

## Digital democracy and brokerage dynamics in regional head elections in Indonesia

### *Demokrasi digital dan dinamika broker dalam pemilihan kepala daerah di Indonesia*

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#### **Abstract**

The progress of the digitalization era in democracy has led to changes in the current political contestation, especially the way candidates approach voters. This study explores broker schemes in the digital world regarding how candidates use social media to build a broker network. This study used qualitative research, by observing social media and interviewing several key informants. This study finds that in the era of digital democracy, candidates use social media to develop digital brokers, but as a pre-elaboration and intensively introduce the candidate's real work to voters. Some candidates believe that conventional brokers are still final in knowing and binding broker loyalty, but winning candidates experiment with digital brokers. On the other hand, digital democracy has provided space for candidates to focus on brokers on social media to code the brokers who will be targeted or nominated to become structured conventional brokers. This study expands the study of brokers in electoral political studies, especially insights related to digital brokerage schemes and adds focus to the study of regional elections in Indonesia. This study concludes that digital brokers are a strategy for expanding digital voter networks and persuading candidates' work to voters on social media in the long term.

**Keywords:** conventional broker; digital brokers; digital democracy; Palangka Raya; regional head elections

#### **Abstrak**

*Kemajuan era digitalisasi dalam demokrasi telah memunculkan perubahan kontestasi politik saat ini, khususnya cara kandidat mendekati pemilih. Studi ini mengeksplorasi skema broker dalam dunia digital terkait bagaimana kandidat memanfaatkan media sosial untuk membangun jaringan broker. Studi ini menggunakan penelitian kualitatif, dengan mengobservasi media sosial dan mewawancarai beberapa informan kunci. Studi ini menemukan bahwa di era demokrasi digital kandidat menggunakan media sosial untuk mengembangkan broker digital namun sebagai pra elaborasi dan memperkenalkan kerja nyata kandidat kepada pemilih secara intensif. Beberapa kandidat meyakini bahwa broker konvensional masih bersifat final dalam mengetahui dan mengikat loyalitas broker, namun kandidat pemenang bereksperimen dengan broker digital. Di sisi lain, demokrasi digital telah memberi ruang bagi kandidat untuk fokus pada broker di media sosial dalam rangka kodifikasi broker yang akan disasar atau dicalonkan menjadi broker konvensional terstruktur. Studi ini memperluas kajian tentang broker dalam studi elektoral politik, khususnya wawasan terkait skema broker digital dan menambah fokus dalam kajian Pilkada di Indonesia. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa broker digital merupakan strategi dalam memperluas jaringan pemilih digital dan mempersuasi kerja kandidat kepada pemilih di media sosial dalam waktu yang panjang.*

**Kata kunci:** broker konvensional; broker digital; demokrasi digital; Palangka Raya; pemilihan kepala daerah

#### **Introduction**

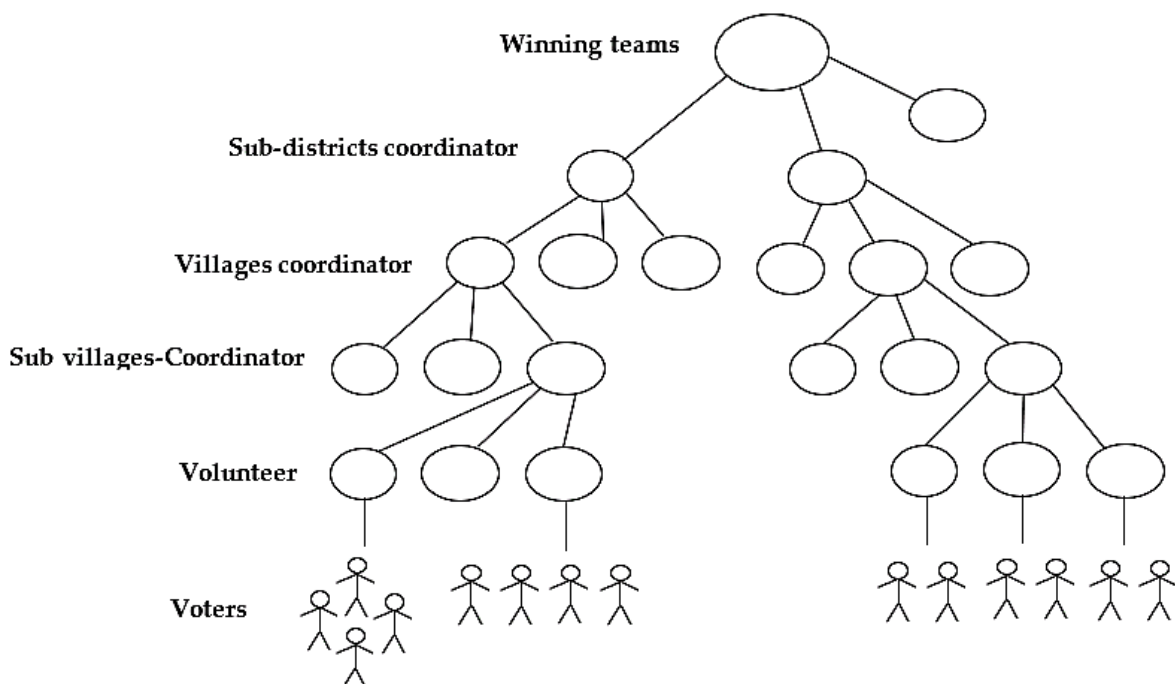
Data from the Ministry of Communication and Information shows that in 2021, internet users in Indonesia will increase by 11% from the previous year, from 175.4 million to 202.6 million users (Agustina 2021). This significant growth affected Indonesia's political polarization as evidenced by the use of social media by political parties to disseminate missions, maintain and seek new networks,

and carry out campaigns to win public support and sympathy (Subiakto & Ida 2017, Putri & Fithrah 2018, Wahyudi 2018).

