

Understanding the Indonesian mediapolis: The role of social media during the 2014 Indonesian presidential election

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Abstract

This article examines the role of social media during the 2014 Indonesian presidential election. It analyses how candidates used Facebook and Twitter and how celebrities were enlisted to promote candidates to their fans. The coinciding development of rapid internet literacy, together with the introduction of a direct election system that appeals to identity- and celebrity-driven politics, came together to make social media a central part of Indonesian elections. This confluence has radically altered the conduct of campaigns. In order to explain this transformation, it is necessary to understand the nature of the Indonesian mediated public sphere, characterised by strong inter-media connections between social media and broadcast forms.

Introduction

In recent years, the influence of social media during election campaigns has become a source of much speculation for political analysts and election watchers around the world. The most prominent and extensive works are probably the ones conducted within the US political settings, such as analyses of Facebook in the 2008 US presidential election (Bronstein 2013; Goodnow 2013; Vitak et al. 2011; Woolley, Limperos, & Oliver 2010) and Twitter in the 2012 US presidential election (Houston, Hawthorne, Spialek, Greenwood, & McKinney 2013; Vargo, Guo, McCombs, & Shaw 2014).

Researchers have replicated such investigations in other developed democracies such as Australia, the UK and Sweden. The use of social media by political parties and

politicians has been surveyed in the 2010 Australian elections (Macnamara & Kenning 2011, 2014), as well as Twitter during the 2012 Queensland state election (Bruns & Highfield 2013), Facebook and Twitter in the 2010 UK election (Baxter, Marcella, & Varfis 2011; Graham, Broersma, Hazelhoff, & van't Haar 2013; Jackson & Lilleker 2011) and Twitter in the 2010 Swedish election (Larsson & Moe 2012).

However, in Asian and African countries, studies involving the influence of social media in the marketing of political parties and during elections are sparse. Some studies examine the influence of social media during Asian elections, such as the 2008 and 2013 general elections in Malaysia (Gomez 2014; Gong 2011; Liow 2012; Sani & Zengeni 2010), Thailand's 2013 general election (Grömping 2014) and general elections in Singapore (Lee & Kan 2009; Skoric, Poor, Achananuparp, Lim, & Jiang 2011; Sreekumar & Vadrevu 2013). However where there has been analysis of social media and politics in Asia and Africa, it has generally been confined to looking at social movements and political activism. Svensson (2014) has examined the use of social media as a means of political discussion in China, Weiss (2014) and Liu (2012) scrutinized the use of social media in support of political activism in Malaysia, Indonesia, and Singapore. Soriano and Sreekumar (2012) examined the incorporation of social media by a political dissent group, Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), in the Philippines. Howard, Duffy, Freelon, Hussain, Mari, and Mazaid (2011) and Lotan, Graeff, Ananny, Gaffney, and Pearce (2011) are among the many studies probing the roles of social media in regard to political activism in the Middle East and North African regions during the Arab Spring of 2011. The Arab Spring was the most prominent, and perhaps the most scrutinised, event with regard to the role of social media for political movements. Other studies on the subject include Axford 2011; Bruns, Highfield, & Burgess 2013; Comunello & Anzera 2012; Ghannam 2011; Shirazi 2013 and Wilson & Dunn 2011. An analysis of the use of social media in the background to the 2008 and 2011 general elections in Malaysia and Singapore also highlights the role of social media in facilitating political movements (Abbott 2012). This may suggest a stereotyping of social media itself as a media predisposed to protest rather than one that has been 'mainstreamed'.

In this article, we examine the 2014 Indonesian presidential election as an example of how social media has been mainstreamed in electoral contests. We analyse how the presidential candidates used Facebook and Twitter during the election, as well as how celebrities were enlisted to promote candidates to their fans in social media. Both

social media platforms become subjects of scrutiny because of the widespread and rapid uptake of Facebook and Twitter in Indonesia. By mid-2014 Indonesia was ranked as having the fourth highest numbers of Facebook users and the fifth highest number of Twitter users in the world with 69 million and 29 million users respectively (Alz 2014; Purnell 2014). We argue that a combination of factors made these social media important in the 2014 presidential election and they will likely be so again in future elections. Since 1998, the coinciding development of rapid internet literacy in Indonesia, together with the introduction of a direct election system that appeals to identity and celebrity-driven politics, have come together to make social media a central part of Indonesian election campaigns.

Thus, we argue, the axis of influence that can be understood by analysing the relative media power of social media versus legacy media (such as newspapers, TV, radio) is an important context for studying elections. As Dunaway and Lawrence (2015) contend, it is important to identify the contexts that delimit the framing of electoral reporting. But such framing is not merely determined by print and broadcast media ownership and electoral context, which often produces the game-frame or ‘horse-race’ contests familiar to western democracies. Rather the importance of ‘inter-media’—the dynamic mediapolis in which social and mass media can feed off each other, evident in the case of Indonesia’s 2014 election, is potentially the supervening factor in that nation’s politics.

In this article, we show how the interaction between old and new media systems is central to what Andrew Chadwick (2014) calls the ‘political information cycle’. For example, the use of celebrities in the election campaign assumes that voters are connected to a broad range of media. When celebrities endorse presidential candidates, they do so on the basis of a following built up through the distribution of film, music and television content. In turn, they have profiles on social media that can be used as a platform for endorsing candidates. Such endorsement feeds back into news reporting, which assures that political communication occurs in a wide range of media that cuts across the different kinds of access and media literacy found in the diversity of Indonesian audiences.

Having introduced this argument however, it is necessary to provide relevant background on the Indonesian political system, the development of the internet in the country, and the impact of the internet—especially social media—in Indonesian socio-political contexts in the last two-decades.

Political System of Indonesia: Transformations and Implications

The current Indonesian political system was born from a national reform movement in the late 1990s leading to the resignation of President Soeharto on 21 May 1998 after ruling the country for almost 32 years (Liddle, 2002, p. 385). Since that time, Indonesian politics has come to be known as the ‘reform era’ which succeeded Soeharto’s so called ‘new order’ era (1966-1998). Such a political shift led to the implementation of direct election and multi-party systems, as well the rescinding of media restrictions around political elections.

Direct Election Systems

A major transformation to the electoral systems in the reform era is the implementation of direct elections for members of parliament, heads of local government, and the president (Qodari, 2010, p. 122). The change has generated two new phenomena in Indonesian polity, that is, professionalization of politics (Qodari, 2010) and ‘entertainment and celebrity-driven’ politics (Heryanto, 2010, p. 188).

Professionalization of politics is marked by a more central role in election campaigns of political surveys and political consultants. Political party elites incorporate results of political surveys and strategies prescribed by political consultants to influence potential voters in their favour. Political actors and political consultants use political surveys not only as a means to gauge electability of politicians or political parties but also to influence public opinion (Qodari, 2010, p. 127). As a result, political consultants, along with their polling results, have been increasingly playing a central role in Indonesian politics (Qodari, 2010, p. 138).

