

Mediated Populism and Islamic Political Communication: Examining Zohran Mamdani's Digital Campaign Strategy in New York City

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Abstract

The rapid development of digital media has transformed political communication practices, enabling political actors to engage directly with the public through social media platforms. This study examines Zohran Mamdani's digital campaign strategy from the perspectives of Mediated Populism and Islamic Political Communication. The novelty of this research lies in its integration of mediated populism theory with Islamic political communication to analyze the digital political communication of a Muslim politician in a multicultural Western context. This research employs a qualitative approach using content analysis methods. Data were collected from Mamdani's official social media platforms and relevant scholarly and media sources. The data were analyzed through thematic categorization and interpretation based on the dimensions of people-centeredness, anti-elitism, and popular sovereignty, as well as Islamic political communication values such as Muslim identity representation, social justice, inclusivity, and ethical communication. The findings reveal that Mamdani consistently utilizes digital media to construct a people-centered political narrative, criticize economic inequalities, and encourage public participation in political processes. Furthermore, his Muslim identity is represented not through exclusive religious symbols but through substantive values of social justice, inclusiveness, solidarity, and public welfare. The study concludes that Mamdani's digital campaign demonstrates a convergence between mediated populism and Islamic political communication in shaping an inclusive and progressive political identity.

Keywords: Mediated Populism, Islamic Political Communication, Digital Campaign, Zohran Mamdani, Social Media

INTRODUCTION

Advancements in information technology and the emergence of social media have transformed patterns of political communication from the dominance of conventional mass media to direct interaction through digital platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, X (formerly Twitter), and YouTube. Numerous international studies, as well as research conducted in the Indonesian context, demonstrate that digital platforms accelerate the dissemination of political messages, enhance personalization, and enrich two-way interactions between politicians and the public through direct engagement. (Bohatyrets, 2021; Bossetta, 2018; Darius, 2022; Domalewska, 2018).

Politicians' efforts to utilize the digital platform ecosystem represent part of a broader shift from a *mass media logic* to a *hybrid or digital campaigning logic*, which combines traditional campaign elements with the distinctive features of modern platform design. (Fisher et al., 2018; König et al., 2022).

In the Indonesian context, the existing literature also highlights how social media have become important channels for political campaigns, the mobilization of young voters, and the formation of digital public spheres that can facilitate political participation while simultaneously contributing to polarization when not supported by adequate digital literacy and appropriate regulatory frameworks. (Fairuza et al., 2023; Fatah & Fatanti, 2019; Firjarahman et al., 2024).

Populism has emerged as a significant political phenomenon across various countries, emphasizing closeness between political leaders and the people while promoting narratives of resistance against elites. In the digital era, social media have strengthened the capacity of populism by providing politicians with direct channels through which they can construct their image as authentic representatives of the people. This development has accelerated political mobilization and the formation of public opinion. (Hidayati, 2021; Shaira et al., 2021).

The concept of *mediated populism* explains how digital media infrastructures including social media platforms, recommendation algorithms, and norms of online interaction—function as key mechanisms for constructing, framing, and disseminating populist messages. In the Indonesian context, the literature on populism and digital discourse demonstrates that populism is expressed not only through verbal rhetoric but also through visual content, captions, memes, and social media framing that reach broad audiences. (Deha, 2021; Gunawan, 2024; Priyanto, 2021; Qudsi & Syamtar, 2020).

Social media are no longer merely campaign channels; they have become spaces for political identity construction, where politicians establish emotional connections with audiences through visual content, personal narratives, and direct interaction. The success of contemporary political campaigns is increasingly influenced by political actors' ability to utilize algorithms and digital cultures that

shape information flows, visibility, and public opinion formation. (Khairunnisa, 2023; Putra, 2023; Rosdiana & Suryaningtyas, 2024; Wijaya & Baskoro, 2022).

Within this framework, digital communication strategies serve a dual function: fostering personal closeness through personal branding and mobilizing collective identities through political identity narratives that may strengthen cohesion among supporters while also potentially polarizing audiences through identity-based conflict framing. (Rosdiana & Suryaningtyas, 2024; Sitorus et al., 2024; Wijaya & Baskoro, 2022).

