

THE USE OF MASS MEDIA IN THE WINNING STRATEGY OF THE GOLONGAN KARYA PARTY IN NORTH SUMATERA PROVINCE IN THE 2024 LEGISLATIVE GENERAL ELECTIONS

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Abstract

This study aims to comprehensively examine the utilization of mass media as a winning strategy for the Golongan Karya Party (Golkar) in the 2024 Legislative Elections in North Sumatera Province. This study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with informants consisting of leaders of the North Sumatera Golkar Provincial Board, communication and media teams, district/city branch leaders, elected legislative candidates, and mass media journalists. Data were also obtained through observation and documentation studies of campaign materials, internal party documents, and mass media coverage. Data analysis used the Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña model, which includes data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. The study found that North Sumatera Golkar Party implemented a multiplatform political communication strategy that synergistically integrated conventional media (radio, newspapers) and digital media (Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp). This strategy was built through a systematic strategic planning process using SWOT analysis. Moreover, effective coordination among various levels of party structure and integration of media campaigns with field campaigns created synergy that strengthened campaign impact. This research concludes that, mass media, particularly digital media, played a strategic and significant role in Golkar Party's electoral success in North Sumatera in the 2024 Election. However, the effectiveness of mass media communication strategies did not work in isolation but was integrated with other political strategy elements such as party leadership such as Musa Rajekshah as chairman of the Golkar DPD North Sumatera, legislative candidate quality, relevant programs, and grassroots campaigns.

Keywords: *mass media, political communication strategy, Golkar Party, Legislative Election.*

INTRODUCTION

Legislative elections are an important event for political parties to gain seats in parliament. In this context, mass media plays a crucial role as the main channel for political parties in campaigning political messages, building images, shaping public opinion, and mobilizing voters (Munzir, A.A. 2019; Valencia, J.G. 2024; Sakina, I and Hendrik, D. 2025; Asriadi, A. et al. 2025). In fact, mass media can function as a strategic communication tool capable of influencing people's political behavior, building public trust and social change through the dissemination of effective and structured messages (McNair, B, 2017; Happer C and Philo, G, 2013). Mass media has become a key instrument for increasing a party's chances of electoral success in various democratic countries, including Indonesia. In the context of modern democracy, mass media plays a strategic role not only in disseminating political information but also in building the party's image and identity in the eyes of voters (Tahir and Othman, 2024). Furthermore, political parties can reach voters more broadly through digital and conventional channels, strengthening their visibility and control over the circulating public narrative (Carvalho and Junior, 2025; Shah, 2020; Sudiwijaya, 2024). In Indonesia, this phenomenon began to emerge in the 2004 general election, the first election since the end of the New Order era to directly elect the President and Vice President. This phenomenon has also significantly changed the communication patterns and forms of interaction between political parties and the public, becoming more interactive. Considering the strategies of political parties in the 2004

election campaign, it is clear that many political parties have shifted to more innovative campaign patterns by utilizing mass media. Political parties no longer rely solely on campaigners to deliver speeches in public, but rather package and design campaigns, whether in the form of advertising, publicity, or talk shows through mass media (both electronic media such as television and print media such as newspapers and magazines. Since the rapid development of technology, especially the internet, it has brought many changes in the world of communication due to the digitalization process. It is not surprising that social interactions that develop in the real world are influenced by the accumulation of conversations in cyberspace (new media). The presence of new internet-based media provides a space for critical public voices that are not easily controlled. The interactive nature of new media and user-generated content ensures broad opportunities for users not only to transmit information, but also allows users to become creators and disseminators of information (Luca, M, 2015; L. Meghan, Mahoney, Tang Tang, 2016)

In fact, the trend that has occurred since the 2014 election until the 2024 election is to strengthen the role of digital media in guiding opinion and shaping public political preferences. All political parties compete to use digital mass media to target different voter segments and retain their followers. This strategy is packaged in tweets about the party's priority issues, party values, to promoting presidential and vice-presidential candidates, national and regional legislative candidates. Based on the results of research by the Center for Digital Society (CfDS) Fisipol UGM in 2023 on the activities of political parties (PDI Perjuangan, Gerindra, Golkar, PKB and Nasdem) welcoming the 2024 election on social media platform X, it states that social media is one of the mediums of high political party activity. The political party with the most activity on social media X is PDI Perjuangan with a total of 30,593 tweets. Next is the Gerindra party account which reached 17,057 tweets. Meanwhile, the other three accounts were the Golkar party account with 5,982 tweets, the PKB party with 3,468 tweets, and the Nasdem party with 3,182 tweets (CfDS, 2023)

Interestingly, according to the recapitulation data, the political parties with the most votes in the 2024 legislative elections also won: the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P), Golkar, Gerindra, PKB, Nasdem, PKS, Demokrat, and PAN (KPU RI, 2024). On the other hand, the Golkar Party, despite being considered the oldest party in Indonesia, having existed since 1971, continues to prove itself as a strong and solid political party. Even in the 1977 to 1997 elections, Indonesian politics was dominated by Golkar. Although Golkar has experienced fluctuations in vote share since the 1998 reforms, it has consistently remained a major force in Indonesian politics. This resilience is demonstrated by its ability to continue competing in every post-reform election, from 1999 to 2024. Despite shifts in rankings with other parties, Golkar remains in the top 2-3 as the winning national political party. The following is a list of the winners of the post-reform elections from 1999 to 2024.

