



Prosumerism in the democratic arena: A critical analysis of social media users' role in the production and dissemination of election information in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

The phenomenon of prosumerism on social media plays a crucial role in influencing the dynamics of citizens' political participation, particularly in the upcoming 2024 Indonesian elections. However, this phenomenon also presents challenges related to the spread of disinformation and polarization. This study aims to explore how prosumers produce and disseminate political content on social media and its impact on public discourse. It posits that prosumerism, through digital platforms, has transformed political participation into a more interactive process, yet remains susceptible to misuse. The theoretical framework includes prosumerism, echo chambers, and digital literacy. A qualitative methodology is employed, utilizing a literature review of various relevant recent studies. The analysis indicates that while prosumerism enhances political participation, it is often trapped within echo chambers that exacerbate biases and the dissemination of disinformation. The conclusion of this research suggests that although prosumerism can broaden political participation, without effective regulation and improvement of digital literacy, it may deepen social polarization and threaten the integrity of democracy.

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INTRODUCTION

The 2024 Presidential Election in Indonesia is a highly anticipated political event that occurs every five years. Taking place in February 2024, this election features three pairs of candidates: Anies Baswedan-Muhaimin Iskandar, Prabowo Subianto-Gibran Rakabuming Raka, and Ganjar Pranowo-Mahfud MD. These presidential and vice-presidential candidates strategically utilize media as a tool for their political campaigns, aiming to reach a wider audience and shape public opinion (Silitonga & Roring, 2023). Traditional media, such as television, radio, and newspapers,

remain relevant channels of communication. Television is employed to broadcast campaign advertisements, presidential debates, and to present work programs to the general public. Meanwhile, radio serves as an effective medium for reaching communities without internet access, particularly those in rural areas. Newspapers and magazines are utilized to convey messages through articles and interviews.

In addition to conventional media, candidates are increasingly relying on digital media and social media as integral components of their campaigns. Various social media platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok, are leveraged to interact directly with the public, particularly the youth (Fahruji & Fahrudin, 2023). The content created often includes short videos, creative posts, or live broadcasts to personally convey their visions and missions. Paid advertisements on social media also allow campaign messages to target specific audiences based on demographics, interests, or locations. Candidates frequently utilize viral content, such as memes or short videos, to foster public discussions that enhance their image.

Media presence is also employed by candidates to build positive narratives and manage issues that arise during the campaign period. Presidential and vice-presidential candidates frequently share stories that highlight their achievements or the leadership values they uphold to cultivate a favorable public image. In the event of controversies or attacks from political opponents, they use media to provide clarifications or respond to pertinent issues (Batoebara & Hasugian, 2023). This indicates that reputation management through media is an essential element in winning voter trust.

What sets this election apart is the significant emphasis on digital approaches by all candidates, employing various methods such as data analytics to understand social media trends and public sentiment, enabling them to craft more relevant messages and reach specific voter groups. Each candidate collaborates with influencers, including youth figures, artists, and community leaders, to broaden the reach of their campaigns on social media. They also frequently utilize live features on platforms like Instagram and YouTube to demonstrate transparency and engage directly with potential voters (Majid, Nurcholis & Andriani, 2023). Finally, candidates capitalize on viral issues and trending topics on social media to enhance their popularity and show their responsiveness to current societal issues.

Currently, social media has expanded the political participation landscape, involving not only political elites and mainstream media but also the general public. This shift has led to the emergence of the concept of prosumerism, where the role of information consumers transitions into that of information producers. The theory regarding the "work of consumption" and "work of prosumers," emphasizes that the consumption of information now involves a productive process, wherein users process, disseminate, and even produce new meanings from the information they consume (Aryantini et al., 2024). This concept serves as a foundation for understanding how citizens are not merely passive consumers in the evolving political meanings on social media.

