

## POLITICAL MEDIATIZATION IN MEMES: A NETNOGRAPHY STUDY ON GANJAR PRANOWO & MAHFUD MD CANDIDATE MEMES FOR THE 2024 PERIOD

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### ABSTRACT

*Memos as digital content with humorous characteristics are an important part of online interaction on social media. The existence of memes in politics acts as a rhetorical tool and discursive argument, with its use to convey messages with political content. The use of memes as political mediatization in the 2019 elections in Indonesia as an expressive form of the success team of the Presidential and Vice Presidential candidates at that time. This study examines political mediatization through memes that occurred in the candidates Ganjar Pranowo and Mahfud MD in the 2024 Indonesian President and Vice President elections. Using a netnographic method, the research identifies five categories of meme usage- pure humor, ridicule, general political information, candidate information, and expressions of support.. These memes, originally light-hearted, evolved into strategic tools shaping a relaxed and approachable political image. This study highlights how media logic has transitioned into social media logic, prioritizing personalized content and user engagement to influence public perception. This transition underscores the effectiveness of memes in altering political narratives and fostering voter interaction during campaigns.*

**KEYWORDS** Mediatization; Politics; Memes; Election; Social Media



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### INTRODUCTION

Media has long been a critical tool for sharing news and other important information in society, including about existing social and cultural values along with the internet accelerating the dissemination of information across vast audiences (Holm, 2021; Long & Wall, 2012). Among the diverse forms of digital content, memes have emerged as humorous yet impactful carriers of cultural and political messages (Davison, 2012; Shifman, 2014). Memes' ability to influence public discourse has made them integral to online political interaction, particularly

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during elections, where they serve as rhetorical tools and vehicles for political mediatization (Mortensen & Neumayer, 2021; Segev et al., 2015). The illustration regarding political mediatization has been researched by Rogers & Giorgi (2023) where memes have become the most important part of online interaction for users because they are able to influence public discourse in spreading ideas, debating elections, protests and social movements. However, in terms of social media's techno-commercial infrastructure of personalization and filtering processes, memes tend to be around interesting and controversial topics in social media. In the context of the election of leaders in a country, memes can be a big influence factor for the public, especially voters, which some politicians also use as a tool to communicate. (Bulatovic, 2019). The popularity and distribution on social media platforms make memes are one of the most popular content formats and can reach a large audience (Bebić & Volarevic, 2018). In political contexts, memes with humor characteristics provide a sense of connection, inspiration to convey something that may be depressing (Williams, 2016).

Previous research highlights the role of memes in shaping political narratives. For instance, in Indonesia's 2019 Presidential Elections, memes focusing on unicorn startup debates dominated Twitter discussions, often propagated by anonymous accounts (Soebakir et al., 2020). Similarly, memes were used by campaign teams to express praise, criticism, and mockery (Fauzi et al., 2020). In the 2024 elections, memes have gained prominence as a strategy to engage millennial and Gen Z voters, comprising more than half of the electorate, with candidates leveraging humor and relatability to capture public attention contrast to the nature that tend to be 'volatile, diverse, and changeable' (Baharudin, 2023; Mulyanto, 2024; Wiggins, 2019).

However, the use of memes in the 2024 General Election is not only limited to the candidates, there are also memes related to supporting events in the election itself such as the debate of the Presidential and Vice Presidential candidates uploaded by the audience in a humorous tone that pokes fun at the candidates and their presentations during the debate. With a predominantly millennial and Gen-Z audience supported by high rates of social media use (Nurhanisah et al., 2023). The spread of memes in the 2024 Presidential election in Indonesia has seen a marked increase. (Indra, 2023).

The use of memes in political campaigns has had a significant impact on people's preferences, especially among young people. Memes have been observed to add a different and lighter dimension to the usually serious face of politics, making it more appealing to some young individuals. (Kurnia, 2024). In the context of the 2024 elections, it is predicted that content production and political ad spending on social media will increase in terms of cost and visual presentation, with a focus on image building in the digital space. (Kurnia, 2024). Previous research has also shown that memes have the potential to expand opportunities for political discourse and electoral politics, as well as amplify audience opinions and attitudes, which can contribute to political polarization. (Hapsoro, 2018). In addition, social media is increasingly being used by political candidates to shape their image and influence voters' perceptions (Malik, 2017).

Based on these findings, this research aims to understand the processes and patterns of using memes as political mediatization by conveying messages in shaping opinions and political agendas during the election period of Indonesia's Presidential and Vice Presidential candidates in the 2024 period. This research will discuss how the processes and patterns of political mediatization in political memes in the 2024 Presidential and Vice Presidential elections in Indonesia with the research subjects of memes on Presidential and Vice Presidential Candidates, Ganjar Pranowo and Mahfud MD on Twitter/X throughout 2024.

This research will examine several forms of memes that were spread and developed throughout the campaign process with the time span of the campaign period from November 2023 to February 2024, namely the volunteer team that uploaded memes of Ganjar Pranowo and Mahfud MD on Twitter/X accounts. This research has questions such as:

1. What is the form of spreading political memes as political mediatization in the 2024 Presidential and Vice Presidential elections in Indonesia carried out by the Ganjar Pranowo and Mahfud MD volunteer team on Twitter/X?
2. What is the pattern of using political memes throughout the campaign process for the 2024 Presidential and Vice Presidential elections in Indonesia carried out by the Ganjar Pranowo and Mahfud MD volunteer teams on Twitter/X?

## **Literature Review**

### ***Mediatization***

The concept of mediatization is different from the concept of mediation, where mediation refers to the neutral activity of conveying messages and communicating through the media. Mediatization aims to describe and understand the changes that are made when media and technology become an integral part of everyday life as well as institutional structures in society. (Voldtmer et al., 2019). Mediatization sees the media as shaping and framing the process and discourse in political communication in the society where the communication process occurs (Urfan, 2011).

Mediatization is a political system that influences most of the demands of the media in its political coverage (Asp, 2014). Mediatization as a cultural process that changes the character and function of social institutions due to the response to the increasingly widespread presence of the media. (Hjarvard, 2008). Technological developments encourage the development of media so that it has the ability to reach a wider audience, so it has greater power to convey social and cultural political issues. One form of this adaptation is when politicians express their public statements that polarize issues so that they have a greater chance of getting media coverage. (Hjarvard, 2008).

Media as a catalyst for political change with its ease of reporting political issues every day (Urfan, 2011). So politicians use the media to gain political support by shaping images in the media in order to reach a wide audience. The concept of mediatization is used to describe the process of the expansion of media logic into

politics and the dependence of politicians on the media (Strömbäck, 2008). (Strömbäck, 2008).

### ***Political Mediatization***

The mediatization of politics involves the increasing influence of media on political processes, including institutions, organizations, and actors (Strömbäck & Esser, 2014). This concept can be understood through four interrelated dimensions:

1. **Media as a Source of Information:** The centrality of media as a provider of political and societal information, shaping public discourse and influencing perceptions.
2. **Media Independence:** The degree to which media operates autonomously, distinct from other social and political institutions, ensuring a critical role in democratic processes.
3. **Media Logic vs Political Logic:** The extent to which political coverage is driven by media priorities (e.g., sensationalism, framing, audience engagement) against political imperatives (e.g., policy agendas, strategic messaging). This dimension emphasizes how media and political actors negotiate the presentation of information.
4. **Guidance by Media and Political Logic:** The ways in which political actors and institutions adapt to media demands, balancing media logic and political logic to achieve their goals. This interplay shapes how politicians and organizations respond to media influence, often altering communication strategies to maximize impact (Strömbäck, 2008).

Political mediatization refers to the pervasive influence of media on governance, reshaping communication patterns and institutional behaviors (Linxiao, 2021). This concept encapsulates how individuals, organizations, and institutions adjust their activities to align with media requirements (Strömbäck & Esser, 2014).

