

Analyzing Communication Strategies KPU Sergai Podcast as Digital Public Communication for Electoral Education

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Abstract

This study examines the KPU Sergai Podcast as a digital public communication initiative for voter education. While podcasts offer potential to enhance political literacy through flexible and narrative-driven formats, their effectiveness in institutional contexts remains limited. This research employs a qualitative case study approach, integrating podcast analytics, content observation, and in-depth interviews to analyze how communication strategies are designed and implemented. The findings reveal that podcast performance remains suboptimal, as indicated by consistently low audience reach (fewer than 100 views per episode) and minimal engagement, including limited likes and the absence of comments and shares. These patterns suggest that the podcast has not succeeded in expanding its visibility or fostering interactive communication. Beyond descriptive results, the study identifies a structural communication problem. Internal constraints such as limited resources, lack of technical capacity, and restricted production quality shape content characteristics and distribution strategies, resulting in predominantly one-way communication and misalignment with audience preferences, particularly among younger users. The findings demonstrate a causal pathway in which these constraints lead to audience misalignment, low engagement, and passive audience behavior. This condition reflects a broader communication gap between the interactive potential of digital media and its practical implementation in governmental communication. This study contributes by offering an integrated analytical framework linking institutional capacity, content strategy, and audience engagement. Practically, it highlights the need for more interactive content, multi-platform distribution, and improved production quality to enhance digital public communication effectiveness.

Keywords: *Podcast, Digital Communication, Voter Education, Audience Engagement, Communication Strategy*

1. Introduction

The rapid development of digital technology has fundamentally transformed patterns of public communication, including how government institutions disseminate information to the public. This transformation is not only marked by increased internet usage, but also by changes in how information is produced, distributed, and consumed in real time across spatial and temporal boundaries. Public communication is no longer unidirectional, but has evolved into a more interactive and networked communication environment (Kruikemeier et al., 2020). In this context, digital platforms enable more dynamic interactions between institutions and audiences, allowing for the co-construction of meaning and participatory communication processes (Medaglia & Zheng, 2017).

This transformation is closely related to the inherent characteristics of digital media, which differ significantly from conventional media systems. Digital media are characterized by interactivity, accessibility, and user participation (Flew, 2014). These characteristics have shifted audiences from passive recipients of information into active participants who contribute to communication processes (McQuail, 2010). As a consequence, public institutions are required to move beyond one-way information delivery and adopt more dialogic and participatory communication models (Boulianne, 2019). This shift is further reinforced by collaborative governance perspectives, which emphasize importance of interaction and co-creation in public communication (Sørensen & Torfing, 2021).

However, the transition toward participatory communication is not automatically achieved through digitalization. Digital media ecosystems are shaped by complex relationships between content production, distribution, and consumption (Napoli, 2019). As such, the effectiveness of digital communication depends not only on technological adoption but also on how communication strategies are designed and implemented. In particular, factors such as audience engagement mechanisms, content relevance, and platform optimization play a crucial role in determining communication outcomes (Enli & Skogerbø, 2019).

One form of digital media that has developed rapidly within this ecosystem is podcasting. Podcasts offer an audio-based format that is flexible, personal, and on-demand, enabling deeper narrative engagement and emotional connection with audiences (Spinelli & Dann, 2019). This format allows institutions to communicate in a more conversational and accessible manner compared to traditional media formats. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of podcasts as public communication media depends on

how content is structured, targeted, and distributed within a broader digital ecosystem (Llinares et al., 2018).

In the Indonesian context, podcast consumption has experienced significant growth in recent years. Reports indicate that a substantial proportion of internet users regularly engage with podcast content, reflecting the expansion of digital audio ecosystems (We Are Social & Meltwater, 2023). Despite this growth, the development of podcasts has been largely driven by independent creators rather than public institutions. This condition raises important questions regarding how effectively podcasts are utilized as tools for governmental communication.