Normatively, public involvement in the dissemination of political information on social media is regulated by various laws in Indonesia. Law No. 7 of 2017 on Elections grants every citizen the right to freely express their political opinions. However, this freedom is also constrained by Law No. 11 of 2008 on Information and Electronic Transactions (ITE Law) along with its amendments in Law No. 19 of 2016, which governs the prohibition of the dissemination of false information, hate speech, and information that could incite social conflict and political instability. Various platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, have community guidelines that help limit and penalize the spread of unlawful or potentially harmful content.

However, empirically, there are significant challenges in implementing these regulations on the ground. Social media often becomes an arena for the dissemination of information that is not entirely factual, and even deliberate misinformation aimed at manipulating public opinion. Research by the Indonesian Survey Institute (2022) indicates that 72% of the Indonesian population

accesses political information through social media, with 27% of them receiving inaccurate or biased information. This situation is exacerbated by the algorithms used on social media platforms, which tend to prioritize emotionally charged content, such as controversial political issues, often spreading more rapidly than factual content. Political opinion polarization on social media is further intensified by algorithms that trigger digital "echo chambers," where users are exposed only to information aligned with their political views, reinforcing their beliefs without examining the truthfulness of the information.

From a critical perspective, the urgency to examine prosumerism in the context of the 2024 elections is significant from theoretical, practical, and social aspects. Theoretically, this research will fill the gap in studies regarding the changing role of social media users as active political actors in the dissemination of information. Utilizing Cesareo's theory, prosumerism in politics is not merely a passive consumption of political information but an active process wherein citizens produce and construct complex political narratives. The concept of "work of consumption" in elections means that consumers of political information do not just receive but also ascribe meaning through selection, adjustment, and dissemination of information (Silitonga & Roring, 2023). Thus, this study aims to contribute to the development of contemporary political communication research that considers the dynamic interaction between users and technology in shaping public opinion.

Practically, understanding the dynamics of prosumerism in elections can assist the government, electoral oversight bodies, and social media platform providers in designing more effective policies to monitor and manage content during the election period. The increasing flow of information on social media necessitates policies that can curb the spread of hoaxes while respecting public freedom of expression. This research is expected to provide policy recommendations to enhance public digital literacy, enabling individuals to filter information independently. Socially, the rise of prosumerism in election information dissemination may pose risks of political polarization, potentially threatening social cohesion. The widespread circulation of misinformation can increase public distrust in the electoral process and democratic institutions.

This research on Indonesian social media use during the 2024 election provides crucial insights for policy design. Understanding the dynamics of prosumerism—where citizens actively produce and disseminate political information—is vital for crafting policies that balance free speech with the need to combat disinformation. The findings can inform strategies to improve digital literacy, empowering citizens to critically evaluate online content and resist manipulation. Furthermore, the research highlights the need for policies that address the spread of misinformation amplified by social media algorithms, mitigating risks to democratic stability and social cohesion. By analyzing the interplay between prosumer behavior, algorithm-driven echo chambers, and the legal framework, this study offers actionable recommendations for managing online content during elections and promoting responsible digital citizenship.

Furthermore, the election in Indonesia has a complex social dimension, where the public is often influenced by collective emotions shaped through viral content on social media. Public tends to engage emotionally with political content disseminated via social media, especially during campaign periods. Prosumerism in this context can act as a double-edged sword; on one hand, it enhances political participation, while on the other, it can lead to sharp horizontal conflicts if not managed properly.

This study will focus on how the Indonesian public utilizes social media as a medium for the production and dissemination of political information during the 2024 Presidential Election. It will analyze the impact of prosumerism on public perception and the stability of democracy through comprehensive empirical and theoretical analysis. By exploring the role of prosumers in social media, this research aims to provide critical insights for the development of public policy that is more responsive to the dynamics of social media in the democratic process. The findings of

this study may also serve as an important reference for enhancing public digital literacy, enabling citizens to become critical and wise users of social media in navigating the waves of digital information.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study adopts a critical paradigm, enabling the researcher to explore the power relations within the digital society, particularly in the context of the political economy of social media. The critical paradigm is selected to understand how prosumerism—the active role of users as both producers and consumers of information—can shape political discourse on social media (Butsi, 2011). In the electoral context, this paradigm is relevant for investigating the structural inequalities that arise from algorithmic dominance, control of digital platforms, and influential political actors. This critical perspective provides a framework for examining how power and control of information on social media can limit, direct, or reinforce public access in the democratic process.