Mediatization impacts how media and politics are intertwined (Strömbäck & Esser, 2014). Thus, political mediatization illustrates the complex interaction between media and politics, where media and political logics influence each other in shaping public opinion and achieving political goals. The form of mediatization carried out by politicians is now not limited to mass media alone. With the development of technology, it encourages the development of media to reach a wider community, including by using social media.

The use of social media is commonly used by politicians to construct messages and images that the actors want to convey to the public. This study will examine how the process and pattern of political mediatization carried out by the volunteer team and Ganjar Pranowo and Mahfud MD through social media Twitter/X by using political memes in campaigning for the election of the President and Vice President of Indonesia in 2024.

### ***Political Campaigns and Digital Political Campaigns***

Media technology has changed the act of communicating with leaders, the public, and the media itself. Long before Twitter became part of branding efforts, political leaders have used the media as a means of communicating about their

politics. Today, online messaging plays a key role in the election process of Presidential and Vice Presidential candidates. The election is no longer using a mass media approach, but an interactive approach where the media in this campaign is tweeted through Twitter or all available media in the context of social media. The campaign complements the strategy of gaining exposure by combining digital media technologies to influence voters, utilizing messages that are precisely targeted to voters' personalized social media profiles. (Stromer-Galley, 2014). Social media itself has transformed aspects of political campaigning, and reduced the power of traditional gatekeepers such as general journalists, and also increased the ability of 'rebel' candidates to develop a following on social media, particularly Twitter, and gave challengers the opportunity to build support on both issues and personality characteristics (Perloff, 2014). (Perloff, 2014).

Various studies in the field of digital political communication have provided an in-depth understanding of the role of the internet in modern political processes. Digital Political Communication Theory, is a theoretical foundation that discusses the role of the internet in the context of political mobilization, engagement, and participation in the political process. (Koc-Michalska & Lilleker, 2017).. In their journal, Koc-Michalska & Lilleker emphasize the importance of online political activism, which includes the use of social media and other digital platforms as a means to spread political messages, garner support, and mobilize voters. In addition, it highlights how digital technologies have changed the way political campaigns are conducted, providing new capabilities for candidates and political parties to interact directly with voters and influence their views. By exploring this concept, this theory provides an understanding of how digital media plays a key role in shaping the dynamics of modern politics and changing the way politics is understood and conducted by society.

On the other hand, Manuel Castells (2013) explores the dynamics of communication in network society aiming to develop a systematic theory of communication for contemporary society. In the context of network societies, the concept of power involves complex control and influence, in which communication plays an important role. Mass communication has a key role in conveying messages and influencing public perception, often with the potential to be manipulated by parties with vested interests. Technology plays an increasingly important role in facilitating social movements, allowing previously marginalized groups to voice their interests globally. However, technology also brings new challenges, especially in the context of artificial intelligence (AI), where algorithms and automated systems can influence the way information is delivered, filtered and understood by society. As such, the impact on communication and access to information creates a complex foundation for understanding the dynamics of power and control in an increasingly networked society.

As the largest group of voters in the past two elections, young people have a strategic role in socio-political life. Concerned about the decline of youth political engagement, it is often proposed that social media can be a solution to the challenge. In this debate, social media is considered to have two roles. First, social media can serve as a new communication channel that allows established political institutions, such as parties, and their stakeholders to engage the younger generation.

Alternatively, young people use social media to change the way they engage in politics by finding new ways to express their political preferences without being tied to traditional political engagement, such as creating parodies to memes. (Keating & Melis, 2017).

Reaching back to individuals who have made voting intentions has been shown to increase voter turnout, according to research conducted by Gerber et al. (2008). Interpersonal contact made by campaign volunteers significantly influences the decision for voters. Then, in the realm of digital marketing, especially on social media platforms such as Twitter, there are developments, especially political marketing strategies that are often referred to as microtargeting, which involves customizing campaign messages to individuals or users based on their social media characteristics and preferences. (Perloff, 2014). This approach complements traditional demographic segmentation and aims to engage users on a personalized level. As a result, undecided voters are able to receive information from their acquaintances who volunteer for the campaign, thus influencing voter behavior towards individuals or users.

### ***Memes***

The definition of meme itself was initiated by Richard Dawkins (1976) where the word meme itself comes from the Greek '*minema*' which is defined as something that is imitated. Dawkins explains that culture is an unusual thing about humans and then the transmission of culture makes humans even though they are actually conservative, then appear in the form of evolution. The basic process of a meme according to Dawkins is how an idea formed from human culture spreads from humans to other humans which is commonly referred to as imitation so that the process of cultural transmission occurs.

Referring to the meme that has been initiated by Dawkins, Shifman (2014) argues that the definition of memes is quite ambiguous because Dawkins himself refers to examples of memes used involving God, hymns and anecdotes, and practices related to Christian rituals that he considers spiritual. According to him, memes aim to explain or describe a small unit of a culture that spreads by word of mouth through imitation or imitation, which can then shape or reflect the minds of the general public which then he explains the definition of memes in a simple form, namely:

1. Viewing scattered meme units in an attempt to incorporate several memetic dimensions that people can emulate.
2. Understand memes not as single, well-developed entities, but rather as groups of content units with common characteristics.

Thus, the form of memes initiated by Shifman (2014) along with the development of the digital era is referred to as internet memes where there is a group of digital elements that provide similar characteristics of the same content, form, and or attitude by being made aware of each other and spread, imitated, and or changed via the internet by many users. The use of internet memes in the digital era where in addition to being a common source of online commentary, memes are also used as commentary on social issues and especially on politics, especially as an

alternative communication in conveying an issue that is crucial for media and political actors. (Moreno-Almeida, 2021; Zhang & Gearhart, 2022)..

### ***Political Messages through Memes***

There have been studies conducted on political memes including that their use is an invitation or message to others in a case and that those exposed to the political content of memes experience political participation, increased online expression of opinion, and anger towards candidates perceived as opposition (Halversen & Weeks, 2023). (Halversen & Weeks, 2023).. In addition, there are new findings conducted by Kulkarni (2017) where satirical memes spark political discussions.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

The research conducted is by conducting a qualitative research approach with a constructivism paradigm which studies the meaning or understanding that is interpretative of a particular event or point of view. (Mertens, 2023). Thus, this constructivism approach seeks to understand and analyze the process and patterns of using political memes as a form of political mediatization in the 2024 Presidential and Vice Presidential election campaign in Indonesia carried out by the Ganjar Pranowo & Mahfud MD volunteer team.

The research method used is Netnography where researchers understand a user culture in both social media and online applications by maintaining the authenticity of the data obtained so as to provide a comprehensive understanding of the topics uploaded by users who then adapt as social media platforms develop in understanding online phenomena. (Kozinets, 2020). Netnography emphasizes internet users who are active in online communities and have rich online lives. Along with the changing times, netnography methods continue to evolve. Now, the focus of netnography is not only on specific communities, but more on how audiences, especially users, interact online with various social experiences. (Eriyanto, 2021).

Netnography, as described by Kozinets (2020) is a qualitative research method that aims to interpret and understand online culture through digital traces, network practices, and online systems. These online traces can be in the form of various elements such as images, texts, photos, music, advertisements, and audio-visual media. According to Eriyanto (2021) netnography research goes through several stages, namely initiation, investigation, interaction, immersion, integration, and communication of research results which will be described as follows:

### **Initiation**

At this stage, the author initiated the research in the form of informational and regulatory preparations needed in the research. The researcher defined keywords that might be used in the distribution of memes such as the keywords "Ganjar penguin/penguin", "Penguin Chairman", "National Penguin Team". The researcher determined the Twitter/X platform as a place for data collection, because on this platform the most penguin meme data was spread. The search was conducted by

focusing on the interactions that occurred around the @timpenguinnas volunteer account and spread from there. The researcher observed the campaign period from November 2023 to January 2024 with a big data site approach to dive further into the investigation stage.