From an audience perspective, podcast users are predominantly younger individuals, particularly those belonging to Generation Z. This group is characterized by multitasking media consumption patterns and a preference for content that is engaging, narrative-driven, and emotionally stimulating (Morris & Patterson, 2019). While podcasts are often categorized as low-attention media, this raises a critical issue regarding their effectiveness in delivering complex and cognitively demanding content, such as political and electoral education.

Podcasts are also often perceived as credible and trustworthy communication media due to their conversational format and perceived authenticity (Edison Research, 2022). However, such potential does not automatically translate into communication effectiveness. The success of podcast-based communication depends on institutional strategies, content relevance, and audience engagement practices (Newman et al., 2022). Digital platforms have been shown to enhance political participation, but only when communication strategies are aligned with audience characteristics and media usage patterns (Vaccari & Valeriani, 2021). In Indonesia, fluctuations in youth voter participation suggest the presence of a gap between communication strategies and audience expectations.

In response to these challenges, KPU Sergai introduced the KPU Sergai Podcast as an innovation in digital public communication. This initiative aims to deliver electoral education in a more flexible and accessible format. However, its implementation remains largely technical rather than strategic, limiting its effectiveness as an interactive communication medium. Previous studies indicate that government podcast initiatives often face challenges related to audience awareness, content strategy, and evaluation mechanisms. Furthermore, existing research on podcasts tends to focus on creative industries rather than public institutions, creating a gap in understanding how podcasts function within governmental communication strategies.

Based on these conditions, this study addresses a critical research gap by analyzing the communication strategy of KPU Sergai Podcast as a digital public communication tool. Unlike previous studies that primarily focus on media usage, this study examines how communication strategies are designed, implemented, and adapted in practice. Conceptually, it integrates new media theory, communication strategy, and public communication within the broader context of digital government transformation. Accordingly, this study seeks to answer the following research question: How is the communication strategy designed and implemented by KPU Sergai through its podcast as a digital public communication media for voter education?

2. Method

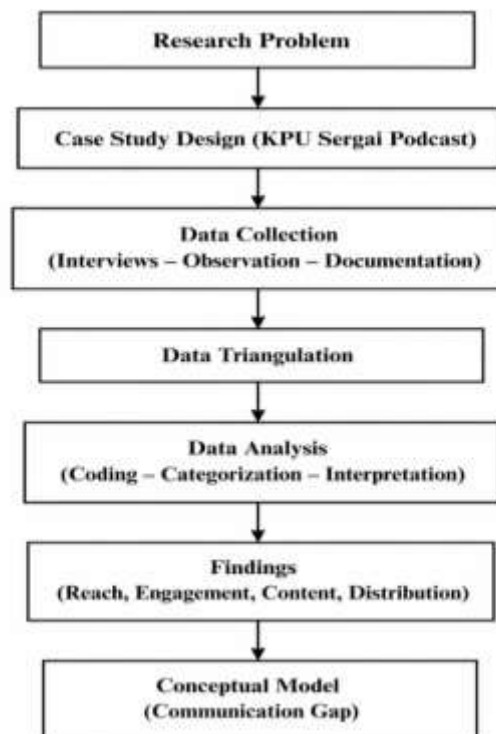


Figure 1. Research Method Design

This study employs a qualitative approach using a case study design to analyze communication strategies implemented in the KPU Sergi Podcast as a form of digital public communication in voter education. A qualitative case study is appropriate for examining complex communication processes

within real-life contexts and for capturing meaning-making from multiple actors (Yin, 2021).

This approach enables an in-depth exploration of how communication strategies are designed, produced, and interpreted by both institutional actors and audiences, which aligns with qualitative inquiry in digital communication research (Tracy, 2020). The case study design is applied as the KPU Sergai Podcast is understood as a bounded system embedded within a specific institutional context. This design is particularly suitable for addressing exploratory research questions and understanding how communication effectiveness is constructed rather than measured statistically (Yin, 2021; Saldaña, 2021).

Critically, this methodological choice is justified by the need to capture the discrepancy between the interactive potential of digital media and its actual implementation in institutional communication practices, which cannot be adequately explained through purely quantitative metrics.

