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The Representation of Political Memes on Social Media X (Twitter): A Semiotic Analysis of Popular Culture Products

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ABSTRACT

Memes are popular cultural products that has gained significant influence in the political communication, particularly among younger demographics. With their ability to combine textual and visual elements, memes have become an effective instrument for conveying socio-political aspirations and critiques in the digital age. This study utilizes Barthes' semiotic theory to analyse the denotative and connotative meanings of elements within political memes. The research employs a descriptive qualitative approach to provide an in-depth description of the construction of political narratives. Data collection was conducted through two principal methods: literature analysis and content uploads on platform X (Twitter) using the purposive Search Advanced Technology (SAT). The findings show that political memes represent public dissatisfaction with political actors, government elites, and policymakers, making them a strategic informal communication instrument. The study successfully identifies national and international political narratives and situations. In conclusion, political memes on social media play a crucial role in representing modern political dynamics and the centralization of media in shaping public perception, as well as facilitating political discourse. By emphasizing the relevance of modern digital culture, this study pioneers in explaining the role of memes as a product of popular culture. However, this research is limited to platform X (Twitter), and cross-

platform studies with a mixed-methods approach are necessary for a more holistic understanding of memes in advanced political discourse. This finding contributes to the study of political communication and contemporary digital culture.

ABSTRAK

Meme merupakan produk budaya populer yang semakin berpengaruh signifikan dalam komunikasi politik, terutama di kalangan kaum muda. Dengan karakteristiknya yang mampu menggabungkan elemen tekstual dan visual, meme menjadi instrumen yang efektif untuk menyampaikan aspirasi dan kritik sosio-politik di era digital. Penelitian ini menggunakan teori semiotika Barthes yang bertujuan untuk menganalisis makna denotatif dan konotatif elemen-elemen meme politik. Studi ini menerapkan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif untuk mendeskripsikan konstruksi narasi politik secara mendalam. Pengumpulan data melalui dua metode utama, yaitu analisis literatur dan unggahan konten pada platform X (Twitter) dengan menggunakan Search Advanced Technology (SAT) secara purposif. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa meme politik merepresentasikan ketidakpuasan publik terhadap aktor politik, elite pemerintahan dan pemangku kebijakan, yang menjadikannya instrumen komunikasi informal yang strategis. Penelitian ini berhasil mengidentifikasi narasi dan situasi politik nasional dan internasional. Produk meme berhasil menyederhanakan

narasi politik, menarik perhatian khalayak, menstimulasi diskusi kritis, dan membangun kesadaran kolektif. Kesimpulannya meme politik di media sosial berperan penting dalam merepresentasikan dinamika politik modern dan sentralisasi media dalam membentuk persepsi publik serta memfasilitasi diskursus politik. Dengan menekankan pada relevansi budaya digital modern, menjadikan studi ini pionir dalam menjelaskan peran meme sebagai produk budaya populer. Namun, penelitian ini terbatas pada platform X (Twitter) sehingga penelitian lintas platform sosial dan pendekatan campuran diperlukan untuk memahami lebih holistik meme dalam diskursus politik lanjutan. Penemuan ini berkontribusi pada studi komunikasi politik dan budaya digital kontemporer.

INTRODUCTION

Currently, memes are one of the most popular forms of political communication (Shifman, 2014). A meme is a simple visual representation that contains political messages, which can be complex—sometimes nonsensical or even offensive (Paz et al., 2021). Memes function similarly to biological genetic processes—relating to 'replication' and 'dissemination' processes by individuals or groups within a particular society for communication purposes (Williams, 2020; Listiorini, 2017). This suggests that memes are a form of communication capable of

conveying complex narratives in an effective and straightforward manner, making them relevant in the context of an increasingly fragmented digital culture (Wu & Wall, 2021).

According to Rahayu et al. (2019) in their research, the term meme refers to the concept originally introduced by Richard Dawkins, an evolutionary biologist, author, and Oxford-based expert in general knowledge. In Dawkins' 1976 book *The Selfish Gene*, the term describes the basic unit of an idea or culture that can spread and evolve rapidly (Rahayu et al., 2019). Therefore, memes are referred to as "*Viruses of the Mind*," which develop through imitation and persist in social environments with many followers or imitators (Williams, 2020).

