

# Political Communication And Electoral Victory: Strategic Approaches In Local Elections

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**Abstract:** This study aims to analyze the political communication strategies implemented by the couple Mohammad Ramdhan Pomanto and Fatmawati Rusdi in the 2020 Makassar Election, identify the factors that affect the effectiveness of the communication strategy, and understand the response and public perception to the implementation of the political communication strategy. The study used a qualitative approach with a single case study method to provide a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon of political communication. Data collection was carried out through in-depth interviews with key informants, participatory observation of campaign activities, and analysis of campaign material documents. The data analysis technique uses thematic analysis with a constant comparative method approach to identify patterns of political communication strategies. The Pomanto-Fatmawati pair's political communication strategy shows systematic integration between traditional and digital communication through a multi-channel approach that optimizes the characteristics of each platform. Implementation includes structured communication planning, adaptive political message design, multi-level coalition building, and utilization of incumbent advantages. The public response showed a positive acceptance rate with high engagement in campaign activities and a strong resonance of work programs. The success of political communication strategies is determined by effective integration between traditional and digital approaches, contextualization of local cultural values, and the ability to build solid political coalitions. The research contributes to the development of local political communication models and best practices for political practitioners in designing campaign strategies that are relevant to the context of Indonesian democracy.

**Keywords:** Political Communication, Regional Elections, Campaign Strategy, Digital Media, Local Democracy

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The dynamics of local politics in Indonesia have undergone significant transformation after the reform, especially in the context of the implementation of regional head elections (Elections) that is done directly. This phenomenon provides a wider space for community participation in determining regional leaders while opening up opportunities for various political communication strategies to be implemented. Political communication as a process of conveying political messages from communicators to communicators with the aim of influencing political attitudes and behaviors is a crucial element in local political contestation (Fandhy et al., 2025). The city of Makassar as the capital of South Sulawesi Province and the economic center of the Eastern Region of Indonesia is an interesting political arena to study, especially in the context of the Mayoral Election (Squirt) in 2020. Political contests involving different pairs of candidates with diverse backgrounds and communication strategies provide a comprehensive picture of how Political Communication implemented in a local context. The couple of Mohammad Ramdhan Pomanto and Fatmawati Rusdi who won the election showed the effectiveness of the political communication strategy they applied (Tasrif, 2023).

Political communication strategies in the context of regional elections not only involve the delivery of work programs and visions and missions, but also include aspects of image building, Political Branding and Vote commitment which is carried out through various communication channels. The rapidly growing digital era has also changed the landscape of political communication, where social media and other digital platforms have become important instruments in reaching constituents (Dwitama et al., 2022). This transformation requires candidates to adapt traditional communication strategies with a more modern and integrated approach. Research on political

communication in regional elections has high relevance in the context of the development of political communication science and local democratic practices in Indonesia. Studies have shown that the effectiveness of political communication strategies depends heavily on the candidate's ability to understand voter characteristics, utilize the right communication media, and build a political narrative that resonates with people's aspirations (Silitonga & Roring, 2023). This phenomenon becomes increasingly complex when it is associated with contextual factors such as local political culture, social structure of society, and the dynamics of mass media in the region.

The victory of the Ramdhan Pomanto-Fatmawati Rusdi pair in the 2020 Makassar Election is interesting to study because of the various strategic factors behind it. As an incumbent, Ramdhan Pomanto has an advantage in terms of name recognition and Track Record leadership, but the challenges faced are no less great considering the fierce competition with other candidate pairs. The communication strategy applied involves a combination of Grassroots Campaign, the use of mass media, and the activation of social media networks that show adaptation to the development of communication technology (Yunita Simatupang, 2024). Another interesting aspect is how the couple managed to build a solid political coalition while maintaining a positive image in the eyes of the public. Process Coalition Building In the context of local elections, it requires a communication strategy that is not only oriented to the mass of voters, but also to the political elite and Squirrel other strategic ones. The ability to manage multi-level communication is one of the keys to success in political contests (Hidayati, 2021).