Emerging in the contemporary Indonesia political milieu (Heryanto, 2010, p. 188) is an incorporation of celebrities and entertainment events into politics. An early instance of this trend to political activism of celebrities was that in the 2009 election 60 celebrities (comprising actors, musicians and comedians) ran for positions. Eighteen of these celebrities made their way into parliament, some polling more

successfully than existing senior politicians. Another example is that a few figures from the entertainment industry secured executive positions at provincial and district levels (Heryanto, 2010, p. 186). The visible success of celebrities has also drawn politicians to woo the entertainment industry to increase public support during election campaigns (Heryanto, 2010, p. 187).

Multi-party system, revocation of media restrictions, and media polarisation

From 1977 to 1997, only three political parties were allowed to participate in general elections. The implementation of the multi-party system changed this and heralded a remarkable surge in party formation, with 48 political parties participating in the 1999 general election (King, 2000, pp. 89-91). But the numbers of political parties in the two subsequent general elections declined markedly. Only seven political parties participated in the 2004 general election whereas in the 2009 general election there were nine political parties (Mujani & Liddle, 2010, p. 36). This figure rose again to fifteen in the 2014 general election (Aspinall, 2014, p. 97). Among the parties participating in the 2014 election, some were founded or affiliated with media owners. These affiliations will be elaborated on in the following discussion.

Political reform in the late 1990s also markedly changed the Indonesian media system. Under the new media ‘regulations’, anybody is permitted to establish and operate a media organisation and licences from government bodies are no longer required. Earlier, during the new order era, only those granted media licences were permitted to establish and operate media organisations but in 1999, Abdurrahman Wahid—then president of Indonesia—annulled this licensing system (Said, 2009).

Within this new media environment, media organisations and their owners may also openly affiliate with any party. In the past, media outlets had to align with the ruling party to remain in business (Hill, 1992, pp. 3-6). These changes have triggered some changes, with media owners now going into politics, either by forming new parties or affiliating with existing ones. Since the 2004 presidential election, two prominent media tycoons, Aburizal Bakrie and Surya Paloh, entered politics where they became political rivals (Ida, 2011, p. 22).

Aburizal Bakrie, a prominent businessman owning several media channels, defeated Paloh in a vote for leader of the Partai Golongan Karya (the Party of

Functional Groups, also known as Golkar) in 2009. With influential TV and newspaper interests, Paloh, then went on to found the National Democratic Party in 2011. The affiliations of media owners with political parties have contributed to a polarization of Indonesian media, especially during elections, as media channels support their owners' political allegiances openly.

Entertainment and celebrity-driven politics

The involvement of celebrities in election campaigns has become commonplace. The 2004 US presidential election, for example, demonstrated such a phenomenon as many celebrities were incorporated into the campaign in the hope of attracting young voters (Payne, Hanlon, & Twomey, 2007, pp. 1240-1241). Such practices have continued to feature in political campaigns in the U.S *post* the 2008 presidential election (Becker, 2013, pp. 1-2; Daunt, 2012; Garthwaite & Moore, 2008, 2013; Pease & Brewer, 2008).

Celebrities again played a role in the 2016 US Presidential election. Dozens of celebrities were reported as backing Democrat candidate Hillary Clinton. Pop stars and actors such as Katy Perry, Demi Lovato, Elton John, and Morgan Freeman were among her supporters. Meanwhile, the star of reality TV show *Duck Dynasty*, Phil Robertson, supported Clinton's Democrat rival Ted Cruz. On the Republican side, Bernie Sanders received support from Neil Young (musician) and Red Hot Chili Peppers (band) as well as a rapper, Killer Mike. A famous wrestler and movie star, Hulk Hogan, as well Alaskan ex-politician and TV host, Sarah Palin advocated Sanders' Republican rival Donald Trump (*US election 2016: Serenades, selfies and other endorsements, 2016*).

Incorporation of celebrities into election campaigns also occurred in other countries. Lynton (1997) observed the 1996 United Kingdom election in which The Spice Girls pop group endorsed Margaret Thatcher. Rojek (2001, p. 124) highlighted similar attempts made by several British politicians, such as Harold Wilson, John Major, and Tony Blair.

Henneberg and Chen (2008) reported several celebrities also participated in a political contest in Taiwan by providing endorsements for the competing candidates during Taipei City Councillor election in 2002. Mishra and Mishra (2014) also affirmed that prominent figures from the country's entertainment industry were involved in election campaigns endorsing their favoured political parties in India.

Heryanto (2010) suggested the new electoral system in Indonesia has generated a phenomenon of ‘entertainment and celebrity-driven’ politics that manifests in two forms: the migration of celebrities into politics, and the amalgamation of entertainment performances into election campaigns. The former refers to attempts of several celebrities, mostly from show business, to compete for legislature posts in the 2009 election (p. 188) and for governmental executive posts at district and provincial levels (Heryanto, 2010; Masaaki & Hamid, 2008; Van Klinken, 2008). Entertainment performances by celebrities became essential to campaign rallies, as part of pursuing support from electorates (Heryanto, 2010, p. 187).

Development of the internet in Indonesia

Adoption of the internet in Indonesia was initiated by the National Research Council in 1986 in forming an information network, named IPTEKnet. However, technical and financial impediments meant such initiatives discontinued for several years, before recommencing in 1993. It commenced providing internet access in June 1994, mainly for research and scholarly work. The first commercial internet service provider was RADNET, founded in the mid-1990s. With the operations of IPTEKnet and commercial internet companies like RADNET, demand for internet access soon increased. It was claimed there were approximately fifteen thousand internet users in the country by the end of 1995; this figure had reached forty thousand subscribers by the end of 1996 (Hill & Sen, 1997, pp. 72-74). The number of internet service providers (ISPs) continued growing and they formed the Indonesian Association of Internet Service Providers (APJII) in 1996 (Hill & Sen, 1997, p. 80).

The rapid emergence of ISPs did not automatically generate more internet subscribers. Only a limited number of the middle-upper class, mostly living in big cities on Java, could afford this new medium of communication since it was only in such cities that people could get telephone connections, a prerequisite for connection to cyberspace (Lim, 2005, p. 74). Under such circumstances, the emergence of *warung internet* / ‘*warnet*’ (internet kiosks) provided important alternatives for affordable internet access points. The Indonesian postal service company, *PT. Pos Indonesia*, pioneered the *warnet* business by establishing *Wasantara-Net* in May 1996 (Hill & Sen, 1997, p. 70). In the following years, the number of *warnets* continued to increase, providing major entry points for internet access particularly for young people.