Table 1. Infographic of Winning Parties in the 1999 – 2024 Elections

No	Period 1999	Period 2004	Period 2009	Period 2014	Period 2019	Period 2024
1	PDIP	Golkar	Demokrat	PDIP	PDIP	PDIP
2	Golkar	PDIP	Golkar	Golkar	Gerindra	Golkar
3	PKB	PKB	PDIP	Gerindra	Golkar	Gerindra

Source: quoted from various sources

From the data in Table 1, one of the important phenomena of the 2024 legislative elections was the significant achievement of the Golkar Party, which succeeded in occupying second place nationally with 23,208,654 votes or 14.28 percent, by winning 102 seats in the Indonesian House of Representatives. This condition increased drastically from third place in the 2019 election with 12.15 percent and 85 seats (KPU, 2024). Golkar as the supporting party also succeeded in winning presidential and vice-presidential candidates in the 2019 and 2024 elections. Likewise, the condition of the Golkar Party at the regional level. Based on KPU RI data, the Golkar Party was able to become the winner in 14 provinces, an increase from the 2019 legislative elections where it only controlled 8 (eight) provinces. The provinces that the Golkar Party won in the 2024 General Election include: Aceh, Banten, Bengkulu, Jambi, West Java, South Kalimantan, East Kalimantan, Riau Islands, West Papua, Southwest Papua, Riau, Central Sulawesi, South Sulawesi, Sumatra and North Sumatra. Specifically in North Sumatra province, the Golkar Party's vote acquisition is one of the most impressive increases. Based on the recapitulation results of the North Sumatra Provincial General Elections Commission (KPU), the Golkar Party was able to win 8 (eight) seats in the DPR-RI. This acquisition increased 2 (two) times compared to the 2019 General Election, where Golkar only won 4 (four) seats with 13.18 percent of the vote in North Sumatra (Kompas, 2024). The Golkar Party also managed to win the most seats, namely 22 seats from 12 (twelve) electoral districts in North

Sumatra Province. This number increased from the 2019 General Election which only won 19 seats in the North Sumatra DPRD (Kompas, 2024). Not only that, the Golkar Party also managed to place its cadre as the chairman of the Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD) of North Sumatra Province. Even at the district/city level in North Sumatra, the Golkar party has succeeded in placing its cadres as DPRD Chairpersons in 13 regions, namely: Asahan Regency, Dairi Regency, Humbang Hasundutan Regency, North Labuhanbatu Regency, Langkat Regency, North Padang Lawas Regency, Pakpak Bharat Regency, Simalungun Regency, South Tapanuli Regency, Binjai City, Padangsidimpuan City, Tanjung Balai City, and Tebing Tinggi City.

The Golkar Party's success in securing the most votes in North Sumatra is inseparable from the various campaign strategies implemented to gain public trust. These campaigns were conducted both face-to-face and through digital media. Of course, the increasingly open digital media landscape has significantly changed the strategies, techniques, and tactics used in disseminating party campaign materials (Fahrudi and Fahrudin, 2023). Furthermore, the Golkar Party is a political entity that has traveled a long way in Indonesian history. Founded in 1963 amidst the political upheaval of the Old Order era, growing alongside the New Order, and adapting to the Reformation era, Golkar is certainly not just an ordinary political party. The Golkar Party has been able to adapt to the demands of the times while maintaining its moderate-conservative ideological character and traditions (Alhabsi, et al., 2023). This phenomenon also proves that the Golkar Party is still relevant today. The Golkar Party is not trapped in the romanticism of the past, but is truly present as a modern party with systematic, measurable, and data-based political communication.

On the other hand, political communication strategies through digital media in the context of elections continue to undergo significant evolution. Advances in information and communication technology have created a more complex and diverse ecosystem. Conventional and digital media interact with each other, forming a new public space for political discourse. Political parties, including Golkar, are required to adapt to this changing media landscape by developing multiplatform communication strategies that integrate various media channels (Pradana et al., 2023). In this context, the phenomenon of using digital media as a winning strategy for the Golkar Party in North Sumatra in the 2024 elections is interesting and important to examine in more depth for several reasons. First, the Golkar Party's success in significantly increasing its vote share amidst increasingly fierce political party competition. Second, the context of North Sumatra, with its diverse demographic, sociocultural, and geographic characteristics, requires a multidimensional strategy and approach (Kompas, 2024). Therefore, the party's communication strategy must be able to reach and resonate with various voter groups with diverse backgrounds and interests. Based on this background, this study seeks to answer the research questions: how the Golkar Party of North Sumatra integrates conventional and digital media in its political communication strategy, and how the synergy between the two types of media contributes to the party's electoral victory.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Political Communication

Political communication is the process of disseminating and receiving political messages by the public through various media and communication channels. According to Brian McNair, political communication is "all forms of communication used by political actors to achieve their goals" (McNair, 2017). Meanwhile, Jesper Strömbäck defines political communication as "the process by which political messages are communicated through various channels to different audiences with the aim of influencing political opinion and behavior" (Strömbäck, 2021). This definition emphasizes the important role of communication in shaping public opinion and influencing political behavior. Political communication plays an important role in various political activities, including campaigns, public policy-making, and interactions between the government and citizens (Nuraliza, F., Pratama, A. B., & Sari, D. P., 2024). Effective communication can help increase political participation, build public support, and strengthen government legitimacy. Without good communication, political messages will not reach the desired audience, which can lead to misunderstanding and political apathy among the public. Therefore, understanding and applying effective political communication is crucial for the success of political activities. In the context of general elections, political communication is a vital instrument for political parties and candidates to convey their vision, mission, work programs, and ideology, while also building a positive image and mobilizing support. Syarbaini, Nur, and Anom (2021) in their work "Theory, Media and Political Communication Strategies" state that political communication has three main components; first, the structural dimension related to the institutions of political actors involved in the communication process; second, the process dimension, which includes the mechanisms and channels of communication used to convey political messages; and third, the effect dimension, which refers to the impact on the attitudes, opinions, and political behavior of the audience. These three components are interrelated

and form a dynamic system. The use of appropriate communication strategies, such as well-designed messages, the use of social media to reach a wider audience, and the delivery of messages through television or radio advertisements, is very important in creating a positive image and increasing electability.

