



# Transformation of Indonesian Presidential Candidates' Political Communication on TikTok in the 2024 Election

*Salsabila Nirwana<sup>1</sup>, Nana Abdul Aziz<sup>2</sup>, Njoku Ifeanyi Daniel<sup>3</sup>*

<sup>1</sup>Universitas Islam Negeri Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, Indonesia

<sup>2</sup>Bandirma Onyedi Eylul University, Turkey

<sup>3</sup>Imo State University, Nigeria

[tryntsalsabila@gmail.com](mailto:tryntsalsabila@gmail.com), [nanaaziz@ogr.bandirma.edu.tr](mailto:nanaaziz@ogr.bandirma.edu.tr), [ifeanyichrist825@gmail.com](mailto:ifeanyichrist825@gmail.com)

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## Abstract

**Objective:** This study analyses the transformation of the digital campaign strategy of Indonesian presidential candidates in the 2024 election by focusing on the shift in the political communication arena from the debate space and conventional media to the TikTok platform as a visual and emotion-based campaign medium. This study aims to identify the pattern of campaign strategies, political communication styles, and the level of effectiveness of candidate messages in reaching and influencing voters, especially the younger generation, through TikTok. **Theoretical framework:** The analysis is based on the theories of digital political communication, campaign personalisation, visual populism, and the algorithmic logic of social media as proposed by Tapsell, Kreiss, Gibson, and McAllister, as well as Lim. **Literature review:** The literature shows that digital campaigns in Indonesia have grown rapidly, but studies that specifically place TikTok as a strategic arena for the formation of political image, emotions, and identities in national elections are still limited. **Methods:** This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with content analysis of the 30 most representative TikTok videos from the official accounts of Prabowo Subianto, Ganjar Pranowo, and Anies Baswedan during the 2024 Election campaign, accompanied by an analysis of engagement metrics as supporting data. **Results:** The findings show that the three candidates adopted different campaign strategies, but all submitted to the dominance of TikTok's visual-emotional logic, where Prabowo highlighted a virality-based populist-humorist style, Ganjar combined populism with the visualisation of real work, and Anies prioritised moral-intellectual communication that triggered reflective discourse. **Implications:** These findings confirm that the effectiveness of digital campaigns is multidimensional, involving trade-offs between viral reach and depth of political interaction. **Novelty:** The novelty of the research lies in the meaning of TikTok as a new political arena that actively reshapes campaign strategies, communication styles, and candidates' relationships with young voters in contemporary Indonesian electoral democracy.

**Keywords:** algorithms, digital campaigns, political communication, 2024 elections, tiktok.

## INTRODUCTION

The 2024 Presidential General Election in Indonesia shows a fundamental change in the practice of political communication. The campaign arena that was previously dominated by conventional media such as television, print media, billboards, and formal debates has now

undergone a significant shift to the digital space [1]. Social media has developed into a major space for presidential candidates and their campaign teams to interact with the public, not only as a means of conveying visions and programs but also as a medium for image formation, public emotional management, and mobilisation of electoral support [2].

These changes cannot be separated from the development of digital technology and the transformation of people's information consumption patterns. Social media platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube are strategically used to reach voters, especially the younger generation [3]. TikTok, as a short video-based platform with a very large number of users in Indonesia, is an effective campaign instrument because it is able to convey political messages through a light, visual, and entertaining format, but still contains a strong political meaning. Based on We Are Social data [4], the number of active TikTok users in Indonesia reaches more than 109 million people, the majority of whom come from the Generation Z and millennial groups, who are projected to be the largest voter base in the 2024 election [5].

Theoretically, this phenomenon can be understood through the study of digital political communication, which emphasises the shift from one-way political communication to a more personal and interactive pattern. Lilleker and Jackson's and Kreiss' studies show that social media allows for the personalisation of campaigns and the customisation of political messages to specific audience characteristics [6]. In the context of TikTok, the platform's algorithmic logic and culture encourage the delivery of political messages in the form of concise, aesthetic, and emotional content, thus creating a discursive space that is fundamentally different from rational and argumentative formal political debate [7].