Digitalization technology has made a big change in all aspects, including political developments. A democracy brings various kinds of influences so that it changes the style of political participation (Bell et al. 2004, Wiggins & Bowers 2015); ways of political mobilization, campaign strategies, the polarization of public opinion, governance (Gilardi 2016); website use in political branding (Bimber & Davis 2003, Trippi 2005, Chadwick 2006, Foot et al. 2006); changes in political communication methods (Shahreza 2017).

The brokerage is a scheme that connects candidates and voters (Hicken 2011). All candidates in the election are not able to interact directly with such a large mass of voters so an alternative emerges to use brokerage services as an intermediary to meet voters (Stokes et al. 2013). Brokers are the same as success teams (Habibi 2021) which are social network machines formed by candidates to optimize their efforts to reach voters (Aspinall 2014a, Aspinall & Sukmajati 2015, Aspinall et al. 2017). The tough task of brokers is to ensure voter loyalty (Wang & Kurzman 2007, Stokes et al. 2013). The broker's mechanism in winning candidates varies depending on the characteristics of the community. According to Aspinall and Sukmajati (2015), the broker itself is tasked with recruiting voters who can be part of the broker chain. They are tasked with targeting voters from various backgrounds, including close friends, neighbors, business associates, family and other close associates.

The point is that the brokerage network builds a reciprocal relationship with voters and plays the psychology of voters to lock in certain candidates (Schaffer & Schedler 2002, Sobel 2005, Leider et al. 2009 Ravanilla et al. 2017). A study by Aspinall (2014a) states that the success of a candidate is largely determined by the loyalty of the broker. Loyalty can be seen from their behavior that delays material benefits and builds long-term relationships. On the other hand, there is also opportunistic brokerage behavior, motivated by short-term material gains. Brokers of this category usually work during the campaign season by reaping material benefits from candidates for distribution to voters. Aspinall and Sukmajati (2015) summarize various electoral studies that the formation of brokers by candidates is carried out systematically from the winning centre team, sub-district, village to the voter level, as shown in Figure 1.

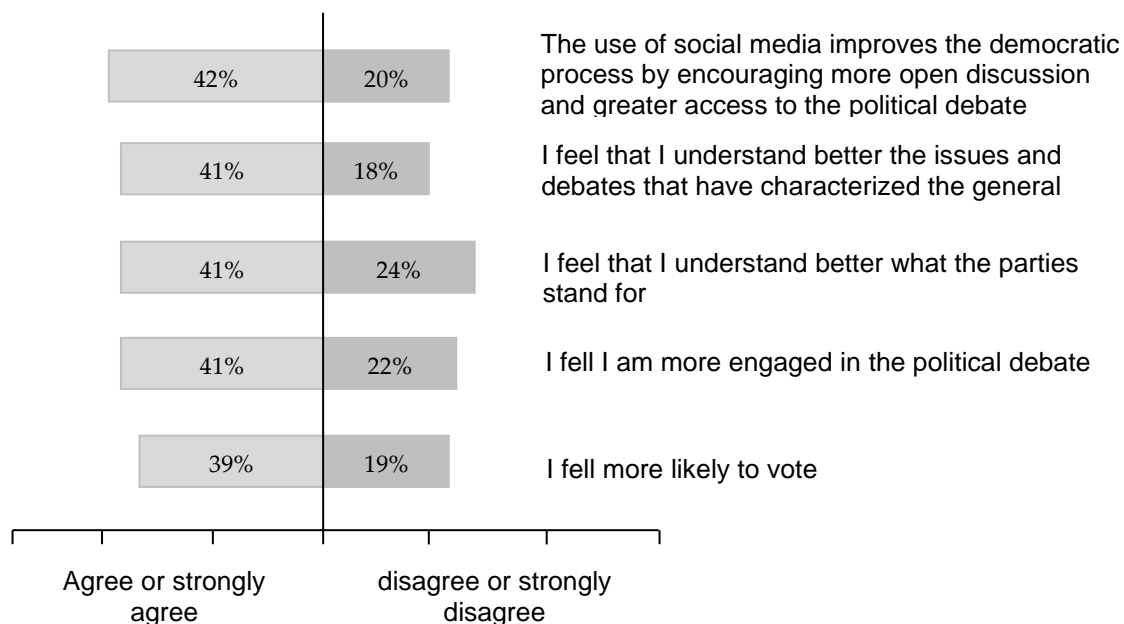


**Figure 1.**  
Winning teams structure  
Source: Aspinall & Sukmajati (2015)

Conversely, several works of literature have described a positive relationship between digital media use and voter political participation (Bimber 2001, DiMaggio et al. 2001, Bimber & Davis 2003, Tolbert & McNeal 2003, Shah et al. 2005, Xenos & Moy 2007, Boulianne 2009, Cho et al. 2009, Bakker & De Vreese 2011, Gainous & Wagner 2011). Howard and Hussain (2011) explore digital media as a means of influencing voters in elections, some of which track social media, such as Facebook, blog, WhatsApp, mailing lists, websites, YouTube, Twitter; online communities (Zhou 2011).

