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The Role of Social Media Hashtags in Political Promotions: Mediating Role of Supply Chain Communication

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Abstract- **The current study examines the impact of hashtags used in social media for political promotion and analyses the mediating role of supply chain communications (SCC) in the relationship. The current study was performed in Indonesia, where 301 Twitter users were surveyed about current variables with a questionnaire. The data was analysed through Statistical Product and Service Solutions (SPSS) and Analisis of Moment Structures (AMOS) in order to complete "structural equation modelling." The findings of the current study depicted that increased social media hashtags about a political matter tend to increase significantly political promotion. Furthermore, it has been found that increased social media hashtags about a political matter significantly enhance the political communication in society. It means that increased hashtags enhance SCC, and SCC ultimately significantly enhances political promotion. The current study contributes to the literature and in practice, because it enhances the limited literature about the role of SCC in political promotion in association with social media hashtags. Practitioners should leverage the insights from hashtags to be the function as a promotion tool.**

Keywords: *Hashtags on social media, POlitical promotion, SUPPLY chain communication*

1. Introduction

Social media evolved many years ago when Truscott and [11] introduced "Usenet," which is a "worldwide discussion system" that allows users to post public messages and share the information with others [29]. This discussion system is a hybrid of web forums and email, and discussions are facilitated by contemporary newsreader software. Technological advancements continued to enhance social media platforms and enabled users to use social media as a platform to express their thoughts and feelings. The technologies of digital media—such as podcasting, digital video, forums, blogging, photography, review sites, wikis and social networking—

played an important role in enhancing social media use among users [13, 19].

Social media and its hashtags can be used to create immediate awareness about different emergencies in order to avoid the most dreadful consequences of such emergency situations. Furthermore, to suggest for some change or evolution throught advocacy organizations mobilize, educate, and connect with their constituents, so that the use of hashtags is spreading worldwide [30, 34].
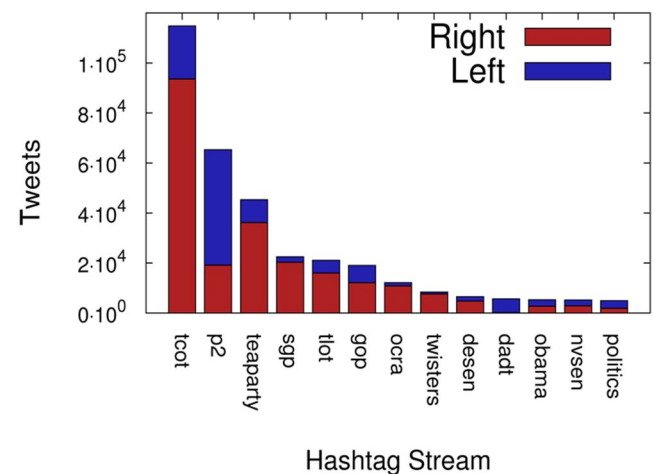
Figure 1. Political Discourse on Twitter (Source: CNetS)

The figure 1 showed that the trend of hashtag usage in political affairs—through which people show their support for some political party, governmental policy or act—is becoming extensive worldwide. Besides showing support for some act or phenomenon, social media hashtags are also used by users to argue against some act, entity, policy or group. For example, the recent social media hashtag, which has been trendy worldwide, is the "Me Too" hashtag, which was introduced as an argument against sexual harassment [23,33].
Similarly, the extensive political use of the hashtag to enhance public support like participating in promotion development events that are being realized in the modern

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era. Hashtags are used to unite supporters of a particular political party or entity in the network via a virtual platform. Some word, sentence or phrase is used as a hashtag to express an issue, protest or awareness about something related [1, 17, 32].

In Indonesia, the increasing number of political discussions, support, protests, unity and controversies, identified by hashtags on social media, has raised the need to study and understand whether these hashtags play any role in political promotion. This raises the question, What is the role of social media hashtags in enhancing the supply chain communication (SCC)? Such use of hashtags can enhance collaboration and communication between stakeholders, through which the purpose of consistent monitoring and communication is fulfilled which ultimately contributes to the political promotion [6, 25]. Therefore, the objective of the current study is to assess the impact of hashtags in social media on SCC and political promotions.

The remaining paper consists of four sections (i.e., (1) literature review, (2) methodology, (3) analysis, and (4) discussion and conclusion) in which a literature review of the scholarship on social media hashtags, political promotion, SCC and their relationships is followed by the methodology, analysis, results, discussion and conclusion.

