

Meme Symbolization in New Media as A Representation of Political Communication in The Digital Space

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Abstract

This research wants to see the meme symbol as a representation of political communication in the new media or digital space. What new media and digital space conveyed by Jurgen Habermas are used as public spaces, where users can interact and transact in new media digital spaces. The presence of new media and digital space in the midst of society provides a variety of choices for the public to determine what information and messages will be carried out when the mass media is in front of them in their daily life. Therefore, this research focuses on a meme terminology. Memes in mass media and digital space are often found in various styles. But what's interesting is how memes themselves are contextualized in the context of political communication. Research using a qualitative approach is of course in the form of obtaining data and describing the data, according to field data

Keywords: Mass Media, Symbols, Memes, Digital space

INTRODUCTION

The presence and development of new media is able to change various aspects of the reality of human life quite significantly. Reality that adapts to new media, new media or New Media becomes a space to show various events ranging from political, economic, social and cultural events. In political reality, the presence of new media with varying speed and sophistication capable proposing new phenomena, this is known as digital democracy. In many cases, it is acknowledged that the presence of new media has become a determining factor in the process of political democratization. This is possible user Utilizing it very freely, the message is articulated not only in the form of text, but also in the form of images or memes.

New media as a new space for users makes it easier to realize various daily needs, even new media and digital space are able to take users to a global zone, even in globalization Which nature multidimensional. As a new generation of media, new media and digital space give global society the same opportunity, namely being able to connect people without time and place limits (Kussanti, 2022) User participation and being known as the netizen movement as internet users, is increasing surfaced. The emergence of social movements via the internet goes hand in hand with rapid development communication and information technology, the position of space is now increasingly popular as a technology that provides all speed, knows no boundaries and even eliminates the barriers of space and time, new media as space in everyday reality has become a reference and basic need for almost all groups. User Not focused only on adult users, mass media is present and provides equal opportunities and opportunities for use by all citizens, especially the Indonesian people. Users seem to build their own construction in creating media messages. In line with Little John (2016), users construct views and see messages as social realities resulting from the construction of social interactions, and the truth of a social reality is relative.

New media and digital space as communication channels provide great opportunities and opportunities to realize many interests. Not only as an information channel, but also mass media For needs construct another meaning. Then new media is positioned as a space, a space for interaction, construction, commodification and a space for political communication channels. As a media space, what Juergen Habermas (2010) once imagined, namely, as a space where conflicts of interest of both parties can be managed in ways and media that are mutually acceptable. In other words, in this way the urgency of the consultation process seems to be ignored, emphasizing rational discussion, exchange of positions thematic and efforts to build consensus.

Many phenomena and daily realities have different energies and values when they are included in new media and digital space. Then various terms were born that seemed to emphasize that new media and digital space as spaces have undeniable value in terms of opportunities. Viral reality, reality and spectacle become a well-known reality, all due to media in the digital space. All levels of society have opportunities The same For constructing and accessing it with various offers of different needs. In

book *Communication, Cultural, & Media Studies*, written by John Hartley (2010) the democratic process that takes place in new media and digital space has been nicknamed Cyberdemocracy, namely a virtual community that has its own rules. Here democracy lives in a virtual world with the mediation of digital space. This is what according to Leggiwie and Bieber in (Anthony, 2003) that democracy is characterized by the freedom to obtain and create information effectively in the process of democracy and digital politics.

As spaces, new media and digital spaces provide great opportunities for users to create communication patterns. So, communication patterns must not only be formed verbally, but can also be represented by certain symbols, namely political symbols and messages in the form of memes. The term meme was first proposed by Richard Dawkins

(1976) in the book *The Selfish Gene*, and refers to the unit of imitation and cultural transmission in genes. Expansion of the concept Dawkins is then used to point out general symptoms regarding meme culture in new media and digital spaces, namely the way in which ideas are imitated, spread and mediated from person to person, through interaction or conversation, both through analog and digital media.

Hearing the term Meme often means something funny that we often encounter in everyday life, the object can vary from other people, mass groups/groups, even ourselves. This humor is also developing, a very unique phenomenon has developed in the world and especially in Indonesia in the last three or four years. Is the object a meme? Memes are no stranger to netizens. Meme objects have often appeared on various social media. Memes are represented by a combination of photo slides and text and are aimed at responding to certain issues that become discourse in social reality. Memes as messages are then created, processed, represented and given meaning in such a way, so that meme production cannot be considered trivial and simplified as a form of technical creativity, but instead creative-subtaif full of meaning.