Meanwhile, the emergence of digital media makes it easy to obtain information flow, which causes a decrease in the use of old media (Strömbäck et al. 2013). They know that the characteristic of voters to surf into the digital world is to reduce the uncertainty and uncertainty they feel about the election (Kankanhalli et al. 2005, Yuan et al. 2007). If conventionally, voters can ask directly from their colleagues (Cross et al. 2001, Morrison 2002, Palazzolo 2005, Yuan et al. 2010). The studies of Monge et al. (2003) study information via social networks and focus on reciprocal relationships. Similar to Yuan et al. (2010) they view that every member of an organization can be influenced by other communication networks as well as reciprocal information retrieval. This emphasis would like to suggest that the role of digital media in providing political information in networks is very large. Society today is easier to receive information from the media than information from friends in the work environment (Palazzolo 2005).

Miller's (2016) research traces political activity in the UK which is concentrated on Facebook and, to a lesser extent, Twitter. Voters have received political content on social media, i.e. 83% received it on Facebook (32% of all social media users), 25% on Twitter, 9% on YouTube, 7% on WhatsApp, 3% on Instagram and 2% on Reddit. According to him, talking about politics is part of the digital life of most social media users in the UK (see Figure 2). People do this proactively, contribute content as often as they receive it, and especially communicate with people they know and don't know. This occurs across all age groups but is most significant among younger social media users.



**Figure 2.**  
The benefits of political discussion on social media  
Source: Miller (2016)

Of course, Hara (2008) affirms empirical evidence that the widespread use of the internet and mobile technology has dominated the American presidential campaign since 2000. Then, Bimber and Davis (2003) and Bimber and Copeland (2013b) focus on candidate websites during the 2000 election and their impact on voter behavior. Also, it was found that the internet makes a big difference for

candidates and voters (Smith 2009) and the internet disseminates valuable data about policies, programs, candidates and other political actors. Social networking sites were intensified so that nearly half of all Americans use the internet for political information (Chadwick & Howard 2009). Elections with younger voters and Obama supporters were more likely to use this technology (Smith 2009). Candidates according to Hindman (2005) use various technologies in their efforts to reach voters and win elections.

The internet has become a common campaign tool and uses web pages for information on qualifications, careers, personal achievements and policy positions. Candidate e-mails and homepages have become popular for organizing campaign events, mobilizing supporters and distributing information. Then, (Herrnson et al. 2007) suggest that candidates should focus on online political campaigns because according to the results of their research, younger and more educated constituents interact more with the internet as a reference in deciding their political choices. In Indonesia, Lim (2017) conducted a study of the 2017 Jakarta *Pilkada* case. Lim exploratively explained the relationship between social media and electoral politics. According to him, social media has created polarization in Indonesian society and framed contestation to create opposing views, such as rational versus racist, democratic and non-democratic.

The previous study discussed brokers with a focus on the working mechanism and the role of brokers as a liaison between candidates and voters in a structured manner with a face-to-face method. They are limited in disclosing brokerage schemes in the digital world. On the other hand, some literature has discussed the relationship between digital media and electoral politics, particularly the effect of digital media on contestation and the use of digital media on candidate wins. They don't talk about the broker's side but the response of social media users to the electability of candidates. The weaknesses of previous studies are limited in revealing digital democracy and broker dynamics.

This study fills the existing void, wants to expand the discussion regarding brokers, that the candidates themselves use the momentum of digitalization in election contestations in Indonesia, especially regional head elections. What are the dynamics of brokers in digital democracy? The purpose of this study is to explore broker schemes in the digital world regarding how candidates use social media to build a broker network. Does the broker in social media have a significant impact on the candidate's victory compared to conventional brokers? This study expands the study of brokers in electoral political studies, especially insights related to digital brokers in the study of regional elections in Indonesia.

## Research Method

This research used a qualitative approach. This study was conducted by observing election activities in Palangka Raya City in 2018, including political discussion activities on social media. This study interviewed 30 people, including the leader of the winning team, members of the winning team, admin of Instagram, Facebook, and WhatsApp, and members of social media accounts. The way we work is to browse and observe social media accounts, Instagram, Facebook and WhatsApp groups. We rely on interview data with key informants by focusing on broker development on candidate social media. Data collection was carried out from September 2017 to July 2018.

The results of observations on social media accounts were mapped in the broker scheme. We underlined the results of the discussions on social media as points of depth that were explored during the interview. We rely on triangulation methods to guarantee validity. Data from observations and interviews were analyzed interactively (Miles et al. 2018), namely by organizing data, describing them into units, synthesizing, organizing into patterns, choosing what is important and what will be studied, and concluding. Data analysis was carried out to find out broker dynamics about conventional methods and digital brokers, especially the position of digital brokers in candidate contests.

## Results and Discussion

### A brief overview of the pilkada results

Palangka Raya is the capital of Central Kalimantan Province, consisting of five sub-districts, including Jekan Raya, Pahandut, Sabangau, Bukit Batu, and Rakumpit Districts. The number of voters participating in the elections was 176,823 people spread over five districts. According to the Election Commission of Palangka Decree Number 18/HK.03.1-Pt/6271/Kota/II/ 2018, there are four pairs of mayor candidates, among them: (1) Rusliansyah–Rogas Usup, (2) Fairid Naparin–Umi Mastikah, (3) Tuty Dau–Rahmadi, and (4) Aries Narang–Habib Fawzy. Voting was conducted on July 27 2018 which took place in 592 Polling Stations. Although from the beginning many candidates were predicted to win the contestation, the final result was won by the couple Fairid Naparin–Umi Mastikah, such as Table 1.