The concept of political communication in the current digital era has undergone a significant transformation with the advent of information and communication technology, which enables faster, broader, more open, and interactive communication between political elites and the public. The effectiveness of political communication depends on the quality of the relationship between political elites, the public, and the mass media. The ability of politicians to communicate effectively, both as party elites and as mediators between the interests of the public and the party, is very important for building trust and gaining support. In this context, the mass media not only functions as a channel for delivering messages, but also as an active actor in shaping political opinion, performing control functions, and mediating political conflicts.

Mass Media in Political Communication

Mass media is an integral component of modern political communication, serving as a bridge between the interests of political actors and the public. Mass media refers to communication channels used to disseminate information to a large and heterogeneous audience (McQuail, 2010). Mass media includes various platforms such as television, radio, newspapers, magazines, and new media (digital media) such as online news portals and social media platforms. Mass media plays a key role in shaping public opinion, providing news, entertainment, and education, as well as being a forum for social and political discussion. It also plays a role in influencing culture and social norms in significant ways (Abhiyasa et al. 2024).

The use of mass media in political campaigns has become a subset of mass media that focuses on disseminating information related to politics and public policy. According to Norris, political mass media plays a vital role in the democratic process by providing the public with information about candidates, policies, and political events (Norris, 2000). This media includes platforms such as political news broadcasts on television, opinion articles in newspapers, and political content on social media. Political mass media influences the public agenda by determining which issues receive attention and shaping the dominant political narrative. This enables voters to make more informed decisions and has an impact on election results and the political process as a whole. Political mass media not only disseminates news but also influences public perceptions and attitudes toward political issues. According to Bennett, political mass media can influence how people understand and assess political events and shape opinions about candidates and policies (Bennett, 2012).

In the context of the 2024 elections in Indonesia, digital media has played a crucial role in political campaigns, even becoming a phenomenon capable of fundamentally changing the political landscape (Postill, J., 2020). Afrita (2024), in her research on the impact of social media on political participation in the 2024 elections, found that election campaigns were very active on various social media platforms. Similarly, Lestari, Kumalasari, and Kasiami (2024) found that social media such as TikTok was a very influential and effective tool for political candidates in the 2024 election campaign. The study explains how political parties and political actors utilize the TikTok social media platform to build a good image, interact, and promote their political messages. The effectiveness of social media in political campaigns lies primarily in its ability to reach young voters (Gen Z and Millennials), who are the most active social media users and the majority of voters in the 2024 elections. However, the use of social media in political campaigns also faces a number of challenges. Among them are misinformation, filter bubbles, and echo chambers, which are phenomena that arise in the use of social media (Jayus et al. 2024). The rampant spread of hoaxes, which are difficult to control, has become a massive phenomenon in the run-up to the 2024 elections, due to the absence of adequate and specific legal regulations on political campaigns through digital media such as social media. The impact is polarization of opinion that tends to be emotional and provocative rather than informative. As well as negative campaigns with personal attacks on candidates that easily spread through platforms and influence public opinion with invalid information.

METHOD

This research approach uses a qualitative approach with an exploratory-descriptive design (Neuman, 2014). This is to thoroughly analyze the use of mass media as a winning strategy for the Golkar Party in the 2024 Legislative Elections in North Sumatra Province. This approach was chosen because it is relevant for understanding complex social phenomena (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This is illustrated by political communication strategies from the perspective of actors directly involved in the process, as well as studying the meaning, process, and context of the use of mass media in political campaigns (Flick, U, 2018). In this regard, the qualitative approach allows researchers to comprehensively understand how the North Sumatra DPD Golkar Party

created, implemented, and evaluated political communication strategies that influenced the party's electoral victory. Meanwhile, the research paradigm used is constructivist-interpretive, which assumes that social reality is shaped by interactions and interpretations of meaning carried out by political actors. Therefore, this study reflects the subjective perspectives and experiences of the informants as well as the researcher's interpretation of the data obtained (Denzin and Lincoln, 2018). This research was conducted at the North Sumatra Provincial Golkar Party DPD office located in Medan City. In addition to the North Sumatra Golkar Party DPD office, the researchers also involved several Medan City Golkar DPC officials as representatives of urban areas with high voter turnout and digital literacy rates.

The research was conducted over a period of six months, from May 2024 to October 2024. This period was chosen because it was the post-election phase, which allowed researchers to reflect on and evaluate the political communication strategies that the Golkar Party had implemented during the campaign period. The subjects of this study were political actors and stakeholders involved in the design, implementation, and evaluation of the Golkar Party's victory, including the leadership of the North Sumatra DPD Golkar, the North Sumatra Golkar Party Communication and Media Team, the leadership of the Medan City DPC Golkar Party, elected legislative candidates, political consultants and campaign teams, and journalists covering the 2024 elections in North Sumatra. There were 15 informants in this study using purposive sampling. Meanwhile, the sources of data for this study were: first, primary data, which was obtained directly from primary sources through interviews. Second, secondary data, which was obtained from secondary sources, such as internal Golkar Party documents, public documents and regulations, mass media reports, scientific publications, and data from the General Elections Commission (KPU) and the Central Statistics Agency (BPS). Meanwhile, data collection techniques used three techniques, namely in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation studies. Then, data analysis in this study used the Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014) analysis technique, which consists of four stages: data collection, data condensation, data presentation, and conclusion drawing.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Overview of Golkar Party's Victory in North Sumatra in the 2024 Legislative Elections

The 2024 Legislative Elections (pileg) in North Sumatra Province (Sumut) recorded very significant results for the Golkar party. Based on the results compiled by the Sumut KPU, the Golkar Party won first place with 1,712,074 votes, equivalent to 22 percent of the total valid votes. Converted into seats, Golkar won 22 seats in the 2024-2029 Sumut DPRD from 12 electoral districts. This number is seven seats more than in the 2019 period. This achievement places Golkar as the winner of the 2024 legislative elections in North Sumatra and displaces the dominance of the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P), which previously won the most seats in the 2019 elections.

