
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Mapping Social Media Engagement and Platform Affordances in Political Campaigns: A Preliminary Study of the 2024 Indonesian Presidential Election

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| ABSTRACT

This study presents a preliminary examination of social media use in political campaigning during Indonesia's 2024 presidential election, with a specific focus on candidates' engagement performance across platforms. Using a descriptive quantitative approach, the study aims to (1) measure the level of engagement for each presidential and vice-presidential candidate through observable behavioral indicators, including likes, comments, and shares, and (2) compare engagement across major social media platforms, namely Facebook, Instagram, X (Twitter), and TikTok. Data were collected from candidates' official accounts during the campaign period and analyzed using standardized engagement metrics. The findings indicate that engagement varies not only across candidates but also significantly across platforms. Visual and algorithm-driven platforms such as TikTok and Instagram tend to generate higher levels of engagement, whereas Facebook and X (Twitter) exhibit relatively lower interaction patterns. These results suggest that the effectiveness of digital political communication is not solely determined by posting intensity or follower size, but also by candidates' ability to align their communication strategies with the affordances of each platform. As a preliminary study, this research provides an initial empirical mapping of cross-platform engagement dynamics and highlights the importance of platform-specific affordances in shaping political communication outcomes in contemporary digital campaigns.

| KEYWORDS

social media engagement; social media affordances; political communication; digital campaigning; platform architecture

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

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1. Introduction

Social media has a unique ability to capture diverse audiences almost instantly and without geographical limits, providing candidates with unique opportunities for political outreach. In Indonesia's 2024 general elections, social media rapidly became a focal point of political marketing and campaigning, especially during the presidential elections, which feature several competing pairs of candidates: Prabowo Subianto–Gibran Rakabuming, Ganjar Pranowo–Mahfud MD, and Anies Baswedan–Muhaimin Iskandar. All six candidates used social media extensively for political communication, which included the hiring of commercial digital campaign teams to create and manage content. Candidates used more than one social media platform, participating and sponsoring content on all the major channels, such as X (Twitter), Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok. This demonstrates the significance of social media in electoral processes, emphasizing the need for extensive outreach to secure votes.

The number of platforms acts as both a creator and destroyer of opportunities. Because of the number of platforms available, candidates can target a range of audience types, each with their own set of preferences and habits. Each medium possesses communicating opportunities of a variety of formats, styles, and degrees of interactivity. However, the advantages of each medium come with a significant number of challenges. Each medium possesses its own set of tools that shapes the ways content is created, distributed, and the audience's response. Therefore, the short text public debate and discussion style dominant on X differs from the visual focus of posts on Instagram or the algorithm driven short videos on TikTok. Additionally, many

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candidates fail to differentiate their communication strategies on these platforms. Many use the same approach across the platforms in a uniform way by producing the same content and distributing it regardless of their audience. By failing to grasp the other factors, an approach like this dramatically lowers potential communication effectiveness.

Social media engagement, as described in the literature, refers to the interactions an audience has with content generated by political actors via comments, shares and likes. In addition to providing a measure of public interest, engagement also demonstrates how political content is understood, reacted to, and disseminated by the audience. (Aydin, 2020; Dolan et al., 2016; Voorveld et al., 2018). This makes engagement one of the most important factors in determining the success of political communication. Most importantly, the context of the platform on which engagement occurs must be considered. Each platform offers different possibilities for action which are determined by the technology used to the the users (Bucher & Helmond, 2017; Majchrzak & Markus, 2012). These determine the design and the nature of user interaction to create, share and engage with content. For example, Instagram and TikTok are designed for visually appealing content, and as such, they generally promote engagement through likes and comments; while the platform X is designed for conversations and promotes information diffusion through retweets and replies (Coelho et al., 2016; Bossetta, 2018).

This study constitutes a preliminary study that seeks to provide an initial empirical overview of social media engagement in the context of Indonesia's 2024 presidential election. Despite the growing body of literature on digital political communication, studies that simultaneously examine social media engagement and platform affordances within a single electoral context remain limited. As a preliminary investigation, this research focuses primarily on describing how engagement is manifested across the social media platforms used by presidential and vice-presidential candidates, as well as identifying differences in engagement performance associated with the affordances of each platform. The study does not attempt to examine the causal factors that influence variations in engagement levels. Instead, it provides an initial descriptive mapping of engagement patterns across platforms. More specifically, this study examines the engagement performance of social media accounts belonging to presidential and vice-presidential candidates. It has two primary objectives. First, it aims to measure the level of engagement for each candidate using observable behavioral indicators, namely likes, comments, and shares, as forms of audience response. Second, it seeks to descriptively compare engagement levels across social media platforms, taking into account how platform-specific characteristics shape interaction patterns.