**Table 1.**  
Vote count recapitulation results 2018

Candidate Pair	Vote Result (%)
Fairid Naparin–Umi Mastikah	50.44
Aries Narang–Habib Fawzi	38.47
Rusliansyah–Rogas Usup	15.80
Tuty Dau–Rahmadi	9.77
Total Valid Voice	114.47

Source: KPU of Palangka Raya, adapted by author

Table 1 shows that Fairid Naparin-Umi Mastikah is 50.44% ahead of other candidates, even though Aries Narang-Habib Fawzi is predicted to win the contestation due to the supporting party factor, namely the PDI-P who always carved a victory in the previous legislative election, then power the other resources, including experience, motion and popularity.

### Where do brokers come from?

Each candidate has a successful team and their role is to build a winning network both conventionally (face-to-face) and through the digital world. In a digital context, the successful team manages an account, such as Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp. The purpose of the existence of the account is so that the success team can recruit brokers (volunteers) to be invited to join in winning candidates. This study traces that brokers are those who have fluency in the use of the internet and social media. The results of observations on social media accounts, the candidate's success team invite followers of social media (broker) accounts to join the candidate's success team. It is known that most of the brokers come from the younger generation.

The administrator of the @Jamu-Fairid account (short for "Jaringan Anak Muda Fairid") when interviewed explained that he was a volunteer who opened an account to support and attract young people to support Fairid Naparin-Umi Mastikah. Young people recruited to become volunteers or brokers come from youth organizations (KNPI and Pemuda Pancasila), sports clubs, music clubs, mosques and church youth and students. Not only that, brokers also come from the elderly and mothers who are fluent in using social media.

As in Figure 3, the success team of Rusliansyah-Rogas Usup invites followers, with an invitation: "Hello Pahari Rusli-Rogas, if you want to register as a volunteer, you can come directly to the volunteer post located on Jalan Temanggung Tilung VII no. 24 and Kariraman streets or you can register yourself on the Kawal2R application which can be downloaded on your Android phone." An invitation also came from the success team of Fairid Naparin-Umi Mastikah, which was conveyed on the Instagram account @fairidcenter, by displaying photos of 3 young people and the invitation read "they are with Fairid Umi, when are you? Let's join together with Fairid-Umi volunteers." The invitation from the success team got a response from followers and they asked how to register to

become a volunteer. Unlike the candidate Rusliansyah-Rogas Usup, it makes it easier for followers to register as volunteers because an android application is provided.

Young people who were targeted by the success team have become a phenomenon in the regional head elections in Indonesia, no different from what the “Teman Ahok” (friend of Ahok) volunteers did in the 2017 *Pilkada* of Jakarta (Susanti et al. 2021). This phenomenon is also linear with the data that the millennial generation dominates social media users in Indonesia. In a report entitled “Digital 2021: The Latest Insights into The State of Digital,” it is stated that the penetration rate for social media is around 61.8%. In other words, of a total of 274.9 million people in Indonesia, 170 million of them have used social media. The use of social media is dominated by generations Y and Z who mostly come from young people with an age range of 25-34 years (Stephanie 2021).

### Brokerage dynamics in “digital” and “conventional” features

Based on the observations, each candidate optimizes the role of the broker in the framework of mobilizing electoral support. However, it is interesting to illustrate that each candidate has used digital media such as Facebook (Fb), Instagram (IG) and WhatsApp (WA) as a means to build a broker's network. According the winning teams of the campaign, they opened a social media account and a communication network to form communities while distributing profiles of candidates to the voting. Segmentation of the voters is aimed at novice voters who interact more in cyberspace. More about the social media network scheme for each candidate can be seen in Figure 3 below.

