
Political Communication and Leadership Image of Ning Ita for Success in Two Periods the Mojokerto City

Syavira Dwi Kumala Putri^{1*}, Ayu Fatmala Agustin², Nik Nur Nazira Arisyah Bt Nik Nazman³

¹State University of Surabaya, Surabaya, Indonesia

²State University of Malang, Malang, Indonesia

³Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin, Trengganu, Malaysia

*Email: syavira.23229@mhs.unesa.ac.id

Abstract

Ning Ita's success in leading the city of Mojokerto for two periods is an interesting phenomenon in political sociology, especially in the context of political communication and leadership image formation. Leaders who can build effective communication tend to gain strong legitimacy from the community, thereby maintaining the sustainability of their leadership. This study aims to analyze Ning Ita's political communication strategy and its contribution to a positive image among the public. Using the theory of political communication as a foundation, the research was conducted with a qualitative approach through documentation studies and in-depth interviews for comprehensive data. The results showed that Ning Ita implemented a systematic communication strategy through mass media, social media, and direct interaction with the community. Consistency in delivering clear, transparent, and participatory political messages is the main factor shaping his image as a responsive, innovative, and close to the People leader. Effective political communication has an impact on increasing public confidence and political stability, favoring the sustainability of its leadership. In conclusion, political communication is not just a tool to deliver policies, but a strategic element to build an image of sustainable leadership and strengthen the relationship between leaders and society.

Keywords: Political Communication, Leadership Image, Ning Ita, Two Terms, Mojokerto City

Paper Type: Research Paper

Corresponding author: syavira.23229@mhs.unesa.ac.id

Received: 29 April 2025, **Received in Revised from** 16 July 2025; **Accepted:** 25 July 2025;

Available online: 31 July 2025

Cite this document as: Putri, S. D. K., & Arisyah, N. N. N. (2025). Political communication and leadership image of Ning Ita for success in two periods the Mojokerto City. *Journal of Religion and Local Politics*, 1(3), 144–154.
<https://propanoramic.com/index.php/jrlpl/index>

INTRODUCTION

Political communication is a critical element in the dynamics of government and politics, especially in the context of regional leadership (Khairunnisa & Nugroho; C., 2025). Basically, political communication can be understood as the process of delivering messages involving political actors with the aim of influencing public opinion and obtaining social legitimacy from society (Afifah, U., & Hermawan, D. Y., 2022). One of the factors that determines the success of a leader is their ability to build and maintain a positive image in the eyes of the public (Taufiq, Anwar, K., Rasman, I., & Fadhlain, S., 2022). In this regard, Ning Ita, who has led Kota Mojokerto for two consecutive terms, provides an interesting example of how effective political communication strategies can support leadership sustainability.

The phenomenon of Ning Ita's success in leading the city of Mojokerto for two periods cannot be separated from the way he conducts political communication. In general, effective political communication has the power to influence the public perception of its leaders, which in turn will affect the level of public support and trust (Ria, D., Poernomo, M. I., Putri, G. L., & Kesuma, M. E.-K., 2025). Leaders who successfully manage political communication well, both through mass media, social media, and direct interaction with the community, will more easily build a solid leadership image and get legitimacy from the public (Safrizal ZA, et.al., 2025). The study of political communication in the context of regional leadership has been widely conducted by various researchers. For example, research on President Joko Widodo's communication style shows that Jokowi's success in communicating politics cannot be separated from the use of symbolic communication that emphasizes cultural aspects and local identity (Sutrisno & Tunaerah; L., 2024). This approach proved to be able to build a leadership image that is closer to the people and increase public support. The study also found that Jokowi's political communication is not only done through mass media, but also through direct interaction with the public as well as the use of social media as a means to reach a wider audience (Effendi et al., 2023).