By 1998, the number of internet users in the country was approximately half a million, climbing to one million in 1999 and 1.9 million in 2000. In 2002, around 60 per cent of internet users in Indonesia went online from a warnet (Lim, 2002, p. 392). By mid-2013 APJII stated there were approximately 80 million internet users in Indonesia and the number was projected to reach 139 million by the end of 2015 (APJII, 2013). Based on a survey on Indonesian internet users in 2013, APJII suggested the dominant users were young people 18-35 years old (82.8%). Approximately 49 per cent of internet users were male and 51 per cent were female. It suggested 85 per cent of all internet users were using smartphones to surf the web. They used the internet for accessing social media (87.4%), searching information (68.7%), instant messaging (59.9%), updating news (59.7%), downloading/uploading videos (27.3%), email (25.4%), online shopping (11%) and online games (10%) (APJII 2014, pp. 12-31). The APJII suggested that among Indonesian internet users the internet was the second major source of information after television, followed by newspapers and radio (Herawan & King, 2013, p. 64).

Mediapolis

The fast diffusion of online media in Indonesia radically changed the nature of the country's mediated public space of communication and political participation. We argue in this paper that deliberative and interactive forms of political engagement have overtaken the political participation afforded by mass media. In the context of a presidential election, candidates cannot afford to ignore social media, as we witness a transformation from a public sphere in Indonesia to what Roger Silverstone described as a 'mediapolis' (2007).

Silverstone's concept of mediapolis draws on the political philosophy of Hannah Arendt and her understanding of a 'polis'. She viewed 'polis' as a communal space where political elites, in ancient Athens, were engaged in public discourse concerning public affairs. She did not refer to it as a physical space but as a public space of face-to-face communication (Arendt, 1958, pp. 198-199). Silverstone appropriates Arendt's 'polis' and transforms it into mediapolis: 'the mediated public space' of communications (Silverstone, 2007, p. 31).

Silverstone (2007, p. 33) suggests that mediapolis is different from Habermas' public sphere. Habermas' *public sphere* is characterized by egalitarian participation, in

terms of the status of its participants and the opportunities given to them to engage in public discourses. Rational arguments are also essential in such public discourse.

A mediapolis, however, requires neither such egalitarian participation nor rational arguments. Silverstone maintains such idealistic requirements are unable to be realized in the complex settings of contemporary mediated space of communications. The concept of a mediapolis acknowledges an inequality of participation within and across national borders, due to social, economic, cultural and political disparities as well as the contribution of irrational arguments in public discourse (Silverstone, 2007, p. 34).

An Indonesian mediapolis?

Silverstone (2007) suggests the mediated world of the mediapolis is ‘deterritorialized’ and not contingent on existing in any particular region (p. 107). The mediapolis is constituted around face-to-face human interactions, which is analogue (Silverstone, 2007, p. 31). That is to say, the mediapolis, while extended and mediated, privileges the features of face-to-face communication, such as reciprocity, a high degree of contextual information, and interpersonal specificity. Media are not simply means of communication, but constitute an environment which cannot be separated from daily lives of people in contemporary society and their ‘performance’ of identity (Silverstone, 2007, p. 5).

This study defines an Indonesian mediapolis as the mediated public space of communication in which issues arising from face-to-face interactions (within the geographical boundaries of Indonesia) are projected, perceived and constructed. They include all media types—mainstream and new media—that contain information or issues about Indonesia. Such media need not operate exclusively in Indonesia, but are nevertheless accessible by Indonesian people.

Advancing research on mediapolis: from a moral space to a political space

Silverstone argues that the mediapolis is a moral space and that media are an increasingly significant site for the construction of a moral order’ (Silverstone, 2007, p. 7). This moral dimension of the media mediates the relationship between ‘self and

other', be it between politicians, politicians and constituent, or between constituents themselves (Silverstone, 2007, p. 22). A celebrity, whose identity is defined by very high visibility, can play a key role in brokering trust in, and the moral virtue of, a political candidate. These features of the mediapolis provide a theoretical context that is well suited to examining an election as a contest among political actors and their celebrity supporters.

In the contemporary polity, appearance in the mediapolis is essential, as it becomes a gauge for social, political, and other kinds of status of individuals or organizations. The more often prominent individuals or organizations appear in the mediapolis, the higher their status is likely to become. As '[s]tatus leads to influence, and influence to power (and of course vice versa)' therefore, political actors are engaged in continuous struggles over their appearances in the mediapolis (Silverstone, 2007, p. 30).

Mediapolis, is conceptually better suited to scrutinizing Indonesia's mediated public space of communication than 'public sphere' for three reasons. First, the concept of a mediapolis is able to accommodate the inequality in access to, and literacy in, different forms of media that would be overlooked by public sphere frameworks. *Southeast Asian Economic Outlook 2013* suggests Indonesia still has a number of problems concerning socio-economic inequalities, especially between urban-rural and East-West regions of the country (OECD., 2013, p. 32). Disparity of access to media is still wide, except in the case of television. Penetration rates of television, radio, and newspapers/magazines among the population were at 90.2 per cent, 23.5 per cent, and 18.9 per cent respectively in 2009 and the internet was at 24.6 per cent in 2010 (Ambardi, Parahita, Lindawati, Sukarno, & Aprilia, 2014, p. 17).

Second, the involvement of the arts and cultural industries, especially celebrities, in elections has incorporated emotional forms of attachment from fans that is also incompatible with Habermas's rational public sphere. While such a mediated space is often drawn from a much more universal global space (Orgad, 2007, p. 35) the content that is privileged in such a space is content grounded in national-popular relationships that are specifically meaningful to Indonesians.

Third, an Indonesian mediapolis is advanced in this paper as a way of conceptualizing a situation in which, historically, the lifting of restrictions on traditional media co-emerged with a rapid uptake of online and social media. In a developing country like Indonesia such a confluence produced instances of 'leap-frogging' for many online users who had previously had little access to independent

political communication in election periods. Thus the Indonesian media system cannot simply be characterized as a ‘hybrid’ system (see Chadwick 2014), a term used for developed nations like the US and the UK. In these nations, the strategies of political campaigns have operated in the context of centuries of press freedom for which social media is seen to be an extension that can provide an edge in the political information cycle.

In Indonesia, much of the ‘intermedia’ power of social media derives from a decidedly more dynamic and rapidly evolved relationship with legacy media. And, as we shall see, social media have substantially reshaped the content of mainstream or ‘legacy’ news media, such as newspapers, but in a way that campaigners have had little experience with.

