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Analysing responses to digital activism in Indonesia and Malaysia using AIDA framework

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This article examines how six youth-led X accounts in Indonesia and Malaysia generated engagement and were associated with different forms of participation during the 2024 Indonesian presidential election and the 2022 Malaysian general election. Using the AIDA (Attention-Interest-Desire-Action) framework as a non-linear interpretive heuristic, it draws on platform metrics, interactional traces, and interviews with organisers. The study compares four candidate-

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centred volunteer accounts in Indonesia with two reform-oriented and civic education initiatives in Malaysia as an analytical contrast rather than a like-for-like national test. The findings show that spectacle and gamified formats scale Attention and affective Desire within platform attention economies, yet frequently remain associated with discursive, platform-proximate Action, revealing an action gap. In contrast, the Malaysian civic initiatives demonstrate stronger organisational and institutional linkages between online coordination, procedural participation and civic education. Situating AIDA within hybrid media ecologies and platform governance, the article argues that democratic effects depend less on visibility metrics than on organisational capacity and linkages to institutional processes. The study contributes to eParticipation research by distinguishing discursive-amplificatory, material-participatory, and institutional forms of Action and by specifying how platform logics condition their relationship to online engagement.

Keywords: AIDA, digital activism, eParticipation, youth political activism, Southeast Asia

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1. Introduction

Digital activism has become a major form of political participation today. Social media platforms can shape how people engage in collective action by lowering barriers to participation (Mask, 2022). Yet, the democratic potential of digital activism remains ambivalent. This ambivalence is consistent with research on 'managing democracy' under digital conditions, where institutional adaptation often lags behind platform-driven shifts in political communication and participation (Schwanholz et al., 2018). This tension echoes early digital-democracy debates that anticipated participatory gains while warning of new asymmetries in voice, access, and agenda control (Hacker & Dijk, 2000). While digital platforms open opportunities for digital activism, their platform architectures can privilege visibility, affective intensity, and rapid circulation over deliberation and institutional accountability. As a result, activism operates within attention economies that shape which issues gain public visibility (Fuchs, 2023; Persily & Tucker, 2020; Schafer & Walker, 2021).

Following scholarship on social-media-based political participation and hybrid media activism (Dennis, 2019; Treré, 2019), this article defines digital political activism as collective or coordinated digital practices directed towards a political claim, actor, process, or public outcome. This operational definition distinguishes digital political activism from general online political expression by requiring an identifiable orientation towards mobilisation, advocacy, participation, or civic learning. Recent studies emphasise the hybrid character of digital activism. Online practices are embedded within broader media ecologies that link platform-based communication with offline mobilisation, organisational infrastructures, and cultural repertoires (Dennis, 2019; Treré, 2019). In Southeast Asia, youth activism exemplifies this hybridity. Online participation frequently overlaps with, and in some cases supports, offline collective action (Halimatusa'diyah, 2024). This condition demonstrates

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that digital engagement can function as a pathway to material participation when supported by coherent frames and organisational linkages.

At the same time, digital activism is shaped by unequal platform power. Corporate platforms control visibility through algorithms that set agendas, compress political timeframes, and encourage reactive forms of participation. This limits deliberation and sustained collective action (Pierman, 2023). These structural conditions shape not only visibility, but also the conversion of engagement into political efficacy (Iosifidis & Nicoli, 2020). Digital activism should therefore be analysed as a socio-technical process rather than a neutral tool of mobilisation (Fuchs, 2023; Pierman, 2023; Treré, 2019).

Against this backdrop, this article examines six youth-led X accounts in Indonesia and Malaysia during the 2024 Indonesian presidential election and the 2022 Malaysian general election using the AIDA (Attention, Interest, Desire, Action) framework. AIDA is treated as a non-linear interpretive heuristic rather than a causal model of political behaviour. By tracing how the accounts generated attention, cultivated affective or civic attachments, and provided different pathways to action, the study evaluates when platform-based engagement is associated with democratic participation and where its structural limits lie in platformised political environments.

Indonesia, once regarded as one of the most promising democracies in Southeast Asia after the fall of Suharto in 1998, has witnessed a steady decline in democratic quality in recent years. While democratic institutions remain intact, they are increasingly vulnerable to elite dominance, clientelism, and legal manipulations that undermine judicial independence and electoral fairness (Ida et al., 2020). The use of state power to silence opposition voices has become a key issue, with restrictions on press freedom and digital surveillance limiting civic engagement (Saud & Margono, 2021). Political participation remains strong among youth, who have leveraged digital activism to challenge government policies and mobilise protests. Movements such as #ReformasiDikorupsi and #TolakOmnibusLaw demonstrate the power of online mobilisation in Indonesia (Wahyuningroem et al., 2024).

Malaysia presents a similarly complex and fragile democratic landscape. The historic 2018 General Election (GE14), which saw the ruling party lose power for the first time in over six decades, was initially viewed as a breakthrough for democracy. However, subsequent political instability, party realignments, and electoral manipulations have raised serious concerns about governance continuity and democratic legitimacy (Ahmad & Mohd Zain, 2021). The lowering of the voting age from 21 to 18 and automatic voter registration (Chai, 2022) were expected to improve political participation, yet youth engagement remains primarily digital rather than institutional (Yin & Fei, 2022).

This study compares two configurations of digital mobilisation, one from Indonesia and another from Malaysia. The four Indonesian accounts were candidate-centred volunteer initiatives formed during an intense presidential campaign in 2024. The two Malaysian cases were longer-term reform and civic education initiatives associated with the 2022 general election, whose platform strategies extended beyond X. This contrast is analytically useful because it shows how organisational purpose, platform strategy and institutional linkages shape the relationship between online engagement and various forms of Action. Population size, case distribution, observation periods, organisational

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goals, and available platform metrics also differ. The comparison therefore identifies account-level strategies and contextual contrasts; it does not rank national levels of digital activism or infer country-wide differences from six cases.

Both Indonesia and Malaysia face similar systemic challenges that threaten their democratic resilience. Political instability and weak coalition governments have caused governance uncertainty, with Malaysia experiencing frequent leadership changes since 2020, leading to a lack of political continuity (Ahmad & Mohd Zain, 2021). In Indonesia, the prevalence of patronage politics and prioritisation of party loyalty over national interests have led to ineffective policymaking (Dahl et al., 2003). Youth political engagement remains visible in digital movements and issue-based mobilisation. However, while digital political activism is widespread, young citizens remain reluctant to join formal political institutions due to distrust in politicians and political parties (Yaakub et al., 2023). In Malaysia, economic concerns have further discouraged youth political engagement, as many prioritise financial stability over activism (Alfaruqy & Padmonurcahyo, 2023).

Addressing these democratic challenges requires comprehensive reforms that promote electoral integrity, youth engagement, press freedom, and digital governance. Strengthening electoral integrity is a priority for both countries. Fostering youth political engagement requires structural changes in civic education and party structures. Expanding civic education programmes could enhance political literacy among young voters, while political parties should create meaningful spaces for youth participation rather than treating them as passive voters (International IDEA, 2021).

Taken together, youth-led digital activism in Indonesia and Malaysia operates within platform environments that shape how participation becomes visible and how far it is associated with political action. This article asks: How do selected youth-led X accounts in Indonesia and Malaysia generate Attention, Interest, Desire and different forms of Action, and what conditions appear to separate platform engagement from material or institutional participation? Drawing on platform traces and interviews, the analysis finds that high recorded visibility was often associated with expressive participation, whereas material and institutional Action appeared where mobilisation cues were connected to organisational capacity, offline networks, or formal pathways. The article contributes to eParticipation research by refining the Action stage and the action gap within asymmetric cases. The next section sets out the AIDA model and explains its value and limitations for analysing digital activism by youth in Indonesia and Malaysia.

2. The AIDA Model

2.1. Development of the AIDA Model

The AIDA model (Attention, Interest, Desire, Action) is a widely used framework in marketing and communication. It describes the sequential stages through which an audience progresses prior to decision-making. Originally developed for advertising, AIDA has since been adapted for political campaigns to shape public perception, increase voter engagement, and influence election outcomes.

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E. St. Elmo Lewis introduced the AIDA model in 1898 to assist sales professionals in crafting persuasive messages (Jobber & Ellis-Chadwick, 2016). The model comprises four key stages: **Attention**, in which a message captures the audience's focus; **Interest**, where engagement is maintained through relevant content; **Desire**, where an emotional connection strengthens motivational appeal; and **Action**, where the audience is encouraged to take a specific step, such as making a purchase or voting.