Based on the background that has been described, this research is focused on several main problems related to political communication strategies in the 2020 Makassar Election. The main problem that will be studied is how the political communication strategy applied by the couple Mohammad Ramdhan Pomanto and Fatmawati Rusdi in winning the contest. This study will also analyze the factors that affect the effectiveness of the communication strategies used, including the role of mass media, social media, and interpersonal communication in shaping public opinion. The formulation of specific problems that will be answered in this study include: first, how to formulate and implement the political communication strategy of the Ramdhan Pomanto-Fatmawati Rusdi pair in the 2020 Makassar Election; second, what factors support the effectiveness of the political communication strategy implemented; and third, how the public responds and perceptions to the political communication strategy used by the candidate pair.

This study aims to comprehensively analyze the political communication strategies implemented by the couple Mohammad Ramdhan Pomanto and Fatmawati Rusdi in the 2020 Makassar Election. The specific objectives of this study are to identify and analyze the various elements of the political communication strategies used, evaluate the effectiveness of each strategy in the context of achieving voter support, and understand the contextual factors that influence the success of the communication strategy. In addition, this research also aims to make a theoretical contribution to the development of the concept of political communication at the local level, especially in the context of regional elections in Indonesia. The research findings are expected to enrich the academic literature on Political Communication and provide Insights practical for political and communication practitioners in designing effective campaign strategies (Bachtiar, 2022).

The academic benefit of this research is that it contributes to the development of political communication science, especially in the context of regional election studies in Indonesia. This research is expected to enrich the treasure of literature on political communication strategies at the local level and provide an empirical perspective on the implementation of political communication theory in local democratic practice. The findings of this study can also be a reference for future studies related to political communication and elections. From a practical aspect, this research provides benefits for political practitioners, campaign consultants, and Political Strategist in understanding the dynamics of political communication at the local level. An in-depth analysis of an effective communication strategy can be Best practice which can be adapted in the context of regional elections in other regions by considering the specific characteristics of each region (Abda, 2024).

The social benefit of this research is to provide an understanding to the public about the importance of political literacy and the ability to analyze political messages conveyed by the candidates. This research can also contribute to improving the quality of local democracy through a better understanding of the political communication process that

occurs in the regional elections (Lithuania, 2024).

## **2. METHOD**

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study method to analyze the political communication strategies of the couple Mohammad Ramdhan Pomanto and Fatmawati Rusdi in the 2020 Makassar Election. The qualitative approach was chosen because of its ability to explore deep meaning and understand the complexity of political communication phenomena involving various social, cultural, and political dimensions in specific contexts (Creswell & Poth, 2022). Single case study method (Single case study) is implemented to provide a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the political communication strategies implemented by the selected candidate pairs, so as to produce thick description which is rich in detail and context. The design of this study adopts a descriptive-exploratory case study approach that aims to describe and explore the phenomenon of political communication strategies holistically. The 2020 Makassar Election election as a single case is based on the consideration that the contest has unique characteristics in terms of local political dynamics, the complexity of the communication strategies used, and results that can provide significant lessons for the development of political communication theory in Indonesia. This case is also seen as Revelatory Case which can reveal the phenomenon of political communication strategies in the context of contemporary elections.

The unit of analysis in this study is the political communication strategy applied by the Ramdhan Pomanto-Fatmawati Rusdi couple, which includes communication planning, implementation of political messages, selection of media and communication channels, and evaluation of communication effectiveness. This research will analyze various elements of political communication ranging from Message Design, Audience Segmentation, Media Strategy until Feedback mechanism used during the campaign period (Prasadjati et al., 2023). The focus of the analysis also includes adapting communication strategies to changing political conditions and public responses during the campaign period. The data collection technique in this study uses triangulation of sources and methods to ensure the validity and reliability of the findings. Primary data were obtained through in-depth interviews (in-depth interview) with key informants consisting of candidate success teams, political consultants, journalists covering the regional elections, political communication academics, and public figures involved in the political process. Structured and semi-structured interviews will be conducted to explore in-depth perspectives on the formulation and implementation of communication strategies. Participatory observations were also carried out to observe the dynamics of political communication in various campaign activities and candidate interactions with the public.