2.   Literature Review

The social media hashtag is a word, sentence or phrase preceded by a hashtag (#) that is used by social media users to show their support, protest, view or opinion about something. The hashtag is considered outstanding role in the dynamics of information in social media and the internet in the modern era, because it is a function of most social media websites. The hashtag allows people to update their tweets and posts on a single theme and to focus on a single issue or political affair [4, 28]. The notion "hashtag" is associated with the use of hashtags (#) for the sake of attention and the involvement of other people for some cause or issue over social media. Through hashtags, some affair, issue or topic can be converted into public dialogue by ordering, indexing and collecting public interchange over a strong topic [1, 13]. Hashtag activism has become an important topic for recent researchers due to recent hashtags that became so successful worldwide. For instance, the hashtags "#MeToo", "#Ferguson", and "#HandsUpDontShoot" injected new voices into public discussions [1]. The importance of the term "hashtag" to politics is associated with its ability to unit supporters, protesters, opposition, etc. on a platform and to inject new voices in discussions of the public promotion. The increased and concise communication of some cause ultimately enhances SCC, which is an important factor of streamline communication [5, 7, 8].

SCC refers to the communication and collaboration between the stakeholders associated with some cause. More effective SCC leads to better awareness and more understanding about some cause or affair, and stakeholders ultimately have authentic, streamlined and uninterrupted information about the affair [2]. Political promotion refers to the publicity, awareness and elevation of some political issue, concern, entity or group in public [9, 21]. Several researchers suggest that a political campaign can be successfully promoted through social media and social media hashtags [26]. While promoting or framing a political issue through hashtags, some word, sentence or phrase is used and is converted into a "Public Dialogue" in order to emphasize its importance [5, 10]. The following section of the next literature discusses the relationship between current variables in light of past studies.

2.1   Hashtags in Social Media and Political Promotion

Social media hashtags are important derivatives of social media and the internet that have raised the opportunity of the quick promotion and publicity of something. This also occurs in politics, because political information, affairs, issues, etc. can be publicized and communicated quickly through hashtags, leading to the sufficient promotion of the respective material or cause [11]. Many scholars have suggested that social media hashtags have the potential to promote different issues in a short amount of time due to the conciseness with which the hashtag relays information. Since the hashtag a single word, short phrase or sentence which provides information about some political cause or affair in a concise manner, the chance increases that the respective cause is promoted. Thus, users or viewers can learn about a trending issue by looking up a concise sentence, word or phrase [11, 20, 31]. When hashtags are used, viewers become curious about the complete matter behind the hashtag, so they become more likely to learn about the respective political issue, affair or party in order to gain complete knowledge about the issue [1, 32]. Hence, the increased number of hashtags mean that the promotion of a political matter or group will increase, because an increasing number of people will see the hashtags and will learn about the issue. With the increased usage of social media worldwide, the usage of hashtags is also increasing, which is an important determinant for the promotion of a public issue. Furthermore, the increasing significance of Twitter in the field of politics has also raised the need for studies and discussions on hashtag activism in politics, marketing and other fields [15, 24]. This need has been created by the increasing number of political discussions on social media platforms (particularly on Twitter) for the sake of arguing, supporting, protesting or mobilizing political issues. Past

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scholars have acknowledged that social media hashtags can play an important role during political elections [4, 31]. The importance of the hashtags is meaningful that some issues can be communicated and publicized in a concise way (through the hashtag) on social media—such as Twitter, Instagram, etc.—which can ultimately raise the attention and interest of the public. Hence, the promotion of political issues can be achieved through hashtag activism [4, 6, 11]. However, the existing literature provides limited empirical evidence about the role of hashtag activism in political promotion; therefore, the current study hypothesizes:

H_1: "Social media hashtags have a significant, positive impact on political promotion."

