Social Media and Political Parties: An Analysis of Twitter Utilization as Political Communication

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Article Info	
	Abstract: This study aims to look at the activities of the @Gerindra Twitter account that utilizes Twitter as a digital communication medium for party branding. This research uses a descriptive qualitative method using the VOSViewer application as a research positioning and gap because digital communication research is not the first time. For the data analysis unit, the researcher used the NVivo 12 plus application to see the interactions carried out by the @Gerindra Twitter account. The results showed the transformation of the @Gerindra Twitter account, which previously only carried out branding activities using formal language and seemed rigid. However, the @Gerindra Twitter account has recently become a trending topic on Twitter several times because of its unusual communication style, which seems relaxed and not harsh. In addition, it also often tweets jokes that invite more and more Twitter user interactions. This shows that Gerindra's political party uses Twitter social media to communicate digitally with the public, especially millennials and Generation Z groups.

INTRODUCTION

The current era of digitalization can change every order in people's lives, including in the social interaction of the community with one another using social media platforms (Leyman, 2022; Yuan et al., 2023). Social media is widely used to see how the transition to new media involves various perspectives and highly interactive participation (Berrocal-Gonzalo et al., 2023; Dowling, 2022). The existence of social media provides an opportunity for each individual to get information widely and can also dialogue with several other audiences in cyberspace (Tassabehji et al., 2019).

The presence of social media is one of the impacts of technological development and has also been able to change people's behavior (Abbas et al., 2019; Chen & Lin, 2019). Social media has shifted the role of conventional media, such as print and broadcast media, which have seemed uninterested by some people. The use of the internet by social media makes social media a giant magnet and attraction and can invite anyone to participate by contributing and providing feedback openly (S. Ahmed & Gil-Lopez, 2024; Hoffmann & Lutz, 2023; Kuznetsova & Tolbert, 2023; Tang & Zhang, 2023).

The development of technology makes social media an alternative to establishing communication with various communities that are far away (Bruns, 2019; Urman & Katz,

2022). Until now, when viewed from the type or type of social media, many are used by the public, such as Twitter, Facebook, microblogging, and Instagram (Lawelai et al., 2022). Indonesia itself is included in quite a lot of social media users, for more details in Figure 1 below.
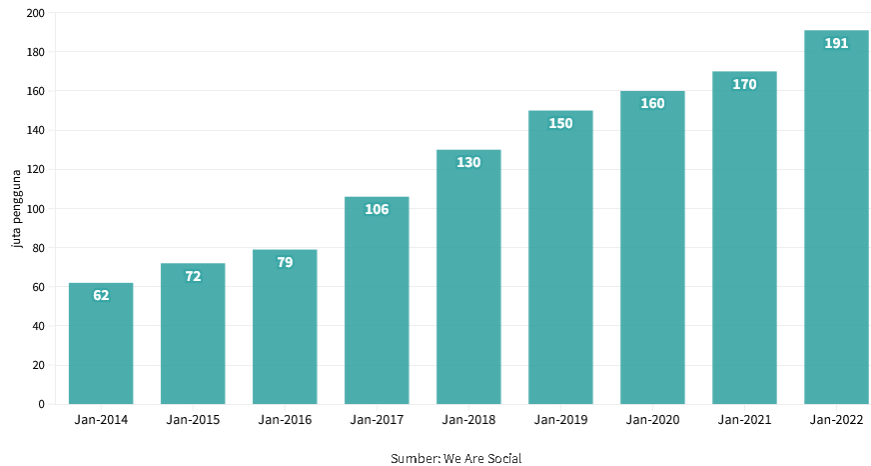

Figure 1. Social Media Users in Indonesia

If you look at the We Are Social report above, it can be seen that there is an increase in social media users from year to year, even data in January 2022 active social media users reached 191 million active users. This number increased by 12.35% compared to 2021, reaching 170 million active users. This shows that there is a cultural shift where the use of social media is a must in the current era in fulfilling one of the needs of life in the form of interaction with the community, even with the intermediary of social media platforms.

