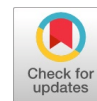


# Media Framing and Political Interests: A Critical Analysis of Lintas7.Net's Role in the 2020 Pacitan Regional Election

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**Abstract:** A recent research study analyzed Lintas7.net's news framing during the 2020 Pacitan regional election. The study uncovered a clear bias towards political and economic interests, indicating a vested interest in maintaining the current power dynamics in Pacitan. The research employed critical analysis and utilized Entman's framing analysis methodology, incorporating data from documentation and interviews carried out throughout the year. The study's findings shed light on concerns regarding the media's role in upholding democratic ideals, specifically regarding Lintas7.net's biased behavior during the 2020 Pacitan Regional Election. The utilization of framing techniques and selective information dissemination by the media outlet undermines the objectivity of the public sphere. Addressing this issue requires prioritizing the independence of media platforms and upholding ethical standards for journalists. Future evaluations should focus on guaranteeing the autonomy of local online media and their responsibility to provide accurate and unbiased information in the selection of qualified leaders. This can be accomplished by promoting media transparency, independence, and a dedication to objective reporting. By doing so, the integrity of the democratic election process can be preserved, allowing for the fair and equitable selection of deserving leaders in Pacitan.

**Keyword:** Media Bias, Democracy, Pacitan Regional

## I. INTRODUCTION

The role of media in shaping public perception and influencing political outcomes has never been more significant than in today's digital age. The 2020 Pacitan Regional Election (Pilkada) in Indonesia stands as a striking example of how local online media, such as Lintas7.net, can play a pivotal role in framing political events and candidates. This research study delves into the intricate world of media framing during the 2020 Pacitan regional election and sheds light on the vested interests that underlie media behavior.

As the democratic process unfolded in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic, local online media outlets like Lintas7.net became the primary sources of information for the electorate. Candidates vying for the positions of regent and deputy regent recognized the power of online media in enhancing their popularity and electability. Consequently, the role of local online media in shaping perceptions and influencing the political landscape during the Pilkada Pacitan cannot be overstated. This research study employed a critical analysis approach, guided by Entman's framing analysis methodology, to unravel the complex dynamics at play within Lintas7.net's coverage of the 2020 Pacitan regional election. Data were collected through meticulous documentation and interviews conducted over the course of the election year. The study's findings reveal a clear bias toward political and economic interests, suggesting a vested interest in maintaining the status quo of power in Pacitan[1].

This bias raises important concerns regarding the role of local online media in upholding democratic values. The selective dissemination of information, coupled with the use of framing techniques, challenges the objectivity of the public sphere. Addressing this issue is of paramount importance, and it necessitates a focus on media platform independence and ethical journalism standards. The objective of this research is to highlight the critical role played by local online media outlets like Lintas7.net during the 2020 Pacitan Regional Election, emphasizing the need for media transparency, independence, and commitment to objective reporting. This approach is essential in preserving the integrity of the democratic election process and ensuring the fair selection of deserving leaders in Pacitan. In the following sections, we will delve deeper into the findings and implications of this study, advocating for a more transparent and ethical media landscape in the context of local elections.

The implications of this research study call for a collective effort from media organizations, regulators, and the public to preserve the integrity of the democratic process. Transparency, independence, and a commitment to objective reporting are fundamental principles that must be upheld to ensure that local elections, such as the Pilkada Pacitan, are conducted fairly and with integrity. By addressing these implications, stakeholders can work towards a media landscape that truly serves the interests of the public and upholds the democratic values of Indonesia.

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A study on online media, framing, and its impact is essential in an increasingly interconnected and information-dependent society. This research helps maintain the integrity, transparency, and quality of information provided to the public, as well as supports a healthy democratic process.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Morris, (2020), research explores the implications of fake news and simulations in the digital age that have the potential to trigger political crises. Boomgaarden (2017) [2] study discusses political representation in the media and how framing is used as a game to influence people's views and election outcomes. The research reveals the role of the media in influencing the way people view politics and its candidates. Sinoj Antony S (2020) [3] explores the impact of hyperreality in media and literature, with an emphasis on the ways hyperreality can influence people's perceptions of reality and the image built in contemporary media culture. Schmuck, Heiss, Matthes (2017) [4] discuss the framing game in politics and how framing is used to influence public opinion as well as election outcomes.

Klüver, et al (2015)[5] explore the use of framing by interest groups in drafting policy proposals. Ville (2020)[6] study focuses on audience expectations of journalist transparency and how this affects journalism credibility. This research illustrates how transparency can be a key issue in maintaining media credibility. Karpinen, C. & Hallvard (2016) [7] reviews the concept of media independence and the debate around it. This research discusses how the media can maintain its independence in the face of economic and political pressures.

Hunter (2015) [8] discusses conflicts of interest in independent journalism and norms of autonomy. Yusuf (2011) [9] examines the issue of neutrality in local media and the impact of economic and political factors on this issue. The research highlights the challenges local media face in maintaining their credibility and independence.