The study by Rahayu et al. (2019) also defines memes as snippets of images from television shows, films, and other sources, which are modified by adding text for the purpose of humour and entertainment, often infused with culture. However, in Murfianti's (2020) research, memes are seen not only as a source of humour but also as instruments to strengthen social bonds in the online world. This suggests that memes are tools capable of reflecting social and cultural dynamics (Flecha Ortiz et al., 2021). Memes are commonly recognized as images with text, contextualized with specific topics, often those currently being discussed in society (Dewi, 2019). This reflects the communication patterns of new media in response to ongoing trends. Meme content in Indonesia has become increasingly prevalent, with many meme creators intentionally crafting them—various symbolic concepts aimed at supporting the interests of specific groups (Puspitasari & Yuliarti, 2021; Rahmawati et al., 2024).

The phenomenon of memes in Indonesia first emerged by adapting global content, such as Trollface and Rage Comics. By the late 2000s, memes evolved into a local phenomenon with themes and contexts tailored to the culture and social issues (Rahayu et al., 2019). In the political context, memes have become tools for shaping public opinion and increasing political engagement (Nissenbaum & Shifman, 2017). With their easy accessibility, memes can build collective identities within the digital space. Williams (2020) suggests that political memes function as communication tools that simplify political narratives, making them easier for the public to digest. Additionally, memes serve as a medium for conveying socio-political criticism and encouraging critical thinking among social media users (Hayat et al., 2021).

Previous studies have shown that social media has become an effective platform for political campaigns and mobilizing the public (Baharuddin et al., 2021). This finding aligns with Indrawan's (2017) research, which demonstrates that effective political communication can shape public opinion and influence societal behaviour. Political communication, as discussed

by Masduki & Widyatama (2018), refers to the use of communication as a discipline in the political process. Simply put, society has the authority to convey messages, aspirations, criticisms, and suggestions to the elite or vice versa. Additionally, the research by Hayat et al. (2021) emphasizes the importance of social media for communication in the political process.

According to data from the Pew Research Centre (2023), more than 85% of Generation Z in the United States are active users of social media. Additionally, nearly 70% of them actively participate in meme culture, both as creators and consumers. This phenomenon is not only occurring in the United States but also in other countries, including Indonesia. Social media encompasses various types of platforms that are simple to use for sharing content—playing a role in the digital world—such as social networking and similar functions (Anjani & Widyatama, 2023). Furthermore, Hartanti's (2024) thesis explains that social media has now become a platform with a large following, particularly among the youth, as a means of modern communication. Its comprehensive features, tailored to user needs, make it undeniable that such modern communication media facilitate access and connectivity (Gittawati, 2023).

In Indonesia, the use of social media has experienced a significant increase. Referring to the latest data from We Are Social, Rainer (2024) reveals that there are 139 million active social media users, which accounts for 49.9% of Indonesia's total population. With this number, approximately 75% of internet users in the country use at least one social media platform. As shown in Table 1 below, several social media platforms are frequently used in Indonesia.

Platforms	Percentage of Users
WhatsApp	90,9%
Instagram	85,3%
Facebook	81,6%
Tiktok	73,5%
Telegram	61,3%
X (Twitter)	57,5%

Table 1. Percentage of Social Media Usage in Indonesia 2024

Source: *Data Analysis, 2024*

Based on the data above, X (Twitter) has a smaller percentage of users, at 57.5%, but it remains an important platform for the dissemination of information and public discussion (Widagdhaprasana, 2022). This platform is known for its characteristic that allows users to share thoughts, opinions critically, openly, and sharply. Political memes circulating on social media platforms—X (Twitter)—often convey political ideas, criticize policies, and shape public opinion (Putra et al., 2022). Memes have become one of the most widely shared forms of content across various social media platforms, including X (Twitter).

Platform X (Twitter) is one of the communication instruments that is packaged online to disseminate information to the public without limitations of space and time (Rahmawati et al., 2024). X (Twitter) has experienced rapid growth, particularly among the youth who are closely connected with the active social media culture (Nizar & Aesthetika, 2024). Young people quickly and easily spread and share content, ideas, or simply stories about their daily lives with the public, with most content on X (Twitter) being personal (Nizar & Aesthetika, 2024). These social media users often express their aspirations, showcase characters that differ from those in other media, or present a "*different perspective*," trends in social interactions, and contemporary issues.

