



Content Analysis of Anies-Muhaimin Campaign in Aceh for The 2024 Presidential Election

Cut Izzah Ladya^{1*}, Ardiansyah²

^{1,2} Syiah Kuala University, Banda Aceh, Aceh, Indonesia

*Correspondence : cutladya016@gmail.com

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Abstract

This study analyzes the victory of Anies Baswedan and Muhaimin Iskandar in the 2024 presidential election in Aceh Province, focusing on how their campaign strategies and content through social media influenced public perception and voting behavior. The research aims to explain how political communication conducted through both digital and mainstream media became a determining factor in shaping the political preferences of the Acehnese community. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, this study collected data through in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation. The theoretical framework is based on political communication theory and agenda-setting theory, which help explain how the media can influence the formation of public opinion and political attitudes. The findings reveal that social media platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and Facebook became the main channels for communicating messages, building emotional connections, and strengthening the candidates' popularity among the Acehnese people. Campaign content that emphasized religious values, moral integrity, and local identity was particularly effective in attracting attention and generating engagement. The use of regional symbols and culturally resonant narratives further enhanced the message's authenticity and relevance. Meanwhile, mainstream media such as television, radio, and newspapers played a secondary yet important role in reinforcing credibility and delivering structured messages. However, its reach remained limited unless its content was amplified through social media sharing. In conclusion, the success of Anies Baswedan and Muhaimin Iskandar in Aceh was closely linked to their adaptive political communication strategy, which combined cultural sensitivity, emotional appeal, and strategic use of digital media to influence voter perceptions and strengthen political legitimacy.

Keywords: Agenda-setting theory. Political communication, Religious identity, Social media campaigns.



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1. INTRODUCTION

In the 2024 Presidential Election, there were three candidate pairs: Anies Rasyid Baswedan-Muhaimin Iskandar, Prabowo Subianto-Gibran Rakabuming Raka, and Ganjar Pranowo-Mahfud MD(CNN Indonesia, 2023). In Aceh, the election was in the spotlight because the Anies-Muhaimin ticket garnered significant support, securing 2,369,534 votes, far surpassing Prabowo-Gibran (787,024) and Ganjar-Mahfud (64,677)(Detik Sumut, 2024). Voter turnout reached 87%, indicating high public enthusiasm. Acehnese support for Anies is not measured solely by the number of votes, but also by the narrative of change he champions, which aligns with religious values, justice, and a commitment to



the ordinary people, in line with Aceh's historical experience of fighting for social and political justice.

The Anies-Muhaimin ticket's victory in Aceh was also inseparable from its digital campaign strategy. Social media platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, Twitter (X), and Facebook became crucial tools for building rapport with the community (Azzaakiyyah, 2023) (Mark & Date, 2023) (Nugraha et al., 2024). Anies used a narrative of change with an inclusive, humanistic approach and used social media to build an image as an intellectual, religious, tolerant, and people-oriented leader. The content he created not only conveyed his vision and mission but also incorporated elements of local Acehnese culture, including the use of regional languages and interactions with local figures, thus building an emotional connection with voters.

One effective strategy is using TikTok and Instagram to reach young voters through interactive, relaxed content that still contains political messages (Ismail et al., 2025) (Politicalmedia.com, 2025). Anies also frequently conducts live broadcasts on TikTok, attracting hundreds of thousands of viewers and fostering real-time interactions with the public, including answering questions and listening to their concerns. Meanwhile, Instagram portrays Anies as an elegant and humanistic leader; Twitter is used to respond to current issues; and Facebook is used to reach middle-aged and upper-aged voters with reflective and religious content. This cross-platform strategy demonstrates Anies' ability to adapt his communication style to the characteristics of each segment of Acehnese society.

