattern of communication that was improved between leaders and the community was one-way. Leaders also invest heavily in communicating information and other policies through the current media. Today, political actors can easily run more effective and efficient communication patterns through new current media, namely social media. The capital spent is no longer as much as it used to be.

Communication through social media makes the reach wider. It makes communicants and communicators more equal and allows communicants to play a greater role in communication, and communicators are more likely to get feedback. Social media tends to function as a public space that can be used freely and openly. Two-way communication between political actors and the masses is equally and mutually beneficial to both parties.

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