The research employs a qualitative approach with a literature review method to identify and analyze concepts and empirical findings related to prosumerism in the democratic process. This method is chosen for its interpretative nature, allowing the researcher to delve deeply into how interactions between social media users, algorithms, and the digital political economy structure create specific patterns in the production and distribution of electoral information. This approach is rooted in mass communication studies, particularly the political economy of media, which examines the relationships between economic, political, and cultural forces and their influence on the production and consumption of political information on social media (Halik, 2018). Through this approach, the study aims to identify emerging patterns of prosumerism on social media in the electoral context and its impact on the quality of democracy in Indonesia.

The method utilized in this research is document analysis, with the subjects being the active participation of social media users in producing and disseminating political information, while the object of research is the practice of prosumerism itself in the electoral context. The research object includes the phenomenon of electoral information production by the public via social media, covering aspects such as political narratives, content visualization, and responses to electoral issues (Majid, Nurcholis & Andriani, 2023) generated by prosumers. The data sources employed in this study include secondary data from academic literature, research reports, survey results, and mass media publications related to trends and dynamics of social media usage during the 2024 election period in Indonesia.

To strengthen the research methodology, the study will incorporate semi-structured interviews with a diverse range of Indonesian social media users who actively engage with political content during the 2024 election campaign. These interviews will explore participants' experiences creating, sharing, and consuming political information online, delving into their motivations, perceptions of information accuracy, and susceptibility to misinformation. The interview data will be analyzed thematically to identify patterns and insights into prosumer behavior and its impact on public opinion. This qualitative approach, combined with quantitative analysis of social media content (as previously described), will provide a richer and more nuanced understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.

To ensure a comprehensive understanding of prosumerism across Indonesia's diverse landscape, the research employed a multi-faceted sampling strategy designed to capture the breadth of demographic and geographic variations. This involved a stratified sampling approach, incorporating proportional representation from various regions, socioeconomic strata, and age groups to mitigate potential biases. Data collection methods included both quantitative analysis of social media content from diverse platforms and qualitative data gathered through semi-structured

interviews with social media users, ensuring a balanced perspective across different user experiences. The limitations of this sampling strategy, including potential underrepresentation of specific groups, will be explicitly addressed in the discussion section.

The types of data used encompass normative and empirical data. Normative data consists of regulations and policies governing the use of social media during election periods, such as Law No. 7 of 2017 on Elections and Law No. 11 of 2008 on Information and Electronic Transactions (ITE Law) along with its amendments in Law No. 19 of 2016. These regulations provide a legal foundation protecting freedom of expression on social media while preventing the spread of disinformation and hate speech. Empirical data is drawn from national survey results, field studies, and research reports related to social media usage patterns for elections in Indonesia. This data is utilized to understand the patterns of prosumer engagement in shaping public opinion and disseminating political information during the 2024 election.

Data collection is conducted through documentation methods, where various literature, reports, and academic research findings are analyzed to provide a comprehensive overview of prosumerism in the electoral context. This documentation technique includes the search and selection of relevant literature, such as journal articles, statistical data on social media usage, and reports from survey institutions that examine the role of social media in the democratic process. This technique allows the researcher to identify patterns in prosumer engagement and connect these findings with the theories of prosumerism and political economy of media as a basis for analysis.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Dynamics of Prosumerism in the 2024 Indonesian Election

The rise of prosumerism is supported by social media algorithms that prioritize emotionally engaging content, making sensational or controversial political information more likely to go viral. These algorithms allow specific content – particularly that which elicits emotional reactions, both positive and negative – to reach a broader audience and amplify the political influence of prosumers. Platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok play significant roles in shaping user experiences and information preferences, with each platform offering distinct participatory characteristics (Wicaksana, 2016). For instance, Twitter is often used for intense political discussions through short opinions and hashtags, enabling real-time conversations about current issues. Conversely, TikTok is predominantly utilized for disseminating short videos that often employ humor or creative visuals to captivate younger audiences, who represent a demographic with high levels of digital political engagement (Lestari et al., 2024).

