

POLITICAL COMMUNICATION IN BUILDING A LEADERSHIP IMAGE ON @NILUHDJELANTIK INSTAGRAM ACCOUNT

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzes Ni Luh Djelantik's political communication in building leadership image through Instagram account @niluhdjelantik using Hanna Pitkin's Political Representation Theory framework. A descriptive qualitative research method was applied involving nine informants consisting of the account owner, Instagram account admin, political communication academic, and six active followers in Denpasar City through semi-structured in-depth interviews, content observation, and documentation study. The results show that Ni Luh Djelantik's political communication successfully builds a strong leadership image through the integration of four representation dimensions: (1) formal representation through DPD RI legitimacy that strengthens credibility; (2) descriptive representation through identity as a Balinese woman with activist and entrepreneur background that creates emotional closeness; (3) symbolic representation through assertive communication style and use of Balinese cultural symbols that reinforces authenticity; (4) substantive representation through content containing constructive criticism, educational information, and solutions relevant to Balinese community needs. The integration of these four dimensions forms a holistic leadership image: brave, honest, caring for grassroots communities, rooted in local values, and responsive to actual problems. The research confirms that Instagram has transformed political communication to become more interactive and participatory, functioning as a "24-hour digital aspiration office" that opens direct access between people's representatives and constituents, and is effective in building legitimacy and mobilizing political participation among young generation.

Keywords: political communication, leadership image, Instagram, political representation, social media

INTRODUCTION

The development of digital technology has fundamentally changed the landscape of political communication. Social media, especially Instagram, is now a strategic arena for political figures to build an image and interact directly with the public without the mediation of conventional media. This visual platform allows politicians to showcase their personal and professional sides, creating emotional closeness that is difficult to achieve through traditional communication channels (Widodo & Kristiyono, 2025). Instagram is no

longer just a forum for sharing photos, but has transformed into a space for political representation that allows the formation of identities, the conveyance of aspirations, and the construction of leadership images in the digital realm (Ahmad et al., 2024).

The phenomenon of using social media by Indonesian political figures is increasingly massive, especially in building personal branding and leadership image. Data shows that Instagram is one of the most popular platforms in Indonesia with users dominated by the productive age group of 18-34 years, making it an effective means to reach young voters and shape public opinion (Ghofur et al., 2025). In this context, political communication not only serves to convey policy information, but also as a strategy to build trust, legitimacy, and an authentic image of leadership through visual narratives and digital interactions (Adnan & Mona, 2024). Social media creates a democratic space where politicians can communicate messages directly, while the public has access to respond, criticism, and support in real-time, creating a more participatory two-way dialogue (Noorikhshan et al., 2023).

One of the public figures who actively uses Instagram as a medium of political communication is Ni Luh Djelantik, a member of the DPD RI from Bali. Through his personal account @niluhdjelantik with more than hundreds of thousands of followers, he consistently voices various socio-political issues, ranging from criticism of foreign tourists' behavior that violates Balinese cultural norms, advocacy for the rights of marginalized groups, to evaluation of government policies. The content uploaded not only contains formal political statements, but also displays a personal side through the use of traditional clothing, documentation of social activities in the community, and direct interaction with followers through the comment column and Instagram Stories feature. The consistency between real activities in the field and digital representations on Instagram creates a perception of authenticity that strengthens the image of his leadership as a figure who cares, is responsive, and rooted in local values (Airlangga et al., 2024). This phenomenon is interesting to study because it shows how a female politician from the region uses social media not just for electoral campaigns, but as an instrument for the formation of a sustainable leadership image.

To understand the dynamics of Ni Luh Djelantik's political communication in building a leadership image, this study uses the framework of Political Representation Theory from Hanna Pitkin (1967). This theory divides political representation into four dimensions: formal representation that emphasizes legal legitimacy through official positions as members of the DPD RI; descriptive representations that reflect the similarity

of identities such as gender, ethnicity, and regional background; symbolic representations formed through symbols, narratives, and publicly accepted communication styles; as well as substantive representations that focus on the extent to which content truly advocates for constituent interests through concrete actions and messages (Bagaskara et al., 2025; Alifah, 2022). These four dimensions are relevant to analyze how Ni Luh Djelantik utilizes her formal status, identity as a Balinese woman, local cultural symbols, and critical and solutive substantive content to build legitimacy and leadership image in the digital space.

