

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ELABORATION LIKELIHOOD MODEL (ELM) IN THE POLITICAL COMMUNICATION STRATEGY OF THE JAYA-WIBAWA PAIR ON INSTAGRAM IN THE 2024 DENPASAR REGIONAL ELECTION

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the political communication strategies of the Jaya-Wibawa pair to shape their leadership image through the Instagram account @jayawibawadenpasar in the 2024 Denpasar Regional Head Elections, based on the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) framework. The methodology used is descriptive qualitative, conducted by observing the content and responses from the comments section, completing digital documentation, conducting literature studies, and conducting in-depth interviews with members of the Jaya-Wibawa campaign team. The findings from this study indicate that the pair's communication approach is built on two main categories, namely incidental content and persuasive content, which complement each other to achieve engagement and appeal to young voters. The application of ELM theory can be seen in the combination of two persuasion paths. The central route emerged through data-based content, explanations of programs, and policy arguments that encouraged high elaboration, as demonstrated by the audience's critical comments on the effectiveness of programs and the continuity of public policies. Meanwhile, the peripheral route was more evident through aesthetic visual elements, music, symbols of unity, and emotional touches that created a positive impression without in-depth analysis. The combination of these two persuasion channels successfully increased the electability of the candidate pair. This study confirms that Instagram plays a role as an interactive and real-time political communication platform, capable of strengthening the legitimacy of candidates and encouraging young voter participation through a light, visual, and accessible campaign approach.

Keywords: Elaboration Likelihood Model, Political Communication, Instagram

INTRODUCTION

Technological changes in the last twenty years have fundamentally changed the way political communication is conducted in Indonesia and globally. This transformation has not only affected the methods politicians use to convey their

messages, but also the way the public receives, understands, and assesses the image of each candidate. Previously, political communication was heavily reliant on traditional media such as television, billboards, and direct interaction (), but today, the flow of political information is dominated by interactive, real-time social media (Fatih, 2024).

Social media has transformed into the main arena for political debate, where image building, message dissemination, and support gathering are carried out in a more personal and visually focused manner. Platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, X (Twitter), and TikTok not only serve as a means of disseminating information, but also function as strategic tools for creating public perception and shaping the political identities of candidates (Hayat et al., 2024). In Indonesia, this development has been particularly noticeable since the 2019 elections, when various candidates began combining digital campaigns with emotional and visual approaches to reach young voters, who make up the majority of internet users.

Instagram, as a medium that focuses on visuals and short messages, has become a very efficient tool for creating a political image that is emotional, sincere, and easy to understand. The use of social media can shape the public's perspective and become a strategic channel for disseminating information while building engagement with the audience (Ramadiansyah & Pratiwi, 2024). According to a report from We Are Social (2024), more than 86% of internet users in Indonesia remain active on Instagram, and most of them are in the 18-34 age range, which is also the main voter group in the political arena (Hayat et al., 2024). Platforms such as Instagram offer a more open and responsive communication pattern compared to traditional media, thereby encouraging more active interaction between public institutions and the community (Goenawan & Jati, 2025). Its strong visual appeal, emotional narratives, and high level of interaction make Instagram not only a medium for promotion, but also a place to build a political brand in a sustainable manner.

Previous research shows that Instagram can serve as an effective political tool due to its interactive and authentic characteristics. Fajar, in his research, emphasizes that the use of icons, indexes, and visual symbols on Instagram is very effective in building a political image that is human, close to the community, and focused on social empathy (Abdillah & Zulhazmi, 2021). A similar view is also expressed by Lestari, who examines Jaya Negara's success in creating a political brand rooted in local culture and deep digital engagement with the community during the Denpasar Regional Head Election (Lestari et al., 2023).

This phenomenon was once again evident in the 2024 Denpasar regional election, where the Jaya-Wibawa pair used Instagram as their main channel for their digital campaign. Their communication approach emphasized local values, cultural innovation, and closeness to the younger generation in Denpasar. Through content that combines visual aesthetics with compelling political messages, the Jaya-Wibawa pair seeks to shape an image of leadership that is close to the people, creative, and has integrity. Their digital campaign is not only a means of expanding the reach of their political message, but also a way to create a strong emotional bond between the candidates and voters.

The development of political campaigns through social media shows a shift in political communication from a hierarchical model to a more participatory one. Fatih states that social media strengthens the democratization of public spaces, where

people can interact directly with prospective leaders, provide feedback, and shape political narratives through digital engagement (Fatih, 2024). However, this openness also poses risks, such as the spread of misinformation, polarization of opinions, and the use of buzzer politics that can change public opinion. Therefore, it is important for candidates to develop communication strategies based on ethics, credibility, and truthfulness in order to maintain the integrity of digital democracy.