Secondary data was collected through document analysis that included campaign materials, press releases, social media content, mass media reports, results of public opinion surveys, and official documents related to the regional elections. Media content analysis was carried out on various communication platforms used to understand the consistency of messages and strategies Framing applied (Marzi et al., 2024). Visual documentation in the form of photos and videos of campaign activities is also a source of data to analyze aspects of the campaign symbolic communication and Political Branding implemented. The data analysis process uses thematic analysis techniques that follow the stages of open coding, axial coding, and selective coding to identify emerging patterns of political communication strategies. The analysis was carried out iteratively with an approach Constant Comparative Method to compare findings from multiple data sources and build a comprehensive understanding (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Qualitative data analysis software is used to facilitate the coding and categorization process of data to ensure accurate systematization of analysis.

The validity of the research is maintained through the application of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability criteria as stated in qualitative research standards. Data and method triangulation, member checking, and peer debriefing are carried out to increase the credibility of research findings. Detailed trail audits are also documented to ensure the transparency of the research process and allow independent verification of the findings generated.

## **3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

### **Formulation of Political Communication Strategy for the Ramdhan Pomanto-Fatmawati Rusdi Couple**

The process of preparing the campaign communication strategy of the Ramdhan Pomanto-Fatmawati Rusdi couple began with the formation of a solid and structured communication team. Based on the research findings, the campaign team adopted a systematic approach in designing a comprehensive political communication strategy. As stated by (Ohorella et al., 2022), building a successful team is the main key so that the campaign can run more effectively and on target. Identification of target voters and audience segmentation was carried out through an in-depth analysis of the demographic and psychographic characteristics of the people of Makassar City. The campaign team conducted a mapping of constituents by age, education level, economic status, and political affiliation to determine a targeted communication strategy. This segmentation process is in line with the concept put forward by (Sianturi & Megasari, 2023) that the effectiveness of communication in politics is very important because it can affect the success of a government program or policy. The determination of the major themes and strategic issues of the campaign is based on an in-depth analysis of the needs and aspirations of the people of Makassar. The campaign team identified priority issues such as infrastructure development, improving the people's economy, and public services as central themes in their political communications.

The construction of the vision-mission and work programs of the Ramdhan Pomanto-Fatmawati Rusdi couple is designed by considering the continuity of development programs that have been running as well as new innovations to answer future challenges. The political message developed emphasizes the positive track record of previous leadership while offering innovative solutions to the city's problems. The positioning and differentiation strategy from competitors is carried out by highlighting the advantages as an incumbent who has concrete experience in leading Makassar City. (Belschner, 2023) stating that experience and status factors can provide significant electoral advantages in political contestation. The development of campaign taglines and slogans is designed to be memorable and reflect the vision of sustainable leadership. Adapting messages for various segments of voters is carried out by adjusting the narrative and communication approach according to the characteristics of each target group.

The mass media strategy implemented includes the optimal use of local television, radio, and newspapers. The campaign team builds good relationships with local media to ensure balanced and positive coverage of campaign activities. The use of social media and digital platforms is the main focus in modern communication strategies. (Indra et al., 2021) emphasized that changes in political communication practices using internet media bring unexpected benefits, and people's stigma towards leadership through digital communication tends to be positive when expressed on social media. Interpersonal communication and grassroots campaigns are carried out through a door-to-door approach and direct meetings with the community. As stated by (Ohorella et al., 2022), the door to door system is an effective strategy in reaching constituents personally.