Seeing data regarding the ten largest social media users in Indonesia makes it a real thing how social media becomes a necessity in life today, for more complete data can be seen in Figure 2 below.
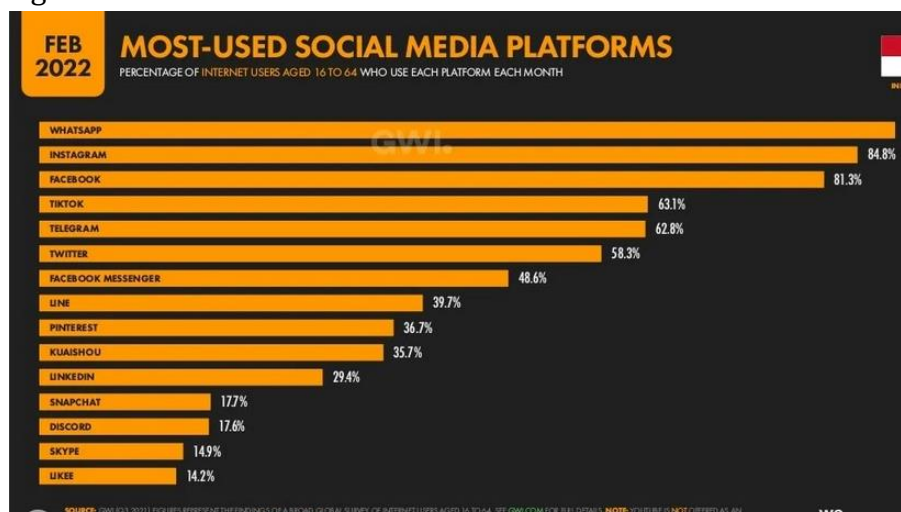

Figure 2. Social media that are widely used in Indonesia.

Based on data from We Are Social, around 88% of the total population uses WhatsApp social media in their daily lives. Following WhatsApp are Instagram and Facebook applications from a total population of 84.8% and 81.3% of the total population

of Indonesia. The total population of Indonesia until 2022 is 275.77 million people (Statistik, 2022). This means that most Indonesians utilize social media in their activities without any distance or age limit.

Nowadays, social media is not only used for interaction, but also as a medium for education, promotion and sharing information with everyone (Y. A. Ahmed et al., 2019; Greenhow & Chapman, 2020). Even the use of social media as a medium of interaction is not only carried out by individuals, but also by community organizations and government institutions, even political parties. The message can be interpersonal, but they actually have a goal to strengthen the publicity of the political message that has been made (Abdillah, 2014). There is nothing wrong even when political parties use social media, because social media was created to connect individuals with individuals, individuals with institutions, and institutions with institutions.

Seeing the conditions in which Indonesian people have used social media, so that this opportunity is utilized by political parties to image themselves (Hui, 2020). Because social media can promote the image of political parties very easily. This has a positive impact on political parties where they no longer need to interact directly with the community (Ernst et al., 2019; Heiss et al., 2019; Meléndez & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2019). In addition, the existence of social media facilitates the political communication of each political party to the public effectively and efficiently and is able to make one of the strategies in the campaign process in Indonesia.

Forming a political image for every actor and even political parties is very important, seeing that in 2024 a people's party will be held in the form of legislative, presidential, and vice president elections (Astuti, 2022). This requires each political party to establish communication and show a good image in the community. Political communication becomes decisive in making people believe because political images are formed based on information received by the audience, either directly or through mass media or nowadays with social media that conveys general and actual political messages (Farkas & Bene, 2021; Stier et al., 2018). Political communication that uses social media as an intermediary is said to be effective because it will be able to reach various groups of young voters to participate more (Ohme et al., 2020). The 2024 elections will also be dominated by millennials, who are also heavily involved in social media activities so far.