Nurul Fadilah Umi, dkk, (2020), [10] examines online media framing related to mayoral candidate Gibran Rakabuming. Arswendi R. (2017) [11] reviewed the progress of political communication with online media in simultaneous regional elections in Indonesia. Haryadi (2021) [12] discusses the influence of online media on democracy in Indonesia after the presidential election. This research highlights how online media can influence political processes and public participation.

Political participation and trust Jacob, M. S., & Schenke (2020) [13] examines the relationship between political participation and the level of political trust. The results of Wilkes (2015) [14] study discuss the correlation between political participation and the level of political trust. This research highlights the importance of public participation in building trust in the political system.

Baudrillard (2018: 137) [15] asserts that industrial society is symbolized by machines, while gadgets represent post-industrial society. A simulator can produce genuine symptoms but cannot be objectively categorized as sick or not sick [16]. According to Baudrillard's perspective,

postmodernism is not solely a culture of signs but rather a culture of simulacra. Baudrillard's theory describes reality through four stages: 1) the image reflects the basic reality, 2) it distorts and perverts the basic reality, 3) it creates the absence of the basic reality, and 4) it relates to any reality whatsoever, forming its pure simulacrum [17].

Online media presents journalistic works in the form of news articles, features, and multimedia content produced online [18]. It enables communication through computer/gadget/tablet devices, facilitating many-to-many and few-to-few patterns. Online media combines journalism and information technology infrastructure, allowing connectivity among individuals, institutions, and regions without temporal and spatial limitations [19]. Online journalists make decisions on multimedia formats that best convey a story, incorporate interactivity to engage the audience, and establish connections with other stories and resources through hyperlinks [20] [21].

Media framing, as explained by Eriyanto (2015) refers to how media constructs the reality of events, actors, groups, or other subjects. Framing is a relatively stable meaning system that endures over time, shaping perceptions similar to a text or modular map [22]. Frame, framing, and framework are terms used to identify and understand tendencies in facilitating accurate comprehension across different contexts [23] [24].

Journalists play a crucial role in selecting valuable information and photos for publication, influencing their readers [25]. Media framing, through the perception of reality, can influence public opinion [26][27] Framing shapes media reality and constructs public opinion by conveying stories within specific constraints, organizing materials, and producing interpretative frameworks [28].

## III. METHOD

The research methodology employed in this study follows a constructionist paradigm and primarily utilizes framing analysis to critically examine the phenomenon of news framing in local online media during the 2020 Pilkada (local election) in Pacitan, especially in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic. The research aims to understand how journalists, particularly from Pacitanku.com and Lintas7.net, perceive and interpret the local election in Pacitan. The study covers the period from January 2020 to December 2020 and relies on primary and secondary sources from these online news portals. Data collection in this research involves two main techniques: documentation and interviews. Documentation refers to the collection of various types of news texts from Pacitanku.com and Lintas7.net. These texts can include written articles, images, and other relevant materials that serve as records of past events [29].

In addition to documentation, interviews were conducted with key stakeholders, including media owners, politicians, and community figures. These interviews provide valuable insights and perspectives on the framing of the Pilkada in Pacitan within the context of the Covid-19 pandemic.



The analysis of the research data is primarily based on Entman's framing analysis methodology. This approach involves the identification and emphasis of specific aspects of real events through the selection of relevant news texts [21]. The selection of these aspects encompasses defining elements, providing explanations, moral justifications, and recommendations within the discourse present in news texts sourced from Lintas7.net and Pacitanku.com.

Overall, this research methodology allows for a thorough examination of how local online media framed the 2020 Pilkada in Pacitan during the Covid-19 pandemic, shedding light on how these platforms portrayed and interpreted the local election and its various dimensions.

#### IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

##### A. Local Online Media Takes a Bias

During the 2020 Pacitan Regional Election (Pilkada), Lintas7.net, a local online media outlet, was found to exhibit bias in its news framing. The outlet supported specific candidates based on political and economic interests, aiming to increase their electoral support while portraying negative images of other candidates, particularly targeting Yudi Sumbogo. The media leveraged the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic to create negative portrayals of Yudi Sumbogo and his running mate, Isyah Ansori.

Analyzing this situation using Baudrillard's theory of simulacra, Lintas7.net's news framing can be seen as constructing a hyperreality that deviates from the actual qualities and leadership abilities of the candidates. The media outlet exhibited bias by favoring certain candidates, such as Indrata Nur Bayuaji and Gagarin, while casting Yudi Sumbogo and Isyah Ansori in a negative light. They capitalized on real debates during the pandemic to create negative portrayals.

Contrasting this biased framing with Habermas's concept of an ideal public sphere, it becomes evident that Lintas7.net's actions deviated from the ideals of an open and critical discourse. In an ideal public sphere, the media's role is to provide accurate and objective information about the candidates. However, during the 2020 Pacitan Regional Election, the public domain was saturated with information that favored specific candidates, undermining the principles of an ideal public sphere.