Table 2 Comparison of Political Party Votes in North Sumatra in the 2019 and 2024 Elections

Political Parties	Elections 2019		Elections 2024	
	Seats	%	Seats	%
Golkar	15	13,11	22	23,11
PDI Perjuangan	19	20,95	21	18,67
Gerindra	15	13,48	13	12,36
Nasdem	12	12,22	12	11,44
Demokrat	9	12,22	5	7,45
PKS	11	9,47	10	8,14

Source: North Sumatra Provincial KPU (2019, 2024), processed by researchers

Based on the data in Table 2, the Golkar Party experienced a very significant increase in the number of seats, namely 22 seats or an increase of 7 seats compared to the 2019 elections. This increase was the highest among all parties participating in the elections in North Sumatra. Meanwhile, PDI Perjuangan, which had previously been the winner, experienced a decline in votes and came in second. This phenomenon indicates a significant shift in voter preferences and points to the success of the political and communication strategies implemented by the Golkar Party.

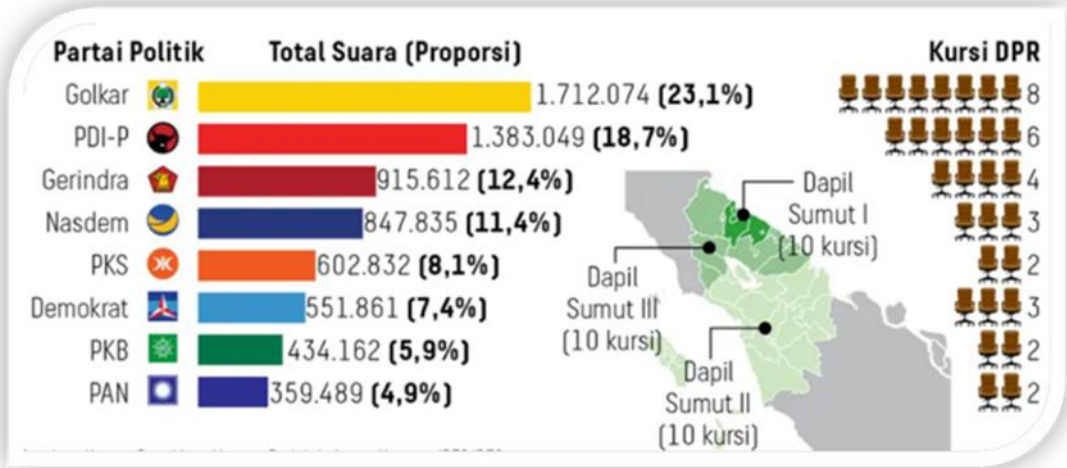
Table 2 Comparison of Golkar Party Vote Gains in North Sumatra in the 2019 and 2024 Elections

Pemilu	Jumlah Suara	Persen (%)	Perubahan
2019	878,690	13,18	Meningkat 9,92 %
2024	1.712.074	23,10	

Source: North Sumatra Provincial KPU (2019, 2024), processed by researchers

In addition, the Golkar Party also won the most votes in the 2024 Indonesian House of Representatives election for the province of North Sumatra. Golkar became the leading party in North Sumatra and won in 13 regencies/cities. Golkar won 8 of the 30 seats in the House of Representatives from the North Sumatra electoral district. In the 2024 elections, with the support of 1,712,074 votes, or around 23.1 percent of the total voters in North Sumatra, Golkar emerged as the winner. Compared to the previous election, Golkar's achievement in North Sumatra was spectacular, successfully increasing its support by 10 percent. Meanwhile, PDI Perjuangan, which previously won the most seats, was only able to gain 18.7 percent of the votes or 6 seats.

Figure 1 Votes and Seats Won in the North Sumatra House of Representatives in the 2024 Elections



Source: accessed on the website <https://www.kompas.id/artikel/konfigurasi-kemenangan-golkar-di-sumatera-utara>

Golkar's victory was not only achieved at the national and provincial levels, but also spread across various regencies/cities in North Sumatra. Based on data from the North Sumatra KPU, Golkar won in 18 of the 33 regencies/cities in North Sumatra, including in strategic areas such as Medan City, Deli Serdang Regency, Simalungun Regency, North Tapanuli Regency, and Labuhanbatu Regency. Overall, the number of seats in the Regency/City DPRD in North Sumatra has increased. In the 2024 elections, Golkar candidates won a total of 208 seats in 33 regencies/cities. This number is an increase compared to the 2019 elections, where they won 184 seats. This dominance shows that Golkar's political communication strategy has successfully reached various segments of voters with heterogeneous characteristics, from urban to rural areas, from communities with high digital literacy to traditional communities.

Strategic Planning for Political Communication of the Golkar Party in North Sumatra