In the 2024 Presidential Election, the three main candidates, Anies Baswedan, Ganjar Pranowo, and Prabowo Subianto, use TikTok not only as a formal campaign channel but also as a means of building a persona that feels close and relevant to society. Political content is packaged through memes, music, daily activity vlogs, and visual humour that follow popular trends [8]. This practice demonstrates the blurring of the boundaries between politics and entertainment, while underscoring the shift in campaign strategy from policy arguments to visual and emotional approaches. As a result, political competition not only takes place in the public debate space, but also in algorithmic mechanisms and trending topics on social media [9].

Although the literature on digital campaigns and social media has evolved, there are still significant research gaps. Tapsell highlighted how digital media in Indonesia allows political actors to control the distribution of information directly, but has not specifically discussed TikTok as a contemporary campaign medium [10]. Gibson, McAllister, and Kreiss emphasise personalisation and segmentation of digital campaigns but focus on Western contexts [11]. Meanwhile, the negative impact of social media on the quality of democracy, but it does not examine in depth the communication strategies of candidates in building emotional relationships with young voters through platforms such as TikTok [12].

Based on these conditions, the novelty of this research lies in the effort to examine TikTok as a new political arena in the 2024 Presidential Election with a comprehensive approach. This study not only views TikTok as a campaign tool but as a strategic space for the formation of political narratives, visual symbols, and candidate personalisation. Thus, this research is directed to answer how the digital campaign strategies of presidential candidates are carried out through TikTok, how political narratives and communication styles are constructed, and the extent of their effectiveness in reaching and influencing young voters [13].

Implicitly, this research makes an important contribution both theoretically and practically. Academically, the research findings are expected to enrich the study of political communication and digital democracy, especially related to the use of short video-based social media in electoral contests [14]. Practically, the results of this research can be a reflection material for political actors, election organisers, and policymakers in formulating

digital campaign strategies that are more ethical, responsible, and oriented towards strengthening the quality of democracy in Indonesia.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The study of digital political campaigns in Indonesia cannot be separated from the transformation of the media power structure. Ross Tapsell in *Media Power in Indonesia* shows that media digitalisation has changed the way political actors distribute information to the public. Social media allows candidates and political elites to convey messages directly without going through the filtering of conventional media such as television or newspapers [15]. In the context of campaigns, this allows candidates to control narratives, build a more informal personal image, and reduce reliance on debate forums or mainstream political journalism. Tapsell's findings serve as an important foundation for understanding the campaign arena's shift from formal public spaces to more fluid and personal digital spaces.

The change is in line with Gibson and McAllister's findings that highlight the transformation of political communication from one-way patterns to more interactive ones through digital campaigns. In their article in *Political Studies*, social media is seen as a means that allows for more intensive personalisation of campaigns, including tailoring messages to specific audience preferences [16]. This approach strengthens voter engagement, especially among younger generations, who tend to actively interact in the digital space. This perspective is relevant to analysing how TikTok is used in the 2024 election as a medium to reach young audiences through participatory, creative, and entertaining content [17].

Daniel Kreiss in *Prototype Politics* emphasises that modern political campaigns rely heavily on the ability of political actors to master digital platforms and understand the digital culture of their audiences. He introduced the concept of customised messaging, which is a messaging strategy that is tailored to the characteristics of identity, preferences, and communication styles of certain groups of voters [18]. In the context of TikTok, this concept can be seen in how Indonesia's presidential candidates in the 2024 election package political messages through humour, popular trends, and casual communication styles to get closer to young voters.

Nevertheless, the literature also highlights the problematic side of digital campaigns. Merlyna Lim examines how social media in Indonesia often becomes a narrative battle arena full of buzzers, disinformation, and algorithm manipulation. In his article in the *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, Lim emphasised that the digital space often undermines rational discourse because viral and emotional content is more dominant than policy substance. While not specifically addressing TikTok, Lim's argument is important for understanding the risks of using the platform in political campaigns, especially when the popularity of content takes precedence over the quality of democratic debate [19].

