

From Clicks to Votes: Digital Mobilization Of Gen-Z In Indonesia`S Democracy

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Abstract

This study examines how digital media has reshaped political campaigning and youth participation in Indonesia's 2024 presidential election, with particular attention to the political mobilization of Generation Z voters. As the first election in which Gen-Z constituted a significant proportion of the electorate, the 2024 contest provides a critical moment to assess how affective digital strategies influence democratic engagement. The study employs qualitative content analysis of social media campaigns to investigate how political actors mobilized online attention, emotions, and participation. The primary dataset comprises 72 Instagram posts (12 selected posts from each of the six presidential and vice-presidential candidates), systematically coded and analyzed using NVivo to identify dominant themes, messaging patterns, and strategic variations across campaigns. Digital media monitoring data from Indonesia Indicator, covering the period from October 2023 to 14 February 2024, serve as contextual evidence to situate content-level findings within Indonesia's broader digital campaign landscape. The findings reveal clear divergences in digital mobilization strategies. The Prabowo-Gibran campaign relied heavily on emotional, entertaining, and personalized content, successfully generating affective connections and higher levels of online engagement among Gen-Z voters. In contrast, other candidates predominantly employed conventional issue-based and programmatic messaging, which tended to elicit less interactive participation. The study argues that Indonesia's 2024 election reflects the consolidation of affective digital politics, in which algorithmic visibility, emotional resonance, and participatory digital culture increasingly shape electoral competition

Keywords: Digital Mobilization; Generation Z; Social Media Mobilization; Youth Participation; Affective Digital Politics

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Introduction

Digital platforms increasingly mediate electoral processes in modern democracies. Social media has become a major platform for producing political visibility, engagement, and legitimacy, rather than merely a medium for political communication. The development of digital infrastructures has changed how political actors engage with the public, rally supporters, and vie for attention. In addition to party organizations, networked communication, platform logics, algorithmic visibility, and political messaging now shape election campaigns in many countries.

According to Lim (2002), open information spaces produced by digital technology can increase the chances of democratic and civic engagement. But digital democracy also brings new difficulties, such as the increasing impact of emotional communication, tailored political content, and public conversation mediated by algorithms.

These changes are especially important for Generation Z, a group whose political indoctrination largely occurs online. Research indicates that many young people actively engage in politics through digital expression, memes, short-form videos, and online interactions, even though they show little involvement in traditional political organizations or collective activism (Loader et al., 2014; DPPUGM, 2023). Political participation, therefore, increasingly takes the form of personalized, expressive, and platform-mediated engagement rather than institutionalized collective action.

As one of the world's largest democracies and among the countries with the highest levels

of social media penetration, Indonesia provides a critical context in which digital communication increasingly shapes electoral competition. Generation Z constituted approximately 22.85% of registered voters in the 2024 election and 27.94% of Indonesia's total population (BPS, 2021).

While recent studies on Indonesia's 2024 presidential election have examined candidate image construction on Instagram (Indrayani, 2025), cross-platform engagement patterns and social media affordances (Eriyanto, 2024), digital citizenship discourse on social media (Mulyono et al., 2024), and the proliferation of political gimmicks and symbolic communication in online campaigning (Aminulloh et al., 2025), these studies have largely approached digital political communication through separate analytical lenses. Existing scholarship has focused on impression management strategies, engagement metrics, public discourse, or symbolic political performances. Consequently, limited attention has been paid to how affective communication, platform-native content strategies, participation cues, and amplification practices work together to mobilize Generation Z voters during electoral campaigns.

This study addresses that gap by examining Instagram Reels as a distinctive site where affective publics (Papacharissi, 2015), connective action (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012), networked visibility (Castells, 2012), and computational politics (Woolley & Howard, 2019) converge. Rather than focusing solely on candidate image construction or engagement outcomes, the study investigates how emotional resonance, platform affordances, participation logics, and amplification strategies shape digital political mobilization. By integrating these

perspectives, the study offers a more comprehensive account of affective digital politics and advances understanding of how Generation Z's engagement is structured within platform-mediated democratic processes.

