

THE POLITICIZATION OF ENTERTAINMENT AND ITS IMPACT ON DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION: EVIDENCE FROM PILKADA JAWA BARAT

Azarine Charissa Rahma¹, Fitriyah²

^{1,2}Department of Political Science, Faculty of Social and Political Science, Universitas Diponegoro

Email: azarine.charissa@gmail.com, fitriyahundip@gmail.com

Received : 05 March 2026
Revised : 15 March 2026

Accepted : 01 April 2026
Published : 11 April 2026

Abstract

This study examines the politicization of entertainment and its implications for democratic participation in Indonesia, with a particular focus on the 2024 West Java Local Election (*Pilkada Jawa Barat*). In the digital era, political communication is no longer confined to traditional media; instead, candidates increasingly rely on entertainment-driven platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube, as well as campaign concerts and celebrity endorsements, to engage voters. Drawing on qualitative data from campaign content, media reports, and voter interviews, the findings reveal that entertainment media have become central to political public relations, enabling candidates to build personal brands, cultivate emotional connections, and mobilize younger voters, particularly millennials and Gen Z. The study shows that entertainment media lower barriers to political participation by presenting politics in accessible, culturally familiar, and entertaining formats. However, this trend also carries significant risks, as voter impressions are often shaped more by personality, humor, and popularity than by substantive policy debates. The West Java Pilkada illustrates the hybrid nature of Indonesian democracy, where digital spectacle is combined with traditional cultural and religious campaigning, reflecting both innovation and fragility in political communication. Overall, the research concludes that entertainment media function as a double-edged sword in Indonesian politics: while they democratize access and expand participation, they also risk reinforcing shallow, personality-centered politics that undermine accountability and deliberation. The findings contribute to broader debates on public relations politics, mediatization, and democratic consolidation in the digital era, offering insights for scholars, practitioners, and policymakers concerned with the evolving relationship between media, politics, and democracy.

Keywords: *Entertainment Media, Political Public Relations, Mediatization of Politics, Pilkada Jawa Barat, Indonesian Democracy*

INTRODUCTION

In modern societies, political communication is no longer limited to traditional news outlets such as newspapers, radio, or television news broadcasts. The rapid development of media technology has shifted the way people access information, leading to the emergence of new platforms that blend politics and popular culture (Jin, 2024). Entertainment media, in particular, has become one of the most influential arenas where political messages are delivered and consumed by the public (Kim & Patterson, 2025). This phenomenon, often described as the *politicization of entertainment*, highlights how politics increasingly permeates spaces that were once considered purely recreational (Patrick et al., 2024). Political messages are no longer confined to formal debates or news programs but are also present in light-hearted contexts such as late-night comedy shows, talk shows, political satire, films, and even viral content on digital platforms (Long et al., 2021). Such developments illustrate how entertainment can serve as an alternative channel for political communication that reaches broader and more diverse audiences (Naerland & Dahl, 2022).

As a result, citizens are now exposed to political content not only through conventional news reports but also through jokes, memes, celebrity endorsements, and cultural narratives embedded in entertainment products (Harff & Schmuck, 2025). This shift shows that political information is no longer delivered in formal, one-directional formats, but increasingly wrapped in entertaining packages that are easier to digest and more emotionally engaging. These new modes of engagement suggest that entertainment media does more than provide amusement; it actively shapes how individuals perceive, interpret, and respond to political issues in contemporary society. The boundary between “serious” political communication and “light” entertainment is therefore becoming increasingly blurred,

creating both opportunities and risks for democratic participation (Darbo & Skjerdal, 2019). The convergence between politics and entertainment has important implications for how citizens consume, interpret, and respond to political messages (Matthes et al., 2023). On the positive side, entertainment media can serve as an entry point for individuals who are otherwise disengaged from formal political processes, offering accessible and relatable narratives that stimulate political interest and participation (Alodat et al., 2023). By simplifying complex political issues through humor, storytelling, or celebrity endorsement, entertainment can encourage broader segments of society especially younger voter to pay attention to political debates (Doona, 2016). However, this process can also result in oversimplification, selective framing, or even misinformation, particularly when political content is designed more for virality than for substance.

In Indonesia, where younger voters constitute a significant portion of the electorate, this phenomenon is highly relevant (Kholilah Yahya et al., 2024). The simultaneous regional elections (*Pilkada Serentak*), particularly in populous provinces such as West Java, demonstrate how candidates increasingly rely on entertainment platforms to connect with voters, especially millennials and Gen Z. The demographic reality of Indonesia shows that young voters dominate the electorate, making them a crucial target group for political campaigns (Hertanto, 2023). Unlike older generations who tend to rely on television and print media, younger voters are digital natives who spend significant time on social media, consuming information in short, visual, and entertaining formats. This generational shift compels political actors to adapt their communication strategies by embedding political narratives within entertainment spaces that resonate with the lifestyle and media habits of these younger audiences (Garcia et al., 2015).

In practice, this adaptation is reflected in candidates' use of TikTok dances, Instagram reels, YouTube vlogs, and collaborations with digital influencers to craft a relatable image and build emotional bonds with constituents (Bizjak Zabukovec & Faganel, 2024). Candidates no longer limit themselves to delivering campaign promises through formal speeches or debates but instead employ humor, visual storytelling, and interactive content to engage voters on a personal level. Such strategies show how political actors respond to the fragmented media environment, where attention spans are shorter and competition for visibility is intense. By embedding political content in popular culture, candidates increase their chances of reaching disengaged citizens, particularly first-time voters, who may otherwise remain indifferent to traditional political campaigns (Grüning & Schubert, 2022).