The diversity in platform usage reflects prosumers' adaptation to the formats and features provided, resulting in a wide range of content tailored to each platform's characteristics. Instagram facilitates the dissemination of visual information through photos or infographics, simplifying complex political issues for broader audiences. In contrast, Facebook serves as a medium for sharing longer news articles, allowing users to engage in in-depth discussions in comment sections (Makarawung et al., 2024). This variety in content forms indicates that social media allows prosumers to adjust their political communication strategies based on the demographic characteristics of their audience, tailored to each platform's technical advantages.

Motivations behind prosumer activities in political content production vary, reflecting individual goals that extend beyond merely sharing information. Some users are driven by the desire to express personal opinions or political affiliations, while others aim to mobilize support or influence broader public views. Research indicates that individuals are more active in political content production when they perceive the shared information as highly relevant to their social

groups. This motivation is often reinforced by a sense of ownership or deep involvement in specific political issues, prompting them to add personal meaning to the content they share (Ayu et al., 2023; Juditha, 2019; Ragil et al., 2024).

Examining the processes of prosumers supporting each presidential candidate in the 2024 election reveals distinct strategies. Supporters of Anies Baswedan and Muhaimin Iskandar actively disseminate content through platforms like Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok, utilizing hashtags such as #AniesForPresident2024 to unify their messaging. These supporters frequently produce creative content—such as short videos and infographics—showcasing Anies' achievements as Governor of Jakarta, particularly in areas like public transportation and urban revitalization (Haris et al., 2022; Indra & Wahid, 2021; Khumaila & Asbari, 2023).

In the Prabowo-Gibran camp, supporters also actively craft content that reinforces their candidates' political narratives. They often highlight Prabowo's military background and assertive leadership, combined with Gibran's image as a youthful representative of change. Commonly used hashtags like #PrabowoGibran2024 facilitate support across various platforms. Content such as short videos of Prabowo during military activities or public speeches is creatively edited to showcase his charisma, while Gibran is portrayed as a relatable young leader (Fitri et al., 2024; Haris et al., 2022; Sihabudin et al., 2024).

Similarly, supporters of Ganjar Pranowo and Mahfud MD create and share content that positions them as ideal candidates, leveraging Ganjar's reputation as a "people-oriented" leader. Videos on platforms like YouTube and Instagram depict Ganjar's interactions with communities and involvement in local cultural events. Hashtags such as #GanjarMahfud2024 are consistently employed to promote this pair, with Mahfud MD's image as a strong legal expert highlighted in relation to justice and anti-corruption issues (Ayu et al., 2023; Sirait et al., 2024).

The phenomenon of prosumerism in the 2024 Indonesian election illustrates the complexities of digital political participation shaped by technological forces and individual actors producing information. By integrating technical, social, and political factors, prosumerism enables citizens to engage directly in public opinion formation (Herlina et al., 2024; Masni et al., 2024). However, the sustainability of this phenomenon in supporting a healthy democracy relies heavily on appropriate policies to manage the impacts of social media, including government regulations and digital platform initiatives. A critical understanding of these dynamics can aid in designing more adaptive and effective public policies to address the challenges posed by digital engagement in the electoral context.

The Production of Meaning in Election Information Dissemination

The production of meaning in the dissemination of political information during the 2024 Indonesian Election has become increasingly complex due to the active generation and spread of misinformation and hoaxes by information prosumers. Prosumerism allows the public to create content that often diverges from factual accuracy and contains biases intended to influence public opinion (Lestari et al., 2024; Pakaya et al., 2024; Yahya et al., 2024). During the political campaign, many social media accounts disseminated negative narratives about certain candidates using unverified or out-of-context information, thereby crafting adverse perceptions. Politically charged misinformation tends to spread more rapidly on platforms like Facebook and Twitter, as their algorithms prioritize content that garners significant interaction, facilitating broader reach for potentially viral information.