The urgency of this research arises from the existing literature gap. Most studies of digital political communication in Indonesia focus on electoral campaign strategies or personal branding of regional head candidates ahead of the election (Ahmad et al., 2024; Kurniasih & Setianti, 2024; Ramadhan et al., 2023), while in-depth studies on how politicians actively build a leadership image through social media, especially from the perspective of political representation, are still limited. Research on Ni Luh Djelantik is also important because she represents the phenomenon of regional women politicians who have managed to build significant influence on social media without relying on the big party machine, but through the consistency of issues, authenticity of narratives, and personal closeness to the audience. This is different from conventional political communication patterns that tend to be top-down and structured through large campaign teams.



Figure 1. Content on representation in Instagram @niluhdjelantik

Source : Instagram @niluhdjelantik (2025)

Based on this background, the formulation of this research problem is: How does political communication on Instagram accounts @niluhdjelantik play a role in building a leadership image in the eyes of active followers? This study aims to analyze the political communication strategies applied in @niluhdjelantik Instagram content, identify the construction of leadership images formed in the audience, and examine the political communication through the dimension of Hanna Pitkin's Political Representation. Theoretically, this research is expected to contribute to the development of digital political communication studies and the formation of leadership images through social media, especially in the context of regional women politicians in Indonesia. Practically, the results of the research can be a reference for public figures, politicians, and activists in designing effective political communication strategies to build an authentic, responsive, and sustainable leadership image in the digital era.

METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive research type that aims to provide an in-depth overview of political communication in building a leadership image on @niluhdjelantik Instagram account. The qualitative approach was chosen because it allows for a comprehensive analysis of social phenomena through words, images, and narratives collected from various data sources (Adlini et al., 2022). The primary data source was obtained through in-depth interviews with key informants determined by purposive sampling with a total of 9 (nine) informants, including the account owner, namely Ni Luh Djelantik as the main informant, 1 (one) Instagram account admin as social media staff, 1 (one) political communication academic, and 6 (six) active followers of accounts domiciled in Denpasar City. Meanwhile, secondary data was collected from observations of @niluhdjelantik Instagram content, documentation studies in the form of captions, interactions, visual symbols, account insights, and literature reviews from relevant academic journals, books, and scientific articles (Sugiyono, 2023). Data collection techniques are carried out in three ways: observation of upload and interaction patterns on Instagram accounts, semi-structured in-depth interviews both in person and online through digital platforms, and documentation of published visual and textual content (Chalik et al., 2024; Arif et al., 2021).

The data analysis uses the Miles and Huberman model which includes three stages: data reduction by selecting and focusing information relevant to the dimension of Hanna Pitkin's political representation; presentation of data through descriptive narratives,

category tables, and visual charts to see political communication patterns; as well as drawing and verifying conclusions by comparing findings from various sources (Yuwono et al., 2024). The validity of the data is ensured through source triangulation, which is comparing data from various different informants including followers, account owners, admins, and academics, as well as triangulation techniques using observations, interviews, and documentation of the same object to ensure the credibility and consistency of the findings (Sugiyono, 2023). The research is focused on the content of personal accounts @niluhdjelantik because it is the main channel that is managed directly, has the largest number of followers, and displays the most active interaction with the audience, making it more representative to analyze political communication in building a leadership image.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study analyzes Ni Luh Djelantik's political communication in building a leadership image through @niluhdjelantik Instagram account using the framework of Hanna Pitkin's Theory of Political Representation. Based on the results of in-depth interviews with nine informants consisting of account owners (Ni Luh Djelantik), Instagram Social Media Staff (Crista Fialdila), political communication academics (Ni Putu Yunita Anggreswari), and six active followers of accounts domiciled in Denpasar City, it was found that political communication conducted by Ni Luh Djelantik succeeded in building a strong leadership image through four dimensions of representation: formal, descriptive, symbolic, and substantive. Each dimension makes a unique contribution to shaping public perception of his leadership as a member of DPD RI from Bali.

Legitimacy of Position as Capital of Political Trust (Formal Representation)

Formal representation emphasizes the legal and procedural legitimacy that a political representative obtains through official mechanisms such as elections (Bagaskara & Ma'ruf, 2025). In the context of Ni Luh Djelantik, his official status as a member of the DPD RI for the 2024-2029 period provides formal legitimacy that strengthens the credibility of his political communication on social media. This legitimacy is not just a symbol of position, but rather a capital of trust that makes his political messages perceived as more weighty and has institutional pressure.