The *Pilkada Jawa Barat* offers a clear illustration of this phenomenon. Candidates strategically utilized social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube, often collaborating with influencers and engaging in viral content to enhance their visibility (Theodorakopoulos et al., 2025). These practices reflect the growing role of entertainment as a political stage where personal branding and emotional connection often matter as much as, if not more than, substantive policy debates (Geise et al., 2025). For example, appearances in popular podcasts, lighthearted talk shows, or comedic skits allowed candidates to present themselves as approachable and relatable figures rather than distant political elites. From the perspective of public relations politics, entertainment media thus provides politicians with opportunities to bypass traditional journalistic filters, control their narratives, and build direct relationships with constituents (Smellie & Boswell, 2025).

However, this convergence of politics and entertainment is not without risks. While it can democratize political participation by making information more accessible, it also carries the potential to trivialize politics, oversimplify complex policy issues, and privilege personality over competence. When political messages are delivered primarily through entertainment formats, there is a danger that voters will evaluate candidates based on charisma, humor, or popularity rather than their governance capacity or policy platforms (Baym, 2010). In the long run, such tendencies may reinforce the dominance of personality-based politics in Indonesia, reducing the quality of public discourse and weakening the foundations of issue-based democratic engagement. Thus, the case of *Pilkada Jawa Barat* not only illustrates the effectiveness of entertainment media in modern campaigning but also raises critical questions about its broader implications for political communication and democratic consolidation in Indonesia.

The use of entertainment platforms in electoral politics demonstrates how media logics increasingly influence the way candidates construct their image, communicate with voters, and build legitimacy in the public sphere. While this approach has been effective in mobilizing voter attention and participation, it also challenges the normative expectations of democratic deliberation, where political debates are ideally based on issues, policies, and rational arguments rather than spectacle and popularity. The consequences of this trend remain contested. On one hand, the politicization of entertainment can democratize access to political information, particularly among young and first-time voters who may not engage with formal debates or policy documents (Asimakopoulos et al., 2025). By embedding politics within popular culture, entertainment media lowers the entry barriers for political participation and provides a more inclusive arena for diverse voices. On the other hand, it risks reinforcing personality-based

politics, weakening issue-driven discourse, and deepening polarization along partisan lines (Élections, 2024). The increasing reliance on celebrity endorsements, viral content, and influencer campaigns suggests that political capital may become more dependent on media visibility than on policy competence. In the Indonesian context, where celebrity figures often transition into politics and campaigns are heavily mediated through popular culture, this issue becomes even more pressing (Dahlan et al., 2025).

Based on this background, this study seeks to analyze the political consequences of entertainment media in Indonesia, with a particular focus on the dynamics of the *Pilkada Jawa Barat*. By examining how entertainment media functions as a platform for political communication, the study aims to contribute to the broader discussion on public relations politics, mediatization, and democratic participation in the digital era. The findings are expected to provide insights not only for scholars of political communication but also for practitioners, policymakers, and political actors who must navigate the increasingly blurred boundaries between politics and entertainment. Moreover, this research highlights the urgency of reassessing how democratic engagement is shaped in the digital age, where entertainment media is no longer peripheral but central to political life.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Political Public Relations

Political public relations can be understood as a comprehensive strategic communication approach used by political actors, institutions, and parties to build legitimacy, maintain credibility, and create a sense of closeness with the public. Unlike conventional public relations, which primarily focuses on corporate reputation or product branding, political public relations emphasizes the process of framing political messages and constructing narratives that resonate with voters across diverse social and cultural backgrounds (Melissen, 2005). Through carefully managed communication, political actors seek not only to inform but also to persuade, mobilize, and sustain long-term political support.

Swetha & Aravind, (2025) emphasizes that politics is not only about the struggle for power but also about how power is communicated through symbols, language, and media. In other words, political success is heavily dependent on how effectively candidates and parties can package themselves, their policies, and their visions into communicable symbols that align with the expectations and aspirations of the public. This perspective underscores the shift from traditional political campaigning, which often relied on direct party machinery, toward more media-centric strategies that integrate political branding and storytelling.

In the Indonesian context, political public relations are often manifested in various forms, including campaign strategies, candidate branding, and the strategic use of mass media as well as digital platforms to strengthen political identity (Sukendar et al., 2025). Candidates employ slogans, visual imagery, and endorsements to construct an appealing political persona, while social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube have become essential tools for connecting with younger voters. The personalization of politics where the candidate's personality and image take precedence over party ideology illustrates how public relations practices have evolved in Indonesia's democratic environment (Putra, 2024).

Furthermore, political public relations in Indonesia is also shaped by cultural and local values. Campaigns often integrate entertainment, religious symbols, and community-based activities to foster emotional bonds with voters. This approach demonstrates that political communication is not merely transactional but also relational, emphasizing long-term trust-building rather than short-term electoral gains (OECD, 2022). The ability of candidates to balance modern digital strategies with traditional cultural narratives reflects the hybrid nature of political public relations in Indonesia's electoral politics.