Although initially designed for commercial marketing, AIDA has evolved into a fundamental tool in advertising, branding, and digital communication (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Its adaptability has enabled integration into modern media, including social media and political campaigns. Scholars such as Rehman et al. (2015) and Abdelkader & Rabie (2019) highlight how political campaigns apply AIDA within digital marketing through personalised content, social media advertising, and algorithm-driven engagement strategies, demonstrating its relevance in political communication.

Over time, AIDA's application expanded markedly due to advances in media technology. In particular, the growth of mass media in the 20th century made radio and television essential platforms for political messaging. Political strategists adopted the AIDA model to shape election campaigns, leveraging mass communication to influence voter behaviour. Cwalina et al. (2000) demonstrate how television political advertisements frequently utilise AIDA principles to shape voter perceptions and reinforce candidate appeal.

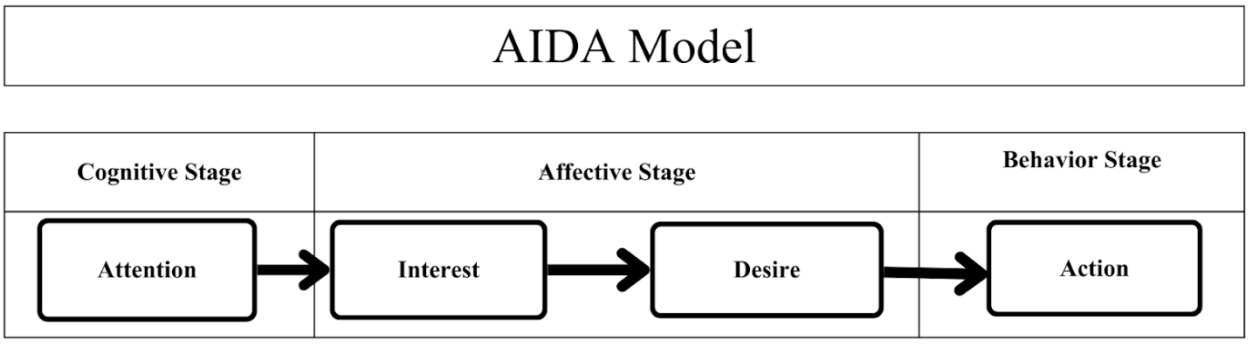
With the emergence of digital marketing and AI-driven advertising, the model has been further refined to incorporate data analytics, behavioural targeting, and psychographic profiling. Political campaigns increasingly rely on these methods to enhance outreach efforts (Boehme-Neßler, 2020; Bollinger & Stone, 2022; Fuller, 2023). Social media platforms such as Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), TikTok, and YouTube have become a central arena for political communication, where AIDA is applied to disseminate targeted messages (Abdelkader & Rabie, 2019).

In addition, recent developments in neuromarketing and behavioural psychology have extended AIDA's relevance in voter behaviour analysis. Montazeribarforoushi et al. (2017) explore how neuroscientific insights enhance persuasive messaging, particularly in commercial marketing. These findings are increasingly applied in political campaigns, although their effectiveness remains contingent on voter engagement, cognitive biases, and the broader socio-political context.

Democratic participation, however, does not necessarily follow AIDA's linear sequence. Users may repost before developing sustained interest, retain affective alignment without acting, or participate because of organisational ties established before encountering a post. This study therefore uses AIDA to organise observable engagement signals, not to predict that one stage causes the next. Participation ladders are better suited to assessing degrees of citizen power or institutional influence (Arnstein, 1969); AIDA is retained here because the narrower research problem concerns how communication strategies generate and connect different forms of platform engagement. Its use remains conditional on qualitative interpretation and triangulation.

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Figure 1. AIDA Model (Kotler & Keller, 2016)



2.2. The AIDA Model in Political Campaign: A Framework for Voters' Influence

In digital politics, capturing public attention constitutes the initial, and often most formidable, challenge. Online environments are saturated with competing political messages, news, and social media discourse. Political campaigns, advocacy groups, and activists employ striking visuals, provocative headlines, and viral content in an attempt to cut through the digital noise. Bungsraz (2020) aptly observes that "attention is the first currency of activism," emphasising the necessity of visibility as a precursor to engagement. In this study, AIDA is adapted to political communication by recognising the ideological and affective dimensions of engagement and by treating its stages as overlapping analytical categories rather than a fixed sequence (Boehme-Neßler, 2020). Each stage of the AIDA model plays a distinct role in shaping how candidates attract and maintain voter support.

The first stage, **Attention**, involves generating public interest through campaign events, media coverage, and social media outreach. Political advertisements, televised debates, and digital campaigns are central mechanisms in this regard. Cwalina et al. (2000) demonstrate how political advertisements in Poland, France, and Germany effectively employed AIDA by combining compelling visuals with persuasive narrative framing. The 2016 Trump campaign exemplifies how viral social media strategies and provocative messaging can sustain both public and media attention, though the broader news cycles also played a significant role in shaping the narrative (Ouyang & Waterman, 2020). In this research, Attention is indicated by available impression or view counts for selected posts shared on X (formerly Twitter). However, the predictive validity of these metrics in forecasting voter behaviour remains contested (Dennis, 2019).

The second stage, **Interest**, focuses on keeping audiences engaged with relevant and persuasive content. Dennis (2019) argues that viral content alone is insufficient to stimulate political participation. Rather, meaningful engagement requires substantive political discourse. Campaigns commonly utilise storytelling, policy-oriented communication, and direct voter interaction to maintain sustained interest. Digital democracy platforms offer additional avenues to maintain voter interest and support public discourse. However, their effectiveness in political campaigns varies (Fuller, 2023). Applying the framework to X (formerly Twitter), this research uses likes, replies, and follow-

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up exchanges as platform-dependent indications of Interest, while recognising that these signals do not establish comprehension, agreement, or persuasion (Dennis, 2019).

The third stage, **Desire**, shifts engagement toward emotional investment in a campaign. Campaign slogans such as "Make America Great Again" (Trump) and "Yes We Can" (Obama) exemplify strong emotional messages that resonate with the public, cultivating strong affective ties. Montazeribarforoushi et al. (2017) demonstrate that emotion-driven messaging enhances both memory retention and decision-making efficacy among voters. Digital activism relies on emotional engagement to inspire long-term commitment to a cause (Boehme-Neßler, 2020). This research considers affective or affiliative language in replies and reposts as qualitative proxies for expressed alignment, not direct measures of private motivation. However, further empirical work is required to establish the extent to which these forms of engagement translate into voter conversion (Mumtaz, 2019).

The final stage, **Action**, entails transforming voter engagement into concrete political behaviour, such as registering to vote, attending rallies, or casting ballots. Campaigns frequently use Get-Out-The-Vote (GOTV) strategies, SMS alerts, and digital tools to increase turnout. Obama's 2012 campaign successfully applied the AIDA model through text reminders, data-driven outreach, and online fundraising (Holtz-Bacha & Just, 2017). Similarly, Biden's 2020 campaign combined digital outreach with voter mobilisation efforts, leveraging online tools for grassroots engagement. Activist movements such as Black Lives Matter and Extinction Rebellion have also employed digital platforms for coordination and mobilisation, though their direct alignment to AIDA's structure requires further research (Fuchs, 2023). For this analysis, Action is divided into discursive-amplificatory Action (such as public support, vote pledges, and reposting), material-participatory Action (such as donating, volunteering, attending, or producing campaign resources), and institutional Action (sustained advocacy directed towards rules, public institutions, or organised civic education). These forms are not treated as equivalent, and material or institutional claims require interview or documentary corroboration.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

This study adopted a qualitative comparative case design to explore how selected youth-led digital movements in Indonesia and Malaysia engaged online audiences through their X (formerly Twitter) accounts. The unit of analysis is the account and its associated organising practice, not the national electorate. Qualitative research is particularly suited for a nuanced exploration of human experiences and meaning-making processes (Guest et al., 2012). Thematic analysis was employed as the primary data analysis technique due to its flexibility and applicability to various forms of text-based data (Wolgemuth et al., 2025).