The findings of the study show that the majority of informants recognize the importance of formal status in forming their trust in the content shared by Ni Luh Djelantik.

Agus stated,

"Some of them are, because he has an official position so he looks more credible. But on the other hand, I also remain vocal about which are personal opinions and which ones are based on data." (interview, October 24, 2025)

This statement indicates that formal legitimacy provides a psychological effect in the form of increased credibility, although the audience remains critical in assessing the substance of the message. The same thing was expressed by Rastini,

"Mrs. Niluh's status as a member of the DPD RI makes me believe more in what she conveys, because she is part of the official state institution." (interview, October 23, 2025)

From the perspective of the account owner, Ni Luh Djelantik is aware that formal legitimacy provides additional trust, but she emphasizes that the trust is built long before having an official position. He stated

"The public may feel safer because they know that what is talking about this is not an arbitrary account. But I know very well, the people believe not because of the title of 'senator', but because I have been consistent in the past. They have seen me go down directly, help, reprimand, accompany residents to agencies, even before I have a position. The formal status is only complementary. Trust is built long before that." (interview, 4 November 2025)

This statement shows his awareness that formal legitimacy functions optimally when supported by consistency of actions and closeness to society.

Political communication academic, Ni Putu Yunita Anggreswari, provides a theoretical perspective on this formal representation. He explained,

"From the perspective of formal representation, according to Hanna Pitkin, legitimacy comes from institutional mandates. In the context of Ni Luh Djelantik, his status as a member of the DPD RI provides a legal and political basis that makes his communication have more weight. Formal representation means that a person has the official authority to speak on behalf of the group he or she represents. When Ni Luh conveys criticism or advocacy through social media, the public interprets it as the voice of the institution, not just an individual. This strengthens the persuasive power of his uploads because messages coming from formal officials are always considered more credible, more responsible, and more likely to have policy impacts." (Interview, November 7, 2025)

Yunita added that formal positions in the digital era have greater effectiveness because they allow for a quick response from state institutions.

"In formal representation theory, there is a direct link between legitimacy and effectiveness. Formal positions allow each statement to be considered politically relevant, so his digital interventions often trigger a quick response from government agencies. This effectiveness is born from two factors: access to state

mechanisms, such as working meetings, official letters, or policy oversight, and public expectations that it is able to follow up on the issues presented. In other words, digital spaces magnify the effect of formal representation because the public monitors and connects uploads to official actions it may take." (Interview, November 7, 2025)

However, this formal legitimacy also carries the consequence of greater ethical limitations and responsibility. Ni Luh Djelantik explained

"Of course you should, my dear. There are institutional ethics that I must maintain. I can't just talk, let alone attack someone's person. But I still have to be firm. If there is a policy that is not on the side of the people, I convey it clearly, with data, and with polite language. I never attacked the person, I attacked his policies. That's a big difference I've always held." (interview, 4 November 2025)

The account admin, Crista Fialdila, also emphasized that the content management team pays close attention to these formal restrictions.

"Mother's status as a member of DPD RI is indeed the main foundation in content preparation. We ensure all content is neutral and focuses on legislative and public service duties and functions. Every material has gone through a screening process to ensure it does not violate the code of ethics or institutional rules." (Interview, 5 November 2025)

Another informant, Asa, emphasized that official positions give more authority in conveying aspirations

"Yes, it makes me more confident, and makes him the right person to voice it." (Interview, October 20, 2025)

While Candra explained more analytically,

"Obviously, at first, he was just a vocal activist who talked about Bali. Well, now he has an official stamp. The talk is not just a rant anymore, but a talk from a person who actually has a seat in Senayan. Automatically the weight goes up." (interview, October 23, 2025)

Candra's statement underscores the transformation of public perception: from activist to official politician, which brings with it the consequence of increased moral and institutional authority.

These findings are in line with the research of Adnan and Mona (2024) which states that the formal status of a politician on social media plays an important role in building political communication authority, especially when the message conveyed concerns the public interest and government policies. Furthermore, Bagaskara and Ma'ruf (2025) explain that formal representation provides legal legitimacy that allows a political

representative to speak on behalf of constituents legitimately, so that the message conveyed is not only considered as a personal opinion, but as part of the function of official political representation.

