

## Political Communication Strategies in the 2024 Solo Mayoral Election: The Case of Respati-Astrid

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### ABSTRACT

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Political communication media play a crucial role in shaping public opinion and influencing voter behavior in contemporary electoral contests. However, limited studies have specifically examined how non-traditional political candidates strategically integrate multiple communication media to achieve electoral success in local elections. This study aims to analyze the utilization of political communication media by the Respati-Astrid candidate pair in the 2024 Solo Mayoral Election. The research employs a descriptive qualitative approach, with data collected through interviews, documentation, and media analysis. Data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, which includes data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings reveal that the Respati-Astrid campaign implemented an integrated political communication strategy through the combination of outdoor media, digital media, interpersonal communication, and mass media. Outdoor media such as billboards were used to strengthen visibility and political branding, while digital platforms including Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube effectively expanded outreach and engagement among younger voters. Interpersonal communication through blusukan activities enhanced emotional connection and public trust, whereas mass media reinforced political legitimacy and public narratives. The study demonstrates that the convergence of multiple communication channels, combined with audience-oriented messaging, contributed significantly to the candidates' electoral success. This research contributes to political communication studies by providing empirical evidence on the importance of integrated media strategies and adaptive communication approaches in local electoral politics in Indonesia.



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### Introduction

Regional head elections (Pilkada) constitute one of the most important democratic mechanisms in Indonesia, as they provide citizens with the opportunity to directly elect local leaders every five years. The simultaneous local elections held on November 27, 2024, represented a significant political event across the country, including in Surakarta (Solo), Central Java. As one of Indonesia's politically symbolic cities and the hometown of former President Joko Widodo, Solo has long attracted public and academic attention in relation to electoral dynamics and political communication practices. The 2024 Solo mayoral election became particularly noteworthy due to the emergence and eventual victory of the Respati-Astrid candidate pair. Unlike conventional political candidates who usually possess extensive political experience or strong institutional backgrounds, Respati and Astrid entered the electoral contest primarily as young entrepreneurs with relatively limited formal political experience. Despite this condition, they successfully defeated Teguh Prakosa-Bambang, an incumbent-backed candidate associated with the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDIP), one of the most influential political parties in Indonesia.

The victory of Respati-Astrid indicates that electoral competition in contemporary local politics is no longer determined solely by party dominance, political seniority, or institutional power. Instead,

communication strategies and the effective utilization of political communication media increasingly shape voter perceptions and electoral outcomes. This phenomenon reflects broader transformations in political communication, particularly in the digital era, where political actors are required to compete not only through policy proposals but also through symbolic representation, media visibility, and audience engagement. The increasing integration of traditional media, digital platforms, and interpersonal communication has significantly altered the way political campaigns are conducted and consumed by society.

Political communication can generally be understood as the process through which political actors deliver messages, symbols, and information to influence public opinion and political behavior. According to Cangara (2018), political communication encompasses not only verbal rhetoric, but also non-verbal symbols, visual representations, actions, and strategic interactions aimed at shaping political attitudes. In electoral contexts, political communication serves as a central instrument for introducing candidates, promoting political programs, constructing public images, and mobilizing voter support. Consequently, the success of political campaigns is often closely associated with the effectiveness of communication strategies implemented by candidates and campaign teams.

The development of communication technology and media convergence has transformed the nature of political communication in contemporary elections. Traditional campaign tools such as billboards, banners, and print media continue to play an important role in creating visibility and symbolic recognition among voters. However, digital media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, Facebook, and online news portals have become increasingly dominant in shaping public discourse and political engagement. Social media platforms, in particular, enable political actors to communicate directly with audiences without relying entirely on conventional media gatekeepers. This direct interaction allows candidates to personalize political messages, create emotional engagement, and rapidly disseminate campaign narratives to wider audiences. Furthermore, digital media provide opportunities for interactive communication, where public responses in the form of comments, shares, and reactions become part of the political communication process itself.

Previous studies have demonstrated that digital communication strategies significantly influence political participation and voter mobilization, especially among younger generations. Budiyo (2016) explains that social media has become an essential medium for political communication in Indonesia because it facilitates rapid information dissemination and direct engagement between political actors and citizens. Similarly, Nulty et al. (2016) argue that digital media strengthen political campaigns by expanding audience reach and enabling more participatory forms of communication. Nevertheless, while existing research has widely discussed the role of social media and mass media in electoral politics, relatively limited attention has been given to how non-traditional candidates strategically integrate multiple communication channels in local electoral contexts, particularly in Indonesia.

