Public Relations Strategies Via Instagram Account @Putrikarlina14 to Increase the Popularity of Garut Regional Election (Pilkada Garut)

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the public relations strategy employed through the Instagram account @putrikarlina14 to increase the popularity of the Syakur-Putri candidate pair in the 2024 Garut regional election. The background of the study highlights the drastic rise in electability, significantly influenced by the role of social media. A descriptive qualitative method was applied, involving interviews, observations, and content analysis. The results show that communication strategies integrating personal branding and mass communication theory successfully built emotional closeness, increased engagement, and shaped a positive public image. The use of Instagram features such as Stories and Reels proved effective in reaching young voters. The study concludes that a structured digital strategy with strong visual storytelling can foster adaptive, participatory, and impactful political communication at the local level.

Keywords: Instagram,personal branding,political communication,public relations,regional election.

INTRODUCTION

The 2024 *Garut Regency Regional Head Election* (*Pilkada*) was held on November 27, 2024. In this political contest, the pair of Abdusy Syakur Amin and Luthfianisa Putri Karlina managed to win with 66.31% of the votes, outperforming the pair of Helmi Budiman and Yudi Lasminingrat, who obtained 33.69% of the votes. This victory demonstrates the effectiveness of the campaign strategy implemented by the Syakur-Putri pair, including the use of social media as a tool for political communication. One of the platforms utilized is Instagram, where the @putrikarlina14 account played a significant role in conveying the vision, mission, and work program to the people of *Garut*. The use of social media in political campaigns has become a significant trend, given its ability to reach voters broadly and interactively. Instagram, as a visual platform, allows politicians to deliver stories that are close and relevant to voters, increasing voter engagement and loyalty (Enli et al, 2021). Instagram as a visual platform provides an opportunity for politicians to tell stories that are close and relatable, especially for young voters (Larsson et al, 2022).

Putri Karlina, with the title drg. Hj. L. Putri Karlina, MBA, is a candidate for Deputy Regent of *Garut* for the 2024–2029 period, paired with Dr. Ir. H. Abdusy Syakur Amin, M.Eng, IPU. Putri Karlina has a strong background in health and management, making her a competent figure in designing policies based on community welfare. In her political campaign, she carries the vision of inclusive and sustainable development for *Garut*, in line with national ideals toward a Golden Indonesia 2045. In addition, with the development of information technology, social media has become a significant tool in political campaigns. Studies on the influence of social media on first-time voter participation in the 2019 election show that these

platforms play an important role in disseminating information and mobilizing support, especially among young voters (Hadi, 2023). Instagram has become a significant social media platform in political campaigns, allowing politicians to interact directly with voters through engaging visual content. Research shows that the use of social media, including Instagram, is effective in conveying political messages and building candidate imagery (Kurniasih, 2024). In the context of the *Garut Regional Elections*, the public relations strategy through the @putrikarlina14 Instagram account is used to increase the popularity of candidates by effectively conveying their vision, mission, and work programs to the public. Public relations leverage Instagram as a strategic platform to shape and enhance a positive image through engaging visual content and direct interaction with audiences (Ramadhan et al, 2024).

The real conditions on the ground at the end of September showed that Syakur-Putri only received 11.1% support from voters, far behind Helmi-Yudi, who got 42%. Meanwhile, 47% of voters were still undecided. In the two weeks leading up to October, support for Syakur-Putri increased to 46.75%, while Helmi-Yudi only increased slightly to 49.25%. *Swing Voters* dropped drastically from 46.9% to 4%, showing that many people ended up supporting Syakur-Putri. In mid-October, the pair led with 49.32%, leaving Helmi-Yudi with 40.63%, and *Swing Voters* dropped to 4.9% (Gani, 2024). This cannot be separated from the solid support of the team and the influence of social media, especially the Instagram account @putrikarlina14, which helped increase electability.