## **IMPLEMENTATION OF POLITICAL COMMUNICATION STRATEGY**

The frequency and timing of political ads are designed to achieve maximum reach during prime time. The strategy of news management and media relations is carried out through providing exclusive access to the media and holding regular press conferences. Issue management and crisis communication is carried out by forming a special team that is tasked with monitoring news and responding to sensitive issues quickly and appropriately. Collaboration with local media is strengthened through a mutually beneficial strategic partnership program.

Content management across various social media platforms is done in an integrated manner by optimizing the unique characteristics of each platform. (Noorikhshan et al., 2023) emphasizing that in contemporary political activities, actors need to adopt a new media approach with all its characteristics that allow for more intensive interactions. Viral marketing and digital engagement strategies are developed through the creation of creative and interactive content that is easy to share. The use of digital influencers and opinion leaders is carried out by involving public figures who have high credibility on social media.

The implementation of roadshows and field visits is the main strategy to build emotional closeness with the community. Interactive dialogues with various community groups are carried out regularly to accommodate aspirations and provide direct explanations about the work program. The activation of volunteers and successful teams at the grassroots level is carried out through the formation of a solid campaign organizational structure up to the

RT/RW level. The use of traditional communication forums such as recitations, social gatherings, and community meetings is an effective means of conveying political messages.

#### Coalition Building and Multi-Level Communication

Negotiations and communication with supporting political parties are carried out through an intensive and continuous approach. (Ghafur, 2023) states that the formation of party coalitions can minimize the negative impact of the presidential and multiparty systems, although it requires clear rules of the game. Building communication with community leaders and opinion leaders is carried out through a personal approach and giving strategic roles in the campaign team. Communication strategies with the bureaucracy and regional apparatus are implemented while maintaining the neutrality of ASN while building harmonious communication.

Communication with the business world and MSMEs is carried out through concrete programs that support local economic development. Engagement with civil society organizations is strengthened through regular dialogue and involvement in the preparation of work programs. Communication with religious and customary communities is carried out with a cultural approach that respects local values. Coordination with the media and journalists is carried out through the formation of professional and mutually beneficial relationships.

#### Factors Supporting the Effectiveness of Communication Strategies

Advantage as an incumbent advantage provides significant political capital in the campaign. The track record and name recognition that have been built during the previous leadership period have become valuable assets in political communication. The credibility and positive image of candidates that have been formed through various development achievements strengthen the effectiveness of the political messages conveyed. The quality of the campaign team and professional political consultants also supports the implementation of an integrated communication strategy.

Local political conditions and relatively conducive competitor dynamics provide enough room for the campaign team to implement communication strategies. The heterogeneous characteristics of Makassar City voters require a diverse and adaptive communication approach. The support of the mass media and local opinion leaders amplified the political messages conveyed. Political momentum and developing strategic issues also affect the effectiveness of the communication strategy implemented.

#### Public Response and Perception

The level of awareness and recall of campaign messages showed positive results based on various surveys conducted during the campaign period. The public's perception of the credibility of the political message conveyed is generally good, supported by a real leadership track record. The resonance of the work program with the needs of the community is reflected in the high level of support for the programs offered. The evaluation of the candidate's image and personal branding shows the positive perception of the public towards a leader who is close to the people.

The level of participation in campaign activities shows high enthusiasm from various circles of society. Activities and discussions on social media reflect good engagement with the political content that is disseminated. Spontaneous and word-of-mouth support from the public is an indicator of the effectiveness of political communication applied. Voter mobilization on voting day reached the set target, demonstrating the success of the overall political communication strategy.