The analysis uses AIDA as a non-linear framework to trace observable engagement signals on platforms, rather than as a causal explanation of political behaviour. This approach recognises that participation is shaped by algorithmic governance and hybrid media environments (Fuchs, 2023; Treré, 2019). The operational indicators were developed by the authors for this study. Attention was

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indicated by available impressions/views; Interest by likes, replies, and follow-up exchanges; Desire by affective, affiliative or civic language in replies and reposts; and Action by the discursive-amplificatory, material-participatory, and institutional categories defined above. These measures are treated as platform-dependent indicators because what becomes visible and popular is shaped by algorithmic ranking systems (Persily & Tucker, 2020; Shaffer, 2019). Accordingly, popularity metrics often reward content that performs well in terms of visibility, rather than deliberative engagement (Schwanholz et al., 2018).

Table 1. Operationalisation of AIDA for Platform-Mediated Digital Activism (X)

AIDA Stage	**Conceptual Function**	**Operational Indicators (X)**	**Qualitative Coding Focus**	**Validity Notes**
Attention	Recorded platform visibility	Impressions/views, where available	Visual cues, urgency markers, hashtags	A platform-dependent signal shaped by ranking and salience; not a measure of unique supporters or voting intention (Persily & Tucker, 2020; Shaffer, 2019).
Interest	Sustained engagement with content	Likes, replies, and follow-up exchanges	Questions, procedural inquiry, topical follow-ups and engagement, criticism	Indicates interaction, not a uniform level of comprehension, agreement, or persuasion (Fuchs, 2023).
Desire	Affective, affiliative, or civic alignment	Reposts, quote posts; affect-laden replies	Identity markers, emotional registers (admiration, solidarity), affiliative language, collective responsibility	A qualitative proxy for expressed alignment, not a direct measure of private motivation (Iosifidis & Nicoli, 2020). Reposts may reflect amplification or circulation rather than personal desire, and are therefore read as expressed alignment only when accompanied by affect-laden or affiliative language.
Action	Discursive-amplificatory, material-	Public vote pledges; donations; volunteering	Type of commitments, coordination	The three forms are not equivalent. Material and institutional claims

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	participatory, or institutional response	commitments; attendances, campaign production or electoral work; sustained advocacy or organised civic education.	cues; evidence of participation; organisational or institutional pathway.	require interview or documentary corroboration; no individual-level conversion is inferred (Dennis, 2019; Halimatusa'diyah, 2024).

3.2. Data Collection

Data were collected through in-depth interviews and digital scraping of posts and replies on X (formerly Twitter). In-depth interviews were conducted with main administrators or founders of each selected account, allowing insight into the intentions and strategies behind their digital engagement. TWExportly was used to collect account timelines and BulkExporter to extract complete reply threads from selected posts. Timeline data were exported on 18–20 June 2024. The available archives covered 29 December 2023–11 June 2024 for @aniesbubble, 4 January–11 March 2024 for @olpproject, 2 January–18 June 2024 for @timpenguinnas, 17 August 2021–14 June 2024 for @UNDI18MY, and 23 September 2020–19 March 2023 for @YPoliticsMY. Because the Humanies archive contained the account's earlier personal history, the project-specific analysis began with the first identifiable Humanies post on 14 January 2024 and extended to 17 June 2024. Posts relevant to each initiative's political or civic activities were then purposively selected for qualitative analysis. Online engagement was triangulated with interview data and documented offline activities, consistent with hybrid media activism and beyond-slacktivism approaches (Halimatusa'diyah, 2024; Treré, 2019).

Six accounts were purposively selected for this study: four candidate-support accounts from Indonesia (@aniesbubble, @olpproject, @humaniesproject, and @timpenguinnas) and two civic or reform initiatives from Malaysia (@UNDI18MY and @YPoliticsMY). The sampling strategy followed purposive sampling principles, which prioritise the selection of "information-rich cases" that best illustrate the phenomenon under investigation (Patton, as cited in Guest et al., 2012). Accounts were selected because they were youth-led, engaged in political or civic activity, and were not directly affiliated with any government entity or formal political party. This distribution enables an analytical comparison between different types of mobilisation, although it does not provide representative national samples.

Interviewees were informed that the research was intended for academic publication. Abel, Topan, Daedosoo, and Sophie are pseudonyms or account identities, while Himawan, Qyira Yusri, and Kyle Choong are identified by the names under which they participated in interviews concerning their public organisational roles. Confidential information not necessary to the analysis is excluded.

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Table 2. Case Selection and Interview Overview

Country	Account handle on X	Interviewee (Role)	Rationale for Case Selection	Interview Date
Indonesia	@aniesbubble	"Abel" (founder; head of admin team)	Supporter of Anies Baswedan; Indonesia's presidential candidate no 1. Illustrates parasocial attachment around a presidential candidate; high-visibility case for attention economies.	26 March 2024
	@humaniesproject	Himawan (campaign team leader)	Supporter of Anies Baswedan; Indonesia's presidential candidate no 1. Exemplifies candidate-centred mobilisation using spectacle and offline–online hybridity (e.g., LED trucks, rallies) to scale attention within platform economies.	27 May 2024
	@olpproject	"Daedosoo" (founder) "Sophie" (co-founder)	Supporter of Anies Baswedan; Indonesia's presidential candidate no 1. Demonstrates K-pop–inspired mobilisation and identity framing in political communication; useful for analysing cultural hybridisation and affective publics.	16 April 2024
	@timpenguinnas	"Topan" (main administrator; pseudonym)	Supporter of Ganjar Pranowo; Indonesia's presidential candidate no 3. Represents data-driven, humour-oriented youth mobilisation supporting a presidential ticket; illustrates gamification and dialogic engagement distinct from fandom mimicry.	26 March 2024

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Malaysia	@UNDI18MY	Qyira Yusri (Founder)	Represents civic reform mobilisation focused on voting rights (Undi18); combines online advocacy with sustained offline organising and institutional outcomes.	24 July 2024
	@YPoliticsMY	Kyle Choong (Co-founder)	Represents civic education–oriented activism prioritising political literacy and offline classes; contrasts with high-visibility mobilisation logics.	30 July 2024

3.3. Data Analysis

Data from interviews were transcribed and organised in NVivo software. Analysis began with the four AIDA stages as deductive coding domains. Within these domains, case-specific codes were developed and refined iteratively for cultural framing, procedural inquiry, affective or civic alignment, mobilisation cues, organisational capacity, and the three forms of Action. This combination retained the study's analytical focus while allowing themes not specified by AIDA to inform interpretation (Guest et al., 2012).

Data from X (formerly Twitter) contain posts and replies from selected accounts. These data were analysed using a two-stage thematic analysis procedure, following these steps:

1) Thematic Coding Using the AIDA Model: Each selected post and its replies were read multiple times and coded using the AIDA framework as thematic anchors. This deductive approach enabled the identification of engagement patterns associated with Attention, Interest, Desire and Action, without presuming that individual users progressed sequentially from one stage to another consistent with theory-guided thematic analysis (Smith, 1992; Thelwall, 2021).
2) Inductive Refinement and Narrative Construction: Codes were refined as recurring themes emerged from interviews and digital traces. Themes were then interpreted and structured into case narratives showing how cultural repertoires, platform strategy, calls to action, organisational arrangements, and institutional links accompanied different forms of engagement (Wolgemuth et al., 2025).

Coding was conducted as an interpretive thematic exercise rather than an independently double-coded reliability study; no intercoder-reliability coefficient was calculated. To limit overinterpretation, case narratives were checked against the original post and reply records and the relevant interview transcript. Platform metrics were not treated as evidence of psychological states, and material

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or institutional claims were retained only where interview or documentary evidence provided corroboration. This approach combines deductive theory-guided coding with inductive openness to emergent themes (Guest et al., 2012; Thelwall, 2021).

4. Result

The cases were situated in the 2024 Indonesian presidential election and the 2022 Malaysian general election, while @UNDI18MY and @YPoliticsMY also reflected longer organisational trajectories. This section presents findings from interviews with the main administrators and/or founders of six youth-driven X accounts, four from Indonesia and two from Malaysia. Each case illustrates a distinct engagement strategy analysed through AIDA. Throughout the analysis, Attention, Interest, and Desire refer to the operational indicators specified in Table 1. Descriptions of relative engagement are interpreted within each account's platform context.