This gap becomes increasingly relevant in the case of the Respati-Astrid campaign. Their success cannot merely be explained through party support or political networks alone, but also through the strategic integration of various political communication media. The campaign combined outdoor media such as billboards, digital platforms including Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube, interpersonal communication through blusukan activities, and exposure in mass media outlets. Each communication medium served a different function and targeted different voter segments. Digital media primarily attracted younger audiences and enhanced campaign visibility, while interpersonal communication strengthened emotional closeness and public trust. At the same time, mass media contributed to shaping broader political narratives and legitimacy.

Moreover, the Solo mayoral election illustrates how political communication strategies must adapt to local socio-cultural contexts and voter characteristics. Solo voters are politically active and highly exposed to both traditional and digital media environments. Therefore, successful political campaigns require not only persuasive messages but also strategic channel selection and audience-oriented communication approaches. In this context, the Respati-Astrid campaign provides an important case study for understanding how integrated media strategies function in contemporary local electoral politics.

Based on this background, this study aims to analyze how political communication media were utilized by the Respati-Astrid candidate pair during the 2024 Solo mayoral election. Specifically, the study seeks to identify the types of media used, examine their strategic functions within the campaign, and explore how the integration of multiple communication channels contributed to electoral success. By focusing on the

convergence of outdoor media, digital communication, interpersonal engagement, and mass media exposure, this research contributes to the development of political communication studies, particularly in the context of local elections in Indonesia. Furthermore, the study provides empirical insights into how non-traditional political candidates can effectively compete in contemporary democratic contests through adaptive and integrated communication strategies.

## Method

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design to explore the utilization of political communication media by the Respati-Astrid candidate pair in the 2024 Solo mayoral election. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because the study aimed to understand communication strategies, media usage, and campaign practices within their natural political context. According to Creswell (2017), qualitative research enables researchers to interpret social phenomena through direct interaction with participants and contextual analysis of events and documents.

The research utilized both primary and secondary data sources. Primary data were obtained through semi-structured interviews with selected informants who were directly involved in or knowledgeable about the campaign process, including campaign team members, political observers, and community figures. The informants were selected using purposive sampling based on their relevance, experience, and ability to provide information related to political communication strategies used during the election. Secondary data were collected from campaign documentation, news reports, online media publications, social media content, photographs, and other relevant political communication materials associated with the Respati-Astrid campaign.

Data collection was conducted through interviews, documentation, and observation of campaign-related media content. To ensure data credibility, triangulation techniques were applied by comparing information obtained from different sources and forms of evidence. Data analysis followed the interactive model developed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), consisting of four interconnected stages: data collection, data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing or verification. This analytical process was conducted continuously throughout the research to identify patterns, interpret findings, and generate a comprehensive understanding of the integrated political communication strategies implemented by the Respati-Astrid candidate pair during the 2024 Solo mayoral election.

## Results and Discussion

To provide a clearer analytical foundation, it is important to understand that political communication in electoral contexts is inherently strategic and goal oriented. Campaign communication is not only concerned with message delivery but also with how messages are framed, distributed, and received by different segments of voters. In contemporary political contests, candidates are required to adapt to a rapidly changing media environment, where traditional and digital media coexist and interact. This condition encourages the use of integrated communication strategies that combine multiple media platforms to enhance message effectiveness and audience reach (Bimber, 2014; Salman, A., Salleh, N. A. M., Yusoff, M. A., & Abdullah, 2018).

Furthermore, the effectiveness of political communication is closely related to the ability of candidates to align their communication strategies with voter characteristics and socio-political contexts. In local elections, such as the Solo mayoral election, communication strategies must consider local culture, voter behavior, and the influence of prominent political figures. Therefore, analyzing the use of political communication media requires not only identifying the types of media used but also understanding how these media function within a broader strategic framework.

The results of this study describe how the Respati-Astrid candidate pair utilized various political communication media during the 2024 Solo mayoral election. These findings directly address the research question regarding the types and roles of political communication media employed in their campaign strategy. In political communication, the process involves several key components, including communicators, messages, media, audiences, and feedback. This aligns with the classical communication model proposed by Lasswell, which emphasizes the elements of *who says what, through which channel, to whom, and with what effect* (Taqi et al., 2025). In this study, the Respati-Astrid candidates act as communicators who strategically design and deliver political messages through multiple media channels to influence voter behavior.

