

By the way...

Millennials call for instagrammable politics

Indonesian millennials will be an absolute and veritable resource of the presidential election in 2019. Millennials – the generation born in 1981 to 2000 and currently aged 15 years to 34 – have characteristics that are different from other generations, like the baby boomer generation or Generation X (Gen-Xer).

A tech-savvy generation, they are heavily influenced by smartphones, the Internet and social media, all of which emerged and expanded during their childhood.

With many losing their right to vote for the first time in the upcoming presidential election, millennials should not be disregarded in light of their blatant indifference to politics. The presidential hopefuls' ability to attract them will expand their rank of fresh supporters, as millennials are generally free from political brainwashing. In contrast, neglecting them is tantamount to losing an opportunity to garner "untainted" political proponents.

In an attempt to attract millennials, presidential hopefuls in particular and politicians in general need to recognize that this distinct voter group demands "instagrammable politics".

This demand is greatly inspired by what Instagram could offer to politics and politicians. As an expanding, modern and classy social media, Instagram is the preferred tool for appealing to young and new voters among the millennial generation.

So, what is instagrammable politics, and how can it be utilized? Why must politicians be more attentive to this kind of techy politics to entice more millennials?

Just like Instagram with its emphasis on visual mediums, instagrammable politics emphasizes the significance of visuals in political campaigns. The presidential candidates and their running mates need to excel in promoting themselves as visually as possible.

Approaching millennials through conventional speeches or writing long passages of self-introduction on a website are things of the past. Owing to their instant and tech-savvy lifestyles, millennials spend a lot of time seeking readily available information that requires very little time to find and digest, scrolling through hundreds of such snippets in a speedy fashion.

Photographic imagery turns out to be the favored medium for meeting their needs. Instagrammable politics, therefore, stresses pictures, GIFs and short videos.

Over the past few days, I chatted with some students at my university, asking how they identified and inquired into presidential candidates and running mates.

Much to my surprise, the top answer was through social media, particularly Instagram, with assorted views. Some said that Instagram was more personal, as it portrayed the candidates more directly.

A picture speaks a thousand words.

Others professed that Instagram prevented politicians from telling lies or making up things. They thought that graphic images, photos and videos had a more emotional and authentic impact.

Although the images or videos may be subject to editing, voters could easily and quickly assess them and form a response, a completely different process from reading campaign materials or listening to speeches, both of which require analytical skills and critical thinking.

Equally important, instagrammable politics allows politics to survive, as it may decrease the rate of political saturation among the public – the people being overwhelmed by politicians and political going-on. The rampant images of politicians "overpromising and under delivering" will diminish if they are required to update their pictorial depictions regularly.

The politicians' constant use of updated photos and videos, especially those running for the presidency, will give the impression that their services and dedication are ongoing.

In contrast, their inability to keep voters up-to-date about their activities will only confirm the public's ingrained disappointment that their effort to approach voters is more a ceremonial strategy rather than a real and continuing devotion to the people.

Constantly updating pictures and videos may sound self-centered and self-aggrandizing. Yet it shows the candidates' seriousness and knowledgeableness about the unique political demands of millennials.

A generation that tends toward practicality, millennials not only like abbreviating text messages, but also applying shortcut methods when it comes to discovering things and people and acting upon their discovery. There is no way they will read the opinion or profile pages of a newspaper to research into or find out about certain figures, including presidential hopefuls.

In a recent conversation with several Indonesian scholars in Clayton, a suburb of Melbourne, I learned that social media users no longer be independent to base their responses on a particular happening or personality.

On Facebook, for example, many users are preoccupied with commenting on other users' comments rather than posting their own statuses, while on Instagram and Twitter, they comment according to a character limit.

This poses another challenge for politicians. They must abandon their preferred methods of voicing their politics and instead endorse themselves through their social media accounts in a simpler, more comprehensible and attractive way to millennials and younger voters.

—DONNY SYOPHAN

Scott to play in Jakarta