### **Investigation**

Netnography uses web data, such as analyzing conversations on social media (Kozinets, 2020). The steps taken are to determine the site to be studied, looking for various types of data such as images, videos, or memes. After collecting the data, the researcher reads, watches, or listens to the data, then saves it for coding and further analysis by careful selection of relevant information traces. These traces are selected based on the researcher's decisions, interests, perspectives, and influences.

After simplifying the questions and sorting potential keywords, the investigation process was carried out. Although the research team found digital traces of penguin memes without political context throughout 2023, there was no data showing an association with candidate 03 Ganjar Pranowo and Mahfud MD. This included the months of November and December (which had already been determined at the initiation stage), where only 3 posts associating penguin memes with Ganjar Pranowo were found, uploaded on December 28 - 31. As a result, the observation time span was extended to February 14, 2024.

### **Interaction**

In netnographic research, interaction through engagement is important to understand the subject's perspective without the need to directly participate in their activities. Through social media and other interrogation tools, such as online interviews, public postings, or direct messages, the data generated includes a trail of questions and participants, similar to a survey or interview. In this analysis, the concept of "engagement history" is used to understand the history of individuals' interactions on these platforms, aiding the process of understanding the dynamics of interactions over time. The researcher traces and interacts through digital footprints that have gone before.

### **Immersion**

Immersion in netnography engages the researcher deeply with the research subject, focusing on pre-existing site data on the internet and social media. Through note-taking in an immersion journal, the researcher records digital data and interprets it personally, intellectually and emotionally. The immersion journal also records the research process in detail, including social media visits, idea exploration, and original thinking.

This research applies the netnography method to collect data through observation of volunteer posts from Ganjar Pranowo and Mahfud MD, candidates for Indonesian President and Vice President in 2024 on the Twitter/X platform. The focus of the research is to understand how memes are used in persuasive political campaigns on social media. The netnography approach was chosen as it allows immersion and involvement of the researcher in understanding and interpreting the



topics discussed in the meme posts of penguins, the campaign icons of Ganjar Pranowo and Mahfud MD. Thematic analysis was also used to identify themes relevant to the topic of discussion, in accordance with the characteristics of the netnography method.

The data sources in this research are divided into two, namely primary data and secondary data. The primary data source in this research is political meme content with a penguin theme uploaded by the Ganjar Pranowo and Mahfud MD volunteer team accounts on Twitter/X from December 28, 2023 - February 14, 2024. Secondary data sources in this study are information derived from previous research such as books, journals, articles, and the internet that are still related to political mediatization research through memes.

The netnography approach is adopted in this study because it can provide an opportunity to analyze social and cultural interactions in an online context, especially in social media platforms such as Twitter/X accounts on the volunteer team and Ganjar Pranowo and Mahfud MD who are the focus of the research. This research aims to identify, analyze, and understand how the processes and patterns of social media users, especially Twitter/X account followers, and political mediatization of political memes during the campaign period of the 2024 Presidential and Vice Presidential elections in Indonesia.

The object of this research is focused on memes containing the content of candidate pairs Ganjar Pranowo and Mahfud MD on Twitter/X. These memes can be taken from the accounts of political volunteers such as Tim Penguin Nasional, Ganjar Pranowo, Mahfud MD, and sympathizers with personal accounts. To maintain the relevance and validity of the data used, the object of this research is limited to data on digital traces uploaded in the period December 28 - February 14, 2024.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **The Odyssey Begins**

To begin the investigation, researchers identified keywords potentially used in the dissemination of the meme, such as "Ganjar penguin/penguin," "Chief Penguin," "National Penguin Team," and so on. These keywords were applied to searches on Twitter/X social media, as the primary platform where penguin memes are most widely spread. The study focused on interactions within the @timpenguinnas volunteer account and its broader network.

Given that this research was conducted post-election, the investigation was conducted using a historical approach, where the researcher traced the origin of the Penguin meme and its relationship with Ganjar Pranowo. In accordance with the plan developed at the initiation stage, researchers then searched Twitter/X social media for "Penguin hunting" from November to December 2023. However, after conducting the search, the research team did not find any digital traces of Penguin memes with a political context throughout 2023, nor was there any data that showed a connection with candidate pair number 03, Ganjar Pranowo and Mahfud MD. In fact, the @timpenguinnas account itself was not found in that time span. However, on December 28-31, 2023, three posts were found that humorously associated

penguin memes with Ganjar Pranowo. At that time, penguin memes were still a comedic representation of pornographic content fans.

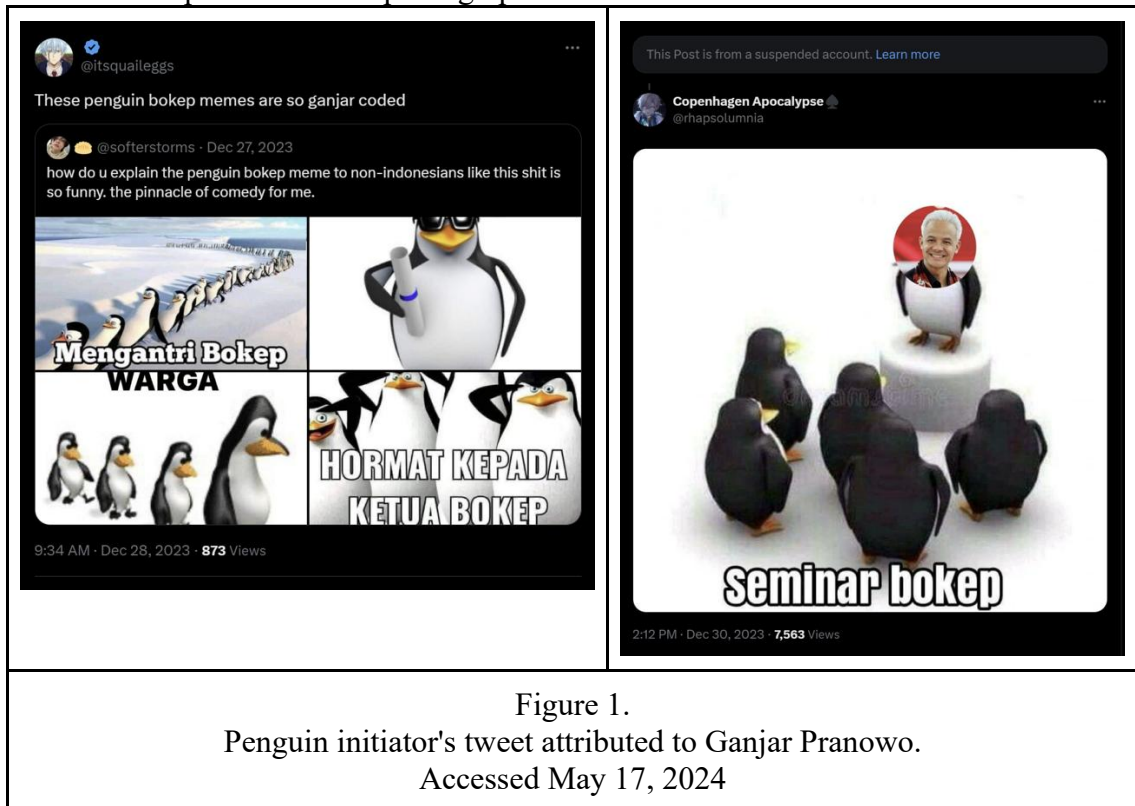


Figure 1.  
Penguin initiator's tweet attributed to Ganjar Pranowo.  
Accessed May 17, 2024

Source: Research Results, 2024

There is a uniqueness found in this wandering process: both @itsquaileggs' and @rhapsolumnia's tweets/uploads were in response to other, possibly unrelated tweets; where @itsquaileggs only commented on @softerstorms' tweet of a penguin meme based on its original context of being a representation of a pornographic fan, and @rhapsolumnia only replied to the tweet of someone whose account had been suspended, so the context of the meme was lost.

