

Adaptive communication strategies for sustaining public political participation: Lessons from the 2024 Surakarta regional election

Djayanti Poetria Handayaningsih^{1*}, Rahmat Wisudawanto², Dyah Retno Pratiwi³

^{1 2 3} Universitas Sahid Surakarta, Surakarta, Indonesia

*Corresponding Author: d.poetria@gmail.com

Submission: 3 July 2026

Revision: 17 July 2026

Accepted: 27 July 2026

Abstract

Communication strategies implemented by election management bodies play a crucial role in sustaining voter participation. However, previous studies have primarily focused on voter outreach activities or the utilization of digital media without integrating the entire communication strategy process with SWOT analysis. This study aims to analyze the communication strategy of the General Election Commission (Komisi Pemilihan Umum [KPU]) of Surakarta City in sustaining voter participation during the 2024 Regional Head Election. A descriptive qualitative approach was employed using interviews, observations, and document analysis, with the data analyzed through the interactive model. The findings indicate that the communication strategy was implemented through the stages of research, planning, execution, measurement, and reporting, supported by systematic planning, multi-stakeholder collaboration, and the effective use of digital media. Nevertheless, its implementation continues to face challenges related to low social media engagement, disparities in digital literacy, and the spread of disinformation. The SWOT analysis demonstrates that sustaining voter participation depends on the organization's ability to adaptively integrate internal strengths with external opportunities. This study contributes to the literature on election communication strategies by integrating the stages of communication strategy with SWOT analysis.

Keywords: Communication strategy; Voter participation; Regional head election; SWOT analysis; General Election Commission of Surakarta City.

Abstrak

Strategi komunikasi penyelenggara pemilu berperan penting dalam mempertahankan partisipasi pemilih. Namun, penelitian sebelumnya umumnya berfokus pada pelaksanaan sosialisasi atau pemanfaatan media digital tanpa mengintegrasikan keseluruhan tahapan strategi komunikasi dengan analisis SWOT. Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis strategi komunikasi Komisi Pemilihan Umum (KPU) Kota Surakarta dalam mempertahankan partisipasi pemilih pada Pilkada Tahun 2024. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif melalui wawancara, observasi, dan studi dokumentasi. Data dianalisis menggunakan model analisis interaktif. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa strategi komunikasi diimplementasikan melalui tahapan *research*, *planning*, *execution*, *measurement*, dan *reporting* yang didukung oleh perencanaan yang sistematis, kolaborasi multipihak, serta pemanfaatan media digital. Meskipun demikian, implementasinya masih menghadapi berbagai tantangan, seperti rendahnya tingkat keterlibatan pada media sosial, kesenjangan literasi digital, dan penyebaran disinformasi. Analisis SWOT menunjukkan bahwa keberhasilan mempertahankan partisipasi pemilih bergantung pada kemampuan organisasi mengintegrasikan kekuatan internal dengan peluang eksternal secara adaptif. Penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi terhadap pengembangan kajian strategi komunikasi pemilu melalui integrasi tahapan strategi komunikasi dengan analisis SWOT.

Kata Kunci: Strategi komunikasi; Partisipasi pemilih; Pilkada; Analisis SWOT; KPU Kota Surakarta.

Introduction

Regional head elections constitute a fundamental instrument of local democracy, providing citizens with the opportunity to determine the direction of regional leadership through the electoral process (Aminah, 2020). Voter participation is widely recognized as a key indicator of election quality because it reflects the extent of citizens' engagement in the democratic process (Kropf et al., 2020). Consequently, election management bodies are responsible not only for ensuring that electoral stages are conducted in accordance with established regulations but also for encouraging citizens to exercise their voting rights consciously and responsibly. In this context, communication plays a strategic role in disseminating electoral information, fostering political education, and strengthening public trust in the electoral process (Susila et al., 2020). Effective communication strategies ensure that electoral information reaches its intended audience accurately, thereby enhancing public understanding and encouraging citizen participation throughout every stage of the election.

