

Communication Management Of Baitul Muslimin Indonesia In Building A Positive Image On The Democration Party Of Indonesia Straight Against Muslimal Communications In North Summar

Tubagus Rizki Hardiansyah¹, Anang Anas Azhar², Winda Kustiawan³

^{1,2,3} Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara

Tubagus3005233017@uinsu.ac.id

Abstract

This study analyzed the communication management strategy of Baitul Muslimin Indonesia (Bamusi) in building a positive image of the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDIP) among the Muslim community of North Sumatra. The study used a qualitative approach to the case study method, involving in-depth interviews of 12 key informants—consisting of Bamusi administrators, local religious figures, and Muslim communities from various Islamic organizations such as NU and Muhammadiyah as well as participatory observation and document analysis. The results show that Bamusi adopted three main strategies: a symbolic-cultural approach through religious activities, personal communication with religious figures, and dissemination of national narratives via social media. This strategy is effective especially in changing the perception of moderate Muslim groups, with 70% of informants stating that there is an improvement in PDIP image. This study emphasizes the importance of religious values-based political communication and its contribution to understanding symbolic framing and strategic communication in the context of nationalist and Islamic ideological relations.

Keywords: Strategic communication, political framing, party image, symbolic participation, qualitative studies, Bamusi, moderate Muslim community, North Sumatra

Introduction

In Indonesian political constellations, the relationship between nationalist parties and religious community groups, especially Muslims, is often colored by historical and cultural tensions. The Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDIP), as a nationalist-secular party, often receives resistance from some Muslim people who consider this party less accommodating to Islamic values (Mietzner, 2012; Saputra et al., 2023). This negative image was reinforced by several controversial events, the statements of party figures who were considered insensitive to religious issues, and the post-reform political polarization that confirmed the ideological divide between nationalist and Islamic groups (Kristiyanto & Hanief, 2022; Kristiyanto et al., 2024).

A survey shows that PDIP still faces challenges in gaining support from Muslim voters, especially in areas that have been sociologically and historically strong Islamic bases (Arjon, 2018; Platzdasch, 2009). North Sumatra is one of the crucial areas in this regard (Mahendra et al., 2023; Situmorang et al., 2023). In addition to having a majority Muslim population, the province also reflects the political complexity of identity involving large mass organizations such as Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), Muhammadiyah, and conservative Islamic groups. Studies from Darajat et al., (2025) show that ideological resistance to PDIP in North Sumatra is not only based on religious aspects, but also on past political memories and the distribution of development benefits that are considered uneven (Thw, 2023).

In response to the challenge, PDIP formed Baitul Muslimin Indonesia (Bamusi) in 2007 as an official wing organization focused on Islamic religion (Kadewandana, 2008; Ronaldi & Bakti, 2023). Bamusi serves as a channel for political communication between

PDIP and the Muslim community, as well as carrying out the functions of da'wah, advocacy, and political education (Sutarto et al., 2019). Structurally, Bamusi has management from the central to regional levels, and is organizationally under the direct coordination of the PDIP DPP, with a special mandate to develop an inclusive party image of Islamic values (Riyadi, 2013).

Several previous studies have discussed party imaging efforts through the wings of religious organizations. For example, Gunawan et al., (2024) studied PKB communication strategies through NU, while Farhan, (2019) highlighted the relationship between political parties and religious groups in digital campaigns. However, there are not many studies that specifically examine Bamusi's communication strategy as a PDIP imaging instrument in areas with high ideological resistance such as North Sumatra. This is the gap that this research wants to fill.

Theoretically, the study refers to a strategic approach to communication in the realm of political communication as well as framing theory in understanding how political messages are packaged and adapted to religious audiences (Klinger & Svensson, 2015; Oser et al., 2022). In addition, image construction theory and symbolic participation were also used to analyze how Bamusi used religious symbols to shape public perception (Sutarto et al., 2019).