Interestingly, although formal legitimacy has a positive effect, some informants also admit that there is an ambiguity between formal and personal roles in Ni Luh Djelantik's Instagram content. Agus added,

"There is really that. When discussing national issues, the official side was seen. But in other uploads, his style is more subtle, personal and close, and sometimes even feels too relaxed for the size of a public official." (interview, October 24, 2025)

Ni Luh Djelantik herself is aware of this duality and explains how she distinguishes the two roles.

"The role is different, but the values I hold are the same. If I speak as a senator, I make sure that my information is accurate, there is a legal basis, there is data, and there is a clear follow-up. If I speak as a person, a Balinese woman, an activist, a mother, a businessman, I speak more personally, more closely, like when I call 'my darling'. But they are both born from the same heart." (interview, 4 November 2025)

This duality actually strengthens the appeal of his political communication, because it does not seem rigid or bureaucratic.

Crista Fialdila explains how the team manages a balance between formal and personal content.

"The content created is indeed focused on formal activities as DPD members, such as citizen complaints, field visits, and follow-up on aspirations. However, her communication style follows Mom's simple and familiar style, such as the use of the word 'my love' and heart emoticons, so that it still feels close and personal to the audience. This approach makes the content less formal and still engaging, in keeping with Mom's simple, laid-back personality." (Interview, November 5, 2025)

Komang emphasized the importance of formal legitimacy in the context of public acceptance:

"Formal legitimacy is important because it makes people more respectful and listen to their opinions." (interview, October 24, 2025)

Meanwhile, Jelita highlighted the impact of the position on public respect

"Yes, because he used to be a member of the DPD, so if you talk about it, it looks like he understands and has a basis." (Interview, October 23, 2025)

These statements affirm that formal legitimacy is not just an administrative attribute, but rather a social capital that strengthens the influence of political

communication in the digital space.

In the context of social media, formal legitimacy also functions as a filter of trust in the midst of rampant disinformation and hoaxes. Research by Widodo and Kristiyono (2025) shows that politicians who hold official positions tend to be more trusted by social media audiences compared to political influencers without formal positions, because there is an assumption that they have access to official information and are legally responsible for the statements they make. This is relevant to the findings of this research, where the formal legitimacy of Ni Luh Djelantik as a member of the DPD RI is a guarantee of credibility in the eyes of his followers.

Yunita also highlighted how social media expands the function of formal representation beyond traditional institutional channels.

"Yes, social media expands the formal dimension to be more responsive. Beyond legislative duties and procedural oversight, a senator can now accept the aspirations directly of citizens without bureaucratic intermediaries. This results in what is called 'hyper-responsive representation', where representative functions are no longer limited to formal meetings, but take place in real-time through digital channels." (Interview, November 7, 2025)

Thus, Ni Luh Djelantik's formal representation in political communication on Instagram serves as a foundation of trust that strengthens his leadership image. The legitimacy of the position not only increases the credibility of the message, but also provides moral and institutional authority that makes its voice more heard and respected by the public. However, the effectiveness of this formal representation also depends heavily on his ability to maintain a balance between his formal role as a state official and his personal role as an individual close to the community, as well as consistency in following up on issues raised on social media with real actions on the ground.

Local Identity and Gender as Emotional Bridges (Descriptive Representation)

Descriptive representation refers to the similarity of identity between political representatives and constituents, covering aspects of gender, ethnicity, religion, and social background (Alifah, 2022; Bagaskara & Ma'ruf, 2025). In the context of Ni Luh Djelantik, her identity as a Balinese woman with a background as an activist and entrepreneur is a key element that forms an emotional closeness to the audience. Ni Luh Djelantik explained that her identity greatly influenced the way she communicated:

"As a Balinese woman, I have a moral responsibility to maintain modesty but still dare to tell the truth. So if I speak firmly, it is not because I am angry, but because I am defending the customary order, manners, and honor of our society." (interview, 4 November 2025)

The findings of the study show that Ni Luh Djelantik's local identity as a Balinese woman played a significant role in building a sense of representation among her followers.