The theory used in this study is Personal Branding Theory. Personal Branding Theory refers to the process by which individuals build, manage, and promote their self-image as a unique and consistent "brand". To differentiate oneself from others in professional or personal terms, personal branding aims to increase positive perceptions, build trust, and differentiate oneself from others (Labrecque et al, 2011). Strong personal branding can increase credibility on social media and influence audience support and brand awareness (Luwie et al, 2021). Authenticity and credibility are also the main factors in building effective personal branding (Zafar et al, 2022). The dimensions of personal branding theory include Self-Identity (how individuals understand themselves, including values, skills, personalities, and life goals), Differentiation (highlighting the uniqueness of individuals compared to others), Vision (a clear vision of what one wants to achieve and long-term goals), Consistency (in messaging, visuals, and behavior), Credibility (building trust through expertise, experience, and integrity), Visibility (efforts to increase visibility in the public eye, especially through social media), Relationship and Networking (building and maintaining relationships with audiences, colleagues, and communities), and Self-Narrative (the way individuals tell their life stories to create an emotional connection with the audience).

Additionally, this research is supported by Mass Communication Theory. Mass Communication Theory is a conceptual framework used to understand, explain, and predict phenomena related to the production, distribution, and consumption of messages through mass media. This theory discusses many aspects, ranging from how the media influences the audience to how the media shapes social reality. Key aspects of mass communication theory (McQuail, 2010) include the Institutional Dimension (structure and organization of mass media), Content Dimension (analysis of message content), Audience Dimension (role of audiences in the communication process), Media Effects Dimension (how mass media affects individuals, groups, and society), and Media Technology Dimension (the role of technology

in mass communication, including the impact of the internet and social media). Professional social media management can improve political communication by building interactive and personal relationships between the public and politicians (Mergel et al, 2021). Instagram allows for the delivery of more personalized and interactive messages, thus strengthening the relationship between politicians and audiences (Enli et al, 2021).

Previous research by Kurniasih (2024) on Anies Baswedan's Personal Branding Strategy in Building Political Communication Through Instagram found that Anies Baswedan succeeded in using this platform effectively to build and manage his personal branding, fulfilling the elements of distinctiveness, relevance, and consistency. Key aspects of Anies Baswedan's personal branding strategy on Instagram include the uniqueness of the content, a relaxed and persuasive communication style, the selection of relevant issues, messages of change, and consistency in engagement with netizens. The research used a qualitative method with content analysis and user interaction as an appropriate approach (Kurniasih, 2024).

Other research by Rahmaur (2021) on Ganjar Pranowo's Personal Branding to Build Political Communication on Social Media Instagram found that content displaying closeness to society and daily activities has a positive impact on public perception. The researcher used a qualitative study method by analyzing the content uploaded by Ganjar Pranowo on Instagram (Rahmaur, 2021).

Previous research has examined the role of social media, especially Instagram, in building politicians' personal branding and political communication in general (Kurniasih, 2024; Rahmaur, 2021). However, most studies still focus on national contexts and political figures who already have extensive exposure. Studies that address local contexts, especially in the *Regional Head Election* (*Pilkada*) at the district level such as *Garut*, are still very limited and have received little attention. Additionally, existing research tends to examine personal branding strategies partially, without integrating the overall mass communication aspect, which includes institutional dimensions, message content, audience, media effects, and media technology (McQuail, 2010). As a result, understanding how digital strategies are carried out holistically in election campaigns has become less complete and does not fully describe the complexity of modern political communication practices. Furthermore, the majority of previous research has focused on the analysis of content and narratives conveyed by political figures without being supported by empirical data in the form of interviews with direct actors in the field or actual social media insight data. This results in a less contextual and practically valid picture of the implementation and effectiveness of communication strategies.

Along with the rapid development of social media technology and changes in the behavior of young voters who are increasingly dominant in the political arena, studies that examine the strategic use of the latest social media features such as Instagram Stories and Reels in building emotional closeness and increasing engagement are needed to update the insights and practices of digital political communication. Therefore, this study seeks to fill this gap by examining in depth and comprehensively the public relations strategy through the Instagram account @putrikarlina14 in the 2024 *Garut Regional Elections*, with an approach that integrates personal branding theory and mass communication theory. This research is also supported by interview data with the campaign team and Instagram insight analysis, which provides a valid and rich picture of the effectiveness of the communication strategy. Thus,

this research not only fills conceptual and empirical gaps but also makes relevant practical contributions to the development of digital political communication strategies at the local level.