The dimensions of personalisation and populism in Indonesia's digital campaigns are also discussed by Aspinall and Mietzner in *Democracy for Sale* [20]. They show that political campaigns are increasingly oriented towards candidate imagery compared to policy platforms. Social media reinforces this tendency by encouraging candidates to display a persona that is "close" and "popular" [21]. This phenomenon is particularly evident in the use of TikTok, where visual aspects, body expressions, dress styles, and informal language are important elements in building political appeal among young voters.

The study, which specifically highlights TikTok as a medium for political campaigns in Indonesia, is starting to develop in the context of the 2024 election. Nugroho, in the *Journal of Political Communication Science*, emphasised that TikTok serves as a new space to eliminate the symbolic distance between candidates and voters [22]. The study showed that the use of TikTok not only aims to increase the visibility of candidates but also builds affection and emotional loyalty of voters, especially the younger generation. This study makes an important empirical contribution because it directly links the use of TikTok to the dynamics of the 2024 Presidential Election campaign [23].

Nugroho's findings are strengthened by Setiawan's research that examines the relationship between Generation Z and visual politics on TikTok. He found that young voters were more interested in political content presented visually, creatively, and emotionally than in debates or presentations of formal visions and missions [24]. TikTok is seen as effective because it is able to present politics in a familiar and non-intimidating form. This perspective is in line with the studies of Loader, Vromen, and Xenos, which emphasise that the political participation of the younger generation in the digital age is often manifested through light interactions such as liking, sharing, commenting, or producing content, rather than through conventional political participation [25]. With its interactive and creative characteristics, TikTok provides an ideal space for the development of this form of political participation.

## METHODOLOGY

This study uses a type of descriptive qualitative research with a qualitative content analysis approach to examine the transformation of the digital campaign strategy of Indonesian presidential candidates in the 2024 election through the TikTok platform [26]. This approach was chosen because the character of digital campaigns on TikTok is audio-visual, narrative, and symbolic, so it requires interpretive analysis that captures the meaning behind political messages, rather than simply measuring the frequency or statistics of exposure. As Krippendorff points out, qualitative content analysis allows researchers to interpret communication messages contextually according to the culture and medium in which they are produced and consumed.

The data sources in this study consist of primary data and secondary data. Primary data is in the form of political campaign video content uploaded on the TikTok platform by the presidential candidate's official account, as well as volunteer/campaign team accounts identified as part of the official digital strategy [27]. The analysis unit focuses on three presidential candidates for the 2024 election, namely Prabowo Subianto (@prabowo), Ganjar Pranowo (@ganjar\_pranowo), and Anies Baswedan (@aniesbaswedan). Meanwhile, secondary data was obtained from academic literature, research reports, and supporting documents relevant to digital campaigns and political communication. This study does not aim to test quantitative hypotheses, but rather to understand how political messages are constructed to reach and influence young voters as a strategic electoral group.

Data collection was carried out through digital documentation and non-participant observation of TikTok uploads during the official campaign period of the KPU, namely, November 28, 2023, to February 10, 2024. All content is systematically archived, accompanied by recording digital metrics such as the number of impressions, comments, likes, and shares to provide an overview of audience interaction levels. Given the large amount of content produced, this study used purposive sampling with certain criteria, including videos coming from official accounts during the campaign period, containing explicit or implicit political messages, and showing a significant level of audience interaction. Based on these criteria, each of the 10 most representative videos from each candidate was selected, so that the total sample analysed amounted to 30 videos.



Figure 1. Participants of Presidential Candidates and Their Representatives in the 2024 General Election

Data analysis was carried out using conventional and categorical qualitative content analysis that integrates the visual, verbal, and symbolic dimensions of video content. The analysis stages include data reduction, initial coding, thematic categorisation, and critical interpretation by linking findings to political personalisation theory, digital populism, and platform-based message segmentation. This process refers to the Krippendorff approach as well as Elo and Kyngäs. To ensure the validity of the data, this study applied source triangulation, peer debriefing, and trail audit according to Lincoln and Guba's trustworthiness principles. The urgency of using this qualitative method lies in its ability to uncover political communication strategies that are latent and emotional, so that the implications not only enrich the study of digital political communication but also provide a critical understanding of the impact of TikTok-based campaigns on the quality of democracy in Indonesia.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The 2024 Indonesian Presidential Election marks a structural and paradigmatic change in the national political communication strategy. The campaign arena is no longer dominated by formal spaces such as candidate debates, billboards, and mainstream media that are one-way and elitist, but have shifted significantly to short-video-based social media platforms, especially TikTok [28]. This shift suggests that political contestation does not only take place at the level of ideologies and programs, but is increasingly determined by a candidate's ability to manage public attention in an algorithm-based digital ecosystem. TikTok, in this context, does not simply function as a medium for conveying political messages but as a space for the production of meaning, emotions, and political identities, where the image of candidates is formed, negotiated, and disseminated massively [29].