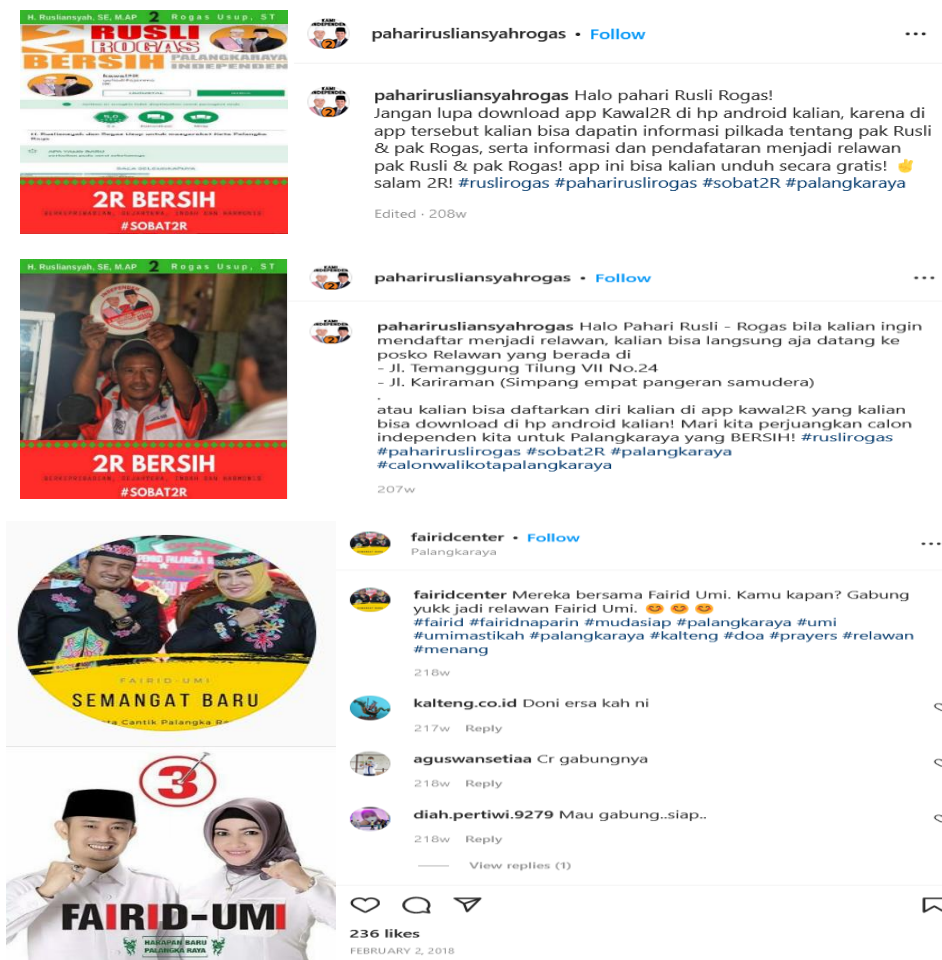
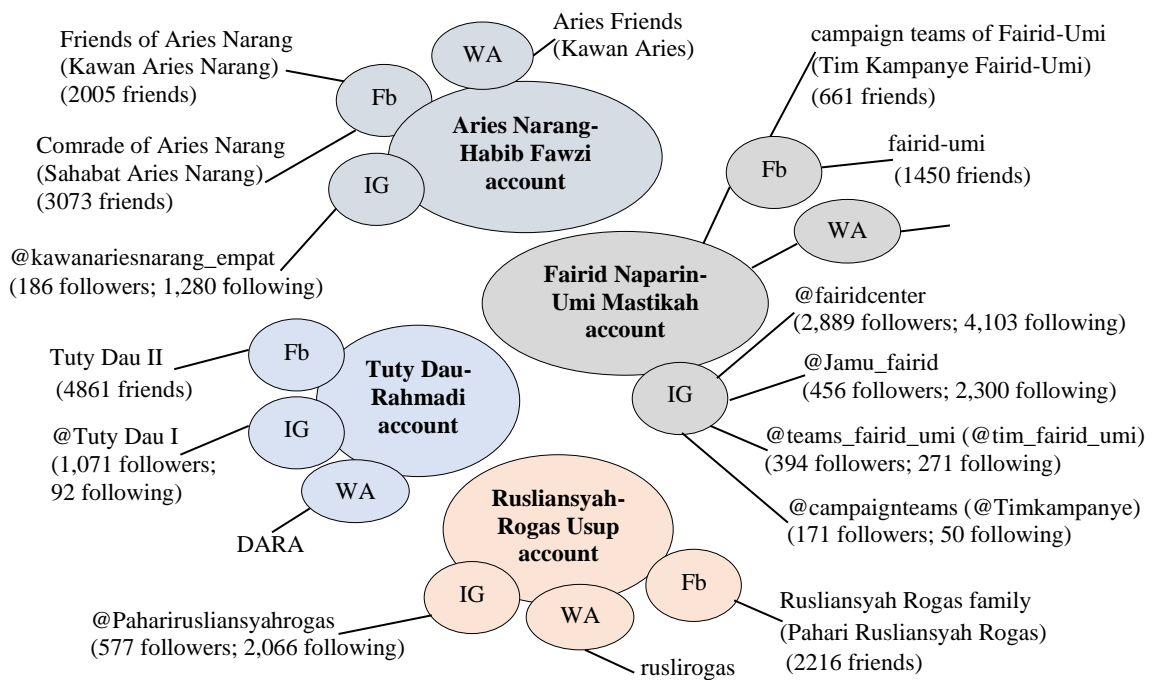


Figure 3.

Screenshot invitation to brokers to join the candidate success team  
 Source: @pahariusliansyahrogas, @fairidcenter Instagram account

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**Figure 4.**  
Digital media brokerage for each candidate  
Source: Secondary data processed in 2019, adapted by author

Figure 4 shows each candidate uniformly used digital media for finding a broker network, but variations can be seen in terms of the quantity and frequency that responds to the media. Correlation of the number of voters who respond to the most linear-digital media with the winning candidate. This fact is a factor in the victory of the pairs Fairid Naparin - Umi Mastikah. As confirmed from the interview with the winning team:

“We approach candidates with voters by creating a social media account. We hope that the account forms its network as it already did. Our target is to get as many followers as possible. Some of us even notice that our followers also become followers of other candidates.” (Informant HEN).

Meanwhile, the conventional broker's network formation method is still used as a strategy for gaining electoral support from all candidates. Aries Narang - Habib Fawzy winning teams claimed that the candidate had a very powerful electoral machine because it was carried by the Party of Indonesian Democratic Struggle (PDIP) if it was calculated that voter loyalty and deep-rooted networks would almost certainly ensure that Aries Narang - Habib Fawzy had a chance to win the election. Aries Narang - Habib Fawzy winning teams, said:

“Informing our broker network, we optimize the network of winning teams formed by the party in a structured way. We continue to use the brokers' network through Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp to strengthen the network in a structured manner. Digital media networks have not been able to convince us because the level of loyalty is difficult to predict, uncontrolled and biased.” (Informant FER).