The phenomenon of political communication in the digital age has also become a topic widely discussed by experts (Hermanto, A., Supriyono, B., Mardiyono, & Rahardjo, K., 2024). Along with the development of information technology, social media has become a very effective channel for political leaders to interact with the public (Adawiyah, S. E., & Ginting, R., 2024). Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and political leaders can easily convey messages, respond to criticism, and build their image in front of the public (Dharta, F. Y., Ghazalie, Putra, D. A., & Albrecht, M., 2025). Research conducted by Gay et al. (2024) regarding political communication strategies in building a political image in Polewali Mandar also showed that the combination of traditional and digital media is very effective in building a positive image among the community.

Political communication carried out by Ning Ita can be seen through participatory communicative means, which provide space for the community to convey their aspirations (Hermawan, V., 2025). For example, through social media, Ning Ita often holds Q&A sessions with the community, listens to input from residents, and explains the policies taken by the city government. Studies of political communication have also shown that a positive political image is shaped not only by the messages conveyed but also by the way they are conveyed (Thuang, K. H., 2023). Research by Hasna (2023) on women's political communication in Indonesia shows that communication styles that prioritize emotions and the use of symbols can form a strong image

in the public eye. Research by Safrizal et al. (2025) on young leaders in the digital democratic landscape also provides important insights into the importance of adaptation in communicating in the digital age. This shows that leaders who are able to adapt to technological change have great potential to influence public opinion and form a strong leadership image (Arman, R. I. P., & Park, S. Y.-S., 2024).

Research on effective political communication strategies also notes that proper use of social media can strengthen the image of leadership (Kulachai, W., Chayanon, S., & Srisorn, W., 2024). According to Balqis et al. (2024), structured and targeted political communication can strengthen the political image of political actors, especially when the message conveyed is consistent and easily understood by the audience (Zidan, F. A. et.al., 2025). Ning Ita, with a clear and transparent communication strategy, managed to build an image as a leader who is close to the people and responsive to their needs. This is one of the factors that support the sustainability of his leadership for two periods.

Through existing studies, it can be concluded that political communication has a very important role in forming a positive leadership image (Sjoraida, D. F., Guna, B. W. K., Nugraha, A. R., Pasaribu, D., & Djafri, N., 2024). However, in the context of this study, there is a novelty that becomes the main focus, namely, the analysis of how Ning Ita integrates political communication through traditional and digital media to build a positive leadership image in the city of Mojokerto. This novelty lies in a deeper understanding of the communication strategies used by Ning Ita in utilizing social media and mass media simultaneously. This approach not only contributes to the study of political communication at the local level but also provides an overview of how leaders can utilize technology to strengthen relationships with the community.

METHODS

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study method to analyze the political communication strategy applied by Ning Ita in building a positive leadership image during his two periods of leadership in the city of Mojokerto. The qualitative approach was chosen because it allows researchers to explore in depth the phenomena of political communication that occur in local social, political, and cultural contexts. Case studies are used to explore specific aspects of political communication implemented by Ning Ita, focusing on the communication strategies used, the media utilized, and the impact on public perception.

This research uses data collection techniques through documentation studies and in-depth interviews. The documentation study was conducted by analyzing various relevant secondary sources, such as news from the mass media, uploads on Ning Ita's official social media, and local government publications related to political communication and leadership. The analysis of these documents aims to identify the communication patterns used, the types of political messages conveyed, and how these communications are packaged to build a positive leadership image. Documentation studies also include a review of previous studies that discuss political communication, leadership image, and the effectiveness of the media in building relationships between leaders and society.

In-depth interviews were conducted with several informants who had direct links to Ning

Ita's political communication strategy. The selected informants include government officials involved in the preparation and implementation of local government communication strategies, journalists covering Ning Ita policies and activities, as well as community representatives who actively interact with local leaders through various communication channels. The purposive sampling technique is used in the selection of informants to ensure that the respondents interviewed have a deep understanding of the topic under study. Interviews were conducted using interview guides designed to gather information about public perceptions of political communication, the effectiveness of the media used, and the impact of political communication on public support.