Mediatization of Politics and Entertainment Media

The concept of *mediatization of politics* highlights how the logic of media increasingly influences political behavior, communication, and even decision-making processes (OECD, 2022). Media are no longer passive channels that merely transmit political information; instead, they actively shape the content, style, and strategy of political communication. Politicians and parties are thus compelled to adapt their messages to the expectations of media formats, which often prioritize immediacy, spectacle, and emotional appeal over in-depth policy discussion (Dwivedi et al., 2021). This shift indicates that politics cannot be understood in isolation from media, as media logic has become a determining factor in how political reality is constructed and consumed by the public. In the digital era, entertainment has emerged as one of the most dominant strategies to capture public attention and maintain voter engagement. Kim & Patterson, (2025) introduces the notion of *entertainment democracy*, in which the boundaries between politics and entertainment are increasingly blurred. Politicians adopt formats traditionally associated with

popular culture such as memes, comedy, celebrity endorsements, and viral challenges to reach audiences who may otherwise disengage from formal political debates. These practices show how politics has become increasingly mediatized, with entertainment serving as both a medium and a message in contemporary democracy. In Indonesia, the mediatization of politics is particularly evident in electoral campaigns that rely heavily on concerts, celebrity endorsements, and entertainment-oriented content on social media. Candidates increasingly collaborate with influencers, musicians, and television personalities to amplify their visibility and appeal to a broader audience (Ampornklinkaew, 2025). This trend is not limited to national-level politics but is also highly visible in local elections such as the West Java *Pilkada*, where candidates use TikTok dances, Instagram reels, and YouTube vlogs to connect with young voters. Such strategies illustrate how the personalization and dramatization of politics are mediated through entertainment, creating new forms of political engagement that emphasize emotional connection and cultural relevance rather than policy substance (Klüser, 2025).

Moreover, the Indonesian case reflects how mediatization is shaped by socio-cultural dynamics. The use of entertainment in politics not only caters to the consumption patterns of millennials and Gen Z but also resonates with long-standing traditions of blending politics and popular culture, such as campaign concerts (*panggung rakyat*) and celebrity-led rallies. These practices reveal the hybrid nature of mediatization in Indonesia, where global media trends intersect with local cultural forms to produce distinctive modes of political communication. While this may democratize access to political information, it also raises concerns about the trivialization of politics and the dominance of spectacle over substantive discourse (Tucker et al., 2018).

Entertainment Media and Voter Behavior

Entertainment media play a crucial role in shaping political behavior, not only by delivering political information but also by influencing how citizens emotionally connect with politics. Park & Gil De Zúñiga, (2021) argues that mass media are central to the process of opinion formation because they combine information with entertainment, thereby making political content more engaging and easier to consume. Political entertainment ranging from light-format debates and campaign concerts to television satire and influencer-driven endorsements functions as a bridge between politics and popular culture. Such formats lower the cognitive and emotional barriers that often prevent citizens, particularly young people, from engaging with complex political discourse (Zschau et al., 2025).

One of the key features of entertainment media is its ability to simplify political narratives and present them in ways that are both relatable and enjoyable. Rather than focusing on technical policy details, entertainment media tend to highlight personalities, emotions, and storytelling. This can stimulate voter interest, mobilize previously apathetic groups, and encourage political participation through informal channels. However, the accessibility of political messages through entertainment also raises concerns about the depth and quality of political knowledge acquired by voters. While it can democratize political information, it may also promote superficial engagement centered more on image than substance (Yilmaz et al., 2025).

In the Indonesian context, and particularly in the West Java Local Election, entertainment media were strategically deployed to mobilize crowds, amplify campaign messages, and cultivate the popular image of candidates. Campaign concerts featuring well-known musicians, collaborations with social media influencers, and the use of humorous or viral content on platforms like TikTok and Instagram exemplify this trend. Gherghina & Marian, (2024) found that entertainment-based campaigns tend to be more effective in engaging young voters compared to conventional approaches such as policy debates or door-to-door campaigns. This is particularly relevant given that millennials and Gen Z make up a large portion of the electorate, and their media consumption habits are heavily oriented toward digital entertainment.

Ultimately, entertainment media shape not only the visibility of candidates but also the ways in which voters perceive and evaluate them. Voters exposed to entertainment-based political content are more likely to develop parasocial relationships with candidates, treating them as relatable figures rather than distant political elites (Tsftati et al., 2022). In the case of the West Java *Pilkada*, such strategies contributed to a political environment where emotional connection and cultural resonance often outweighed rational policy consideration. This dynamic underscores the dual role of entertainment media in both expanding political participation and redefining the criteria by which voters judge political leadership.

Local Elections and Indonesian Democracy

Local elections (*Pilkada*) are a central instrument of Indonesia's democratic process, serving not only as a mechanism for leadership selection but also as a reflection of the broader interplay between media, politics, and

society. Nugroho, (2025) emphasizes that *Pilkada* represent more than electoral competition; they are also an important indicator of the quality of democracy at the regional level. Through *Pilkada*, citizens exercise their political rights, while political elites and parties test their ability to mobilize support, build coalitions, and frame political narratives in ways that resonate with local communities. The mediatization of *Pilkada* has significantly transformed how electoral campaigns are conducted in Indonesia. The increasing reliance on entertainment media demonstrates how candidates often prioritize visibility, emotional appeal, and cultural symbolism over substantive policy communication. In the case of the West Java *Pilkada*, entertainment-based strategies such as campaign concerts, celebrity endorsements, and viral content on digital platforms illustrate a new dynamic in political communication where candidate images and personal branding dominate the political stage. As a result, voters are more frequently exposed to simplified representations of politics, where the candidate's charisma and media presence often overshadow their policy proposals.