The rapid advancement of digital technology has fundamentally transformed communication patterns between election management bodies and the public. The widespread use of social media, digital platforms, and various online communication channels has expanded the reach of electoral information while simultaneously introducing challenges such as information overload, the spread of misinformation, and changing patterns of audience engagement with public messages (Muhammed T & Mathew, 2022). Consequently, communication effectiveness is no longer determined by the volume of information disseminated but rather by an institution's ability to design communication strategies that align with the characteristics of its target audience. Communication strategies that fail to adapt to these changing conditions may result in low levels of public engagement despite extensive outreach efforts (Skog et al., 2018). Therefore, election management bodies must integrate multiple communication channels, adopt appropriate communication approaches, and foster collaboration with diverse stakeholders to ensure that electoral messages are delivered effectively.

Surakarta City represents a dynamic political environment characterized by a diverse electorate, particularly with the growing proportion of young voters who are highly engaged with digital media (Salim & Drenth, 2020). This condition has encouraged the General Election Commission of Surakarta City to develop a communication strategy that combines face-to-face outreach, digital communication, institutional partnerships, and continuous voter education. Such an approach is intended not only to broaden the dissemination of electoral information but also to strengthen public trust in the administration of the 2024 Regional Head Election. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of communication strategies cannot be evaluated solely based on the number of outreach activities conducted or the extent of media exposure. Instead, it must be examined

through the processes of planning, implementation, evaluation, and the strategic factors that influence the effectiveness of communication in sustaining voter participation.

Studies on the communication strategies of election management bodies have been widely conducted. Research by Koc-Michalska et al. (2021) showed that systematically designed communication strategies enhance the dissemination of electoral information and encourage public participation; however, the study primarily focused on outreach activities without examining the relationships among the stages of communication strategy. Similarly, Hongcharu (2024) found that digital media contribute to expanding the reach of public information, yet social media were treated merely as communication tools without considering the internal and external factors influencing the effectiveness of strategy implementation. Despite these contributions, studies integrating the entire communication strategy process with SWOT analysis to explain the strategic position of election management bodies in sustaining voter participation amid the evolving digital communication ecosystem remain limited.

Based on these considerations, this study aims to analyze the communication strategy implemented by the General Election Commission of Surakarta City in sustaining voter participation during the 2024 Regional Head Election through the stages of research, planning, implementation, measurement, and reporting, followed by an interpretation of the findings using SWOT analysis. This study is significant because it provides a more comprehensive understanding of how communication strategies are formulated, why they succeed or fail to achieve their intended objectives, and which internal and external factors influence their effectiveness. In addition to contributing to the advancement of political communication and public communication scholarship, the findings are expected to serve as a practical reference for election management bodies in developing communication strategies that are more adaptive, collaborative, and oriented toward sustaining voter participation.

Method

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive research design to analyze the communication strategy of the General Election Commission (Komisi Pemilihan Umum [KPU]) of Surakarta City in sustaining voter participation during the 2024 Regional Head Election. A qualitative approach was selected because it enables an in-depth understanding of the processes of planning, implementation, and evaluation of communication strategies from the perspectives of policy implementers (Lexy, 2002). The study was conducted at the Office of the General Election Commission of Surakarta City, located at Jalan Kahuripan Utara No. 23, Sumber, Banjarsari District, Surakarta City, Central Java, Indonesia. This location was chosen because it serves as the central hub for public outreach, public relations activities, voter education programs, and the coordination of public communication throughout the

2024 Regional Head Election. Field data were collected over a three-month period, from March 3 to June 3, 2026. Research participants were selected using purposive sampling based on their direct involvement in the formulation and implementation of the communication strategy. The key informants were Yuly Yulianingrum, a Commissioner of the General Election Commission of Surakarta City responsible for the Division of Public Outreach, Voter Education, Public Participation, and Human Resources, and Wiji Lestari, Head of the Subdivision of Public Participation, Public Relations, and Human Resources.