In this context, qualitative inquiry allows the study to uncover underlying structural mechanisms such as content design, audience alignment, and communicative patterns that shape observable outcomes like reach and engagement.

Informants were selected using purposive sampling, which is widely used in qualitative communication studies to ensure relevance and depth of information (Patton, 2020). The inclusion of both institutional actors and audience participants reflects a multi-perspective approach recommended in digital media studies to capture both production and reception dynamics (Baym, 2021).

Figure 1 presents the data collection through interviews, observation, documentation, triangulation, and iterative data analysis. Process leads to key findings on reach, engagement, content, and distribution, which are synthesized into a conceptual model of communication gap in digital public communication to enhance credibility and validity in qualitative research (Denzin, 2021). Using platform analytics is also consistent with recent digital communication research that integrates qualitative insights with platform-based data (van Dijck, 2021).

Data analysis followed an interactive model involving coding, categorization, and interpretation, allowing identification of patterns and relationships across communication processes (Saldaña, 2021). This approach is particularly relevant for examining digital engagement, as it enables the identification of causal mechanisms behind low interaction and passive audience behavior. To ensure rigor, this study applied trustworthiness criteria, including credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

3. Results

Table 1. Podcast KPU Sergai

No.	Episode Title	Upload Date	Views	Likes	Comments	Shares	Engagement Rate
1	Episode 1: Citizens' Voices After 2024 Elections	##### #	88	12	0	0	13,64
2	Episode 2: Public Participation in Prevention and Oversight Functions During and After Election Stages	##### #	74	5	0	0	0,067
3	Episode 3: Elections as a Means Of National Integration	##### #	26	1	0	0	0,038
4	Episode 4: Voter Education For Young Voters as a Firm Of Civic Awareness and Responsibility	##### #	61	0	0	0	0,065
5	Role of Population Administrati	##### #	4	0	0	0	0

No.	Episode Title	Upload Date	Views	Likes	Comments	Shares	Engagement Rate
	on in						
	Ensuring						
	Citizen						
	Voting						
	Rights						

As presented in Table 1, all five podcast episodes recorded low view counts, each remaining below 100 views. Episode 1 achieved the highest number of views (88), followed by Episode 2 (74 views) and Episode 4 (61 views). In contrast, Episode 3 recorded only 26 views, while Episode 5 showed the lowest performance with 4 views. These findings indicate that utilization of the KPU Sergai Podcast as a digital public communication media remains suboptimal, particularly in terms of audience reach and engagement. The results confirm that audience reach is consistently limited across all episodes, suggesting that the KPU Sergai podcast has not succeeded in expanding its visibility beyond a narrow audience scope.

This empirical pattern aligns with the first category in Table 2, namely low audience reach, which indicates limited content visibility. A similar trend is observed in audience engagement metrics. As shown in Table 1, interaction levels are minimal, with no comments or shares recorded across all episodes. The number of likes is very low, ranging from 0 to 12, with Episode 1 receiving the highest engagement (12 likes), while Episodes 4 and 5 show no interaction at all. Furthermore, engagement rates exhibit a consistently weak pattern, with only Episode 1 reaching 13.64, while the remaining episodes remain close to zero.

These findings are reinforced by the second category in Table 2, namely low engagement, which reflects a passive audience pattern. The absence of comments and shares indicates a lack of two-way communication, suggesting that audiences primarily consume content without active participation.

Table 2. Finding Category

No.	Category	Finding (Result)	Implication
1	Audience Reach	Low Views	Limited Visibility
2	Engagement	Low Interaction	Passive Audience
3	Content Characteristics	Formal, Instructional, On-Directive	Low Attractiveness

No.	Category	Finding (Result)	Implication
4	Distribution Strategy	YouTube and Instagram	Restricted reach
5	Audience Alignment	Not Aligned with Gen Z	Weak Connection
6	Production Quality	Simple Format, Low Visual and Narrative	Low Competitiveness

As summarized in Table 2 and illustrated in Figure 2, content characteristics, distribution strategy, audience alignment, and production quality collectively shape communication outcomes. KPU Sergai's podcast content is predominantly formal, instructional, and one-directional, corresponding to the category of content characteristics and resulting in low content attractiveness. This limits the ability of content to capture audience interest and stimulate interaction.