The number of Indonesians using Instagram reached 88,861,000, or 31.3% of the total population, in February 2024, with 54.2% of users being women. With 35,400,000 users, the largest age group is 25 to 34 years old. The 18 to 24 age group showed the largest difference in the number of male and female users; there are 12,300,000 more female users than men.

The novelty of this research lies in the use of Instagram as a political communication tool in the 2024 *Garut Regional Elections*, a topic that has not been widely studied by previous research. This study provides a comprehensive overview of how political communication strategies in social media work by analyzing uploaded content and public engagement through likes, comments, and shares. In addition, since the majority of Instagram users in Indonesia are 18 to 34 years old, this study emphasizes the role of the younger generation as the main audience. This study compares the findings with previous research on the personal branding of politicians, such as Anies Baswedan and Ganjar Pranowo. The results reveal the latest digital communication trends and provide strategic advice for candidates. Qualitative methods, such as field visits and interviews with campaign team members, offer a deeper understanding of political communication at the local level.

The purpose of the research is to study the public communication strategies used through the @putrikarlina14 Instagram account to increase the popularity of candidates in the *Garut Regional Elections*. This research will compare it with previous research to understand digital political communication trends and provide recommendations for potential leaders to create better communication strategies.

METHOD

This study employs a descriptive approach with a qualitative method. This approach is referred to as the *postpositivistic approach* or *artistic method* because researchers focus on their own reasoning and interpretation. Such a method is well-suited for social research that requires thorough examination and critical thinking about events within specific contexts (Sugiyono, 2022).

The data collected is both accurate and in-depth, owing to the use of various data collection techniques, including interviews with relevant parties, direct field observation, literature review, and content analysis of Instagram posts. By analyzing the content of Instagram posts, researchers can identify patterns, themes, and trends that emerge from the visual and textual content shared by the research subjects. This method enables researchers to understand how certain messages or images are constructed and conveyed through social media platforms, as well as how audiences respond to that content through likes, comments, and shares. Such analysis also helps uncover self-representation, values, or communication strategies employed by individuals in building personal branding or public image.

The *Syakur Putri* winning team served as the informants for this study. They are responsible for various strategic tasks, including leading the pre-production team, managing daily field activities, and directing the Public Relations Strategy. These informants were selected because of their direct involvement in the creation of the political communication strategy for the *Syakur Putri* pair. As key members of the campaign, they possess a deep understanding of the goals, procedures, and impact of personal branding. Therefore, the

information they provide is highly relevant for understanding how the strategy was designed to influence society and secure victory in the 2024 election.

The resource person for this research is the CEO of a conventional media outlet, @infogarut, which delivers factual, phenomenal news and entertainment to the community in the *Garut* district. This resource person has a strong grasp of relevant local campaign strategies, making them an important reference for analyzing the content posted on the @putrikarlina14 Instagram account. Their perspective provides valuable insight into how the communication approach can foster community participation in the 2024 *Regional Elections*.

Table 2. Data of Research Sources

Name	Age	Position
Agung Syaputra	32 year	CEO Info Garut

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This study aims to analyze how public relations strategies are used through @putrikarlina14 Instagram account in increasing the popularity of the Syakur-Putri candidate pair in the 2024 Garut Regional Election. In the context of Gen Z's engagement on social media, visual and aesthetic narratives play a crucial role in shaping perceptions and engaging their interests. Gen Z tends to be responsive to content that is not only informative, but also packaged in an attractive, aesthetic, and visually and emotionally authentic way (Husna et al, 2024). These findings reinforce the importance of visual strategies such as Stories and Reels on Instagram used by @putrikarlina14 to build emotional connections with young voters. Gen Z has high digital communication skills and is able to build an identity through social media, making them a potential main audience in digital-based political campaigns (Badri, 2022).