Memes have become a separate language in the practice of political communication. Meme visualization in the digital space wants to convey something with a certain image and a certain meaning. Memes in Indonesia are actually quite familiar and have been developing for quite a long time. Memes were first popularized on the site www.lcak.com. The site is still in the same breath as www.9gag.com which was better known in America Union. It is called Safas because what is offered is very similar, of course with differences in the language used because "lcak" is an Indonesian language site and is devoted to creating comic memes which are also in Indonesian, with topics that are a reality in Indonesia. At the democratic party and general elections, for example, many memes appeared which were very easy to find.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses a qualitative-descriptive approach, this approach is used to investigate, describe and elaborate on reality, various conditions, situations and reality phenomena (Saryono, 2010). In this research, researchers looked for and analyzed memes in new media and digital spaces found on several platforms such as Instagram and Facebook. Researchers try to understand by using discourse analysis. While the framework in this research uses Paul Ricour's Hermeneutics, in his stages Ricoeur places two stages, namely in viewing the text, such as being considered autonomous in carrying out decontextualization, while at another stage the text is possible in carrying out recontextualization in the act of reading the text itself.

Meanwhile, in this research, categorized texts are not single texts, but are related to where the text is created and shared or disseminated to readers or audiences. It is also important to know that texts have three forms of autonomy, such as: the author's intention or intention. Cultural situation. The social conditions of providing the text itself.

DISCUSSION

The existence of new media and communication space

Communication can occur anytime and anywhere. There are many media that can be used and supported continuity using new media. Previously, users could only use old media, and conventional media has long been criticized for its tendency to bias reporting which is contrary to the role of media as a social institution. Another reason is the strong orientation of economic interests and the limitation of the principle of objectivity in reporting political issues. In democratic countries, this trend continues to repeat itself. Deregulation, as a consequence of economic and political liberalization, increasingly

emphasizes the media's tendency to serve the interests of capital. In contrast, in authoritarian/totalitarian countries, the media experiences strict repression and censorship. The media is part of the propaganda tools of authoritarian rulers.

Apart from communication purposes, the media is a characteristic and character of maintaining the democratic process. Democracy requires well-informed citizens. Citizens who have political awareness are the strength of democracy, because in a democracy citizens are citizens. Which determine, control, evaluate, performance and political practices as a whole. The media must play a maximum role in preparing good news in carrying out the process democracy. The media must be a substantive source and relate to their interests. Thus, the role of the media in providing quality, substantive information related to the interests of the people, and providing an evaluation of the progress of democracy is a fundamental asset for forming attitudes that lead to critical politics.

Besides That, as roommedia communication acts as a space public. Habermas in (Curran, 2013) considers that Space public is placethe exchange and struggle of various cultural, political, economic or ideassocial. More FarHabetmas said that public space is understood as a living space, in this living space there is a process of interaction And communication with each other in a space, this is what is then called public space. He said all areas or spaces of life social which allow exists opinions are formed general (public opinion) can be understood as public space.

New media is a very democratic space. Everyone has opportunities and chances

The same in access it, have equal opportunities in creating messages, so that users can freely use it according to the wishes of the target to be targeted. Furthermore, democracy and the media have a reciprocal relationship. This means that, on the one hand, democracy requires the media as a communication space, on the other hand, the media can only function for the benefit of the wider community in a democratic political system.

In (Mughan & Gunther, 2016) new media as a public space (public sphere) is a space that is easily accessible without borders, free from pressure from state power, where all citizens carry out political discussions in order to realize a common understanding related to greater public interests. wide. Public space is a "place" for communication as an element forming social life (life-world) which relies on communicative rationality as members of society, and new media and digital space are just one form of modern public space. The "world" where public opinion and political messages will be formed.

Memes in new media and digital spaces

In the digital space, memes are no longer understood as small units of messages that are spread from person to person by copying or imitation, but now the term meme refers to a text, photo replication, or someone's image that is changed to another form. memes are added with various writings which are usually satirical or humorous Memes have their own meaning even though they appear as a joke. The ease of finding memes seems to be in line with or the impact of Internet technology which has led to the emergence of social media which makes it easier for audiences to represent images or text as if they were animated. Memes then become a medium for communication as well as messages sent massively using digital media.

New media and digital space makes it easier for meme creators to share with other parties. Memes can be sent from anywhere and at any time without any restrictions, supported by existing social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Path and other social media. Williamson's view in (Widjajanto, 2013) states that new media and digital space are media designed to spread various messages through social interaction, and are created using publication techniques that are very accessible and large scale.