Several studies show that candidates complain about broker loyalty even though they are already in the winning broker structure. The Study of Aspinall (2014b) and Tawakkal et al. (2017) explained that broker loyalty depends on voter motivation, especially what benefits voters get from winning candidates, both in the short and long term. Indeed, Haridison (2021) showed that the problem of candidate loyalty in the conventional method is handled by binding brokers with continuous material provision until the election period. It seems reasonable that the doubts of the Aries Narang – Habib Fawzy winning team did not prioritize the digital broker network in the Palangka Raya election.

As with the other two candidates, the pattern and form of capturing voters through the broker method are more of a conventional pattern as is their experience in winning legislative elections at the city and provincial levels. They agreed that the use of social media and WhatsApp communication networks could improve efficiency and effectiveness in reaching out to voter networks, but the difficulty was in mapping voter commitments. Why does the commitment be difficult to map? One of the winning teams stated:

“We observe that many brokers belonging to Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp groups are also in the other candidate groups. They are categorized into voters who are difficult to predict the direction of their support. They are motivated to seek benefits in each candidate programme.” (Informant JAN).

Meanwhile, some candidates have not seen the digital method as a means that can expand voter networks, because it is believed that the control tools for the use of social media and communication networks are difficult to predict the results, so they continue to focus on using conventional methods to expand voter networks. They believe more in verbal communication (face to face) between candidates and voters or between colleagues (brokers) and the work environment (Cross et al. 2001, Morrison 2002, Palazzolo 2005, Yuan et al. 2010). The belief of some candidates not to put the digital method as the main approach in the formation of brokers is due to avoiding opportunistic brokerage behavior (Aspinall 2014b) or dual status. Whereas, interaction in digital networks is not a matter of dual status, but merely the formation of reciprocal relationships related to voter opinions (Monge et al. 2003).

Several studies discuss broker reciprocity in face-to-face situations. Brokers form repeated reciprocal relationships in social networks so that individuals can see the benefits of joining the network. Observations on the candidate's social media show that the candidate's success team uses social media to display what the candidate has done for the public who have the potential to become voters so that followers are moved to become winning brokers. Conventional brokers (face-to-face) as in the previous study are tasked with targeting voters from various backgrounds, such as close friends, neighbors, business relations, family, and other close relationships ( Schaffer & Schedler 2002, Sobel 2005, Leider et al. 2009, Aspinall & Sukmajati 2015, Ravanilla et al. 2017). The weak point of this study lies in the level of dissemination of information to prospective brokers, compared to when it was done digitally.

It is interesting to learn further that the success team of Fairid Naparin – Umi Mastikah believes in the view that establishing a digital broker network can develop networks and information to voters quickly and enlarge conventional broker networks (Palazzolo 2005, Yuan et al. 2010). This emphasis would like to suggest that the role of digital media in providing political information in the network is very large. The transformation to a digital approach in seeking confidence in political decisions is confirmed in the *Pilkada* of Palangka Raya. According to the statement of the winning team or the success team, there is no target number of volunteers (brokers), but what is important is reciprocity.

The effort of the candidate Fairid Naparin – Umi Mastikah is very effective in building a broker chain from digital media and digital communication networks to influence followers to join as volunteers (brokers). As the winning team stated,

“We have built a voter base long before the nomination of candidates via specially created individual accounts. The basis is each other's network of friends. The target is the young voters of Palangka Raya, which is around 30% of the total voters. We, the winning team, know the aspirations of the voters through direct discussions and on social media and WhatsApp accounts for approximately one year before the nomination of candidates, so segmentation programs to the voter base have been running, such as sports clubs, youth recitations, entertainment and campus student activities, as well as the household needs of residents such as environmental improvement programs.” (Informant YAN).



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**Figure 5.**  
Screenshot of sample social media content before becoming a candidate  
Source: @fairidcenter Instagram account

It is known that the social media account was deliberately created to display the figure of Fairid Naparin to the voters of Palangka Raya City before the election period took place. The movement of social media had been going on for a year earlier. Figure 5 is the sample selected and describes the activities of the Fairid Naparin before becoming a candidate. Social activities are then posted on social media to psychologically arouse followers. Some content is also submitted on YouTube and then re-posted on social media. The meaning contained here is that a young and energetic figure has had many relationships and networks in all segments. Relationships built face-to-face in various activities will be new information to eliminate follower doubts about who the potential candidates will

be. The establishment of a digital broker has already started when the team successfully posted all Fairid activities and activities. In the next stage, when the candidate has been determined, the success team then invites all followers to join as volunteers, as seen in Figure 3.

### Digital campaigns and how brokers do a campaign for candidates

Referring to the opinion of Howard and Hussain (2011), there is a positive relationship between the use of digital media voters and this would like to emphasize the target of the candidate in expanding the brokerage network mostly to internet users. According to Strömbäck et al. (2013), the ease of seeking information about politics through digital media can quickly reduce doubts and ambiguity (Kankanhalli et al. 2005, Yuan et al. 2007) about candidate profiles rather than having to come to an open campaign. The use of the internet and online communication networks influences the candidate's campaign tradition in contestation in the *Pilkada* of Palangka Raya, specifically conveying the candidate's platform via social media, such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, and YouTube.