Therefore, it is not surprising that nowadays, more and more political actors and even political parties use social media to do activities and build their respective self-images (Bast, 2021), with the hope that the public will get to know and be more confident in the actor or political party. A micro-blogging social media site that also has many users in Indonesia is the Twitter platform, Twitter is a social networking service or micro-blogging that allows users to send, read, and reply to text messages of up to 280 characters or known as tweets.

It is interesting to see some of the phenomena happening on Twitter today, where the official account of the Gerindra party has increased followers and is also very active in addressing the public with contemporary and non-rigid language. Until now (20/12/2022), the Gerinda Party account has 641 thousand followers, and the account has even become the talk of netizens several times because it often tweets about

motivation in the morning, rhymes, and even often holds door price. There is nothing wrong if the account owner is an influencer or public figure, because it is their job to entertain the public. Interestingly, the official accounts of political parties take on this role, thus creating a new phenomenon regarding how political parties can also get closer to the community through social media, which is Twitter.

This research aims to see how the Gerindra party is currently doing various ways to get closer to the community and also, at the same time, by utilizing Twitter as Digital communication. Research on political party communication is not the first time. Several previous researchers have also researched this matter. However, researchers want to see how previous researchers have carried out the position of the research gap regarding the Gerindra party. For more details, it can be seen in Figure 3 below.
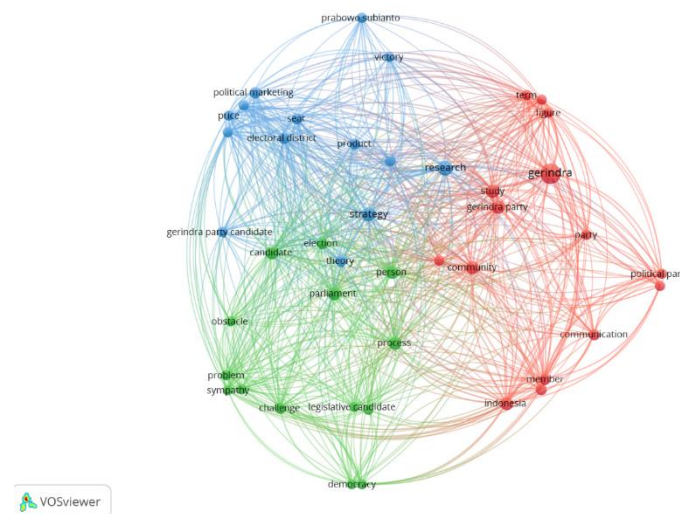

Figure 3. Interaction of Research Results

This image is the result of visualizing a network of research results that discuss the Gerindra Party. It is clear that there are already many who have conducted research on the Gerindra Party, but the discussion about the Gerindra Party is mostly about Strategy, Figures, Political communication and future challenges. It can also be seen how each article is also related to one another, which indicates how each researcher is also connected and complements existing research. In this study, the researcher focuses on the digital communication of political parties, which looks at the utilization of social media Twitter by the Gerindra Party as a massive digital communication.

The digital age has indeed made a change in the current political communication (Boulianne, 2020; Olof Larsson, 2023). What makes a difference is that there is no long separation in political communication between the elite and the citizen as is the case in Indonesia today. The efforts made by the Gerindra party in utilizing Twitter as a means of political communication clearly manifest that there is no longer the rare separation mentioned earlier. Every political party becomes more in touch with the community by being able to interact without having to meet directly. Therefore, researchers are interested in discussing the communication carried out by the Gerindra Party through its Twitter account.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach that uses the VOSviewer application (Prakoso et al., 2023), to see how the research gap and the position of researchers with previous research (Kirby, 2023). The research data comes from a social media twitter account owned by the Gerindra Party with an account named @Gerindra. The Gerindra Party account was chosen because it saw an increase in activity on Twitter social media which made a means of digital communication by the party. Furthermore, the data was coded using the NVivo 12 plus tool (Allsop et al., 2022).