The data were collected through in-depth interviews, observation, and document analysis. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to obtain detailed information regarding the formulation, implementation, and evaluation of the communication strategy employed by the General Election Commission of Surakarta City to sustain voter participation. Observations focused on the implementation of public outreach activities, the management of communication media, and public relations practices, whereas document analysis included the examination of the 2024 Regional Head Election reports, internal institutional documents, meeting minutes, social media analytics, and other supporting documents. Data credibility was established through source triangulation by comparing evidence obtained from interviews, observations, and documentary sources. The data were subsequently analyzed using the interactive analysis model proposed by Miles et al. (2014), consisting of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. The analytical process was conducted iteratively throughout the study, enabling each finding to be systematically verified and generating a comprehensive interpretation of the communication strategy implemented by the General Election Commission of Surakarta City in sustaining voter participation during the 2024 Regional Head Election.

Results and Discussion

Implementation of the communication strategy of the General Election Commission of Surakarta City based on the five stages of communication planning

The implementation of the communication strategy of the General Election Commission (Komisi Pemilihan Umum [KPU]) of Surakarta City in sustaining voter participation during the 2024 Regional Head Election began with the research stage, which served as the foundation for developing the communication strategy. Cangara (2013) explained that research is the initial process aimed at identifying audience characteristics, information needs, and environmental conditions that influence communication effectiveness. Through this stage, organizations obtain the information necessary to determine communication objectives, formulate messages, and select the media channels most appropriate for their target audiences. In the context of regional head elections, the research stage is particularly important because the diversity of voter characteristics requires communication strategies that are

adaptive rather than standardized, taking into account the social conditions and behavioral patterns of the target audience.

Yuly Yulianingrum explained that the General Election Commission of Surakarta City initiated this stage by mapping the Permanent Voter List (Daftar Pemilih Tetap [DPT]), evaluating voter participation in the 2020 Regional Head Election, and identifying changes in public behavior following the 2024 General Election. This analysis generated information on the generational composition of voters, areas requiring greater attention during voter outreach activities, and public preferences for accessing electoral information. These findings subsequently became the basis for determining communication priorities, ensuring that the communication strategy considered not only the number of voters but also the characteristics of each voter group.

Table 1. Distribution of the Permanent Voter List (DPT) in Surakarta City by generation and primary media channels

Generation	Birth year	Number of voters (Surakarta DPT)	Percentage (%)	Primary media channels
Generation Z	1997–2012	90,172	20.54	TikTok, Instagram, YouTube
Millennials	1981–1996	137,673	31.36	Instagram, Facebook, Online News Portals
Generation X	1965–1980	128,451	29.26	Facebook, Television, WhatsApp,
Baby Boomers	1946–1964	73,618	16.77	WhatsApp, Newspapers, Face-to-Face Meetings
Traditionalists	Before 1946	9,074	2.07	Word-of-Mouth Communication, Radio, Community Leaders
Total	–	439,988	100.00	–

Source: Compiled from the 2024 Permanent Voter List (DPT) of the General Election Commission of Surakarta City.

Table 1 shows that the voter composition in Surakarta City was dominated by Generation Z and Millennials, totaling 227,845 voters, or 51.90% of the entire Permanent Voter List (DPT). The predominance of these two generations indicates that most voters possess relatively high levels of digital literacy and are more likely to rely on social media as their primary source of information. At the same time, Generation X, Baby Boomers, and Traditionalists continue to represent a substantial proportion of the electorate. Consequently, the communication strategy could not rely solely on digital media but also needed to incorporate conventional communication channels tailored to the characteristics of each voter group. Yuly Yulianingrum explained that the demographic mapping served as the basis for audience segmentation and for

selecting the most effective communication channels for each voter group. This finding is consistent with McQuail (2010), who argued that communication effectiveness is strongly influenced by audience characteristics because each group has distinct information needs, media preferences, and patterns of message reception. Therefore, demographic mapping serves not merely as administrative data but also as a strategic foundation for designing public communication that is more adaptive to community characteristics.

The findings from the research stage subsequently provided the foundation for the General Election Commission of Surakarta City to proceed to the planning stage. Cangara (2013) explained that communication planning is the process of establishing communication objectives, identifying target audiences, formulating messages, selecting appropriate media, and designing communication programs based on previously collected research findings. Accordingly, the quality of communication planning depends largely on the accuracy of the information obtained during the research stage. Yuly Yulianingrum explained that the voter profile mapping was used to establish voter participation targets, develop audience segmentation, determine communication channels appropriate for each voter group, and formulate communication messages that were more easily understood by the public.