Indonesia's 2024 election is analytically significant because it marks the convergence of three developments: the emergence of Generation Z as a major electoral constituency, the growing dominance of platform-native campaigning (Sihombing, 2024), and the increasing use of AI-enabled digital communication in electoral politics (Waty et al., 2025; Pinatih et al., 2024). Generation Z accounted for approximately 22.85% of registered voters and 27.94% of Indonesia's population (BPS, 2021). Candidates increasingly relied on short-form videos, influencer collaborations, memes, AI-generated imagery, chatbots, and personalized digital content to attract youth attention and shape public perceptions (Sihombing, 2024; Rosadi, 2024; Waty et al., 2025; Pinatih et al., 2024). While existing studies primarily examine these technologies as campaign tools or communication innovations, this study investigates how they intersect with affective communication, platform affordances, and algorithmic visibility to facilitate youth-oriented political engagement. Although social media-driven campaigning has become common across contemporary democracies (Papacharissi, 2015; van Dijk et al., 2018), Indonesia's 2024 election is distinctive in that these developments converged within a single electoral cycle. Unlike Brazil, where affective politics has been associated with anti-establishment populism and polarizing digital narratives (Cesarino, 2020; Nemer, 2022;

Fernandez-Villanueva & Bayarri, 2021; Bayarri & Fernandez-Villanueva, 2025), or India, where digital mobilization has been linked to nationalist narratives and personalized political branding (Udupa, 2019; Jaffrelot, 2021), affective engagement in Indonesia was increasingly organized through the cultural and communicative logics of social media platforms, with humor, memes, short-form videos, and personalized digital aesthetics emerging as key mechanisms of political mobilization among Generation Z voters.

The originality of this study therefore lies in three areas. Empirically, it provides a systematic analysis of Instagram Reels as a platform-native campaign format during Indonesia's 2024 presidential election. Methodologically, it combines theory-guided qualitative content analysis with contextual digital monitoring data to examine not only campaign content but also the broader visibility environment in which such content circulated. Theoretically, it moves beyond treating affective publics, connective action, networked society, and computational politics as separate perspectives by integrating them into a single framework for explaining digital political mobilization. In doing so, the Indonesian case extends existing scholarship on affective publics by demonstrating that political mobilization is increasingly structured not only by emotional resonance but also by the interaction among platform-native communication, algorithmic visibility, and youth-oriented digital culture. This suggests that the cultural and communicative logics of social media platforms – including short-form video, personalization, algorithmic visibility, and participatory content practices – have become an increasingly important infrastructure of

democratic participation in contemporary electoral politics (Papacharissi, 2015; van Dijck et al., 2018).

Research Methods

This study adopts a theory-guided qualitative content analysis to examine affective digital campaigning on Instagram Reels during Indonesia's 2024 presidential election. Methodologically, this approach prioritizes analytical depth over breadth by focusing on how affective tone, audiovisual aesthetics, participation cues, and amplification strategies are articulated within platform-native political content. Rather than measuring electoral outcomes or voter preferences directly, the analysis is designed to capture the logic of mobilization embedded in short-form digital communication, particularly as it relates to Generation Z voters.

The decision to focus on Instagram Reels reflects both empirical and theoretical considerations. Empirically, Instagram was the only social media platform consistently used by official candidate accounts across all presidential and vice-presidential contenders during the campaign period. Reels, the platform's primary short-form, algorithmically amplified format, is a key site where affective expression, visual storytelling, and participatory cues converge. Theoretically, short-form audiovisual content is central to the formation of affective publics, in which political engagement is structured by emotional resonance and rapid circulation rather than deliberative exchange (Papacharissi, 2015). By examining Reels, this study can analyze political communication at the intersection of affect, visibility, and platform affordances.

The use of purposive sampling, selecting 12 high-engagement Reels from each candidate, reflects an analytical focus on visibility within networked attention economies. High engagement functions here not as a proxy for persuasion or electoral influence but as an indicator of successful alignment between affective content and platform logics. This approach is consistent with scholarship on networked societies, which emphasizes that political power in digital environments is increasingly exercised through communication flows and visibility rather than solely through institutional authority (Castells, 2012). However, this sampling strategy also entails limitations. By prioritizing high-engagement content, the analysis may underrepresent less visible forms of campaign communication that nevertheless contribute to organizational mobilization or policy messaging.

Several limitations of the study should be acknowledged. First, the analysis does not examine audience reception or interpretation. While the study identifies how participation cues and affective strategies are embedded in campaign content, it does not assess how Gen-Z users interpreted, negotiated, or resisted these messages. As such, the findings speak to the supply side of digital mobilization rather than to its reception or impact on voter behavior. Second, the study does not establish a causal relationship between digital engagement and voting decisions. Consistent with critiques of digitally mediated participation, online visibility and affective engagement do not necessarily translate into sustained political commitment or electoral choice (Tufekci, 2017).