From a distribution perspective, reliance on YouTube and Instagram, as indicated in Table 2, constrains the potential reach of the podcast. This limited platform strategy reduces discoverability and restricts access to broader and more diverse audience segments, particularly those active on emerging platforms such as TikTok.

In addition, findings reveal a misalignment between content and audience preferences, particularly among younger audiences (Gen Z). As shown in Table 2, this misalignment results in a weak connection between content and its intended audience, thereby contributing to low engagement levels.

KPU Sergai podcast is presented in a relatively simple format with limited visual and narrative elements, as reflected in the production quality category. This reduces the competitiveness of content compared to other digital media productions, which are generally more dynamic and engaging.

These quantitative findings are further supported by qualitative data obtained from interviews with podcast managers, Human Resources, and Public Participation Division (SDM and Hupmas). Interviews indicate that internal constraints play a critical role in shaping these outcomes. Key factors include limited budget allocation, restricted use of digital platforms, absence of technical training and capacity-building for staff, inadequate production equipment, and limited production time. Collectively, these constraints hinder the development of high-quality and engaging content.

When interpreted in relation to Figure 2, these findings reveal a clear causal pathway. Internal constraints influence content characteristics,

distribution strategies, and production quality, which in turn lead to audience misalignment. This misalignment subsequently results in low audience reach and engagement, ultimately producing passive audience behavior.