This study explores the representation of political memes on the X (Twitter) platform through semiotic analysis. As highlighted in Nita et al. (2021), analysing memes using semiotic theory can reveal hidden meanings behind the combination of text and images. Barthes' *Elements of Semiology* defines semiotic theory where a sign—whether in the form of text or image—carries both denotative meaning, the literal interpretation of a sign, and connotative meaning, the additional associations or broader interpretations that may vary depending on social and cultural contexts (Pertwi, 2023; Nissenbaum & Shifman, 2017). The collaboration between text and images in memes produces layered meanings; for example, a meme featuring an image with sarcastic text can convey various connotations of social criticism depending on the audience's interpretative experiences (Pratiwi, 2023; Gittawati, 2023).

Viral memes on X (Twitter) often create narratives that influence public opinion collectively and drive political discussions (Penney, 2020; Williams, 2020; Li, 2022). Semiotic analysis provides a valuable framework for examining the meanings embedded in political memes, making it highly relevant. Semiotics involves contextual analysis, which is essential for understanding political memes that are often satirical and provocative (Rahayu et al., 2019; Gittawati, 2023). Through this analysis, authors can identify the denotative and connotative meanings within the combination of images and text. Previous studies have shown that memes frequently construct false dichotomies and emphasize group identities, which can shape how individuals perceive political issues (Elmore & Coleman, 2019).

This study employs a qualitative approach to deeply describe the meaning of political memes represented on the X (Twitter) platform. Research indicates that memes shared on social media platforms often contain strong ideological content, which can evoke emotional reactions and influence the political attitudes of audiences (Du et al., 2020). Therefore, understanding

how memes function within the broader context of political communication and popular culture is crucial. The author believes that understanding the representation of political memes through semiotic analysis can provide insights into how these cultural products influence public perceptions, critical thinking, and political engagement. By examining memes shared on X (Twitter), this study objects to uncover potential as tools for effective political communication while addressing challenges such as polarization and misinformation. The research data is sourced from relevant literature and memes collected from X (Twitter) posts. Through semiotic analysis, author provides new insights and recommendations for the responsible use of memes in the public sphere. The findings are expected to foster a better understanding of the role of memes in shaping opinions, perspectives, public perceptions, and fostering participatory political engagement among younger generations. The author hopes to contribute to a broader understanding of the dynamics of popular culture in the political landscape (Ahmed, 2024; Leiser, 2022). Ultimately, this research seeks to highlight the importance of critical media literacy in navigating the complexities of digital culture and communication.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This study reviews several relevant prior findings. Kharroub and Baş (2016) examined the use of images on Twitter—now known as X—during the 2011 Egyptian revolution. While these images provided significant insights, they recommended further research to understand the motivations of social media users for posting specific content during periods of political change. These findings underscore the need for exploration into the context and meanings behind political memes. Meanwhile, Kalkina (2020) revealed the transformation of Soviet propaganda posters into internet memes, reflecting how Russian users adapt their cultural and symbolic heritage into digital communication. Dimitrov et al. (2021) emphasized the importance of understanding propaganda techniques in memes, which can aid in analyzing how political messages are subtly conveyed through visual media.

The transnational public networks explored by Doerr (2017) demonstrate how right-wing activists in Europe utilize memes to foster solidarity and disseminate political ideologies. This highlights that memes serve not only as entertainment but also as tools to bolster specific political movements. Meanwhile, Wu and Wall (2021) investigated memes related to anti-Asian racism during the COVID-19 pandemic, revealing how memes construct complex narratives

around race and politics while creating more inclusive spaces for discussion among younger generations.

Teng et al. (2021) examined the influence of memes on brand image, but they also noted that the characteristics of meme dissemination are often applied to political or public issues. Similarly, Moreno-Almeida and Gerbaudo (2021) showed that memes function as effective political communication tools, capable of creating new symbols reflecting shifts in nationalist symbolism. In another study, Zidjaly (2017) analyzed the use of memes as a medium to express political dissatisfaction in Oman, emphasizing the significant role memes play in political negotiation.