Based on this background, this research aims to analyze Bamusi's communication strategy in forming a positive image of PDIP among the Muslim community of North Sumatra. This study also wants to assess the extent of the effectiveness of communication in changing public perceptions that previously tended to be negative or skeptical of parties.

To this end, the formulation of the research questions is: How is the communication strategy implemented by Bamusi in forming a positive image of PDIP among the Muslim community of North Sumatra? To what extent is the effectiveness of the strategy in changing the Muslim community's perception of PDIP? And what are the supporting and inhibiting factors for Bamusi's success in this region?

By answering these questions, it is hoped that this study will contribute to the development of a study of political communication based on cultural and religious values, especially in the context of the relationship between nationalist and Islamic ideology in Indonesian electoral politics.

Methods

This research uses a qualitative approach with case study types, because it aims to understand deeply the strategic communication management process conducted by Baitul Muslimin Indonesia (Bamusi) in forming the image of the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDIP) among the Muslim community of North Sumatra. Case studies were chosen because they provided a complex social, cultural, and political dynamics analysis space in a specific local context (Yin, 2016).

Location and Focus of Research

The research was conducted in three main areas in North Sumatra, namely Medan City, Deli Serdang Regency, and Tebing Tinggi City. These three regions were chosen because of their political significance, large and diverse Muslim populations, and a fairly intensive level of Bamusi activity. Medan as the provincial capital became the center of the political and communications movement, Deli Serdang had a strong Islamic

boarding school community and mass organization, while Tebing Tinggi represented a dynamic urban-rural voter character.

Informants and Sampling Techniques

The number of speakers in this study was 12 people, consisting of: 4 Bamusi administrators (provincial and district/city levels), 4 religious leaders (NU, Muhammadiyah, independent Islamic boarding schools), 4 active Muslim communities (taklim assembly administrators, socio-religious activists).

The selection of informants was purposively sampled, with the following criteria:

1. Engaging directly or having sufficient knowledge of Bamusi's activities,
2. Having influence or involvement in the local Muslim community,
3. Be willing to be interviewed and have direct communication involvement with a religious party or organization.

Snowball sampling techniques are also used to determine public informants to expand and explore data.

Data Collection Techniques

Data is collected through:

1. Semi-structured interviews: Conducted in person twice on each main informant, with interview guides arranged based on strategic communication theory and framing.
2. Participatory observation: Researchers attended several Bamusi activities such as recitation, national seminars, and religious dialogue in Medan and Deli Serdang. Field records were arranged systematically during observation.
3. Documentation: Includes two types of data:
 - a. Primary: Transcripts of interviews, field observation records
 - b. Secondary: News articles, official Bamusi and PDIP social media uploads, activity publication materials, and internal organization documents.

Data Validity Technique

To maintain the validity of the data, several validation techniques are used:

1. 1. Triangulation of sources (compare interview data with documentation and observation),
2. 2. Member checks (confirmation of initial findings to key informants), and
3. 3. Audit trail (systematic recording of the analysis process to enable tracking of analysis logic).

Data Analysis Technique

1. The data was analyzed using the Miles and Huberman (1994) models which consisted of:
 2. 1. Data reduction: Filtering and simplifying information from interviews and observations,
 3. 2. Data presentation: Matrix preparation and thematic narratives based on strategic communication indicators,
 4. 3. Conclusion drawn: Interpretation of findings based on theories and frameworks.

Analysis also uses framing theory (Entman, 1993) to identify how Bamusi frames political messages, as well as strategic communication theory (Cutlip, Center & Broom, 2006) to assess communication planning and effectiveness. In addition, analysis indicators are developed based on participatory communication dimensions: message clarity, participation form, interaction intensity, and audience response.

Theoretical Framework

The analysis framework in this study incorporates:

1. Lasswell's communication model (who told what, to whom, through what channel, and with what effect),
2. Framing theory (Entman, 1993) for dissecting religious narratives and symbols,
3. Participatory Political Communication to measure community involvement in the communication process,
4. Diffusion of Innovation (Rogers, 2003) to view the acceptance of messages by the public.