Based on the analysis of the 10 most popular TikTok videos from each presidential candidate, Prabowo Subianto, Ganjar Pranowo, and Anies Baswedan, it is clear that the three consciously and strategically adapt their campaign patterns according to the characteristics of the platform. The content uploaded no longer focuses on presenting the program in detail and argumentatively, but instead shifts to creating personal impressions, emotional closeness, and visual power that is easy to consume [30]. This shift marks a fundamental transformation from rational-informative political communication to affective-symbolic communication, in which emotions and visual representations become the primary instruments of political persuasion.

Prabowo Subianto, for example, has consistently used lip-sync, dance, memes, and light-hearted political humour formats to build a populist-emotional image. The repeated representation of "Prabowo gemoy" in various videos cannot be understood solely as political entertainment, but as a symbolic strategy to deconstruct the elitist and authoritarian image that has been attached to military figures in Indonesian electoral politics [31]. Through TikTok, Prabowo has succeeded in reducing the psychological distance between candidates and the audience, especially young voters, by presenting himself as a warm, humane, and approachable figure.

On the contrary, Ganjar Pranowo presents a relatively different approach by emphasising the visualisation of real work through blusukan activities, dialogue with residents, and direct involvement in people's lives. Although it still follows TikTok's fast and visual format, Ganjar's content seeks to maintain continuity between digital images and policy track records in the real world. Meanwhile, Anies Baswedan chose a narrative-reflective communication path with a calmer tone and a message that emphasises moral values, social justice, and systemic change [32]. This approach places TikTok not only as an entertainment space but also as a medium for conveying ideas and political reflection.

This phenomenon is in line with Bene's view that in the digital politics of the post-truth era, candidates who are able to simplify complex messages into easily recognisable visual symbols have a significant competitive advantage [33]. Therefore, TikTok can no longer be positioned as an additional or complementary campaign channel, but rather as a key strategic

space that reshapes the way candidates produce, distribute, and interpret political messages, while transforming the relationship between politicians, media, and the public in contemporary electoral democracies.

**Table 1. Presidential Digital Campaign Strategy Pattern on TikTok**

Capres	Strategy Focus	Dominant Content Form	Main Objectives
Prabowo Subianto	Populist-emotional	Memes, dances, humour, lipsync	Virality and emotional closeness
Ganjar Pranowo	Real-populist work	A Conversation with the Public, a Dialogue	Credibility and affordability
Anies Baswedan	Moral-intellectual	Reflective narrative, voice-over	The idea and value of change

This table shows that each presidential candidate developed a different TikTok campaign strategy according to personal character, political image, and targeted voter segmentation. However, these differences are within the same framework, namely an implicit recognition of the dominance of visual and emotional logic in contemporary digital politics, where the success of political communication is determined more by the ability to build affective closeness and symbolic appeal than by the rational and profound delivery of policy programs.

### **Differentiating Political Communication Styles: Populist Humour, Real Work, and the Politics of Ideas**

The differences in the digital campaign strategies of the three presidential candidates are clearly manifested in the style of political communication they display on TikTok. This style of communication no longer functions simply as an instrument of electoral persuasion, but has developed into a strategic mechanism in the formation and reproduction of candidates' political identities [34]. In the context of TikTok as a short-duration audio-visual-based platform, political communication is forced to adapt to the logic of speed, visualisation, and emotion, so that symbols, body gestures, facial expressions, and affective atmosphere become more dominant than complex and rational policy arguments. This condition confirms that contemporary digital politics is moving from a deliberative space to a symbolic space that is consumed instantly by the public [35].