Identity can be understood as a social construction shaped by power relations and media representations. Political identity not only reflects individual beliefs but is also constructed through media representation practices, narrative framing, and the use of visual symbols that influence public perceptions. Castells' framework of political identity comprising *legitimizing identity*, *resistance identity*, and *project identity* provides an analytical tool for understanding how political actors construct identities through digital content and social media campaign activities. (Witawan, 2018). In the Indonesian context, political identity construction is often associated with religious, ethnic, or cultural symbols employed to legitimize political positions or mobilize specific groups. (Firmantoro et al., 2018; Putra, 2023; Rosdiana & Suryaningtyas, 2024; Sitorus et al., 2024; Witawan, 2018).

Islamic identity also constitutes an important component in the construction of political image. For Muslim politicians in Western societies, Islamic identity is often employed to signal empathy toward local Muslim communities and commitment to values such as social justice, equality, and solidarity with marginalized groups. Studies on the representation of Islam in public discourse suggest that the political image of Muslim figures is constructed through a combination of religious symbols, personal narratives, and records of social advocacy, all of which influence public perceptions of their political legitimacy. (Alam, 2021; Allali, n.d.; Firmantoro et al., 2018; Wijaya & Baskoro, 2022). In multicultural Western contexts, Islamic identity can also serve as a source of legitimacy for policies supporting minority groups, while at the same time becoming a source of polarization when associated with narratives of identity conflict or perceived threats to national values. (Khairunnisa, 2023).

Zohran Mamdani is one of the emerging progressive politicians who is widely recognized for his active use of social media as a political communication tool to engage broader audiences, particularly younger generations. Through various digital platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, X (formerly Twitter), and YouTube, Mamdani delivers political messages that are presented in a simple, interactive, and relatable manner. His campaign focuses on issues such as economic justice, housing affordability, immigrant rights, access to public services, and the improvement of working-class welfare, areas that have often been perceived as

neglected by political elites. Mamdani's success in attracting public attention lies not only in the substance of his political messages but also in his ability to integrate his Muslim identity, progressive values, and authentic digital communication strategies. This combination positions Mamdani as a new representation of Muslim politicians in the United States, capable of building emotional connections with voters while utilizing digital media as a platform for political support mobilization and public participation.

Although numerous studies have examined digital populism and political communication within the context of social media, research connecting the concept of mediated populism with Islamic Political Communication remains relatively limited, particularly in the context of Muslim minority politicians in the United States. Most previous studies have focused on right-wing populism, identity politics, or the use of social media in political campaigns more generally. Consequently, there remains significant room for further investigation into how Islamic identity is constructed and communicated through digital media as part of a broader populist political strategy.

To date, only a limited number of studies have specifically analyzed how Islamic identity is employed within digital communication strategies to construct narratives centered on public interests, social justice, and resistance to political elites in order to gain public support. Therefore, this study is important for understanding how digital media are utilized by Muslim politicians to construct political narratives within multicultural societies. In addition to contributing to the development of scholarship on political communication, digital communication, and Islamic Political Communication, this research is expected to provide insights into the communication strategies employed by Zohran Mamdani to build public engagement, construct his political identity, and establish his image as a progressive Muslim politician through digital media.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach using Krippendorff's qualitative content analysis to examine Zohran Mamdani's digital campaign strategy from the perspectives of Mediated Populism and Islamic Political Communication. Data were collected between January and June 2025 from both primary and secondary sources. The primary data consisted of purposively selected high-engagement campaign content published on Zohran Mamdani's official social media platforms during the New York City mayoral campaign. Four social media posts representing the highest engagement on each platform were selected as the units of analysis.

Table 1. Social Media Content Selected as Units of Analysis

No.	Platform	Campaign Content	Likes	Comments
1	Instagram	<i>Our Time Is Now (Brooklyn Bridge March)</i>	644,000	9,118

2	Facebook	<i>FIFA Ticket Pricing Campaign</i>	127,000	2,323
3	YouTube	<i>Until It's Done</i>	5,200	583
4	X (formerly Twitter)	<i>Our Time Has Come, New York</i>	153,000	6,520

The sampling technique employed was purposive sampling, selecting posts that received the highest public engagement and were directly relevant to the themes of populism, Muslim identity, and political communication. Secondary data were obtained from scholarly journal articles, books, previous studies, and media reports related to Zohran Mamdani, digital political communication, mediated populism, and Islamic political communication.