The findings indicate that the candidates employed a combination of political communication media, including outdoor media, digital media, interpersonal communication, and mass media. This integrated approach

reflects a deliberate communication strategy aimed at maximizing outreach and effectiveness across different segments of society.

### Outdoor Media: Billboards as Visual Political Messaging

Political communication in electoral contexts is increasingly understood as a strategic process that involves not only the delivery of messages but also the careful selection of communication channels and audience targeting. In modern political campaigns, candidates must compete not only in terms of programs and policies but also in their ability to manage communication effectively across multiple platforms. This shift reflects the transformation of political communication from a linear process into a more dynamic and interactive system shaped by technological developments and media convergence (Widodo & Kristiyono, 2025).

The study finds that billboards were widely used by the Respati-Astrid candidates and placed in strategic locations such as traditional markets, main roads, and high-traffic areas, including Jalan Gatot Subroto and the Notosuman area. The large size and prominent positioning of these billboards ensured high visibility among the public. From a communication perspective, billboards function as a medium for delivering concise and memorable political messages. The visual design of the Respati-Astrid billboards featured bright light-blue colors, a modern layout, and the slogan “*Muda Mendunia*” along with the hashtag #*PASTIMelanjutkan*. The inclusion of former Indonesian President Joko Widodo as a visual symbol further strengthened the perception of political endorsement.

This finding supports the argument that traditional media such as billboards remain relevant in political campaigns due to their ability to reinforce symbolic messaging and increase candidate recognition. Media, in this context, play a crucial role in shaping public opinion and influencing voter perception (Setiawan et al., 2025). Thus, billboards not only function as information channels but also as tools for political branding and image construction.

This perspective highlights that political communication should be viewed as a holistic and adaptive process. The interaction between different media platforms allows political actors to reinforce their messages through repetition and consistency across channels. The contemporary media environment is characterized by the coexistence of multiple media logics, where traditional and digital media mutually influence each other (Endang Purnawati et al., 2026). In this regard, the use of integrated communication strategies becomes increasingly relevant, particularly in local electoral contexts where candidates must compete for visibility, credibility, and voter trust simultaneously. Therefore, examining how different media are combined and utilized strategically provides important insights into the effectiveness of political communication in shaping electoral outcomes.

### Digital Media: Expanding Reach and Engaging Younger Voters

In recent years, digital media has transformed the landscape of political communication by enabling more direct, interactive, and personalized engagement between candidates and voters. Unlike traditional media, digital platforms allow political actors to bypass conventional gatekeepers and communicate their messages instantly to a wide audience. This transformation has made digital media an essential component of modern political campaigns, particularly in reaching younger voters who are highly active in online environment (Papathanassopoulos & Giannouli, 2025). Moreover, the rise of algorithm-driven platforms has further increased the visibility of political content, allowing campaign messages to spread rapidly and repeatedly across user networks.

Digital media emerged as a central component of the Respati-Astrid campaign strategy, particularly in targeting younger voters, including Generation Z. Platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube were actively utilized to disseminate campaign messages on a large scale. The content shared on these platforms primarily focused on campaign programs, political endorsements, and narratives encouraging youth participation, such as the slogan “*Wayabe Cab Enom Tampil*”. Additionally, the involvement of political figures such as Kaesang Pangarep and Gibran Rakabuming Raka further amplified the campaign’s visibility and credibility.

From a theoretical perspective, this finding aligns with the role of digital and social media as powerful tools in modern political communication. Social media enables rapid dissemination of information, interactive engagement, and broader audience reach. As noted by Nulty et al., (2016), social media has become a primary platform for political campaigns to mobilize support and communicate directly with potential voters. Furthermore, YouTube was utilized as a medium for political branding, where campaign activities were documented and shared to build candidate image and reputation. This reflects the function of media not only as a channel of information but also as a tool for constructing political identity and influencing public trust.

In addition, the use of digital media allows for more flexible and adaptive communication strategies. Campaign messages can be continuously adjusted based on audience responses, such as comments, shares, and engagement

metrics, which provide immediate feedback to campaign teams. This interactive feature distinguishes digital media from traditional communication channels, as it enables a two-way communication process between candidates and voters. As a result, digital platforms not only function as tools for message dissemination but also as spaces for political interaction and participation.