The large number of meme messages found in digital space media cannot be separated from the role of new media users and the use of digital space itself to disseminate information related to memes that are currently popular. One of them is that if a user feels interested in the topic and image of a meme seen in a new media and digital space, then the user will represent, repost or re-upload the meme post to their personal account. Memes appear to bring their own reality, the reality of the impact or response to other realities.

New media provides users with great opportunities to create messages. Memes memes so to speak as processconveying messages in new forms. Where memes are images or photos that are given text or language to produce a new meaning. In other words, the images in memes tell their own story, to be interpreted by other users. It can be said that this meme appeared because of wanted to convey a message through a new form. Memes found in new media and digital spaces combine nonverbal communication (expression) with verbal Communication (language) which then creates meaning and value for certain messages.

New media and digital space as spaces are articulate and massive in providing opportunities for how political messages can be represented and can be created with attractive styles that are responded well by users and are easily accepted.

The representation of memes in the digital space has become a popular means of public political expression. Memes as political messages, as universal communication patterns.

Memes as political messages

Many messages use images and then share them with the public with an attractive style and offer certain value. Many political figures have even appeared in pictures of presidential candidates and their political parties have not been spared in memes. To make it more interesting, it is accompanied by writing and taglines in the form of memes. The role of information technology is becoming increasingly sophisticated and memes are increasingly developing and appear to have their own value.

The function of memes is to make moral judgments (make moral choices). Memes are used to justify or even provide arguments and definitions.

Memes as messages do not require depth of argumentation. Furthermore, rationality, logic and neat thinking are not needed to design a message. Text is no longer created with the measures of logical depth and text ratio are actually reversed and exchanged so that what remains is an anomaly and a paradox.

The author views memes as political messages which are not only put forward as works of art, memes as a way of sending certain messages and values, messages which are often made into highly satirical messages, meaning that the depiction is not done according to the reality that is being imitated, but is a message that is created inappropriately. real.

Memes are an expression of political messages that often appear in the world or digital space. As a meme message, it becomes a very strategic message, even as a strategy, it becomes a way of various subversions in political reality.

The use of memes as political messages in political parties has potential and political benefits, memes are seen as political capital for political actors. Memes carry messages, memes are a medium for criticism and criticism by audiences and political actors. The practice of spreading political memes in new media and digital spaces shows a shift in political communication patterns and strategies. Representation of political messages is not necessarily like the practice of direct communication, building political communication can be formed through messages that seem satirical, inaccurate, gray and

so on, messages only rely on the power of certain images and text, images and text that carry the message and certain political values. The message of this meme is quite significant in politics, so it is not uncommon for political actors and sympathizers to use memes as political messages.

Memes as Political messages are not only a form of communication that is used to criticize and attack political opponents, but also provide opportunities for wider interactions after receiving memes as messages. The practice of spreading memes as political messages in new media and digital spaces shows a shift in communication patterns. Political messages are packaged to suit developments the technology, The convergence of new media and digital space has led to the migration of political criticism and political education to digital space media. As stated by (Abugaza, 2013), new media allows for rapid and massive exchange of information, a new space that is trying to be offered to create political messages using digital space.

Memes can also be seen as a political movement, although only in the digital space. Memes seem to be an alternative response to all channels of criticism, political input, even as a protest against current political actions and realities.

The emergence of memes is a political communication activity, including a culture of criticism therein. New media and digital space really support openness of action, and build political communication through existing platforms, where politics, netizens freely and even tend to with free convey their political views just through their fingertips. In this new media too, the public and political actors can freely use new media platforms, namely social media, Facebook, Instagram as a forum for public voice which was previously constrained in traditional media.



Figure 1. Hoax Meme Politic (Source: liputan6.com, Dec, 2023)

New media and digital spaces then move to become transformative public spaces used for political messages. The phenomenon of memes as messages then develops and adapts to the needs of its users and goes in a broader direction. Users of new media and digital media then replicate this meme into various variations that discuss various topics, including the field of contemporary politics. Not only that, users also spread this meme through social networks and sites on new media with existing platforms. Memes as messages then appeared in various variants such as: ragecomic memes and pure memes. Ragecomic memes are memes in the form of comics while pure memes are images that have no conversation (not comics) only have funny words. Like the meme that appears above, there is a picture of Prabowo's face with writing containing the existing political

messages. In plain writing, even though the text is not from Prabowo but from another author, the text indicates a certain message with the aim of sending certain political meanings and messages as well.