On the other hand, the third tweet in December explicitly supported Ganjar Pranowo's association with penguin memes, as in the example below:

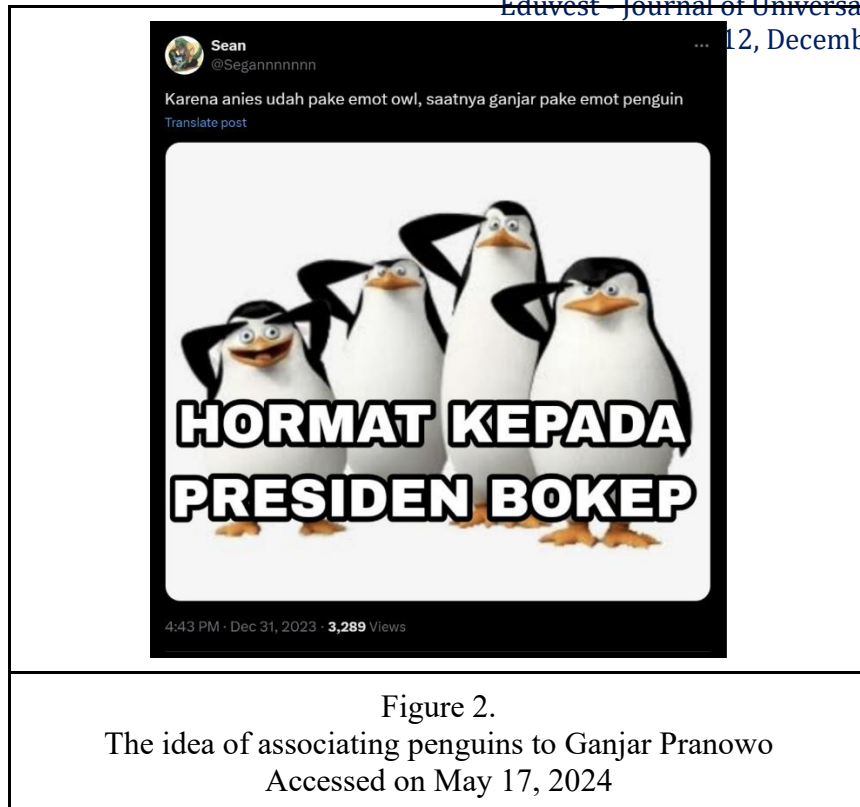


Figure 2.  
The idea of associating penguins to Ganjar Pranowo  
Accessed on May 17, 2024

Source: Research Results, 2024

Despite successfully finding the tweets of the initiator of the penguin appendage's association with Ganjar Pranowo, the roots of the popularity of the Ganjar Pranowo penguin meme are still unclear. Therefore, the research team decided to extend the observation time until the day of the election, February 14, 2024.

### **The Rise of the Penguin Nickname**

The investigation conducted in January brought better results to help the author's immersion into the culture of penguin meme use. The tweets that started the popularity of the penguin nickname for Ganjar Pranowo started on January 2, 2024. At that time, there was a lot of news coverage discussing the Free Internet program launched by Candidate Pair 03, along with further statements from Ganjar Pranowo regarding this matter. After the emergence of the discourse and news, penguin memes appeared again, initiated by several prominent figures on Twitter/X social media such as @neohistoria\_id account, @strike\_bravo\_b account, @aldapstr account, and several other figures.



Source: Research Results, 2024

After tracing the initial use of the penguin meme, which was originally intended for pornography-related content, the research team found a connection between the use of the penguin meme and the image of Ganjar Pranowo formed after making a statement on Deddy Corbuzier's Close the Door Podcast. The meme was used as a humoral response after Ganjar Pranowo said that he was an 'ordinary person', who also liked pornographic content. The following screenshot also shows that many people humorously summarized the background of the penguin nickname addressed to Ganjar Pranowo.

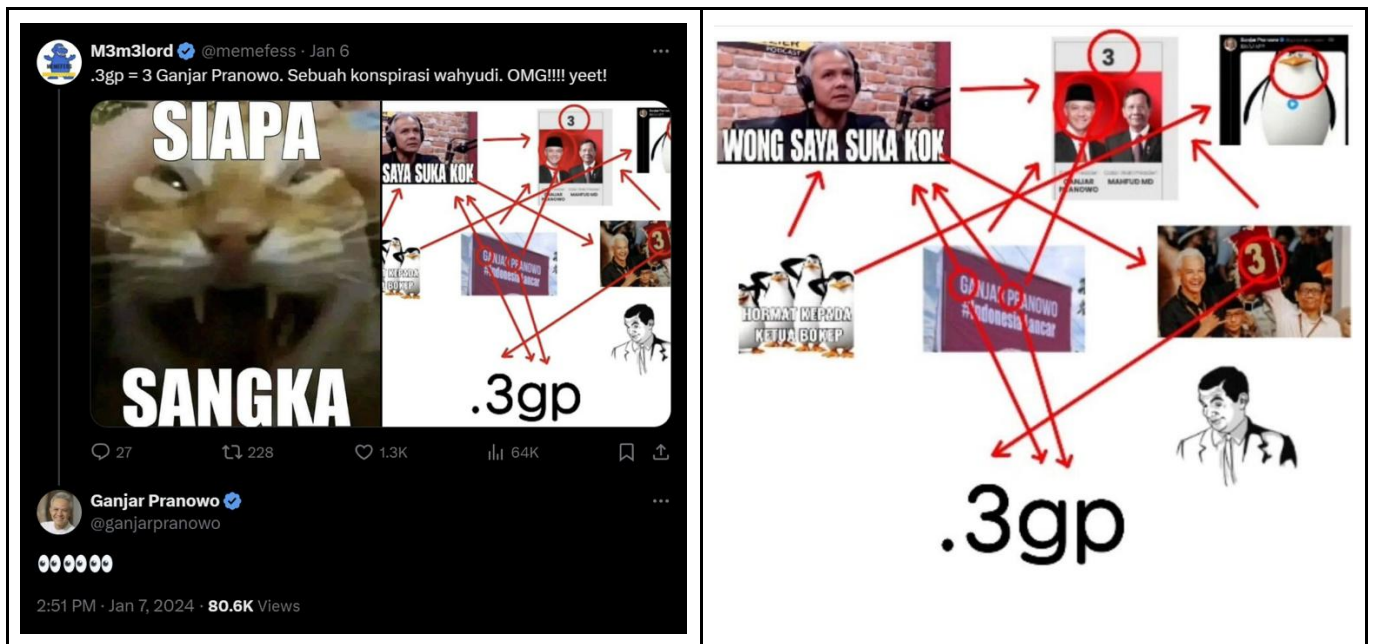


Figure 4.  
*@memefess tweets about the "penguin conspiracy" and its details.*  
*Accessed on May 18, 2024*

Source: Research Results, 2024

The research also found an additional tweet from @memefess account that was commented directly by Ganjar Pranowo, which shows that he supports the nickname.

The perception of Ganjar Pranowo, which was previously considered negative by the general public for appearing vulgar and supporting pornographic content, has turned positive since the penguin meme, especially on social media Twitter/X. As such, Ganjar Pranowo himself has 'embraced' this association through his tweets on the platform since January 5, 2024.





Figure 5.  
Ganjar Pranowo's tweet with penguin theme  
Accessed May 18, 2024

Source: Research Results, 2024

As Ganjar Pranowo's popularity rose, the research team found the emergence of an account that represented support for Ganjar Pranowo and Mahfud MD, namely Tim Penguin Nasional or TPN with the account name '@timpenguinnas'.