Agus stated

"I feel somewhat represented, because he is also from Bali and often raises issues that are close to the life of the people here." (interview, October 24, 2025)

The same thing was also conveyed by Rastini and Komang, who both emphasized that the origins of Ni Luh Djelantik made it easier for them to believe and follow his views. They say:

"Yes, I feel represented because he is from Bali." (interview, October 23, 2025)

Ni Luh Djelink's gender identity as a woman is also an important symbol. Asa and Jelita expressed their appreciation for the presence of female figures who are able to speak out without losing their integrity. They say:

"Yes, there is also a sense of pride to see women being active in politics, it's cool, being able to speak out loud in the world of politics which is usually dominated by men." (Interview, October 20, 2025)

From an academic perspective, Yunita reinforces the findings of the field by explaining that Balinese women's identities carry a strong symbolic content in the political context. She stated that the characteristics of Balinese women who are known to be firm, religious, hardworking, and close to culture make them have great social capital in building closeness with the public.

"Identity is a strong political capital. Balinese women have unique values, are assertive, hard-working, religious, and close to culture. When Ni Luh Djelantik appeared with that identity, the public felt that 'this is our person'." (Interview, November 7, 2025)

Ni Luh Djelink's background as an activist and entrepreneur is also clearly reflected in her Instagram content. He explained,

"As an activist, I learned to stand up for the people without fear of pressure. As a shoe entrepreneur, I learned about fast work, consistency, and transparency to customers. That's why my way of speaking on Instagram doesn't go around." (interview, 4 November 2025)

Admin Crista Fialdila also corroborated this by highlighting how Ni Luh's background affected her simple but authentic appearance. He explained

"Mother's background as a businesswoman and activist makes her appear simple and unpretentious in her appearance. This is reflected in the simple style of dressing." (Interview, November 5, 2025)

The uniqueness of Ni Luh Djelantik's identity also distinguishes him from other politicians.

These findings are in line with research by Bagaskara and Ma'ruf (2025) which shows that descriptive representation strengthens women's political legitimacy in the eyes of constituents, especially when they share the same experiences and identities with the communities represented.

Assertive Communication Styles and Local Cultural Symbols (Symbolic

Representations)

Symbolic representation is concerned with how a political representative uses symbols, language, and communication styles to construct an image that is accepted by the public (Arawi & Atthahara, 2022). In the context of Ni Luh Djelantik, a firm communication style, straightforward use of language, and Balinese cultural symbols are important elements in forming an authentic leadership image. Ni Luh Djelantik explains her communication philosophy:

"Since I was a child, I was taught that talking must come from the heart. I can't use language that is complicated or too academic. I talk as if I am sitting in a banjar bale, chatting with mothers, fathers, and young people." (interview, 4 November 2025)

The findings of the study show that Ni Luh Djelantik's communication style on Instagram is perceived as firm, easy to understand, and not long-winded. Agus stated,

"I think his communication style is firm and easy to understand. He spoke as he was, not long-winded, so the message came quickly." (interview, October 24, 2025)

Komang emphasized,

"In my opinion, his communication style on Instagram is easy to understand and firm. It does not use complicated political language, so that the general public can understand the issues being discussed." (interview, October 24, 2025)

The use of Balinese cultural symbols in Ni Luh Djelantik's Instagram uploads is also an important element in symbolic representation. Ni Luh Djelantik emphasized that the use of cultural symbols is not just imagery:

"When I wear kebaya, kamen, frangipani flowers in my ears, simple hair is not an image. That's indeed the way I dressed since before I sat in the DPD. The cultural symbol that I display is a form of my devotion to Bali." (interview, 4 November 2025)

Yunita gave an academic analysis that

"Cultural symbols such as kebaya, kamen, Cambodian make the public immediately remember the identity of Bali. But most importantly, the symbol is used consistently and in line with the political values it brings." (Interview, November 7, 2025)

Candra explained the impact of this communication style:

"His visual style and language are very influential, his language that is to the point, emotional, and sometimes angry makes him look honest and not playful." (interview, October 23, 2025)

Ni Luh Djelantik's communication style is also perceived to be able to make politics feel closer and less scary for the general public. Candra emphasized,

"Yes, 100%! He deconstructed a political image that had always seemed high-class, boring, and full of small talk." (interview, October 23, 2025)

These findings are in line with research by Ramadhan et al. (2023) which shows that personal branding through consistent visual and language styles can strengthen political imagery and increase electability.

