

The Role of Podcasts in the 2024 Political Campaigns Reviewed through the Perspective of Symbolic Interaction Theory

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ABSTRACT

The 2024 Indonesian election is a significant political event, with social media playing a crucial role in campaign communication and message conveying. Candidates and political parties use social media to garner support and mobilize voters, making campaigns more measurable and targeted. The Unpacking Indonesia Podcast, hosted by Zulfan Lindan, is a political discussion platform that invites various figures and analysts to discuss current issues in detail. The podcast features diverse speakers such as Hasan Nasbi, M. Qodari, Adi Prayitno, and Eros Djarot. Symbolic interaction theory, introduced by George Herbert Mead and Herbert Blumer, emphasizes the importance of symbols and social interaction in shaping social meaning and reality. In the context of the podcast "Unpacking Indonesia," political symbols are created and modified through discussions between Zulfan and his sources. These statements, analyses, and views become symbols that listeners interpret, influencing their perceptions and actions. Social media, podcasts, and symbolic interaction theory are interrelated in shaping social and political realities in the digital era. Political podcasts have become effective social media in disseminating political information and discourse to the public, offering in-depth discussions on complex issues and featuring a variety of sources from academics to activists. Interaction and involvement with listeners through question-and-answer sessions or panel discussions make podcasts more interesting and interactive. Political podcasters often work independently of mainstream media, presenting alternative, more critical perspectives. By spreading political discourse through podcasts, they can influence public opinion and garner support for various political issues, making them an important platform in the media ecosystem.

Keyword: Social Media; Zulfan Lindan; Unpacking; Symbolic Interaction

INTRODUCTION

Podcasts have become a popular medium for political communication due to their ability to convey in-depth information and detail, unlike social media, which tends to be brief. They offer easy accessibility, interactivity with the audience, a wide variety of topics, and the ability to build community and trust. Popular political podcasts include Pod Save America, The Daily, and Political Gabfest,

which cover current political issues with in-depth analysis. The 2024 elections, including presidential and legislative elections, drive increased interest in political podcasts. People look to political podcasts for information, perspective, and guidance in choosing leaders and legislators. Podcasts cover various topics such as public policy, public services, the Corruption Eradication Committee, and elite political communication.

According to Kompas Research and Development, people's enthusiasm for voting in the 2024 elections is relatively high, with 89.2% of respondents saying they would exercise their right to vote. Only 10.4% of respondents are still undecided or have not yet made a definite choice, indicating a strong desire for citizens to participate in the upcoming democratic process. Podcasts offer in-depth analysis and comprehensive discussion of the issues, giving listeners a better understanding of political dynamics. With competent sources and good research, podcasts can be a valuable source of information for the public in facing the 2024 elections. They also play a role in building political awareness and participation, helping voters make more informed decisions.

Positional podcasts are useful for politicians in campaigns, spreading messages, engaging with voters, and developing personal brands. By choosing relevant topics, inviting competent sources, and conducting good research, politicians can use podcasts to reach voters more personally and effectively. Promotion via social media is also important to attract more listeners. Direct interaction with voters is one of the main advantages of social media. Politicians can interact directly with voters through this platform, building closeness and trust. Through this platform, they can listen and respond to people's aspirations and complaints in real time, improving their image and relationship with voters.

Indonesian political podcasts, such as Deddy Corbuzier, Akbar Faisal Uncensored, Unpacking Zulfikar, and Total Politik, have become an important source of information for many people in Indonesia who want to understand more about political developments in the country. Political podcasts are becoming increasingly important for society as a means of seeking political considerations. They provide in-depth information, provide a longer and more flexible platform for discussion, offer diverse perspectives, and make them accessible to people anytime and anywhere. Additionally, political podcasts encourage active participation and discussion among the public through interactive segments like question-and-answer sessions or comments from listeners, strengthening participatory democracy.