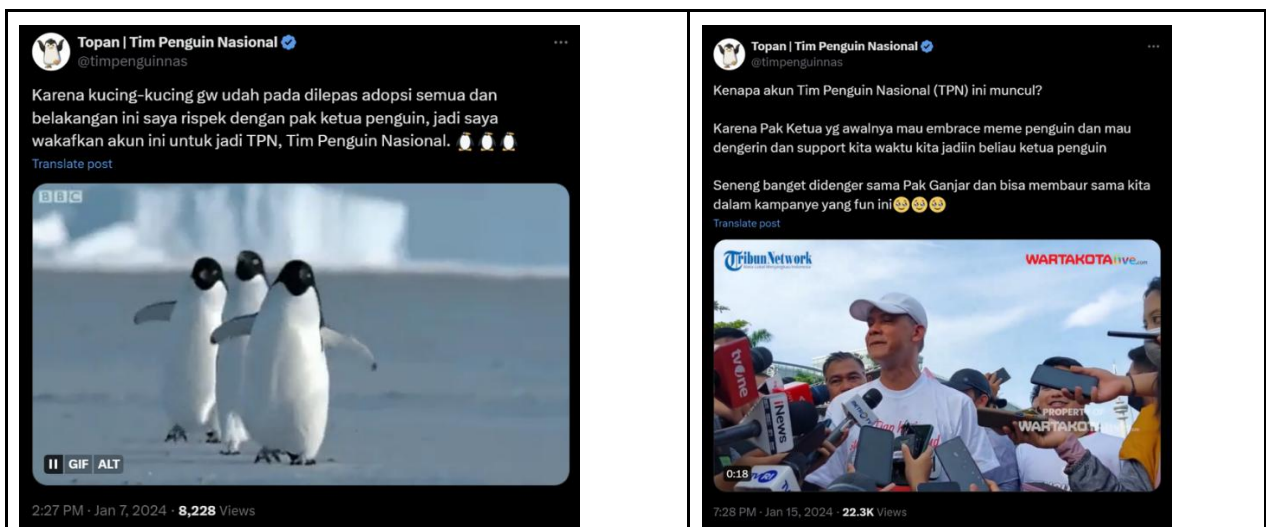


Figure 6.  
The emergence of the @timpenguinnas account on social media Twitter/X  
Accessed on May 18, 2024

Source: Research Results, 2024

On January 7, 2024, the account manager of @timpenguinnas, nicknamed Topan, announced that he was a campaign volunteer for candidate pair 03, Ganjar Pranowo and Mahfud MD, which was followed by the increasing popularity of Ganjar Pranowo. Then, on January 15, 2024, Topan also admitted that the emergence of @timpenguinnas was initially caused by the public's positive response to Ganjar Pranowo's image through penguin memes about him, which showed Ganjar Pranowo's image as someone who was relaxed, open, and not anti-criticism.

The emergence of the @timpenguinnas account has increased the popularity of candidate pair 03, especially Ganjar Pranowo, as well as the flow of visits to the account. Some accounts even explicitly expressed their desire to support Ganjar Pranowo due to his unique penguin campaign.

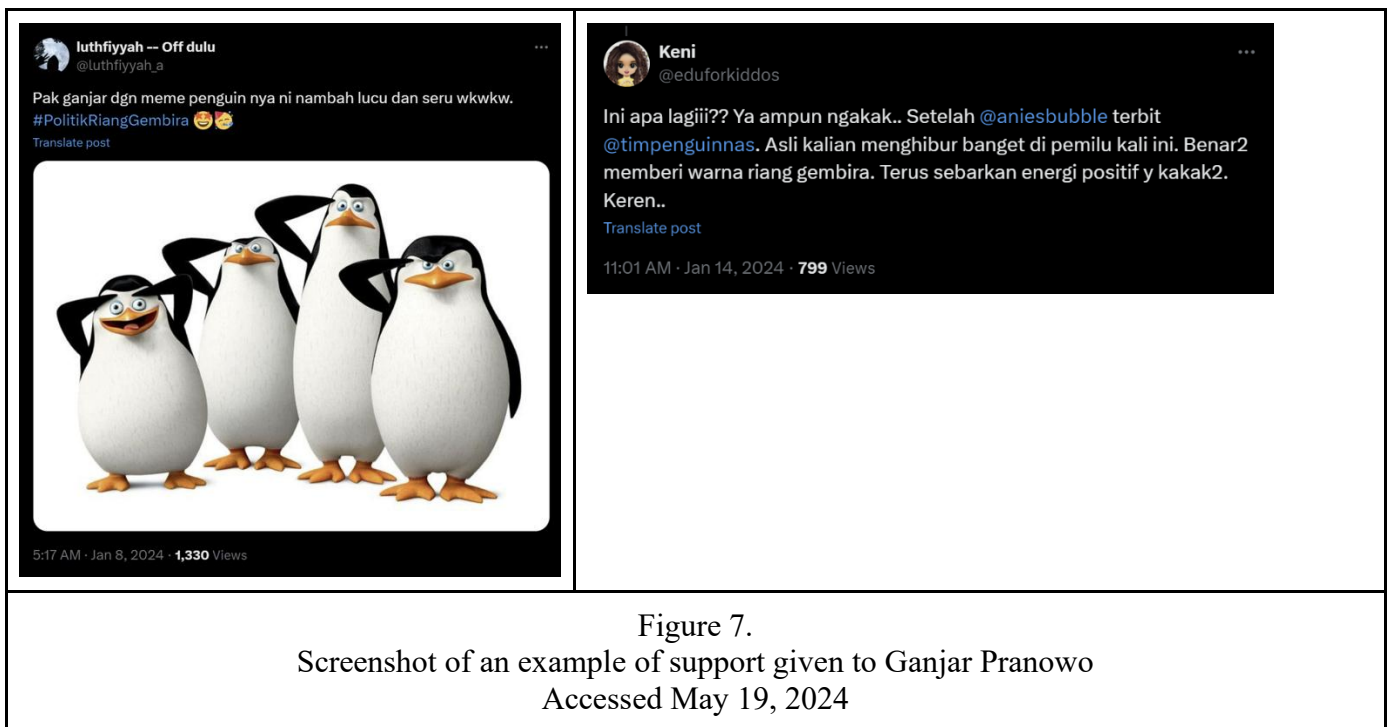


Figure 7.  
Screenshot of an example of support given to Ganjar Pranowo  
Accessed May 19, 2024

Source: Research Results, 2024

Unfortunately, many of these accounts had deleted their tweets or even padlocked their accounts by the time of writing this research, so observations can only be based on available ethnographic notes without screenshots at this time.

A screenshot of a social media post error message. The text is white on a dark grey background. It reads: "You're unable to view this Post because this account owner limits who can view their Posts. [Learn more](#)".

Figure 8.  
Evidence that some posts have been deleted by the account owner  
Accessed May 19, 2024

Source: Research Results, 2024

### **National Penguin Team and Political Campaign Management**

After the emergence of @timpenguinnas account, penguin meme became the communication base of Ganjar Pranowo's supporters community during the campaign period and was used freely by his supporters, especially the volunteers of @timpenguinnas account. The research team found that, after the emergence of this penguin meme campaign culture became more widespread, there were several functions of its use on Twitter/X social media. The functions are divided into 5 broad categories based on the end goal: 1.) Pure humor; 2.) Mockery; 3.) Political Information; 4.) Candidate Information; and 5.) Statement of Support. When broken down, these categories are sorted based on the characteristics below.

As explained earlier in the literature review section, one of the most prominent characteristics of a meme is its humor base, which can contain a specific meaning or just something abstract. Meanwhile, the category of pure humor is a category that has an overtly humorous character with no other purpose than to provoke positive reactions in the form of smiles or laughter. Of the 276 memes collected, which were then curated by the research team, it was found that this category was the most common category found with a total of 111 contents. The most pure humor meme content found by the research team was during the early days of the campaign, before penguin memes began to be widely used in Ganjar Pranowo's campaign.