There is an increasing amount of literature on social media engagement in the realm of political communication, but there is still a notable absence of candidate level cross platform engagement studies focused on a single electoral context. The vast majority of prior studies focus on one platform, or calculate engagement as an aggregated measure without regard to the differences of platform specific affordances. Therefore, the leading focus of this study is the combination engagement analysis and social media affordances, advocating the different social media platforms as the most important units of contextual analysis. This approach helps to illustrate the complexities of digital political communication and provides an example of a case where political candidates engagement in efforts to maximally exploit different social media platforms in an electoral context.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Social Media Engagement

Social media engagement describes how an audience interacts and gets involved with content on social media at the psychological and behavioral levels. The literature describes engagement from two major angles. First, social media engagement is described as considering multiple dimensions, such as cognitive, affective, and behavioral (Aydin, 2020; Dakroub et al, 2023; Dolan et al, 2016; Dolan et al, 2019; Trunfio & Rossi, 2021; Voorveld et al, 2018). This suggests social media engagement goes beyond the visible social media actions, such as likes, comments, and shares, to include social media users paying attention to the social media content, processing the information, and experiencing social media content on an emotional level. Second, social media engagement is often defined as quantifiable social media content interactions (likes, comments, shares, clicks, and views) (Chen et al, 2020; Dhanesh et al, 2022; Moran et al, 2020; Schultz, 2017; Swani & Labrecque, 2020; Trunfio & Rossi, 2021).

In the context of presidential campaign communication, social media engagement can be understood as public involvement with political messages disseminated by candidates, both as a mental experience and as observable actions reflected in digital metrics. Several studies emphasize that engagement emerges from the interaction between users and content produced by organizations, institutions, public figures, or political actors, and therefore cannot be separated from relational, contextual, and communicative dimensions (Coelho et al., 2016; Doyle et al., 2022; Soares et al., 2022; Voorveld et al., 2018).

Engagement is an elastic concept that exists on a continuum from passive to active forms. A well-established perspective in the literature classifies engagement as consumption, contribution, and creation (Dakroub et al., 2023; Dolan et al., 2019; Shahbaznezhad et al., 2021; Trunfio & Rossi, 2021). Consumption refers to the access or viewing of content by users without activity or without any visible feedback. While passive, this is the basic form of engagement (Dakroub et al., 2023; Trunfio & Rossi, 2021). In the next layer, users shift from mere spectators and take active steps in engaging with the content by liking, commenting, or sharing content. This represents participation in the dissemination of the content (Aydin, 2020; Chen et al., 2020; Moran et al., 2020; Schultz, 2017). It can be noted, however, that there is a hierarchy in contribution practice that classifies them into different

engagement levels. Swani and Labrecque (2020) suggest that “likes” are often reflexive and require little cognitive effort. Comments are seen as more engaging because they require an opinion to be articulated. Shares are more complex because they require the user to think about the implications of the message as they propagate the post within their network.

The highest tier of creation is when users not just respond to content, but initiate and/or create new content with regard to that person, issue, or message (Dakroub et al., 2023; Dolan et al., 2019; Trunfio & Rossi, 2021). Here, consumers shift from being passive recipients to active contributors in the digital communication space. It is important to understand engagement as a continuum starting from passive consumption and active co-creation, and moving from solitary engagement to collective participation (Dolan et al., 2016; Shahbaznezhad et al., 2021; Trunfio & Rossi, 2021).

2.2. Social Media Affordances

The concept of affordance provides a crucial theoretical lens for understanding how technology (particularly social media) shapes users’ possibilities for action. The term affordance, first used in the field of ecological psychology, speaks to the possible actions that arise from the relationship of the user and the surrounding environment. In relation to social media, and the other forms of technology, their affordances are viewed as the result of the combination of technology and user desire, rather than viewed as the inherent characteristics of the technology (Bucher & Helmond, 2017; Majchrzak & Markus, 2012). Therefore, instead of viewing technology as directly guiding or determining behavior, it is more accurate to say that technology provides the conditions of possibility for behavior to occur.

Additional development of this perspective is offered in the Technology Affordances and Constraints Theory (TACT), which articulates the idea that with every affordance is an inherent constraint (Majchrzak & Markus, 2012). That is to say, in addition to the actions that a piece of technology may afford, there are other actions that are limited or controlled by that technology. In the context of social media, the buttons to “like” a post and the ability to share, along with the distribution of content by algorithms facilitate certain user actions and limit or control the interactivity and type of actions that may be performed. Thus, it is important to analyze the affordances of a technology with the acknowledgement that they are in relation to the goals of the user, the design of the technology, and the social context within which the technology exists.

Bucher and Helmond (2017) elaborate on this framework by looking at the multi-faceted nature of social media affordances, including social, technical, as well as user aspects. They draw a line between low-level affordances (button, menu) and high-level affordances (visibility, participation). They also bring in the concept of imagined affordances, which has to do with user perceptions, expectations, and interpretations of and the practices they employ regarding the use of certain platforms.

Within social media contexts, affordances are central to understanding how digital platforms shape communication practices. Boyd (2010), through the concept of networked publics, identifies four key affordances: persistence, replicability, scalability, and searchability. Persistence refers to the enduring nature of digital content, while replicability allows content to be copied and redistributed with ease. Scalability enables content to reach large audiences, and searchability allows content to be retrieved through search mechanisms.