This practice of misinformation is exacerbated by the involvement of prosumers in disseminating biased or false information to shape favorable opinions about specific candidates or groups. For instance, political memes often simplify complex issues into satire or mockery, appealing particularly to younger social media users. Such memes not only propagate biased information but also influence the perceptions of others, especially when content is repeatedly

encountered in a short timeframe (Fahruji & Fahrudin, 2023; Majid, Nurcholis & Andriani, 2023). Political memes and visualizations effectively shape public perception by delivering strong messages concisely, often neglecting the verification of factual accuracy.

Social media algorithms play a crucial role in reinforcing digital echo chambers, creating homogeneous environments where users are exposed only to information that aligns with their political views. Algorithms on platforms like Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter are designed to display content based on user preferences and interactions, resulting in users primarily seeing content that corresponds to their existing opinions (Danelo et al., 2024; Triantanto et al., 2024). This creates echo chambers where similar information is repeatedly circulated, reinforcing users' beliefs without challenges from alternative perspectives. In the context of the 2024 election, these echo chambers contribute to increasing polarization among social media users as they remain confined to content that supports their political affiliations, often sharing information without verification.

Additionally, algorithmic selectivity leads to emotional content becoming more prominent. Social media algorithms effectively promote content that elicits strong emotional responses, such as anger or fear, as such content tends to generate higher engagement. When prosumers produce emotionally charged content, such as videos containing false claims or dramatic imagery about specific political issues, they maximize the visibility of their posts. During elections, emotional manipulation is often used to incite fear or hatred towards particular candidates or political groups, with many prosumers in Indonesia creating provocative content related to religious or ethnic issues to evoke specific sentiments against opposing political factions (Fahruji & Fahrudin, 2023).

The influence of algorithms in reinforcing prosumer biases has significant implications for the quality of the democratic process, particularly in shaping public opinion and trust in political institutions. Recurrent dissemination of misinformation in digital echo chambers can create erroneous collective perceptions, ultimately affecting public views on candidates or the electoral process as a whole. Social media users reported encountering inaccurate or biased political information, with many unable to verify its truthfulness. This condition indicates that algorithm-enhanced echo chambers foster environments where misinformation spreads easily, making it challenging to clarify or access objective information (Triantanto et al., 2024). Therefore, while prosumerism highlights the active role of social media users in political information production and distribution, it also presents challenges in maintaining accuracy and quality in the digital space. Addressing these challenges necessitates enhancing public digital literacy, enabling individuals to recognize biases in prosumer content, comprehend algorithmic operations, and adopt a more critical approach to political information shared on social media.

The Transformation of Political Participation in the Digital Age through Prosumerism

The transformation of political participation in the digital age through prosumerism has significantly changed how society interacts with and engages in political issues, particularly in the context of the 2024 Indonesian Election. Prosumers, as active social media users who both consume and produce information, play a crucial role in strengthening and mainstreaming electoral issues in the digital arena (Asmaranti et al., 2024). By becoming content producers, prosumers can shape public narratives on various political topics they consider important. This engagement allows public opinion to focus on specific issues related to candidates, policies, and moral and ethical aspects of campaigns. Active prosumers in social media debates are vital in driving public opinion through content that can rapidly spread and reach millions of users.

Prosumerism also provides a new digital political experience for citizens, where social media serves as a participatory learning arena. Online activities enable users to learn about political issues from diverse perspectives while expressing their own opinions. Through this process, citizens not only receive information but also interact, debate, and critique political actors

or specific policies, often using data and arguments they gather independently. This involvement transforms social media into a new public space where political experiences can be obtained more directly and interactively compared to traditional media (Farida et al., 2023). For instance, in discussions about economic policies or human rights, prosumers can share their viewpoints and disseminate information from reports or articles, creating an open learning ecosystem for other users.