Prabowo Subianto represents the most adaptive populist communication style to TikTok's logic. Through the construction of the "gemoy" symbol, Prabowo built a political figure that was fluid, lightweight, and emotionally accessible. This symbol functions as an empty signifier as stated by Bagaskara, which is a sign that is ideologically relatively empty but has a strong affective attachment. Humour, non-formal expressions, and non-rigid body gestures are key strategies to break down the distance between candidates and audiences, while normalising political power in a more personal and entertaining form, especially for young voters [36].

Ganjar Pranowo, on the other hand, adopted a communication style that combined populism with a technocratic approach. Ganjar's TikTok content consistently features real work activities, direct dialogue with residents, and responses to people's daily problems. This visualisation builds an active, responsive, and solution-oriented leadership narrative, so that the populist image does not stand alone, but is attached to work performance and administrative experience. This pattern is in line with Lestari's findings on technocratic populism, where closeness to the people is constructed along with competence and performance-based legitimacy [37].

Significantly different, Anies Baswedan chose a moral-intellectual communication style that was relatively far from the aesthetic of TikTok entertainment. The narrative emphasises normative values such as social justice, systemic change, and the future of the nation, with a

reflective tone and minimal humour elements or popular visual effects. This strategy does limit the viral power of content, but at the same time, strengthens Anies' position as an intellectual and reformist figure. Thus, Anies' political communication is more directed towards the formation of normative and discursive identities than the creation of instant emotional closeness. Overall, these differences in communication styles confirm that TikTok does not necessarily result in the homogenization of political messages, but rather serves as an arena of symbolic differentiation. The same platform is leveraged with different communication logics, according to the political image, support base, and electoral strategy of each candidate. This strengthens Ramadan's argument that social media not only shapes the way messages are conveyed, but also limits and directs the forms of political identity that can be produced and accepted in the digital public space [38].

**Table 2. Typology of Presidential Political Communication Style on TikTok**

Capres	Communication Style	Key Features	Audience Segmentation
Prabowo Subianto	Populist humorist	Funny, expressive, emotional	Young voters, Gen Z
Ganjar Pranowo	Populist technocrat	Real work, dialogue	Moderate voters
Anies Baswedan	Moral-intellectual	Narrative, reflective	Critical & educated voters

The table shows that the differentiation of the political communication styles of the presidential candidates on TikTok reflects the planned and adaptive electoral segmentation strategy against the logic of the emotionally visual-based platform. Prabowo Subianto optimises a light, expressive, and affective populist-humorous style to maximise emotional closeness and virality among young voters and Gen Z; Ganjar Pranowo displays technocratic populism through the visualisation of real work and citizen dialogue that emphasises the credibility of performance for moderate voters; while Anies Baswedan carries a narrative and reflective moral-intellectual approach to build the legitimacy of ideas among critical and educated voters. This pattern confirms that TikTok serves as an arena of symbolic differentiation, where a candidate's political identity is strategically constructed through the adjustment of communication styles to audience segmentation, so that digital political communication moves from personal expression to a structured, measurable, and target-based practice of persuasion in line with your research's findings on the dominance of visual-emotional logic as well as the trade-off between quantitative virality and depth of discourse in 2024 Presidential Election campaign.

### **Public Engagement Dynamics: Quantitative Virality and Depth of Interaction**

The effectiveness of the candidates' political communication strategies and styles was analysed through public responses reflected in engagement metrics in the form of likes, comments, and shares. These three indicators are not understood solely as a measure of popularity, but rather as markers of symbolic appeal, audience engagement levels, and the ability of campaign content to penetrate TikTok's algorithmic circulation mechanism [39]. In the context of short video-based social media, engagement serves as an important indicator of how political messages are received, interpreted, negotiated, and then disseminated by the digital public [40].

The results of the analysis show that Prabowo Subianto consistently excels in the quantitative engagement dimension. With an average of 52,000 likes per video and the highest number of shares compared to other candidates, Prabowo's content shows a dominant level of virality [41]. These findings reinforce the argument that humour, non-formal gestures, and light visual formats have structural advantages in the TikTok ecosystem that prioritises speed of consumption and instant emotion. TikTok's algorithm tends to amplify

content that is easy to understand and trigger affective reactions, thereby increasing the reach of entertainment-based political messages.