The stages carried out by the research in conducting this analysis begin with the data input stage, which takes data from Twitter through the NCapture fiture, then coding, exploring, visualizing data, and presenting data so that finally concluding. Researchers limited the Twitter activity of the @Gerindra account to May-October 2022. To display the results descriptively, researchers also use tables and images to clarify the reading in the analysis section that has been carried out. The analysis section uses three analysis tools on NVivo 12 plus, namely graph analysis, word cloud analysis and cluster analysis.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Tweet from Political Party Admin

In this discussion, the author tries to see how the phenomenon of social media Twitter is utilized by the official account of the Gerindra party in conducting political communication to the public. The number of tweets of an account will be influential in terms of displaying the intensity of use and dissemination of information carried out. Generally, most official political party accounts are formal and rigid, where the content only contains party activities and indicates being in the imaging process. It was very visible during the 2019 elections that @Gerindra's Twitter account was very active in campaigning for its candidates then. The communication style during the 2019 elections was also very formal and not interactive with the community, which did not build a good image for the party.

Post 2019 there is a very significant change in Gerindra's Twitter account, with the communication model built not only formally but also interactively in accordance with their target millennial groups, who are many on Twitter if you look at writing on the Mojok.co media platform, who also agreed that there was a considerable transformation carried out by the admin of the Gerindra party. In addition, Mulyadi also explained that becoming an admin in social media is not easy because you have to know in detail the message to be conveyed (Product Knowledge). The most important thing is that you must be able to adjust the characteristics of your follower's Twitter, as social media has great potential, as evidenced by the active admin replying to his followers' comments.

Some of the tweets made by the Gerindra admin have proven to be very attractive to millennial groups and even Generation Z. This is indicated by the many interactions carried out by the Gerindra admin, which are not, as usual, discussing party agendas and party activities alone, but are also very interactive with their followers and are not rigid

and seem more relaxed according to the habits of Twitter users so far. one of the tweets made by the Gerindra Twitter admin can be seen in Figure 4 below.

Figure 4. Gerindra's Interesting Admin Tweets

The results of the capture layer show one of the activities carried out by Gerindra's twitter admin which is unusual from the daily life of political parties on social media which is only party branding with all the activities and activities of each party. Gerindra's admin is able to create interactions that are interesting and in accordance with the character of twitter users, most of whom are Generation Z groups who have a character that does not really like discussions or chats that are too formal and rigid. Even twitter users have wondered why the party's official account has become very active in interacting using twitter social media to greet and sometimes has nothing to do with direct party imaging and political education. Even if you look deeper, Gerindra's Twitter admin also often discusses things that are "dime" and seem to be just joking, as in Figure 5 below.

Figure 5. Gerindra Admin's "dime" Tweet

The next screenshot shows how the Gerindra Party interacts with its followers by prioritizing jokes that are often known today as "Gombalan receh". This is indeed one of the identities with activities on Twitter that prioritize interesting tweets and have high humor. This is different from Instagram or Facebook, which prioritize showing daily activities with a tendency to show off. Gerindra's Twitter admin seems to be very familiar with the characteristics of twitter users in Indonesia who really like things that smell of humor even though sometimes it is more of a "dime" term. Even so, this does not mean that the Gerindra Party Admin does not prioritize the matter of political education that must be given to the public, but the admin activities that have been carried out at this time are a form of political marketing on social media for millennials and Generation Z groups.

Gerindra Party Account Tweet Activity

The number of tweets of an account will affect many things and indicate the intensity of use and dissemination of information carried out. This is related to job characteristics and organizational commitment. The number of Gerindra Account tweets in 2022 was 1,127 tweets on twitter. Basically, the more the number of tweets carried out, the more interactions that will arise, and the more information is disseminated.