Finally, while contextual data from the Indonesia Indicator and documentary sources

are used to situate the findings within the broader digital campaign environment, these materials function as analytical background rather than independent empirical datasets. This choice reflects a deliberate methodological boundary, ensuring that the core analysis remains grounded in systematic qualitative coding of platform content. Future research could build on this study by combining content analysis with audience interviews, surveys, or experimental designs to examine how effective digital politics is received, interpreted, and translated into political action across different segments of Indonesian youth.

Literature Review: Digital Democracy, Affective Public, and Networked Participation in Indonesia

Indonesia's experience with digital democracy illustrates how the internet has evolved from a space of political opening into a contested public arena shaped by emotion, identity, and platform logics. Following the post-authoritarian expansion of cyber-civil spaces that enabled civic participation beyond state control (Lim, 2002), Indonesia's digital public sphere has undergone significant transformation. Rather than functioning solely as a deliberative arena, digital platforms have increasingly become sites of emotional mobilization, polarization, and symbolic contestation.

Research on Indonesian digital politics has primarily focused on online activism, religious mobilization, and identity-based polarization. Lim (2017) demonstrates how movements such as the Aksi Bela Islam 212 transformed social media into algorithmic enclaves, where users selectively engage with emotionally resonant

content that reinforces political and religious identities. Similarly, Fealy (2016) shows how online Islamic political mobilization challenges Indonesia's pluralist democratic norms by circulating moral narratives and digital propaganda. These studies highlight the ambivalent role of digital platforms in expanding participation while intensifying fragmentation and emotional polarization.

While this body of literature provides important insights into the character of Indonesia's digital public sphere, it has paid comparatively limited attention to how these dynamics operate within formal electoral campaigns. In particular, less is known about how political actors strategically mobilize affect, visibility, and participation through platform-native communication to engage young voters during national elections. This gap is especially salient given the growing centrality of Generation Z within Indonesia's electorate and their deep integration into digital media environments.

In the Indonesian electoral context, Sofian (2020) documents how memes function as contested political discourse during regional elections. Zalzillah & Gumelar (2024) describe how digital platforms such as NarasiSewsroom shape public opinion through interactive narration and fact-checking. In the 2024 presidential election, TikTok emerged as the dominant medium for affective campaigning, with viral content strategies specifically designed to capture Generation Z voters (Dewi, 2025).

To address this gap, this study draws on the concept of affective publics as its primary analytical lens. Papacharissi (2015) conceptualizes affective publics as networked

formations organized around shared emotional expression rather than ideological consensus or institutional membership. Within such publics, political engagement is driven by feelings of belonging, resonance, and recognition, circulating rapidly through digital platforms via visual, audio, and symbolic cues. This framework is particularly relevant for understanding contemporary electoral politics, where short-form videos, memes, humor, and personalized narratives increasingly shape political visibility and engagement.

The affective publics framework helps explain why emotional tone and expressive performance have become central to political communication on platforms such as Instagram and TikTok. Rather than persuading voters through programmatic argumentation, political actors seek to cultivate emotional connection and relatability, positioning themselves within the everyday digital cultures of their audiences. For Generation Z—whose political socialization is deeply embedded in platform environments—affective communication constitutes a key modality of participation, enabling engagement that is expressive, personalized, and low-threshold.

Complementing this perspective, scholarship on connective action provides insight into the changing forms of political participation among digitally native youth. Bennett and Segerberg (2012) argue that contemporary political engagement increasingly takes the form of personalized, loosely coordinated action facilitated by digital media rather than collective mobilization through formal organizations. In this model, participation is sustained through individual expression and symbolic alignment rather than hierarchical coordination. Studies of

youth political engagement further show that young citizens tend to value authenticity, creativity, and emotional resonance over party loyalty or ideological coherence (Loader et al., 2014). These dynamics align closely with the logic of affective publics, where participation emerges through expressive acts such as sharing, commenting, and remixing political content.

Beyond participation, the distribution and visibility of political communication are shaped by the structural conditions of networked societies. Castells (2012) emphasizes that power in networked environments operates through communication flows and visibility rather than solely through institutional authority. In digital electoral contexts, this means that political influence is increasingly contingent on the ability to capture attention within algorithmically curated platforms. Tufekci (2017) further cautions that while digitally mediated participation can mobilize attention rapidly, it often lacks organizational depth and sustainability, producing forms of engagement that are highly visible yet politically fragile.

These dynamics are intensified by the growing role of computational politics. Woolley and Howard (2019) describe how political actors strategically use algorithms, automation, and coordinated amplification to shape online discourse and influence public opinion. In electoral contexts, affective content is not only emotionally resonant but also algorithmically advantageous, as platforms tend to reward content that generates high levels of interaction. As a result, affect becomes both an emotional and computational resource, linking

participation with visibility within platform infrastructures.