4.1. 아니스 (@aniesbubble)

@aniesbubble emerged on X (formerly Twitter) on 29 December 2023, as a fan-style account supporting Indonesian presidential candidate Anies Baswedan and his running mate, Muhaimin Iskandar (AMIN). The account draws heavily on K-pop fan culture, as can be seen by the founder's choice of account name in Hangul (아니스, transliterated as "Anies"). The account's username, @aniesbubble, further signals this cultural borrowing. In K-pop fandoms, "Bubble" refers to a subscription-based messaging application developed by Dear U, through which idols send exclusive messages, images, videos, or audio clips to their fans. While idols experience the app as a group chat with all subscribers, the user interface on the fan's side is designed to simulate a private, one-on-one conversation from the fan's perspective (Dear U, n.d.). K-pop fans often set up accounts dedicated to sharing their idol's Bubble messages. By adopting this format, @aniesbubble positions Anies Baswedan not merely as a political figure but also as an "idol", cultivating parasocial intimacy and fan-style engagement within the political sphere.

The founder of @aniesbubble, who goes by "Abel", a pseudonym derived from the abbreviation of "aniesbubble", explained the account's origin. Abel, a female university student in her early 20s and a fan of K-pop groups Aespa and RIIZE, created the account as a fan account on 29 December 2023. Familiar with K-pop fan culture, the account's first post was playfully sharing Anies Baswedan's live stream. The post's caption was written in Hangul "남 얘기 하지 마세요.. 나 지금 여기 있어요…", transliterated as " Don't talk about other people... I'm here right now...", mimicking how K-pop fan accounts often share their idols' live stream sessions. What had started as a personal and light-hearted fan parody for Abel generated substantial recorded platform engagement as the post reached more than 300,000 views, marking a significant breakthrough in the Attention stage of the AIDA model. The post also gained more than 4,000 likes, showing positive engagement aligned with the Interest stage of the model. With 39 comments and more than 600 shares, the post also registered notable Desire. However, it lacked a direct call for action that would correspond to the Action stage.

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Following the high engagement on their first post, @aniesbubble continued to post content featuring Anies Baswedan's live streams and campaign activities. To maintain the culture of K-pop fan accounts, @aniesbubble posted captions in Hangul followed by English translation, mirroring common practice in K-pop fandoms, where fan accounts usually post their idols' Bubble in Hangul and then translated the messages into English or other languages. This approach resonated with Indonesian youth, who found the communication style as fun, interesting and engaging them in fandom culture that they are familiar with. Later, @aniesbubble not only posted Anies's live streams and campaign activities but also began to mobilise Indonesian youth to attend Anies's campaigns and to vote for him. For instance, @aniesbubble posted Anies's campaign event in Padang, West Sumatera on 3 January 2024. This post gained Attention of 2.6 million views and Interest indicated by 2,900 likes. The post gained more than 5,800 reposts, indicating substantial amplification. Affective Desire was visible in replies expressing personal attachment to the candidate.

Many youths replied to the post by @aniesbubble by using vocabularies usually articulated by K-pop fandoms. Such as, "@aniesbubble Boleh bw LS fandom lain ga ka?", transliterated into "@aniesbubble, is it ok to bring other fandom's lightstick?". This reply refers to the custom of K-pop fans bringing their idols' lightsticks when attending their idols' concerts or fanmeetings but at the same time, bringing other group's lightsticks can be considered taboo. Other replies such as "@aniesbubble Ini nanti solo performance apa ot2?", transliterated into "@aniesbubble, will there be a solo performance or OT2?", likened the political campaign to a "performance", and asked whether the "performance" would be a "solo performance", as in only Anies would attend, or an "OT2 performance", as in both Anies and his running mate Muhaimin would attend. K-pop fans use "OT" or "One True" to indicate the number of members in a group.

One of the most popular posts by @aniesbubble came ahead of Anies' campaign in Jakarta, on 18 January 2024. This post recorded 8,275,761 views, indicating substantial Attention within X for the selected post. The post gained Interest in the form of 68,000 likes and Desire in the form of more than 20,000 reposts and 2,700 replies. Replies in this conversation further amplified this visibility using fan-style enthusiasm or emotional flair. For example, @afrkml replied, “@aniesbubble @olpproject Bener2 kek food support pas idol lagi comeback stage di music show 😭😭😭□,” transliterated as "@aniesbubble @olpprooject (the support) really looks like food support for idols' comeback stage in music show 😭😭😭□". This post again likened Anies' campaign event to idols' comeback stage. Similarly, @gloriahermawan’s reply, “@aniesbubble @olpproject Woaaaaaaah food truck…. Keullaeseu! 😍” mixed Indonesian, Korean and specific K-pop fandom terms, reinforcing the affective and performative nature of the engagement.

In addition to @aniesbubble's high-performing posts, Abel also utilised X's Space feature to deepen audience engagement. One of such Space forums featured Anies Baswedan himself and attracted 2.7 million listeners and gathered 20,000 likes. These figures indicate substantial recorded Attention and interaction among the users reached by this X Space. These live forums allowed followers to engage in real-time dialogue, enhancing the parasocial dynamics characteristic of fandoms. The posts and digital activities displayed overlapping indicators of Attention, Interest, and affective Desire, but the data do not trace individual followers through a sequence. The participants

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in these forums also do not necessarily represent Indonesian digital citizens and their varied interests.

Capitalising on this momentum, Abel later launched HaveAniesDay, a campaign website supported by approximately 15 collaborators. This site aimed to introduce AMIN's policy platforms and track records in a youth-friendly interactive format. Notably, the site also provided templates for others to build their own interactive microsites. This initiative provided a pathway for discursive-amplificatory and material-participatory Action of the AIDA model, as users were encouraged not only to consume content but also to contribute to and reproduce it. While the causal link between digital engagement and actual voting behaviour remains difficult to ascertain, the case of @aniesbubble illustrates how political fan accounts can generate substantial Attention, Interest and Desire, while providing a communicative environment in which some forms of political participation became more visible. As such, @aniesbubble exemplifies how AIDA can be adapted to digital campaigns to gain popular support.

4.2. Olppaelmi Project (@olpproject)

The Olppaelmi Project, also known as @olpproject, was launched on 4 January 2024 to support Indonesian presidential candidate Anies Baswedan and his running mate, Muhaimin Iskandar (AMIN). Based on an in-depth interview with the account's founder and administrators conducted on 16 April 2024, the account founder, who prefers to be called as "Daedosoo" and her co-administrator, who goes as "Sophie", recounted the account's origin. As a K-pop fan, Daedosoo had come across posts from @aniesbubble and was inspired to also support AMIN using K-pop fandom culture. While Daedosoo did not specify which @aniesbubble's post had inspired her, this origin story suggests that @aniesbubble's communication style informed Daedosoo's decision to create another support initiative. This account indicates that @aniesbubble's communication style influenced the establishment of another support initiative. This is an evidence on how a particular account's progression to the final AIDA stage. Despite that, this does not necessarily demonstrate the progression through AIDA within a wider audience.

The account's name, "Olppaelmi", is a romanisation of the Korean word 올빼미, transliterated as "Owl". Thus, the username can be translated literally as "The Owl Project". Daedosoo chose "Owl" as it symbolises wisdom, intelligence and calmness, characteristics attributed to Anies by his supporters. The practice of associating animal symbols with idols is common in K-pop fandoms, a tradition adopted by @olpproject, and later echoed by other supporters of Anies. If Abel positioned @aniesbubble to mimic K-pop fan accounts sharing their idols' Bubble messages, Daedosoo positioned @olpproject around another core aspect of K-pop fandom culture: providing fan support to their idols' activities. In the context of the 2024 Indonesian presidential election, @olpproject sought to mobilise public support and facilitate participation in Anies Baswedan's campaign events. Thus, @olpproject's posts contained more calls to action than @aniesbubble's.

Since mobilising and providing fan support is a common occurrence in K-pop fandom culture, @olpproject received positive engagement from Indonesian youth. Their first post gained Attention with 392,000 viewers. The post also gathered Interest with more than 6,700 likes and 165 comments and Desire with more than 1,500 reposts. Although this post did not include an explicit call to action,

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replies indicated audience anticipation for one. Notably, a particularly interesting reply came from @eternalroseanne, who asked whether @olpproject would organise a hashtag party to support Anies during the presidential debate on 7 January 2024. This reply, and many other similar replies, demonstrated not only engagement but also a proactive interest and desire from Indonesian youth for structured participation.