Internet and socio-political events

The role of social media during Indonesia’s 2014 presidential election has had little analysis. Given the importance of online access as a source for information about politics (second only to television sources), it is important to consider the influence of social media during a presidential election

New order era

Despite the fact that very few people in Indonesia had access to and were able to use the internet during its early years, scholars claimed it had come into play within Indonesian socio-political contexts. Hill and Sen (1997, p. 76) suggest that it penetrated Indonesian socio-political realms by supporting political movements in the mid-1990s. Engagement of the public—in particular student activists—in political discourses via the *Apakabar*¹ mailing list and the propagation of warnet were two essential factors enabling such roles. The mailing list, moderated by an American from Maryland, USA, became an essential means of political information dissemination and a source of uncensored news among the dissidents, for whom traditional media were under siege by the ruling government. Propagation of warnet was claimed to have equipped political dissidents with an affordable and uncensored medium of communications (Hill & Sen, 1997, pp. 70-71).

In a study on the background of Indonesian politics in the 1990s and 2000s, Merlyna Lim (2006, pp. 6-10) demonstrated how the internet facilitated political movements that led to the resignation of President Soeharto in 1998 and the demise of the new order era. She suggests that it became a contributing factor to such political shifts, transforming Indonesia from an authoritarian to a democratic state.

However, Sen and Hill (2002, pp. 176-183) suggest the internet also introduced adverse consequences to the socio-political situation in the newly born democracy as it accentuated the conflict between civic and radical groups, such as *Laskar Jihad* (Jihad Warrior) whereby a communal conflict that was located in the eastern part of the country escalated across the Indonesian cybersphere. The public was soon engaged in debates online while *Laskar Jihad* urged people to join them fighting in the battlefields of regional conflicts. Such uses widened the spectrum of the conflict from one that was locally contained in a specific area, to a much larger stage.

Reform era

Since the beginning of the reform era in 1998, there have been significant shifts in the use of the internet in the Indonesian context. While previously it was mostly used to create covert communication channels and alternative political news sources among political dissidents, the internet has transmuted such roles into socio-political devices employed by the government, political parties, politicians, and the general public of Indonesia. Such shifts materialized partly due to transformations in Indonesian political systems and media spheres resulting from the reform movement.

The internet is claimed to have played such an important role during the general election in 1999 that the election was dubbed ‘the country’s first online election’. This significant shift in communication was not due to pervasive use of the internet by political parties for their campaigns, but rather, to a successful adoption of the medium by the General Election Commission (KPU). Using existing national banking internet networks, KPU processed the election results and displayed them publicly online in real time under public scrutiny so that the public could acknowledge that the election was fair (Hill, 2003, p. 531). At that time, political actors still ignored this medium and only nine out of forty-eight contesting parties had already set up official websites (Hill & Sen, 2000, p. 131). In the 2004 general elections, significant use of the internet

remained limited and was mainly used by KPU. Even then, only a few political parties owned websites (Hill, 2008, pp. 88-89).

During Indonesia's 2009 presidential election, however, the internet—especially social media—started being utilized for political purposes. For example, a Facebook group 'Say no to Megawati' appeared during the event. It criticized Megawati Soekarno Putri, one of the candidates (and President from 2001-2004). Such criticisms were directed at her presidential tenure, extended to offline milieus where significant damage was done to her political image (Nurhadryani, Maslow, & Yamamoto, 2009, p. 220). It wasn't until 2014 that social media as tools for political campaigns gained more attention and interest from political parties and politicians. By then political actors were incorporating Facebook and Twitter into their campaigning strategies, during the 2014 Indonesian legislative elections and presidential election of that year (Andretti, 2014, pp. 500-504).

In the reform era, social media also played a role in socio-political events beyond election campaigns. In one case, in 2008, Facebook was employed in support of Prita Mulyasari who was sentenced to a six-month jail term and fined 204 million Indonesian rupiah (IDR) (AUD \$20,287) after being convicted of defaming a private hospital by complaining about its poor l. As the public perceived such a sentence was unjust, several Facebook groups emerged to support her. These included two groups calling themselves *Dukung 204 Juta Koin untuk Ibu Prita Mulyasari*² and *Coin for Prita Mulyasari*³. The Facebook movements demanded the court annul such sentences and at the same time collected coins to pay the fines. While Mulyasari still received six months' imprisonment, the movement was able to collect IDR 800 million in donations (Gazali, 2014, pp. 429-430).

Another case, in 2009, involved an anti-corruption movement. In this case, Facebook was again used by the public to support Chandra Hamzah and Bibit Samad Riyanto, two commissioners of the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) in a legal case against a senior Indonesian police officer, who was the chief of the Criminal Investigation Agency (Bareskrim) of the Indonesian police (Polri), Susno Duadji. Bareskrim was investigating a corruption case when he found that KPK tapped his telephone. The corruption case was regarding a bank named Bank Century. He was indignant about the phone tapping and became even more furious when KPK declared that it had started an investigation concerning the corruption case. A few days later,

the Indonesian police put both the commissioners into custody with an allegation of abusing power in the phone tapping incident. Several Facebook groups emerged in support of the commissioners. The most prominent group was '*Gerakan 1.000.000 Facebookers Dukung Chandra Hamzah & Bibit Samad Riyanto*'⁴ which attracted more than a million followers within a few days of its launch. The social media movement's effects were profound and mainstream media consequently highlighted the case. It even caused then President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono to intervene by setting up a special team. The power of social media was confirmed, when the issue was resolved within a few months and the case against the commissioners was withdrawn (Molaei, 2015, p. 103).

In the early days of the development of a distinctly Indonesian mediapolis Twitter and YouTube played a role in colouring Indonesia's political landscape. Twitter became prominent in Indonesian media and political spheres. Tweets from President Yudhoyono's @SBYudhoyono during his term of office (2004-2014) often attracted the attention of Indonesian media and the public as they were frequently used to disseminate information about salient political issues and explain his government's policies. Occasionally, the president also tweeted images about the personal life of his family. Despite having a social media team handling his Twitter account, the president himself often tweeted. This was indicated by *SBY* appearing at the end of the tweets. Seventy-one out of 140 tweets from the president in November 2013 were authored by himself (McRae, 2013).

It has been pointed out that YouTube has also been influential in Indonesian politics. *Boomee.com*, a website specializing in social media news, claimed that video campaigns on YouTube during the 2014 Indonesia's presidential election might have influenced its results. This website was operated by a Jakarta based research institution focusing on social media discourses in Indonesia. The claim was based on its review of popular videos in YouTube during the campaign periods. It suggested videos about Joko Widodo, or 'Jokowi' (Widodo's nickname), received positive responses from viewers attracted to their creative contents as well as the positive image of him that was displayed. Videos about the other candidate, Prabowo Subianto, received negative responses from viewers because they aired controversial issues concerning his past while serving in the military (Dermawan, 2014). There were some controversial issues related to the retired general such as the kidnapping of twenty-three political dissidents in the 1990s and the shooting of some political protesters in Tri Sakti University,

Jakarta on 12 May 1998 (Edward, 2015). While it is clear that YouTube did play some role in political events, the most popular videos such as “CAMEO Fun Campaign: Prabowo Jokowi”, only attracted 1.5 million views, a comparatively small number in a population of some 250 million (Dermawan, 2014).