This reliance on entertainment in politics, however, brings both opportunities and risks for democratic consolidation. On the one hand, it enhances inclusivity by making politics more accessible, particularly to younger and first-time voters who may feel disconnected from traditional political discourse. Entertainment-oriented campaigns can stimulate enthusiasm, increase voter turnout, and broaden political participation across diverse social groups (Deželan, 2023). On the other hand, the dominance of personality-driven strategies risks undermining rational, issue-based discourse by encouraging voters to make decisions based on popularity and spectacle rather than policy evaluation (Susanti & Khu, 2025). Such a trend may reinforce clientelistic and personality-based politics, which remain persistent challenges in Indonesia's democratic development.

Moreover, *Pilkada* are not only influenced by entertainment but also by the broader sociocultural fabric of Indonesian society. The fusion of politics with religion, culture, and entertainment reflects a hybrid form of political communication that blends modern media strategies with local traditions. While this hybridization creates culturally resonant forms of engagement, it also complicates efforts to institutionalize issue-based politics. The West Java case demonstrates how *Pilkada* can function both as a laboratory of democratic innovation and as a site where the tensions between populism, media spectacle, and substantive democracy are most visible.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employs a qualitative case study design to analyze the political consequences of entertainment media in the context of the West Java Local Election (*Pilkada Jawa Barat*). A case study approach is appropriate because it allows for an in-depth exploration of specific political phenomena within their real-life context (Brunelle et al., 2023). The focus on West Java is particularly relevant, as it represents one of Indonesia's most populous provinces, where entertainment-based strategies have been widely utilized during electoral campaigns.

Data Collection

The research relies on multiple sources of qualitative data to ensure validity and richness of analysis:

1. Document Analysis
 - Campaign materials such as posters, slogans, and social media content (TikTok videos, Instagram reels, YouTube vlogs).
 - News reports and online articles covering the West Java *Pilkada*.
 - Official documents from the Indonesian General Elections Commission (KPU) and campaign regulations.
2. Content Analysis of Social Media
 - Selected entertainment-oriented content shared by candidates and their teams during the campaign period.
 - Analysis focused on narrative strategies, use of humor, celebrity endorsements, and engagement patterns.
3. Semi-Structured Interviews
 - Conducted with campaign team members, media practitioners, and young voters (millennials and Gen Z) in West Java.
 - Interviews aimed to capture perceptions of how entertainment media shaped voter engagement and political decision-making.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), focusing on recurring patterns related to the politicization of entertainment and its implications for political communication. The analysis proceeded in three stages:

1. Coding: Identifying key themes such as political branding, voter mobilization, emotional connection, and policy trivialization.
2. Categorization: Grouping themes into broader categories reflecting opportunities (e.g., increased participation) and risks (e.g., personality-driven politics).
3. Interpretation: Relating findings to existing theories of political public relations, mediatization of politics, and voter behavior.

Validity and Reliability

To enhance credibility, the study employed triangulation by cross-checking data from documents, social media content, and interviews. Member checking was also conducted with selected interviewees to confirm the accuracy of interpretations. The research process followed ethical guidelines, ensuring informed consent from all participants and maintaining confidentiality of responses.

Research Scope and Limitation

This study focuses on the 2024 West Java Pilkada as the primary case, with particular attention to the entertainment-based campaign strategies employed by major candidates. The analysis highlights how platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, YouTube, and campaign concerts were strategically used to construct candidate images, engage younger demographics, and amplify emotional connections with voters. While the findings provide valuable insights into the broader phenomenon of entertainment media in Indonesian local elections, they remain context-specific to West Java, a province with unique demographic, cultural, and political dynamics. Therefore, the results may not be directly generalizable to other provincial contests or to national-level elections, where different media environments, voter characteristics, and political structures may influence campaign strategies and outcomes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings from the 2024 West Java Pilkada reveal important insights into the changing nature of political communication in Indonesia, particularly in relation to the broader process of mediatization of politics. As Mazzoleni & Schulz, (1999) argue, mediatization compels political actors to adapt their behavior and strategies to the logic of media visibility and spectacle, which often prioritizes attention-grabbing formats over substantive policy discussions. In this context, candidates in the West Java election were observed to deliberately align their campaign strategies with the dynamics of entertainment media, recognizing that in a highly saturated digital environment, visibility often translates into political viability. The evidence from this study clearly shows that candidates not only relied on traditional political rhetoric but also embraced the performative aspects of media culture, positioning themselves not merely as political leaders but also as entertainers who could sustain audience attention through humor, lifestyle representation, and viral content.

This transformation demonstrates how political communication has become inseparable from the logics of consumer culture and popular media, where image management and emotional resonance frequently overshadow issue-based deliberation. Such findings are consistent with Kolodiaznyi et al., (2023) notion of “entertainment democracy,” in which politics increasingly overlaps with popular culture and celebrity practices, thereby blurring the boundary between governance and spectacle. In the Indonesian context, this dynamic is further amplified by the country’s vibrant social media ecosystem, where platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube dominate the daily media consumption of younger generations. The cultural prominence of celebrities and influencers in Indonesia also adds another dimension, as their endorsement or collaboration with political candidates can significantly shape public perception. Consequently, entertainment-driven strategies are not merely optional tools of campaigning but are becoming indispensable components for electoral success, especially in competitive regions like West Java where candidates must capture the attention of large, diverse, and media-savvy electorates.