Some of the tweets Gerindra's account has made in the last few months can be seen in Figure 6 below.
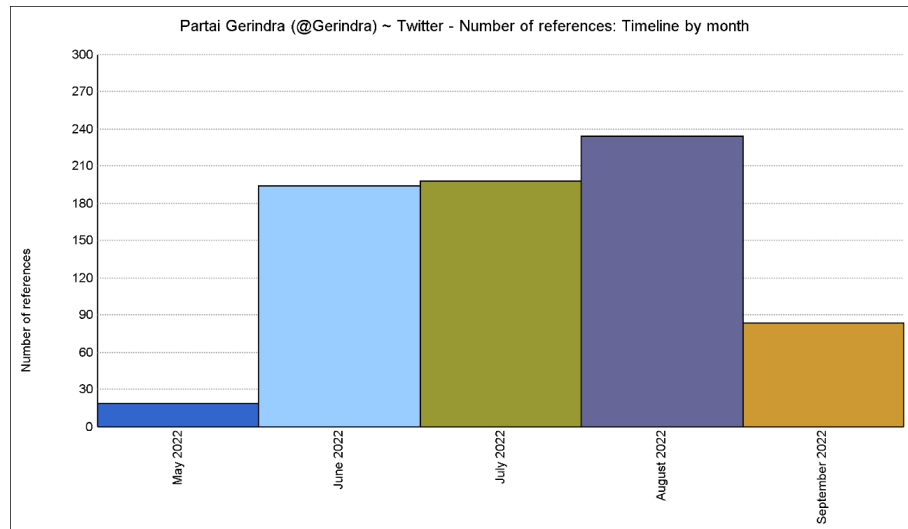
Figure 6. Number of Tweets of Gerindra Party

The diagram above shows the tweet activity of the Gerindra Party in the last few months of 2022. It is very visible that the tweet activity carried out by theindra Party is very high in August 2022. This is because August is the month of Indonesian independence, where interaction activities that smell of nationalism are very much done. While very little activity occurred in May 2022, there were only 19 tweets. The fluctuations that occur in Gerindra Party's tweet activity are normal because all activities and activities are very few in the middle of the year. A drastic increase in June shows that the Gerindra party on Twitter is active again when entering the election stage process, which began in June 2022.
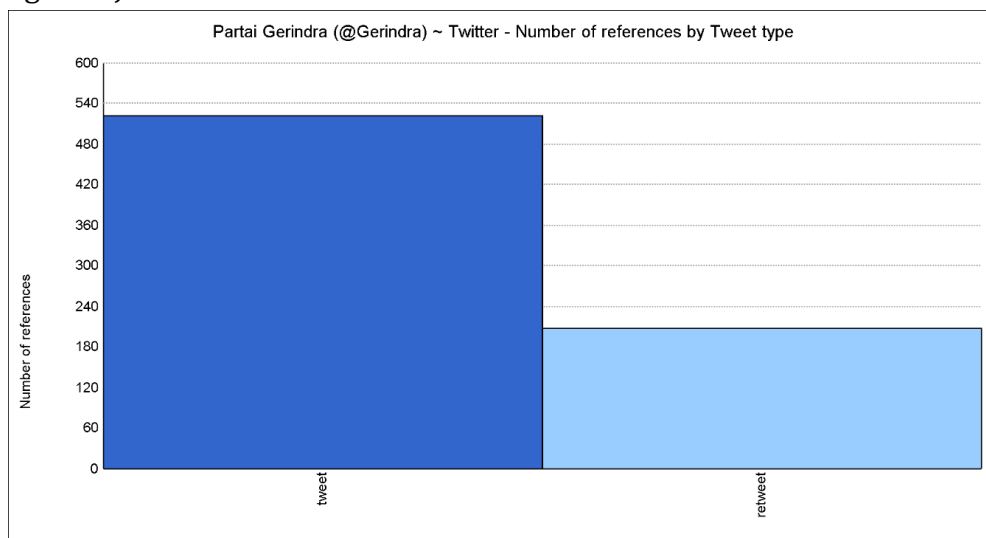