Through this approach and method, research can explain holistically how Bamusi communication is designed, implemented, and accepted by the Muslim public in North Sumatra in forming a more positive PDIP image.

Results and Discussions

Based on the results of the analysis, a number of main themes were found that reflect the pattern and direction of Bamusi's communication strategy in building a positive image of PDIP in the community, especially the Muslim community. These findings suggest that the communication approach used is not single, but multi-dimensional and contextual.

Through the results of analysis conducted on Bamusi's communication strategy in building a positive image of PDIP, several main themes were found reflecting the strategic approach used. These themes suggest that Bamusi not only focused on delivering political messages but also emphasized a symbolic, cultural, and relational approach.

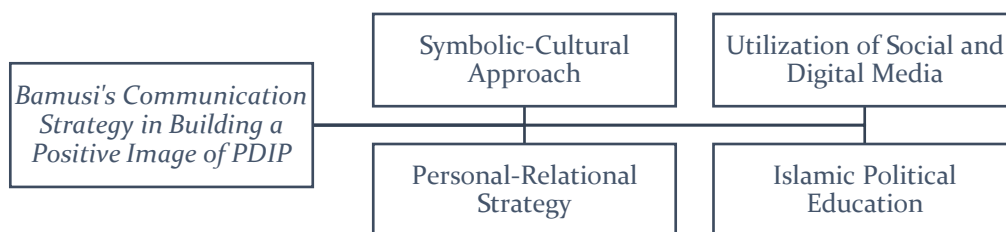


Figure 1. Analisis yang dilakukan terhadap strategi komunikasi Bamusi dalam membangun citra positif PDIP

1. Bamusi's Communication Strategy in Building a Positive Image of PDIP

Baitul Muslimin Indonesia (Bamusi), as a wing organization of the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDIP) engaged in Islamic religion, carried out a planned and structured communication strategy in building a positive image of the party among Muslim communities (Kadewandana, 2008; Ronaldi & Bakti, 2023; Sutarto et al., 2019). Bamusi's communication strategy relies on a cultural, religious, and social approach to society, which is considered more effective in reaching the Muslim base that previously tended to have an ideological distance from PDIP (Arifin, 2022).

a. Symbolic-Cultural Approach

Bamusi understood the importance of symbolic approaches to political communication. Therefore, various activities held are full of religious symbols and nuances, such as the commemoration of the Maulid of the Prophet Muhammad SAW, regular recitation, the khataman of the Qur'an, and the distribution of compensation for orphans and the poor. This activity has two functions: first, as a form of empathic communication that touches the spiritual values of Muslim society; second, as a tool to draw closer to the image of PDIP as a party concerned with Islamic values (Sutarto et al., 2019).

b. Personal-Relational Strategy

Bamusi is also active in establishing interpersonal and relational communication with local religious leaders, such as ustaz, dai, taklim assembly leaders, and Islamic boarding school leaders. This communication is carried out informally or formally in the form of friendship, lecture invitations, or community dialogue. This strategy was intended to create a social bridge between PDIP and traditional Muslim bases, which had previously been closer to Islamic parties (Arifin, 2022; Riyadi, 2013).

In an interview with one of the Bamusi administrators in Medan City, it was stated: "We don't impose ideology. What we bring is a national spirit that conforms to Islamic values. So we came with the intention of staying in touch, preaching, and building ukhuwah."

This suggests that communication is carried out in a collaborative rather than confrontational framework.

c. Utilization of Social and Digital Media

In the digital age, Bamusi not only relies on offline communication, but is also active in online spaces. They use platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube to spread Islamic content framed with national messages. Video lectures, testimonies of religious figures supporting nationalism, and quotes from nationalist clerics were uploaded to form positive public opinion, especially among the younger generation of Muslims (Marini & Lestari, 2023; Ronaldi & Bakti, 2023).