One of the central implications of these findings is that entertainment formats lower the threshold for political participation. As Khan, (2024) argues, political messages embedded within entertainment content become more accessible and less intimidating for audiences who might otherwise ignore or disengage from formal political discourse. In the West Java case, this was evident in how campaign concerts, viral TikTok dances, humorous memes, and influencer-driven collaborations encouraged broader youth participation. Interviews with voters revealed that many young people, particularly first-time voters, were initially indifferent to campaign debates or policy manifestos but found themselves drawn into the electoral process through entertaining and culturally familiar content. For them, the medium of entertainment served as an entry point into politics, translating abstract political issues into relatable narratives embedded in everyday media consumption.

THE POLITICIZATION OF ENTERTAINMENT AND ITS IMPACT ON DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION: EVIDENCE FROM PILKADA JAWA BARAT

Azarine Charissa Rahma and Fitriyah

This underscores the mobilizing potential of entertainment media as a democratic resource, enabling wider participation in political life by meeting citizens in the cultural spaces they already inhabit. However, it also raises questions about the depth of engagement fostered by such strategies whether they cultivate lasting political awareness or remain limited to superficial attraction based on entertainment value. The West Java Pilkada thus exemplifies both the promise and the ambiguity of entertainment democracy in Indonesia, where access and mobilization are achieved but often at the risk of diluting substantive policy discourse. While entertainment-driven strategies successfully draw citizens particularly young and first-time voters into the electoral process, they also shift the terrain of political communication away from policy deliberation and toward cultural performance. This dual character underscores the tension at the heart of entertainment politics: it democratizes political access but potentially weakens the depth of democratic engagement.

At the same time, however, the reliance on entertainment media also exposes significant risks for the quality and depth of democratic discourse. As Lin, (2009) caution, the increasing fusion of politics and entertainment can trivialize public debate, transforming campaigns into spectacles where emotional appeal and celebrity-like performance dominate. Instead of encouraging critical reflection on governance, voters are often nudged to evaluate candidates on the basis of humor, virality, or lifestyle branding. The voter accounts collected in this study reinforce these concerns: many respondents openly admitted that their impressions of candidates were shaped more by personality, humor, or relatability than by a careful assessment of policy platforms. This shift in voter orientation reflects what Duncan & Duncan, (2010) calls the “aestheticization of politics,” where style and affect increasingly outweigh substance.

Such dynamics are consistent with Aspinall & Mietzner, (2019) observations about the personalization of Indonesian politics, where electoral contests often revolve around individual images and symbolic performances rather than programmatic visions. In the context of the 2024 West Java Pilkada, candidates who successfully mastered entertainment-based strategies gained visibility and popularity, but this success came at the cost of issue-driven debate. Thus, while entertainment media expand the reach of political messages and foster inclusivity, they simultaneously risk reinforcing shallow, personality-centered politics that may undermine Indonesia’s democratic consolidation in the long run. The West Java Pilkada illustrates this paradox clearly: strategies that were highly effective in mobilizing mass participation also revealed the fragility of substantive political engagement. Voter enthusiasm was often driven by campaign concerts, viral dances, or influencer endorsements, yet these moments of excitement did not always translate into deeper awareness of governance agendas or long-term political commitments. This reflects the structural tension between participation and deliberation, where greater accessibility does not necessarily ensure more informed democratic choices. From the perspective of political public relations, entertainment media function as a double-edged sword. On one side, they provide powerful opportunities for visibility, emotional resonance, and innovative branding. They allow candidates to bypass traditional media filters, directly engage with constituents, and cultivate relatability in a highly personalized manner. These tools are particularly effective in reaching younger voters millennials and Gen Z who tend to be skeptical of formal political institutions yet highly responsive to the cultural language of digital media. Entertainment-driven strategies can therefore broaden the democratic sphere by connecting with audiences that conventional political communication often fails to reach (Ariel & Elishar, 2025).

On the other side, however, these same strategies risk transforming elections into popularity contests, where visibility, virality, and personal charm outweigh substantive discussions of policy. This dynamic undermines accountability, as candidates are rewarded more for their ability to entertain than for their capacity to govern. Furthermore, it erodes the deliberative quality of democracy by narrowing political discourse to soundbites, memes, and spectacles, leaving voters with a shallow or fragmented understanding of their political choices (Pharris, 2023). In the long term, such tendencies may weaken democratic consolidation in Indonesia, as the substance of politics is overshadowed by its performance. The case of the 2024 West Java Pilkada thus demonstrates both the promise and the perils of entertainment politics: it opens the door to wider participation but at the same time risks hollowing out the democratic process from within. What makes the West Java case particularly revealing is its illustration of the hybrid nature of Indonesian democracy, where modern digital entertainment strategies were seamlessly combined with traditional campaign practices such as mass rallies, cultural performances, and religious gatherings. This hybridization highlights the adaptability of political actors in navigating different arenas of communication: on one hand, mastering the logic of digital media through TikTok dances, Instagram reels, and influencer collaborations, while on the other, reaffirming legitimacy by participating in *pengajian*, local arts performances, and *silaturahmi* networks.

