

THE TRANSFORMATION OF PERSUASIVE TECHNIQUES IN POLITICAL COMMUNICATION IN THE DIGITAL ERA

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Abstract : This study explores persuasive techniques in political communication in the ever-evolving digital era, where social media platforms offer real-time interaction opportunities while simultaneously presenting significant challenges. The research focuses on the importance of a deep understanding of complex audience characteristics, the spread of disinformation, and the urgent need for ethical and socially responsible dimensions in every political campaign. Using a qualitative approach with literature review and content analysis methods, this article identifies various persuasive strategies, including compelling narratives, emotional appeal, message repetition, and the integration of accurate data and facts to build credibility. The findings reveal that the effectiveness of persuasion depends not only on communication skills but also on the communicator's ability to adapt to audience skepticism, understand cultural contexts, and counter hoaxes. Therefore, this study concludes that a holistic and sustainable approach—combining persuasive expertise with integrity, transparency, and a commitment to democratic dialogue—is key to achieving political goals and fostering meaningful public participation.

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Introduction

In today's era, engaging directly with the audience through social media has opened up new pathways for persuasion. Communicators can interact in real time, receive immediate feedback, and swiftly adjust their messages in response. This opportunity allows them to build closer and more personal relationships, thereby enhancing the persuasive impact. In the political arena, the art of persuasion through communication becomes crucial, as public attitudes and behaviors toward political issues can shift dramatically from a single short message. Therefore, thoroughly understanding the audience and employing appropriate rhetorical strategies are key to achieving desired political goals. (Alfiyani, 2018)

Political campaigns frequently employ various persuasive techniques to attract public attention and shape public opinion. In an age of fast-paced and diverse information, political communicators face increasingly complex challenges. They must deliver messages that are not only engaging but also relevant to the public's needs and aspirations. A lack of understanding of the target audience represents a major obstacle to effective persuasion. Without insight into the audience's background, values, and beliefs, a communicator risks delivering ineffective—or even damaging—messages. The emergence of social media and digital platforms has significantly complicated political communication, as information can be rapidly disseminated and misinterpreted. (Suryadi, 2019)

Persuasive techniques must also take into account ethical considerations and social responsibility. There is a risk that messages intended to influence may instead mislead or manipulate the audience. Political communicators must ensure integrity and transparency in every campaign they conduct. Effective political communication goes beyond merely conveying messages; it also emphasizes the cultivation of trust and positive relationships with the audience. This becomes especially challenging within a constantly evolving political landscape and rising skepticism toward available information. In the realm of persuasion, it is essential to study various techniques, including narrative strategies, emotional manipulation, and strategic repetition to enhance message effectiveness. Powerful storytelling can foster an emotional connection with listeners, making them more receptive to the ideas being conveyed. Emotional appeal can surpass logic in impact, placing responsibility on communicators to choose words and visuals that resonate with the audience's feelings. (Retpitasari & Khoiriyah, 2023)

Accurate data and factual information contribute to more credible persuasive messages. When the audience believes the information presented is trustworthy, they are more likely to accept and support the proposed ideas. Misleading or incomplete data presentation can jeopardize public trust in the communicator. It is crucial to be mindful of cultural and social contexts when communicating. Message reception is shaped by societal values and norms. Adapting persuasive strategies to the local context is vital for achieving the desired outcomes. It is also important to acknowledge the challenges of the digital world, where misinformation can spread rapidly and obscure the intended message. Therefore, communicators must focus not only on persuasion but also on educating and empowering audiences to discern valid information from falsehoods. Thus, persuasive techniques in political communication should be viewed as a dynamic and continuous process, requiring deep understanding of the audience, context, and communication ethics. This holistic and responsible

approach can foster more constructive dialogue and encourage more active political participation. (Al-Fikri et al., 2023)

Research Methodology

This study employs a qualitative approach using library research to explore persuasive techniques in political communication within the digital era. The qualitative approach was chosen for its capacity to deeply explore meanings, values, and communication strategies, particularly in understanding how persuasive techniques are applied across various contexts and communication media. According to Moleong (2021), qualitative research enables researchers to comprehend social phenomena from the perspectives of both audiences and political communicators.

This research goes beyond merely describing persuasive techniques; it also analyzes the impact of these techniques on public attitudes, opinions, and behavior. The focus is on persuasive techniques used in political communication, particularly in the context of social media and digital platforms. The data analyzed in this study were obtained from various secondary sources, including academic journals, books, news articles, political campaign media documentation, and political communication content from Indonesian national political figures on social media. The data collection was conducted through a systematic documentation process.

The research procedure followed several stages: identifying and collecting relevant and up-to-date literature sources; selecting data based on relevance to the research focus namely, persuasive techniques in political communication; conducting content analysis of the collected documents by identifying the types of persuasive techniques used, their contexts, and their impact on audiences; and drawing conclusions based on the analytical findings.