Criticism, Information, and Solutions for the Balinese People (Substantive Representation)

Substantive representation focuses on the extent to which a political representative truly advocates for the interests of constituents through real actions and policies delivered (Alifah, 2022; Bagaskara & Ma'ruf, 2025). In the context of Ni Luh Djelantik, substantive representation is reflected through Instagram content that not only contains criticism of government policies, but also provides educational information and constructive solutions for the Balinese people. Ni Luh Djelantik explains her content approach:

"For me, all three are important. But the most important thing is the solution. I don't want to just criticize and stop there. If the public DMs me about clean water, about rogue foreigners, about garbage, I don't post it right away. I checked the field first, I asked the person, I confirmed the facts." (interview, 4 November 2025)

The findings of the study show that Ni Luh Djelantik's content on Instagram is perceived as a combination of criticism, information, and solutions. Educational and informative content is also an added value in the substantive representation of Ni Luh Djelantik. Ni Luh Djelantik explains the educational function of Instagram:

"Social media is like a bridge. Often government policies are not conveyed clearly, so that people are confused or misunderstood. On Instagram, I can explain in simple language what the core of the policy is, what the impact is, who benefits." (interview, 4 November 2025)

From Komang and Candra's statements, it can be concluded that Ni Luh Djelantik's content has a strong educational function. Its ability to simplify complex political and policy issues makes information easier for the public to understand.

"Yes, his upload made me understand more about political and policy issues, especially those related to the Balinese people. He explains complex issues in simple language." (interview, October 23, 2025)

The relevance of the issues raised to the needs of the Balinese people is also a strong indicator of substantive representation, Candra explained more specifically,

"It's very appropriate. The issues he raises, especially motorcycle gangs, rogue tourists, local law enforcement, and the fate of MSMEs, are real-time issues that Balinese people face on a daily basis." (interview, October 23, 2025)

Yunita explained that

"The content is usually based on field facts. He did go down directly, saw the

situation, and then narrated it back to the public. It makes his substantive representation strong because he really voices the interests of people on the ground." (Interview, November 7, 2025)

Thus, an analysis of the four dimensions of political representation shows that Ni Luh Djelantik's political communication on Instagram is a holistic integration that strengthens each other in building a leadership image. Formal legitimacy as a member of DPD RI provides a foundation of credibility, descriptive identity as Balinese women creates emotional closeness, symbolic representation through a firm communication style and the use of local cultural symbols strengthen authenticity, while substantive representation through critical and solutive content proves a real commitment to the interests of the community. The image of leadership that is formed is a leader who is courageous, honest, cares about small communities, is rooted in local values, and is responsive to the actual problems faced by constituents.

Integration of the Four Dimensions of Political Representation in Building a Leadership Image

Analysis of the four dimensions of political representation shows that Ni Luh Djelantik's political communication on Instagram does not stand alone in one dimension, but is a holistic integration that strengthens each other in building a leadership image. Formal legitimacy as a member of DPD RI provides a foundation of credibility, descriptive identity as Balinese women creates emotional closeness, symbolic representation through a firm communication style and the use of local cultural symbols strengthen authenticity, while substantive representation through critical and solutive content proves a real commitment to the interests of the community.

The integration of these four dimensions creates what Budi et al. (2022) call a "holistic leadership image", where credibility, inspiration, emotional closeness, and consistency of actions combine into a complete whole. In the context of Ni Luh Djelantik, the leadership image formed is a leader who is courageous, honest, cares about small communities, is rooted in local values, and is responsive to the actual problems faced by constituents.

These findings are also in line with research by Widiastuti et al. (2022) which highlights that a positive leadership image is born from the leader's ability to empower constituents, establish harmonious social relationships, and encourage participation in decision-making. Ni Luh Djelantik realizes this through an interaction

pattern on Instagram that is not only one-way, but also creates a dialogue space where followers can submit complaints, provide additional information, and even be part of the advocacy process.

Furthermore, the study found that Instagram's social media functions as a "24-hour digital aspiration office" that opens direct access between elected representatives and constituents without complicated bureaucratic mediation. Candra described this phenomenon clearly, "Instagram is like an aspiration office that is open 24 hours, much more responsive than the office of ordinary people's representatives." This shows that political communication on social media has transformed traditional political representation patterns that are formal and limited to more accessible, responsive, and participatory.