Ganjar Pranowo occupies the middle position with an average of 31,000 likes and around 2,300 shares per video. This achievement reflects a more moderate and compromised communication strategy, which seeks to maintain a balance between substantive work narratives and the demands of digital aesthetics. Ganjar's content is relatively stable in attracting public attention, but it does not result in a spike in extreme virality [42]. This suggests that approaches that combine substance and visuals are still effective, even though their dispersion is inferior to content that fully conforms to the logic of algorithmic entertainment.

Different from the other two candidates, Anies Baswedan actually recorded a qualitative engagement pattern. Although the average likes are lower, Anies' account generates the highest average of comments, which is around 920 per video. The predominantly argumentative and reflective nature of the commentary shows that Anies's content is more capable of triggering cognitive and discursive involvement. In other words, the content is not simply watched or shared, but invites the audience to respond substantively through discussion and exchange of ideas [43].

These findings confirm that engagement in digital campaigns is not single or linear. The quantitative virality reflected in likes and shares is not always directly proportional to the depth of the political conversation. TikTok allows for coexistence between the politics of entertainment that are emotional and the politics of ideas that are reflective in nature, each with a different logic of influence and reach. Thus, the effectiveness of digital campaigns on TikTok needs to be understood multidimensionally, not only from how widely the message spreads, but also from how the message is interpreted and debated by the public.

**Table 3. Average TikTok Video Engagement for the 2024 Presidential Election**

Capres	Average Likes	Average Comments	Average Share
Prabowo Subianto	52.000	850	4.100
Ganjar Pranowo	31.000	730	2.300
Anies Baswedan	27.000	920	1.800

The data confirms that the effectiveness of political campaigns on platforms like TikTok is not singular, but depends on the communication goals to be achieved. Visual and emotion-based strategies have proven to be superior in creating virality because they align with TikTok's algorithmic logic that prioritises quick engagement, affective reactions, and ease of content distribution [44]. In contrast, narrative-intellectual strategies, while not resulting in high quantitative engagement spikes, are more effective in encouraging cognitive engagement and building more reflective and argumentative political discourse. This difference suggests that virality is not always synonymous with the quality of political deliberation, and confirms the trade-off between the breadth and depth of conversation in contemporary digital campaigns.

## Analysis

The findings of this study demonstrate that the 2024 Indonesian presidential election represents a significant transformation in the structure and practice of political communication, particularly through the strategic use of the TikTok platform. Based on the qualitative content analysis of 30 representative videos from the official accounts of Prabowo Subianto, Ganjar Pranowo, and Anies Baswedan, the data reveal that TikTok has evolved from a simple social media tool into a central arena where political identity, emotional appeal, and symbolic narratives are constructed and negotiated. This shift reflects broader changes in digital political communication, where the logic of algorithms, visual storytelling, and affective engagement increasingly shapes campaign strategies.

First, the results indicate that the three presidential candidates adopted distinct campaign approaches, yet all operated within the same structural logic of TikTok as a short-video platform dominated by visual and emotional communication. Traditional political messaging that emphasizes detailed policy discussion or ideological debate is significantly reduced in this environment. Instead, political communication becomes more personalized, performative, and emotionally engaging. Candidates strategically construct their digital personas in ways that align with the expectations of TikTok's algorithmic ecosystem, which prioritizes concise content, visual creativity, and rapid audience engagement.

Prabowo Subianto's campaign strategy illustrates the strongest adaptation to TikTok's entertainment-driven culture. His videos frequently incorporate humor, dance, lip-sync trends, and memes that emphasize the widely circulated "gemoy" (cute and friendly) persona. This symbolic construction is particularly important because it reshapes public perception of a figure previously associated with a rigid military background. Through playful and light-hearted content, Prabowo reduces the psychological distance between political elites and young voters, transforming his political image into a more approachable and relatable character. The engagement data strongly supports the effectiveness of this approach, with Prabowo achieving the highest average likes (52,000) and shares (4,100) among the three candidates. These metrics indicate that emotional and entertainment-oriented content possesses a structural advantage within TikTok's algorithm, allowing messages to spread rapidly and reach broader audiences.