THE POLITICIZATION OF ENTERTAINMENT AND ITS IMPACT ON DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION: EVIDENCE FROM PILKADA JAWA BARAT

Azarine Charissa Rahma and Fitriyah

This dual approach reflects not only the resilience of local cultural forms but also their continuing relevance in shaping political communication in Indonesia. By positioning themselves as both digital influencers and cultural participants, candidates in West Java sought to construct identities that resonated with multiple constituencies urban youth active in social media, rural communities attached to cultural traditions, and religious groups for whom moral credibility remains central. In doing so, candidates effectively blurred the boundaries between the modern spectacle of entertainment politics and the enduring authority of cultural and religious symbolism.

While such hybridity showcases innovation and inclusivity, it also deepens the challenge of balancing popularity-driven appeals with policy-driven debates. Campaigns that rely too heavily on spectacle whether digital or cultural risk marginalizing substantive discussions on governance, development, and accountability. As Aspinnall and Mietzner (2019) note, the personalization of politics in Indonesia has long favored charisma and symbolic performances over programmatic visions, and the 2024 West Java Pilkada reaffirms this trend. Ultimately, the blending of entertainment media with traditional forms of political mobilization underscores both the strength and the fragility of Indonesian democracy: it demonstrates the system's cultural flexibility in accommodating new media logics, yet simultaneously raises concerns about whether such hybrid campaigns can truly foster informed and deliberative democratic participation. The 2024 West Java Pilkada shows how political actors are increasingly adept at navigating multiple arenas of communication, appealing to younger voters through digital entertainment while also reinforcing legitimacy through cultural and religious practices. This adaptability represents a significant evolution in Indonesia's democratic landscape, where political campaigns must constantly balance innovation with tradition.

Overall, this study suggests that the growing entanglement of politics and entertainment in Indonesia should be understood as both a catalyst for participation and a potential threat to democratic quality. On the one hand, it widens access, particularly for millennials and Gen Z, groups often marginalized by conventional forms of political discourse. Entertainment-driven strategies can demystify politics, lower barriers to entry, and bring fresh energy into the democratic process. On the other hand, however, they risk entrenching a style of politics that privileges visibility, spectacle, and personal branding over substance, accountability, and policy-based debate. In this sense, the success of entertainment politics is double-edged: it democratizes access while simultaneously hollowing out deliberation.

Looking ahead, future elections at both the local and national levels will likely continue to reflect this tension between participation and deliberation. The key challenge for Indonesia's democratic consolidation will be to harness the mobilizing potential of entertainment media without allowing it to erode the deliberative core of democratic practice. This raises urgent questions for scholars, policymakers, and practitioners alike: How can democratic institutions adapt to the cultural logics of entertainment media? How can political campaigns maintain inclusivity while preserving accountability? And most importantly, how can Indonesia ensure that the vitality of its democracy is not compromised by the very media strategies that make it more accessible? Addressing these questions will be crucial for safeguarding the future quality and resilience of Indonesian democracy in the digital era.

CONCLUSION

The study of the 2024 West Java Pilkada highlights how entertainment media has reshaped the dynamics of political public relations in Indonesia. Entertainment-based strategies, ranging from digital content creation to hybrid campaigns that integrate cultural and religious traditions, have broadened political participation, particularly among younger and less politically engaged voters. These approaches expand accessibility and visibility, while simultaneously fostering emotional resonance that strengthens candidate recognition. However, the findings also underscore the double-edged nature of entertainment politics. While it opens avenues for inclusivity and innovation, it risks reducing politics to a spectacle dominated by personality-driven narratives, thereby weakening policy-based debates and accountability. This duality reflects the broader tension within Indonesian democracy: its ability to adapt culturally and technologically, yet its vulnerability to the erosion of deliberative democratic practices.

In conclusion, entertainment media in politics should neither be celebrated uncritically nor dismissed outright. It should instead be seen as a structural feature of contemporary Indonesian democracy that requires careful balancing. For political actors, the challenge lies in integrating entertainment with substantive policy communication. For society, the task is to cultivate media literacy and critical engagement to ensure that participation does not come at the expense of democratic quality. The case of West Java thus offers an important lesson for future elections, where the vitality of democracy will depend not only on participation but also on the depth and quality of public deliberation.