2.2   Social Media Hashtags and Supply Chain Communication (SCC)

It has been suggested that social media hashtags play an important role in spreading information and awareness about a situation, matter or cause. Scholars suggest that social media hashtags have the potential to ensure effective communication and collaboration of information between stakeholders in a streamline [8, 11]. When hashtags are used to promote a topic or issue than a detailed background summarized by a single word, sentence or phrase through which the viewers and stakeholders come to know about the trending cause [27]. Such a short word, sentence or phrase is easy to communicate because the conciseness of information makes it more effective, enabling the information to be quickly mobilized [31]. The effective SCC refers to the effectiveness of collaboration and discussions about a particular affair or topic among stakeholders, which can be achieved through uninterrupted communication and the flow of information among stakeholders. The hashtags are used as important tools for communicating political affairs and causes in different countries. For example, the use of hashtags among Canadian politicians on Twitter have been analysed by [32], who suggests that hashtags are important drivers of streamlined political communications among stakeholders. Previous scholars have suggested that hashtags have the potential to diffuse information on social media, because they have the tendency to attract people by raising their curiosity. This increased curiosity leads people, then, to search for thorough information about the full matter. In this way, information is effectively diffused among stakeholders [28].

The increased attention and interests of people due to hashtags lead them to communicate and share the matter with one another, so the chances for effective discussion of the respective material, issue or topic increase. Hence, the increased discussion and collaboration of the topic or affair among stakeholders, caused by the hashtags, enhances the SCC [30]. However, the existing literature provides very limited research and evidence about the positive impact of social media hashtags on SCC. Therefore, there is a need for empirical research about the determining role of social media hashtags in SCC. Therefore, the current study hypothesizes:

H_2: "The social media hashtag has a significant positive impact on supply chain communication."

2.3   Supply Chain Communication and Political Promotion

The role of effective negotiations and collaboration of the general/spesific matter enhances the awareness and understanding about it. As discussed above, social media hashtags can attract and interest a large number of stakeholders so that they are likely to search for detailed information. The streamlined flow of information about a particular political affair or cause enhances its publicity [4]. The extensive discussions and collaborations associated with effective SCC have the potential to significantly promote a political matter, because when several people use political hashtags, then political information is communicated and updated in a concise and efficient manner, enabling large numbers of people to learn about that political matter [3]. Several scholars have suggested that one goal of effective communication, achieved through political hashtags in social media, is to enhance political promotion in different countries [11, 12]. Political support, arguments, protests, views and controversies can be easily spread through social media hashtags, which means that these matters are well-communicated, and the increased communication ultimately promotes the respective matters. The interactions of stakeholders through hashtags have the potential to unite supporters or protesters on social media platforms, which means that communication among political stakeholders enhances the political matter under discussion [13, 28, 30]. It means that the tendency of effective SCC to enhance political promotion leads it to play the important role of mediator between social media hashtags and political promotion. Based on these studies, the current study hypothesizes:

H_3: "The effective supply chain communication has a significant positive impact on political promotion."

H_4: "The effective supply chain communication is a significant mediator between social media hashtags and political promotion."
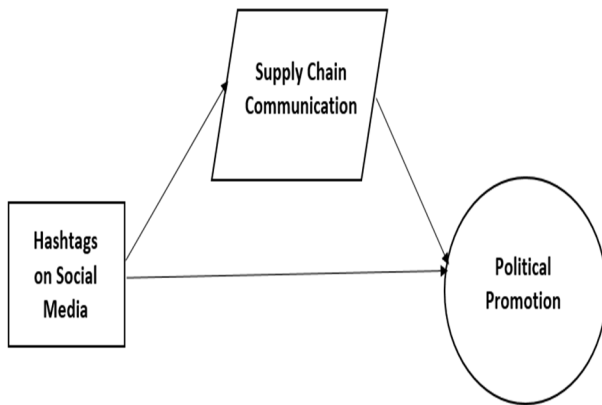
Figure 2. Research Model

Figure 2 showed the model of research, there was a relationship between hash tags on social media and supply chain communication which resulted in political promotion. So that these three things will be the focus of this study.

3. Methodology

3.1 Population, Sample, Instrument and Procedure of the Study

The current research has been performed in Indonesia, because the political hashtags used on social media about Indonesian politics have been examined in terms of their impact on SCC and political promotions. According to the purpose of the study, political hashtags on Twitter were examined as predictors of political promotion and SCC in Indonesia. The population of the current study is comprised of social media (Twitter) users in Indonesia, and the sample was selected through purposive sampling, resulting in a sample size of 301. The self-administered questionnaire tool was used to collect data from respondents. The structured questionnaire was developed and distributed to social media users in Indonesia to learn their views about social media hashtags, political promotion and the role of SCC.