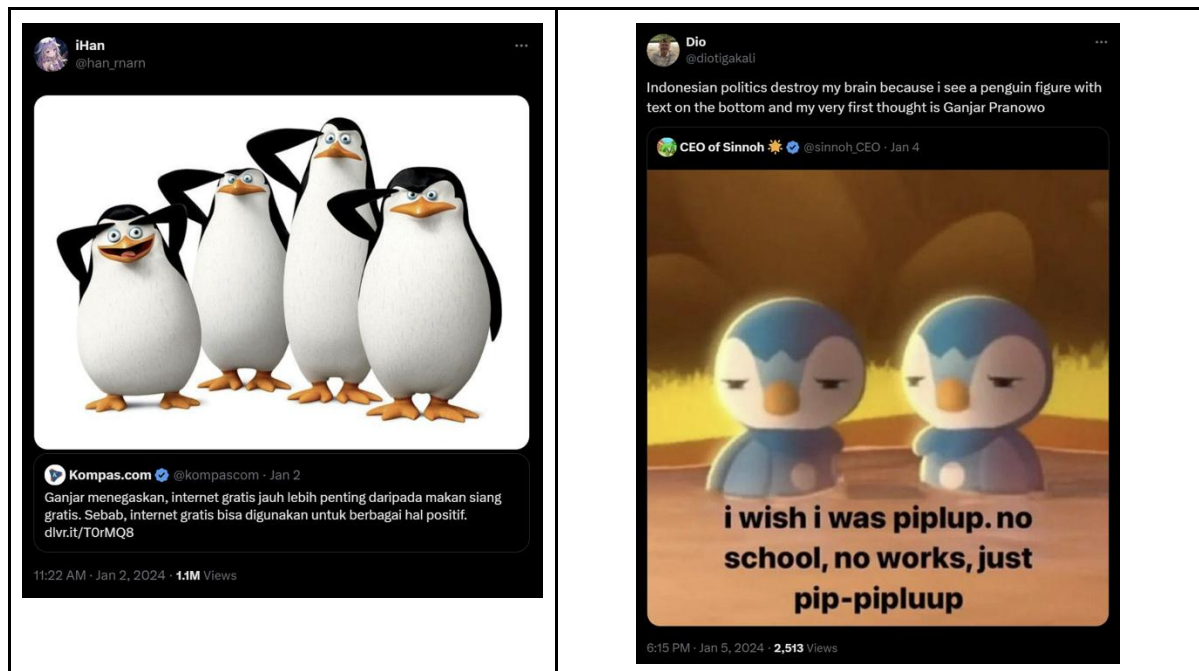


Figure 9.

Left: examples of tweets with pure humor memes; Right: how Twitter/X users consume the content and associate with Ganjar Pranowo.

Accessed May 19, 2024

Source: Research Results, 2024

After the emergence of the @timpenguin account, memes with this format often appear as a form of casual communication and often as reaction images to other tweets, both within and outside the context of political discussions. These memes work well to attract attention and strengthen associations with Ganjar Pranowo.

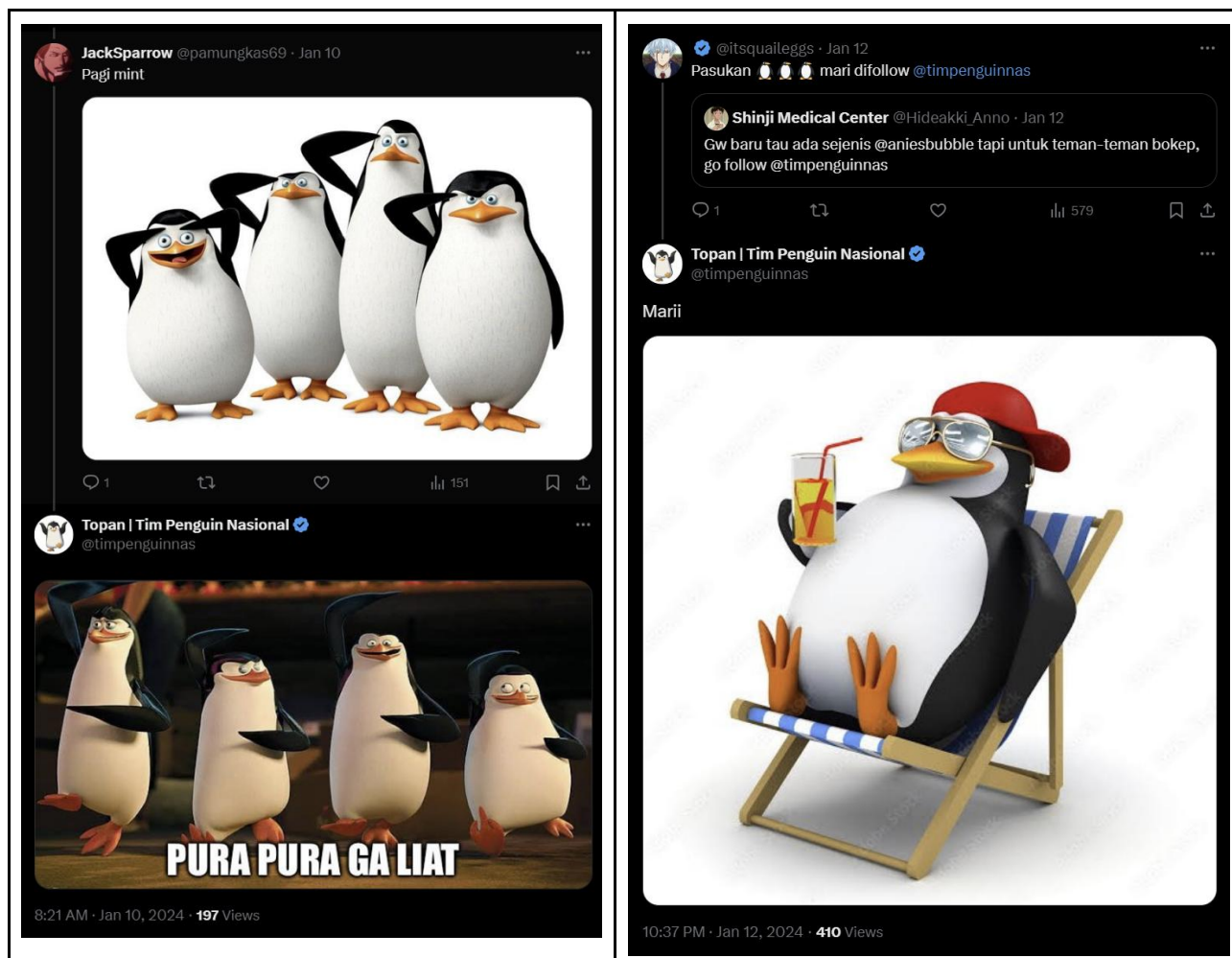


Figure 10.  
An example of how pure humor memes were used after the emergence of the @timpenguinnas account  
Accessed May 19, 2024

Source: Research Results, 2024

The second category is mockery, where content in this category refers to content that contains elements of mockery or satire against certain individuals or groups. Although the characteristics of this category are closest to the original function of memes (as a form of satire), memes in this category are among the least used by volunteers and supporters of Candidate Pair 03 including the @timpenguinnas account; only 19 mockery meme uploads were found. In addition, the memes used still have a simple format, namely a picture of a penguin with a short text as a companion to a tweet or other upload.



Figure 11.  
Example screenshot of a meme with a mockery category

Source: Research Results, 2024

In categorizing political information, the research team initially grouped all memes containing political information into this category. However, during the immersion process, the research team found a significant difference in patterns between memes containing general political information (*guard the election, don't forget to watch the debate, etc.*) and information about Candidate Pair 03. Although both are objective in tone, memes in this category have a tendency to 'soft-sell' without having to overtly reveal to vote for Candidate Pair 03.

Therefore, the research team attempted to curate them into two new categories, namely Political/General Information and Candidate Information. The research team found that the Candidate Information category was the second most common category, with a total of 70 posts found, most of which came from the @timpenguinnasional account.