Data obtained from documentation studies and in-depth interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis methods. Thematic analysis was chosen because it allows researchers to identify and categorize patterns that emerge from the data collected. This analysis process begins with the transcription of the interview, then continues with a coding process to identify the main themes related to political communication and the image of leadership. After the main themes are identified, the researcher interprets the data by linking it to the theoretical framework of political communication used in this study.

To improve the validity and reliability of the data, this study applies triangulation techniques and methods. Source triangulation is done by comparing data obtained from various sources, such as mass media, social media, and interviews with various informants. Meanwhile, the triangulation method is done by combining various data collection techniques, namely documentation studies and in-depth interviews, in order to obtain a more comprehensive picture of the political communication strategy of Ning Ita.

This study also considers ethical aspects in the process of data collection and analysis. Before conducting the interview, informants were given an explanation of the purpose of the study and given the freedom to express consent or refuse to participate. The anonymity of informants is maintained by not stating their identity in the research report, unless there is explicit permission from the person concerned. In the analysis and presentation of data, the researcher seeks to be objective by not adding interpretations that are subjective or biased to the findings obtained.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results revealed that Ning Ita's political communication strategy was carried out systematically and consistently, with an emphasis on information disclosure and a participatory approach. One of the government officials stated, " Ning Ita always ensures that every policy and program that is carried out is accompanied by a transparent explanation to the public, thus creating a deep sense of trust." This statement indicates a strategic orientation that not only focuses on achieving administrative targets, but also on building close relationships with the public.

In an effort to utilize the mass media as the main means of communication, Ning Ita optimizes the role of newspapers, television, and radio to convey policy messages. A journalist who interviewed mentioned, "Every time there is a new government program, the information is intensively disseminated through the local media, so that the public can immediately understand and appreciate the steps taken by the leadership." This reflects an awareness of the role of traditional media in shaping public opinion and affirms the integrity of government

communications.

Social Media is also a strategic platform that is used to reach a wider target audience, especially young people and professional workers. According to a digital media analyst, "Ning Ita actively uses official accounts to interact directly with the public, provide regular updates on policies, and respond to critical issues in real time." The interaction not only strengthens the image of modern leadership but also fosters a sense of closeness between leaders and citizens.

The results of interviews with community representatives revealed that the communicative approach carried out face-to-face through direct dialogue in various meeting forums had a positive impact on public perception. One of the residents said, "Ning Ita's presence in various discussion forums makes me feel that the voice of the people is heard and accommodated in every policy taken." The phrase confirms the importance of direct communication as part of a participatory strategy in government.

An inclusive approach to communication can be seen from the delivery of messages tailored to the local context and the values of local cultural wisdom. A local community leader revealed, "The messages conveyed by Ning Ita always contain family values and mutual assistance, so it is easily accepted by all levels of society." This shows that effective communication requires adjusting to the social and cultural norms that exist in each environment.

In the study of documentation, it can be seen that the presence of Ning Ita's leadership image is supported by official publications that are consistent and informative. The documents reveal that each innovative program is equipped with in-depth visual and narrative materials, so as to enhance the public's understanding of the government's strategic objectives. An official involved in the preparation of the material stated, " Each piece of information is prepared taking into account the social context and aspirations of the people, so that the message conveyed can be well received and create a positive impact."

The success of the political communication strategy was also marked by a positive response from the mass media. An editorial editor revealed, "Coverage of government programs under Ning Ita's leadership has always been in-depth and critical, so as to present a balanced perspective between achievements and challenges faced." This statement indicates the synergy between the government and the media in disseminating information accurately and constructively.

The study also found that political communication conducted by Ning Ita reflects consistency in delivering the vision and mission of local governments. A strategic official said, " We always ensure that every message conveyed through various communication channels is always in line with the vision of sustainable development of Mojokerto City." Consistency is considered a key factor in building a solid leadership identity and is easily recognizable by the public.