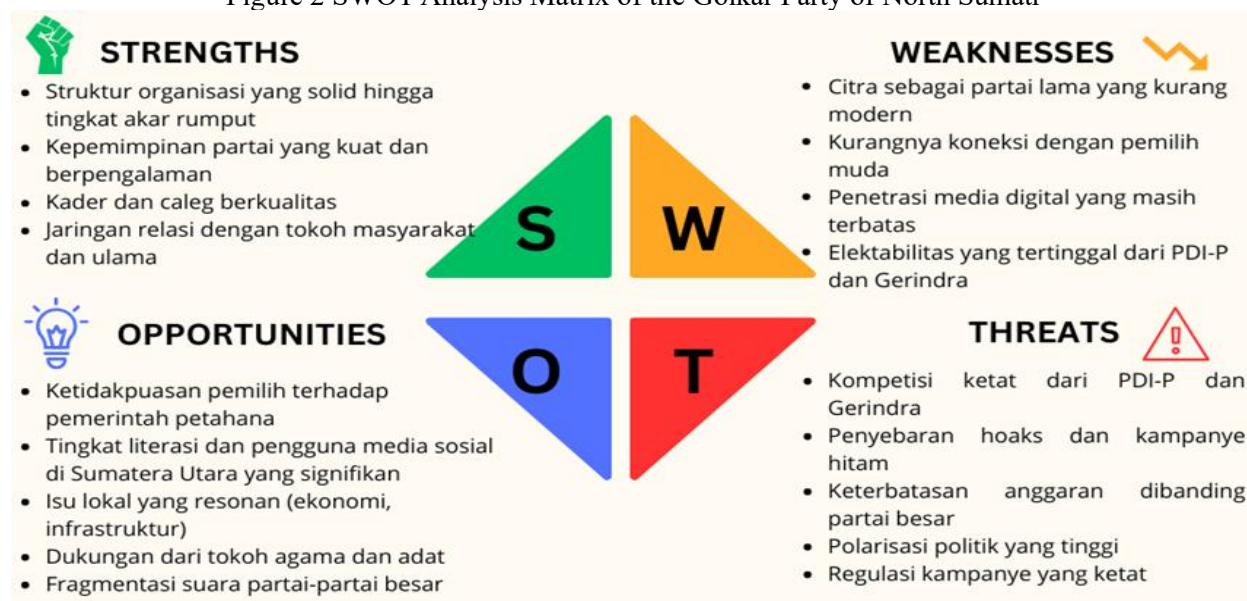
The history of elections shows that North Sumatra has been one of the most dynamic arenas for political contestation. This phenomenon cannot be separated from the diversity of its citizens' social identities. Each social identity grows in a non-dominant size. Referring to the results of the 2010 Population Census conducted by BPS, North Sumatra province now has a population of 15.3 million, consisting of at least 11 ethnic groups, with non-dominant proportions. In addition to ethnic diversity, religious identities are also quite diverse. Islam, Christianity, Catholicism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Confucianism, and various other beliefs coexist. Therefore, in a population concentration model formed from these diverse identities, each political force will compete for influence in every contested region. It is in these diverse regions that Golkar, a nationalist party known for its ability to unite all social identity forces in society, plays an optimal role. In this context, the Golkar Party is also able to plan effective political communication strategies to win votes in each voting district. Based on interviews with the leadership of the North Sumatra DPD Golkar and the election campaign team, the strategic political communication planning process began well before the official campaign period, namely in mid-2023. This phase began with a comprehensive situation analysis that included an internal analysis (the strengths and weaknesses of Golkar North

Sumatra), an external analysis (opportunities and threats in the developing political dynamics). This was followed by a competitor analysis (the strengths and strategies of other parties), as well as an analysis of voters in terms of their characteristics, preferences, and political behavior in North Sumatra. This was explained by an informant (Chair of the North Sumatra DPD Golkar);

"Before the 2024 elections, we will continue to conduct in-depth studies and technical work to respond to the political dynamics developing in North Sumatra, as well as events occurring at the national level. Although we realize that in 2019, Golkar was only in third place with around 13 percent of the vote. This situation was a severe blow and must be addressed. The Golkar leadership, under the leadership of Bang Ijeck (Musa Rajeksah), has shown mature solidarity. This is evident from an internal survey to understand the strength of the party machine. Under Bang Ijeck's command, almost the entire leadership at the DPC level and the party wings have entrusted the party's victory to him. We also conducted a survey to map out crucial issues developing in society and public preferences in the 2024 elections, so that we have a general picture for conducting campaigns and developing party programs".

If we use a situation analysis using the SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) framework and translate it into the political communication strategy planning of the Golkar Party of North Sumatra, the results can be visualized in the following matrix;

Figure 2 SWOT Analysis Matrix of the Golkar Party of North Sumatr



Source: Compiled from internal documents of the North Sumatra DPD Golkar, 2023

Based on the SWOT analysis, the North Sumatra Golkar Party also mapped voter segmentation and identified priority target audiences. This was done based on several variables such as demographic, geographic, psychological, and political behavior characteristics that are developing in society.

Table 3 Mapping of Segmentation and Priority Voter Targets of the North Sumatra Golkar Party

Segment	Characteristics	Communication Strategy
Traditional voters	Aged 45 and above, rural, lower secondary education, party loyalists	Conventional media (newspapers, radio, face-to-face meetings), narratives of continuity and stability
Urban swing voters	Aged 30-50, urban, higher education, professionals, rational voters	Digital and print media, focus on concrete programs and track records
Young voters	Aged 17-35, urban/peri-urban, active social media users, first-time voters	Social media (Instagram, TikTok, YouTube), visual and interactive content
Religious voters	All ages, strong religious values, follow religious leaders	Religious lectures, preaching, endorsements by religious figures, religious content

Source: Golkar Party Internal Survey Data, 2023, processed by researchers

Table 3 shows that this mapping indicates that the Golkar Party identifies voters in order to adjust its political communication strategy. In an interview with the head of the North Sumatra DPD Golkar election campaign team, he said:

“For the Golkar Party, young voters are the largest and most strategic segment that is the main focus of our digital communication strategy. However, the party also does not neglect the traditional voter segment, which is the loyal Golkar voter base, through face-to-face meetings” (2023).