Such explanations illuminate two important points concerning the use of social media within the reform era. Firstly, it has always been the public, not the political parties or politicians, who took the lead in exploitations of this medium for socio-political purposes. It seems, for the Indonesian public, social media have been understood to be a ‘secret weapon’ of the oppressed and as such have been appropriated accordingly within contemporary socio-political milieus. Secondly, Indonesian political parties and politicians have attempted to adopt and incorporate social media into their political campaigns, especially during the 2014 presidential election. To what extent they have been successful remains largely unanswered. Nevertheless, the following discussion of the 2014 election offers the beginnings of an analysis.

Social media and the 2014 Indonesian presidential election

In the 2014 presidential campaign both candidates, Prabowo Subianto and Joko Widodo, incorporated Facebook and Twitter in their endeavours. The former was operating a Facebook page ‘Prabowo Subianto’ and a Twitter account ‘@Prabowo08’ and the latter was on a Facebook page ‘Joko Widodo’ and Twitter account ‘@jokowi_do2’ (Andretti, 2014). It is argued that incorporation of social media in their election campaign endeavours were due to a combination of two factors: namely the large number of social media users in the country, and that these were predominantly young people, and a large number of young voters had registered for the election.

Regarding the former, Indonesia had approximately 65 million Facebook users and 30 million Twitter users by mid-2014 (Yang, 2014, p. 1). Moreover, social media users in the country were predominantly young people aged 18 to 35. They constituted 82.8 per cent of the overall social media users (APJII 2014, pp. 12-31).

Meanwhile, Statistics Indonesia (BPS) projected that by 2014 the number of Indonesians aged 15 to 34 would reach 84.5 million (Bappenas, BPS, & UNFPA, 2013, pp. 49-52). The figure constituted 44 per cent of the total registered voters in the election that reached approximately 190 million people. In an open plenary meeting for the recapitulation of registered voters of the 2014 presidential election on 13 June 2014 the KPU announced that the registered number of voters was 190,307,134 people (Admin, 2014).

However, as voting eligibility only applies to those who were aged 17 years (or less) but married, therefore the percentage of young people eligible to vote in the election was likely lower. A BBC article, quoting an Indonesian social media analyst, estimated that approximately 30 per cent of the total voters in the election were young people aged under 30 (Lestari, 2014).

Considering this proportion Facebook and Twitter were suitable to become election campaign vehicles to reach and influence young voters. Therefore, both the presidential candidates incorporated them in their election campaigns. An analysis on their Facebook pages suggests that they were dedicated to election campaign endeavours as indicated by their initial that occurred not long before, or even within, the official election campaign period of 4 June to 5 July 2014. Joko Widodo started posting messages on his Facebook page on 12 June 2014, which was within the campaign period (Widodo, 2014) whereas Prabowo Subianto's initial posting was on 11 May 2014, weeks before the official campaign period (Subianto, 2014). With regard to their Twitter accounts, both presidential candidates had already operated them a few years earlier Prabowo Subianto has joined Twitter (@Prabowo08) in May 2009 and Joko Widodo has been on Twitter (@jokowi_do2) since September 2011. An analysis on the contents of messages disseminated by means of the social media websites during the election campaign periods found that they mostly conveyed political messages concerning the election.

Methods

This study examines tweets and Facebook pages of the presidential candidates from 19 May to 9 July 2014. The time frame encompasses the dates between the dates the candidates registered with the Indonesian Electoral Commission (KPU) to stand and

the election (9 July 2014). Jokowi registered his candidacy on 19 May 2014 (Firdaus, 2014) and Prabowo on 20 May 2014 (Aritonang, 2014). During this period both candidates used social media intensively. The Facebook pages of Prabowo and Jokowi were retrieved and saved to PDF files on 24 February 2015. Data concerning the Twitter accounts of Prabowo and Jokowi were retrieved and saved to PDF files on 24 and 25 February 2015.

Suara Merdeka (Voice of Freedom), a daily news outlet based in Semarang Central Java, reported on its website that on 19 June 2014 Jokowi's @jokowi_do2 Twitter handle had 1,581,588 followers and 872,944 Twitter users followed Prabowo's @prabowo08 (Susilo, 2014). BBC Indonesia, on its website (published on 5 July 2014) stated that Jokowi and Prabowo had 1.2 million and 972,000 Twitter followers respectively (Lestari, 2014). On 9 June 2015 @jokowi_do2 had 2.85 million followers and 1.88 million Twitter users were following @prabowo08. Figures reported by *Suara Merdeka* are used as they were estimated to be at about the mid-point in the time frame used for this analysis (19 June).

The numbers of likes, shares, and comments (Facebook) and favourites and retweets in this analysis are based on their Facebook pages and Twitter accounts on the day of data retrieval. It was not possible to get the precise number on each day during the time frame. Even if a tool for such data collection were available, it would still be difficult to determine which figures to use in the course of a day because they can be so dynamic.

Similar procedures were also applied in the retrieval of the statistics concerning Facebook fans and Twitter followers of the celebrities advocating for each candidate.

Findings

This section presents results of analyses upon the presidential candidates' use of Facebook and Twitter as well as the social media accounts of some celebrities supporting the contesting candidates.

Table 1: Facebook activities of the presidential candidates 19 May to 9 July 2014 (52 days)

Candidate	Likes / Fans	Posts	Likes to Posts	Comments to Posts	Shares to Posts	Average Posts / Day	Average Likes / Post	Average Comments / Post	Average Shares / Post
Prabowo	5,917,776	37	7,390,097	887,987	302,825	0.71	199,732	24,000	8,184
Jokowi	1,637,103	53	637,626	51,568	55,820	1.02	12,031	973	1,053

An analysis of Facebook pages of the presidential candidates, Prabowo and Widodo (Jokowi), reveals Prabowo had a much higher number of ‘fans’ compared to Jokowi with 5.9 million to 1.6 million respectively (Susilo, 2014). With 51 posts from 19 May to 9 July 2014, Jokowi was more active than Prabowo with only 37 posts. Prabowo, who was registered as contestant number one, also received a greater number of comments at an average of 24,000 per post while Jokowi received only around 1,000. Jokowi was also left behind in the number of Facebook shares. Approximately 1,000 users shared each of his posts whereas more than 8,000 users shared each of his rival’s posts in the same period. In conclusion, despite being less active as indicated by fewer numbers of posts, Prabowo was much more popular among Facebookers than Jokowi, according to the measures of the number of likes, comments, and shares.