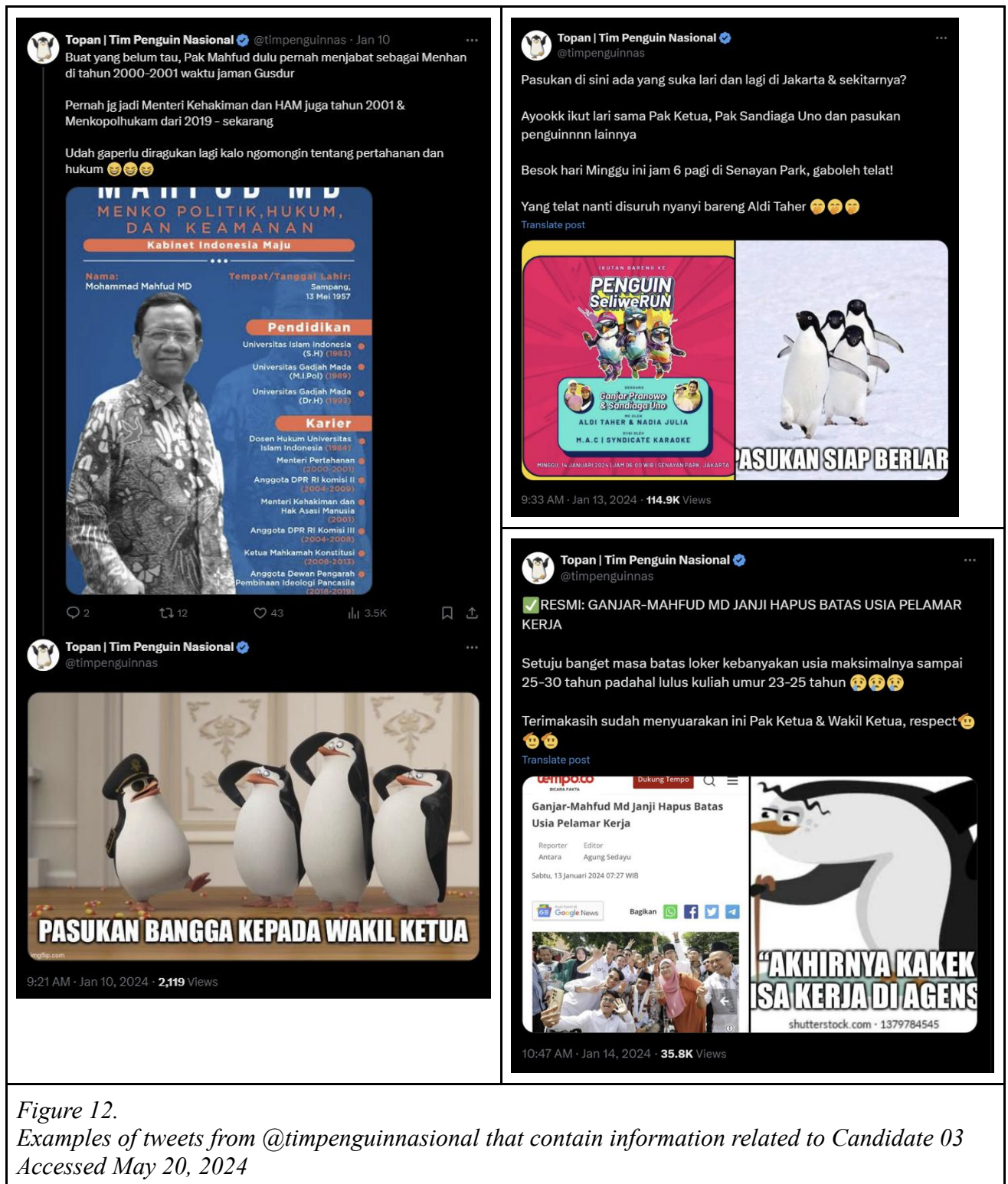


Figure 12. Examples of tweets from @timpenguinnasional that contain information related to Candidate 03 Accessed May 20, 2024

Source: Research Results, 2024

Another case with memes with the General Political Information category, which on the other hand is the upload with the least amount of the research team



found, namely only a total of 9 contents uploaded by various sources that provide information about the stages of the election.

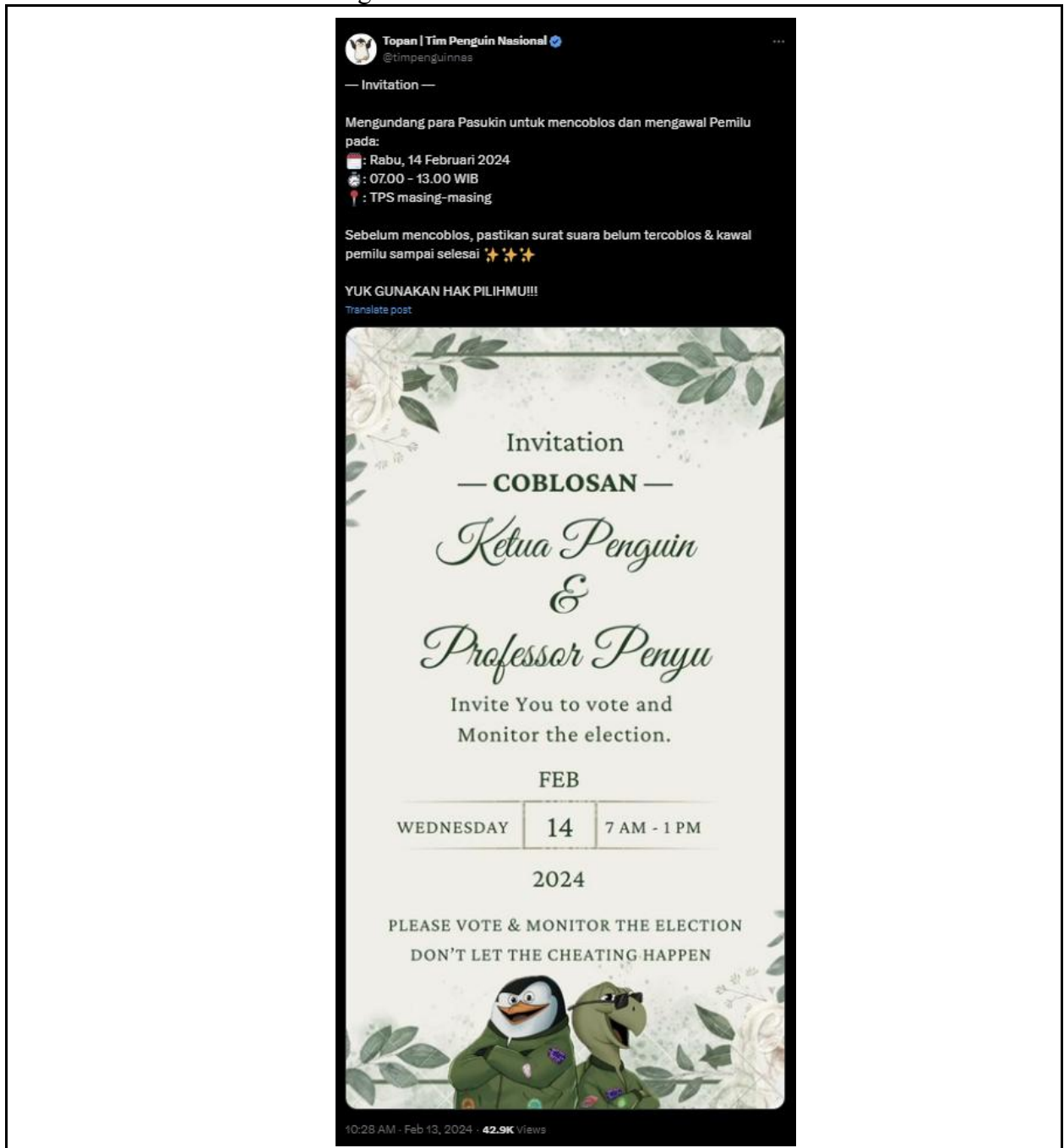


Figure 13.  
Example tweet from @timpenguinnas account

Source: Research Results, 2024

The last category we examined was the support category, where the memes openly and subjectively expressed support for Candidate Pair 03.