Data collection was conducted through documentation, literature review, and systematic observation of digital campaign content. Documentation involved collecting and archiving social media posts, including videos, images, and textual narratives, while the literature review provided the theoretical framework and contextual information from academic publications and credible media sources.

Data were analyzed using Krippendorff's qualitative content analysis procedures, which included data organization, coding, thematic categorization, interpretation of meanings, and conclusion drawing. The coding process was guided by the dimensions of Mediated Populism—people-centeredness, anti-elitism, and popular sovereignty and the principles of Islamic Political Communication, including Muslim identity representation, social justice, inclusivity, and ethical political communication. This analytical framework enabled the study to identify how Mamdani constructed inclusive political narratives through digital media and how these narratives reflected the convergence of populist discourse and Islamic political communication values in a multicultural democratic context.

Table 2. Zohran Mamdani's Social Media Platforms

Facebook	Twitter (X)	YouTobe	Instagram

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Zohran Mamdani's Digital Campaign Strategy on Social Media

Zohran Mamdani utilizes social media as a primary instrument of political communication to establish closer connections with the public, particularly younger generations and voter groups that are highly active in digital spaces. His campaign strategy extends beyond the dissemination of political information to encompass the creation of personal, authentic, and easily understandable interactions with the public. Unlike conventional campaign models that rely heavily on mass media and formal political advertising, Mamdani adapts his communication strategy to the unique characteristics of each digital platform, enabling political messages to be delivered more effectively in accordance with the communication culture of social media users. This approach aligns with the concept of digital campaigning, which emphasizes the importance of tailoring political messages to the architecture and characteristics of specific social media platforms. (Agency, 2025).

On Instagram, Mamdani employs visual content and short-form videos as the primary means of communicating his political agenda. Through features such as Reels, Stories, and carousel posts, he presents complex issues—including the housing crisis, the rising cost of living, and public transportation challenges—in a simple, engaging, and accessible manner. These contents frequently feature Mamdani directly interacting with public spaces, such as bus stops, residential neighborhoods, and community centers, thereby creating an image of proximity to the everyday experiences of New Yorkers. The use of humor, visual symbolism, and a casual communication style makes political messages more appealing and shareable among social media users. The high level of engagement on Mamdani's Instagram account indicates the effectiveness of this strategy in increasing public attention to his campaign.

TikTok serves as the most effective platform for reaching younger voters. Through short-form videos, Mamdani communicates political messages in formats that align with digital trends and popular culture among Generation Z audiences. His content frequently incorporates storytelling, humor, direct conversations with residents, and collaborations with local content creators. Furthermore, Mamdani actively utilizes interactive features such as comments, stitches, and duets to respond to public concerns and aspirations, fostering two-way communication that strengthens the relationship between the candidate and his audience. This strategy demonstrates how social media functions not only as an information channel but also as a space for political participation, allowing voters to feel directly involved in the campaign process.

On X (formerly Twitter), Mamdani adopts a different approach by positioning the platform as a forum for discussing current issues and responding rapidly to political developments. Through concise posts, political statements, and interactions

with journalists, activists, and members of the public, he cultivates an image as a politician who is responsive to public concerns. X is also utilized to reinforce campaign agendas through narrative dissemination, information clarification, and real-time mobilization of political support. Meanwhile, Facebook is employed to reach a broader and more age-diverse electorate, particularly individuals who continue to rely on the platform as a source of political information. Content shared on Facebook generally includes campaign documentation, live broadcasts, policy information, and invitations for public participation in various political activities. (Mensenkampff, 2026).

In addition, YouTube functions as a platform for delivering more in-depth and substantive content. Through this medium, Mamdani uploads campaign speeches, policy discussions, documentation of field activities, and explanatory videos addressing a variety of public issues. YouTube enables audiences to gain a more comprehensive understanding of his political vision and policy proposals. The availability of long-form content on YouTube complements the communication strategies employed on Instagram and TikTok, which are primarily oriented toward short, engaging, and potentially viral content. Consequently, the combined use of Instagram, TikTok, X, Facebook, and YouTube demonstrates that Mamdani implements an integrated digital political communication strategy in which each platform serves a distinct function and audience segment while collectively contributing to the development of political support.