"Unpacking" is a political podcast that has significantly influenced political discourse in Indonesia by providing in-depth and reliable political information. It invites competent sources, such as academics, political practitioners, and activists, to provide detailed analyses of various political issues. The podcast also encourages active political discussion participation by making it accessible to a wider audience through its flexible format. Unpacking's approach educates the public about politics and encourages more active participation in the democratic process. Social media plays a significant role in political contestation, particularly

in the 2024 elections in Indonesia. Prabowo Subianto and Gibran Rakabuming Raka have used social media to reach a wider and more diverse audience, conveying their campaign messages, vision, and mission directly to millions of internet users throughout Indonesia.

The digital strategy used by the Prabowo-Gibran campaign team involves creating interesting and easy-to-share content, such as campaign videos, memes, infographics, and live broadcasts. This content attracts attention, inspires emotion, and encourages active participation from supporters. Social media allows the campaign to utilize analytical data to understand voter preferences and behavior, tailor messaging, and target specific groups of voters with tailored ads. Social media also plays a role in gathering public participation through online and offline support. Interactive digital campaigns encourage the public to engage in discussions, provide support through likes, shares, and comments, and participate in real-world campaign activities. The active participation of these supporters strengthens the campaign's momentum and creates a sense of community among voters.

Lastly, social media helps monitor and ensure transparency in the election process. Using platforms to report violations, monitor voting results, and share information about the election process ensures fairness and transparency, giving the public confidence that their votes are counted. Overall, "Unpacking" has significantly impacted political discourse in Indonesia by providing in-depth and reliable information, encouraging active participation, and promoting a more inclusive and accessible political landscape.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Symbolic interaction theory is an approach in sociology that emphasizes the importance of symbols and social interactions in forming meaning and identity. In a political context, this theory helps us understand how political symbols, such as flags, slogans, and political figures, as well as interactions between politicians and the public, influence political perceptions and actions. Political symbols play an important role in shaping political identity and loyalty. For example, party logos, campaign colors, and politicians' rhetoric communicate political values and goals to the public, creating a sense of togetherness and collective identity among supporters of a particular party or candidate.

Interaction between politicians and the public through speeches, debates, campaigns, or social media is a form of symbolic interaction where political meanings and messages are formed and negotiated. In these interactions, politicians build a positive image and gain public support through language, gestures, and symbols. On the other hand, the public also interacts with politicians to convey their hopes, aspirations, and criticism. Political campaigns are a concrete example of the application of symbolic interaction theory, where politicians use symbols such as catchy and memorable slogans and appearances that reflect certain values to attract attention and support.

In the digital era, symbolic interactions also occur on social media. Politicians use these platforms to communicate directly with the public, comment on current issues, and shape public opinion. Symbols such as hashtags, political memes, and visual posts have become important tools in conveying political messages and shaping perceptions. Social media allows politicians to reach a wider audience and build closer relationships with voters. Arrianie (2023:35) explains that symbolic interaction theory provides a framework for understanding how symbols and social interactions shape political dynamics. In politics, symbols and interactions between politicians and the public play an important role in shaping political meaning, identity, and action. By understanding this process, we can better appreciate the complexity of political communication and its influence on people's political perceptions and participation.

Researchers see that Mead's Symbolic Interaction Theory wants to convey that a person's existence in a social group will have different functions and behaviors depending on his position or role. (Rahayu, 2010) His research said that in symbolic interaction, the interacting parties take balanced roles to communicate effectively. In symbolic interaction, people interpret each other's actions and signals based on the meaning that results from that interpretation. Symbolic interaction studies the nature of interaction, which is a dynamic social activity of humans; individuals are active, reflective, and creative, interpret, and display complicated and difficult-to-predict behavior (Mulyana, 2008). Burke & Stedt (2022:9) stated that symbolic interaction theory is a theory in sociology that emphasizes the importance of symbols and social interactions in forming meaning and social reality. This theory focuses on how individuals create, modify, and interpret symbols in everyday social interactions. George Herbert Mead and Herbert Blumer were the main figures who developed this theory, making it one of the main approaches in sociology (Wirawan, 2012, p. 97).