Moreover, the emphasis on visual content and storytelling in platforms such as Instagram and TikTok contributes to the personalization of political communication. Candidates are able to present themselves as relatable and authentic figures, which is particularly effective in attracting younger voters. This supports the argument that digital political communication is increasingly oriented toward image-building and emotional engagement, rather than solely focusing on policy-based messages.

### **Interpersonal Communication: *Blusukan* as Direct Political Engagement**

Another important strategy employed by the Respati-Astrid candidate pair was *blusukan*, which can be categorized as interpersonal communication. This approach involves direct interaction with the community and allows candidates to engage with citizens in a more personal and immediate manner. In communication theory, interpersonal communication is considered one of the most effective forms of communication because it enables direct feedback and emotional connection between communicators and audience. Through *blusukan*, the candidates were able to combine observation and social interaction to better understand community needs (Djamil, 2017).

The findings show that *blusukan* activities were conducted intensively in various locations, such as traditional markets, residential areas, and public spaces. These activities were often carried out together with prominent political figures, including Joko Widodo, Kaesang Pangarep, and Gibran Rakabuming Raka, which further increased public attention and legitimacy. In addition, the candidates engaged in direct dialogue with citizens, addressing issues such as employment opportunities and local economic conditions, particularly related to small and medium enterprises (SMEs). This form of communication not only functioned as a campaign strategy but also as a way to build trust and emotional proximity with voters (McKinney, 2021). From a political communication perspective, *blusukan* reflects the importance of face-to-face interaction in influencing political attitudes. As noted by (Taqi et al., 2025), direct engagement allows candidates to shape public perception more effectively compared to mediated communication. Thus, interpersonal communication complements mass and digital media by strengthening relational and emotional aspects of political support.

This finding also indicates that interpersonal communication through *blusukan* plays a strategic role in bridging the gap between candidates and voters, particularly in local electoral contexts where personal relationships and trust are highly valued. Unlike digital or mass media, which often emphasize broad outreach, face-to-face interactions enable candidates to demonstrate responsiveness, empathy, and authenticity in addressing community concerns. This direct engagement not only strengthens emotional bonds but also enhances the credibility of candidates as leaders who are attentive to grassroots issues. Consequently, *blusukan* functions not merely as a symbolic campaign activity but as an effective communication strategy that reinforces voter confidence and supports electoral mobilization.

### **Mass Media: Reinforcing Political Narratives and Public Opinion**

Mass media, both print and digital, also played a significant role in the political communication strategy of the Respati-Astrid candidates. The study finds that print media such as newspapers (e.g., *Solopos*, *Tempo*, and *Kompas*) were used to cover campaign activities, while online media platforms such as *Solopos.com*, *RRI.co.id*, *Detik.com*, and *Kompas.id* contributed to disseminating political information. Mass media function not only as channels for information dissemination but also as instruments for shaping public opinion and framing political narratives. According to Suharjiantoro & Lutfie, (2025), media coverage can significantly influence how the public perceives political actors and issues.

The findings indicate that media coverage of the Respati-Astrid campaign often highlighted their competitiveness and strengths, particularly in digital campaigning. Such narratives contributed to building a positive public image and reinforcing their credibility as viable candidates. Moreover, the involvement of mass media in campaign activities, such as press conferences and public events, demonstrates how candidates strategically utilize media exposure to amplify their political messages as usual (Garrett, 2019). This confirms that mass media remain an essential component of political communication, even in the digital era (Amallah et al., 2025).

In addition, mass media serve as an important source of political legitimacy, as information disseminated through established media institutions is often perceived as more credible by the public. Compared to information circulating on social media, news coverage in mainstream media tends to carry greater authority due to editorial

processes and journalistic standards. This credibility enhances the persuasive power of political messages and helps candidates gain broader public recognition. Therefore, the strategic use of mass media not only amplifies campaign visibility but also strengthens the perceived reliability and trustworthiness of the candidates in the eyes of voters.

### **Integrative Analysis: Media Convergence as a Political Communication Strategy (Novelty)**

The findings of this study reveal that the effectiveness of the Respati-Astrid campaign was not determined by a single type of media, but rather by the integration of multiple communication channels. This strategy can be understood as a form of media convergence, where various media, outdoor, digital, interpersonal, and mass media, are combined into a unified and coherent political communication strategy.