Ganjar Pranowo, by contrast, adopts a strategy that combines populist appeal with technocratic legitimacy. His TikTok content often highlights "blusukan" activities, direct interactions with citizens, and documentation of everyday governance practices. Rather than relying primarily on humor or viral entertainment, Ganjar presents himself as an active and responsive leader engaged with community issues. This approach creates a narrative of credibility and administrative competence while still maintaining the visual and accessible format required by TikTok. The engagement statistics place Ganjar in a moderate position, with an average of 31,000 likes and 2,300 shares per video. Although his content does not achieve the same level of virality as Prabowo's, it maintains stable audience interaction, suggesting that hybrid strategies combining substantive work narratives with visual storytelling can still perform effectively within the platform's ecosystem.

Anies Baswedan presents a notably different communication pattern that emphasizes moral and intellectual discourse. His TikTok videos tend to feature reflective narratives, voice-over commentary, and discussions of social justice, systemic reform, and national vision. Compared with the other candidates, Anies' content incorporates fewer entertainment elements and relies more heavily on argumentative storytelling. As a result, his engagement pattern differs significantly. While the average number of likes (27,000) and shares (1,800) is lower, Anies records the highest average comments per video (920). This suggests that his content stimulates deeper cognitive engagement and encourages audiences to participate in reflective discussions rather than simply reacting through quick emotional responses.

The engagement metrics therefore highlight an important multidimensional dynamic in digital political campaigns. Viral popularity, represented by likes and shares, does not necessarily correspond with the depth of political interaction. Entertainment-based content tends to maximize reach and algorithmic visibility, whereas narrative-intellectual communication generates more deliberative audience participation. In this sense, TikTok enables the coexistence of two parallel modes of digital politics: affective populism driven by emotional symbolism, and discursive engagement driven by ideas and reflective narratives. Overall, the analysis demonstrates that TikTok functions not merely as a campaign channel but as a transformative political arena that reshapes the relationship between candidates and voters. Political success in this environment depends on the ability to balance visual storytelling, emotional resonance, and narrative substance within the constraints of algorithm-driven communication. The 2024 election thus illustrates how digital platforms

redefine the mechanisms of political persuasion, audience engagement, and democratic participation in contemporary Indonesia.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research, it can be concluded that the 2024 Indonesian Presidential Election marks a fundamental transformation in political campaign strategy, where TikTok functions as the main arena for symbolic, emotional, and affective contestation, rather than just a complement to conventional campaigns. The three presidential candidates consciously adapted their communication styles and campaign strategies according to the logic of short video platforms based on algorithms, visuality, and emotions, so that political communication shifted from a rational-informative pattern to an affective-symbolic pattern. Prabowo Subianto showed excellence in creating virality through a populist-humorous approach that is in harmony with the TikTok ecosystem. Ganjar Pranowo occupies a moderate position by combining visuals of real work and technocratic credibility, while Anies Baswedan stands out in building a more reflective political discourse through a moral-intellectual approach, albeit with a more limited viral reach. These findings confirm that the effectiveness of digital campaigns cannot be measured singularly through quantitative metrics, but rather needs to be understood multidimensionally by considering the depth of interaction, the formation of political identities, and the meaning negotiated in the digital public space. Thus, TikTok not only changed the way political messages were conveyed but also reconstructed the relationship between candidates, media, and voters in contemporary Indonesian electoral democracy.

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## Author's Contributions

Salsabila Nirwana conceptualized the research, conducted data collection, and drafted the manuscript. Nana Abdul Aziz contributed to theoretical framework development, data analysis, and manuscript revision. Njoku Ifeanyi Daniel assisted with comparative perspectives, methodological refinement, and critical editing. All authors discussed the results, contributed to interpretation, and approved the final version of the manuscript.

## Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this research. This study was conducted independently without financial or institutional influence that could affect the research process or findings. The authors affirm that all interpretations, analyses, and conclusions presented reflect their academic perspectives and scholarly responsibility.

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