These findings confirm that for the Golkar Party, it is important to reach young voters through digital media, but also not to abandon a multiplatform approach to reach all voter segments, including traditional voters. In addition, based on the findings of this study, it is known that the North Sumatra DPD Golkar Party also formulates the party's goals and positioning as an effort to strengthen the party's system and institutions. The political communication strategies employed include: first, raising political awareness. This is done by ensuring that the party name and its legislative candidates are known to all voter segments in each electoral district. Second, building a positive image and credibility. This strategy involves changing the public's perception of Golkar from an “old party” to an experienced party that remains relevant and modern, as well as building public trust in the capacity and integrity of the party's cadres. Third, mobilizing support and participation. Encouraging voters not only to vote for Golkar, but also to get involved in the party's political activities. This was revealed by the secretary of the North Sumatra DPD Golkar, who said:

“Golkar North Sumatra is optimistic that it will be able to attract millennial voters. Under the leadership of Ijeck (Musa Rajekshah), it has recruited around 140,000 new young cadres to date. This effort is specifically aimed at preparing young people to become territorial cadres at the village/sub-district level and in work groups. The initiative began with training through a political education program at the Golkar Institute in Jakarta ” (2023).

A similar sentiment was expressed by a North Sumatra DPRD candidate, who said,

"Brother Ijeck (Musa Rajekshah) always reminds us cadres to go directly to the community, not only when there are political interests. The presence of Golkar must be felt by the community, such as through the house renovation program. In addition, Brother Ijeck also always emphasizes “polite politics” to all cadres, not to use dirty tactics to achieve political targets, not to elbow our own friends, because we must support each other" (2023).

From the interview results, it can be explained that the North Sumatra DPD Golkar has developed a clear and consistent positioning. This positioning emphasizes the key element that, in order to achieve the party's goals, the North Sumatra DPD Golkar is building an image of a party that has integrity, ethicality, and commitment to the public interest.

The Use of Mass Media in the Golkar Party's Strategy to Win the North Sumatra Regional Representative Council Election.

1. Media Platform Diversification: Integration of Digital and Conventional Media

This study found that the North Sumatra Golkar Party used a multi-platform communication strategy by integrating digital and conventional media. This effort is based on the understanding that each voter segment has different preferences and media consumption patterns, requiring a diverse approach to reach all target voters. From the data obtained, the mass media used in campaigning for the North Sumatra DPD Golkar's political activities can be classified as follows:

Table 4 Types of Mass Media Used and Target Voter Segments

Jenis Media	Platform	Key Segments	Frequency	Content Types
Conventional media				
Television	TVRI Sumut	Traditional voters	Political ads	Candidate profiles, party programs, testimonials
Radio	Local Radio	Rural voters	Political ad spots	Issue discussions, party programs
Newspapers	Analisa, Waspada, Sinar Indonesia Baru	Urban voters	Political ads	Candidate profiles, vision and mission, party political programs
Digital Media				
Instagram	@golkarsumut, @jurnal_golkarsumut	Young urban voters	2-3 posts/day	Infographics, quotes, activity photos
Tiktok	@golkarsumut	Young voters	2-3 videos/day	Creative short videos, trending content

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Twitter	@Golkarsumut	Young voters	1-2 post/day	Political narratives, campaign messages
Facebook	@golkarsumut	Urban voters	Tentative	Photos, party activities
Whatsapp	Volunteer groups	Cross-age, grassroots base	Tentative	Campaign messages, activity information, mobilization
Website	www.golkarsumut.or.id	Information seekers, educated voters	Periodic updates	Profiles, programs, news, contacts

Source: Internal data from the North Sumatra Golkar Regional Representative Council Communication Team, 2023, processed by researchers

From Table 4, it can be seen that the North Sumatra DPD Golkar uses no less than eight different media platforms, each with its own target audience, characteristics, and type of content. This diverse use of media demonstrates an understanding of the media ecosystem and voter media consumption behavior. Based on the information obtained, social media such as Instagram and TikTok are the main platforms that are most actively used. Social media has become the spearhead of the North Sumatra Golkar DPD's digital communication strategy in campaigning for party activities. This was also conveyed by the North Sumatra Golkar DPD Media Team in an interview, saying;

"Golkar North Sumatra produces various types of content tailored to the characteristics of each platform and voter preferences. We have learned from previous experiences that overly rigid and formal political content no longer attracts attention, especially among the younger generation. They want to see the personal side of party cadres and candidates; they want to be entertained while understanding. So, the content on social media is very diverse, some serious, some casual, some informative, some entertaining. The important thing is not to stray from the party's positioning. And the most actively used social media platforms are Instagram and TikTok."

Although digital media is a priority, the North Sumatra DPD Golkar does not neglect the important role of conventional media in its political communications. Conventional media, especially newspapers, remain an important channel for reaching traditional voters who are not active on digital media, as well as for building the party's legitimacy and credibility. In addition to paid advertisements in newspapers, the North Sumatra DPD Golkar is also actively pursuing media relations to gain positive media coverage. The party's communications team regularly sends out press releases, holds press conferences, and provides open access to journalists to cover the party's campaign activities. As a result, the North Sumatra DPD Golkar always receives local media coverage at an average frequency of 1-3 news items per day during the campaign period, with the tone of the reporting being mostly neutral to positive. This was explained by the executive of the Medan City Golkar DPC:

"We always build good relationships with the media. We are responsive, open, and professional in our interactions with journalists. When there are important activities, we always invite the media and answer their questions openly. This is important for us to do in order to build a party brand that is not only transparent but also educates voters."

From the interviews, it can be understood that the strategy employed by the Golkar Party emphasizes the importance of controlling the media agenda to shape public perception. By obtaining extensive and positive media coverage, Golkar North Sumatra succeeded in ensuring that the issues and messages they prioritized were known to the public. Based on the results of interviews with DPD and DPC Golkar Party officials, it was stated that the mass media strategy contributed significantly to the party's success in the 2024 elections. However, they also acknowledged that conventional communication strategies such as internal party consolidation, recruiting qualified legislative candidates, grassroots campaigns, and relevant programs had a significant impact. This was emphasized by the DPC Golkar Party executive in Medan City, who said:

"The mass media, especially digital media (social media), is a game changer for the party. Without a mature and solid media strategy, it would be impossible for us to increase our votes in each electoral district. But we believe that the mass media alone is not enough. Therefore, we are also preparing a strategy by recruiting popular, qualified cadres and legislative candidates, implementing measurable programs, and maintaining the solidarity of our cadres in the field. Everything must work together." (2023).