This digital approach shows Bamusi's adaptation to the development of communication technology, while also answering the polarization challenges that occur a lot on social media. This strategy is in line with the theory of digital political communication, where social media is an important space in the battle of discourse and image.

d. Islamic Political Education

In addition to social and symbolic aspects, Bamusi also organized seminars, public dialogue, and Islamic discussions that emphasized the importance of synergy between Islamic values and nationalism. Through this forum, Bamusi attempted to build a narrative that PDIP is a party that upholds social justice, pluralism, and unity, which is part of the sharia maqashid (the main objectives in Islam) (Arifin, 2022; Kadewandana, 2008).

This discussion is important to clear the views of some people who still view PDIP sceptically. Political education in a religious format is a strategic medium in reaching the more rational and open Muslim public against intellectual argumentation.

Bamusi's communication strategies showed that the management of political communication sensitive to religious contexts could be an effective instrument in building a positive image of the party in a religious society (Arifin, 2022; Hakim, n.d.). This strengthens the theory of strategic communication, in which the success of

political communication relies heavily on the ability to align messages with the value and identity of the audience.

Bamusi's strategy also demonstrates the real practice of communication framing theory, namely framing nationalist parties with Islamic values, not by confrontation, but by collaboration and cultural approaches (Riyadi, 2013; Sutarto et al., 2019). With this strategy, public resistance to PDIP began to melt, especially among moderate Muslims and the younger generation who were open to inclusive religious discourse.

Nevertheless, challenges remain, especially in dealing with resistance from ideologically polarized conservative groups. Therefore, the sustainability of Bamusi's communication strategy needs to be supported by message consistency, actor integrity, and expansion of social networks to the grassroots level.

2. Muslim Community's Perception of the Image of PDIP

The results of interviews, observations, and document analysis show that the Muslim community's perception of PDIP in North Sumatra is generally divided into three categories: positive, neutral, and negative. This difference in perception is strongly influenced by educational background, level of involvement in religious organizations, previous political affiliations, and the intensity of their interactions with Bamusi activities.

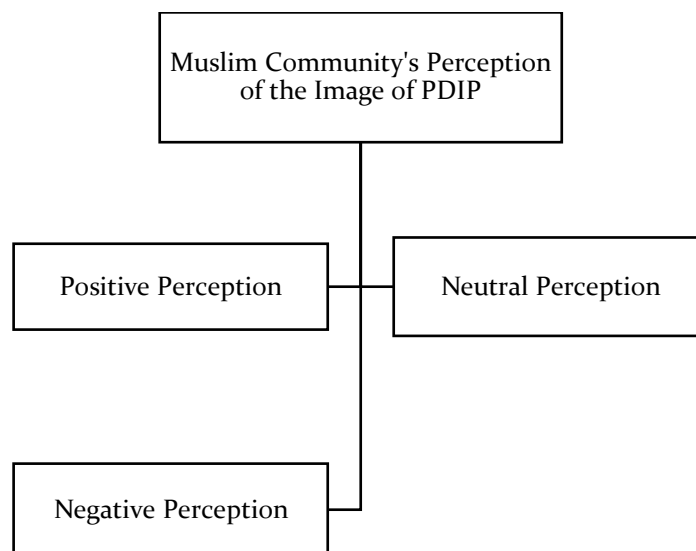


Figure 2 the Muslim community's perception of PDIP in North Sumatra

a. Positive Perception

People with positive perceptions generally come from moderate Muslims, socio-religious activists, and the educated younger generation. They saw that the existence of Bamusi was able to bridge the gap between the PDIP nationalism ideology and the aspirations of Muslims (Ronaldi & Bakti, 2023; Sutarto et al., 2019). Several respondents stated that Bamusi's activities provided a space of religious expression that had been considered far from PDIP.