In line with the study by Paz et al. (2021) in Spain, which demonstrated that political memes are used for political persuasion, this underscores the ease with which memes can be shared and modified, thereby broadening the reach of political messages. Similarly, Putra et al. (2022) emphasized that memes have evolved from mere communication tools into more structured instruments of political propaganda, highlighting their potential in shaping public opinion and influencing political discourse.

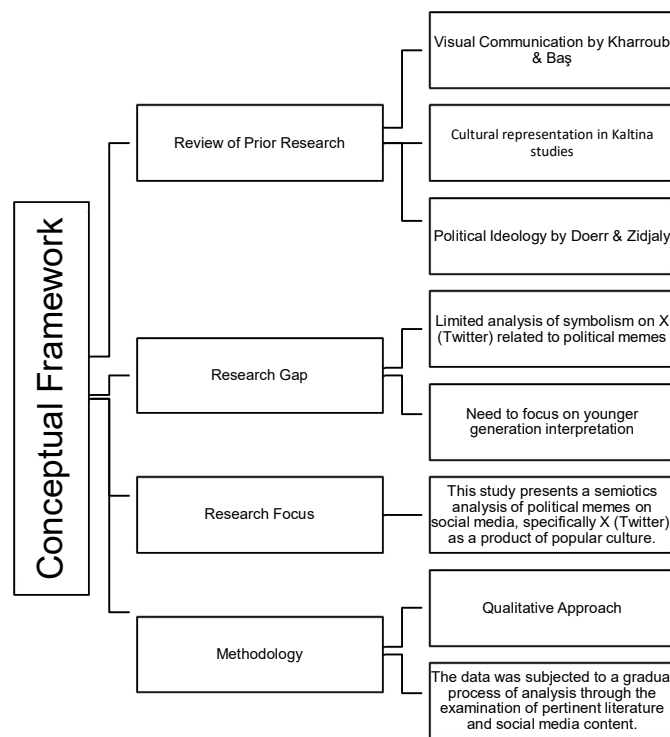


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework
 Source: Data Analysis, 2024

This study identifies a research gap: the lack of in-depth analysis on how political memes on the X (Twitter) platform influence young people's political understanding. While numerous studies have examined memes and politics through various theoretical lenses, there remains a pressing need for specific exploration of how memes are utilized within the context of popular culture and their interaction with political issues, particularly through semiotic studies. Consequently, the conceptual framework of this research focuses on Barthes' semiotic analysis, aiming to understand the denotation and connotation of memes as instruments for conveying messages. Using a qualitative approach, this study analyses data derived from literature and memes captured from X (Twitter) posts, intending to provide fresh insights into political representation.

METHODOLOGY

This research employs a qualitative approach using Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis method, following the stages of data reduction, presentation, and verification (Creswell, 2014). Semiotic analysis is selected due to its relevance in examining political representation within popular cultural products. The author explores the meaning behind the symbolism often characteristic of memes and interprets the political messages constructed through meme elements, whether explicit or implicit (Paz et al., 2021). This approach is highly suitable for analyzing popular culture, as political memes often reflect social perspectives, critique, or commentary on specific issues (Baharuddin et al., 2021; Dewi, 2019).

Semiotic effectively explains visual and textual elements collaborate to create persuasive effects how audiences interpret these messages through connotation and denotation. Compared to other approaches, semiotics is more effective in uncovering the symbolic dimensions that are central to political communication in memes. Thus, semiotic analysis provides a more holistic perspective in understanding this phenomenon. This research collects data through two principal methods: literature review and the compilation of a corpus of meme images uploaded on X (Twitter). The corpus is obtained using Advanced Search Technology (SAT), ensuring data relevance to the current socio-political context during the research period. The data are purposively and selectively collected to deeply interpret the research problem and align with the focus of semiotic analysis (Nissenbaum & Shifman, 2017).