Figure 7. Number of Gerindra Party type Tweets

The Twitter app has two characters to view their respective activities, firstly direct tweets and secondly retweets from other accounts. The two categories have different functions. The direct tweet feature is an independent tweet of one's own ideas that the account owner wants to express, while retweets from other accounts aim to share tweets in the form of information obtained from others and we account owners forward to our own followers. Based on the activities carried out by the Gerindra account, it is very noticeable that there are many activities in the form of direct tweets rather than retweet

activities. The number of tweets made by Gerindra's account was recorded as many as 521 tweets in the period from January to September 2022. Meanwhile, there were 208 retweets made by Gerindra's account.

The difference in the number of tweets and retweets from the activities of the Gerindra account is quite far, where there are more independent tweet activities than retweets. This shows that the Gerindra party provides information directly rather than retweeting from other accounts. As explained earlier, one of the interesting things about Gerindra's current account is that it not only conveys internal political party activities but also provides motivation or just a good morning greeting. The number of interesting interaction activities from Gerindra's account makes more and more interactions occur with each other, so it is not surprising that the Gerindra party account has been a trending topic on Twitter several times.

In addition to seeing the types of tweets made by Gerindra Accounts, several other things need to be seen, especially in the results of discussions that often appear in tweets or retweets. For more details, it can be seen in Figure 8 below.

Figure 8. Word Cloud Tweet Gerindra Account

The activity of tweets and retweets will automatically be recorded in each user's twitter account. Starting with what is often said by the account and the intensity of repeating it is discussed at a later time. The data shows that the word Good Morning is very often spoken by the Gerindra account. After the word is followed by the words pray, do activities, and also the hastag Indonesia raya. This shows that saying Good Morning is very dominant in tweets on Gerindra's Twitter account in 2022.

Based on the data presented by NVivo 12 plus, it is not surprising that so many followers are interested in the changes made by Gerindra's admin at this time. on twitter activities, it has been explained that followers are not too interested in formal speech alone, but must also be able to adjust and use language that is more relaxed and not rigid. It seems that this is the digital communication strategy of the Gerindra party using the Twitter social media platform to get closer to the community, especially in this case the millennial group and Generation Z. The implementation of the 2024 elections requires

sufficient time in building the branding of each political party, which is what is being done by the Gerindra party, which utilizes digital communication on Twitter.

CONCLUSION

In dynamic contemporary politics, the role of social media, particularly Twitter, has emerged as an important force in shaping political communication. This research highlights the transformative impact of digital platforms on political parties, with a particular focus on Gerindra Party's activities. Undoubtedly, social media has transcended its conventional boundaries, becoming an important tool not only for political actors but also for shaping public perceptions of political parties involved in election battles.

The result of this research is the importance of social media in political party branding strategies. Gerindra Party, as exemplified through its Twitter activity, strategically uses digital communication as a powerful channel to attract public attention. This underscores the evolving nature of political outreach in the digital age, where online platforms serve as a dynamic arena for parties to showcase their ideologies, initiatives, and connect with diverse audiences.

Additionally, this research underscores the strategic targeting of specific demographics, namely millennials and Generation Z, by Gerindra's party through its engagement on Twitter. Recognizing the huge potential of these groups as an influential voting bloc in the 2024 elections, the party tailored its digital communications to suit the preferences and interests of these tech-savvy generations. This deliberate approach reflects a careful understanding of the evolving political landscape, where the digital realm is becoming a key battleground for winning the hearts and minds of voters.

This research highlights the multifaceted role of social media Twitter as a political communication tool, emphasizing its instrumental role not only in disseminating party narratives but also in strategically engaging with specific voter segments. As political parties navigate the complicated dynamics of the digital age, this research underscores the importance of adaptability and strategic communication strategies to effectively navigate the evolving contours of contemporary politics.

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