"If we look at it now, PDIP through Bamusi has participated in many Islamic activities. It's good in my opinion, at least they want to come and celebrate the big day of Islam," (Respondent, resident of Medan Johor)

The group also assessed that Bamusi brought a new nuance to Indonesian identity politics, where diversity could be managed without affirming each other's religious beliefs.

b. Neutral Perception

Some people showed a neutral attitude towards PDIP. They have no emotional or ideological closeness, but also no open rejection. This neutral perception usually arises from the middleclass urban community who are more rational and pragmatic in looking at political parties.

This group welcomes Bamusi's activities but remains cautious because it still links PDIP with controversial national issues, such as central government policies, conflicts with certain Islamic groups, or statements by PDIP figures who are considered sensitive to Muslims.

c. Negative Perception

Despite intensive communication efforts, there are still community groups that view PDIP negatively. This perception is common among conservative groups or communities affiliated with certain Islamic parties. They considered Bamusi's presence only as a momentary political strategy and did not reflect the PDIP's ideological changes in depth.

"The smell is just a political tool. When it's an election, it just shows up. Then it's gone. We still vote for the Islamic party," (Respondent, Deliserdang resident)

This negative perception is reinforced by narratives on social media and religious lectures that still contradict nationalism with Islam, so Bamusi's strategy has not been fully effective in changing the paradigm of this group.

Public perception of PDIP through Bamusi shows that religious-based political communication still faces major challenges in the midst of plural Muslim societies. The social construction theory of the realities of Berger Peter & Luckmann, (1966) is relevant here, that public perception is shaped by social interaction, media narratives, and daily experiences. Therefore, changes in perception require time, consistency, and continuous intensity of communication.

Bamusi's presence has been able to build a positive image in some societies, but public perception cannot be changed only by symbols and ceremonial. There must be an ideological commitment, partiality to issues of community, and a real role in people's daily lives. Bamusi's communication strategy had to be more adaptive to the local context, involving people with high social and moral legitimacy in the Muslim community.

3. *Effectiveness of Bamusi Communication Management in Improving the Image of PDIP*

Evaluations on the effectiveness of Baitul Muslimin Indonesia (Bamusi) communication management show that the approach taken has a variable degree of effectiveness, depending on the region, the local actors involved, and the approach used. The effectiveness is assessed from three main aspects, namely: message reachability, audience understanding, and changes in attitude or opinion towards PDIP.

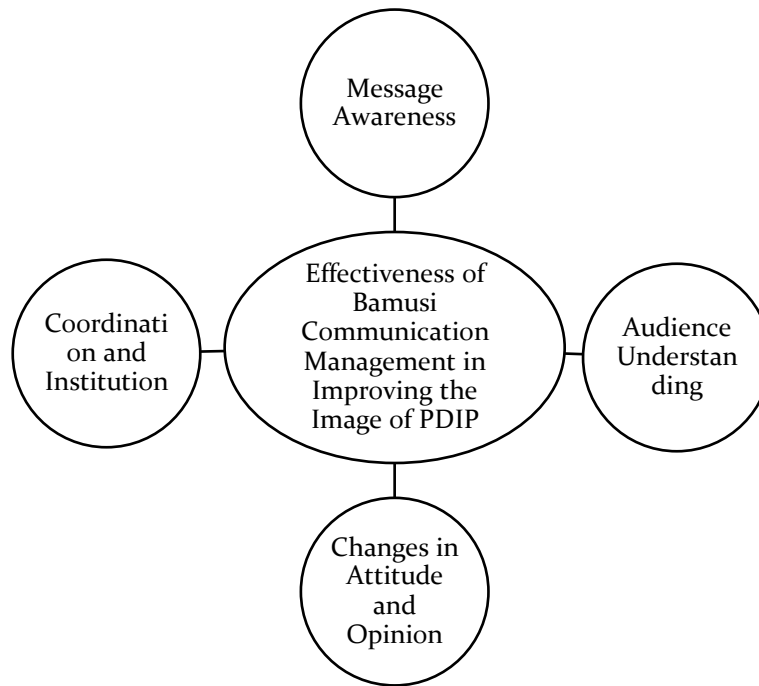


Figure 3. Effectiveness of Bamusi Communication Management

a. Message Awareness

In general, Bamusi managed to reach most of the Muslim community through open and inclusive religious activities. The use of social media, print media, and cooperation with local religious leaders also expanded the distribution of messages that wanted to be delivered.