However, the level of digital literacy and awareness among prosumers significantly influences the quality of this engagement, as only those with sufficient digital literacy can differentiate valid information from inaccuracies. Digital literacy includes the ability to identify false information, critically analyze data, and understand the consequences of spreading unverified information (Asmaranti et al., 2024). In Indonesia, low digital literacy remains a considerable challenge in the political context, with many social media users prone to accepting information without verifying its accuracy. More than one-third of respondents struggle to distinguish between true and false political news, often resulting in reactive prosumer engagement driven by emotion rather than critical analysis.

Ultimately, enhancing digital literacy skills is crucial to ensuring that prosumer political engagement contributes positively to a healthy democratic process. As social media users become more adept at understanding and critically evaluating information, prosumerism can have a beneficial impact on digital democracy, allowing the public to engage in political discussions based on valid data and arguments. Efforts to improve digital literacy must include public education initiatives by the government, educational institutions, and civil society organizations to empower individuals to filter and verify the information they receive (Amaly & Armiah, 2021; Mustapa et al., 2024; Nugroho et al., 2022). By fostering digital literacy, citizens can become more independent and responsible political agents, capable of evaluating policies and candidates based on facts rather than emotions.

The Contribution of Prosumerism to Public Discourse and the Democratic Process

Prosumerism significantly contributes to public discourse and the democratic process, especially in the context of the 2024 Indonesian Election. With prosumerism, public participation in politics has expanded beyond merely receiving information from traditional media. Citizens can now shape public opinion through independently produced content, such as memes, infographics, and short videos shared across various digital platforms. This shift creates a new public space for more dynamic and diverse political discussions, potentially enhancing citizen engagement in democracy. However, this involvement also brings complexities, as political discourse often focuses more on emotional content than on substantive issues (Nurhaipah & Ramallah, 2024).

The varied discourse generated by prosumerism enriches the public sphere, providing a platform for users to share deeper insights on policy issues and social justice. High-literacy prosumers frequently utilize data and analysis to stimulate more substantive discussions (Batoebara & Hasugian, 2023). For instance, during the 2024 election, some prosumers have leveraged platforms like Twitter and Instagram to detail the differences between presidential candidates' programs, allowing the public to access information from an analytical perspective. Unfortunately, amidst this diverse discourse, substantial discussions are often overshadowed by sensational content, as many prosumers opt to disseminate provocative material that captures emotional attention, diverting focus from educational information (Pakaya et al., 2024).

Moreover, the emotional discourse pattern is exacerbated by the formation of digital echo chambers, where users are exposed only to content that supports their views (Herlina et al., 2024). This algorithmic selectivity limits exposure to alternative perspectives, resulting in increased polarization among citizens. In Indonesia, the polarization stemming from these echo chambers has fueled divisions among presidential candidate supporters, leading to distrust of opposing

viewpoints. Therefore, while prosumerism expands political participation access, it also poses complex challenges for the quality of public discourse and the integrity of the democratic process (Masni et al., 2024). Enhancing digital literacy and critical understanding among social media users is essential to ensure that prosumerism contributes positively to an inclusive and healthy democracy.

CONCLUSION

Prosumerism in the 2024 Indonesian election profoundly impacts public discourse and democratic processes, creating a dynamic yet challenging environment. While empowering citizens to actively produce and share political content enhances engagement, the prioritization of emotional appeal over substantive issues, fueled by algorithmic selectivity and the formation of echo chambers, leads to sensationalism and intensified political polarization. This research contributes to understanding this complex interplay, highlighting the need for enhanced digital literacy to foster responsible online political participation. However, the provided text lacks detail on the specific influence of algorithms in creating polarization beyond stating their role in forming echo chambers and does not offer a practical strategy for applying improved digital literacy given varying user skill levels. Future research should quantitatively analyze the precise mechanisms by which algorithms contribute to polarization and develop targeted digital literacy programs tailored to diverse user demographics and digital skills.

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