Data analysis is conducted using content analysis, which systematically examines narratives, messages, symbols, and rhetorical strategies in political communication. This technique is particularly suitable for exploring symbolic and persuasive communication content. In analyzing the data, the researcher mapped out types of persuasive techniques such as repetition, emotional appeals, message personalization, and the use of data and facts to build credibility, as outlined by Effendy (2022) within the framework of mass and political communication.

As Effendy (2022) explains, mass and political communication have their own frameworks that must be deeply understood. This study draws upon several communication and persuasion theories as the foundation for analysis, including two-way communication, the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), and agenda-setting theory. The ELM is particularly significant for analyzing how audiences process political messages, whether through central or peripheral routes, depending on their motivation and cognitive capacity to respond (Cahyadi, 2023).

In determining criteria for secondary data, this study prioritizes the credibility of sources, the relevance of content to the topic, and the timeliness of the information (published between 2020 and 2025). The researcher also considered issue representation and the diversity of perspectives to ensure a comprehensive and objective analysis.

To ensure data validity, this research applies source triangulation by comparing information from various documents and references. This approach aims to enhance the validity of the findings and ensure an analysis that is not biased. The validation process is strengthened through repeated evaluations and collaborative discussions

among researchers to minimize interpretative bias. This study does not aim to generalize its findings but rather to provide a comprehensive insight into the dynamics of persuasive techniques in political communication in the digital era. The results are descriptive-analytical in nature and are expected to serve as a foundation for further research or the development of more ethical and effective political communication strategies.

This methodological approach was selected because contemporary political communication is highly dynamic, with persuasive techniques constantly evolving alongside technological advances and shifts in audience behavior. A qualitative approach through literature study offers flexibility and depth in analyzing the complexity of today's political communication phenomena.

Results and Discussion

The Evolution of the Political Communication Landscape in the Digital Era

The digital era has fundamentally transformed the nature of political communication. The emergence of social media platforms has not only provided alternative channels for communication but also created a new paradigm of interaction between political actors and their public. Within this dynamic, persuasive techniques have undergone substantial development, requiring a comprehensive understanding of two-way communication.

Digital platforms enable political communicators to engage in direct dialogue with the public, receive immediate responses, and adapt communication strategies based on the feedback obtained. This phenomenon presents opportunities to foster more personal and intimate relationships with audiences, which can enhance the persuasive power of political messages. However, this transformation also introduces new complexities that demand proper understanding and strategic management.

The Increasingly Complex Characteristics of Audiences in Contemporary Political Communication

One of the main challenges in implementing effective persuasive techniques lies in understanding the increasingly heterogeneous and complex nature of modern audiences. In this fast-paced information era, the public has broad access to a variety of information sources that shape their perspectives and attitudes toward political issues. This condition requires political communicators to develop a more nuanced understanding of their audience's backgrounds, value systems, beliefs, and expectations.

A failure to grasp these audience characteristics may result in messages that are irrelevant or even counterproductive. When political communicators fail to align their messages with the needs and expectations of the audience, the risk of negative responses or resistance increases significantly. Therefore, audience research particularly the analysis of demographic, psychographic, and media consumption patterns becomes a critical element in designing effective persuasive strategies.

The Dynamics of Social Media Platforms and Information Challenges

Social media has become a primary stage for political communication, while simultaneously presenting new challenges in the distribution and interpretation of information. The speed at which information spreads through digital platforms allows political messages to reach wide audiences in a short time. However, this also

increases the risk of distortion, misinterpretation, or manipulation of information. The phenomena of echo chambers and filter bubbles on social media reinforce audience confirmation biases, where individuals tend to accept only information that aligns with their preexisting views.

This creates particular challenges for political communicators attempting to engage audiences with diverse or even opposing perspectives. Persuasive strategies must therefore be adapted to penetrate these psychological barriers and foster openness to alternative viewpoints.

Ethical Aspects of Persuasive Techniques in Politics

The application of persuasive techniques in political communication cannot be separated from ethical considerations and social responsibility. There is a fine line between legitimate persuasion and manipulation that can undermine democratic processes. Political communicators have a moral obligation to ensure that the messages they convey are not misleading, do not distort facts, and do not exploit the psychological vulnerabilities of their audiences.

Integrity and transparency are essential pillars in building public trust. When audiences perceive that political communicators are honest and trustworthy, the effectiveness of persuasion naturally increases. Conversely, if it is revealed that a communicator uses misleading information or manipulative tactics, their credibility will deteriorate, potentially causing negative consequences for the broader political process.

Persuasive Strategies Through Narrative and Emotion

Effective persuasion often relies on storytelling to establish an emotional connection with the audience. Powerful narratives can transform abstract information into memorable and easily digestible messages. Politicians can help audiences grasp complex issues through storytelling, making them more personal and meaningful. The emotional components of political discourse exert a strong influence, often outweighing the impact of rational arguments. Emotional stimuli can drive audience engagement and shape behavior. However, emotional appeals must be employed cautiously and ethically in persuasion. Politicians must recognize that manipulating emotions for unethical purposes can undermine democratic processes and erode public trust.