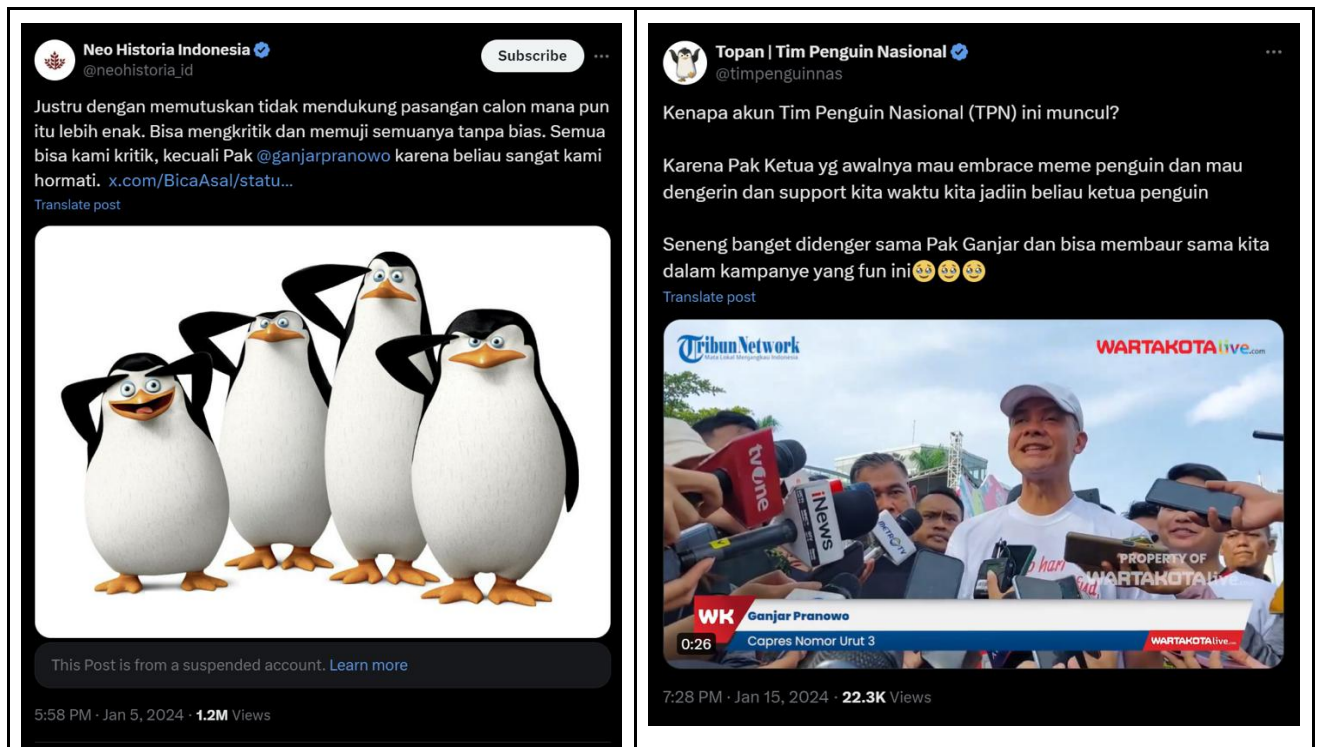


Figure 14.  
Examples of tweets expressing support for candidate 03 subjectively.  
Accessed May 20, 2024

Source: Research Results, 2024

Initially, the support category had the title of the most content we found. However, during the immersion process, the category was prone to be used by *buzzers* who were characterized by uploading the same memes with uniform hashtags and text. Therefore, the research team decided to take one *buzzer* tweet from each meme format to avoid data saturation, and combined it with the actual support tweets that received 60 data. These tweets are often found before major events in the election series, such as the Presidential and Vice Presidential Candidate Debate, and the Akbar Campaign.



Figure 15.

Examples of tweets from buzzer accounts

Source: Research Results, 2024

### Discussion

In the division of categories presented in the research results, namely Humor, Ridicule, Political Information, Candidate Information, and Support, the practices carried out on the memes of Indonesian President and Vice President candidates Ganjar Pranowo & Mahfud MD show that there is a political mediatization process that is influenced by the diffusion that occurs on the Internet as a political communication channel where there is a new opportunity for political actors to communicate through media logic with two types of media adaptation described by Donges. (Haßler et al., 2014) namely:

1. Political parties change their organizational structure to meet the demand for mass media. In this aspect, it is necessary to consult media expert consultants and build media expertise.
2. Political parties change their communication behavior in order to meet the demands of the mass media. This includes maintaining good relations with the media in order to be able to influence the media agenda and especially adjust the communication strategy.

Thus, in the memes that have been uploaded and studied, there are adjustments made by Ganjar Pranowo and Mahfud MD in an effort to adjust the logic of communication to mass media content that can be easily understood, especially in the community. In media logic, there is one aspect that stands out in the dissemination of memes as described by Asp in Strömbäck & Esser (2014) is personalization, where media logic dominates political media coverage of individual actors rather than abstract topics where personalization itself emphasizes news coverage of politicians regarding what plans are being proposed and the personality of politicians who are felt to be related to the lives of people in general.

Then, memes spread on Twitter social media, there is a connective action where there is a familiar collective logic action related to the high level of organizational resources that form a collective identity so that there is personalized communication identified in two forms, namely (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012):

1. Political content is shaped by ideas that are easily personalized, which requires a persuasive method that is inclusive of different personal reasons for competing with a situation that must be changed.
2. A variety of personal communication technologies encourage the sharing of themes, which often involves further personalization in the sharing of digital connections with peers or like-minded supporters.

The adjustment of delivery in the logic of media develops in the logic of social media where in terms of production, the selection of information and the creation of cheap content by users adjusts to each individual's preferences and attracts maximum attention, and in terms of distribution users are likened to intermediaries in disseminating popular content and are often spread to networks of people who have similar interests, and in the use of media, networks bound by interests and like-mindedness with highly customized exposure so that there is an interactive orientation through renewal practices. (Klinger & Svensson, 2015).. So that the form of mediatization that occurs in memes on the candidate pair Ganjar Pranowo and Mahfud MD adapts to the logic of the media which is developing in the logic of network media.

## CONCLUSION

This research shows that the spread of political memes through the Twitter/X social media platform on the Ganjar Pranowo and Mahfud MD campaigns has an important role in their political campaigns in the 2024 elections. Through the use of penguin memes that were originally related to humor and light content, it has built a more relaxed and open political image. The @timpenguinnas account, which is the center of this meme distribution, uses humor, satire, and information to convey political messages and build engagement with voters. The results found that there are five main categories in the use of memes, namely: pure humor, mockery, general political information, candidate information, and statements of support. The pure humor category dominated at the beginning of the campaign to attract attention, while the other categories were used to disseminate information and garner support.

In addition, this research reveals that the spread of political memes reflects the process of political mediatization influenced by the diffusion of the internet as



a new medium of communication. Ganjar Pranowo and Mahfud MD adapted their communication strategies to the logic of the media, which emphasized more on personalization and individual involvement. The memes that were spread also showed that there were organized connective actions and formed collective identities on social media. This communication adjustment evolved into a social media logic where content is produced and distributed according to individual preferences, strengthening interaction and engagement with voters. Thus, the use of memes in this campaign succeeded in creating a strong political mediatization, changing the political narrative, and effectively influencing public perception.

However, this research has several limitations where first, the research focus relies on qualitative analysis without the support of more in-depth quantitative data in measuring the real impact of meme distribution on voter behavior. Second, this research covers the campaign period, which was at the end of December 2023 - February 2024. Until now, the @timpenguinnas account is still actively spreading memes and information so that more in-depth research is needed after the campaign activities.

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