REFERENCES

- Alodat, A. M., Al-Qora'n, L. F., & Abu Hamoud, M. (2023). Social Media Platforms and Political Participation: A Study of Jordanian Youth Engagement. *Social Sciences*, 12(7). <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci12070402>
- Ampomklinkaew, C. (2025). The role of social media influencers in influencing consumers' imitation intentions. *Digital Business*, 5(2). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.digbus.2025.100143>
- Ariel, Y., & Elishar, V. (2025). Political Communication and the Hype Cycle: Tracing Its Evolution Across the Digital Era. *Journalism and Media*, 6(2). <https://doi.org/10.3390/journalmedia6020087>
- Asimakopoulou, G., Antonopoulou, H., Giotopoulos, K., & Halkiopoulos, C. (2025). Impact of Information and Communication Technologies on Democratic Processes and Citizen Participation. *Societies*, 15(2), 1–41. <https://doi.org/10.3390/soc15020040>
- Aspinall, E., & Mietzner, M. (2019). Indonesia's Democratic Paradox: Competitive Elections amidst Rising Illiberalism. *Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies*, 55(3), 295–317. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00074918.2019.1690412>
- Bizjak Zabukovec, B., & Faganel, A. (2024). The Issue of Scales for Measuring Parasocial Interaction and Parasocial Relationship between Followers and Influencers on Social Media. *Sustainability (Switzerland)*, 16(17). <https://doi.org/10.3390/su16177782>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology; In qualitative research in psychology. *Uwe Bristol*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://psychology.ukzn.ac.za/?mdocs-file=1176>
- Brunelle, N., Dufour, I. F., Couture-Dubé, R., Mercier, P., & Garceau, G. (2023). The case study approach Sarah. *Understanding Desistance from Crime and Social and Community (Re)Integration*, 26–40. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003378433-3>
- Dahlan, Z., Tanjung, M., Asari, H., & Wibowo, B. S. (2025). CELEBRITY ULAMA': opportunities for the commodification of religion and the values of Islamic education Das'ad Latif. *Cogent Arts and Humanities*, 12(1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311983.2025.2492427>
- Darbo, K. N., & Skjerdal, T. (2019). Blurred boundaries: Citizens journalists versus conventional journalists in Hong Kong. *Global Media and China*, 4(1), 111–124. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2059436419834633>
- Deželan, T. (2023). *Young people's participation in European democratic processes How to improve and facilitate youth involvement*.
- Doona, J. (2016). *Political comedy engagement: Genre work, political identity and cultural citizenship*.
- Duncan, J. S., & Duncan, N. G. (2001). Aestheticization of Landscape Preservation. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 91(2), 387–409.
- Dwivedi, Y. K., Ismagilova, E., Hughes, D. L., Carlson, J., Filieri, R., Jacobson, J., Jain, V., Karjaluoto, H., Kefi, H., Krishen, A. S., Kumar, V., Rahman, M. M., Raman, R., Rauschnabel, P. A., Rowley, J., Salo, J., Tran, G. A., & Wang, Y. (2021). Setting the future of digital and social media marketing research: Perspectives and research propositions. *International Journal of Information Management*, 59(June 2020), 102168. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2020.102168>
- Élections, G. E. T. (2024). V Political Process : Public Opinion, Attitudes, Parties, Forces, Groups And Elections / Vie Politique : Opinion Publique, Attitudes, Partis, Forces, Groupes Et Élections. *International Political Science Abstracts*, 74(1), 66–133. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00208345241232781>
- Garcia, A. R., Filipe, S. B., Fernandes, C., Estevão, C., & Ramos, G. (2015). The politics of the environment: ideas, activism, policy. In *Choice Reviews Online* (Vol. 40, Issue 04). <https://doi.org/10.5860/choice.40-2419>
- Geise, S., Maubach, K., & Boettcher Eli, A. (2025). Picture me in person: Personalization and emotionalization as political campaign strategies on social media in the German federal election period 2021. *New Media and Society*, 27(7), 3745–3769. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14614448231224031>
- Gherghina, S., & Marian, C. (2024). Election campaign and media exposure: explaining objective vs subjective political knowledge among first-time voters. *Journal of Contemporary Central and Eastern Europe*, 32(1), 37–53. <https://doi.org/10.1080/25739638.2024.2319400>
- Grüning, D. J., & Schubert, T. W. (2022). Emotional Campaigning in Politics: Being Moved and Anger in Political Ads Motivate to Support Candidate and Party. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12(January), 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.781851>
- Harff, D., & Schmuck, D. (2025). Prevalence, Presentation, and Popularity of Political Topics in Social Media Influencers' Content Across Two Countries. *Political Communication*, 42(3), 351–381. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10584609.2024.2406809>
- Hertanto. (2023). Youth Political Perception Towards the Indonesian 2024 Election Hertanto. *Croatian International*

THE POLITICIZATION OF ENTERTAINMENT AND ITS IMPACT ON DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION: EVIDENCE FROM PILKADA JAWA BARAT