Turner (93:2008) explains that symbols are the key concept in symbolic interaction theory. A symbol has a specific meaning that is agreed upon by members of society, such as words, gestures, and objects. For example, the word "table" is a symbol that represents a physical object used to place items. These symbols help individuals communicate and understand the world around them through the meanings they have. Blumer (1986:5) explains that meaning is the interpretation individuals give to symbols based on social interactions. Meaning is not fixed and can change depending on the context of interaction. For example, a smile may be interpreted as a sign of friendship in one context but may be interpreted as a sign of sarcasm in another context. Therefore, the meaning of these symbols is dynamic and is always reinterpreted by individuals in their social interactions.

The phenomenon of using social media has given its users extraordinary freedom to express themselves and interact with other people. However, this freedom needs to be interpreted properly, leading to misuse of these platforms for the spread of misinformation, hate speech, and other unethical behavior. This condition certainly needs to be addressed by increasing users' awareness of their responsibilities in using social media. We must remind every social media user

that humans are distinguished from animals primarily because humans are animal symbolism, creatures that live with symbols (Lofts, 2000, p. 64). As creatures living by symbols, humans can use language, images, and other signs to communicate and create meaning. This ability should be used for positive and constructive purposes, not to damage or hurt others.

Humans have the ethos always to work thinking to produce something meaningful for themselves and the social environment around them. In the context of social media use, this ethos should encourage individuals to think critically before sharing information, consider the impact of each post, and strive to contribute to positive and productive conversations. In this way, social media can be a tool that strengthens social networks and advances meaningful discussions. To achieve this, greater education and awareness about digital literacy is needed. Social media users must be trained to recognize accurate and trustworthy information and avoid the traps of fake news and propaganda.

Additionally, it is important to promote ethical and responsible values in social media so that everyone can participate in digital spaces in a way that respects and values others. By increasing the awareness and responsibility of social media users, we can utilize these platforms for better purposes. Social media has great potential for spreading knowledge, building communities, and facilitating positive social change. However, we must commit to using social media wisely and responsibly to realize this potential.

METHOD

This research was conducted at the Zulfan Lindan Unpacking Podcast Event. The method used in this research was a descriptive qualitative method. According to Creswell (Bungin, 2007), qualitative is descriptive, describing the symptoms or relationships between symptoms found in media observations. This research is included in descriptive research, namely describing and summarizing various conditions, various situations, and various phenomena of reality that exist in society, which is the object of research and attempts to draw that reality to the surface as a characteristic, character, nature, model, sign or description of conditions, certain situations or phenomena. The data collected is in the form of words that are likely to be the key to what has been researched. The data sources used are library research from books, journals, newspapers, and the internet, which are related to the influence of social media in politics, especially regarding political communication strategies. Next, direct observations or observations with predetermined research media will be carried out to get a clear picture of the problems of Zulfan Lindan's political communication, and the Unpacking podcast will be carried out to answer the problems in this study. Data analysis in this research was carried out simultaneously: data reduction, data presentation, concluding, and data verification.

RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

Zulfan Lindan and Unpacking Podcast

Zulfan Lindan, an activist and former Chairman of the NASDEM DPP, hosts the political podcast "Unpacking" in Indonesia. The podcast provides a relaxed but in-depth analysis of political issues, allowing listeners to gain insight from someone who has experienced various levels of politics. The first podcast interviewed Eros Djarot, a senior activist and cultural observer criticizing Jokowi, while Zulfan supported Prabowo Gibran in the 2024 presidential election. Zulfan's political communication is defined as communication that involves political messages and political actors or is related to power, government, and government policy. The framework provided by communication science for political communication is described in Laswell's paradigm: who says what, by what channels, to whom, and with what consequences. This paradigm claims that these elements apply in every communication process and are inherent in political communication.