A similar sentiment was expressed by an informant (a young voter) who provided a perspective from the voter's point of view, saying:

"I am very happy with Golkar, because I often see Ijeck's content on social media such as Instagram. The content is interesting, natural, and not boring like usual political campaigns. From there, I started to find out more

about Golkar's programs, especially for young people, and it turns out there are many. Finally, I followed and voted for Golkar candidates."

The testimonials in the interview show that the digital communication strategy successfully achieved its goals of public awareness and engagement, which then influenced voter preferences and decisions.

Discussion

The Role of Mass Media in Golkar Party's Victory in the North Sumatra Elections

The North Sumatra DPD Golkar Party has strategically utilized mass media since the 2018 North Sumatra gubernatorial election, forming a professional media team that continues to grow until the 2024 legislative elections. This team has the main task of maintaining the continuity of the party's political communication, ensuring that Golkar's political messages are effectively conveyed to the public through various media channels, including print, electronic, and digital. With a positive and human interest-based narrative approach, Golkar has succeeded in building an image as a party that is close to the community and cares about local issues. One of the communication strategies used is a soft selling approach, where political messages are conveyed subtly through various social programs that attract public attention. One example of the success of this strategy is the house renovation program carried out by Golkar North Sumatra. This program is not only a form of social contribution by the party, but also strengthens Golkar's image as a party that is active in the community. Media coverage of this program has had a positive impact on the party, portraying Golkar not only as a political force but also as a real agent of social change (Meifilina, A, 2021).

Another advantage that Golkar has in utilizing the mass media is its flexible political position, which is not trapped in national political polarization. Unlike other parties that explicitly direct their support to certain presidential and vice presidential candidates, Golkar remains focused on winning legislative seats. This stance gives Golkar an advantage in attracting swing voters who tend to avoid involvement in national political conflicts. The mass media plays a major role in highlighting Golkar's more neutral stance, allowing the party to promote its political agenda more broadly without losing its traditional voter base. This is also in line with the research by Arpandi, A (2023), which concludes that digital media plays a central role in building political image, increasing public participation, and enabling more personal and interactive two-way communication, as well as increasing public political participation in elections. The use of digital technology and data analytics is also an important element in the party's mass media strategy (Firmansyah, et al. 2023). By analyzing voter behavior data, Golkar can tailor its campaign messages to be more relevant to the needs of the community. Digital technology, such as social media and WhatsApp groups, enables faster and more efficient dissemination of information, while data analytics helps Golkar optimize its communication strategy based on voter preference trends. This shows that mass media not only functions as a tool for disseminating information, but also as a platform for closer interaction with the community (Firmansyah, et al. 2023; Guntur, A.M. et al., 2023; Hayat, A, M, et al. 2021).

The role of political figures such as Musa Rajekshah (Bang Ijeck) in the use of mass media cannot be ignored. His personal social media accounts have greater appeal than the party's official accounts because of his more personal and authentic communication approach. Bang Ijeck actively shares various stories and experiences that are relevant to the community, building stronger emotional bonds with voters. Bang Ijeck's activity on social media also has a broad impact, as much of his content is then picked up by the mass media, expanding the reach of Golkar's political message. Therefore, as a strategic channel of political communication, the mass media plays a role in receiving and responding to public aspirations. In fact, the mass media has significance in branding parties and party elites, thereby increasing popularity and electability trends (Hidayati, F.R., 2021; Rahmah, S., 2021). In addition to central figures, Golkar legislative candidates have also improved their media literacy in building relationships with journalists and influencers. This ability helps them disseminate political messages more effectively, while ensuring that the narratives appearing in the media remain positive for Golkar. With a good understanding of how the media works, Golkar figures are able to maximize their exposure and maintain the alignment of their communication strategies with the party's campaign objectives.

Golkar has proven that modern and integrated media strategies can have a significant impact on a party's victory. The combination of mass media, digital technology, and the right narrative has enabled the party to reach voters from various segments of society. Consistency in delivering messages that are relevant to the needs of the community and the ability to adapt to changes in political and media dynamics are key to Golkar's success in utilizing the media as a tool for political victory and maintaining the party's voice as a centrist party (Wibisono, D.D, et al., 2023). However, even though the mass media has a major influence, the main challenge faced by Golkar is ensuring that the messages conveyed remain authentic and sustainable. Dependence on the mass media

can also be a risk if the party fails to maintain consistency in its political narrative. Therefore, Golkar needs to continue to strengthen its relationship with the media and improve digital literacy among its cadres so that the party's communication strategy remains effective in the future. The success of Golkar's strategy in utilizing mass media in the 2024 Legislative Elections shows that the media not only functions as a communication tool, but also as a major factor in winning public trust. With a well-planned, integrated strategy that is adaptive to technological changes and voter preferences, Golkar has succeeded in maximizing the influence of mass media to strengthen its position as one of the dominant political parties in North Sumatra. This confirms that in the digital age, mass media is not only a tool for conveying political messages, but also a fundamental element in modern political competition (Nofiard, F, 2022; Munzir, A.A, 2019).