3.2 Definition and Measures of Variables

The current study includes three key variables: "hashtags on social media", "supply chain communication", and "political promotion". "Hashtags on social media" is an independent variable, while "political promotion" is a dependent variable. A mediator has been used in the current model, which is "supply chain communication". The questionnaire for the current study was developed by using the existing scales of past researchers. The variable of political promotion has been measured with the scale developed by [35], while the measurement of social media hashtags was performed with [14]. The variable of SCC was measured using a scale by [18].

4. Results

To investigate the research model of the current study, a self-administrative questionnaire was developed and distributed among respondents. After eliminating roughly marked and incorrectly marked questionnaires, the final size of the 301 responses was analysed with SPSS and AMOS. A frequency distribution analysis shows that there were 147 male and 154 females who participated in the study. 120 respondents were aged 31 years to 40 years, 120 respondents were aged 21 years to 30 years, and the remaining respondents were older than 41 years. The educational achievements of the respondents includes 126 respondents who have a master's degree and 117 respondents with a graduate degree.

4.1 Factor Analysis

The data's suitability for further analysis was checked by the Kaiser Meyer Olkin Measure of Sampling (KMO) test, and the reliability of each item was analysed by factor loading. Tables 1 and 2 present the findings.

Table 1. KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.			0.969
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square		16334.973
	df		496
	Sig.		0.000

Source: Data Processed

Table 1 shows that the data is suitable for further analysis. The KMO test indicated that the adequacy of the data is 0.969, which is near to 1, so the data is excellent.

Table 2. Rotated Component Matrix

	Component		
	1	2	3
SC1			0.953
SC2			0.951
SC3			0.935
SC4			0.917
PP1	0.975		
PP2	0.952		
PP3	0.944		
PP4	0.955		
PP5	0.930		
PP6	0.949		
PP7	0.933		
PP8	0.942		

PP9	0.968
PP10	0.922
PP11	0.946
PP12	0.938
PP13	0.939
PP14	0.923
PP15	0.853
HS1	0.888
HS2	0.928
HS3	0.940
HS4	0.827
HS5	0.877
HS6	0.941
HS7	0.706
HS8	0.940
HS9	0.960
HS10	0.924
HS11	0.820
HS12	0.929
HS13	0.956

Source: Data Processed

Table 2 shows that each construct is falling in it's on the component, and every item has a factor loading of more than 0.60.

4.2 Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)

To test the fitness of the research model, the CFA was used. The outcome shows that the model is a good fit. Table 3 contains the indicators and their observed values.

Table 3. CFA

Indicators	Threshold range	Observed value
CMIN/DF	Equal or Less than 3	1.734
GFI	Equal or greater than 0.80	0.866
CFI	Equal or greater 0.90	0.979
IFI	Equal or greater than 0.90	0.979
RMSEA	Equal or Less than 0.08	0.490

Source: Data Processed

All the above values show that the model of the current study is a good fit, because every indicator value is under the threshold range. Figure 3 contains the measurement model picture of CFA after it was run in AMOS.
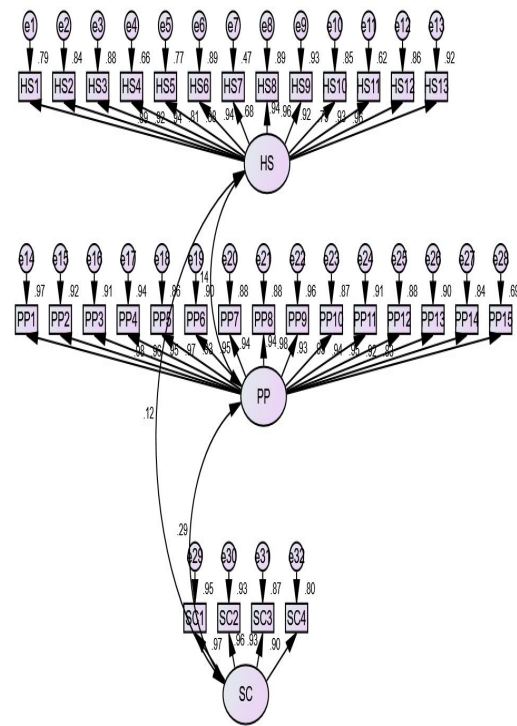

Figure 3. CFA

4.3 Discriminant and Convergent Validity

Discriminant validity shows the discrimination of measurement of each construct from other, whereas the convergent validity presents the internal consistency of the responses.