This study uses political communication theory and agenda-setting theory as the main conceptual framework. The agenda-setting theory proposed by McCombs and Shaw explains that the mass media can influence the public agenda by determining which issues the public considers important through the frequency and emphasis of news coverage (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). In the context of the 2024 Presidential Election in Aceh Province, the agenda-setting process not only occurs through mainstream media such as television, newspapers, and online news portals, but also through interactive, participatory social media. Mainstream media serves as an agenda builder, establishing the legitimacy and credibility of candidates through formal and institutional framing, while social media functions as a space for agenda amplification, enabling political messages to be disseminated more widely and interpreted directly by the public (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). The research findings show that the intensive use of social media by the Anies Baswedan and Muhaimin Iskandar ticket was a significant factor in



their victory in Aceh. Through social media campaign content, Anies built a strong personal brand, highlighting a narrative of religiosity aligned with local Acehnese values and creating an emotional connection with voters, free from the constraints of space and time. Thus, the interaction between the agenda-setting mainstream media and social media simultaneously shapes public perception, where social media functions not only as a campaign tool but also as a strategic instrument in shaping public opinion, political trust, and electoral support in the digital communication era.

2. METHOD

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with a purpose. The object of this study is Anies Baswedan's social media content, which is analyzed using descriptive qualitative methods. This approach was chosen because it can describe phenomena in depth through observed narratives and behavior (Sugiyono, 2016). This study focuses on how social media is used to build political image and its influence on society, particularly in Aceh. Data collection methods included observation, documentation, and interviews. Observation was used to directly observe the political dynamics and communication strategies of the Anies-Muhaimin ticket in the field. Documentation was conducted by reviewing election results reports, news articles, and party documents to strengthen the findings. Meanwhile, interviews were conducted with key informants consisting of Aklima Thaharuddin (Academic), interviewed on May 20, 2025; Ismaniar AB Mizan (Times), interviewed on April 7, 2025, and Ryan Kautsar Augustian (Head of the KIP Sub-Division), interviewed on August 5, 2025, to explore the views and factors that influence their political decisions. By combining these three methods, the study is expected to provide a comprehensive picture of the Anies-Muhaimin ticket's political communication strategy and its public acceptance.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Anies Baswedan's campaign content on social media platforms emphasizes religiosity

The development of social media has significantly changed the pattern of political campaigns in Indonesia. While campaigns previously relied heavily on mainstream media, political communication has now shifted to a two-way, interactive model through digital platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, Twitter (X), and Facebook. Social media is no longer simply a means of entertainment but has become a primary channel for disseminating political messages. Anies Baswedan, a presidential candidate in the 2024

election, has become a figure who has successfully used social media to shape public perception, build emotional connections, and influence public opinion, particularly in Aceh, which has a strong religious and historical character. The campaign content that most appealed to the Acehnese community emphasized religiosity, simplicity, and closeness to the people. For example, a video of Anies' visit to Dayah Darul Ihsan in Aceh Besar, featuring polite interactions with clerics and students, went viral on TikTok and Instagram. This content portrayed Anies as a leader who understands Acehnese Islamic culture and appreciates the role of the Islamic boarding school in the development of civilization. As Aklima Thaharuddin (interview, March 20, 2025) explained, Anies' polite and calm communication style resonated emotionally, further demonstrating his closeness to the community.

A review of public responses in the comments sections of various content shows that Acehnese people responded positively to narratives perceived as close to their social realities, such as issues of development justice, protection of Islamic law, and empowerment of Islamic boarding school education. Many netizens considered Anies a leader who "understands the spirit of Aceh," a quality rarely found in other national leadership candidates. This phenomenon demonstrates that the digital space has become a crucial arena for shaping public opinion and strengthening the symbolic closeness between political figures and the public. In line with (Eriyanto, 2011) view, political communication in mass media and social media not only conveys messages but also constructs meanings that influence public perceptions and attitudes. In this context, as (Nasrullah, 2021) explains, social media becomes a symbolic representational space where people negotiate identity, values, and political support through digital interactions



Figure: TikTok @Aniesbaswedan (December 18, 2023)



Anies's ability to simplify political messages into visual and symbolic language that resonates with the Acehese people is also key to his successful communication. According to (McNair, 2016), political communication is the process of conveying messages to influence public opinion and shape a political image. A concrete example is seen in the video of his visit to the Haul of Sheikh Abdurrauf As-Singkili, uploaded to Instagram and TikTok. On that occasion, Anies conveyed the message that "Aceh is not only the Veranda of Mecca in name, but in soul," which was then widely quoted by local media and received a positive response from netizens.