Situating Indonesia within broader Global South debates further underscores the significance of these dynamics. In many Global South democracies, digital participation unfolds amid weak party identification, uneven institutional trust, and heavy reliance on media visibility (Tapsell, 2018; Castells, 2012). Under these conditions, digital platforms function as alternative infrastructures of political engagement, particularly for young citizens who are highly connected but institutionally marginalized. Research on Southeast Asia shows that digital campaigning often prioritizes personalization, emotional appeal, and visibility over ideological coherence, reflecting broader transformations in political communication (Tapsell, 2018).

Building on these discussions, this study examines the 2024 presidential election in Indonesia as a case that enables the simultaneous analysis of affective communication, connective engagement, and algorithmic visibility.

By integrating insights from affective publics, connective action, networked society, and computational politics, this study conceptualizes digital democracy as a hybrid configuration in which emotional expression, technological mediation, and political strategy converge. Rather than treating affective digital politics as a deviation from democratic norms, the analysis positions it as a structural feature of contemporary electoral democracies in the Global South, where political participation is increasingly negotiated through visibility, emotion, and platform-mediated interaction.

Conceptual Framework: From Affective Publics to Affective Efficiency

While affective publics, connective action, network society, and computational politics are often treated as separate theoretical traditions, this study argues that they are interconnected dimensions of contemporary digital political mobilization. Rather than operating independently, these perspectives describe a sequential process through which political communication is transformed into visibility and engagement in platform-mediated environments.

The process begins with affective publics (Papacharissi, 2015). Political actors first generate emotional resonance through narratives, symbols, humor, intimacy, and visual performances that encourage audiences to experience shared feelings rather than ideological agreement. In digital environments, emotional expression becomes a key mechanism for capturing and maintaining attention.

These affective connections subsequently facilitate connective action (Bennet & Segerberg, 2012). Once an emotional connection is established, citizens are encouraged to participate through personalized and low-threshold forms of engagement, such as liking, sharing, commenting, remixing, and reposting content. Participation emerges not through formal organizational membership but through individualized acts of expression and symbolic alignment.

The accumulation of connective participation generates visibility within networked environments. Following Castells (2012), power in network societies increasingly depends on communication flows and attention

rather than institutional authority alone. Content that successfully stimulates participation gains greater visibility within digital networks, expanding its reach and influence.

Visibility is further intensified through computational politics (Woolley & Howard, 2019). Algorithms, recommendation systems, and platform infrastructures reward content that generates high levels of interaction. Consequently, affective content acquires computational value because emotional engagement increases the likelihood of amplification and circulation. Political communication, therefore, is shaped not only by persuasive messages but also by platform logics that privilege engagement.

Building on these interconnected processes, this study introduces the concept of affective efficiency. It refers to the capacity of political communication to convert digital visibility into engagement through the interplay of emotional resonance, connective participation, and algorithmic amplification. Rather than measuring electoral persuasion or voting outcomes, affective efficiency captures how effectively political actors align affective content with platform logics to generate observable engagement among digital audiences.

Affective efficiency helps explain why, in the Indonesian case, some campaign tactics produced greater engagement despite similar exposure. The idea offers a paradigm for understanding digital mobilization among Generation Z voters by combining emotive publics, connective action, network society, and computational politics. The conceptual

framework is summarized in the following visualization figure:

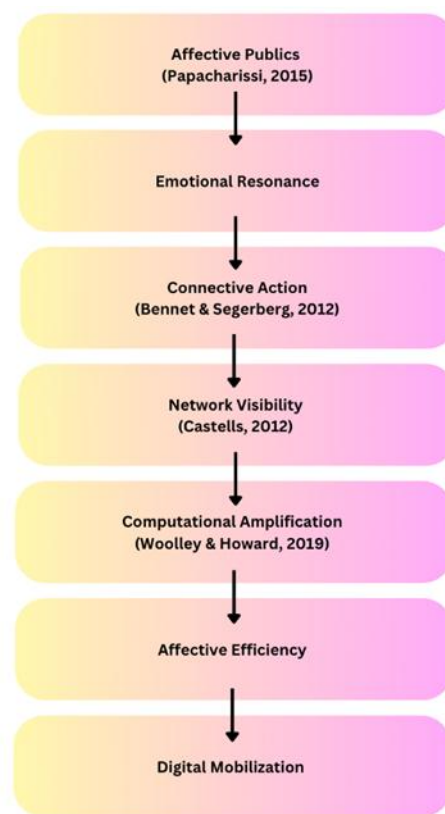


Figure 1. Affective Efficiency Model of Digital Political Mobilization

Source: Developed by the authors based on Papacharissi (2015), Benner and Segerberg (2012), Castells (2012), and Woolley and Howard (2019)