On 5 January 2024, @olpproject announced their first call to action: a fundraising campaign to support Anies Baswedan's campaign events. Maintaining their K-pop narrative, @olpproject proposed to provide support in the form of videotron and LED advertisements, as well as sending food trucks to the campaign's location. This post recorded 1.6 million views, indicating substantial Attention for the selected post. It also garnered Interest with more than 8,400 likes and 571 comments, and Desire with more than 3,200 reposts. Within two days, the fundraising initiative attracted donations exceeding IDR 70,000,000 (approximately USD 4,000) from more than 1,000 supporters. This figure later rose to IDR 200,000,000 (equivalent to approximately USD 12,000) from more than 2,000 supporters, documenting material-participatory Action associated with the campaign. Because the platform and donation records cannot link individual viewers with donors, the figures demonstrate an association between digital communication and fundraising rather than individual-level conversion.

Other than organising fundraising, @olpproject also organised fanart and open letter submission from Anies's supporters. Their post on 14 January 2024 announcing this initiative gained 1.1 million views (Attention), more than 5,900 likes and 118 replies (Interest) and more than 2,100 reposts (Desire). At the end of the programme on 26 January 2024, @olpproject announced that there were more than 900 participants sending their fanarts and letters (Action). The reported participation documents material-participatory Action associated with the campaign. It shows that @olpproject linked its X communication to an organised activity, but it does not demonstrate that individual users followed a complete AIDA trajectory.

In order to manage such complex activities, Daedosoo recruited volunteers to support @olpproject's various activities. At first, she recruited Sophie, her long time friend and fellow K-pop fan. Together, they expanded the team to 35 volunteers. Due to the political nature of the campaign, Daedosoo and Sophie carried out the recruitment process cautiously. Drawing on insider knowledge of K-pop fandom culture, Daedosoo and Sophie vetted candidates based on their familiarity with specific K-pop related jargon and fandom experiences in the Indonesian context. This process ensured both team security and consistency of the account's cultural narrative. As a result, all members shared a common fan background, enabling effective coordination and shared understanding within the team.

4.3. Humanies Project (@humaniesproject)

Humanies Project (@humaniesproject) was established on 14 January 2024 to support AMIN. It started as a personal account of the account's founder, Himawan. Himawan followed both @aniesbubble and @olpproject, and gained inspiration from them to start his own initiative in supporting AMIN. He then renamed his personal account into Humanies Project. "Humanies" was the chosen fandom name for Anies Baswedan's supporters on X. The rebranding signified the changed objective of the account.

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Himawan gathered some friends and they initiated a LED Truck Support for AMIN. The account's first post describing the LED Truck Support initiative gained Attention with more than 1.3 million views. It gathered more than 11,000 likes and 443 replies (Interest) and more than 5,300 reposts (Desire). This initiative came to complement @olpproject's Videotron and LED advertisements initiative. While videotrons and LED advertisements offered exposure in public and high profile commercial areas in Jakarta, LED Trucks initiative was planned to promote AMIN in high density residential areas in Jakarta.

Following this level of engagement, there were replies asking to contribute to the LED Truck initiatives. Thus, @humaniesproject launched their own fundraising. On 17 January 2024, @humaniesproject announced an additional LED Truck route in Tangerang. This post gained more than 1.4 million views (Attention), more than 10,000 likes and 300 replies (Interest) and more than 3,300 reposts (Desire). This post also opened donations for the next LED Truck routes. On 18 January 2024, the account announced it had received a total donation of IDR 50,000,000 (around USD 3,000) from more than 1,000 contributors. By 30 January 2024, the LED Truck initiative gathered IDR 90,000,000 (approximately USD 5,400) from more than 5,000 contributors. They had expanded the trucks' routes to other major cities outside of Jakarta, even to several major cities outside of Java. The donations were also channeled to fund advertisements for Anies Baswedan on Facebook and Instagram. These figures document material-participatory Action associated with @humaniesproject's fundraising and campaign delivery, without establishing individual-level conversion from viewing to donating.

Himawan explained that the project's initial objective was to counter allegations that prominent pro-AMIN accounts were inauthentic or financially sponsored. Himawan and several of his friends whom he recruited to join the Humanies team positioned themselves as an 'organic' civic group acting independently of formal political structures. This initial objective then expanded to larger social activism, such as initiatives to raise funds for victims of various natural disasters in Indonesia. Unlike @aniesbubble or @olpproject, which during their interviews said that they had not had any plan to continue their activism after the election ends, Himawan clearly stated that his team intends to maintain the Humanies Project beyond the election period, aiming to sustain civic engagement and issue-based activism.

4.4. Tim Penguin Nasional (@timpenguinnas)

Tim Penguin Nasional or @timpenguinnas is a social media account based on the platform X (formerly Twitter). The account had been active since 7 January 2024 run by a team of volunteers supporting Indonesia's presidential and vice-presidential candidate pair No. 3, Ganjar Pranowo and Mahfud MD. Based on an in-depth interview with the account's main administrator, who goes by the pseudonym "Topan", the account was established as a platform for the team to share their perspectives on the presidential candidates. The account was managed by a team of four individuals in their twenties to thirties, each coming from different professional backgrounds. This team-based configuration enabled a data-driven strategy; the team employed data analytics to monitor trends, assess engagement patterns and refine content formats (Topan, personal communication, 26 March 2024). As a result, @timpenguinnas deliberately adopted a cheerful and humorous communication style, projecting an image of political participation that is simultaneously informed and accessible.

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This framing lowers the affective threshold for engagement, positioning political discussion not as a heavy ideological exercise but as a form of everyday digital interaction.

Tim Penguin Nasional's contents demonstrate a recurring AIDA pattern. Unlike @aniesbubble, @olpproject and @humaniesproject, which utilise Kpopification and fandom culture as their communication strategy, @timpenguinnas first generated Attention through platform-friendly formats, such as quizzes, light-hearted prompts, or meme-based narratives. Then, they sustained Interest in the form of likes and inquisitive replies. Desire becomes visible in reposts and affectively charged comments that express affiliation with the "penguin" identity and positive evaluations of Ganjar's persona. In multiple instances, the observed responses include discursive-amplificatory Action, such as public declarations of voting intention and support for candidate No. 3.

One of the most popular contents from @timpenguinnas was gamification of political support. On 28 January 2024, @timpenguinnas posted a quiz intending to measure the compatibility between presidential candidate Ganjar Pranowo and an X user. The quiz was light-hearted and maintained a comedic undertone, with questions functioning as a hook inviting users to engage with Ganjar's campaign programmes. This post gained Attention in the form of 100,704 views, indicating a broad reach within the platform's algorithm. Interest is observable through 1,048 likes and 109 replies. Importantly, the replies are not merely affirmative but exploratory. Users asked how the percentage was calculated, compared scores with others, and expressed surprise or amusement at their results. This interactional pattern indicates that Interest is sustained through procedural engagement, where users remain involved not because of ideological persuasion alone, but because the format encourages experimentation and repeat checking. Desire emerges more clearly in the affective and identificatory language embedded in replies and quote posts. Users articulated affiliative expressions such as possessing "DNA penguin," or framed their scores as indicators of latent loyalty. Reposts further amplified this desire by circulating the test, reinforcing collective participation rather than individual evaluation. The Action stage, however, remains predominantly discursive. Several users explicitly stated future voting intentions or conditional commitments while others did not make such a commitment.

@timpenguinnas also utilised narrative authenticity to build engagement. On 29 January 2024, the account posted an anecdotal story on how Ganjar had developed a habit to stay overnight at citizen's homes during his term as the governor of Central Java. The visual–narrative framing of Ganjar staying at a citizen's home operates as a moral-symbolic cue, foregrounding humility and closeness to the common people. The post attracted 13,799 views, a lower Attention threshold compared to the quiz format, yet still substantial within the account's ecosystem. Interest is reflected in 438 likes and 107 replies. In the reply section, users went beyond praises but also critically asked whether such practices were implemented outside Java and debated the sincerity and replicability of the gesture. Desire is visible through 82 reposts, which expand the discussion by contrasting Ganjar's image with current elites. At the Action stage, the post again produces primarily discursive mobilisation. Replies include explicit vote-switching declarations and expressions of support for candidate No. 3. Although these actions do not translate into observable collective activities, such as fundraising or coordinated attendance, they nonetheless represent a transition into public political commitment, consistent with the account's broader engagement strategy.

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While the primary objective during the electoral period was explicitly partisan, Topan emphasised that the initiative was conceived with a longer-term vision. Following the election, the team intends to continue producing informative political content, with the broader aim of sustaining youth engagement in Indonesia's democratic life (Topan, personal communication, 26 March 2024). Taken together, @timpenguinnas case illustrates a variant of youth-driven digital mobilisation that relies less on fandom mimicry and more on humour, analytics, and dialogic openness. Its strength lies in consistently converting visibility into affective alignment and public political signalling, even if the translation into more structured off-platform action remains limited. Nevertheless, the initiative articulates an inclusive and participatory vision of democracy, one grounded in conversation, difference, and sustained civic attention.