Table 4. Discriminant and convergent validity

	CR	AVE	MSV	PP	HS	SC
PP	0.911	0.774	0.075	**0.880**		
HS	0.922	0.731	0.023	0.150	**0.855**	
SC	0.915	0.731	0.075	0.273	0.084	**0.855**

Source: Data Processed

CR greater than 0.70 and AVE must be greater than MSV, prove the convergent validity, whereas the remaining columns show that each variable value is discriminant from the other ones.

4.4 Structural Equation Modelling (SEM)

SEM is a combination of multiple regression, which is used to run jointly the effect of each variable of others. Following are the results of SEM in Table 5.

Table 5. Direct and Indirect Effect of Hashtag to Political Promotion

Direct Effect HS - PP	Indirect Effect HS – SC - PP	Total Effect (DE + IE)
0.119	0.368 X 0.380 = 0.140	0.119 + 0.140 = 0.259

Source: Data Processed

The findings of SEM show that social media hashtags have positive and significant impacts on political promotion. The total effect of social media hashtags is 0.259, whereas the indirect effect of social media hashtags on political promotion is 0.140 via the supply chain communication. The direct effect of the hashtag on supply chain communication is 0.368, whereas on political promotion it is 0.119. Indirect effects through SC are greater than the effect of HS directly to PP. Hence, it is found that social media hashtags have a significant positive impact on SCC and political promotion; and the SCC has a significant mediating role between social media hashtags and political promotion. Therefore, all the hypotheses are accepted. Figure 5 presents the screenshot of SEM while it was running in AMOS.
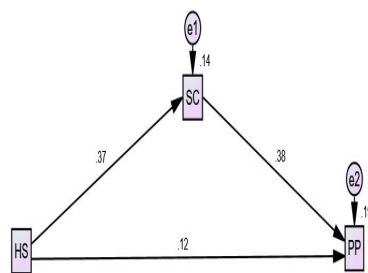

Figure 5. Structural Equation Modelling

5. Discussion of Results

The current study examined the role of social media hashtags in political promotion and the role of SCC in the relationship. For this purpose, the current study hypothesized that social media hashtags significantly influence political promotion. In response to this hypothesis, the data collected in Indonesia and subjected to analysis revealed that this hypothesis is true, because the social media hashtags showed a significant positive impact on political promotion. It means that increased social media hashtags effective for particular political matter or entity enhances political promotion. These results about the positive impact of hashtags on political promotion are in line with previous research, e.g. the arguments of [1, 4, 11, 31, 32] can also be referenced here because their research supports the current findings. The second hypothesis of the current study is supported by the finding that hashtags have a significant positive impact on SCC, and it is found that the increased hashtags enhance interaction and communication among stakeholders. These findings are also aligned with those of previous researchers [8, 11, 28, 30, 31, 32], who also suggest the supportive arguments that hashtags enhance the information shared among users and communication among users. The third hypothesis of the current study questioned the impact of SCC on political promotion. The current study found that increased awareness and communication of political matters in SCC can enhance the political promotion throught Hastags. The fourth

hypothesis, also addressed by the current study, suggests that SCC plays the role of significant mediator between hashtags and political promotion. Hence, it is found that the increased social media hashtags tend to increase the effectiveness of SCC, which ultimately increases political promotion.

6. Conclusion

The purpose of the current study was to analyse the influence caused by social media hashtags on SCC and political promotions, along with the mediating role of SCC in the relationship between hashtags and political promotion. The current study was conducted in Indonesia. The results reveal that all hypotheses of the current study are true, because it has been found that the increased social media hashtags about a political matter or entity enhance its political promotion. Furthermore, the present research reveals that increased social media hashtags about a political matter enhance the communication about it, which means that SCC is improved as a consequence of increased hashtags, which ultimately enhances political promotion, which plays the role of significant mediator between social media hashtags and political promotion.

The current study is expected to contribute significantly to the literature of social media hashtags and communication, because it provides evidential guidelines that how SCC and political promotion can be improved through the use of social media hashtags. Practically, the use of social media hashtags will assist politicians and those who work for political parties to realize the great role of hashtags in political promotion so they will be able to perform accordingly. Policymakers will also get assistance through the current findings while making policies about politics. Despite making significant contributions, the current study includes certain limitations, e.g., it has only extracted a sample from Twitter while other social media sites are also used to update hashtags. Furthermore, the current study limited its findings to Indonesia. Future researchers may wish to conduct cross-country research in order to study this relationship worldwide.

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