Treem and Leonardi (2013) identify four additional affordances that directly influence communication practices: visibility, persistence, editability, and association. Visibility increases the transparency of activities and relationships, persistence ensures message longevity, editability provides control over message production and revision, and association facilitates the formation and visualization of social networks. These affordances illustrate that social media not only facilitates communication but also restructures it by enhancing visibility, connectivity, and control over content.

Bossetta (2018) further conceptualizes affordances through the notion of digital architectures, emphasizing that affordances are shaped by platform structures. He identifies four dimensions: network structure, functionality, algorithmic filtering, and datafication. Network structure determines patterns of user relationships, functionality governs content production and distribution, algorithmic filtering influences content visibility, and datafication enables platforms to collect and utilize user data to optimize content circulation. These dimensions demonstrate that affordances operate not only at the micro level of interaction but also at the macro level of information flows.

Importantly, affordances are platform-specific, resulting in variations in communication practices. Bossetta (2018) shows that Facebook, X (Twitter), Instagram, and Snapchat exhibit distinct affordance configurations. Facebook emphasizes mutual networks and algorithm-driven visibility, X features open networks and rapid information diffusion, Instagram prioritizes visual communication and identity curation, while Snapchat’s ephemeral nature reduces persistence and encourages private communication.

2.3. Social Media Engagement and Affordances

Social media engagement is inherently contextual, shaped by the characteristics of the platforms through which content is produced, distributed, and consumed. Several studies highlight that engagement cannot be understood independently of the medium in which it occurs (Coelho et al., 2016; Shahbaznezhad et al., 2021; Voorveld et al., 2018; Reimer, 2023). This implies that engagement patterns for presidential candidates on Facebook, Instagram, or other platforms cannot be assumed to be equivalent, as each platform provides distinct affordances that structure user interaction.

Coelho et al. (2016) demonstrate that different platforms exhibit distinct interaction mechanisms. Facebook emphasizes comments, likes, and shares while supporting multi-user interactions through groups and pages. Instagram focuses on likes and comments, driven by visual content, while Twitter emphasizes short messages, retweets, and conversational exchanges. YouTube, in contrast, centers on video content and subscription-based engagement. These structural differences suggest that engagement is not solely determined by content quality but also by platform design, which enables certain forms of interaction while constraining others.

Shahbaznezhad et al. (2021) and Reimer (2023) also demonstrate that different platforms generate varying patterns of user engagement. While Facebook generally promotes active user participation, Instagram primarily encourages more passive forms of participation. This distinction matters in the context of political communication, as the greater engagement on a platform may be due to the platform’s affordances and not the quality of the content itself. Likewise, in their 2018 study, Voorveld et al. state that different platforms provide a different user experience because of the differences in their functions, interfaces, styles of connectivity, content formats, and the culture of use. Therefore, platforms are instead active, cognitive environments that drive the experience of engagement, and should not instead, be seen as neutral channels.

Affordances relate to the type of content that works well on different platforms. Aydin (2020), Dhanesh et al. (2022), Moran et al. (2020), and Reimer (2023) show that content features like visibility, interactivity, and emotional tone can lead to higher engagement. Not all platforms respond the same to all factors. Coelho et al. (2016) observe that the type of content and the level of engagement interact differently on different platforms. This means that when candidates post content that is informational, emotional, visual, or interactive, the type of engagement that they get from the content is determined by the functions of the platforms on which the content is posted. Different from the platform features, the way people communicate and the audience also play a role. In crisis situations, Chen et al. (2020) highlight that engagement is influenced by the type of content, media richness, the presence of a dialogic loop, and emotional tone. Doyle et al. (2022) show that the influence of engagement is due to relational orientation, while Soares et al. (2022) illustrate the importance of audience and sectoral contexts.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

This research intends to understand the 2024 election campaign social media strategy of the Indonesian presidential and vice-presidential candidates, with attention to the social media platform. All candidates involved in this contest actively employed social media as part of their political communication strategies, namely Prabowo Subianto, Gibran Rakabuming Raka, Anies Baswedan, Muhaimin Iskandar, Ganjar Pranowo, and Mahfud MD. More specifically, this study examines how each candidate leverages the affordances of different social media platforms. Each platform possesses distinct characteristics and digital architectures, enabling different forms of communication and strategic approaches. This study employs a descriptive quantitative approach using secondary data. The dataset consists of performance matrices of candidates’ social media accounts, including the number of posts, likes, comments, and shares. These data enable systematic comparison of social media usage intensity as well as audience engagement levels across candidates.