These findings strengthen the argument of Noorikhshan et al. (2023) that social media has changed the dynamics of political communication from linear and top-down to interactive and participatory, allowing the public to play an active role in the production and dissemination of political information. In the context of Ni Luh Djelantik, Instagram is not just a tool for spreading political messages, but an arena for forming public opinion and mobilizing effective support.

Although Ni Luh Djelantik's political communication on Instagram is generally considered positive by informants, this study also found that there are challenges and ambiguities that need to be observed. Some informants highlighted that there is a blurring of boundaries between formal content as a state official and personal content as an individual. Agus stated, "There were moments where he really defended the interests of the community, but there were also posts that felt more like a personal opinion than a public official's statement."

This ambiguity reflects the dilemma faced by politicians in the age of social media: how to balance the formal role of a state official with the desire to display an authentic personal side and close to the community. On the one hand, content that is too formal tends to seem rigid and boring, making it less appealing to social media audiences. On the other hand, overly personal content risks blurring the line between personal opinions and official statements, which can lead to controversy or misunderstanding.

Research by Kurniasih and Setianti (2024) shows that successful politicians on social media are those who are able to find a balance between personal authenticity and professional responsibility. In the case of Ni Luh Djelantik, despite

the ambiguity, the majority of informants considered that this duality of role was actually a strength, because it made him look more human and not uprooted from the reality of people's daily lives.

Another challenge that arises is related to content patterns that contain more criticism than information about follow-ups or concrete results that have been achieved. Some informants assessed that while criticism is important to oversee government performance, a more balanced content between criticism, information, and follow-up updates will further strengthen the image of leadership that is not only vocal but also effective in bringing about real change.

From a theoretical perspective, this research contributes to the development of the study of digital political communication by showing how Hanna Pitkin's Theory of Political Representation, which was originally developed in a conventional political context, remains relevant and can be applied in the context of political communication on social media. The four dimensions of representation—formal, descriptive, symbolic, and substantive—have proven effective as an analytical framework for understanding how politicians build leadership images in the digital space.

This research also enriches the literature on women's political communication in Indonesia, especially in the context of regional women politicians who use social media as the main instrument of political communication. The findings of the study show that gender identity and local identity can be strong social capital in building political legitimacy and influence in the digital space, in line with the arguments of Bagaskara and Ma'ruf (2025) regarding the importance of descriptive representation in strengthening women's representation in politics.

Furthermore, this study shows that social media has changed the paradigm of political communication from broadcast (one-way) to conversational (two-way), from formal and bureaucratic to personal and accessible, and from elitist to populist. This paradigm shift opens up opportunities for politicians who previously did not have access to mainstream mass media to build influence and mobilize support directly through digital platforms.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that Ni Luh Djelantik's political communication through @niluhdjelantik Instagram account has succeeded in building a strong leadership

image through the holistic four-dimensional integration of Hanna Pitkin's Theory of Political Representation. Formal legitimacy as a member of the DPD RI provides a foundation of credibility and institutional authority that strengthens the weight of political messages, although its effectiveness depends on the consistency of real actions on the ground. Descriptive identities as Balinese women with a background of activists and entrepreneurs create emotional closeness and a strong sense of representation among constituents, proving that gender and local identities are important social capital in digital politics. Symbolic representation through a firm communication style, straightforward language, and consistent use of Balinese cultural symbols reinforces his authenticity and distinguishes him from other politicians, while making politics feel closer and less intimidating to ordinary people. Meanwhile, the substantive representation reflected in the content containing constructive criticism, educational information, and concrete solutions proves a real commitment to the interests of the Balinese people and successfully encourages political participation and mobilization of policy change. The integration of these four dimensions forms the image of holistic leadership as a leader who is courageous, honest, cares about small communities, is rooted in local values, and is responsive to the actual problems of constituents.

This research confirms that Instagram has transformed political communication from a top-down pattern to an interactive and participatory one, serving as a "24-hour digital aspiration office" that opens direct access between people's representatives and constituents without bureaucratic mediation, and is effective in building legitimacy and mobilizing political participation of the younger generation. This finding makes a theoretical contribution to the development of digital political communication studies by proving the relevance of Hanna Pitkin's Theory of Political Representation in the context of social media, as well as enriching the literature on regional women's political communication strategies in Indonesia that utilize digital platforms to build political influence without relying on big party machines.

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