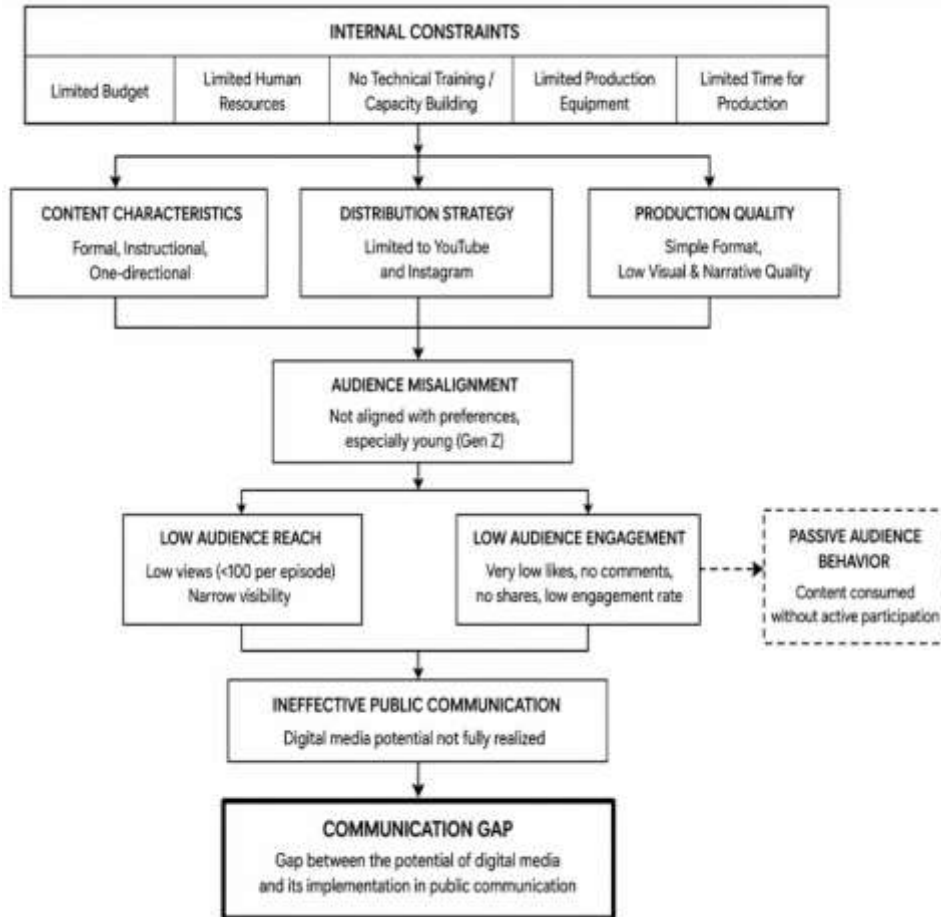


Figure 2. Cause Effect Relation

Findings indicate that the issue extends beyond mere low performance and reflects a broader structural problem in digital public communication. KPU Sergai Podcast tends to replicate a conventional one-way communication model within a digital platform, rather than leveraging the interactive potential of digital media. Consequently, this condition gives rise to a communication gap, defined as a discrepancy between the potential of digital media and its actual implementation in public communication practices.

4. Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that the KPU Sergai Podcast has not yet functioned effectively as a digital public communication medium. As demonstrated in Table 1, audience reach remains consistently low, with all episodes recording fewer than 100 views, while engagement indicators such as likes, comments, and shares are limited. When interpreted alongside Table 2 and Figure 3, these results suggest that the issue extends beyond low performance and reflects deeper structural limitations in the design and implementation of digital communication.

These findings reinforce the argument that adoption of digital platforms does not guarantee communication effectiveness. Rather, effectiveness depends on the strategic integration of content design, distribution mechanisms, and alignment with audience expectations. This is consistent with prior research showing that digital engagement is driven by content relevance, interactivity, and platform optimization (digital marketing research). In this study, convergence of low reach and low engagement indicates a breakdown in this integration, resulting in passive audience behavior.

Furthermore, findings align with studies highlighting structural challenges in public sector digital communication. Institutional communication often struggles to adapt to the interactive logic of digital media due to bureaucratic constraints and limited innovation capacity (Ignacio Criado et al., 2021; Ines Mergel, 2021). This limitation is evident in the present study, where communication remains largely one-directional despite being delivered through digital platforms.

In addition, platform dependency emerges as a critical issue. Research suggests that reliance on a limited number of platforms reduces visibility and constrains audience reach due to weak algorithmic amplification and limited network diffusion (Ulrich Klinger & Jakob Svensson, 2015). The exclusive use of YouTube and Instagram in this study reflects such limitations, preventing broader dissemination across diverse audience segments.

However, findings diverge from studies that demonstrate high engagement in digital environments. For instance, research on digital storytelling and interactive content shows that narrative-driven and participatory formats significantly enhance user engagement (digital storytelling research). This contrast highlights that engagement is not an inherent feature of digital platforms, but rather a result of deliberate content strategies.

Several factors explain this discrepancy. First, communicative context plays a crucial role. Public institutional communication tends to prioritize

formality and informational accuracy, which can limit flexibility and reduce audience appeal compared to entertainment-oriented digital content ecosystems (Mergel, 2021).

Second, content production strategy is a key differentiator. Prior studies emphasize that engagement increases when content incorporates storytelling, personalization, and interactive features (De Vries et al., 2012). In contrast, the podcast analyzed in this study relies on a one-way communication model with limited narrative variation and minimal audience involvement.

Third, audience alignment is critical. Research shows that younger audiences (Generation Z) prefer content that is visually engaging, emotionally appealing, and narrative-driven (Djafarova & Bowes, 2021). Mismatch between these preferences and formal, instructional content style identified in this study contributes to weak audience connection and low engagement.

Fourth, methodological differences also help explain variations across studies. While large-scale quantitative studies often report higher engagement levels across platforms (Appel et al., 2020), this study adopts a qualitative case study approach (Yin, 2021), providing deeper insight into contextual and structural factors shaping communication outcomes.

From a theoretical perspective, these findings can be interpreted through the lens of new media theory, which conceptualizes digital media as inherently interactive, participatory, and dialogic environments (Flew, 2014; Napoli, 2019). However, communication practices in this case remain largely unidirectional, indicating failure to utilize participatory affordances of digital media.