However, not all traditional Muslim-based areas have been touched by Bamusi programs, especially in rural or suburban areas. This is due to limited human resources and Bamusi logistics at the grassroots level.

b. Audience Understanding

From the results of interviews and observations, most people who interact directly with the Bamusi program are able to understand the message brought, namely that PDIP is not an anti-Islamic party, but a nationalist party that respects religious values (Riyadi, 2013; Sutarto et al., 2019). However, this understanding has not been evenly distributed, especially among people who only get information from social media without direct experience participating in Bamusi activities.

Obstacles also arise as a result of deep-rooted ideological bias, in which nationalism is often positioned contrary to Islam in the political narrative of identity.

c. Changes in Attitude and Opinion

The highest effectiveness is seen in the segment of the young Muslim generation, student activists, and local figures who are directly involved with Bamusi activities. They began to be open to PDIP and acknowledged that there was a change in a more religious and humanistic approach to communication.

However, changes in attitudes did not necessarily occur in conservative and ideological partisan groups. For this group, a change of opinion takes longer and a more intensive approach.

d. Coordination and Institution

Bamusi communication management is also quite effective in the aspect of coordination between organizational levels (Saputra, 2017; Tarmuji, 2024), especially

between central Bamusi, regions, and branches in North Sumatra. However, it was found that in some areas, the effectiveness was still low due to the lack of religious-based political communication training, the weak coordination of programs, and the lack of involvement of local religious figures.

Based on this effectiveness analysis, it can be concluded that Bamusi has successfully built a communication platform that is quite responsive to the needs of Muslims, but has not been able to completely change the ideologically rooted negative perception. The strategy used is in accordance with the principle of participatory communication, namely involving the community in the communication process, not just being the object of the message.

Everett Rogers' theory of Diffusion of Innovation is also relevant, that the acceptance of new ideas (in this case the new image of PDIP) takes time and through stages: knowledge, persuasion, decision, implementation, and confirmation. Bamusi has just managed to reach the persuasion stage in some communities, but has not yet reached the implementation stage widely.

Based on the indicators used in this study, the range of messages, audience understanding, and changes in Bamusi's perception are considered to be quite successful in the aspect of understanding (the majority of informants understand the Islamic narrative of PDIP), but have not been strong in the aspect of changing attitudes among conservatives. This demonstrates the importance of adjusting framing and communication channels based on the level of audience ideology.

Table 1. It is based on the audience's level of ideologization.

Indicators	Findings
Message Range	Strong in the city (Medan), weak on the outskirts (High Cliff)
Audience Understanding	70% of informants understand the Islamic-nationalism narrative of PDIP
Changes in Perception	Happens to moderate Muslims; conservatives remain skeptical
Social Media	Effective for the younger generation, ineffective for traditional communities.

Unlike NU and LDII, which are already well-established in the da'wah and education network (Ilmi, 2018; Khasiyati, 2021), Bamusi still has structural weaknesses in terms of the number of cadres, program continuity, and symbolic credibility. Without systematic training and the involvement of authoritative local figures, the effectiveness of communication will remain segmental. Bamusi needs to distinguish himself from similar organizations through strong national narratives and a consistent political work ethic.

Based on data from interviews, observations, and documentation, Bamusi's communication strategy can be mapped into five main approaches that each have different reach and effectiveness for Muslim audiences in North Sumatra. To clarify the impact systematically, the following matrix presents a comparison between the communication strategy used, the media used, its effectiveness, and critical notes for its implementation.