The Significance of Mass Media in Golkar Party's Victory from the Perspective of Voting Behavior Theory

Mass media plays a central role in shaping public perception and influencing voter behavior. In the context of the 2024 Legislative Elections, the Golkar Party in North Sumatra has successfully utilized mass media to consolidate voter support through a systematic and strategic approach. This success can be analyzed using several theories in voting behavior, such as the sociological model, psychological model, and rational choice model, which help explain how voters make decisions in choosing political parties (Patrizia, Catellani, 2004; Civettini, A. 2017). One of the main theories in voting behavior is the sociological model, which emphasizes the influence of social factors such as economic class, religion, and community background on voting decisions. In this case, Golkar utilizes mass media to create a narrative that they are a party that is close to the people and has strong social roots in North Sumatra. Social programs such as house renovations, disaster relief, and community activities that are often covered by the media give the impression that Golkar is an active party that cares about the needs of the community. With this social interest-based communication strategy, Golkar has succeeded in attracting voters from various social groups, especially those who prioritize stability and sustainable development. From a psychological model perspective, the mass media plays a role in shaping party loyalty through the creation of political identity (Patrizia, Catellani, 2004; Civettini, A. 2017). Golkar uses various media channels, including print media, television, and social media to strengthen the party's image in the public eye. The presence of central figures such as Musa Rajekshah (Bang Ijeck) is a key element in building voters' emotional identification with Golkar. Bang Ijeck's social media accounts, which are more personal and authentic than the party's official accounts, are able to create an emotional bond with voters. This success shows that psychological aspects of voting behavior, where voters are more likely to vote based on emotional affinity and perceived closeness to candidates, are one of the dominant factors in Golkar's victory in North Sumatra.

In addition, Golkar's approach to digital campaigns and data analytics can also be explained through the rational choice model. This theory states that voters tend to vote based on rational calculations of the benefits they will receive (Patrizia, Catellani, 2004; Civettini, A. 2017). The mass media was used to portray Golkar as a party that has the capacity to provide tangible benefits to the community, whether in the form of economic, social, or political programs. The use of analytical data helps Golkar identify voter segments that are susceptible to certain issues, allowing them to tailor their campaign messages to the specific needs of these voter groups. With this approach, Golkar has succeeded in directing voters who were previously undecided or swing voters to vote for the party. Another advantage that Golkar gained from utilizing the mass media was its ability to avoid the effects of political polarization in the presidential election. In the 2024 election, many parties experienced difficulties because they had to divide their attention between winning legislative elections and supporting certain presidential candidates. However, Golkar took a more flexible approach by remaining focused on winning legislative seats, while supporting the Prabowo-Gibran pair in a more subtle manner. The mass media played an important role in shaping the narrative that Golkar remained neutral and more oriented towards local interests, rather than simply following the national political trend. This strategy was effective in attracting voters who tended to avoid national political polarization but still wanted to vote for a party with strong political capacity.

In addition to the communication strategy aspect, the mass media also plays an important role in building Golkar's credibility as a party with a clear development vision. Media coverage of Golkar's programs in the regions gives the impression that this party has a solid track record in government and is capable of providing real solutions to community problems. From the perspective of agenda-setting theory, the media not only plays a role in conveying information but also in determining the issues that become the focus of public attention (Rogers, E. M., and Dearing, J. W. 1988). By consistently presenting Golkar in a positive light in the news, the media helps build the perception that Golkar is a stable party oriented towards the welfare of the community.

In addition, the mass media also serves as a tool to maintain the loyalty of existing voters while attracting new voters. In the theory of reinforcement (Adams, M. A. 2000; Champion, R. A. 1960), it is said that the media plays a role in strengthening existing political beliefs among loyal party supporters, while in conversion theory, the media can also influence voters who do not yet have a fixed political affiliation to switch to Golkar. This can be seen in how Golkar uses the media to reinforce its identity as a party with a long history in Indonesian politics, while also projecting an image of a modern party that is adaptive to changing times. Thus, Golkar has not only maintained its traditional voter base but has also succeeded in attracting younger generations who are more active in digital media. However, even though the mass media has a major influence on Golkar's victory, the challenges faced by this party in maintaining its influence are also quite significant. One of the main challenges is ensuring that the message conveyed remains authentic and is not merely temporary. In the digital context, voters are increasingly critical of political content, and media strategies that are excessive or appear manipulative can have the opposite effect, namely reducing the party's credibility.

Therefore, Golkar needs to continue to improve media literacy among its cadres and ensure that the narrative built in the mass media remains consistent with the reality perceived by the public. From another perspective, the media can also be a double-edged sword for Golkar. If the media focuses more on negative issues related to the party, voters who initially supported it may become passive or even switch to another party. Therefore, issue management in the mass media is a crucial factor in maintaining Golkar's positive image. Golkar needs to ensure that it retains control over the narratives that develop in the media to avoid the negative impact that could arise from unfavorable reporting. Overall, Golkar's success in the 2024 Legislative Elections in North Sumatra shows that effective use of mass media can be a very powerful tool in shaping voter behavior. By combining various data-driven communication strategies, creating relevant narratives, and maintaining political flexibility, Golkar succeeded in attracting public attention and winning the trust of voters. However, to maintain this success in the future, Golkar needs to continue adapting to the ever-changing dynamics of the media and ensure that their relationship with the public remains strong, not only during campaigns but also in their day-to-day political performance.

CONCLUSION

The mass media has been proven to have a significant positive influence on the victory of the Golongan Karya Party in the legislative elections in North Sumatra. The mass media plays a strategic role in shaping public opinion, disseminating political information, and directing public attention to certain candidates or political parties. The significant influence of the mass media on the Golkar Party's victory shows that exposure through various communication channels, such as television, radio, newspapers, and digital media, succeeded in increasing the party's electability. Through intense reporting, supportive framing, and planned political communication strategies, the mass media acted as a mediator between political parties and voters. In addition, social media, as part of modern mass media, has provided a broader space for direct interaction with voters, accelerated the dissemination of political messages, and facilitated the formation of a positive image for the Golongan Karya Party. Thus, the party's success in the legislative elections cannot be separated from the effective use of mass media as a political communication tool that is capable of reaching a wide audience quickly and systematically.

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