The planning stage was translated into practice through the implementation of a hybrid communication strategy that integrated digital media with approaches rooted in local cultural values. Social media platforms, including Instagram, TikTok, and other digital platforms, were prioritized to engage Generation Z and Millennial voters, whereas face-to-face communication and culturally based approaches continued to be employed for other voter groups. In addition, the General Election Commission of Surakarta City introduced the mascot "Si Jade" as the communication identity of the Regional Head Election to strengthen emotional engagement with the public. This strategy demonstrates that communication planning extends beyond media selection to encompass the integration of multiple communication channels, ensuring that communication messages remain consistent across all target audiences. This approach is consistent with the concept of integrated communication proposed by Kotler and Keller (2016), who argued that organizations are more likely to achieve their communication objectives when they effectively coordinate multiple communication channels according to audience characteristics. Accordingly, the research and planning stages undertaken by the General Election Commission of Surakarta City established a strategic foundation for the subsequent implementation of communication activities, ensuring that all voter outreach programs were grounded in empirical evidence and responsive to the needs of the community as voters.

The planning stage was subsequently implemented through a variety of voter outreach programs designed to reach all segments of the electorate. Cangara (2013)

explained that the execution stage refers to the implementation of the entire communication strategy through media selection, message delivery, and the execution of communication activities directed at target audiences. Wiji Lestari explained that the communication strategy of the General Election Commission of Surakarta City was implemented through a combination of offline and online activities as part of its hybrid communication approach. The offline approach included voter outreach programs such as KPU Goes to Campus, KPU Goes to School, outreach activities for women's groups through the Family Welfare Empowerment (PKK) organization, persons with disabilities, residents of public housing complexes, correctional facility inmates, Car Free Day events, and participation in various community activities, including Solo Bersholawat. Meanwhile, the online approach focused on optimizing social media platforms, particularly Instagram and TikTok, as well as providing the Cek DPT Online digital service to facilitate public access to electoral information. The diversity of these communication channels demonstrates that the implementation of the communication strategy was not solely oriented toward information dissemination but also toward reaching different community groups according to the characteristics identified during the research stage. This approach is consistent with the concept of Two-Way Symmetrical Communication proposed by Grunig and Hunt (1984), which emphasizes communication that not only disseminates information to the public but also fosters interaction, enabling organizations to adjust their communication strategies based on public responses.

The effectiveness of the communication strategy was subsequently assessed during the measurement stage. Cangara (2013) explained that evaluation is conducted to determine the extent to which communication objectives have been achieved while identifying aspects requiring further improvement. Wiji Lestari explained that the General Election Commission of Surakarta City monitored the performance of its digital media, the utilization of information services, and the level of public participation throughout the Regional Head Election process. The evaluation results were used not only to assess the success of the implemented programs but also to refine communication strategies for future activities.

Table 2. Digital performance indicators of the communication strategy of the General Election Commission of Surakarta City during the 2024 Regional Head Election

Digital indicator	performance	Empirical value	Interpretation of the communication strategy
Total Instagram followers		14,820 accounts	Increased by approximately 18% compared with the pre-election period.
Average video views		1,174 views per video	Indicates substantial reach of educational content on voting procedures.
Average engagement rate		0.48%	Falls within the typical engagement range for local government institutional accounts.
Accesses to the Cek DPT Online portal		42,301 verified searches	Indicates extensive public utilization of digital services for voter registration verification.

Source: Compiled from the 2024 Digital Media Evaluation Report of the General Election Commission of Surakarta City.

Table 2 demonstrates that the digital media-based communication strategy successfully reached a broad segment of the public during the 2024 Regional Head Election. The 18% increase in Instagram followers compared with the pre-election period indicates an expansion in the institution's communication reach. The average of 1,174 video views per post suggests that educational content concerning election stages and voting procedures attracted considerable public attention. Furthermore, the engagement rate of 0.48% reflects active public interaction with the published information, while the 42,301 verified searches through the Cek DPT Online portal indicate extensive public utilization of digital services to verify voter registration status. These findings are consistent with Macnamara (2018), who argued that communication effectiveness should be evaluated not only in terms of information reach (output) but also through audience engagement and public responses to the communicated messages.