The findings of this study indicate that the success of Zohran Mamdani's digital campaign is determined not merely by the intensity of social media use but also by his ability to adapt political messages to the characteristics of each platform. This strategy exemplifies the practice of *mediated populism*, whereby digital media are utilized to build closer relationships with the public, expand the reach of political messages, and foster a community of supporters actively engaged in contemporary political campaigning. (Wired, 2025).

Representation of Mediated Populism in Zohran Mamdani's Digital Campaign

The concept of mediated populism explains how digital media are utilized to establish a direct relationship between politicians and the public through narratives that place the people at the center of attention, criticize elites perceived as failing to represent public interests, and emphasize the importance of popular sovereignty in the political process. According to Mazzoleni and Bracciale (2018), social media enable political actors to communicate populist messages directly without the filtering processes of traditional media, thereby creating a stronger sense of closeness with audiences. In the context of Zohran Mamdani's campaign, these characteristics are clearly reflected in various digital contents focusing on everyday issues affecting New Yorkers, particularly the cost of living, housing affordability, public transportation, and the welfare of the working class.

The element of *people-centeredness* is evident in the way Mamdani constructs campaign narratives oriented toward the needs of ordinary people. A significant portion of his content on Instagram, TikTok, and X features direct interactions with residents, workers, tenants, immigrants, and communities affected by the high cost of living in New York. His campaign messages focus not on partisan identity or personal political branding alone but on the practical challenges faced by citizens in their daily lives. This strategy aligns with the characteristics of populist communication, which positions the people as the primary subjects of political narratives. Muñoz (2021) argues that the representation of “the people” constitutes a central element of populist communication on social media, as it serves to foster emotional closeness between politicians and their audiences.

In addition, the element of *anti-elitism* is reflected in Mamdani’s criticism of economic and political structures perceived as failing to serve the interests of middle- and lower-income communities. Across his campaign content, Mamdani highlights issues such as rising housing costs, economic inequality, and the dominance of wealthy groups in public policymaking. These narratives construct a dichotomy between ordinary citizens and elite groups perceived to benefit disproportionately from the existing system. According to Ernst, Engesser, and Esser (2017), anti-elitism is one of the primary indicators of populist communication because it creates a symbolic boundary between “the people” and “the elite.” In Mamdani’s case, criticism of economic and political elites is employed to strengthen his legitimacy as a representative of broader public interests.

Meanwhile, the dimension of *popular sovereignty* is reflected in Mamdani’s efforts to encourage citizens to actively participate in the political process. His campaign content not only communicates policy proposals but also promotes public engagement through volunteer activities, community discussions, grassroots campaigning, and voter mobilization initiatives, particularly among younger generations. *The Washington Post* reported that the success of Mamdani’s campaign was supported by his effective use of social media, which transformed digital audiences into an active political movement through direct public involvement in campaign activities. Thus, social media function not only as communication tools but also as instruments of political mobilization that reinforce the notion that political change must originate from the people. (Ernst et al., 2017).

Overall, the representation of mediated populism in Zohran Mamdani’s digital campaign demonstrates a combination of *people-centeredness*, *anti-elitism*, and *popular sovereignty*, all strategically packaged through the characteristics of social media platforms. Narratives centered on affordability, criticism of economic inequality, and the promotion of political participation position digital media as a strategic arena for constructing a political image that is closely connected to ordinary citizens. These findings reinforce the view that social media have become a crucial

instrument in contemporary populist practices, enabling political actors to establish direct relationships with the public while mobilizing political support more effectively.

Construction of Islamic Identity in Zohran Mamdani's Political Communication

Islamic identity constitutes an important element of Zohran Mamdani's political communication, consistently expressed through various digital platforms and public campaign activities. As a Muslim politician of Ugandan-Indian descent operating within the political landscape of the United States, Mamdani does not present Islam as an exclusive identity marker. Instead, he integrates it into an inclusive political narrative that emphasizes social justice, solidarity, equality, and diversity. Through social media posts, campaign speeches, and interactions with the public, Mamdani cultivates an image of a Muslim leader capable of bridging different ethnic, religious, and cultural communities in New York. This strategy demonstrates that Islamic identity functions not only as a personal identity but also as a source of moral legitimacy in advocating for the interests of the broader public.