3.2. Unit of Analysis

The object of this study is the official social media accounts of the six presidential and vice-presidential candidates in Indonesia’s 2024 election. There are four main social media platforms the study will focus on as they are the most dominant in digital political communication: X (Twitter), Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok. The candidates’ official accounts will be studied for the campaigning period of the 2024 presidential election, from 28 November 2023 to 10 February 2024. This time frame captures the most significant period of political communication, wherein candidates are actively involved in the dissemination of campaign communication and voter engagement. In this study, there is no differentiation of the posts between candidates and those posts by campaign teams (administrators). All posts are considered as part of the overall communication plan of the candidates. Table 1 identifies the official social media accounts used as units of analysis in the study.

Table 1. Official Social Media Accounts of Presidential and Vice-Presidential Candidates Analyzed in the Study

Candidate	Facebook	Instagram	Twitter (X)	TikTok
Prabowo Subianto	@PrabowoSubianto	@prabowo	@prabowo	@prabowosubianto08
Gibran Rakabuming	@GibranRakabuming	@gibran_rakabuming	@gibran_tweet	@gibran_rakabuming
Ganjar Pranowo	@GanjarPranowo	@ganjar_pranowo	@ganjarpranowo	@ganjarpranowo
Mahfud MD	@OfficialMahfudMD	@mohmahfudmd	@mohmahfudmd	@mohmahfudmdofficial
Anies Baswedan	@aniesbaswedan	@aniesbaswedan	@aniesbaswedan	@aniesbaswedan
Muhaimin Iskandar	@cakiminow	@cakiminow	@cakimiNOW	@amuhaiminiskandar

3.3. Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection and analysis were conducted using Fanspage Karma, a social media analytics tool that enables systematic retrieval and processing of account performance data. From this site, all of the candidates' posts and the corresponding engagement data, including those of likes, comments, and shares were collected. The data were collected and arranged in the form of a matrix for the purpose of comparison and analysis either vertically or horizontally, which means data could be compared separate from each candidate from each platform or compared horizontally in one candidate from multiple platforms. The analysis of the data collected was done descriptively where the patterns of social media were described in relation to the data to the variables of how often the posts were published and the engagement level of the audience. The data were also described to show how the practices of digital campaigning on social media exploit the various features, tools, and affordances of each platform. During the data collection process, certain limitations were encountered regarding data availability. Specifically, data for Prabowo Subianto's Instagram account were not accessible within the system used and were therefore excluded from the analysis. Nevertheless, data from other platforms provide a sufficiently comprehensive overview of candidates' social media strategies.

The analysis of social media engagement in this study follows a quantitative metric-based approach developed in prior studies (Bonsón et al., 2019; Bonsón et al., 2014; Haro-de-Rosario et al., 2018). Engagement can be analyzed from three components of audience interaction: popularity, commitment, and virality (see Table 1). Popularity dimension (P3) is measured from the average number of likes (or favorites) that each post receives, divided by the number of followers, and this is a measure of the audience interest that post has attracted. In the case of commitment dimension (C3), average number of comments that a post receives, divided by the number of followers is a measure of mental engagement, and that is, a measure of a two-way interaction. With the virality dimension (V3), average number of shares (or retweets) per post per number of followers is a measure of the level that the post content is able to proliferate in the social media community (Bonsón et al., 2019; Bonsón et al., 2014). These three dimensions are then combined into an aggregate engagement index ($E = P3 + C3 + V3$) to provide a comprehensive measure of audience engagement (Bonsón et al., 2014).

Table 2. Dimensions, Indicators, and Calculation of Social Media Engagement Metrics

Dimension	Code	Calculation	Description
Popularity	P1	Number of posts liked / total posts	Percentage of posts receiving likes
	P2	Total likes / total posts	Average number of likes per post
	P3	$(P2 / \text{number of followers}) \times 1,000$	Average likes per post per 1,000 followers
Commitment	C1	Number of posts commented / total posts	Percentage of posts receiving comments
	C2	Total comments / total posts	Average number of comments per post
	C3	$(C2 / \text{number of followers}) \times 1,000$	Average comments per post per 1,000 followers
Virality	V1	Number of posts shared / total posts	Percentage of posts shared
	V2	Total shares / total posts	Average number of shares per post
	V3	$(V2 / \text{number of followers}) \times 1,000$	Average shares per post per 1,000 followers
Engagement	E	$P3 + C3 + V3$	Stakeholder engagement index

Source: Bonsón et al. (2019); Bonsón et al. (2014); Haro-de-Rosario et al. (2018).

4. Results

Table 3 presents the official social media presence of the six presidential and vice-presidential candidates across four major platforms: Facebook, Instagram, X (Twitter), and TikTok. The data indicate that all candidates maintained active accounts on multiple platforms, reflecting the importance of social media in contemporary political campaigning. However, the distribution of followers across platforms varied among candidates, suggesting differences in the scale and composition of their online audiences. Some candidates demonstrated stronger audience bases on visually oriented platforms such as Instagram and TikTok, while others had relatively larger followings on network-based or conversational platforms such as Facebook and X. These variations illustrate that each platform provides a distinct digital environment through which candidates reach and interact with potential voters.