The evaluation findings were subsequently documented during the reporting stage as a form of accountability in public communication management. Cangara (2013) explained that reporting constitutes the final stage, serving to document program implementation, evaluation outcomes, and recommendations for improving future communication activities. Wiji Lestari explained that the General Election Commission of Surakarta City prepared reports on the implementation of the Regional Head Election, voter outreach activities, and public participation evaluations, which were subsequently submitted to the Central Java Provincial General Election Commission and the General Election Commission of the Republic of Indonesia. This reporting process demonstrates that the communication strategy did not conclude with program implementation but was followed by systematic evaluation and accountability, providing the basis for refining communication strategies in subsequent elections. Overall, the communication strategy implemented by the General Election

Commission of Surakarta City reflects the five stages of communication planning proposed by Cangara (2013)—research, planning, execution, measurement, and reporting—as an integrated communication cycle supporting the enhancement of voter participation.

SWOT analysis of the implementation of the communication strategy of the General Election Commission of Surakarta City in sustaining voter participation

Increasing voter participation can no longer be understood solely in terms of the number of voter outreach activities organized by election management bodies. The advancement of digital technology has transformed the way people access, select, and respond to political information, making communication effectiveness highly dependent on an organization's ability to adapt to environmental changes. On the one hand, digital media provide opportunities to expand the dissemination of information to the public. On the other hand, they also present challenges, including information overload, the spread of disinformation, and declining public attention to political issues. This situation indicates that the effectiveness of communication strategies should be evaluated more comprehensively by considering both the internal and external factors influencing their implementation. Cangara (2013) explained that communication strategy is a dynamic process because each stage of its implementation is influenced by organizational and environmental conditions. Therefore, SWOT analysis was employed to identify the strategic position of the General Election Commission of Surakarta City, enabling the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats affecting its efforts to sustain voter participation to be understood more systematically.

Table 3. SWOT analysis of the communication strategy of the General Election Commission of Surakarta City in sustaining voter participation during the 2024 Regional Head Election

SWOT component	Analysis indicator	Findings
Strengths	Voter mapping	The identification of voter characteristics by generation and geographic area provided the basis for developing more targeted communication strategies.
	Communication planning	Communication planning was developed systematically by combining digital and face-to-face approaches according to the characteristics of each target audience.
	Program implementation	Voter outreach programs were implemented through multiple communication channels, including social media, community organizations, educational institutions, and public events, thereby expanding the reach of electoral information.
	Institutional collaboration	Collaboration with various stakeholders strengthened the effectiveness of electoral information dissemination.

Weaknesses	Digital media performance	The engagement level of the official social media accounts has not yet fully matched the size of the audience reached.
	Digital literacy	Differences in digital literacy have resulted in uneven access to and understanding of electoral information across voter groups.
	Communication evaluation	The assessment of communication effectiveness remains largely based on quantitative indicators, limiting the identification of changes in voter behavior.
Opportunities	Voter demographics	The predominance of Generation Z and Millennial voters provides opportunities to strengthen digital-based communication strategies.
	Technological development	The widespread use of social media and digital platforms expands alternative channels for disseminating electoral information.
	External partnerships	Collaboration with universities, community organizations, mass media, civil society organizations, and other stakeholders has the potential to enhance the effectiveness of voter outreach activities.
Threats	Political dynamics	The phenomenon of political fatigue may reduce public enthusiasm for participating in the Regional Head Election.
	Digital disinformation	The spread of misinformation and disinformation may influence public perceptions of the electoral process.
	Media ecosystem	Changes in social media algorithms and increasing competition for public attention may reduce the reach of official communication issued by the General Election Commission.

Source: Researcher's analysis based on interview, observation, and documentary data (2026).

Table 3 presents a synthesis of the SWOT analysis derived from the empirical findings of this study. David and David (2017) explained that SWOT analysis is a strategic instrument used to identify the relationship between an organization's internal conditions and its external environment as the basis for formulating more effective strategies. From this perspective, the development of Table 3 was not based on normative assumptions but rather on evidence obtained from interviews, observations, documentary analysis, and the evaluation of the communication strategy implementation analyzed through the five stages of communication planning. Accordingly, each SWOT component represents the actual conditions encountered by the General Election Commission of Surakarta City in its efforts to sustain voter participation during the 2024 Regional Head Election.