The representation of Muslim identity in Mamdani's political communication is evident in his willingness to openly acknowledge and discuss his religious background in the public sphere. On several occasions, he has spoken publicly about his experiences as a Muslim living amid the rise of Islamophobic sentiments in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks. One significant moment occurred when Mamdani delivered a speech at an Islamic cultural center in the Bronx, where he asserted that Muslim identity is not something that should be concealed in political life. This statement served as a response to political attacks that questioned his leadership capabilities based on his religious affiliation. Consequently, Islamic identity is constructed as a symbol of resilience, a representation of minority communities, and a form of resistance against the discrimination experienced by Muslims in the United States.

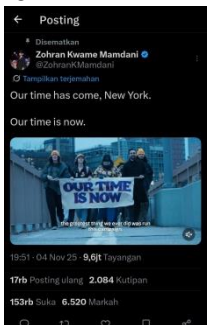
Beyond the representation of Muslim identity, Mamdani also incorporates Islamic symbols in a contextual manner within his political communication. These symbols are not always expressed through explicit religious attributes; rather, they are reflected in his close engagement with Muslim communities, participation in religious activities, and the use of narratives that highlight the collective experiences of Muslims as an integral part of New York's multicultural society. Research by Shintadewi and Ubaidillah (2026) suggests that Mamdani's political communication constructs a *hybrid Muslim identity* an identity that maintains Islamic values while adapting to the realities of liberal democracy and pluralistic societies. Through this identity construction, Mamdani does not position Islam as being in opposition to American national values; instead, he presents it as compatible with the principles of democracy, social justice, and human rights.

The Islamic values reflected in Mamdani's political communication primarily relate to the principles of social justice (*al-'adl*), concern for marginalized groups (*mustadh'afin*), human brotherhood (*ukhuwwah insaniyyah*), and inclusivity. The issues frequently emphasized in his campaign, such as affordable housing, immigrant rights, the protection of vulnerable communities, access to public services, and the reduction of economic inequality, demonstrate a strong alignment with the values of justice that constitute a fundamental component of Islamic teachings. From the perspective of Islamic Political Communication, this approach illustrates that Islamic messages do not necessarily need to be conveyed through explicit religious rhetoric; rather, they can be expressed through policy advocacy oriented toward public welfare (*maslahah*) and the well-being of society.

Furthermore, the use of digital media enables Mamdani to construct his Muslim identity in a more personal and authentic manner. Through platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, X, and YouTube, he presents himself not only as a politician but also as a member of the Muslim community who shares social experiences and concerns similar to those of the people he represents. This strategy strengthens emotional connections with audiences while simultaneously challenging and reducing negative stereotypes about Muslims in the public sphere. Mamdani's success demonstrates that digital media can serve as a strategic space for Muslim politicians to cultivate an inclusive, progressive, and widely accepted political identity within multicultural societies, while remaining firmly grounded in Islamic values and principles.

Table 3. Content Analysis of Zohran Mamdani's Digital Campaign from the Perspectives of Mediated Populism and Islamic Political Communication.

Platform & Content	Content Description	Mediated Populism	Islamic Political Communication
Instagram – “Our Time Is Now” (Brooklyn Bridge March) 	Features Zohran Mamdani walking alongside hundreds of supporters across the Brooklyn Bridge while carrying a banner that reads “Our Time Is Now.”	People-Centeredness: the people are portrayed as the primary agents of change. Popular Sovereignty: the slogan emphasizes that political power resides in the hands of the people.	Inclusivity: highlights ethnic and social diversity among participants. Ukhuwah Insaniyyah (Human Brotherhood): promotes unity across different identities and social groups.