Table 3. Number of Followers of Presidential and Vice-Presidential Candidates Across Social Media Platforms

Candidate	Facebook Followers	Instagram Followers	Twitter (X) Followers	TikTok Followers
Prabowo Subianto	10,007,035	9,401,246	4,740,645	484,233
Gibran Rakabuming	345,702	5,422,203	1,274,020	4,126,223
Ganjar Pranowo	2,322,728	6,246,223	3,570,952	7,322,466
Mahfud MD	140,997	1,433,022	4,068,593	422,816
Anies Baswedan	2,033,646	6,922,023	5,140,101	1,922,114

Prabowo Subianto	10,007,035	9,401,246	4,740,645	484,233
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Note: Follower counts represent the number of followers recorded at the end of February 2024.

The findings indicate that the use of social media by presidential and vice-presidential candidates in Indonesia’s 2024 election was not uniform, either in terms of intensity or strategic orientation. Overall, candidates did not employ all platforms in the same way. Some emphasized high-volume content production to maximize visibility, whereas others placed greater emphasis on interaction quality and audience involvement (see Table 4).

For some candidates, strategies centered on frequent posting reflected an effort to maximize the affordance of visibility, that is, to maintain a consistent and dominant presence in users’ feeds. This pattern was evident on platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and X, where intensive content production functioned as a primary strategy for sustaining public exposure. However, high posting intensity did not always translate into high audience engagement, indicating that the affordance of visibility does not automatically produce strong engagement unless it is supported by relevant and compelling content. By contrast, several candidates adopted a more selective approach by leveraging the affordance of interactivity, namely the platform’s capacity to stimulate audience responses such as likes, comments, and shares. In such cases, content quality became the key factor in shaping digital communication performance. In addition, on platforms such as TikTok, affordances were not determined solely by posting frequency or social networks, but also by algorithmic mechanisms that enabled content to become viral.

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics of Social Media Activity and Interaction of Presidential and Vice-Presidential Candidates during the 2024 Election Campaign

	Prabowo Subianto	Gibran Rakabuming	Ganjar Pranowo	Mahfud MD	Anies Baswedan	Muhaimin Iskandar
Facebook						
Number of followers	10,007,035	345,702	2,322,728	140,997	2,033,646	1,009,410
Number of posts	245	23	421	273	1,010	864
Posts per day	3.27	0.31	5.61	3.64	13.47	11.52
Number of likes	12,217,485	46,123	3,199,383	696,261	3,399,824	4,818,912
Number of comments	1,038,905	16,685	741,572	218,905	250,313	223,241
Number of shares	186,305	2,219	66,964	17,270	169,671	881,477
Instagram						
Number of followers	9,401,246	5,422,203	6,246,223	1,433,022	6,922,023	2,234,201
Number of posts	225	228	441	315	478	563
Posts per day	3.00	3.04	5.88	4.20	6.37	7.51
Number of likes	NA	39,312,866	87,818,829	20,054,654	46,673,369	13,778,176
Number of comments	NA	945,585	4,037,988	379,821	1,783,903	648,464
Twitter (X)						
Number of followers	4,740,645	1,274,020	3,570,952	4,068,593	5,140,101	422,047
Number of posts	41	195	1,039	67	624	864
Posts per day	0.55	2.60	13.85	0.89	8.32	11.52
Number of likes	301,143	1,759,435	3,165,341	866,201	6,576,829	4,818,912
Number of comments	36,771	194,452	689,911	78,025	195,001	223,241
Number of shares	32,110	117,122	626,009	159,980	1,488,776	881,477
TikTok						
Number of followers	484,233	4,126,223	7,322,466	422,816	1,922,114	326,828
Number of posts	3	76	297	138	375	300
Posts per day	0.04	1.01	3.96	1.84	5.00	4.00
Number of likes	103,500	35,015,096	18,497,445	4,288,904	28,988,616	4,656,422
Number of comments	7,907	34,014,147	684,619	336,946	1,478,738	261,129
Number of shares	2,496	719,946	299,990	76,227	701,374	111,175

Note: (a) Interaction metrics (likes, comments, and shares) were calculated from data processed via Fanpage Karma; (b) Instagram metrics for Prabowo Subianto were unavailable in Fanpage Karma and are therefore reported as NA.

In this study, social media engagement is understood as the form of audience interaction with candidate content, reflected in responses such as likes, comments, and shares. Engagement not only indicates public attention but also reflects the extent to

which content stimulates active audience involvement. Overall, the findings suggest that engagement is highly contextual and shaped by platform characteristics. Visually oriented and algorithmically driven platforms such as TikTok and Instagram tended to generate higher engagement than text-based platforms such as X or network-based platforms such as Facebook. This suggests that platforms were not utilized with identical strategies; some candidates prioritized content production designed to attract wide attention, whereas others focused on more limited but consistent forms of interaction.