The study considers the visual and textual elements within memes to uncover their meaning and implications in political communication (Alim & Rahmawati, 2021). The research subjects are political memes uploaded on the X (Twitter) platform. Using a descriptive study approach, this research aims to describe the representation of political memes in social media, enabling readers to understand memes as an effective communication tool to simplify complex political narratives (Nissenbaum & Shifman, 2017). To ensure the validity of the analysis, the study employs triangulation by cross-referencing data from multiple sources, including relevant academic literature, social media metrics, and expert insights into meme culture. Additionally, the research process includes peer debriefing, where this step minimizes biases and enhances the reliability of the findings (Creswell, 2014). The iterative coding process is also applied to categorize the denotative and connotative meanings of meme systematically, ensuring consistency and depth in interpreting the symbolic messages (Alim & Rahmawati, 2021).



Figure 2 Elements of Political Communications
Source: *Data Analysis, 2024*

The authors use political communication theory, emphasizing the importance of social media in shaping public opinion and facilitating two-way political discourse. As a component of political communication, memes encompass messages, media, audiences, and effects (Shifman, 2014). The underlying assumption is that political memes not only reflect current political conditions but also influence public perceptions and behaviour toward political figures and issues (Nissenbaum & Shifman, 2017). By validating findings through detailed documentation and checks, the semiotic analysis of political memes on X (Twitter) provides new insights into the dynamics of political communication in the digital era (Asis et al., 2022). This study contributes to understanding how social media transforms political engagement and the dissemination of ideas within society (Leiser, 2022).

FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

Social media, particularly X (Twitter), plays an essential role as a digital communication platform. Political memes not only convey messages, aspirations, suggestions, and direct criticism but also encapsulate diverse symbols, signs, and connotations. These elements can be interpreted from various audience perspectives. By analysing the representation of symbols in political memes, it is possible to understand how these memes contribute to enhancing political participation among social media users (Ahmed, 2024). Findings reveal that circulating memes often contain sharp social critiques, reflecting public dissatisfaction with current political conditions (Alim & Rahmawati, 2021).



Figure 3 Meme of Official State Accounts
Source: Data Analysis, 2024

Figure 3 illustrates criticism and humour regarding the management of the official social media account of the Republic of Indonesia, @republikindonesia, during the presidency of Prabowo Subianto. This account was created in October 2024—following the inauguration of President Prabowo Subianto and Vice President Gibran Rakabuming Raka—and reached 3 million followers as of November 2024. Figure 4 presents a screenshot of @republikindonesia, which has become meme content on X (Twitter):

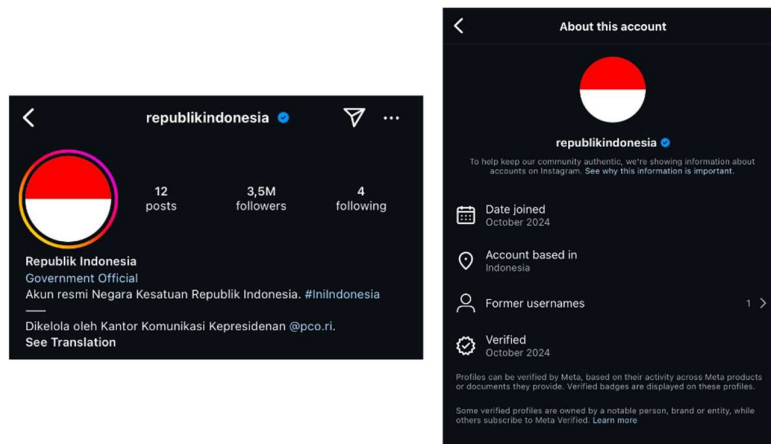


Figure 4 Screenshot @republikindonesia
Source: Data Analysis, 2024

Figure 3 accompanying the meme text displays the official Instagram account interface, emphasizing the formal image of the nation with visual elements like the Indonesian flag and the official account name. However, in the context of the meme, this image is juxtaposed with a caricatured "troll" face, creating a humorous tone and amplifying the conveyed critique. The use of simple visual elements and brief text in this meme enables the delivery of complex messages in an engaging way, effectively capturing the audience's attention (Rahmawati et al., 2024; Williams, 2020).