The Role of Repetition in Message Reinforcement

Repetition remains a timeless and highly relevant persuasive technique in contemporary political discourse. Repeating key messages across various formats and platforms enhances audience recall and increases the likelihood of influencing their attitudes and behaviors. Effective repetition goes beyond merely repeating words; it involves delivering core messages through creative and contextually relevant variations. In today's saturated information environment, audiences are bombarded with messages from multiple sources. Strategic repetition of core messages can help them stand out amid the noise. However, politicians must be cautious to avoid excessive or intrusive repetition, which may provoke negative reactions.

Adapting to Audience Skepticism and Critical Thinking

The increased availability of information has made audiences more skeptical and critical of political messages. Modern society possesses the capacity to verify

information, compare sources, and analyze message consistency. Political communicators must refine their communication skills to ensure accuracy and transparency. While skepticism can pose a challenge, it also reflects an informed and engaged public. A skilled politician can turn this skepticism into an opportunity to build trust through openness, consistency, and accountability. They must be prepared to answer difficult questions, acknowledge uncertainty when appropriate, and demonstrate commitment to the values they advocate.

Integrating Data and Facts in Persuasive Strategies

In the post-truth era, relying on accurate data and facts is more crucial than ever for establishing credibility. Political claims are subject to scrutiny by skeptical audiences who demand concrete evidence. To be effective, persuasive techniques must be grounded in solid research and transparent, comprehensive data presentation. However, the use of data in political communication poses its own challenges. Data can be misused or misrepresented to support specific arguments. Cherry-picking data or using misleading statistics can erode public trust and endanger democratic integrity. Politicians responsible for communication must commit to presenting data fairly and within the proper context.

Cultural and Social Contexts in Political Communication

The effectiveness of persuasive techniques is heavily influenced by the cultural and social context in which communication occurs. The understanding and interpretation of political messages are shaped by a society's values, norms, traditions, and historical experiences. A successful political communicator requires a deep understanding of local contexts and the ability to tailor their communication strategies accordingly. Globalization and digitalization have introduced new cultural complexities. While cultural homogenization facilitates the use of universal communication strategies, local distinctiveness must still be respected and acknowledged. Politicians must navigate the tension between universal and local values.

Addressing the Challenges of Disinformation and Hoaxes

The digital era has made it easier for misinformation and hoaxes to spread, potentially distorting legitimate political messages. The rapid dissemination of information via social media allows fake news to go viral before it can be verified. This creates a challenging environment for political communicators who aim to convey accurate and trustworthy information. To overcome this, political communicators must prioritize not only persuasive techniques but also media literacy education. Cultivating critical thinking requires equipping audiences with the knowledge and skills to distinguish credible information from unreliable sources. Long-term investment in democratic education is essential. Persuasion in politics should not be seen as a one-time act but as an ongoing process.

Contributing to Democratic Dialogue

The ultimate goal of persuasive techniques in political communication is not merely to gain support but to contribute to a more democratic dialogue. Effective political communication should encourage civic engagement, raise political awareness, and facilitate participatory democracy. In this context, persuasion must be understood as a tool for empowerment rather than domination. Responsible political

communicators will use their persuasive abilities to improve the quality of public discourse, promote informed participation, and build social cohesion amid the plurality of viewpoints. The digital era presents both challenges and opportunities for political persuasion techniques.

Future Implications

The success of persuasive techniques depends not only on communication skills and audience insight but also on a strong commitment to integrity, ethics, and social responsibility. As technology advances—particularly in areas such as artificial intelligence, virtual reality, and new communication platforms—political communication will undergo significant transformation. Politicians must become lifelong learners, capable of adapting to new realities while upholding ethical and effective communication principles. The most effective political communication strategies are those that build trust, foster understanding, and facilitate collaborative problem-solving. In an increasingly divided world, the ability to persuade with respect and empathy becomes more crucial than merely winning arguments.

Conclusion

The digital era has revolutionized political communication, creating new opportunities for persuasive techniques through direct and personal interactions on social media. However, this transformation also brings challenges, including increasingly diverse audience complexities, the spread of disinformation, and the growing need for ethical awareness. The effectiveness of persuasion now depends on understanding audience characteristics, the responsible use of narrative and emotional appeals, strategic message repetition, and the integration of accurate data and facts to establish credibility. In this context, political communicators must adapt to public skepticism, consider cultural contexts, and combat misinformation. Therefore, a holistic and sustainable approach one that combines communication skills with integrity and social responsibility is essential not only to influence public opinion, but also to strengthen democratic dialogue and foster more active civic participation.

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