Results and Discussion

This section presents the empirical findings of the qualitative content analysis of Instagram Reels published by presidential and vice-presidential candidates during Indonesia's 2024 election. Based on NVivo-assisted coding of 72 Reels, the results are organized into four

analytical dimensions: (1) affective tone, (2) audiovisual aesthetic strategies, (3) participation logic, and (4) strategic amplification practices. Findings are reported comparatively across candidate pairs to highlight variation in digital campaign styles.

Affective Tone in Instagram Reels Campaigns

Across all candidates, populist affect emerged as the most prevalent affective tone, accounting for 26.39% of coded instances. This was followed by personal intimacy, humor and playfulness, and moral-nationalist affect, each representing 18.06% of the dataset. Less frequently observed were moral-religious affect (8.33%), empathy-care (6.94%), and moral outrage-anger (4.17%).

Within the Anies Baswedan-Muhaimin Iskandar ticket, both candidates showed a strong concentration of populist affect (33.33% each). Anies' Reels also featured moral-nationalist affect (25%) and humor and playfulness (16.67%), with smaller proportions of personal intimacy and moral outrage-anger (8.33% each). Muhaimin's affective distribution was more evenly spread, combining humor and playfulness (25%) and moral-religious affect (25%), while personal intimacy and moral outrage-anger each accounted for 8.33%. Empathy-care was not identified in Muhaimin's content.

The Prabowo-Gibran ticket displayed both overlap and divergence. Populist affect accounted for 33.33% of Prabowo's Reels and 16.67% of Gibran's. Prabowo's content showed a high level of personal intimacy (33.33%) and empathy (16.67%), with no instances of humor and playfulness, moral-religious affect, or moral

outrage-anger. Gibran's affective repertoire was more varied, combining humor and playfulness (33.33%), moral-nationalist affect (25%), and personal intimacy (16.67%), alongside limited expressions of empathy-care (8.33%).

For the Ganjar-Mahfud MD ticket, affective strategies differed markedly between candidates. Ganjar's Reels were dominated by humor and playfulness (33.33%), followed by populist affect (25%) and empathy care (16.67%). Mahfud's content was characterized by a strong emphasis on moral-nationalist affect (41.67%) and personal intimacy (33.33%), with populist affect accounting for 16.67% and a minimal presence of other affective tones.

Audiovisual Aesthetic Strategies

Analysis of audio formats shows that original speech sound was the most frequently used across candidates (26.03%), followed by uplifting sound-based audio (21.92%) and pop-culture audio (16.44%). Other formats, including natural ambient audio and oratorical speech, appeared selectively. Visually, the Reels were dominated by casual, everyday visuals (26.39%) and documentary-style visuals (22.22%). Cinematic and mass-rally visuals appeared in moderate proportions, while AI-generated and explicit visual symbolism accounted for only 1.39% each of the dataset.

Within the Anies-Muhaimi ticket, audio strategies differed despite shared visual preferences. Anies relied primarily on oratorical audio and uplifting sound-based audio (33.33% each), while Muhaimin's Reels were dominated by original speech sound (41.67%), supplemented by natural ambient and pop-culture audio (16.67% each). Both candidates

avored casual, every day, and documentary-style visuals, though Anies incorporated mass-rally visuals more prominently (41.67%).

The Prabowo-Gibran ticket exhibited contrasting aesthetic orientations. Prabowo's audio strategy centered on natural ambient audio and uplifting sound-based audio (41.67% each), with limited use of speech-driven formats. Gibran, by contrast, relied heavily on pop-culture audio (33.33%) and uplifting campaign anthem audio (41.67%). Visually, Prabowo combined cinematic and mass-rally visuals (25% each), while Gibran favored casual, every day, and cinematic visuals (33.33% each).

For Ganjar Pranowo–Mahfud MD, speech-centered audio strategies were most pronounced. Ganjar's Reels primarily featured original speech sound (46.15%), supported by oratorical and pop-culture audio (23.08% each). Mahfud's content showed the highest concentration of original speech sound (58.33%). Visually, both candidates relied heavily on documentary-style and formal-institutional settings, with Mahfud exhibiting the highest proportion of documentary visuals (50%).