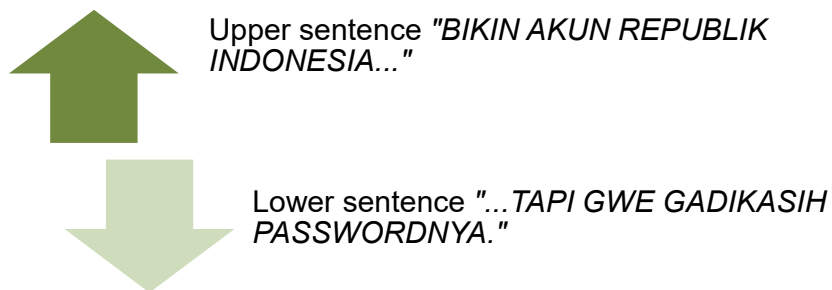


Figure 5 Mapping Memes of Official State Accounts
Source: Data Analysis, 2024

The first sentence reflects a serious and formal action in creating a state's social media account, whereas the second sentence contains elements of ironic humour, indicating the presence of individuals or groups who feel "excluded" from the process. This aligns with the study by Cahyadi et al. (2021), which highlights that issues of control management and bureaucratic communication are often perceived as inefficient by the public. Simply put, the

text mapped in Figure 5 reveals a contradiction between the importance of having an official state account and the impression of a suboptimal system management (Cahyadi et al., 2021).

The meme indicates that the account does not provide access to *"everyone."* The term *"everyone"* refers to individual activities seemingly eager to engage directly due to frustration over the management of the official account—regarded as a representation of public voice (Wei, 2024). This creates a literal meaning that highlights dissatisfaction with the management of the official account. However, it is important to note that not everyone has the authority to manage official state accounts. Managing such accounts is closely related to confidentiality and national interests—requiring careful consideration by the Indonesian government regarding who should have access and control over sensitive information (Camoiras-Rodríguez, 2024).

The meme reflects public distrust or satire toward bureaucracy and government institutions. In today's digital culture, government institutions often become subjects of humour by Indonesian netizens due to perceptions of lacking transparency, being slow, or inefficient. The use of caricatured faces in the meme strengthens the sense of irony and absurdity, emphasizing the *"disconnect"* between the management of accounts and public expectations for government professionalism (Wei, 2024). This meme builds a myth of the government as an entity that is *"incompetent"* in managing modern digital communication. It represents public opinion about the complexity of bureaucracy in the technological era—where expectations for transparency and efficiency are increasingly high.

Ultimately, the meme delivers subtle criticism of the government regarding the management of online platforms (Shifman, 2014). Using visual and humorous approaches, memes serve as informal yet effective tools for expressing socio-political critique (Ahmed, 2024). Their dissemination not only provokes laughter but also constructs a narrative about potential inefficiencies in bureaucracy (Bhakti, 2020). Thus, memes play a role in fostering political engagement while raising public awareness of ongoing issues (Bhakti, 2020; Ahmed, 2024).

Although this meme packages criticism with humour, the government or the entities being targeted by the meme may not take the criticism seriously. This could create a communication gap between the government and society, where criticism conveyed through memes does not receive an adequate response from the authorities. In this context, it is crucial for the

government to understand the dynamics of communication on social media and respond to public criticism effectively (Leiser, 2022).



Figure 6 Baswedan's Superficial Policy
 Source: Data Analysis, 2024

Figure 6 presents satire directed at Anies Baswedan regarding the policy of renaming streets in Jakarta. Baswedan served as the Governor of Jakarta from 2017 to 2022. The meme illustrates how symbols, signs, and connotations are used to convey complex political messages in a simple manner. The meme, which critiques Baswedan, identifies the policy of street renaming as lacking substance, encapsulated in the phrase, *"Kalau jalan hidupmu terasa sulit, cobalah ganti nama jalannya."* This text functions not only as satire but also as a narrative linking the policy to a solution perceived as ineffective (Alim & Rahmawati, 2021; Dewi, 2019).

Mapping			
The meme conveys satire toward Anies Baswedan's policy on renaming streets in Jakarta.			
	Textual	Visual	
Sentence's	<i>"Kalau jalan hidupmu terasa sulit, cobalah ganti nama jalannya"</i>	The image of an empty road with double yellow lines provides a literal impression of the <i>"life path."</i>	The photo of Anies with a background of ondel-ondel strengthens the meme's association with DKI Jakarta's policy (culture).
The phrase employs sarcasm to create humor while simultaneously critiquing a policy perceived as lacking substance.	This statement clearly refers to the street renaming policy implemented by the local government during Baswedan's tenure as the Governor of DKI Jakarta. The narrative creates a perspective that the proposed solution does not address the root of the problem.		