The main findings in this study are grouped into two theoretical frameworks: personal branding theory and mass communication theory. The results of interviews with three main informants (M. Ghozy Burhanudin, Fikri Muhammad, Wildan Kamal) and one resource person from local media (Agung Syaputra), as well as observations of Instagram Insight data, show a strong synergy between the personal branding approach and the strategic management of social media in shaping a positive and sustainable political image.

1. **Theory of Personal Branding**

A. Self identify

The personal branding approach carried out by the Instagram account @putrikarlina14 seen from the consistency of the content that gives rise to Putri Karlina's distinctive values as a young, communicative, and close leader to the community. This is in line with what was stated by (Labrecque et al.2011), that personal branding emphasizes the strategic management of individual identities through consistent visual communication, values, and narratives to form a positive public perception. Solid personal branding can increase the credibility of an influencer on social media. This increase in credibility can then have a good impact on brand awareness and buying interest among its followers (Luwie et al.2021). This identity is strengthened by the narrative of field activities that touch on educational, social, and MSME issues. As revealed by Agung Syaputra, this account creates an emotional connection through the image of Putri Karlina as a "as is" and responsive figure.

B. Differentiation

The content of this account stands out from other candidates because of its aesthetic, reflective, and personal approach. Visual storytelling is the main feature, showcasing hands-on experiences in the field, not just formal imagery. Fikri Muhammad stated that this difference also lies in the emotions presented in each upload. Thus, Putri Karlina's consistency in conveying her personal values through her digital content has the potential to strengthen her relationship with the audience. In addition, it highlights the importance of sociality and charisma in personal branding These two aspects are considered to contribute significantly to how a person's competence and authenticity are perceived (Zafar et al.2022).

C. Vision and Purpose

The vision of "Garut Hebat" is not displayed in the form of slogans alone, but through documentation of real work such as women's empowerment activities, strengthening MSMEs, and social interventions. This vision is naturally integrated into the narrative of the activity, making it feel relevant and contextual to the Garut public. This implies that authenticity and credibility play a crucial role in building effective personal branding.

D. Consistency

Visual branding (sky blue), empathetic language style, and positive narrative are maintained consistently across all content. The weekly editorial calendar is the team's main guideline in maintaining the continuity of messages and the rhythm of uploads. Even when there is no field agenda, the account remains active through recap content and story interactions. The consistency of the Instagram account @putrikarlina14 in presenting a narrative about his closeness to the community, combined with his down-to-earth leadership style and ability to communicate, clearly applies these principles of personal branding in the digital realm.

E. Credibility

Content taken from original documentation without engineering. Credibility is strengthened by citizen testimonials, documentation of real activities, and transparency in narrative. The team avoided excessive staging because local audiences are very sensitive to inauthentic imagery.

F. Visibility

Instagram features such as Reels, Stories, and Live are used to the fullest. Insights show that viral Reels can reach up to 180,000 viewers. Collaboration with community accounts also helps to disseminate content organically. This strategy increases exposure especially in young voters.
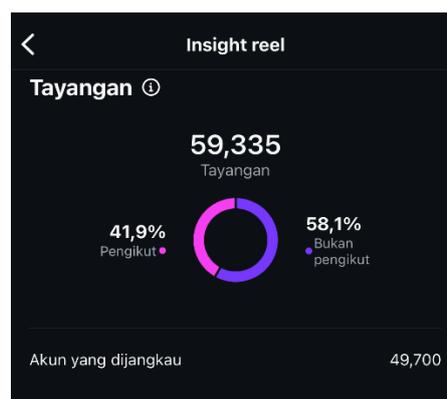

Figure 2. Insight reels

Source: Instagram account @putrikarlina14

This strategy is also reflected in the use of the Reels feature, which is used to convey a short but effective visual narrative. For example, an upload on November 27, 2024 that showed the atmosphere of victory in the Regional Elections received 180,286 views, and the social visit video (November 17) exceeded 133,216 views. This shows that visual campaigns are not only a tool for conveying messages, but also powerful emotional mobilization tools. Generation Z is very responsive to informative visual content and authentic narratives presented through social media (Badri, 2022).