In this context, research focusing on political communication strategies in social media needs to be based on a solid theoretical framework to understand how political messages are received by audiences. One theory that is quite relevant to explain this phenomenon is the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) introduced by Petty and Cacioppo (1986). This theory distinguishes two main persuasion pathways, namely the central pathway and the peripheral pathway (Febiola et al., 2025). There are two main factors that determine whether a person is easily persuaded by a message or not, namely the level of motivation and the individual's capacity to process the message (Mujiarto et al., 2024). The central route describes the persuasion process that occurs when the audience has high motivation and ability to process information, so that they assess political messages in a logical and analytical manner. Meanwhile, the peripheral route relies more on nonverbal cues such as visual appeal, communicator credibility, cultural symbols, or the emotional atmosphere accompanying the message (Hidayat & Solihah, 2021).

The application of ELM theory in the arena of digital political communication is very important, because most social media platform users tend to process information through peripheral pathways due to limited time, dense information, and the speed at which content is consumed. Febiola's findings reveal that in the context of commercial advertising, peripheral processing has a more significant impact on shaping audience perceptions than central processing, especially when messages are conveyed using strong and memorable visual elements (Febiola et al., 2025). Research conducted by Hayat and his team (2024) on Ganjar Pranowo's campaign on Instagram also confirms this, namely that content that shows empathy, a personal style, and visual authenticity is more successful in building trust and emotional closeness with voters (Hayat et al., 2024).

Therefore, this study considers it important to explore the application of the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) in the political communication tactics of the Jaya Wibawa pair on Instagram. The analysis will provide insight into how their political messages are designed through these two channels of persuasion, as well as how a combination of logic and emotion is used to create an effective and credible political image.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study applies a qualitative method to explore the application of the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) in the communication strategy of the Jaya Wibawa pair through their Instagram account @jayawibawadenpasar during the 2024 Denpasar regional head election campaign period (). The qualitative method was chosen to explore the meaning, strategy, and process of delivering persuasive messages formed through a structured and in-depth digital platform. This approach is descriptive and interpretive, emphasizing the social context of political communication that takes place in the digital campaign arena (Pebrianti et al., 2025).

The subject of this study is the official campaign account of the Jaya Wibawa pair, @jayawibawadenpasar, on the Instagram platform during the 2024 Denpasar regional election campaign period. The scope of the study covers content posted during the campaign, message delivery methods, visual tactics, and audience responses or participation expressed in the form of comments and digital interactions. The informants in this study consist of campaign team members or individuals directly involved in managing social media accounts.

Information gathering was conducted through online observation, in-depth interviews, document collection, and literature review. Online observation was used to analyze posted content, including videos, captions, visual design elements, and audience feedback. Interviews were conducted with campaign team members to gain insight into the ideas and objectives of the political communication strategy. Document collection included archives of uploads, digital traces, and visual evidence to support the analysis. A literature review was conducted to reinforce the theoretical study of political communication tactics and the application of ELM (Savitri & Triyono, 2025).

The variables operationalized in this study consist of the application of the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), which includes two routes of persuasion. The central route refers to information processing based on logic, arguments, and the strength of content material, while the peripheral route refers to processing influenced by non-argumentative aspects such as candidate image, visual aesthetics, impressions, popularity, and other suggestive elements. These variables were observed through message content quality, communication methods, and campaign design in each Instagram post.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

General Patterns of Communication Strategies on Instagram

Observations of the Jaya-Wibawa pair's Instagram posts show that their digital communication approach can be divided into two main categories, namely incidental content and persuasive content. Incidental content is material created spontaneously when the candidate pair is involved in various activities, such as field campaigns, worship at temples, meetings with community leaders, or clips from candidate debates. The visual character of this incidental content appears natural and minimally edited, giving an authentic and direct impression, in line with the preferences of young voters who value authenticity in political communication. This type of content is often posted during the peak campaign period because it is easy to adjust to the candidate's daily agenda and is able to capture emotional moments that strengthen their relationship with the community.

In contrast, persuasive content is more carefully designed, using scripts, storyboards, and well-structured visuals. This content includes short videos explaining programs, persuasive messages created to influence public opinion, graphics displaying the vision and mission, and video clips specifically created to enhance the image of the Jaya-Wibawa pair's competence. Through an interview with Kadek Agus

Swantara, S. IP, a member of the campaign and media team for candidate pair 02, it was revealed that the media team compiles persuasive and incidental content concisely to ensure that the central messages of the campaign are conveyed consistently and are easy to understand.