Participation Logic in Instagram Reels

Across all candidates, low-intensity connective action was the dominant participation logic, accounting for 52.78% of coded instances. This was followed by hybrid connective–collective action (20.83%) and personalized connective action (18.06%). Explicit collective mobilization appeared least frequently (8.33%).

Within the Anies Baswedan–Muhaimin Iskandar ticket, low-intensity connective action accounted for 41.67% of Anies' Reels and

58.33% of Muhaimin's. Anies also employed explicit collective mobilization and hybrid connective–collective action at equal levels (25% each), while personalized connective action appeared minimally (8.33%). Muhaimin's participation profile was narrower, with limited use of explicit mobilization and hybrid strategies (16.67% each).

The Prabowo-Gibran ticket demonstrated greater variation. Prabowo's Reels were dominated by personalized connective action (50%), followed by hybrid connective–collective action (33.33%). Gibran's content relied primarily on low-intensity connective action (41.67%), supplemented by hybrid (33.33%) and personalized connective action (25%). No instances of explicit collective mobilization were observed for either candidate.

For Ganjar–Mahfud MD, participation logics were more uniform. Ganjar's Reels were overwhelmingly oriented toward low-intensity connective action (75%), while Mahfud exhibited the highest concentration of this category among all candidates (83.33%).

Strategic Amplification Practices

The analysis indicates that platform-native optimization was the most common amplification practice (47.22%), followed closely by content without explicit amplification strategies (44.44%). Influencer collaborations were rare (6.94%), and AI-generated content was even rarer (1.39%). No instances of algorithmic optimization were identified.

Within the Anies–Muhaimin ticket, Anies' Reels were primarily characterized by the absence of amplification strategies (50%) and platform-native optimization (41.67%).

Muhaimin showed greater reliance on platform-native optimization (58.33%).

For the Prabowo–Gibran ticket, platform-native optimization was more prominent. Prabowo’s Reels combined platform-native strategies (58.33%) with content lacking amplification (41.67%). Gibran exhibited the highest reliance on platform-native optimization (66.67%), with limited use of influencer collaboration and AI-generated content (8.33% each).

The Ganjar–Mahfud MD ticket displayed the strongest internal contrast. Ganjar’s content was evenly distributed between platform-native optimization (50%), influencer collaboration (25%), and no amplification strategy (25%). Mahfud’s Reels overwhelmingly lacked amplification strategies (91.67%).

Table 1. Comparative Digital Campaign Profiles of Presidential Candidate Pairs on Instagram Reels

Candidate Pair	Dominant Affective Tone	Audio-Visual Style	Participation Logic	Amplification Orientation
Anies–Muhaimin	Populist affect with moral-nationalist and moral-religious accents	Documentary and casual-everyday visuals; speech-centred and	Low-intensity connective action with selective hybrid	Low amplification, organic circulation

	; limited humor	uplifting audio	mobilization	
Prabowo–Gibran	Populist affect, humor, intimacy	Playful, pop-culture, memetic, and cinematically stylised visuals	Personalized and low-threshold connective action	High platform-native optimization and amplification
Ganjar–Mahfud	Formal, moral-nationalist affect and restrained empathy; limited humor	Documentary, institutional, stable visuals	Low-intensity connective action	Minimal amplification, supporter-driven circulation

(Source: Authors Abstraction from the NVivo Results, 2025)

Table 1 summarizes the dominant campaign profiles of each candidate pair across affective tones, aesthetics, participation, and amplification. The findings reveal distinct configurations of digital campaigning, ranging from moral-populist communication (Anies–Muhaimin) and platform-optimized affective

engagement (Prabowo-Gibran) to more formal and institutional communication (Ganjar-MD).

Contextual Digital Campaign Landscape: Evidence from Indonesia Indicator Report

While the NVivo-based content analysis captures how affective tone, audiovisual aesthetics, participation cues, and amplification strategies were articulated within Instagram Reels, these content-level patterns unfolded within a broader digital campaign ecosystem. To contextualize the findings, this section draws on digital media monitoring data from Indonesia Indicator, Meta Ad Library reports, and documentary sources to map patterns of digital visibility, engagement, and activation strategies during Indonesia’s 2024 presidential election (Indonesia Indicator, 2024; Indonesia Indikator, 2023). These data function as contextual empirical evidence, situating based on Instagram communication within the wider architecture of affective digital mobilization targeting Generation Z voters.