Table 5 presents variation in engagement indicators (popularity, commitment and virality) demonstrating how each candidate leveraged different characteristics of each platform. Overall, audience engagement patterns were not uniform across platforms, but were strongly shaped by content type and available distribution mechanisms. Instagram and TikTok, with their visual and algorithmic orientations, tended to amplify the popularity dimension through high volumes of likes, whereas Facebook and Twitter (X) displayed a more balanced distribution across likes, comments, and shares. Moreover, the consistency of P1, C1, and V1 values indicates that all candidates actively produced content that routinely generated some degree of audience response.

More specifically, each candidate demonstrated distinct strengths on different platforms. Gibran Rakabuming was the most dominant on visual and short-video platforms, producing very high levels of interaction in both likes and comments. Mahfud MD showed strong performance on Facebook and Instagram, particularly in generating audience involvement through a combination of popularity and discursive response. Muhaimin Iskandar stood out in terms of virality, especially on platforms that allow broad redistribution of content such as Facebook and Twitter (X). By contrast, Prabowo Subianto, Ganjar Pranowo, and Anies Baswedan displayed more moderate and dispersed engagement patterns, without a very strong dominance on any single platform.

Table 5. Social Media Engagement Indicators of Presidential and Vice-Presidential Candidates across Platforms

	Prabowo Subianto	Gibran Rakabuming	Ganjar Pranowo	Mahfud MD	Anies Baswedan	Muhaimin Iskandar
Facebook						
P1 (Posts with likes / posts)	1	1	1	1	1	1
P2 (Likes / post)	49,867	2,005	7,601	2,550	3,366	5,577
P3 (Likes / followers × 1000)	4.99	5.80	3.27	18.09	1.65	5.53
C1 (Posts with comments / posts)	1	1	1	1	1	1
C2 (Comments / post)	4,240	725	1,761	802	248	258
C3 (Comments / followers × 1000)	0.42	2.10	0.76	5.69	0.12	0.26
V1 (Posts with shares / posts)	1	1	1	1	1	1
V2 (Shares / post)	760	96	159	63	168	1,020
V3 (Shares / followers × 1000)	0.08	0.28	0.07	0.45	0.08	1.01
Instagram						
P1 (Posts with likes / posts)	1	1	1	1	1	1
P2 (Likes / post)	NA	172,425	199,136	63,666	97,643	24,473
P3 (Likes / followers × 1000)	NA	31.79	31.88	44.43	14.11	10.96
C1 (Posts with comments / posts)	1	1	1	1	1	1
C2 (Comments / post)	NA	4,147	9,156	1,206	3,732	1,152
C3 (Comments / followers × 1000)	NA	0.77	1.47	0.84	0.54	0.52
Twitter (X)						
P1 (Posts with likes / posts)	1	1	1	1	1	1
P2 (Likes / post)	7,345	9,023	3,047	12,928	10,540	5,577
P3 (Likes / followers × 1000)	1.55	7.08	0.85	3.18	2.05	13.22
C1 (Posts with comments / posts)	1	1	1	1	1	1
C2 (Comments / post)	897	997	664	1,165	313	258
C3 (Comments / followers × 1000)	0.19	0.78	0.19	0.29	0.06	0.61
V1 (Posts with shares / posts)	1	1	1	1	1	1
V2 (Shares / post)	783	601	603	2,388	2,386	1,020
V3 (Shares / followers × 1000)	0.17	0.47	0.17	0.59	0.46	2.42
TikTok						
P1 (Posts with likes / posts)	1	1	1	1	1	1
P2 (Likes / post)	34,500	460,725	62,281	31,079	77,303	15,521
P3 (Likes / followers × 1000)	71.27	111.69	8.50	73.47	40.22	47.49
C1 (Posts with comments / posts)	1	1	1	1	1	1
C2 (Comments / post)	2,636	447,555	2,305	2,442	3,943	870
C3 (Comments / followers × 1000)	5.44	108.48	0.31	5.78	2.05	2.66

	Prabowo Subianto	Gibran Rakabuming	Ganjar Pranowo	Mahfud MD	Anies Baswedan	Muhaimin Iskandar
V1 (Posts with shares / posts)	1	1	1	1	1	1
V2 (Shares / post)	832	9,473	1,010	552	1,870	371
V3 (Shares / followers × 1000)	1.72	2.30	0.14	1.31	0.97	1.13

Note: Data were compiled and processed using social media analytics retrieved from Fanpage Karma

Table 6 summarizes the level of social media engagement of Indonesian presidential candidates standardized per 1,000 followers. The engagement value (E) was obtained by aggregating three main indicators—popularity (P3), commitment (C3), and virality (V3)—which represent audience interaction intensity through likes, comments, and shares. To maintain comparability across platforms, the average engagement value (\bar{E}) was also used, calculated according to the number of indicators available on each platform. With this approach, engagement measurement does not simply reflect the absolute number of interactions, but rather emphasizes the extent to which candidates were able to optimize their existing follower base to generate audience involvement.