Table 2. Bamusi Communication Strategy Matrix and Its Effectiveness

Communication Strategies	Target Audience	Primary Media/Method	Efficiency	Critical Notes
Symbolic-cultural	Moderate Muslims	Revelation, Maulid, khataman, compensation	Tinggi	Increase emotional closeness
Personal-relational	Local religious leaders	Friendship, invitation to lecture, dialogue	Sedang-Tinggi	Opening the discussion room, but not yet touching the mass organization hard.
Social & digital media	Young generation of Muslims	Instagram, YouTube, nationalist da'wah videos	Sedang	Not reaching traditional conservative circles
Islamic political education	Activists, students, teachers.	Seminars, discussions, public forums	Sedang	Need continuity and depth of matter
Ceremony & party symbols	The general public	Banner, the PDIP logo in religious activities	Rendah	Risk of rejection if not accompanied by strong religious narratives

To strengthen understanding of the public response and trace the logic behind the effectiveness of each strategy, direct quotations from key informants are used as concrete illustrations. The following table presents representative statements from various categories of informants, which are interpreted in the context of the meaning of political communication and the acceptance of the Bamusi message.

Table 2 shows that the effectiveness of Bamusi's communication strategy depends heavily on the suitability of the approach to audience characteristics. Symbolic-cultural strategies and personal relationships have proved most effective in reaching moderate Muslims and local religious figures because this approach emphasizes shared values and emotional closeness. In contrast, social media-based strategies tend to only succeed in the younger generation segment, while conservative groups still show high resistance because they consider Bamusi's communication has not yet touched on a more

substantial ideological aspect. This imbalance indicates the importance of differential approaches to value-based and identity-based political communication.

Table 3. Key Quotes by Informant Category

Informant Category	General Identity	Main Quote	Meaning/Analysis
Bamusi's caretaker	Chairman of Bamusi Medan	"Kami tidak memaksakan ideologi, tapi menawarkan semangat kebangsaan."	Framing nationalism as a value compatible with Islam
NU characters	Pesantren Nanny, Deli Serdang	"If we are invited to discuss, we are open, as long as we do not attack Islam."	Participatory relations open up opportunities for political legitimacy
A conservative society	Majelis Taklim, Tebing Tinggi	"The smell only came during the election, after that it was gone."	Negative perception due to inconsistency and lack of presence of grass roots
A young activist	University Student, Medan	"Through social media, I know that PDIP is starting to actively participate in Islamic activities."	Social media is effective for rebranding to young intellectual groups.

Table 3 completes the mapping by showing the direct voices of various informants, which strengthen qualitative findings credibly. From quotes classified according to social and ideological position, it appears that the perception of Bamusi is influenced by the consistency of presence, the credibility of actors, and the open dialogue space. NU figures and young activists are more open because they find conformity of values and direct experience, while conservative people still refuse because they see Bamusi's communication is seasonal and elitist. This underscores the importance of a continuing and participatory presence as a requirement for legitimacy in religious political communication at the grassroots level.

From the two visualizations above, it can be inferred that the success of Bamusi communication depends not only on the content of the message or channel used, but also on the established socio-political relations, the credibility of local actors, and the symbolic match between party value and public religious identity. Therefore, political communication strategies in such a religious context require not only technical accuracy but also cultural sensitivity and continuity of interaction.

Conclusion

This study finds that Baitul Muslimin Indonesia (Bamusi) plays a strategic role in shaping PDIP's positive image among Muslims in North Sumatra through symbolic-cultural communication, engagement with religious leaders, and Islamic political education. The strategy effectively reached moderate Muslims and youth, with 70% of informants reporting a positive perception shift. Bamusi reframed PDIP's image using Islamic values and national narratives, aligning with Entman's framing theory. However, its impact is limited among conservative groups resistant to symbolic

approaches. Methodological constraints include limited geographic scope, small sample size, and lack of quantitative triangulation. Future efforts should expand religious communication training and adopt mixed methods to strengthen inclusive, value-based political messaging in pluralistic societies.

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