The structure of Table 3 was developed based on three main components: the SWOT components, the analysis indicators, and the analytical findings. The SWOT components classify the research findings into the dimensions of strengths,

weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, whereas the analysis indicators identify the strategic aspects underlying the classification of each dimension. The analytical findings, in turn, explain the empirical evidence supporting the placement of each indicator within its respective category, thereby enabling the analytical process to be understood more objectively. Weihrich (1982) argued that the identification of internal and external factors constitutes the primary foundation for developing adaptive strategies because these components are interrelated and collectively determine an organization's strategic position. Accordingly, Table 3 serves not only as a summary of the analytical findings but also as an interpretative framework that connects the empirical evidence with the discussion of each SWOT component. Through this approach, the strategic position of the General Election Commission of Surakarta City in sustaining voter participation can be comprehensively explained by examining the relationships among the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats influencing the implementation of its communication strategy.

The principal strength of the communication strategy implemented by the General Election Commission of Surakarta City lies in its ability to integrate voter mapping, communication planning, program implementation, and inter-institutional collaboration into a coherent communication system. This finding suggests that the effectiveness of public communication is determined not merely by the number of voter outreach activities conducted but by the organization's ability to align audience characteristics with appropriate communication approaches. Generational voter mapping enabled the selection of communication channels and messages that were better tailored to each audience segment, ensuring that electoral information was delivered through media consistent with their preferences. This finding indicates that the Commission's communication strategy was not uniform but adaptive to audience characteristics. Grunig and Hunt (1984) argued that organizations capable of establishing planned two-way communication achieve greater communication effectiveness than those relying solely on one-way information dissemination. This finding supports the study by Rohid (2026), which found that the success of election management bodies' communication is influenced more by their ability to integrate multiple communication channels than by merely increasing the frequency of voter outreach activities. Therefore, the strength of the General Election Commission of Surakarta City lies not only in the implementation of communication programs but also in its capacity to transform internal resources into a structured and responsive communication strategy that addresses public needs.

Despite these strengths, this study also identified several weaknesses that may reduce the effectiveness of the communication strategy if not addressed through a more comprehensive evaluation mechanism. The relatively low engagement level on the Commission's official social media accounts indicates that extensive information reach does not automatically generate public interaction or sustained attention. This finding

suggests that communication success cannot be assessed solely on the basis of views or follower counts because the primary objective of public communication is to foster public understanding, trust, and behavioral change. Moreover, differences in digital literacy have resulted in uneven access to electoral information across voter groups, creating disparities in message dissemination. Macnamara (2018) argued that communication evaluation should measure changes in knowledge, attitudes, and behavior rather than focusing exclusively on output indicators such as communication activities. This finding differs from the study by Dow et al. (2022), which concluded that increased digital interaction can enhance public participation when supported by audience feedback-based evaluation. This difference suggests that the primary challenge faced by the General Election Commission of Surakarta City lies not in the adoption of digital media itself but in optimizing communication quality and developing an evaluation system capable of capturing its actual impact on voter behavior.

From an external perspective, the surrounding environment provides substantial opportunities to strengthen the communication strategy that has already been implemented. The predominance of Generation Z and Millennial voters creates significant potential for expanding digital-based communication because these groups interact intensively with a wide range of information platforms. However, these opportunities arise not merely from technological advancement but from the organization's ability to utilize technology as a means of building relationships with the public. Collaboration with universities, community organizations, mass media, and civil society organizations further demonstrates that electoral information dissemination is increasingly shifting toward a collaborative communication model involving multiple stakeholders. Rogers (2003) argued that the successful adoption of innovation depends largely on the compatibility of communication channels with the characteristics of message recipients. This finding is consistent with Gao et al. (2020), who found that collaborative network-based communication strategies improve the effectiveness of information dissemination because message credibility is reinforced not only by election management bodies but also by trusted community actors. Therefore, the greatest opportunity for the General Election Commission of Surakarta City lies not simply in the increasing use of digital media but in the development of a communication ecosystem that enables electoral information to be disseminated more broadly, adaptively, and participatively.