Overall, TikTok showed the highest level of engagement, followed by Instagram. This can be explained by the affordances of both platforms, which are oriented toward visual and short-form content that is easy to consume, attention-grabbing, and amplified by aggressive algorithmic distribution. TikTok in particular does not rely solely on follower networks but on the performance of content itself through recommendation systems, allowing content to reach broader audiences and generate large-scale interaction. Instagram shares similar characteristics, although to a lesser extent, with stronger emphasis on visual aesthetics and interaction through likes and comments. By contrast, Facebook and Twitter (X) tend to rely more heavily on social networks and more discursive communication patterns, producing relatively more moderate engagement levels.

Viewed by platform, on Facebook Mahfud MD recorded the highest engagement level, followed by Gibran Rakabuming and Muhaimin Iskandar. On Instagram, Mahfud MD again stood out, while Ganjar Pranowo and Gibran Rakabuming also performed strongly, especially on the popularity dimension. On Twitter (X), Muhaimin Iskandar emerged as the most dominant. On TikTok, engagement levels were substantially higher than on other platforms, with Gibran Rakabuming as the most prominent candidate, followed by Mahfud MD and Prabowo Subianto. These findings indicate that engagement success is strongly shaped by the fit between candidates’ content strategies and the characteristics and affordances of each platform, as well as by their ability to optimize interaction from their follower base.

Table 6. Comparison of Candidates’ Social Media Engagement across Platforms

Platform	Candidate	P3	C3	V3	E (Total)	\bar{E} (Average)
Facebook	Prabowo Subianto	4.99	0.42	0.08	5.49	1.83
	Gibran Rakabuming	5.80	2.10	0.28	8.18	2.73
	Ganjar Pranowo	3.27	0.76	0.07	4.10	1.37
	Mahfud MD	18.09	5.69	0.45	24.23	8.08
	Anies Baswedan	1.65	0.12	0.08	1.85	0.62
	Muhaimin Iskandar	5.53	0.26	1.01	6.80	2.27
Instagram	Prabowo Subianto	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
	Gibran Rakabuming	31.79	0.77	–	32.56	16.28
	Ganjar Pranowo	31.88	1.47	–	33.35	16.68
	Mahfud MD	44.43	0.84	–	45.27	22.64
	Anies Baswedan	14.11	0.54	–	14.65	7.33
	Muhaimin Iskandar	10.96	0.52	–	11.48	5.74
Twitter (X)	Prabowo Subianto	1.55	0.19	0.17	1.91	0.64
	Gibran Rakabuming	7.08	0.78	0.47	8.33	2.78
	Ganjar Pranowo	0.85	0.19	0.17	1.21	0.40
	Mahfud MD	3.18	0.29	0.59	4.06	1.35
	Anies Baswedan	2.05	0.06	0.46	2.57	0.86
	Muhaimin Iskandar	13.22	0.61	2.42	16.25	5.42
TikTok	Prabowo Subianto	71.27	5.44	1.72	78.43	26.14
	Gibran Rakabuming	111.69	108.48	2.30	222.47	74.16
	Ganjar Pranowo	8.50	0.31	0.14	8.95	2.98
	Mahfud MD	73.47	5.78	1.31	80.56	26.85

Platform	Candidate	P3	C3	V3	E (Total)	\bar{E} (Average)
	Anies Baswedan	40.22	2.05	0.97	43.24	14.41
	Muhaimin Iskandar	47.49	2.66	1.13	51.28	17.09

Note: Data were compiled and processed using social media analytics retrieved from Fanpage Karma. Instagram engagement data for Prabowo Subianto were not available in Fanpage Karma and are therefore indicated as NA. The average engagement value (\bar{E}) was calculated to account for differences in indicator availability across platforms. On Instagram, engagement was based only on two indicators (P3 and C3) because share metrics (V3) were unavailable. Accordingly, \bar{E} on Instagram was calculated as the average of two indicators, whereas on other platforms (Facebook, Twitter/X, and TikTok), \bar{E} was calculated as the average of three indicators. This approach was adopted to ensure cross-platform comparability while acknowledging differences in platform affordances.

Prabowo Subianto and Gibran Rakabuming exhibited contrasting patterns of social media use. Prabowo tended to adopt a more selective approach, emphasizing engagement quality rather than sheer content quantity. This is evident in his ability to generate relatively high interaction even without highly intensive posting across all platforms. By contrast, Gibran demonstrated particular strength on visual and algorithm-driven platforms such as TikTok and Instagram, leveraging affordances of virality and algorithmic distribution to reach broad audiences. This pattern suggests a stronger orientation toward exploiting platform dynamics rather than simply increasing posting frequency.

Ganjar Pranowo and Mahfud MD displayed more balanced strategies in their use of social media. Ganjar tended to combine relatively high posting intensity with efforts to build audience engagement, especially on platforms such as Instagram and X. This reflects simultaneous use of the affordances of visibility and interactivity. Mahfud MD, meanwhile, adopted a more moderate approach, with relatively even activity across platforms but without overwhelming dominance on any single one. Nevertheless, his relatively strong interaction levels indicate that his content was still effective in exploiting the affordance of interactivity.