4.5. #Undi18 (@UNDI18MY)

@UNDI18MY is a Malaysian youth-led digital advocacy account established and managed by the Undi18 movement, founded by Qyira Yusri and her co-founder Tamar. The movement emerged from a structural democratic constraint in Malaysia, namely the restriction that citizens could only vote after the age of 21. As articulated by Qyira Yusri, the founder of Undi18 Malaysia, during an interview on 24 July 2024, this condition placed Malaysian youth in a "chicken-and-egg" dilemma: young people were expected to care about democracy while being formally excluded from electoral participation.

The account operates as a low-resource, high-impact mobilisation infrastructure, relying almost entirely on social media, to advance political participation and electoral engagement among Malaysian youth. As confirmed in the in-depth interview, the account was intentionally designed to be simple, legible, and scalable, with the hashtag #Undi18 functioning simultaneously as message, demand, and identity marker. The organisational logic privileges clarity over ideological density and prioritises actionability over discursive sophistication. Unlike personality-driven political influencer accounts, @Undi18My is structured as a movement account. It established credibility from consistency, informational reliability, and responsiveness rather than charismatic leadership. Over time, the account evolved into a resource hub for electoral information, protest coordination, and volunteer mobilisation, particularly during moments of political urgency. (Qyira, personal communication, 24 July 2024).

From the outset, @UNDI18MY combined digital advocacy with offline political engagement, including public discussions, lobbying, and protest coordination. Social media platforms such as X and Instagram were adopted as low-resource, high-impact tools to disseminate a simple and legible demand, which was lowering the voting age, while offline mobilisation was understood as indispensable for achieving legal reform. As Qyira emphasised, "it's not enough to just engage people online. We have to be able to mobilise offline as well" (personal communication, 24 July 2024).

@UNDI18MY's focus on mobilisation is apparent in a post on 18 November 2022. In this post, @UNDI18MY urged voters to mobilise for postal ballot sorting. Impression data were unavailable in the captured historical post data; therefore, the exact Attention recorded by the post cannot be measured or compared with the Indonesian cases. The observable post recorded 829 likes (Interest) and 775 reposts, indicating interaction and amplification. Civic alignment was evident in replies

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expressing urgency, solidarity, and intention to participate. The post also managed to mobilise the audience into actions, as can be seen from replies such as "ON THE WAY!!!!" signifying the user was mobilised to perform postal ballot sorting and other posts offering logistical support. Interview and campaign documentation reported that 33,000 postal ballots were processed. Together, these sources indicate an organisational link between the online call and material-participatory electoral work, but they do not identify which viewers subsequently volunteered or attribute the full ballot-processing outcome to the post alone.

In AIDA terms, @UNDI18MY's Attention phase relied less on affective spectacle and more on issue clarity and urgency. Hashtags such as #Undi18 and campaign-specific calls during moments like the Lawan protests, overseas postal voting coordination, and volunteer recruitment for ballot sorting were designed to surface rapidly within politically attentive networks. While these posts did not always generate sustained viral cycles, they effectively captured attention at moments when institutional or procedural intervention was required. @UNDI18MY prioritises procedural and institutional Action over affective maintenance. Consequently, the account concentrates its observable X activity around critical moments and remains relatively quiet outside them; unavailable impression data prevent a claim about comparative visibility.

Interest was cultivated through informational density and responsiveness rather than emotional attachment. Users engaged with @UNDI18MY to seek clarification about voting procedures, protest logistics, or volunteer requirements. This is evident in queries and follow-up interactions surrounding overseas postal vote collection hubs and GE15 volunteer mobilisation. Interest here was not curiosity-driven in a cultural sense, but instrumental: users stayed engaged because the information was immediately relevant to their capacity to participate democratically.

Desire in the @UNDI18MY case is best understood as civic rather than affective. Unlike Indonesian volunteer accounts that generated desire through humour, fandom mimicry, or persona-driven intimacy, @UNDI18MY fostered motivation by reinforcing the idea that youth participation could produce real institutional change. Expressions of solidarity, urgency, and collective responsibility—particularly during GE15—reflect a desire to contribute to democratic outcomes rather than to perform political identity online.

Crucially, @UNDI18MY demonstrates documented links between digital communication and material or institutional Action. Its wider organisational work included physical protests, volunteer mobilisation, overseas ballot coordination, and direct advocacy towards political institutions. The amendment lowering the voting age emerged from a multi-year campaign involving lobbying, negotiation, and offline organising; it cannot be attributed to a single account or post. The case therefore illustrates institutional coupling between platform communication, offline organisation, and advocacy, rather than proving that platform engagement directly caused legal reform.

4.6. YPolitics (@YPoliticsMY)

@YPoliticsMY represents a distinct mode of youth political engagement in Malaysia, education-focused, ideologically neutral, and platform-selective. Based on an in-depth interview with the co-founder of @YPoliticsMY, Kyle Choong, on 30 July 2024, the movement was established during the

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COVID-19 period. @YPoliticsMY was initiated to address what he identifies as a fundamental deficit in Malaysian youth's understanding of democratic institutions, parliamentary procedures, and the separation of powers (Kyle, personal communication, 30 July 2024). Unlike electoral or protest-oriented youth initiatives, YPoliticsMY positions itself as an intermediary civic classroom, bridging the gap between formal institutions and youth everyday life.

@YPoliticsMY operates as a volunteer-driven movement with a relatively complex internal division of labour. The @YPoliticsMY team encompassed research, copywriting, fact-checking, design, and thematic teams (law, economy, foreign policy, social issues). Kyle's background in public relations and law directly influenced the account's communication strategy: political content is deliberately cut down, visually prioritised, and packaged in "bite-sized" formats to match Gen-Z attention spans. Kyle stressed that the movement is explicitly non-partisan, with committee members drawn from both government and opposition backgrounds. This neutrality functioned as a core organisational norm rather than a rhetorical claim (Kyle, personal communication, 30 July 2024).

Crucially, @YPoliticsMY does not treat X as its primary arena. As Kyle notes, Instagram constitutes the movement's main platform due to its stronger visual affordances and larger follower base, while X is used episodically to respond to "hot topics" rather than to sustain continuous engagement. This platform choice is analytically central to understanding its AIDA trajectory. The data and interview material suggest that YPoliticsMY's relatively low and episodic presence on X is strategic and structural, not accidental. Since @YPoliticsMY is education-first rather than mobilisation-first and its strongest content relies on visual pedagogy, @YPoliticsMY reportedly performs better on Instagram than on X. As a fully volunteer-based initiative with no stable funding and declining post-COVID availability, YPoliticsMY lacks the capacity to maintain high-frequency posting. Finally, their commitment to neutrality carried algorithmic costs. By refusing partisan framing, outrage cues, or populist rhetoric, YPoliticsMY sacrifices the kinds of affective triggers that typically drive virality on X. This is a conscious trade-off in favour of credibility and cross-ideological engagement, as evidenced by politicians from multiple parties commenting on its posts during peak periods.

Taken together, @YPoliticsMY exemplifies an education-oriented AIDA variant with episodic activity on X. Attention on X is sporadic. Interest is cognitively demanding. Desire is civic rather than affective; and Action is largely displaced offline, through initiatives such as Kelas Demokrasi and youth workshops conducted across Malaysian states. In comparative terms, @YPoliticsMY differs fundamentally from Indonesian volunteer accounts and even from @UNDI18MY. Where Indonesian cases mobilise affect to sustain Attention, and @UNDI18MY mobilises procedures to achieve Action, @YPoliticsMY focuses on epistemic preparation—building the conditions under which meaningful political participation can later occur. Its limited presence on X, therefore, should be read not as communicative weakness, but as the outcome of an educational theory of change that prioritises understanding over immediacy, and civic maturity over algorithmic performance.

5. Discussion

The findings show that AIDA can organise account-level engagement without demonstrating a linear progression from visibility to political outcomes. Across the six cases, Attention, Interest, and

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Desire often overlapped, while Action varied in form and evidential strength. The central analytical issue is therefore not whether an account reached a final AIDA stage, but what kind of Action was observed and what organisational conditions accompanied it.