In-depth interviews with multiple informants shed light on the nuanced communication strategies employed, which prioritize not only the dissemination of information but also the establishment of robust feedback mechanisms that engage the public. One journalist highlighted this dynamic by stating, "Through a diverse array of channels, including opinion columns and interactive question-and-answer sessions on social media platforms, the public is empowered to express their thoughts, critique policies, and share their perspectives. These contributions are met

with a responsive follow-up from decision-makers." This insight emphasizes the critical role of public engagement in shaping the landscape of political communication, fostering a dialogue that bridges the gap between the authorities and the electorate.

The use of Information Technology and digitization in delivering messages is one aspect that supports the effectiveness of communication strategies. A technology analyst revealed, "The digital transformation carried out by the Mojokerto city government allows the delivery of information quickly and accurately, which in turn strengthens the relationship between the government and the community." Information technology also acts as a bridge to reach various segments of society with various backgrounds.

The results showed that the success of Ning Ita's political communication strategy can also be seen from the increase in public confidence in local governments. One resident interviewed revealed, "Every policy taken is accompanied by easy-to-understand explanations and information disclosure, so I feel safe and confident with the direction of the city's development." This confirms that effective communication can enhance legitimacy and political stability.

Analysis of the documents also revealed that the messages conveyed by Ning Ita have motivational elements that are able to inspire people to actively participate in government programs. A community activist stated, "The message conveyed through social media always contains a spirit of unity and New Hope, which makes me and many other residents feel motivated to participate in the development of the city." High community engagement is an indicator that effective political communication can create a positive social impact. In terms of internal communication, the organizational structure of local governments is also optimized to support the dissemination of consistent and integrated messages. A senior official said, "We implement a coordinated internal communication system, so that each work unit knows their role in supporting the communication strategy that has been set by the leadership." This strategy not only improves operational efficiency but also ensures that the message conveyed to the public is always aligned with the government's strategic objectives.

The use of a dialogical approach in any public interaction is also a key element that is successfully applied. An informant from the youth community revealed, "Through regular meetings and discussion forums, Ning Ita not only spoke to us, but also listened to our aspirations and constructive criticism. This makes us feel valued and involved in every step of development." This open dialogue is considered one of the effective strategies to reduce the distance between leaders and society.

The results confirmed that the success of Ning Ita in maintaining two periods of leadership is inseparable from a comprehensive and integrated political communication strategy. All informants, both from officials, the media, and the public, agreed that transparent, participatory, and responsive communication has played an important role in building a positive leadership image. A strategic officer concluded, "This success is not solely due to the policies taken, but also because of how the message is conveyed and received by the community, which creates a deep emotional bond and trust in Ning Ita's leadership."

The results of the research on Ning Ita's political communication strategy show that her

leadership relies heavily on the systematic application of transparent and participatory communication, where each message and policy is delivered in a structured manner through various media including traditional mass media, digital media, and direct interaction with the community, thus significantly reflecting efforts to build trust and emotional closeness between leaders and the public; these findings are in line with studies on political communication conducted by Effendi et al. (2023) towards President Joko Widodo's communication style, where the success of symbolic communication that emphasizes cultural aspects and local identity is key in building a leadership image that is close to the people.

In the context of the use of mass media, this study reveals that Ning Ita makes optimal use of newspapers, television, and radio to disseminate policy information that is educational and informative, an approach that is also found in previous research on Jokowi's political communication strategy that emphasizes the importance of delivering messages through conventional media to reach a wider audience, resulting in positive perceptions among the public (Effendi et al., 2023).

In line with the dynamics of communication in the digital era, the research results highlight the use of social media as a strategic tool that allows Ning Ita to interact directly with the public, provide real time updates, and respond constructively to criticism; These findings support the argument put forward by (Dharta, F. Y., Ghazalie, Putra, D. A., & Albrecht, M., 2025) who emphasizes that the use of digital platforms such as Instagram, Twitter and Facebook is an important innovation in optimizing responsive and participatory political communication.