G. Relationship and Networking

Figure 3. Instagram Engagement
Source: Instagram account @putrikarlina14

Insight data shows that 83.1% of content distribution on Instagram accounts @putrikarlina14 comes from the story feature (Instagram Story). This feature is actively used as a dynamic and responsive communication medium, ranging from conveying daily activities, explaining work programs, to building two-way interaction with the audience through poll and open-ended question features. The use of Instagram Stories not only serves as an information channel, but also as a participatory space that allows people to be directly involved in the political communication process. This strategy reflects a dialogical approach to communication, not just one-way or top-down. In this case, Fikri Muhammad emphasized that the use of stories and polls is the main engagement tool to absorb the aspirations of residents, as well as reach voters who are not present in field activities. This means that these features are able to bridge the gap between prospective leaders and the public, create an impression of closeness, and show responsiveness to public votes. This approach is also in line with the trend of digital communication that prioritizes real-time interaction and emotional engagement, making personal branding more relevant and grounded in society (Muhamad.2025). It is evident that the use of Instagram features such as Stories and Reels helps increase engagement and reach a younger demographic. Politicians can establish real-time interactions and emotional connections thanks to these features (Lilleker et al, 2021).

H. Self-Narrative

The micro-storytelling approach is used to build a strong personal narrative. Princess Karlina is portrayed as the main character in every field story. Narratives such as "I am present" or "I am witnessing firsthand" indicate a real presence, not just a symbolic representation. Agung Syaputra, CEO of Info Garut, emphasized that this account succeeded in bridging local issues and leader figures in one solid visual narrative, which is not done by many other candidates who tend to be normative and formal. This statement highlights the success of the @putrikarlina14 account in presenting content that is not only informative, but also emotionally and contextually relevant to the lives of the people of Garut. The visual narrative that is built does not stand alone, but is integrated with local issues that are developing ranging from education, MSMEs, to social community activities. Thus, the image displayed is not just a representation of oneself, but a reflection of the voice and needs of the community itself (Syaputra.2025). This approach is in line with the findings of Rahmaur (2021), who stated that visual strategies that rely on proximity to the public's daily lives can have a significant impact on shaping the image and loyalty of voters. Visuals that are authentic, contextual, and full of emotional meaning have the power to build connectedness between leaders and the public. Unlike other candidates who tend to convey messages in a formal and rigid manner, @putrikarlina14 account utilizes the power of visual storytelling to create a sense of leadership that is humane, approachable, and relevant to the reality of society. This is not only a branding strategy, but also a form of political communication that is adaptive to digital culture and the preferences of young audiences. Engaging visual content combined with engaging stories can significantly increase young voter engagement (Husna et al, 2024).

Mass Communication Theory

In the framework of mass communication theory, @putrikarlina14 Instagram account can be said to have succeeded in fulfilling the five main dimensions in mass communication in an integrated and strategic manner. This success is evident in how the account is institutionally managed, presents robust content, actively engages audiences, produces measurable media effects, and makes the most of technology (McQuail, 2010).

A. Institutional

Institutionally, this account is managed by a content team that has a professional and organized work structure. Wildan Kamal explained that the content production process is carried out through weekly coordination, involving various roles such as content planners, copywriters, and caption editors. Each upload is carefully designed, from compiling a content calendar, choosing consistent color tones, to adjusting the message to evolving social trends. This approach shows the existence of solid institutional management and is oriented towards a long-term communication strategy (Kamal.2025). This approach strengthens the connection between politicians and the public while increasing electability through social media (Karlsen et al, 2022).

B. Content

In terms of content, this account features a combination of informative and emotional messages. One of the most prominent forms of content is the Reels feature, which not only conveys the message in a concise and engaging way, but is also capable of generating high engagement rates. For example, Reels uploaded on October 21 was able to achieve 70,249 impressions, with a total watch duration of more than six days and generated 2,246 interactions. This reflects the account's ability to convey political ideas through a visual approach that is

engaging and easily accepted by the digital public, especially the younger generation. Instagram, as a visual platform, is perfect for building a humanistic and approachable political image through interactive and informal content (Vujnovic et al, 2022).