Trends of ‘like’, ‘comment’, and ‘share’

The popularity of a Facebook post can be measured by the numbers of ‘like’, ‘comment’, and ‘share’ (Chang, Yu, & Lu, 2015; Sabate, Berbegal-Mirabent, Canabate, & Lebherz, 2014). Taking these measures into account, analyses of these numbers as given to Jokowi’s posts in his Facebook page over the 52 days from 19 May to 9 July 2014, show that his posts had been increasingly popular as exhibited by considerable stable increases of the number of likes. Approximately 5,000 people liked his first two posts on 12 June 2014. The number of likes increased to approximately 20,000 from four posts on 25 June 2014. His two posts on 6 July 2014, just three days before voting day, increased considerably to more than a hundred thousand likes.

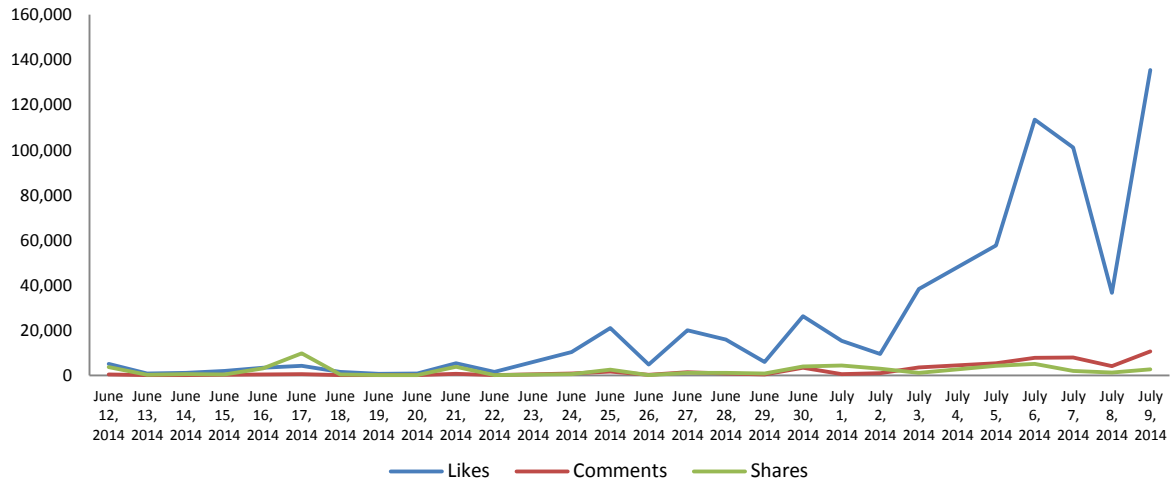


Figure 1: Trends of 'like', 'comment', and 'share' of Jokowi's Facebook posts
19 May to 9 July 2014 (52 days)

The popularity of his posts dropped to approximately six thousand likes on 8 July 2014, before finally reaching more than 135,000 likes on voting day. On the other hand, the number of shares and comments was consistently low. The two initial posts were only shared and commented by 2,098 and 245 users respectively. The highest number of comments and shares was approximately 10,000, received on 9 July 2014 and 17 June 2014.

Prabowo's Facebook posts were more popular than Jokowi's. The first posts, immediately after his official declaration to run for the presidency on 19 May 2014, received 187,413 likes and 27,929 comments and were shared by 3,688 users. The numbers of likes were high and tended to increase towards voting day. However, they fluctuated greatly during 52-day periods ranging from 75,000 to more than half a million. The number of comments and shares were significantly lower than likes but they were more consistent. His initial post on 21 May 2014 generated 3,688 shares and 27,929 comments. The numbers of shares and comments added to 16,576 and 72,972 respectively on 21 June 2014 and reached 23,016 and 67,036 on election day.

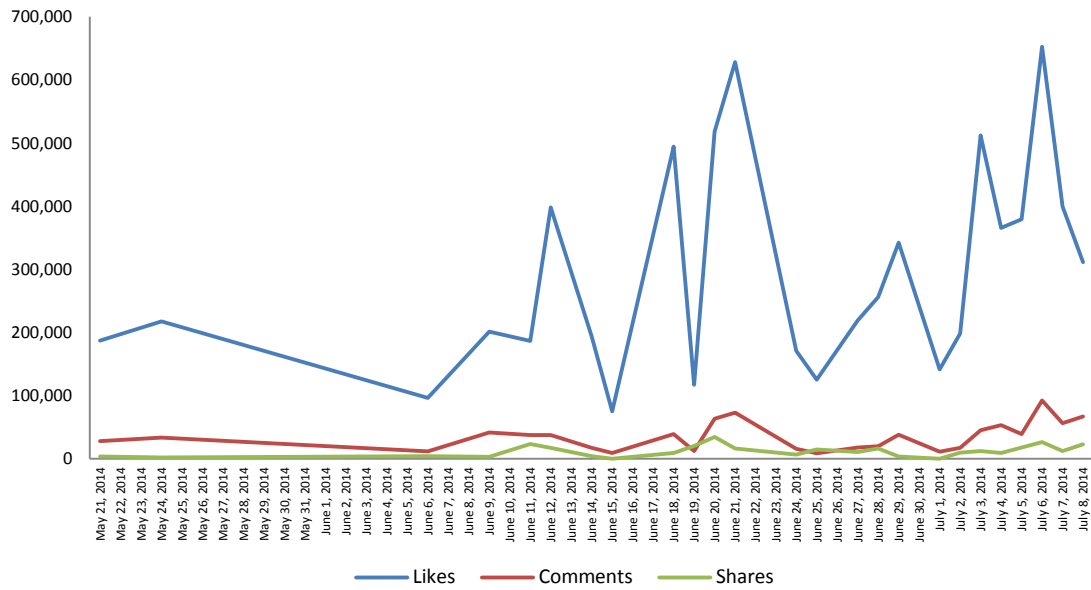


Figure 2: Trends of ‘like’, ‘comment’ and ‘share’ of Prabowo’s Facebook posts 19 May to 9 July 2014 (52 days)

The Presidential candidates’ Twitter activities

Table 2: Twitter activities of the presidential candidates 19 May to 9 July 2014 (52 Days)

Candidate	Twitter Followers	Tweets	Retweets	Favourites	Average Tweets / Day	Average Retweets / Tweet	Average Favourites / Tweet
Prabowo	872,944	198	184,651	43,235	3.8	933	218.4
Jokowi	1,581,588	49	119,240	43,866	0.9	2,433	895.2

The volume of tweets from Prabowo was almost four times more than from Jokowi. Probowi had an average of 3.8 tweets per day compared to Jokowi, who had less than one per day. However, Prabowo’s tweets were re-tweeted less often than Jokowi’s. While Jokowi was able to generate an average 2,433 re-tweets per tweet, Prabowo’s average re-tweets were approximately 900 per tweet. Regarding the number of favourites—displays of liking a particular tweet—Prabowo was also less popular in the Twittersphere than Jokowi, as indicated by fewer numbers of average favourites per tweet. Prabowo received approximately 200 favourites for each of the tweets he sent during the 52-day period but Jokowi received more than 800. In conclusion,

Prabowo was more active than his rival yet he received much less engagement and fewer responses in the Twittersphere in comparison to Jokowi.