The fact that occurred in the *Pilkada* of Palangka Raya was that candidates used digital methods in channeling profiles and carrying out campaigns to influence voters. By tracing several candidates' social media accounts, this study found that digital campaigns were carried out by creating content with the tagline “young, independent and progressive,” posting candidate activities in interaction with voters, and posting brokers in interpreting candidates in their way. Figure 6 is a sample of posts on candidates' social media accounts.

Besides displaying photos of their candidate pairs, they also describe their respective figures on social media walls. As the account @paharirusliansyah writes: “The prospective leader is the one who is always close to his people, who always listens to the aspirations of his people, and always looks for solutions for his people! Ready to serve the residents of Palangka Raya cleanly! Regards 2R.” The @kawanariesnarang account reads: “we are serial number 4 Aries M. Narang and Habib Fawzi as Mayor and Deputy Mayor of Palangka Raya for the 2018-2023 period, #we are nationalists #we are united #we fight #we really win #let's get closer and fight together.” Then the @fairidcenter account wrote: “If I run for mayor only for personal gain and enrich myself, I am now 32 years old, then at 37 years old my career will be ruined. I will not be trusted again by the community, it is the same as destroying the future, I intend to serve and prosper the people of Palangka Raya.” Then Umi Mastikah was also popularized, as the description on the @tim\_fairid\_umi account reads: “For me, a position is a service to the community, especially as a woman I certainly want to see women and women in Palangka Raya can be independent.”



Figure 6.

Candidate profile screenshot on social media

Source: Instagram @paharirusliansyahrogas, @kawanariesnarang, @fairidcenter, @tim\_fairid\_umi

After conducting a search on each candidate's account, it was found that only the Fairid Naparin-Umi Mastikah candidate pair were intensively using social media to campaign for their vision, mission and superior programs. Several brokers interviewed said they were greatly helped by this kind of information (see Figure 7) without having to meet and ask candidates. The era of digitalization shows people who seem passive in interacting in the real world but are actually active on social media.

The approach of the Fairid Naparin - Umi Mastikah winning team in finding electoral support is in line with Miller's (2016) study in the UK regarding the percentage of recipients of political content on social media. The main assumption developed is that the community is always proactive in discussing politics and contributing content to respond to the debate. Those who are dominated by beginner voters discuss reciprocally in the digital world and naturally expand the network to other virtual worlds. According to the winning team of Fairid Naparin - Umi Mastikah, he said:

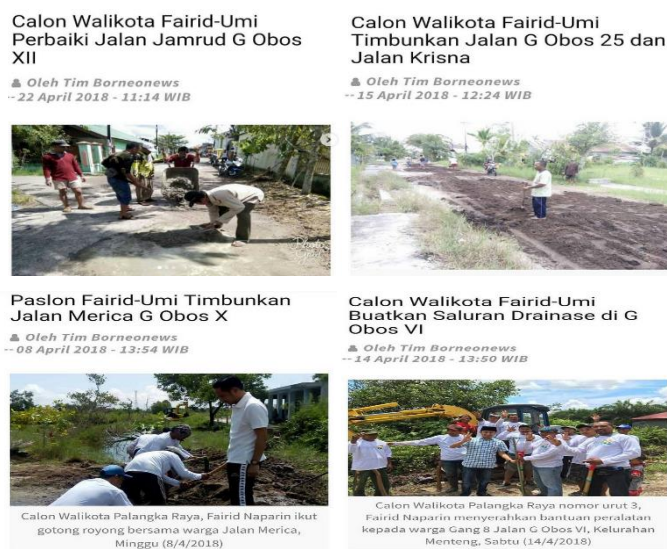
"We observe that the highest participation of voters responding to media is on Instagram, WhatsApp, Twitter, and finally Facebook. A very intense discussion took place in the WhatsApp group regarding the direction of the development of Palangka Raya and the aspirations of the new mayor. The main aspiration is related to the improvement of road infrastructure when during the rainy season it is flooded with water and even flooding and overflowing drainage because it is not connected." (Informant MIK).



Figure 7.

Screenshot of candidate's vision, mission and program on social media  
Source: @fairidcenter and @tim\_fairid\_umi Instagram accounts

The reality on the ground itself revealed that the winning team's prediction of the benefits of political discussion on social media was in line with Miller's (2016) study where political discussion on social media increased voter involvement and confidence to vote during the elections (Figure 2). This study found that successful teams performed repeated affirmations and extensions of information. This means that the candidate's real actions are repeated over and over again in every social media account, both the success team and the broker. Massive delivery of information on social media as if the followers are involved in the real activity and in this context reciprocity occurs.



**Figure 8.**

Screenshots of activities during the campaign on social media

Source: the account of @fairidcenter Instagram and @tim\_kampanye\_fairid\_umi Facebook

Figure 8 is a candidate's activity as a result of the community's aspirations for the hope of progress in the City of Palangka Raya and then accommodated by the candidate during the campaign period. Candidates make improvements in residential areas, such as road infrastructure and drainage. Candidates are also involved in the activity and assist in the form of equipment. This tangible evidence reduces the risk of betrayal and gives digital brokers confirmation of the seriousness of the candidate in meeting their expectations.