In 2020, Zulfan Lindan became better known to the public after making the controversial statement that Anies Baswedan was the antithesis of Jokowi. This statement attracted attention from the media and the public and caused a strong reaction from within the Nasdem Party, where Zulfan once belonged. As a result, Surya Paloh, General Chair of the Nasdem Party, decided to give Zulfan a dismissal letter as a party cadre. This decision reflects the party's disagreement with Zulfan's views, which do not align with the party's political line. Zulfan's statement caused tension within the party and sparked debate in the public sphere regarding the differences between the two political figures. This incident illustrates the internal dynamics of political parties in Indonesia, where different individual views can cause conflict with the party line. Zulfan, with his background as an activist and political observer, felt the need to express his views even though he risked facing consequences from his party.

The Unpacking podcast contributes to a political perspective ahead of the 2024 election. The discourse discussed is also actual, such as the case of Brigadier Josua, who was killed by Ferdi Sambo, demonstrating the sensitivity of the Unpacking Podcast in understanding issues that are developing in the public. Elite political figures who have attended the Unpacking Zulfan Lindan podcast include Fahri Hamzah (Gelora), Nusron Wahid (Bapilu Golkar), Setiawan Djodi (supporting culture Prabowo), Hasto Kristiyanto (PDIP Secretary General), Adian Napitupulu (PDIP Politician), Mardani Ali Sera (Chairman of the PKS DPP), and political analysts such as M.Qodari, Hasan Nasbi, Ujang Komarudin, Akhmad Khairul Umam, and Syafiq Hasyim. The Unpacking podcast event responds to socio-political dynamics and plays a social role in influencing society.



Source: Youtube

Biddle (2013:13) explains that social role theory is an important concept in sociology that explains how individuals behave and interact in various social situations based on the roles they play in society. This theory emphasizes that human behavior is greatly influenced by the expectations, norms, and rules inherent in their social roles. Every individual plays various roles in life, such as family, worker, friend, and community member. In the 2024 elections, Zulfan's political tendencies support Prabowo Subianto and Gibran Rakabuming Raka as presidential and vice-presidential candidates. Even though Zulfan is trying to maintain a neutral attitude in his podcast, his stance supporting the Prabowo-Gibran pair is becoming clearer through his various comments and analyses. It shows how a public figure can have political preferences while still playing a role in the media as a conduit for information. Wirawan (2012: 118) stated that social interaction is a process in which individuals act and react to others through symbols. In social interactions, individuals constantly interpret the actions of others and respond based on their interpretation of those symbols. Through this process, they shape and modify social reality. Self-concept is also important in this theory, where the self is formed through social interactions and reflection on how other people perceive us.

Symbolic interaction theory suggests that social reality is not fixed but is formed through ongoing social interactions. It emphasizes that individuals interpret the context of interactions and their roles to understand what is expected of them. This theory is applied in communication, education, and cultural studies. In symbolic interaction, individuals interpret each other's actions and signals based on the meaning of that interpretation. It studies the dynamic nature of interaction, where individuals are active, reflective, and creative, and how identities and social norms are formed and maintained.

In a democratic system, everyone has the right to political opinions and choices. Zulfan's political choices are part of the freedom of opinion guaranteed in democracy. The "Unpacking Indonesia" podcast provides up-to-date information and encourages in-depth discussions about politics and democracy. It focuses on public service and contributes to increasing public awareness of the importance of effective public services. However, the podcast may support Prabowo Gibran's partner in the 2024 elections, potentially influencing listeners' political views. This interpretation could indicate that Prabowo-Gibran had a very effective presence or

campaign on TikTok during that time, attracting more attention and interaction than the other two groups. It could be due to various factors, including more engaging content or greater resonance with TikTok's audience.

Democracy Podcast and Discourse

Mills (2003: 23) Michel Foucault explains that discourse, or a system of statements and knowledge, not only reflects power but also plays a role in producing and distributing power. In his book *The Archeology of Knowledge*, Foucault shows that discourse shapes how we understand and talk about reality and determines what is considered valid knowledge. Foucault argued that power does not only come from large institutions such as the state or government but is spread across various social relations and discursive structures. He sees power as something widely distributed in social practices, everyday interactions, and even our language and ways of thinking. It means that power exists in many aspects of life and is not only concentrated in one source (Mills, 2003, p. 42).