Table 2 Meme's Maps @ Baswedan
 Source: Data Analysis, 2024

The use of visuals in Figure 6, such as the empty road and the photo of Anies Baswedan, reinforces the message being conveyed. The image of the road serves as a metaphor for life, while "renaming the road" symbolizes a solution perceived as superficial. This highlights that the meme functions not only as entertainment but also as a tool for critique of public policies considered irrelevant (Bhakti, 2020). The policy also sparked many issues among the public (Ifnaldi & Carolina, 2023). Its myth reflects public opinion that is sceptical of government policies. Therefore, this meme not only reflects the current political climate but also influences the public's perception and behavior toward political figures (Hayat et al., 2021).

In the context of popular culture, modern society addresses public policies through humour— as illustrated in Figure 6. The Baswedan meme becomes a non-confrontational form of expression while still conveying a political message. This is particularly relevant for the younger generation, who are more familiar with social media as a platform for interaction and communication (Ahmed, 2024). It demonstrates how X (Twitter) plays a role in shaping public opinion and facilitating two-way political discourse. By utilizing humour and satire, this meme not only entertains but also encourages critical thinking among social media users (Hayat et al., 2021; Ahmed, 2024).

Meme critiques the street renaming policy, which is considered irrelevant. This informal meme serves as a digital communication form to understand policy contexts and uses humour as an expression tool (Bhakti, 2020). Its effect has the potential to generate negative or sceptical opinions about the policy. This shows that memes function as a means of strengthening certain political movements and building solidarity among users in representing the irony of public policies. The meme demonstrates how social media facilitates criticism of policies, which is crucial in the context of contemporary political communication (Ifnaldi & Carolina, 2023).



Figure 7 Fufufafa
Source: Data Analysis, 2024

Figure 7 represents a critique of Indonesia's public complaint system, signaling public dissatisfaction with bureaucracy (Puspitaningrum et al., 2024). The phrase "*Lapor Mas Wapres*" not only targets the complaint program but also creates an informal impression—reflecting Javanese culture—as the word "*Mas*" implies closeness and familiarity (Mahmud et al., 2019; Sunaryanto & Syamsuri, 2022). This aligns with studies showing that the use of familiar language can enhance connection between the public and government institutions, thus creating space for more open dialogue. Additionally, the phrase "*Kirim PM ke profil akun: FUFUFAFA*" links formal complaints to more casual digital platforms, Kaskus, known as an informal discussion space among Indonesian netizens (Sunaryanto & Syamsuri, 2022).

The caricature of the figure with modern design in the meme reinforces the satirical element through its visual representation (Nizar & Aesthetika, 2024; Rahayu et al., 2019). The inclusion of the Kaskus logo as part of the visual adds a cultural dimension that critiques the formal system in a way that is more easily understood by the public (Sunaryanto & Syamsuri, 2022). This meme not only functions as a critique but also strengthens the identity of digital culture, which is increasingly relevant in the Society 5.0 era, where information technology plays a crucial role in social and political interactions. Indonesians are becoming more active in using social media as a channel for political criticism, creating an expression space for dissatisfaction with government policies (Puspitaningrum et al., 2024).

Figure 7 functions as a guide to submitting complaints via digital media, resembling an official advertisement. However, this meme, in its connotative sense, contains irony, implying that complaints to the government are seen as ineffective and merely a formality. The use of "*Mas*" in this context creates the impression that the complaint process is simple, but it reflects the public's scepticism about the effectiveness of the existing complaint system (Penney, 2020). Previous research shows that humour media often delivers social criticism, which is more easily accepted by the public, and this meme is a clear example of this phenomenon (Sunaryanto & Syamsuri, 2022).