Inclusive and participatory communication strategies are implemented through direct dialogue and interactive forums, which allow communities to express aspirations and provide feedback on policies taken by local governments; this approach reflects the results of research stating that effective political communication is determined not only by the delivery of messages, but also by feedback mechanisms that enable two-way communication, similar to the findings in a study by Gay et al. (2024) which revealed that the combination of traditional and digital media is very effective in building a positive image.

In-depth analysis of official documents and visual materials that are consistently compiled reveals that Ning Ita's communication strategy also emphasizes the presentation of information that is easy to understand and relevant to the local socio-cultural context, thus supporting the creation of a strong leadership narrative that is rooted in the hearts of the community. Society; this is in line with Hasna's (2023) view, which highlights the importance of delivering messages with a communicative style that prioritizes emotions and symbols in forming a convincing leadership image.

The use of digital media not only as a means of disseminating information, but also as an interactive means of establishing close relationships between government and society, where digital transformation has facilitated the rapid and accurate delivery of information; this approach is in line with the arguments put forward by Safrizal et al. (2025) which emphasizes adaptation to information technology as an important factor in influencing public opinion in the era of digital Democracy.

The findings of the study indicate that the presence of responsive and open political communication has increased the level of public confidence in local governments, where the public feels the information conveyed is always accompanied by clear and transparent explanations, which in turn creates political stability and supports leadership sustainability, similar to the findings of the study by Balqis et al. (2024) which indicates that structured and consistent communication can significantly strengthen the political image.

A comparison with research on Jokowi's communication strategy reveals that despite the differences in context between national and regional levels, the basic principles of building public trust through open and participatory communication remain consistent, where Ning Ita shows a tendency to integrate the use of traditional and digital media to bridge the gap between government and society, resulting in synergies that support stability and legitimacy of leadership.

From the point of view of internal analysis, the results of the study emphasize that the alignment of communication between work units in the local government environment is an important supporting factor in ensuring the consistency of messages conveyed to the public, where this internal coordination plays a role in optimizing the effectiveness of the overall communication strategy; these findings are in line with previous research findings that highlight the importance of an integrated organizational structure to support a successful political communication strategy.

In comparison with the phenomenon of political communication in the digital age, this study highlights the role of direct interaction through forums and question and answer sessions organized through social media, where this strategy has proven effective in bridging the distance between leaders and society, thus building an image of leadership that is responsive and adaptive to social dynamics; this is in line with a study by (Dharta, F. Y., Ghazalie, Putra, D. A., & Albrecht, M., 2025) and research by Safrizal et al. (2025) which underlines that adaptability to digital technology is key in winning public trust.

Overall, the comparison between the results of Ning Ita's political communication strategy research with previous studies on political communication in the context of leadership, as conducted by Effendi et al. (2023), (Dharta, F. Y., Ghazalie, Putra, D. A., & Albrecht, M., 2025), Gay et al. (2024), Hasna (2023), Safrizal et al. (2025), and Balqis et al. (2024), pointed out that the implementation of transparent, participatory, and consistent political communication is an essential element in building a positive and sustainable leadership image, which approach has proven effective in increasing public support and strengthening the relationship between local governments and the community as a whole.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the study, it can be concluded that the political communication strategy implemented by Ning Ita during his two periods of leadership in Mojokerto City played a crucial role in forming a positive leadership image, responsive, and close to the community. Through the use of mass media, social media, and direct interaction, Ning Ita succeeded in building transparent, participatory, and consistent communication, thereby increasing public confidence and strengthening her political legitimacy. The study also confirms that the

combination of effective political communication and the use of digital technology is able to bridge the gap between government and society, which ultimately supports political stability as well as leadership sustainability. The findings reinforce previous studies showing that political communication is not only a tool for policy delivery, but also a key strategy in building close relationships with communities and creating sustainable and competitive leadership in the digital age.

FUNDING ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Syavira is a student at Universitas Negeri Surabaya (UNESA), Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, majoring in Political Science. Her research interests include political communication, local leadership, and the impact of digital media on political behavior. For correspondence, please contact syavira.23229@mhs.unesa.ac.id.

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