From a theoretical perspective, this approach aligns with the concept of political communication as a strategic process involving message design, channel selection, and audience targeting (Cangara, 2023). The Respati-Astrid candidates demonstrated the ability to adapt their messages across different media platforms while maintaining consistency in their overall campaign narrative.

This study also highlights that successful political communication in contemporary elections depends not only on the use of advanced technology but also on the ability to understand audience characteristics and local socio-cultural contexts. For instance, digital media were used to target younger voters, while interpersonal communication was employed to engage directly with grassroots communities.

Therefore, the novelty of this research lies in demonstrating how non-traditional candidates without prior political experience can achieve electoral success through an integrated media strategy. This finding contributes to the development of political communication studies, particularly in the context of local elections in Indonesia, by emphasizing the importance of media convergence and audience-oriented messaging.

The findings of this study demonstrate that political communication in local electoral contexts is not merely about delivering messages but also about strategically selecting and integrating communication channels. The Respati-Astrid candidate pair successfully implemented a multi-layered communication strategy that combined symbolic, digital, interpersonal, and mass-mediated approaches.

From the perspective of communication theory, this strategy reflects the practical application of Lasswell's model, where the effectiveness of communication is determined by the alignment between communicator, message, medium, audience, and expected effect (Kurniawan, 2018). The candidates were able to position themselves as relatable communicators, construct targeted political messages, and select appropriate media channels for different voter segments.

Furthermore, the study confirms that political communication is inherently persuasive and oriented toward influencing public attitudes and behavior (Cangara, 2023). In this case, persuasion was not achieved through a single dominant medium but through the reinforcement of messages across multiple platforms. This repetition and consistency of messaging played a crucial role in strengthening voter awareness and trust.

Another important finding is the complementary relationship between different types of media. Digital media provided speed, reach, and interactivity; interpersonal communication created emotional closeness and trust; mass media contributed to legitimacy and wider recognition; while outdoor media ensured visibility in public spaces. This confirms that each medium has its own function, but their effectiveness increases when used in combination.

In addition, the study highlights the importance of audience-oriented communication. The Respati-Astrid campaign demonstrated an understanding of voter segmentation, particularly by targeting younger voters through digital platforms while maintaining engagement with broader community groups through direct interaction and traditional media. This adaptive strategy indicates that successful political communication requires not only message delivery but also audience sensitivity.

Overall, these findings reinforce the argument that contemporary political campaigns are increasingly characterized by integrated communication strategies. The success of the Respati-Astrid candidates illustrates that even candidates without strong political backgrounds can compete effectively by leveraging media strategically, constructing relevant messages, and aligning communication approaches with the socio-political context.

### **Conclusion**

This study concludes that the success of the Respati-Astrid candidate pair in the 2024 Solo mayoral election was strongly influenced by their ability to strategically integrate multiple political communication media. The findings show that the candidates did not rely on a single medium but combined outdoor media (billboards), digital media, interpersonal communication (blusukan), and mass media into a coherent communication strategy. This

integrated approach enabled them to deliver targeted messages to different segments of voters, thereby increasing public engagement and electoral support.

The main contribution of this study lies in demonstrating that media convergence plays a significant role in contemporary political communication, particularly in local electoral contexts. The study also provides empirical evidence that candidates without prior political experience can achieve electoral success by effectively utilizing diverse communication channels and adapting their messages to audience characteristics. This finding enriches the literature on political communication by highlighting the importance of strategic media integration and audience-oriented messaging.

However, this study has several limitations. It focuses on a single case study, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. In addition, the research primarily examines the types and use of media without quantitatively measuring their relative effectiveness or impact on voter behavior. Therefore, future research is recommended to explore comparative studies across different regions or candidates, as well as to incorporate mixed methods approaches in order to measure the effectiveness of each communication medium more systematically. Further studies may also examine the role of digital algorithms and political branding in shaping electoral outcomes.

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### Author Contributions Statement

HS, SA conceptualized the study; HS conducted data collection; SA performed data analysis; HS and SA contributed to writing, reviewing, and editing the manuscript.

### AI Usage Statement

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### Conflict of Interest

This section is a statement from the author that this article has a conflict of interest or not.

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