The comparison is between mobilisation types rather than national populations. The Indonesian sample is dominated by candidate-support accounts formed during an election, whereas the Malaysian sample consists of reform and civic education initiatives with longer histories. The discussion retains the original AIDA-stage structure but bounds each comparison by case purpose, timing, platform use, and available data.

5.1. AIDA engagements in Subject Accounts

The selected accounts used comparable communication functions but assembled them differently. Indonesian candidate-support accounts relied on cultural familiarity, humour, spectacle, and affective identification. The Malaysian cases relied more on procedural urgency, civic information, and educational purpose. These case-specific patterns illustrate how organisational purpose and communication strategy shaped the observed form of engagement.

5.1.1. Attention

Accounts from both countries demonstrate strong capacity to attract attention through visually salient content, urgent language, and culturally resonant symbols. In Indonesia, accounts such as @humaniesproject deployed innovative tactics such as LED trucks and videotron display, to promote campaign events. Tweets framed with prompts such as "*Siapa yang udah nungguin hari ini? (Who has waited for today?)*" generated over 765,000 views. These posts often aligned with trending hashtags like #WomenInPolitics or national events, ensuring high visibility. Similarly, Malaysian accounts like @UNDI18MY use urgent messaging, such as "🚨 URGENT 🚨 We need backup!" to mobilise attention during critical moments such as volunteer recruitment. Across both contexts, this research found a critical first step in the AIDA sequence, which is anchoring content to trending topics or symbols to amplify reach.

The Indonesian posts for which impressions were available recorded substantial visibility, including 8.2 million views for @aniesbubble's "Desak Anies Jakarta" post and 765,700 views for @humaniesproject's LED-truck post. For the selected Malaysian historical posts, impressions were unavailable; @UNDI18MY's volunteer appeal recorded 829 likes and 775 reposts, while @YPoliticsMY used X only episodically. Given the different availability of impression data, the comparison focuses on visibility strategies and organisational purposes rather than the magnitude of national-level engagement.

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5.1.2. Interest

Sustaining engagement at the interest stage is achieved through interactivity and perceived relevance. Indonesian accounts such as @timpenguinnas frequently employ prompts and playful mechanisms to maintain engagement, inviting replies ranging from playful banter to explicit political positioning. Malaysian accounts, by contrast, sustain interest through informational utility. For example, @UNDI18MY maintained interest by addressing practical queries from diaspora voters (e.g. *"Anything for Mexico?"* or *"New Zealand?"*) in threads about overseas voting hubs. This stage demonstrates that engagement thrives when audiences see themselves reflected in the conversation, whether through cultural cues or civic utility.

The capacity of Indonesian campaigns to capture mass attention through spectacle-driven content aligns closely with Wahyuningroem et al.'s (2024) analysis of Indonesia's #ReformasiDikorupsi and #TolakOmnibusLaw movements. These movements similarly relied on visually provocative posts in the form of memes, protest art, and influencer endorsements to dominate X trends. The @aniesbubble account's use of visually attractive posters and website and event-centered hype exemplifies this "attention blast" strategy, where physical spectacle (e.g., rallies, light displays) is amplified through social media shares. As Lim (2017) observed in Malaysia's Bersih 4.0 rallies, such hybrid strategies combining offline spectacle with online virality exploited platform algorithms that prioritise visually engaging, emotionally charged content.

By contrast, the Malaysian case reveals the structural limits of scaling similar attention economies for civic-oriented campaigns. Although @UNDI18MY's use of national symbols and urgent framing (e.g., "🚨 URGENT 🚨") generated localised traction (e.g., 775 reposts for volunteer appeals), the available interaction counts cannot be standardised against Indonesian impression data. This discrepancy reflects Persily and Tucker's (2020) argument that civic content is structurally disadvantaged in platform environments dominated by personality-driven politics. Social media algorithms, optimised for "clickability," favour emotionally charged, conflict-oriented, or celebrity-linked posts; dynamics that Indonesian campaigns harnessed through candidate-centric branding (e.g., @timpenguinnas's Ganjar Pranowo's overnight stays with citizens). In contrast, @YPoliticsMY's reform-oriented threads, lacking emotional or personality hooks, attracted minimal engagement, underscoring the challenges faced by issue-based civic messaging within attention-driven ecosystems.

5.1.3. Desire

The transition from interest to desire is driven primarily by emotional resonance, though the nature of this affect varies substantially across contexts. In Indonesia, desire is frequently articulated through leader-centered admiration that resembles fandom practices. Replies expressing personal concern or affection for figures such as Anies Baswedan (e.g. *"Aku harap ahn nies ahjussi selalu diberikan kesehatan"* (I hope uncle Anies is always in good health)) reveal an affective attachment that blurs the boundary between political support and celebrity devotion. In Malaysia, desire is more commonly framed through collective ideals and civic responsibility. Posts emphasising unity and democratic duty, such as *"Rakyat Malaysia bersatu hati sehari sebelum PRU!"* (Malaysians unite the day before the election) elicit replies like "Thank you dear Malaysians" that reflect gratitude and shared

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purpose. While Indonesian accounts cultivate desire through personalised emotional bonds, Malaysian accounts rely on a more restrained civic affect grounded in collective identity.

The emotional intensity observed in Indonesian campaigns, particularly the fan-like devotion to figures such as Anies Baswedan, resonates with Halimatusa'diyah's (2024) operationalisation of Papacharissi's (2015) "affective publics." These digitally mediated communities coalesce around shared emotional investments, blending political support with cultural fandom. Expressions such as "Ahn Nies Ahjussi" used by @aniesbubble followers, illustrate how political support adopts the lexicon of K-pop fandom, where supporters adopt familial or romanticised language to establish connections with their idols. This process can be understood as "Kpopfication," whereby political engagement is reframed through fan culture's emotional lexicon and rituals. Similarly, @timpenguinnas's gamified polls, "Berapa persen Ganjar-Mahfud kalian?" (How similar to Ganjar-Mahfud are you?), further exemplify this by translating political alignment into a playful, identity-affirming interaction.

In Malaysia, emotional engagement is oriented less toward individual figures and more toward collective ideals. @UNDI18MY's emphasis on national unity, expressed in slogans such as "Rakyat Malaysia bersatu hati" (Malaysians are united), tapped into what Dennis (2019) terms "civic affect", an emotional attachment rooted in democratic responsibility and shared national purpose. This framing echoes earlier moments of Malaysian political mobilisation, including the 2018 "Ubah" (Change) movement, in which voting was discursively constructed as a patriotic duty. However, the absence of charismatic focal figures in Malaysian campaigns constrains the intensity of emotional attachment. As Yurcel et al. (2024) note, personality-driven movements often achieve higher engagement by humanising abstract political goals. The Malaysian cases thus reflect a tension between civic pragmatism and the emotional pull of individual leaders. This dynamic is also observed in Taiwan's 2014 Sunflower Movement, where youth activists strategically anonymised leadership to emphasise collective action (Ho, 2019).

5.1.4. Action

At the Action stage, the cases display different forms rather than a single comparable outcome. Indonesian accounts included discursive-amplificatory acts, such as vote pledges and content sharing, and material-participatory acts, such as fundraising and campaign production. Malaysian cases included volunteer and electoral work as well as institutional advocacy and organised civic education. These categories overlap, but they differ in cost, reversibility, organisational demands, and democratic significance.

The action gap refers to the distance between visible platform engagement and evidence of material or institutional participation. Across these cases, the gap appeared narrower when four conditions were present: a specific call to action, an organisation able to receive and coordinate participation, links to trusted offline networks, and a practical or institutional pathway through which participants could act. This is an interpretive inference from the cross-case pattern rather than a causal test.

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5.2. Digital Activism and Democratisation in Indonesia and Malaysia

Digital activism in the selected Indonesian and Malaysian cases widened access to political communication and connected platform interaction to different forms of participation under specific organisational conditions. It operated less as an independent cause of democratisation than as a platform-mediated connector linking visibility, affect, and mobilisation to campaign, civic, or institutional practices. Indonesian volunteer accounts were campaign-adjacent and organised around small teams oriented towards rapid content production, whereas the Malaysian initiatives embedded platform use within longer-term civic programmes and offline infrastructures.