The concept of digital engagement further explains these results. Engagement is commonly measured through observable interaction indicators such as likes, comments, and shares (Brodie et al., 2011). The consistently low values observed in this study indicate that these participatory mechanisms are not effectively activated, resulting in passive consumption rather than active engagement.

Additionally, limited audience reach is closely associated with the absence of an integrated distribution strategy. Research highlights that multi-platform dissemination and collaboration with influencers significantly enhance content visibility and audience reach (Lou & Yuan, 2019; Hudders et al., 2021). In contrast, reliance on institutional channels alone in this study constrains organic diffusion by the broader digital ecosystem.

Overall, findings reveal a clear causal mechanism: internal constraints such as limited resources, technical capacity, and production tools shape

content characteristics, distribution strategies, and production quality. These factors collectively produce audience misalignment, which in turn leads to low audience reach and engagement, ultimately reinforcing passive audience behavior.

This study highlights not only a performance gap but also a structural communication gap. KPU Sergai Podcast does not fully leverage the interactive potential of digital media and instead reproduces a conventional one-way communication model within a digital platform. Addressing this gap requires a strategic transformation toward audience-centered communication, interactive content design, and multiplatform distribution strategies.

5. Conclusion

This study concludes that KPU Sergai Podcast has not yet functioned optimally as a digital public communication medium, particularly in the context of voter education. Drawing on a qualitative case study approach and empirical evidence from podcast analytics, content observation, and interviews, findings consistently show limited audience reach, low levels of engagement, a predominantly one-way communication model, and a clear misalignment between content characteristics and audience preferences.

As evidenced in Table 1 and reinforced by categorization in Table 2 and Figure 3, all podcast episodes recorded low visibility (fewer than 100 views) and minimal interaction (very limited likes, no comments, and no shares). These patterns indicate that the podcast has not succeeded in extending its communication impact beyond a narrow audience base. More importantly, findings demonstrate that digital communication effectiveness is not determined solely by the adoption of digital platforms but by the strategic integration of content design, audience alignment, and distribution practices.

The results confirm a coherent causal pathway in which internal constraints, such as limited budget, insufficient human resources, lack of technical capacity, and restricted production facilities, shape content characteristics, distribution strategies, and production quality. These factors collectively lead to audience misalignment, which in turn results in low audience reach and engagement, ultimately producing passive audience behavior. This mechanism explains why podcasts, despite being implemented within a digital platform, fail to realize the interactive and participatory potential of digital media.

From a theoretical perspective, this study is reinforced by the relevance of new media theory, digital engagement theory, and public

communication theory in understanding the effectiveness of digital communication. Findings highlight that interactivity, participation, and alignment with audience preferences are critical determinants of successful digital public communication. Persistence of one-way communication patterns within a digital environment, as identified in this study, reveals a fundamental contradiction between the interactive nature of digital media and its current implementation in institutional communication practices.

This study contributes to the literature by providing empirical evidence of a communication gap between normative expectations of digital media and its practical application in governmental communication, particularly in the domain of electoral education. In addition, it offers an integrated analytical approach that combines audience reach, engagement metrics, content characteristics, and organizational constraints, while emphasizing the issue of audience content misalignment, which remains underexplored in previous studies.

From a practical perspective, findings underscore the need for public institutions to adopt more adaptive, strategic, and audience-centered communication approaches. This includes development of interactive and narrative-driven content formats, expansion of multiplatform distribution beyond conventional institutional channels, collaboration with influencers and digital communities to enhance content visibility, and improvements in production quality through better resource allocation, technical training, and adequate production equipment. These efforts are essential to bridge the identified communication gap and to enhance the effectiveness of digital public communication.

However, this study is limited to a specific institutional context, which may affect the generalizability of its findings. Future research is therefore recommended to examine similar digital communication strategies across different institutional and regional settings, apply comparative and longitudinal approaches, and incorporate broader audience perspectives in order to develop a more comprehensive understanding of digital public communication effectiveness.

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