These very diverse messages are not in line with the concept of communication that has previously been understood, namely that messages are packaged directly and only rely on the power of the text. But when the message shifts to using new media, as proposed by Marshall McLuhan, discovery or development technology Communication is what actually changes human culture in displaying its messages, namely messages using certain images and images, such as this meme itself. The target for using memes is the general public. Meanwhile, the category of memes that our users or the Indonesian people often look for are memes that are funny, fun and entertaining, of course with various reasons for choosing funny memes and so on. Memes can also eliminate boredom and reduce mental stress because through funny stories people will be entertained and their mood will be better. Memes themselves have experienced significant development, namely as virtual communication messages in the digital era.

Memes were chosen because they are full of funny elements, humor, this type of message is considered more persuasive, more relatable and can increase collective awareness. More than that, order using images or memes also conveys certain meanings and values, values that are ideological and belief in nature and make it possible to have a concrete effect on the audience. Humor memes with existing advantages, such as Mishinky's view in (Yuliani, 2012) writing entitled *Humor as Corage Mechanism* that Humor is a tool used to respond to various existing realities, both unpleasant realities by modifying meanings and concepts, beliefs, situations and objects become realities in more than one dimension.

Mishinky also emphasized that meme humor as a message and as a courage mechanism is part of defense, because humor is used as a weapon in responding to daily conflicts. Memes that are full of humor have a deep impact on people's sensitivity in responding to various current problems. In principle, messages in the form of memes with various characters such as humorous characters are randomly created as a form of message in response to the existing reality. Memes as political messages are wrapped in humorous and funny images, but memes as political messages must not be devoid of critical, evaluative, ironic or intimidating content even though they have a high element of humor.

The concerns of users of new media and digital spaces have become a new reality and habit in building political communication. Political messages are no longer displayed directly, as if conveyed aspirationally. Messages in the political sphere for general political interests packaged by generating and creating images with certain patterns.



Figure 2. Meme Message (source: www.indonesia.id)

As in the picture above which shows the two presidential candidate pairs embracing the president. The summary is carried out before determining the candidate pairs. Memes are made with a humorous model as if they send a certain meaning to the audience that the president in the context of the presidential election does not need to intervene.

This meme seems to be responding to reports from various media, the president seems to be leaning towards one of the existing presidential candidates, especially Prabowo and Ganjar, this humorous meme then creates the impression that Jokowi's neutrality as president must put forward. Don't intervene too far in the presidential election. The choice is completely returned to the community as the owners of the vote.

Mememes as messages don't just send pictures that are just plain funny. As stated above, mememes contain criticism, evaluation and input in various forms universal. Mememes are considered to have a significant impact and are able to change any political situation and reality. Mememes have their own meaning and value, so it is not surprising that so many political messages are currently packaged in the form of mememes.



Figure 3. Political Message (source: indonesia.id)

The image above has a certain message and meaning. The appearance of the three couples, even though it is just a picture, has its own meaning and purpose. As in the cartoon image of Prabowo-Gibran which is often seen on the street. Gamba GemoY seems to be pinned on the Prabowo-Gibran pair To usealign the candidate pairs with the millennial generation and the image spreads organically in society. This was deliberately created to gain the interest of young voters. The political message clearly addresses how mememes with certain images actually contain meaning and suit certain purposes.

CONCLUSION

New media and digital space are public spaces, spaces for building communication and interaction. New media and space offer internet users a new space for democracy. This democracy is defined as the era of digital democracy, which combines public participation in democracy using information technology. Digital democracy is a democratic practice that uses digital channels for political communication (Van de Donk, Snellen and Thaens 2012, 51). Many political cases that have been made into mememes show how the dynamics of digital democracy work in the virtual world. Political mememes such as the sambo case and the Rafael Alun tax case are the actualization of the democratic mechanisms of society in the digital era. which is "pragmatic" – especially for media owners. The exclusive rights are given by the community and the ethics of service from the mass media to maintain "social change" for the community, not from the mass media institutions themselves, and the exclusive rights to control this information are never understood by the public. Apart

from that, the maturity of society as an information community is not yet comparable to the speed of mass media movement. And finally, it depends on how capital owners use their economic power in a commercial market system to ensure the flow of public information that is in line with their mission and goals. So what happens is that there is a change in the function of the media as class domination.

Political memes are one manifestation of political participation, especially by young people. Satirical political memes are closely related in the context of digital citizenship. In coloring democracy in the digital era, citizens have space to express criticism through graphic messages or memes. Memes are not only used as a means to voice opinions but also as a medium for disseminating information. Apart from that, memes also act as a medium for education and political literacy.

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