The 2024 election marked an intensification of activation campaigns, defined as interactive and experiential initiatives designed to build emotional connection between candidates and voters through hybrid online–offline engagement (RevoU, 2024). Across the three main coalitions, Anies–Muhaimin (Koalisi Perubahan), Prabowo–Gibran (Koalisi Indonesia Maju), and Ganjar–Mahfud (PDI-P coalition), activation campaigns were closely integrated with social media dissemination, digital advertising, volunteer networks, and user-generated content. This hybrid configuration reflects the consolidation of affective digital democracy in Indonesia, in which emotional resonance and algorithmic

visibility increasingly structure electoral competition.

The authors compare the three presidential tickets using Indonesia Indicator data, as summarized in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Comparison of Digital Campaign Profiles of Presidential Tickets in Indonesia’s 2024 Election

Candidate	Core Campaign Orientation	Dominant Digital Strategy	Engagement Characteristics	Key Limitation
Anies-Muhaimin	Rational and civic participation	Deliberative and citizen dialogue	Generated strong visibility among politically attentive audiences	Limited viral reach
Prabowo-Gibran	Affective mobilization and personalization	Memes, humor, AI-generated, platform-native aesthetic, coordinated amplification	Highest engagement and conversation rate between exposure and interaction	Dependent on affective resonance and platform dynamics
Ganjar-MD	Institutional credibility and community networks	Formal communication, symbolic, and organizational mobilization	Stable visibility through supporter networks	Lower resonance among Gen-Z audiences and limited amplification

(Source: Developed by the authors based on Indonesia Indicator Reports, 2024; Indonesia Indicator Reports, 2023)

Table 2 summarizes the differences among the candidates in their digital campaign strategies. Anies-Muhaimin emphasized deliberative participation and policy-oriented communication; Prabowo-Gibran relied on affective, highly platform-optimized content; while Ganjar-MD adopted a more institutional and community-based approach. In contrast, suggestions that campaigns align with affective communication and platform logics generated higher engagement than those emphasizing deliberation or organizational credibility.

Conversion Rate as an Indicator of Affective Efficiency

Matrix Conversion Rate Parpol

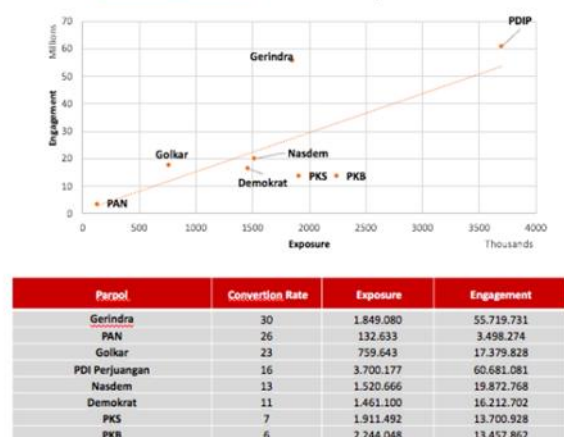


Figure 2. Matrix Conversion Rate Parpol

Source: Indonesia Indikator, 2024

Figure 2 shows significant variation in political parties' ability to convert digital visibility into engagement. Gerindra records the highest conversion rate (30), despite not having the largest overall exposure. This indicates a

strong capacity to transform online visibility into interactive participation, reflecting the effectiveness of affective and platform-native campaign strategies. On the contrary, PDI-P achieved the highest exposure (approximately 3.7 million) but generated a considerably lower conversion rate (16), suggesting that extensive visibility and institutional presence did not automatically translate into audience engagement. how efficiently political actors translate visibility into interactive participation within platform-mediated environments. As shown in the Indonesia Indicator conversion matrix, there is significant variation across political parties in their ability to convert exposure into engagement.

A similar pattern is evident among PKB and PKS, both of which recorded relatively high exposure but low conversion rates (6–7). These findings suggest that digital influence during Indonesia's 2024 election depended not merely on message volume or visibility but on political actors' ability to generate emotionally resonant and platform-compatible forms of communication that encouraged interaction among online audiences.

Building on these findings, this study proposes the concept of affective efficiency to explain how political communication transforms visibility into engagement through the interaction of emotional resonance, connective participation, and platform-mediated

Affective Digital Politics and the Reconfiguration of Democratic Engagement

The findings of this study indicate that digital campaigning during Indonesia's 2024

presidential election was structured less by programmatic persuasion than by affective performance. Across candidate pairs, Instagram Reels operated as a key site where emotions—such as intimacy, humor, populist warmth, and moral resonance—were mobilized to capture attention and facilitate low-threshold participation among Generation Z voters. This pattern reflects a broader transformation in contemporary democratic politics, in which affect serves as a central currency of political communication within platform-mediated environments (Papacharissi, 2015). Political messages gain visibility not primarily because of their policy substance but because they resonate emotionally and align with platform vernaculars. Affect, therefore, operated not merely as a communicative style but as an infrastructure of participation through which visibility, recognition, and engagement were produced.