Source: Youtube

The discourse of support or rejection of the 2024 election results is a political instrument, with PDIP's attitude after the election being accusations of fraud in Prabowo Gibran's victory. This symbolic interaction indicates that PDIP is becoming the opposition in Prabowo Gibran's government. Unpacking offers a perspective that aligns with Michel Foucault's theory about discourse and power, which argues that discourse reflects power and produces and distributes power in society. The podcast presents various perspectives on how political discourse shapes how we understand political and social issues, which aligns with Foucault's view that discourse is a medium through which power is expressed and practiced. It critically examines how certain ideologies can influence public perceptions and power structures and how various political narratives can strengthen or challenge existing power.

Unpacking provides a relevant reference for exploring Foucault's theory about the relationship between knowledge and power, exploring topics such as identity, justice, and politics. Exploring topics such as identity, justice, and politics helps listeners see how political knowledge is shaped and used to support or criticize power, in line with Foucault's notion of a knowledge-power relationship. Foucault's view that discourse is an arena of resistance is also reflected in the

podcast, facilitating debate and reflection that can lead to more conscious and informed political action. Democracy as a political discourse can be analyzed through the lens of Michel Foucault's discourse theory and Symbolic Interaction theory. In this context, discourse about democracy shapes how we think about governance, participation, and social justice.

Symbols like "popular sovereignty," "voting rights," and "transparent government" are used to construct political meaning and promote democratic norms. According to Symbolic Interaction theory, the meaning of these symbols is not fixed but is formed through social interaction. In this process, various interpretations of democracy are exchanged and debated. Democracy as a discourse in Symbolic Interaction theory also creates space for resistance and social change. Podcasts like Unpacking offer a platform for diverse voices to discuss and challenge existing definitions and practices of democracy, potentially becoming a tool for political reform and social change.

CONCLUSION

Podcasts have become an effective political medium due to their flexibility, depth, and interactivity in conveying political messages. Zulfan Lindan's podcast, Channel Podcast Unpacking Indonesia, is an example of how this media influences public perception and discusses political issues. The podcast offers seven reasons why they are effective in political campaigns:

1. **Accessibility and Flexibility:** Podcasts offer flexible access to audiences, allowing them to listen to content anytime and anywhere. The podcast has around 1,000 videos and 285 thousand subscribers, and political elite figures frequently appear, creating a strong impression of influence.
2. **Content Depth:** Zulfan Lindan's podcast analyzes political issues, public policy, and political dynamics. The podcast format allows Zulfan Lindan to explore complex topics and provide more detailed insights than short news stories or social media posts. The content of the Political Unpacking discourse is communicative, easy to digest, and authoritative because it invites experts, academics, researchers, and politicians.
3. **Delivering a more personal message:** Zulfan Lindan uses podcasts as a platform to convey political messages in a more personal and authentic way. The audio format allows Zulfan Lindan to speak directly to listeners, creating a closer connection and showing his human side. As an activist and politician, Zulfan has experienced the dynamics of practical politics, so he has intense communication with political figures personally.
4. **Ability to Reach a Wider Audience:** Using the podcast platform, Zulfan Lindan can reach a wider audience, including demographic groups that may not be reached through traditional media. It allowed Zulfan Lindan to disseminate his ideas to various levels of society.
5. **Brand and Image Development:** Zulfan Lindan's podcast also functions as a tool to build his brand and political image. He can shape the public's perception of himself as a competent and relatable leader with consistent and strategic content.
6. **Creativity in Delivering Messages:** Zulfan Lindan uses various creative

techniques in the podcast to convey political messages. The podcast format allows for engaging narratives, interviews, panel discussions, and inspirational stories.

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