In Indonesia, digital activism contributes to democratisation mainly through agenda amplification and participatory inclusion within candidate-centred electoral publics. The high-Attention strategies documented in the AIDA analysis greatly expand the reach of political communication. Posts by @aniesbubble reached up to 8.2 million views, @humaniesproject's LED truck content exceeded 765,700 views, and @timpenguinnas' quiz reached 100,704 views. These figures show that platform-native formats can lower entry barriers and draw broader audiences into campaign-related interaction. This expansion might be able to supports democratic inclusion by widening exposure to political contestation and arguably lowering participation thresholds (Fuchs, 2023; Mask, 2022).

Data collected further shows that Indonesian accounts use data monitoring and humour-based framing to sustain high interests from the audience. At the same time, these dynamics embed participation in attention economies that privilege emotional appeal and rapid circulation over deliberative quality. Desire is often expressed through affective identification and fandom-like loyalty, while Action remains mainly discursive (e.g., vote signalling, content sharing, information circulation). These patterns show how platform governance rewards visibility over sustained accountability or deliberation, a dynamic that Treré (2019) describes as the algorithmic structuring of hybrid media activism, where platform logics determine not only what content circulates but also which forms of collective action become organisationally viable (Persily & Tucker, 2020; Schwanholz et al., 2018). In the selected Indonesian cases, digital activism was therefore associated mainly with expressive and agenda-setting participation, while evidence of durable civic organisation remained limited (Dennis, 2019; Pierman, 2023).

In the Malaysian cases, platform communication showed clearer documented links to procedural participation and civic capacity-building, despite incomplete impression data. @UNDI18MY's mobilisation peaked during procedural bottlenecks, with volunteer calls generating hundreds of reposts and likes alongside public commitments to ballot sorting and overseas voting coordination. The interviews and documented activities indicate organisational connections between digital coordination and offline electoral processes; they do not establish individual-level conversion or the independent effect of X (Halimatusa'diyah, 2024; Treré, 2019).

Further analysis indicates that Undi18's organisational strategy rejects "online-only" activism and prioritises offline mobilisation and institutional advocacy. This helps explain the stronger conversion of online engagement into procedural action despite lower visibility metrics. @YPoliticsMY represents a complementary pathway, where digital activism contributes through civic education and political literacy rather than through high-visibility mobilisation. Although posts on X often

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receive only single-digit likes, the account channels engagement into "Kelas Demokrasi" (Course on Democracy) and youth workshops. This approach prioritises long-term civic capacity over short-term visibility and aligns with research that links democratisation to civic learning rather than platform metrics (Chapman, 2023; Kennedy, 2021).

Comparatively, the cases point to three context-dependent relationships. First, platform strategies expand or concentrate visibility, but algorithmic ranking and platform governance shape what becomes prominent (Schafer & Walker, 2021; Schwanholz et al., 2018). Second, digital activism generates affective or civic alignment that can sustain engagement, although these expressions do not directly measure private motivation. Third, material or institutional participation was most clearly documented where platform communication was embedded in hybrid media ecologies, organisational capacity, and offline or institutional pathways (Halimatusa'diyah, 2024; Pierman, 2023; Treré, 2019). The contrast therefore concerns the selected mobilisation types rather than intrinsic national differences.

5.3. The Action Gap and Limits of Platform Engagement

A central tension across both contexts concerns the critique of "slacktivism", the notion that online engagement rarely translates to offline impact. The Indonesian cases resist a binary opposition between meaningful activism and "slacktivism": they occupy a hybrid position in which low-threshold expressive acts and more resource-intensive material participation coexisted, though without producing durable electoral or institutional outcomes. Despite @aniesbubble's posts achieving over 8.2 million views and generating intense online activity (e.g., hashtag trends, ticket resales), Anies Baswedan ultimately failed to secure electoral victory in 2024 (Yurcel et al., 2024). The view count was not a representative sample of voters and may reflect concentrated networks, repeat exposure, and algorithmic amplification. Similar patterns have been documented in other electoral contexts, where high social media activity proved a poor predictor of vote outcomes. The case therefore demonstrates that the Desire-to-Action transition is mediated by factors outside AIDA's scope, such as coalition arithmetic, vote distribution, and offline political structures, and that Attention, Interest, and Desire on X cannot be treated as evidence of electoral conversion (Brito et al., 2024).

Malaysian campaigns confront a different manifestation of the action gap. @UNDI18MY linked digital calls with documented volunteering and ballot work, while @YPoliticsMY channelled its educational objectives into activities beyond X. Undi18's constitutional achievement formed part of a multi-year campaign combining digital visibility, institutional lobbying, negotiation, and offline organising; it cannot be attributed to a single post or platform (Tan, 2021). This pattern is consistent with Dennis's (2019) distinction between episodic "micro-activism" and longer-term movement-building.

The limited performance of @YPoliticsMY's reform-oriented threads highlights structural constraints faced by issue-driven civic campaigns. As Persily and Tucker (2020) argue, platform algorithms systematically deprioritise "slow" civic content in favour of sensational, polarising or personality-driven material. In Indonesia, even relatively small accounts such as @timpenguinnas com-

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pensated for limited visibility through cultural hooks and symbolic mascots. Malaysian civic initiatives, on the other hand, often lacked comparable affective entry points. Similar dynamics have been observed in Thailand, where pro-democracy movements rely heavily on memes and hashtags to simplify complex political issues and achieve modest virality (Sinpeng, 2021; Boonlert, 2023).

Malaysia's fragmented digital landscape further complicates mobilisation. Linguistic segmentation across Malay-, Chinese-, and Tamil-speaking communities constrains the reach of national campaigns. For instance, @UNDI18MY's emphasis on English and Malay content may have limited engagement among non-Malay-speaking diaspora communities. This contrasts with Indonesia's relatively monolingual digital environment, where campaigns such as @humaniesproject fluidly combine national and local languages (e.g., Javanese slang). As Maracz and Adamo (2017) note, linguistic inclusivity remains a persistent challenge for civic campaigns in multilingual societies.

5.4. Limitations of the Study

The study has several factors delimit the interpretation of the findings. First, the six purposively selected accounts cannot represent youth-led digital activism in either Indonesia or Malaysia. The account and its associated organising practice therefore constitute the units of analysis, rather than the country or national electorate. The comparison is thus used to identify patterns across different mobilisation configurations, not to establish national differences. Second, the comparison is asymmetric in case number, organisational purpose, timing, and national scale. This asymmetry was addressed through case-specific analysis followed by comparison of mobilisation types.

Third, impression data were unavailable for the selected Malaysian posts, preventing standardised comparisons of reach. The Malaysian cases were consequently assessed through observable interactions, interviews, and documented organisational activities. Fourth, the focus on X provides only a partial account of initiatives, such as @YPoliticsMY, that prioritised other platforms or offline programmes. Interviews and documentary evidences situated the X data within these wider activities. Nevertheless, this study does not provide comprehensive cross-platform measurement. Finally, the study also cannot link individual viewers to later donations, volunteering, attendance, or votes. The reported relationships are therefore associative rather than causal.

6. Conclusion

This study affirms the usefulness of AIDA for exploring youth-led digital political engagement in Southeast Asia when the model is treated as a non-linear interpretive heuristic rather than a causal or predictive sequence. Across the selected Indonesian and Malaysian X accounts, similar communication functions were associated with different engagement patterns and forms of Action, depending on political context, organisational purpose, and platform affordances. The comparison concerns these selected cases and does not establish country-wide differences.

In the Indonesian cases, candidate-centred accounts used K-pop-inspired aesthetics, humour, spectacle, and gamification to generate Attention and affective affiliation. Much observed Action

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was discursive-amplificatory, although @olpproject and @humaniesproject also organised fundraising and campaign resources through teams and volunteer networks. High visibility and emotional intensity did not predict electoral victory or durable institutional change, underscoring the action gap between digital enthusiasm and political outcomes.

By contrast, the Malaysian cases followed different organisational purposes. @UNDI18MY connected episodic platform communication with volunteering, electoral coordination, and a broader institutional campaign, while @YPoliticsMY prioritised political literacy and offline civic education over sustained activity on X. These cases indicate that specific calls to action, organisational capacity, offline networks, and institutional pathways can narrow the action gap. They do not establish that platform engagement independently caused participation or institutional outcomes.

Overall, the article contributes a three-part Action typology that distinguishes discursive-amplificatory, material-participatory, and institutional forms of engagement. For practitioners, the implication is that visibility strategies should be connected to clear participation routes and sufficient organisational capacity. Future research should follow users and organisations across platforms and over longer periods, combine digital traces with participant-level evidence, and examine whether the three forms of Action develop into sustained participation.

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