The comparative findings further demonstrate that affective politics were unevenly distributed across campaigns. The Prabowo–Gibran ticket achieved the highest levels of engagement by combining humor, personal intimacy, and platform-native aesthetics that aligned with Gen-Z users' communicative preferences. In contrast, the Anies–Muhaimin campaign emphasized deliberative dialogue and moral framing, while Ganjar–Mahfud relied more heavily on institutional credibility and documentary-style communication. These differences suggest that digital influence is increasingly shaped by political actors' ability to align affective communication with platform logics and audience expectations. In this context, affective politics is closely linked to connective action, in

which participation occurs through individualized, low-threshold acts such as liking, sharing, commenting, and symbolic identification (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012).

These findings resonate with patterns observed across other Global South democracies. In Brazil, Bolsonaro's campaign relied heavily on memes, humor, and emotionally charged digital narratives to cultivate political identification and online engagement (Cesarino, 2020; Nemer, 2022; Fernández-Villanueva & Bayarri, 2021). In the Philippines, digital campaigning increasingly depended on influencer networks and platform-based storytelling that encouraged emotional identification rather than ideological commitment (Ong and Cabañes, 2018). Similarly, in India, the Bharatiya Janata Party successfully combined personalized leadership, digital branding, and affective nationalism to mobilize online participation among younger voters (Udupa, 2019; Jaffrelot, 2021). Consistent with these cases, the present findings demonstrate how electoral competition increasingly revolves around visibility, emotional resonance, and digitally mediated participation rather than conventional forms of party mobilization. This suggests that while affective digital politics has become a common feature of contemporary electoral competition across the Global South, the specific forms through which affect is mobilized remain shaped by local political cultures, platform environments, and electoral contexts (Papacharissi, 2015; van Dijck et al., 2018).

At the same time, the Indonesian case reveals an important variation within Global South affective digital politics. Unlike Brazil, where affective politics has often been

associated with anti-establishment populism, or India, where digital mobilization is closely linked to nationalist narratives, affective engagement in Indonesia was directed primarily toward Generation Z through the cultural and communicative logics of social media platforms. Humor, memes, short-form video content, personalized digital aesthetics, and digitally mediated candidate personas emerged as key mechanisms for attracting political attention and encouraging participation. The findings therefore suggest that youth-oriented platform cultures have become a significant arena of electoral competition, highlighting the growing convergence among digital entertainment, political communication, and democratic participation.

The Indonesian case also underscores the growing importance of computational mediation in electoral politics. Emotional content is not only socially resonant but also algorithmically advantageous. Campaigns that integrated affective narratives with platform-native formats were more likely to gain visibility in algorithmically curated environments. Affect therefore functions as both an emotional and a computational resource, linking user engagement to platform amplification (Woolley & Howard, 2019). This finding reinforces the argument that political influence in digital environments increasingly depends on visibility and communication flows rather than organizational strength alone (Castells, 2012).

These developments have significant implications for democratic participation. On the one hand, affective digital politics lowers barriers to participation and expands opportunities for political engagement,

particularly among young citizens who are less connected to formal political organizations. On the other hand, the predominance of emotional, highly personalized communication may reduce space for policy deliberation and sustained collective action. Participation becomes more expressive than deliberative, more personalized than collective, and more visible than durable. Rather than interpreting this transformation as a democratic deficit, the findings suggest that contemporary democracy is being reconfigured through the interplay of affect, platform infrastructures, and computational mediation. Understanding this transformation is therefore essential for assessing the future of democratic participation not only in Indonesia but also across Global South democracies undergoing similar processes of digital political change.

Conclusion

This study examined how Indonesia's 2024 presidential candidates used Instagram Reels to engage Generation Z through affective communication, audiovisual aesthetics, and platform-native strategies. Findings show that digital campaigning was driven more by affective performance than by programmatic persuasion, with emotional resonance, humor, and intimacy as key engagement mechanisms. Prabowo-Gibran achieved the highest engagement by aligning affective narratives with Gen-Z platform preferences. The study introduces the concept of affective efficiency, defined as the capacity of political communication to convert visibility into engagement through emotional resonance and connective participation. Future research should investigate how affective engagement

relates to civic participation and electoral behavior across Global South democracies.

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