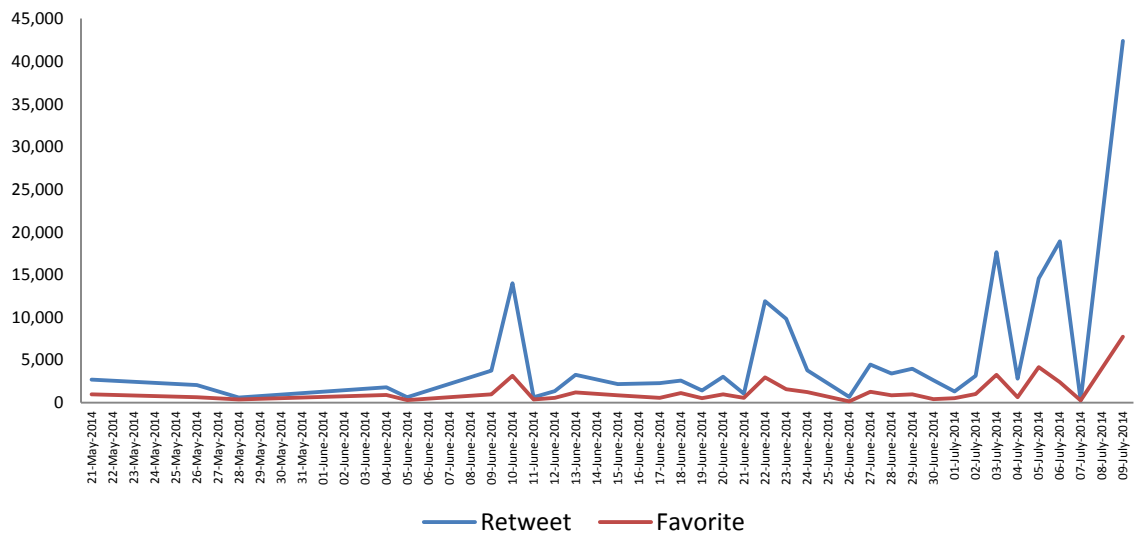


Figure 3: Trends of retweets and favourites Prabowo's Twitter account
19 May to 9 July 2014 (52 days)

Prabowo's tweets failed to attract as much approval from social media users as his Facebook posts. Less than 1,000 people retweeted and clicked the 'favourite' button for his five initial tweets on 21 May 2014, the day of his official presidency candidacy declaration. However, these figures increased significantly. His tweets on 10 June 2014 were retweeted more than 13,000 times and received 3,000 favourites. However, such figures concerning his tweets on 22 June 2014 decreased slightly to 11,000 retweets and 2,000 favourites. Increases were quite likely due to the importance of content and focus on the presidential debate sessions. The numbers of retweets and favourites were at their peak on election day, reaching more than 40,000 retweets and 7,000 favourites.

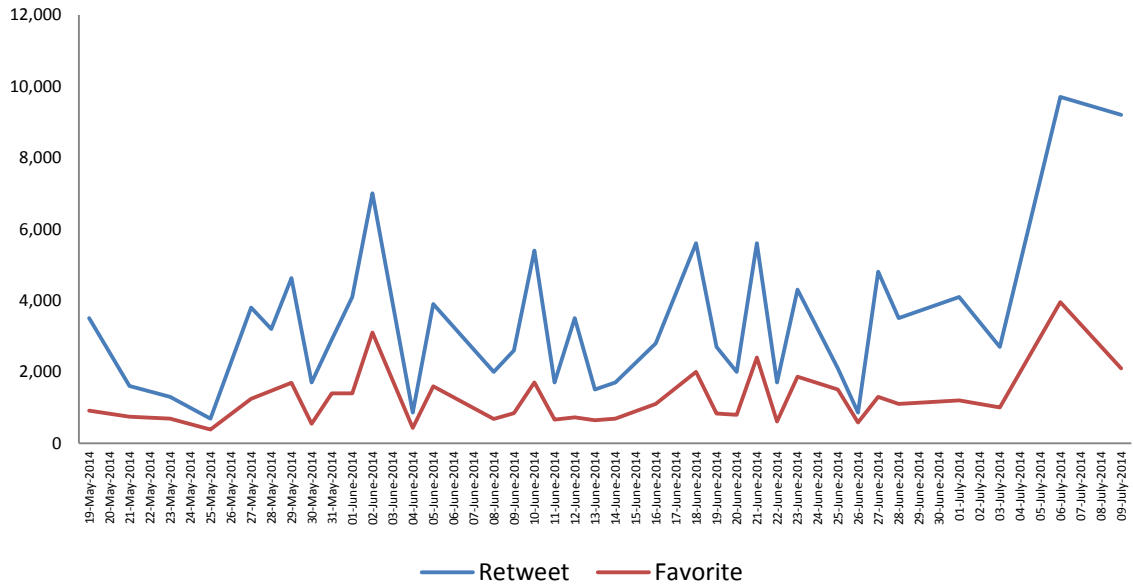


Figure 4: Trends of retweets and favourites of Jokowi's Twitter account
19 May to 9 July 2014 (52 days)

In general, when a particular tweet was highly retweeted it also received a large number of favourites. However, the number of retweets of a particular tweet was always higher than the number of favourites it received. Thus, when his Twitter followers liked a particular Prabowo tweet they were more likely to retweet it than just click the favourite button. This meant his tweets had the potential to reach wider audiences: not only his followers but also the followers of his followers.

Table 3: Social media statistics for celebrities supporting Prabowo's candidacy

Celebrity	Twitter	Facebook Page	Twitter Followers	Facebook Page Likes
Luna Maya	@LunaMaya26	Luna Maya	10,200,000	2,514,776
Raffi Ahmad	@raffiahmadlagi	Raffi ahmad lagi	6,040,000	4,615
Ahmad Dhani	@AHMADDHANIPRAST	Ahmad Dhani Prasetyo	1,540,000	7,163
Diego Maradona	@DiegoAMaradona	Maradona Diego	155,000	6,000,000

Jokowi's tweet on 19 May 2014 was retweeted more than 3,000 times and approximately 900 people rated it as favourite. Throughout the 52-day period, several of his tweets were retweeted approximately 5,000 times. One of them was his tweet on 10 June 2014, a day after the first presidential debate. The tweet conveying his gratitude to his constituents for their support during the debate was retweeted more than 5,000 times. His tweet on 27 June 2014 concerning fund raising information was

retweeted approximately 5,000 times. The highest number of retweets was given to his tweet on election day, reaching more than 9,000. Similar to findings on Prabowo's retweets and favourites, the numbers of Jokowi's retweets were always higher than the number of the favourites a tweet received, meaning his tweets also reached audiences beyond his followers.