**Figure 9.**

Screenshot of the broker's campaign popularizing the candidate on social media

Source: The account of @fairidcenter and @jamu\_fairid Instagram, @tim\_kampanye\_fairid\_umi Facebook

An interesting finding of this study is that the candidate's efforts to cross conventional and digital strategies affect brokers' interest and volunteerism in re-camping their views on the candidate's actions on social media. Figure 9 is representative evidence of the many testimonies on the activities of candidates who they think are suitable to be regional leaders and deserve to be conveyed massively to social media connoisseurs. According to the experience of the success team, this posting of

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candidate activities has aroused the curiosity of other people to get to know the candidate more closely. According to Bimber and Davis (2003), Hindman (2005), Herrnson et al. (2007), Hara (2008), Chadwick and Howard (2009), Smith (2009) and Bimber and Copeland (2013), it has not yet been shown the method to bind brokers to be loyal and have a commitment to vote. They only display the benefits and targets of internet users in political campaigns. Although the Fairid Naparini-Umi Mastikah success team acknowledged the issue of digital broker commitment, the candidate's victory confirmed that their efforts were successful. However, based on the results of the interview bahwa tim sukses meyakini ketika mereka memberi bantuan dan merealisasikan aspirasi maka loyalitas akan terbangun. Preferences and aspirations are recorded and identified and then formed into candidate programs that are realized during a political campaign. This is as said by the campaign team of Fairid Naparini - Umi Mastikah:

"We realized the aspirations of social media during the campaign, including mass fogging. We along with the candidates, fogged in the market and residential areas. Then, a free treatment program to respond to brokers' complaints regarding low public health services. Free medical activities are carried out in all districts, targeting households and the poor. Furthermore, the distribution of free water pumps is the reason to prevent house fires. Communities that are not accessed by fire trucks often ask for free water pumps to anticipate when there is a house fire. Also do not forget, assistance to staple to restore flood-affected communities. One of the aspirations of concern is also the assistance of mutual assistance to the community to improve drainage and hoard a bumpy road in one of the sub-districts. Finally, the improvement of sports facilities and assistance for the implementation of sports events, especially futsal, badminton, volleyball, and motorcycle clubs." (Informant RIN).



**Figure 10.**  
Screenshots of the benefits obtained by the broker  
Source: The account of @fairidcenter and @jamu\_fairid Instagram, @tim\_kampanye\_fairid\_umi Facebook and YouTube

In the Palangka Raya election, it was found that the broker's profits were categorized as short-term (direct) and long-term (post-election) vantages. Aspinall (2014b) mentions that the vantages for brokers can be in the form of programmatic assistance and cash. This is a form of candidates' belief that the assistance will bind them to the electorate. Vice versa, Tawakkal et al. (2017) explained that the belief between the candidate and the broker is determined by the social norms agreed upon by both of them and this also applies in digital democracy. The facilities and infrastructure assistance in Figure 8 is evidence that represents the direct vantages received by the broker. A lot of assistance was given by the candidates, such as programmatic in sports clubs, direct assistance to mothers of recitation and religious activities, orphanages, community groups in Palangka Raya City. Even to this day when he was mayor, his priority toward infrastructure remained consistent, particularly the maintenance of roads and drainage in Palangka Raya City, assistance for education and character development for youth and is referred to as a long-term vantage, as seen in Figure 10.

## Conclusion

This study concludes that each candidate uses social media as a means to reach voters, but the difference lies in the packaging strategy, intensity and reciprocity. The winning candidate appreciates social media tools in constructing a digital broker for a long time to create an image for followers. All the real activities of candidates and candidates are neatly documented and then posted on social media so that followers feel involved with the candidate's activities and this cycle creates continuous reciprocity. From the aspect of the role, the pattern of using social media is not much different from previous studies. It's just that the difference lies in the benefits obtained; in the West social media is used to obtain political information and rational discussion about electoral politics that is currently happening. However, the results of this study indicate that social media is focused on the benefits obtained by candidates in identifying brokers and mapping out brokers that can be invited to join.

Do the dynamics of brokers in this digital democracy provide significant results for candidates concerning conventional brokers that are the focus of electoral studies in Indonesia? We are of the view based on this research study that the development of digital brokers is a pre-elaboration for the codification of those who can be further targeted as brokers and disseminate information about candidates so that other followers can be inspired and join. Some candidates believe that the digital broker's problem is related to broker loyalty. However, the winning candidate constructs social media as a means of interaction between the candidate's real work to voters and digital brokers and in turn the digital broker becomes a means of intermediary to the followers (voters) and is more effective. Successful teams do this scheme repeatedly and consistently.

Several previous studies have not discussed digital brokers in the structured activities of conventional brokers. Instead, it discusses in depth the activities of brokers reciprocally in a real environment so as to produce a standard scheme as depicted in Figure 1. However, the findings in this article provide further insight into the relational conception of broker dynamics, both conventional (real) and digital. This finding synthesizes a candidate broker model in convincing voters and efforts to obtain a greater electoral effect. Through this study, it was revealed that there are other dimensions of candidate winning that were not unraveled in previous studies.

This finding expands the study of brokers in Indonesia, that the study of digital brokers strengthens candidate projections in targeting prospective brokers to be chosen as conventional brokers. Based on our study, there is an inseparable series between digital brokers and conventional brokers. The use of digital media in electoral studies in Indonesia is very beneficial if the goal is for the political intelligence of voters, not solely for the short-term interests of candidates.

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