"We produce short content so that the audience can easily understand the content. We want to prevent the audience from getting bored with long-winded messages." (Interview on November 28)

The visual layout is designed to be simple, calm, and concise because Jaya-Wibawa is targeting millennials and Gen Z, a group of voters who are accustomed to accessing information quickly and prefer content that is casual, easy to understand, and not too formal.

The strategy of combining these two types of content demonstrates the campaign team's deep understanding of Instagram's algorithm dynamics. Incidental content serves to boost real-time engagement, maintaining a sense of closeness and spontaneity, while persuasive content acts as an anchor for the message, supporting the political narrative that is the focus of the campaign. These findings indicate that Jaya-Wibawa not only adapts its communication style to the digital content consumption patterns of the people of Denpasar, but also utilizes the platform's unique features to efficiently combine authenticity and persuasion. These analysis results align with previous research emphasizing that young voters are more responsive to short, casual, and emotional visual content, yet still require substantial content to build perceptions of a candidate's competence.

Central Route

Figure 1. Debate Reels Content



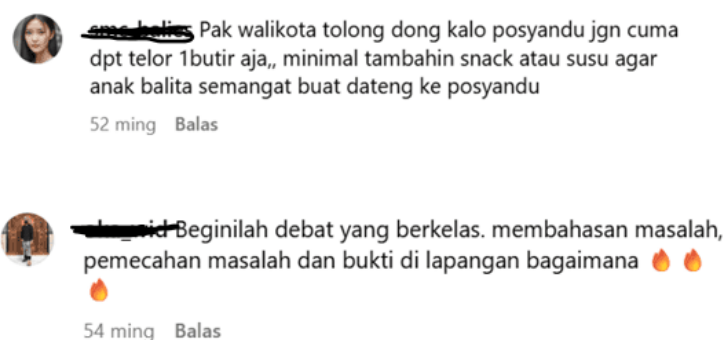
Source: Instagram account @jayawibawadenpasar

The first reel presents excerpts from the second debate, in which the Jaya Wibawa pair answered questions from the number 1 pair, Ambara-Adi, regarding measures and strategies to reduce stunting rates. On this occasion, Jaya Negara provided data-driven responses, detailing the actions taken during his leadership and explaining the metrics used to assess the program's success. The message was delivered in a structured, communicative manner, emphasizing the logic behind the policies implemented. Based on an interview with I Made Sandi Sanjaya, who served as a member of the campaign team and creative media team for pair 02, it was explained that

"The mayoral candidate debate is a crucial moment, because this is where the public assesses the capacity and competence of the candidates as mayor and deputy mayor. Therefore, the media team must move quickly to upload moments that are considered capable of increasing the candidates' electability." (Interview on November 28, 2025)

These characteristics indicate that this material is in line with the main flow of the ELM model. The focus of this presentation is on the substance of the message, not just visual elements or other secondary attractions. The emphasis on data-based evidence, experience as an active official, and explanations of procedures serve as drivers for the audience to analyze the information in greater depth. This is evident from the pattern of public responses in the comments section, which contain many specific questions about policy effectiveness, program sustainability, and data accuracy. This level of cognitive engagement indicates that the audience analyzes the message through a high elaboration route, in line with the predictions of the central route mechanism in ELM.

Figure 2. Comments on debate reel content



Source: Instagram account @jayawibawadenpasar

The public response to the material presented reinforces the evidence that the message was received through deep understanding. Statements such as "Mayor, please, don't just give one egg at the health center, at least add snacks or milk so that young children are excited to come to the health center" reflect critical assessments based on the real experiences of users regarding program implementation. The shift towards the central path occurs when individuals have the capacity and motivation to deeply consider and assess the value of the message they receive (Witharja et al.,

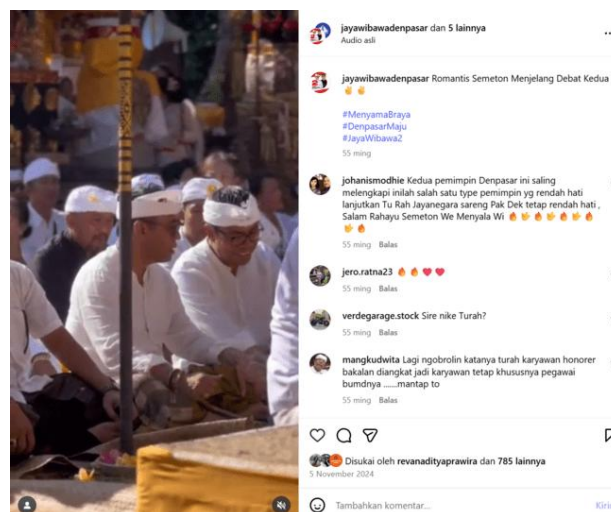
2024). These comments are not just emotional reactions, but also arguments that connect policy with practical needs in the field, indicating a process of deep thinking related to the core of the message.