C. Audience

Figure 5. Interaction Insights
Source: Instagram account @putrikarlina14

The level of audience responsiveness is also a testament to the success of this communication strategy. Data shows that 84.6% of interactions come from account followers, indicating high loyalty and engagement from the core audience base. But interestingly, around 26–44% of content is also able to reach non-followers, expanding the potential for connection with new voters. This shows that the communication built is open, inclusive, and dialogical, not limited to a certain community.

D. Media Effects

Furthermore, the existence of this account has a real media impact on the dynamics of the campaign. During the two-week period, from November 12 to 30, there was a 123% spike in profile visits, reaching 132,893 visits. This surge not only reflects the high level of public interest, but also positively correlates with a significant increase in Princess Karlina's electability—from 11.1% to 66.31% ahead of polling day (Gani, 2024). This data shows that social media is not only a means of information, but also an effective political instrument in shaping perceptions and mobilizing support.

E. Media Technology

The success of this account is also inseparable from the maximum use of media technology. Instagram's features such as Reels, Stories, and Live are optimally used to deliver messages in various formats and situations. Especially the Story feature, which accounted for 83.1% of total impressions over the last 90 days. This signifies that real-time strategy and emotional closeness are key to reaching a wide audience and building sustainable relationships.

Contextual Interpretation and Empirical Support

The results of the study show that there is a close and consistent relationship between the findings in the field and the theories used, both the theory of Personal Branding and Mass Communication. Communication strategies carried out through Instagram accounts @putrikarlina14 proven to be in line with the main principles in Personal Branding theory. The consistency of visual narratives, the delivery of messages that are close to the community, and interaction through features such as Instagram Stories and Reels are clear evidence of the application of the theoretical dimension, especially in the aspects of self-identity, credibility,

visibility, and personal narrative. The prominence of the authentic side and charisma of Putri Karlina's leadership shows how personal branding can create a strong emotional closeness between a leader and his audience, as explained by Labrecque et al. (2011) and Zafar et al. (2022). These findings also indicate that a positive image built through social media directly contributes to increased electability.

The above findings also highlight the success of marketing communication through social media by local groups in increasing connectedness with the community (Kurli et al, 2024). In the context of local politics such as the Garut Regional Elections, the ability to build an authentic narrative that is responsive to public needs is a significant differentiating factor. The support of inclusive and participatory communication elements, as explained by Rahmi et al. (2022), also reinforces that an effective digital communication strategy needs to consider the diversity of audiences and build a dialogue space that embraces all elements of society, including marginalized groups (Rahmi et al, 2022).

On the other hand, the theory of Mass Communication put forward by McQuail (2010) also proves to be relevant in this context. The management of @putrikarlina14 Instagram account is not just about conveying a message, but it is professionally run by a well-organized team. Content is organized in a planned manner, social media features are optimally utilized, and the level of interaction and reach achieved is quite significant. This reflects the application of the five dimensions in the communication theory of the time, namely the institutional dimension, message content, audience, media impact, and media technology that runs in harmony. Therefore, the results of this research not only strengthen the theory that is used as a foundation, but also provide a meaningful empirical contribution to the development of digital political communication strategies at the local level.

The drastic increase in electability of the Syakur-Putri couple in less than two months is concrete evidence of the effectiveness of the digital campaign strategy carried out, especially through the Instagram platform. The campaign not only focuses on disseminating information about the work program, but also emphasizes the importance of storytelling that touches the emotional side of the community. This is clearly reflected in the performance of strategic uploads, such as the content published on November 27, which managed to achieve 10,278 likes and 11,296 interactions overall. The high number indicates that the public not only sees, but also responds and feels connected to the message conveyed.