Facebook – FIFA Ticket Pricing Campaign 	Mamdani criticizes high ticket prices, opposes dynamic pricing, and advocates for affordable ticket quotas for local residents.	Anti-Elitism: criticism of economic systems and corporations perceived as disadvantaging ordinary citizens. People-Centeredness: advocates for the interests of everyday people.	Social Justice (Al-'Adl): promotes fair and equitable access to public facilities and entertainment.
YouTube – “Until It’s Done” 	The video presents Mamdani speaking directly to the public in a simple and personal manner.	People-Centeredness: direct communication with the public. Political Personalization: reduces the distance between the candidate and voters.	Tabligh: messages are delivered openly, clearly, and understandably. Ethics of Political Communication: emphasizes transparency and closeness to the community.
X (Twitter) – “Our Time Has Come, New York” 	Mamdani posts a video with volunteers accompanied by the slogan “ <i>Our Time Is Now.</i> ”	People-Centeredness: the use of the word “ <i>our</i> ” emphasizes collective identity. Popular Sovereignty: political change is portrayed as originating from the people.	Public Participation: encourages citizens to engage in social and political change. Public Welfare (Maslahah): emphasizes the pursuit of the common good.

Based on the four campaign posts analyzed, Zohran Mamdani consistently constructs his image as a representative of the people rather than a member of the political elite. This is demonstrated through the use of symbols of solidarity, direct engagement with citizens, and collective narratives that position ordinary people as the primary agents of political change. Slogans such as “*Our Time Is Now*” and “*Our Time Has Come*” reinforce a shared identity between the candidate and his supporters, creating the impression that the campaign represents a grassroots movement emerging from public aspirations. Furthermore, Mamdani presents himself as an advocate for public interests by criticizing various forms of economic

inequality, including high ticket prices and economic practices perceived as unfair to ordinary citizens. This strategy reflects the characteristic of *anti-elitism*, one of the core dimensions of Mediated Populism, in which political narratives are framed around the distinction between the interests of the people and those of groups possessing greater power and resources.

At the same time, the use of digital media through simple, personal, and interactive communication formats helps establish an image of authenticity and strengthens public trust in the candidate. Through videos, social media posts, and concise yet emotionally engaging messages, Mamdani successfully creates a sense of closeness with his audience while encouraging greater political participation. From the perspective of Islamic Political Communication, this communication strategy reflects the values of social justice, inclusivity, transparency, and a commitment to public welfare (*maslahah*). Therefore, digital media functions not only as a tool for political campaigning but also as a space for constructing a political identity that integrates populist narratives with ethical values consistent with the principles of Islamic Political Communication.

Table 4. Key Findings of Zohran Mamdani's Digital Campaign Analysis from the Perspectives of Mediated Populism and Islamic Political Communication

Analytical Aspect	Key Findings
People-Centeredness	This aspect is dominant across all campaign posts, as reflected in the frequent use of the word " <i>our</i> ," active public engagement, and the visualization of large groups of supporters.
Anti-Elitism	Strongly evident in content addressing FIFA ticket pricing, which positions ordinary citizens in opposition to economic systems and large corporations perceived to benefit elite interests.
Popular Sovereignty	Reflected in the slogan " <i>Our Time Is Now</i> ," which emphasizes that political change originates from the people.
Representation of Muslim Identity	Not expressed through explicit or exclusive religious symbols, but rather through the values and principles advocated throughout the campaign.
Social Justice	Demonstrated through advocacy for more equitable economic access and protection for low-income communities.
Inclusivity	The campaign engages individuals from diverse ethnic, religious, and socioeconomic backgrounds, reflecting an open and pluralistic political approach.

Islamic Political Communication Ethics	Evident in a communication style characterized by respectfulness, transparency, public participation, and a commitment to public welfare (<i>maslahah</i>).
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Based on the analysis of Zohran Mamdani's digital campaign content, the aspect of *people-centeredness* emerged as the most dominant characteristic. This is evident in the repeated use of the word "our" in various campaign slogans, such as "*Our Time Is Now*," which consistently constructs a collective identity between the candidate and the public. Furthermore, the visualization of large groups of supporters and the direct involvement of citizens in campaign activities demonstrate that the people are positioned at the center of the political narrative. The aspect of *anti-elitism* is also strongly reflected, particularly in content addressing FIFA ticket pricing issues. In these posts, Mamdani presents himself as an advocate for ordinary citizens affected by an economic system perceived to benefit corporations and privileged interest groups more than the general public. Moreover, the element of *popular sovereignty* is evident in campaign messages emphasizing that political change lies in the hands of the people, thereby positioning citizens as the primary source of political legitimacy and agents of social transformation.