On the other hand, there is also recognition of the quality of the dialogue, as seen in the comment, "This is a good debate. Discussing issues, looking for solutions, and the evidence is in the field." This response emphasizes the audience's recognition of the systematization of arguments and data presented by the candidates. Such support is not based on secondary aspects, but on an evaluation of the appropriateness and credibility of the information provided.

Both types of responses, whether criticism based on experience or praise for the quality of the argument, indicate that the audience thought about the content at a high level of elaboration, in line with the central route mechanism in ELM. The central route in ELM produces profound messages that raise reflective questions about the effectiveness of the program, reflecting high cognitive engagement such as response patterns related to data validity and sustainability, rather than just visual appeal (Fitri & Muhajarah, 2022).

Peripheral Route

Figure 3. Reels Content on November 5



Source: Instagram account @jayawibawadenpasar

The second reel shows a 30-second video clip with the narration "does anyone know what Turah Jaya Negara is talking about with Pak Dek, comment below." In this video, the two candidates are seen sitting side by side, engaged in light conversation, accompanied by background music and slow-motion editing that emphasizes a relaxed atmosphere and personal closeness. There is no explanation of any programs or substantive policy arguments, so the main appeal lies in the visual impression and atmosphere created through audio-visual elements.

This characteristic reflects the use of peripheral cues within the ELM framework. The message conveyed is implicit, emphasizing the image of togetherness and unity

of the candidate pair. Peripheral cues such as body language, physical closeness, a friendly atmosphere, and even the choice of music are elements that shape a positive view of the audience without requiring deep cognitive analysis. This seemingly simple yet emotional content serves more to create an impression than to present arguments. Fang categorized video campaigns on the Facebook social media platform based on ELM, where the peripheral route (75.6% of cases) relied on superficial cues such as visual elements and brief descriptions to shape positive perceptions without requiring deep elaboration, similar to the image of togetherness through physical closeness and emotional atmosphere (Fang et al., 2025).

Figure 4. Comments on the November 5 post



Source: Instagram account @jayawibawadenpasar

The audience's response also reflects a peripheral processing pattern, as seen in comments such as "ready to vote for number 2" or "true leaders are always in harmony and always work together to develop Denpasar." Responses such as these indicate that the assessments made are not based on consideration of the substance of the policies, but rather on the harmonious and symbolic impressions conveyed by visual elements. In the context of first-time voters, given that their political literacy varies and their interest lies more in simple and accessible material, they generally interpret political messages in the media through a more peripheral processing method (Panggabean & Mihardja, 2025). This indirect reaction is a sign that the audience responds to simple cues that contain emotional value, in accordance with the mechanism of persuasion through peripheral routes in the ELM model.

CONCLUSION

The results of the study show that the Jaya Wibawa pair's political communication approach on Instagram during the 2024 Denpasar regional elections was developed through two main content categories, namely incidental content and persuasive content, which have different but complementary roles. Incidental content serves to create a spontaneous, natural, and authentic impression, which in turn strengthens the emotional connection between the candidates and the community. On the other hand, persuasive content is created in a planned manner, equipped with concise and light scripts and visuals so that the core of the campaign message can be easily understood, especially by millennials and Gen Z, who are the main targets. These findings show that the campaign team was able to understand the dynamics of digital content consumption and successfully created a strategic combination of authenticity and persuasion in accordance with the characteristics of the Instagram algorithm.

The application of the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) in the Jaya-Wibawa campaign can be seen through the use of two parallel persuasion channels. Debate content, program explanations, and policy data delivery show the dominance of the central channel, where the audience processes messages cognitively through substance analysis, empirical evidence, and rational argumentation. This is evidenced by the emergence of critical comments assessing the effectiveness of the program and the candidate's experience as an incumbent. Conversely, light and emotional content such as chatting videos, relaxing music, and symbols of the pair's unity demonstrate the strong use of the peripheral pathway, which influences the audience through visual cues, personal closeness, and affective nuances without requiring deep elaboration. Spontaneous responses in the form of symbolic support reinforce the indication that peripheral channels are more dominant in shaping public impressions. Thus, the main conclusion of this study is that the Jaya-Wibawa pair's communication strategy integrates both persuasion channels, but the peripheral channel has proven to be more effective and more frequently used in Instagram campaigns due to its suitability with the media consumption patterns of the younger generation and the visual character of the platform.

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