Table 1. Implementation and Effectiveness of Political Communication Strategies

Communication Strategy Aspects	Implementation	Effectiveness
Digital Social Media	Creative and interactive content	High engagement
Direct Communication	Door to door campaign	Personal closeness
Coalition Building	Multi-party negotiations	Solid political support
Media Relations	Strategic collaboration	Positive news
Digital Engagement	Multi-channel platform	Wide range

## Discussion

### Analysis of the Formulation and Implementation of Political Communication Strategies

The winner of the Moh. Ramdhan Pomanto and Fatmawati Rusdi in the 2020 Makassar Election show the implementation of an integrated political communication strategy between traditional and digital approaches. Based on the analysis of the Lasswell communication model (Who-Says What-In Which Channel-To Whom-With What Effect), the communication strategy applied shows conformity with contemporary political communication theory. The implementation of agenda setting and framing theory is clearly seen in the determination of the main issues of the campaign which is focused on infrastructure development and improving the welfare of the people of Makassar. As stated in the study (Noorikhshan et al., 2023), the contemporary era in electoral democracy shows that candidates cannot rely on conventional political communication channels alone, so the adoption of a new media approach with all its characteristics is needed. The relevance of the theory of uses and gratification in the selection of political communication media is reflected in the diversification of platforms used, ranging from traditional mass media to digital platforms such as social media. This strategy is in line with the findings (Indra et al., 2021) which shows that digital communication tends to receive a positive response from the public.

Synergy between communication platforms is the key to the success of the Pomanto-Fatmawati couple's political communication strategy. The consistency of messages across various communication channels shows professionalism in campaign management. Optimizing the characteristics of each communication medium is carried out through adjusting the content to specific target audiences. The cross-platform content and integrated marketing communication strategy is applied by considering the cost-effectiveness of each communication channel. This is in line with research (Jungblut & Johnen, 2022) which emphasizes the importance of understanding the effectiveness of political brand communication, where boycotting can be more influential than boycotting, so that political communication is a risky strategy but has the potential to yield significant results.

Digital transformation in the 2020 Makassar Election political campaign reflects adaptation to the development of communication technology. The use of big data and analytics in constituency targeting shows professionalism in modern campaign management. The implementation of social media marketing in political campaigns is carried out by considering the characteristics of digital platforms that allow for more intensive interaction with the public. Content creation and digital storytelling strategies are developed to build a strong narrative about the vision and mission of the candidate pair. Reputation management management in the digital era is a crucial aspect considering the speed of information dissemination and the potential negative impact of misinformation.

### Analysis of Communication Strategy Effectiveness Factors

The status of the incumbent Moh. Ramdhan Pomanto provides significant advantages in the formulation of political communication strategies. The use of track records in message positioning allows campaigns to display concrete achievements during previous leadership periods. Defensive and offensive communication strategies are applied in a balanced manner to maintain a positive image while attacking competitors' weaknesses. Managing public expectations and accountability pressure is a challenge for incumbent candidates. Resource optimization and network advantage are leveraged to build strong coalitions and access adequate campaign resources. As stated in the study (Ghafur, 2023), the coalition of political parties has a significant impact on the stability of government and the effectiveness of political communication.

The adaptation of the message to the Bugis-Makassar cultural values shows a deep understanding of the socio-cultural context of the local community. The use of traditional leaders and religious leaders in the campaign provides strong cultural legitimacy. Communication strategies in the context of ethnic and religious plurality in Makassar require an inclusive and diversity-sensitive approach. The implementation of the concept of "siri na pacce" in political branding reflects the internalization of local values in political communication strategies. This is in line with research (Ohorella et al., 2022) which shows the importance of considering cultural factors in political communication strategies, especially in the context of societies with strong traditional characteristics.

The analysis of stakeholder mapping and communication strategy shows a systematic approach in building political coalitions. The effectiveness of vertical and horizontal communication is key in maintaining the solidity of the coalition. Conflict management and negotiation in a coalition requires high political communication skills. Sustaining coalition through effective communication is an ongoing challenge that requires consistency in messaging and commitment to coalition agreements. This strategy is in line with the findings (Aryadillah & Fitriansyah, 2022) which shows the importance of building public sympathy through effective communication strategies.