This meme suggests that public complaint channels are disregarded. As a result, it creates the impression that the public feels alienated from the bureaucratic process. This aligns with research showing that many people feel that the government does not take their complaints seriously, thus creating distrust in the existing system (Puspitaningrum et al., 2024). Gibran, as the son of President Joko Widodo, becomes a symbol of dynastic politics, which often attracts criticism, and the use of the term "*fufufafa*" in public discourse reflects the public's

response to his communication style and political branding, which can sometimes be unconventional (Ifnaldi & Carolina, 2023). Moreover, it reflects the political dynamics involving millennials and how they engage with politics via social media (Cahyadi et al., 2021).

Gibran Rakabuming Raka, known as a millennial figure, uses social media to build his image and political communication (McLoughlin & Southern, 2020). The use of social media, particularly X (Twitter) and Instagram, plays an important role in shaping public perceptions of him (Leiser, 2022). Gibran often creates unique and sometimes humorous interactions on digital platforms. This demonstrates that Indonesia's younger generation is becoming more involved in politics through more creative and informal methods—reflecting a shift in how society interacts with government institutions (Ahmed, 2024; Puspitaningrum et al., 2024).

In addition, Gibran's candidacy for vice president in 2024 faces new challenges in building his political image amid criticism of dynastic politics and the legal legitimacy of his candidacy (McLoughlin & Southern, 2020). Research shows there is public dissatisfaction with the Constitutional Court's decision allowing Gibran to run, which has led to discussions about fairness and equality in politics (Ifnaldi & Carolina, 2023). The meme critiquing the public complaint system can also be seen as part of a broader criticism of dynastic politics and how the public responds to the current political situation (Nissenbaum & Shifman, 2017; Ifnaldi & Carolina, 2023).

Fufufafa illustrates the complexity of the politics Gibran Rakabuming Raka faces, where the interaction between public image, social media, and dynastic political dynamics comes into play. This shows that Gibran is not only a candidate but also a symbol of change and challenges in contemporary Indonesian politics (Ahmed, 2024). Therefore, this meme serves not only as a critique of an ineffective and unresponsive bureaucracy but also as a reflection of the broader political dynamics in Indonesia. In this context, it is important to understand how elements of digital culture, such as memes and the "*fufufafa*" phenomenon, can contribute to shaping public opinion and influencing society interacts with government (Indrawan, 2017).

By employing elements of humour and irony, memes can capture the attention of a broader audience, including those not actively engaged in political discourse (Penney, 2020). In some cases, seemingly simple memes can carry complex meanings. This implies that the symbols used in political memes often refer to broad cultural and social contexts, enabling users to associate the messages with the consumers (Nissenbaum & Shifman, 2017). This

demonstrates that political memes function as communication instruments for shaping public opinion and reinforcing the legitimacy of political ideologies (Li, 2022).

CONCLUSION

The author concludes that political memes on platform X (Twitter) represent a significant form of digital communication. This study introduces a novel perspective by integrating Barthes' semiotic theory to reveal the dimensions of denotation and connotation—within political memes as elements of popular culture. Another unique aspect is the finding that memes function not only as entertainment but also as effective tools for political critique, capable of reinforcing the legitimacy of public opinion—an inclusive space for political discourse in the digital era. The research successfully identifies the contribution of memes in constructing narratives that criticize bureaucracy, public policies, and political dynasties in Indonesia.

This study is a pioneer in explaining the role of memes as profound products of popular culture amidst the political and social dynamics of contemporary society. The findings of this research offer insights for policymakers and political actors to better understand how memes can serve as strategic political communication tools for reaching a broad audience. Furthermore, the study underscores the importance of governmental responses to public criticism conveyed through digital media to promote transparency and openness. Future research hopes to focus more on cross-platform social analysis, adopt mixed-method approaches, or explore the long-term impact of memes on global political communication.

LIMITATION AND STUDY FORWARD

This study is limited to the X (Twitter) platform, restricting the generalizability of its findings. It employs a qualitative methodology that lacks integration of quantitative aspects and is confined to specific cultural and temporal contexts, overlooking the evolution of meme trends. Future research could broaden the scope by including various social media platforms and adopting a mixed-methods approach for more comprehensive results. Additionally, exploring diverse demographic responses to political memes and examining the role of artificial intelligence in meme creation and dissemination could provide new insights into the automation trends in political communication.

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