Celebrity advocates and their fans in social media

As explained above, the involvement of celebrities in election campaigns has become standard in contemporary politics. During the 2014 Indonesian presidential election, both candidates also involved celebrities in their campaigns. This involvement had been a feature of Indonesian elections well before the advent of social media. Feith (1957) observed political actors incorporated entertainers in election campaign efforts in Indonesia's first election in 1955, particularly during campaign rallies (p. 21). Lindsay's (2005) work shows that such tactics persisted until the 1999 general election. Initially such undertakings involved artists of traditional entertainments, such as *ketoprak*⁵, *wayang*⁶, and *ludruk*⁷. However, since 1971 they have incorporated non-traditional entertainers including the country's most famous pop musicians, comedians, and dancers in campaign rallies (Lindsay, 2005, pp. 38-39).

Such strategies of incorporating celebrities in election campaigns changed during the 2014 presidential election. While the presidential candidates continued deploying celebrities during election campaign rallies they also deployed celebrities in social media by disseminating celebrities' support through Facebook and Twitter. It is argued such a change of strategy was due to the proliferation of social media in Indonesia.

The strategy of candidates using celebrities for endorsing their campaigns drew on recognition that derived from legacy forms of media. Thus, the inter-media relationship that was cultivated was to use social media to connect candidates to celebrities who had built up a following through music distribution and/or film and television. Months before Prabowo officially registered his candidacy (on 20 May 2014), a group of artists declared their support for him (Hakim, 2014). Among them were three prominent Indonesian celebrities: Luna Maya (actress with 10 million Twitter followers and 2.5 million Facebook likes), Dhani Ahmad (musician with 1.5 Twitter followers), and Raffi Ahmad (actor with more than 6 million Twitter followers). Despite their large number of fans, only Luna Maya and Raffi Ahmad

owned verified social media accounts. Luna Maya has a verified Twitter account and a Facebook Page while Raffi Ahmad has a verified Twitter account. Analyses of news media coverage concerning Ahmad Dhani and Prabowo's tweets suggest that @AHMADDHANIPRAST (Twitter) and Ahmad Dhani Prasetyo (Facebook page) were being used as proxies by the musician.

Table 4 Social media statistics of celebrities supporting Jokowi's candidacy

Celebrity	Twitter	Facebook Page	Twitter Followers	Facebook Page Likes
Afgansyah Reza	@afgansyah_reza	Afgansyah Reza	8,010,000	1,600,000
Sherina Munaf	@sherinasinna	Sherina Munaf	9,470,00	2,507,007
Slank	@slankdotcom	Slank	1,270,00	6,700,000
Jason Mraz	@jason_mraz	Jason Mraz	5,850,000	13,951,258
Sting	@OfficialSting	Sting	230,000	5,980,110

While these entertainers have commanded enormous followings within Indonesia, Prabowo also claimed to have received support from the former world soccer player Diego Maradona. On 14 June 2014, Prabowo posted a link on his Facebook page to a short video showing Maradona's support (Subianto, 2014).

Comparably, Jokowi was also supported by many celebrities, many of whom were not only famous in the entertainment industry but also on social media. These included popular singers, Afgansyah Reza (8 million Twitter followers, 1.6 million Facebook fans), Sherina, (7.8 million Twitter followers and 2.4 million Facebook fans) and rock band *Slank* (1 million Twitter followers and 6.7 million Facebook fans). Jokowi also received support via social media from international celebrities such as Jason Mraz and *Sting*.

Conclusion

The preceding discussion of the role of social media in the 2014 presidential election suggests some clear trends in the efficacy of social media for election campaigns in Indonesia's reform era. An Indonesian mediapolis is characterized by strong inter-media connections that have become a central feature of contemporary Indonesian

society in the reform era. These connections are particularly visible in the way that candidates were able to use endorsement from celebrities who use Twitter and with whom Facebook users already had a relationship, via legacy media. But the most significant finding is the fact that the winning candidate, while not as frequent a social media user as his rival, managed to engage his constituents much more. Here, Twitter provides a benchmark. It is not how many tweets a candidate puts out; it is the degree of retweeting that demonstrates the intensity and attachment of voters. Furthermore, many of those retweeting were also linking to news stories that were favourable to their candidates in the legacy media.

But these trends would not have emerged without the political and media industry transformations that date back to 1998 that have privileged the importance of ‘identity politics’ through direct election, competing multi-party systems and a new pluralism of expression that has come about by the revocation of media restrictions. In addition, the propagation of social media among the Indonesian population has prompted socio-political impacts that are exemplified in the 2014 presidential election.

Lastly, while the current analysis of the role of social media during the 2014 presidential election suggests their use influenced the conduct of the election campaigns, further studies are required to explain how they might have impacted upon the election results and how such impacts might have materialized, including the influence of celebrity support.

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Endnotes

¹ *Apakabar* literally means ‘How do you do?’ It contained news about Indonesia sourced from overseas news agencies such as UPI, Wire, Reuter and Xinhua as well as domestic news outlets such as the *Jakarta Post*, *Antara*, *Kompas* and *Tempo*. Some of the articles contained politically sensitive themes regarding the new order government, which were absent from the country’s mainstream media, such as stories concerning corruption and detention of political dissidents by the authorities.

² *Dukung 204 Juta Koin untuk Ibu Prita Mulyasari* means ‘Donate small changes for Ibu Prita Mulyasari, she needs 204 million rupiah’.

³ *Coin for Prita Mulyasari* means ‘Coins for Prita Mulyasari’.

⁴ *Gerakan 1.000.000 Facebookers Dukung Chandra Hamzah & Bibit Samad Riyanto* means ‘The movement of a million Facebook users to support Chandra Hamzah and Bibit Samad Riyanto’.

⁵ *Ketoprak* is a Javanese traditional performing art that combines a play, music, and dance. It usually portrays stories from Javanese folklore.

⁶ *Wayang* usually refers to *wayang kulit* (shadow puppets). It is a Javanese traditional theatrical performing art that uses leather puppets. The puppeteer is called *dalang*. *Wayang* performance usually takes place on important occasions, such as part of a wedding party.

⁷ *Ludruk* is a theatrical performing art that originated in East Java. It combines a play, music, and dance, like *ketoprak*, but it usually presents stories of people’s daily lives.