Agung Syaputra, CEO of Info Garut, also emphasized the effectiveness of this approach by stating that the strength of this account lies in the balance between personal narratives, visualizations, and emotional connections that are conveyed consistently. This statement shows that the success of @putrikarlina14 Instagram account is not solely due to the intensity of the uploads or attractive visuals, but because of its ability to build a continuous emotional connection with the audience. This account has become not only a channel for distributing information, but also a powerful tool of political persuasion. By packaging personal narratives visually and consistently, this account actively shapes public perception and becomes a strategic medium in building the political image of the candidate pair. In the context of modern political communication, this kind of approach has proven to be much more effective than one-**way and normative campaigns.**

4. Comparison with Previous Research

In contrast to the personal branding strategies of national figures such as Anies Baswedan and Ganjar Pranowo who emphasize imagery in a symbolic, universal, and national narrative-oriented frame, @putrikarlina14 Instagram account actually takes a more local direction, presenting the figure of the leader in an abstract framework. This account prioritizes community narratives and real issues faced by the people of Garut on a daily basis, such as education, health, and local economic empowerment. This strategy creates a stronger relatability effect between leaders and voters because the public feels emotionally and practically involved in political conversations that touch on their basic needs.

This approach directly answers citizens' needs for figures who are not only present on screen, but also socially present in their reality. Through content connected to the local context, this account shows that Princess Karlina does not speak from the pulpit of power, but from the midst of her community. In this context, the political communication strategy implemented is not only top-down, but participatory and contextual that invites the public not only to become the object of political messages, but also as active subjects in the democratic process. This kind of communication model is very much in line with the spirit of digital democracy at the regional level where social media technology is not only a tool for disseminating information, but also a dialogue space between leaders and their people. Therefore, the approach taken by @putrikarlina14 account is not only different, but also relevant and strategic in responding to local political dynamics that demand closeness, authenticity, and alignment with real issues of the community.

5. Practical Implications

Public relations strategies and social media management that focus on the use of stories and audience engagement have proven to be powerful methods in driving a natural increase in political popularity. Based on insight data from Instagram, it can be concluded that high user participation and power in delivering visual messages are important factors in forming an authentic political self-image and have real influence. This approach succeeds in presenting the figure of a politician not only as an official figure, but also as a person who is warm, approachable, and consistent in conveying messages to the public.

This success confirms that social media, if managed systematically and professionally, has great potential as a very effective means of public communication. Therefore, similar strategies deserve to be used as a reference for political candidates in various regions in designing digital campaigns that are more adaptive and strategic. The findings from the interviews and the results of media analysis underline that today's political communication demands the integration of visual elements, an approach that prioritizes empathy, and narrative continuity are the three main components in building trust as well as emotional closeness with the wider community.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the analysis and research findings, it can be concluded that the public relations strategy through the Instagram account @putrikarlina14 significantly contributed to the increase in the popularity of the *Syakur-Putri* candidate pair in the 2024 *Garut Regional Election*. This strategy successfully combines personal branding approaches and mass communication theory in a systematic manner, through authentic visual content, message consistency, and active audience engagement. The use of Instagram features

such as *Stories*, *Reels*, and *Live*, as well as micro-storytelling-based narratives, has been proven to build emotional closeness and trust between leaders and the public, especially young voters as a strategic segment in local politics. In terms of mass communication, this account demonstrates professional institutional management, adaptive content delivery, and media impact that can be measured in real terms through insight data.

The author is of the view that the success of this account does not only reflect the effectiveness of digital strategies alone, but also indicates a paradigm shift in political communication that is more personal, open, and based on public participation. In the era of digital democracy, the power of narrative and emotional connection is key to building trust and mobilizing support. Therefore, a communication approach that emphasizes authenticity, consistency of values, and two-way interaction is not only a temporary strategy, but the main foundation in building a sustainable political image.

As a suggestion, this study recommends that political communication practitioners in other regions emulate the practices of @putrikarlina14 accounts, while still adjusting to local characteristics and the preferences of their respective audiences. In addition, further research is recommended to extend the object of the study to other social media platforms such as *TikTok* or *YouTube*, as well as to use a quantitative approach to more precisely measure the relationship between digital strategies and electability levels. Thus, the development of political communication strategies can continue to be relevant and adaptive in dealing with changes in voter behavior and the dynamics of modern democracy.

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