Azarine Charissa Rahma and Fitriyah

- Relations Review*, 93(29), 315–332. <https://doi.org/10.2478/CIRR-2023-0065>
- Jin, D. Y. (2024). The rise of digital platforms as a soft power apparatus in the New Korean Wave era. *Communication and the Public*, 9(2), 161–177. <https://doi.org/10.1177/20570473241234204>
- Khan, S. (2024). *Threats to Social Cohesion And Democratic Resilience: A New Strategic Approach*. March, 150. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65fdbfd265ca2ffef17da79c/The_Khan_review.pdf
- Kholilah Yahya, N., Dewi Warsoyo, A., & Muchamad Ghani, I. (2024). Voting Behavior Patterns of Gen Z in the 2024 Indonesian Presidential Election in DKI Jakarta. *Journal of Law, Politic and Humanities*, 4(5), 1611–1625. <https://doi.org/10.38035/jlph.v4i5.574>
- Kim, E., & Patterson, S. (2025). The American Viewer: Political Consequences of Entertainment Media. *American Political Science Review*, 119(2), 917–931. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055424000728>
- Klüser, K. J. (2025). From Entertainment to Engagement? Entertainment Figures' Political Messaging and Audience Responses in the Digital Age. *Political Communication*, 00(00), 1–24. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10584609.2025.2498526>
- Kolodiazhnyi, A., Ledyayev, V. G., & Rodionova, M. M. (2023). *The Conce pt of “ Entertainment Democracy ” and Its Role in Explanation of Public Sphere Transformation Scientific Reviewers : Scientific Supervisor :*
- Lin, C. A. (2009). Media Effects : Advances in Theory and Research. In *Media Effects: Advances in Theory and Research*. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203877111-32>
- Long, J. A., Jeong, M. S., & Lavis, S. M. (2021). Political Comedy as a Gateway to News Use, Internal Efficacy, and Participation: A Longitudinal Mediation Analysis. *Human Communication Research*, 47(2), 166–191. <https://doi.org/10.1093/hcr/hqaa011>
- Matthes, J., Heiss, R., & van Scharrel, H. (2023). The distraction effect. Political and entertainment-oriented content on social media, political participation, interest, and knowledge. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 142(July 2021). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2022.107644>
- MAZZOLENI, G., & SCHULZ, W. (1999). “Mediatization” of Politics: A Challenge for Democracy? *Political Communication*, 16(3), 247–261. <https://doi.org/10.1080/105846099198613>
- Melissen, J. (2005). The New Public Diplomacy: Between Theory and Practice. *Studies in Diplomacy and International Relations*, 3–27. https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230554931_1
- Naerland, T. U., & Dahl, J. M. (2022). Beyond representation: Public service media, minority audiences and the promotion of capabilities through entertainment. *Poetics*, 92(PB), 101687. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.poetic.2022.101687>
- Nugroho, C. D. H. (2025). A comparative analysis of electoral systems in Indonesia and the Philippines: Structure, process, and political representation. *Jurnal Inovasi Ilmu Sosial Dan Politik (JISoP)*, 7(1), 80–94. <https://doi.org/10.33474/jisop.v7i1.23422>
- OECD. (2022). *Building Trust and Reinforcing Democracy*.
- Park, C. S., & Gil De Zúñiga, H. (2021). Learning about Politics from Mass Media and Social Media: Moderating Roles of Press Freedom and Public Service Broadcasting in 11 Countries. *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, 33(2), 315–335. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ijpor/edaa021>
- Patrick, U. V. M., Honors, L., & Senior, C. (2024). *Exploring Entertainment Media Diets in the Age of Polarization*.
- Pharris, M. H. K. (2023). *The Context of Democratic Discourse : Deliberation and Debate in Online Discussion Spaces* BY. <https://conservancy.umn.edu/server/api/core/bitstreams/ce6798a8-97d9-40d1-9f5a-15a82e5263e5/content>
- Putra, D. K. S. (2024). Power Relations between Media and Politics in Indonesia. *Jurnal Ilmu Sosial Indonesia (JISI)*, 5(2), 143–152.
- Smellie, S., & Boswell, C. (2025). The influence of media narratives on political debate: narratives on the 2015 migrant ‘crisis’ in five European countries. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 9451, 4181–4200. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2025.2523113>
- Sukendar, M. U., Susanto, A., & ... (2025). Political branding on X: sentiment dynamics in Indonesia’s presidential discourse. *Jurnal Studi ...*, 9(July), 347–358. <https://doi.org/10.25139/jsk.v9i2.10120>
- Susanti, M. H., & Khu, S. (2025). The 2024 Indonesian presidential election in the accounts of millennials: A case study of Prabowo Subianto and Gibran Rakabuming Raka voters in Semarang, Central Java. *Social Sciences and Humanities Open*, 11(May), 101629. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssaho.2025.101629>
- Swetha, M., & Aravind, B. R. (2025). “Language as power: Analyzing the intersection of linguistics and politics in Ijeoma Oluo’s work.” *Social Sciences and Humanities Open*, 11(March), 101405. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssaho.2025.101405>

**THE POLITICIZATION OF ENTERTAINMENT AND ITS IMPACT ON DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION:
EVIDENCE FROM PILKADA JAWA BARAT**

Azarine Charissa Rahma and Fitriyah

- Theodorakopoulos, L., Theodoropoulou, A., & Klavdianos, C. (2025). Interactive Viral Marketing Through Big Data Analytics, Influencer Networks, AI Integration, and Ethical Dimensions. *Journal of Theoretical and Applied Electronic Commerce Research*, 20(2), 1–68. <https://doi.org/10.3390/jtaer20020115>
- Tsfati, Y., Cohen, J., Dvir-Gvirsman, S., Tsurriel, K., Waismel-Manor, I., & Holbert, R. L. (2022). Political Para-Social Relationship as a Predictor of Voting Preferences in the Israeli 2019 Elections. *Communication Research*, 49(8), 1118–1147. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00936502211032822>
- Tucker, J., Guess, A., Barbera, P., Vaccari, C., Siegel, A., Sanovich, S., Stukal, D., & Nyhan, B. (2018). Social Media, Political Polarization, and Political Disinformation: A Review of the Scientific Literature. *SSRN Electronic Journal*, January. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3144139>
- Yilmaz, I., Akbarzadeh, S., Abbasov, N., & Bashirov, G. (2025). The Double-Edged Sword: Political Engagement on Social Media and Its Impact on Democracy Support in Authoritarian Regimes. *Political Research Quarterly*, 78(2), 419–436. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10659129241305035>
- Zschau, T., Lee, H., & Miller, J. (2025). When Politics Gets Personal: Students' Conversational Strategies as Everyday Identity Work. *Behavioral Sciences*, 15(6), 1–43. <https://doi.org/10.3390/bs15060835>