Anies Baswedan and Muhaimin Iskandar both demonstrated strategies based on high visibility, but with different outcomes in terms of audience engagement. Anies tended to use multiple platforms intensively while also effectively encouraging content distribution, suggesting strength in the affordances of spreadability and engagement. Muhaimin Iskandar, by contrast, stood out for his high posting frequency, particularly on Facebook and X, although interaction per post was not always proportional. This suggests that maximizing visibility through intensive content production was not always matched by optimal use of interactivity, resulting in a communication pattern oriented more toward exposure than audience involvement.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

Presidential and vice-presidential candidates in Indonesia do not appear to have employed the same social media strategies for every platform. Although each candidate maintained a presence across multiple platforms, the intensity of use, the types of interaction generated, and the levels of engagement achieved followed distinct patterns. Some candidates appeared more effective in exploiting visually oriented platforms such as Instagram and TikTok, whereas others performed relatively better on platforms centered on conversation and information diffusion, such as Facebook and X (Twitter). These findings suggest that social media engagement is not merely a reflection of the size of one's follower base; rather, it reflects candidates' ability to transform that follower base into actual interaction through likes, comments, and shares. In this sense, engagement is more accurately understood as a form of public involvement with the political messages posted by candidates, expressed both as a psychological response and as measurable behavioral action (Aydin, 2020; Dolan et al., 2016; Trunfio & Rossi, 2021).

The variation across platforms further demonstrates that engagement operates as a spectrum of uneven intensity. Some platforms generated responses primarily at the level of contribution through likes, comments, and shares, whereas others were more conducive to particular forms of engagement, such as popularity through likes or redistribution through shares. This is consistent with the argument that engagement cannot be reduced to a single indicator, since likes, comments, and shares reflect different levels of effort and depth of involvement (Swani & Labrecque, 2020). Likes tend to represent the quickest and lowest-effort response, comments signal a higher degree of cognitive involvement, and shares indicate the capacity of a message to be redistributed across broader networks. Accordingly, when a candidate performs strongly on one platform but not on another, this suggests success in leveraging the particular type of engagement afforded by that platform, rather than universal dominance across all forms of engagement. In this respect, the findings support the view that engagement is highly contextual and depends on the relationship between content, medium, and audience (Coelho et al., 2016; Soares et al., 2022; Voorveld et al., 2018).

These distinctions become even clearer when analyzed in the context of social media affordances. The literature clarifies that affordance is linked to the relationship between users and technologies, not features of the technology in isolation. (Bucher & Helmond, 2017; Majchrzak & Markus, 2012). In the context of social media, affordances determine which actions are more likely to be performed, more visible, and more likely to elicit a response. Therefore, the differences in engagement in this study are a direct effect of the affordances of the different platforms. Boyd (2010) identifies persistence, replicability, scalability, and searchability as social media affordances that allow content to persist, be reproduced, spread widely, and remain available. Visibility, persistence, editability, and association are other major affordances that shape digital communication, added by Treem

and Leonardi (2013). In other words, the platforms in which political messages are communicated are not just neutral means of communication. From the very beginning, they are designed to influence the circulation and response of messages.

TikTok and Instagram generally receive higher engagement in this case because their features provide good opportunities for visibility, scalability and attractiveness. Instagram's focus on visual communication and identity curation allows for easy facilitation of popularity in the runs of likes and comments (Bossetta, 2018). TikTok also allows for better engagement opportunities because content distribution is mainly based on algorithmic filtering instead of just follower networks. Therefore, users are able to reach wider audiences if their content aligns with the platform's algorithm which increases the chances of content going viral. Engagement being highest on TikTok, then Instagram, reaffirms the notion that visual narrative, media richness and the algorithmic structures of the platforms create higher possibility of user engagement (Aydin, 2020; Dhanesh et al., 2022; Moran et al., 2020; Reimer, 2023). On the other hand, Facebook and X (Twitter) have lower engagement because of their features that are primarily based on social networks, conversations, and the spread of information. Facebook operates via interconnected networks, users' profiles, and content distribution algorithms; X operates via open networks, hashtags, and retweets, which favors public conversation and the flow of short-form messages rather than the engagement of large-scale multimedia content (Bossetta, 2018; Coelho et al., 2016).

All of these pieces lead to at least two conclusions. First, presidential and vice-presidential candidates in Indonesia used social media differently, and these differences produced distinct engagement outcomes across platforms. Second, such differences cannot be explained solely by candidate quality or follower counts; they must be understood through the affordances of platforms, which shape users' possibilities for action. These findings are consistent with the view that engagement emerges from the interaction between content strategy, platform structure, and audience response (Chen et al., 2020; Doyle et al., 2022; Shahbaznezhad et al., 2021). Accordingly, successful digital political communication depends not simply on maintaining a presence across multiple platforms, but on the ability to tailor messages, formats, and communication styles to the specific affordances of each social media platform.

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