This narrative reinforces Anies' image as a leader closely aligned with the Acehese people's religious identity. The public response on social media to this religiously nuanced content was largely positive. Many comments highlighted Anies's close relationship with issues of development justice, the protection of Islamic law, and the strengthening of Islamic boarding school education. Many netizens also considered Anies a leader who understands the conditions in Aceh, both historically and religiously. This aligns with (McCombs & Shaw, 1972) agenda-setting theory, which states that the media not only tell the public what to think but also determine which issues are considered important. By highlighting themes of religiosity and social justice, Anies's campaign team successfully constructed a public agenda aligned with the aspirations of the Acehese people.

In addition to digital communication, Anies' success was also strengthened by Aceh's socio-cultural context. His emotional connection with charismatic clerics and local religious figures provided significant social legitimacy. Anies' attendance at zikir (remembrance) assemblies, sermons, and visits to Islamic boarding schools demonstrated respect for local traditions. According to symbolic communication theory, the use of religious and cultural symbols can strengthen political messages while building emotional closeness with the community. This finding aligns with research by (Azka & Syahputra, 2023), which emphasized the role of clerics as opinion leaders in Aceh, where Islamic-based political communication is more effective than rational approaches.

Based on the analysis, Anies Baswedan's social media campaign was not only technically successful in utilizing digital platforms but also culturally and psychologically compelling. His polite communication style, down-to-earth religious narrative, and close ties to local Islamic cultural elements such as ulama, dayah, and Acehese traditions strengthened public trust. This strategy demonstrates that social media is not merely a channel for disseminating information but also a context for constructing political



identity. The religiosity displayed in Anies' campaign content is not merely symbolic, but a core narrative capable of stirring the collective emotions of the Acehnese people and providing strong political legitimacy.

From an agenda-setting perspective, Anies and his team's strategy of highlighting themes such as social justice, Islamic education, sharia, and regional poverty in social media content has successfully influenced the Acehnese public's perception of the importance of a leader who carries a partisan narrative. As explained by (McCombs & Shaw, 1972), the media not only tell people what to think, but also what to think about (the media do not tell us what to think, but what to think about). In this context, Anies has successfully positioned religious issues and social inequality in the minds of the Acehnese people as part of their political identity. Content such as "Anies Visits Dayah" or "Ngopi with Acehnese Youth" is not merely a symbolic activity, but part of an effort to shape the political agenda in the Acehnese public sphere.

These findings align with previous research showing that identity and religious issues are crucial factors in the victory or defeat of presidential candidates in Aceh (Muliawati & Fahmi, 2020). This finding aligns with this study's findings, which demonstrate that Anies' content, emphasizing Islamic values and justice, has high appeal. Similarly, research by (Mukharomah & Lenggana, 2024) confirms that political communication strategies through social media play a crucial role in shaping public support. This study expands on this insight by highlighting that the most effective content in Aceh is not solely text-based but also visual and video-based, such as on Instagram and TikTok (Mukharomah & Lenggana, 2024).

3.2 Analysis of Anies Baswedan's campaign content on social media platforms, aspects of simplicity with local values

In his 2024 presidential campaign, Anies Baswedan used social media as his primary communication channel. Platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, X, and Facebook were used simultaneously to reach the public, including in Aceh, which has a religious, cultural, and emotional character regarding Islamic issues and social justice. Anies' digital content often took the form of short videos, inspirational speech clips, and cinematically edited documentation of his visits. Acehnese often reshared moments with Anies, allowing political messages to spread organically and reach a wider audience than the mainstream media.