Nevertheless, changes in the communication environment also present increasingly complex threats to the effectiveness of election management communication strategies. The spread of disinformation, growing competition for public attention in digital media, and the emergence of political fatigue have made citizens increasingly selective in responding to political information. These conditions indicate that communication effectiveness depends not only on the ability to produce messages but

also on the ability to maintain information credibility amid the rapid flow of digital content. Changes in social media algorithms further reduce the likelihood that official messages will reach the public unless supported by adaptive information distribution strategies. Castells (2010) argued that network society is characterized by the decentralization of information production, whereby communication authority is no longer monopolized by formal institutions. This finding supports Bennett and Livingston (2018), who argued that the primary challenge facing election management communication in the digital era is not merely the existence of misinformation and disinformation but the declining position of public institutions as the primary source of information. Consequently, the communication strategy of the General Election Commission of Surakarta City should be directed not only toward disseminating information but also toward strengthening public trust through communication that is timely, accurate, and responsive to the dynamics of the digital environment.

Overall, the SWOT analysis indicates that the communication strategy implemented by the General Election Commission of Surakarta City occupies a relatively strong strategic position because it is supported by adequate internal capacities and substantial external opportunities. Nevertheless, these strengths have not entirely eliminated the weaknesses and threats emerging from the evolving digital communication ecosystem. This finding confirms that the success of sustaining voter participation depends not on the dominance of any single SWOT factor but on the organization's ability to integrate all four components into an adaptive communication strategy. Weihrich (1982) emphasized that SWOT analysis should be understood not merely as a tool for classifying internal and external factors but as a strategic framework for maximizing strengths and opportunities while minimizing weaknesses and threats. Therefore, the principal contribution of this study lies in presenting a strategic analysis demonstrating that election management communication should be understood as a dynamic, collaborative process centered on the organization's capacity to respond continuously to changes in the communication environment, rather than merely as a series of administrative voter outreach activities.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the communication strategy implemented by the General Election Commission (Komisi Pemilihan Umum [KPU]) of Surakarta City played a significant role in sustaining voter participation during the 2024 Regional Head Election through the systematic implementation of communication processes, including voter profiling, communication planning, voter outreach activities, media effectiveness assessment, and reporting of program outcomes. The effectiveness of this strategy was determined not only by the intensity of voter outreach activities but also by the Commission's ability to integrate multiple communication channels, strengthen collaboration with stakeholders, and adapt its communication approaches to the

characteristics of different voter groups. The SWOT analysis indicates that the Commission's internal strengths, including structured communication planning and collaborative networks, were reinforced by external opportunities, particularly the predominance of younger voters and the advancement of digital technologies. Nevertheless, optimizing the use of digital media, strengthening communication evaluation systems, and addressing the challenges posed by disinformation and the evolving media ecosystem remain ongoing priorities. Accordingly, the successful maintenance of voter participation depends not only on the implementation of communication programs but also on the organization's capacity to adapt continuously to the increasingly dynamic communication environment.

This study contributes theoretically by extending the understanding of communication strategy implementation in election management through the integration of the stages of communication strategy and SWOT analysis as a framework for explaining the relationship between internal and external factors in sustaining voter participation. From a practical perspective, the findings may serve as a reference for election management bodies in designing communication strategies that are more adaptive, collaborative, and evaluation-driven. Nevertheless, this study has several limitations. It focuses on a single city-level election management body, limiting the generalizability of its findings to other regions with different social, political, and communication contexts. Furthermore, the study employed a qualitative approach and therefore did not quantitatively examine the relationship between communication strategies and voter participation rates. Future research is recommended to include a broader range of research sites, adopt comparative or mixed methods approaches, and further investigate the effectiveness of digital communication strategies in responding to changes in voter behavior and the evolving information environment in future elections.