From the perspective of Islamic Political Communication, the representation of Muslim identity in Mamdani's campaign is not expressed through prominent religious symbols or exclusive religious attributes. Instead, it is reflected through the values and principles promoted in his campaign narratives. The value of social justice is demonstrated through advocacy for more equitable economic access, protection of low-income communities, and efforts to address social and economic inequalities. In addition, Mamdani's campaign embodies the principle of inclusivity by engaging individuals from diverse ethnic, religious, and socioeconomic backgrounds, thereby reflecting an open and pluralistic political approach that does not restrict participation based on identity. Furthermore, the ethical dimension of Islamic Political Communication is reflected in his respectful, transparent, participatory, and public-oriented communication style. Therefore, Mamdani's digital campaign strategy illustrates a convergence between people-centered populist narratives and the values of Islamic Political Communication, emphasizing social justice, inclusivity, and social responsibility.

The findings of this study are consistent with previous research indicating that social media has become a strategic space for constructing populist political narratives and strengthening direct engagement between political leaders and citizens (Bossetta, 2018; Mazzoleni & Bracciale, 2018). Similar to earlier studies, Mamdani's digital campaign demonstrates the characteristics of mediated populism through people-centered narratives, anti-elitist discourse, and the promotion of popular sovereignty. However, this study extends previous scholarship by showing that these populist communication strategies are integrated with the substantive

values of Islamic Political Communication. Rather than emphasizing exclusive religious symbolism, Mamdani represents his Muslim identity through the promotion of social justice, inclusivity, solidarity, and public welfare. This finding highlights that mediated populism and Islamic political communication can converge in shaping an inclusive political identity within a multicultural democratic society.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that Zohran Mamdani's digital campaign strategy utilizes social media as a primary instrument for building political communication that is effective, participatory, and closely connected to the public. Through platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), and YouTube, Mamdani successfully adapts his political messages to the unique characteristics of each platform, enabling him to reach diverse audiences, particularly younger generations and urban communities actively engaged in digital spaces. Social media is employed not only as a channel for disseminating political information but also as a space for interaction, political identity construction, and public support mobilization.

From the perspective of Mediated Populism, Mamdani's digital campaign exhibits three key characteristics: people-centeredness, anti-elitism, and popular sovereignty. The element of people-centeredness is reflected in the consistent narrative that positions ordinary citizens as the central focus and primary agents of political change. Anti-elitism is evident in his criticism of economic inequality, the rising cost of living, and policies perceived as benefiting elite groups rather than the broader public. Meanwhile, popular sovereignty is manifested through various calls for greater public participation in political processes and the assertion that social and political change must originate from the people as the ultimate holders of sovereignty in a democratic system.

From the perspective of Islamic Political Communication, this study finds that Zohran Mamdani's Muslim identity is not constructed exclusively through religious symbols. Instead, it is represented through substantive Islamic values such as social justice (*al-'adl*), inclusivity, solidarity, human brotherhood (*ukhuwwah insaniyyah*), and a commitment to public welfare (*maslahah*). The communication strategy employed demonstrates that Islamic values can be integrated into modern political communication without creating exclusive identity boundaries. Rather, Muslim identity functions as a source of moral legitimacy in advocating for the interests of society as a whole within a multicultural context.

In conclusion, this study finds that Zohran Mamdani's digital campaign represents a convergence between the practices of mediated populism and the principles of Islamic Political Communication in constructing a progressive, inclusive, and people-oriented political identity. These findings contribute to the

development of scholarship on digital political communication, populism, and Islamic Political Communication by illustrating how social media can serve as a strategic platform for Muslim politicians to build closer relationships with the public, advocate for social justice, and expand political participation in contemporary democratic societies.

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AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION

The author made substantial contributions to all stages of the research process, including the formulation of the research idea and topic, the development of the conceptual framework and research design, data collection, data analysis and interpretation, as well as the writing and editing of the manuscript. The author was also responsible for the article revision process, the refinement of the study's substantive content, and the final approval of the manuscript for publication.

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