The most positive response came from Aceh's youth. The generation of schoolchildren, university students, and productive youth active on social media prefers a relaxed, visual, and personal communication style over formal, technocratic campaigns. Short videos of Anies chatting casually with youth, discussing Islamic education, or conveying messages of social justice in inclusive language became the most-shared content. The simple narrative format, Islamic background music, and visuals of community engagement made the content feel more relatable and down-to-earth to young audiences.



Figure 2. Instagram @Aniesbaswedan (May 4, 2024)

Anies's simplicity is also displayed through visual content that emphasizes his closeness to the local community. For example, when visiting a traditional market in Aceh Besar, he is seen greeting vendors without excessive escort, sitting on the floor drinking coffee, or wearing a simple koko shirt. His Instagram and TikTok posts, with short narratives that show respect for local wisdom, portray a leader who is present, listens, and maintains distance. This type of content is considered appealing because it portrays a leader who is humanistic, humble, and unassuming.

On TikTok, the narrative of simplicity has become increasingly prominent. Short videos capturing Anies' natural activities, such as walking, sampling local cuisine, and interacting with children, reinforce his image as a "people's leader" close to the public. This aligns with (McCombs & Shaw, 1972) agenda-setting theory, which argues that



social media not only conveys issues but also shapes what the public considers important. By repeating narratives about Islamic law, social justice, and closeness to the people, Anies' content effectively positions simplicity as a key value in Acehese political discourse. In addition to Instagram and TikTok, the narrative of simplicity is also reinforced on Twitter and Facebook. On Twitter, Anies posts short reflections on the ordinary people, regional aspirations, and local values, accompanied by photos or videos of direct interactions. Meanwhile, on Facebook, long-form content and activity documentation primarily reach middle- to upper-age groups. Volunteers and support communities frequently reshare this content, reinforcing Anies' image as a humble leader despite his track record as Jakarta's governor.

This strategy can be understood within the framework of political communication theory as explained by (McNair, 2019) who argues that political communication serves not only to convey rational messages but also to build emotional and symbolic connections between political actors and their public. Anies used social media not only to explain his work program but also to shape public perception of him as a religious figure who is consistent and in harmony with the cultural and Islamic values of the Acehese people (McNair, 2019). The content of simplicity consistently promoted on social media shapes the Acehese public's perception of its value as a characteristic of ideal leadership. This view aligns with (Nasrullah, 2021) thinking, who explains that social media is not only a medium for disseminating messages but also a space for the production of symbolic meaning that shapes political identity through visual and narrative representations of public figures.

Based on the analysis, the success of Anies' campaign in Aceh lay not only in his use of digital media, but also in his contextual and adaptive narrative—a campaign strategy emphasizing simplicity, local symbols, and emotional visual communication successfully built public engagement. Social media made the campaign feel like a two-way conversation, rather than a one-way, elitist communication. With this approach, Anies not only built electability but also trust and emotional closeness with the Acehese people.

4. CONCLUSION

The victory of Anies Baswedan and Muhaimin Iskandar in the 2024 presidential election in Aceh was the result of an effective campaign strategy that used social media platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, and X, appealing to the community's emotions and religious values. Content with visual and symbolic narratives that



emphasized religiosity, simplicity, and closeness to local culture was more appealing than a rigid technocratic approach, thus building Anies' image as a leader who understands Aceh both structurally and culturally-spiritually. This success was supported by a deep understanding of the Acehnese people's sensitivity to issues of Islam, social justice, and respect for religious scholars. By combining work programs with empathy and a commitment to local values, Anies-Muhaimin demonstrated that a contextual, adaptive, and emotional campaign strategy is the key to political victory in a region with a strong religious and historical identity like Aceh.

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