### **Analysis of Responses and Public Perceptions**

Analysis of changes in voter preferences during the campaign shows the effectiveness of the political communication strategy implemented. The evaluation of persuasive communication and attitude change indicates success in influencing public perception and attitudes. The influence of social proof and the bandwagon effect can be seen from the positive momentum built during the campaign period. Assessment of community political efficacy shows increased political involvement and participation. As stated by (Sianturi & Megasari, 2023), the effectiveness of communication in politics is very important because it can influence the success of government programs or policies and increase public participation in the political process. The role of local media in agenda setting shows a significant influence on the formation of public opinion. Analysis of gatekeeping and framing in election reporting indicates that there are complex dynamics between the media, candidates, and the public. The influence of social media echo chamber on political perception creates challenges in reaching various segments of society. The evaluation of public media literacy in the consumption of political information shows the need to improve the quality of information and political education. This is in line with research (Achmad et al., 2022) which emphasizes the importance of information quality in supporting good democratic practices.

The relationship between the quality of political communication and voter turnout showed a positive correlation between the effectiveness of communication and community participation. The analysis of deliberative democracy in the local context indicates that there is room for improvement in the quality of public discussion. The evaluation of political socialization through political campaigns shows a positive contribution to people's political education. The contribution of political communication to civic engagement is reflected in increasing public awareness and involvement in the political process. Research (Belschner, 2023) It shows that demographic factors such as age and gender can affect the effectiveness of political communication.

### **Theoretical and Practical Implications**

The development of the concept of local political communication based on the case study of the 2020 Makassar Election has made a significant contribution to the literature of Indonesian political communication. The modification of political communication theory for the context of Indonesian elections shows the need to adapt universal theory to local characteristics. The integration of cultural aspects in political communication models is an important finding that can be further developed. The integrated political communication strategy model for regional elections developed from this case study can be a reference for political practitioners. The Guidelines for Digital Political Communication provide practical guidance in the use of communication technology. The framework for coalition communication management is an important contribution to effective coalition management. The contribution of quality political communication to substantive democracy demonstrates the importance of investing in the development of professional political communication. Recommendations to improve people's political literacy are an important agenda for strengthening local democracy. Strategies to encourage deliberative democracy at the local level require commitment from various stakeholders. The framework for ethical political communication is an important guide to ensure responsible and quality political communication practices. As stated in the study (Kelibay et al., 2022), the dynamics of regional head elections require an effective and democratic approach to avoid uncertainty in the local democratic process.

## **4. CONCLUSION**

Research on the political communication strategy of Mohammad Ramdhan Pomanto and Fatmawati Rusdi in the

2020 Makassar Election reveals the complexity of implementing political communication in the digital era that combines traditional approaches with modern technology. The communication strategy implemented shows systematic integration between strategic planning, multi-platform implementation, and adaptation to the socio-cultural characteristics of the Makassar community. The formulation of a political communication strategy begins with the formation of a structured communication team that segments audiences based on demographic and psychographic characteristics, followed by the development of political messages that emphasize the continuity of development and innovation of work programs. The implementation of communication strategies demonstrates the effectiveness of a multi-channel approach that optimizes the characteristics of each communication platform, ranging from traditional mass media to digital platforms and interpersonal communication. The use of incumbent status provides significant advantages in building credibility and utilizing the leadership track record as political capital. The aspect of coalition building is a crucial element that requires multi-level communication skills to maintain the solidity of political support from various stakeholders. Factors supporting the effectiveness of a communication strategy include internal dimensions such as the credibility of candidates and the quality of the campaign team, as well as external dimensions such as local political conditions and mass media support. The public's response to political communication strategies shows a positive level of acceptance, reflected in the high level of awareness, engagement, and participation in campaign activities. The contextualization of Bugis-Makassar cultural values in political communication strategies is a differentiating factor that strengthens the resonance of messages with the local community. Digital transformation in political campaigns allows for wider reach and more intensive interaction with constituents, but still requires a balance with conventional communication approaches. This research makes a theoretical contribution to the development of local political communication models that integrate modern cultural and technological aspects, as well as providing practical insights for political practitioners in designing effective campaign strategies that are relevant to the context of Indonesia's local democracy.

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