References

- Aminah, S. (2020). The evaluation of regional head election: Developing synergy of regional autonomy and regional head election. *Jurnal Bina Praja*, 12(2), 137–151. <https://doi.org/10.21787/jbp.12.2020.137-151>
- Bennett, W. L., & Livingston, S. (2018). The disinformation order: Disruptive communication and the decline of democratic institutions. *European Journal of Communication*, 33(2), 122–139. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0267323118760317>
- Cangara, H. (2013). *Perencanaan dan strategi komunikasi*. Rajawali Pers.
- Castells, M. (2010). *The rise of the network society* (2nd ed.). Wiley-Blackwell.
- David, F. R., & David, F. R. (2017). *Strategic management: A competitive advantage approach, concepts and cases* (16th ed.). Pearson.

- Dow, A., Montague, K., Concannon, S., & Vines, J. (2022). Scaffolding young people's participation in public service evaluation through designing a digital feedback process. *Designing Interactive Systems Conference*, 319–334. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3532106.3533463>
- Gao, S., Song, X., & Ding, R. (2020). Promoting information transfer in collaborative projects through network structure adjustment. *Journal of Construction Engineering and Management*, 146(2). [https://doi.org/10.1061/\(ASCE\)CO.1943-7862.0001772](https://doi.org/10.1061/(ASCE)CO.1943-7862.0001772)
- Grunig, J. E., & Hunt, T. (1984). *Managing public relations*. Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Hongcharu, B. (2024). The changing roles of mass media amidst the growth of the digital media. *Cogent Social Sciences*, 10(1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2023.2297721>
- Koc-Michalska, K., Lilleker, D. G., Michalski, T., Gibson, R., & Zajac, J. M. (2021). Facebook affordances and citizen engagement during elections: European political parties and their benefit from online strategies? *Journal of Information Technology & Politics*, 18(2), 180–193. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19331681.2020.1837707>
- Kotler, P., & Keller, K. L. (2016). *Marketing management* (15th ed.). Pearson.
- Kropf, M., Pope, J. V., Shepherd, M. J., & Mohr, Z. (2020). Making every vote count: The important role of managerial capacity in achieving better election administration outcomes. *Public Administration Review*, 80(5), 733–742. <https://doi.org/10.1111/puar.13216>
- Lestari, W. (2026, March). *Interview, Head of Public Participation, Public Relations, and Human Resources Subdivision, Surakarta City General Election Commission*.
- Lexy, J. M. (2002). *Metode penelitian kualitatif*. Rosda Karya.
- Macnamara, J. (2018). *Evaluating public communication: Exploring new models, standards, and best practice*. Routledge.
- McQuail, D. (2010). *McQuail's mass communication theory* (6th ed.). Sage Publications.
- Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldana, J. (2014). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook* (3rd ed.). SAGE.
- Muhammed T, S., & Mathew, S. K. (2022). The disaster of misinformation: A review of research in social media. *International Journal of Data Science and Analytics*, 13(4), 271–285. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s41060-022-00311-6>
- Rogers, E. M. (2003). *Diffusion of innovations* (5th ed.). Free Press.
- Rohid, N. (2026). Behind high community participation: Communication strategies of organizers in socializing local head elections. *Jurnal Spektrum Komunikasi*, 14(1), 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.37826/spektrum.v14i1.1143>

- Salim, W., & Drenth, M. (2020). Local governance and access to urban services: Political and social inclusion in Indonesia. In *Advances in 21st century human settlements* (pp. 153–183). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-15-2973-3_7
- Skog, K., Eriksen, S., Brekken, C., & Francis, C. (2018). Building resilience in social-ecological food systems in Vermont. *Sustainability*, 10(12), 4813. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su10124813>
- Susila, I., Dean, D., Yusof, R. N. R., Setyawan, A. A., & Wajdi, F. (2020). Symbolic political communication, and trust: A young voters' perspective of the Indonesian presidential election. *Journal of Political Marketing*, 19(1-2), 153–175. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15377857.2019.1652224>
- Weihrich, H. (1982). The TOWS matrix – A tool for situational analysis. *Long Range Planning*, 15(2), 54–66. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0024-6301\(82\)90120-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/0024-6301(82)90120-0)
- Yulianingrum, Y. (2026, March). *Interview, Commissioner for Voter Education, Public Participation, and Human Resources, Surakarta City General Election Commission.*