To summarize, Lintas7.net's news framing during the 2020 Pacitan Regional Election exemplified biased reporting and the creation of a hyperreality. Baudrillard's theory helps analyze this situation by highlighting the detachment of media representations from actual reality. The media's ideal role in direct democracy is to ensure freedom of expression, determine the governance of the state, and promote social and economic equality. However, Lintas7.net failed to fulfill this role and instead played a biased role in favor of certain candidates

##### B. The following News Text Excerpt

"...The notes on several sheets of paper were read by Yudi Sumbogo during the first segment of the presentation of the Vision and Mission of the Regent and Vice Regent candidate pair in Pacitan. Yudi Sumbogo appeared to read the vision

and mission notes fluently and systematically until the 2.5-minute time provided by the moderator ended..." (Lintas7.net, as quoted by the editor-in-chief of Lintas7.net, 27/10/2020).

Media online Lintas7.net sided with a particular candidate but did not support Yudi Sumbogo. The reality of the debate was used as a source by Lintas7.net journalists to frame the reality of candidates that they did not support, namely Yudi Sumbogo-Insyah Ansori. During the Covid-19 pandemic with strict social restrictions, the public debate organized by the KPU was utilized by Lintas7.net journalists to portray a negative image of Yudi Sumbogo-Insyah Ansori. The local online media sided in framing their news in a way that benefited a certain candidate and harmed the image of Yudi Sumbogo.

Lintas7.net, an online media outlet, exhibited a bias towards a specific candidate and did not show support for Yudi Sumbogo in the Pacitan election. The journalists employed by Lintas7.net took advantage of the debate content to frame candidates they were not in favor of, specifically Yudi Sumbogo-Insyah Ansori, in a negative manner. This occurred during the Covid-19 pandemic, which imposed strict social restrictions, and Lintas7.net utilized the public debate organized by the KPU to portray Yudi Sumbogo-Insyah Ansori in a negative light. The local online media outlet engaged in news framing that favored a particular candidate while tarnishing the image of Yudi Sumbogo.

Habermas (2006) [30] concept emphasizes the importance of an accessible public sphere that is not controlled by institutionalized power such as the state or the market. This public sphere should provide factual and objective information about the candidates. However, during the Pacitan election amidst the Covid-19 pandemic, the public sphere was inundated with information that favored the opposing candidate, Indarata Nur Bayuaji-Gagarin, at the expense of Yudi Sumbogo-Insyah Ansori. The independence of the media relies on the abilities, skills, and ethical standards of journalists.

According to Baudrillard, industrial society is symbolized by machines, while post-industrial society is represented by gadgets. A simulacrum can produce genuine symptoms but cannot be objectively categorized as sick or healthy. Baudrillard's theory describes reality through four stages: the image reflects the basic reality, distorts and perverts the basic reality, creates the absence of the basic reality, and relates to any reality whatsoever, forming its pure simulacrum.

The media tends to be biased, especially in their perception of candidates they do not support. Lintas7.net's framing, with its emphasis on and highlighting of the text choice "Yudi Sumbogo's wife ignores the place of worship regulations based on the video," is an example of this bias. The following news excerpt from a local online media outlet in Pacitan illustrates this point:





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"...A campaign video clip at one of the places of worship in the Pacitan region has gone viral among the public. The 10-second video circulated among the public through WhatsApp groups. In the short video, Ninik Setyorini, the wife of Pacitan Regent Candidate Yudi Sumbogo, is seen leading a special cheer for the Pacitan Regent and Deputy Regent candidate pair, Yudi Sumbogo-Isyah Ansori..." (Lintas7.net, cited by the editor-in-chief of Lintas7.net (25/10/2020)).

Lintas7.net, a local online media outlet, demonstrated bias in favor of specific political and economic interests, supporting certain candidates while criticizing and presenting negative portrayals of their opponents, particularly Yudi Sumbogo in the Pacitan regional election in Indonesia. Lintas7.net employed framing techniques to enhance the electability of their preferred candidates while casting their opponents in a negative light. For example, they emphasized Yudi Sumbogo's use of cheat notes during a debate to create a negative image of him. Additionally, Lintas7.net highlighted a video of Yudi Sumbogo's wife leading a cheer for him at a religious site, using it as a basis for criticism.

In a democratic society, the public sphere should be accessible to all, independent, and free from institutionalization, providing factual and objective information about the candidates. However, media bias undermines this ideal. The independence of the media depends on the skills, abilities, and ethics of journalists. The Pacitan regional election should have been an opportunity to provide accurate and objective information about the candidates' qualities, and the media should have ensured freedom of expression while guaranteeing social and economic equality. Ultimately, media bias undermines democracy and the principle that power should originate from the people.

Baudrillard's theory distinguishes industrial society, characterized by machines, from post-industrial society, symbolized by gadgets. A simulacrum can produce genuine symptoms but cannot be objectively categorized as sick or healthy. Baudrillard's theory presents four stages of reality: the image reflecting the basic reality, distorting and perverting the basic reality, creating the absence of the basic reality, and relating to any reality, thereby forming its pure simulacrum.

Cunningham (2002) [31] emphasizes that liberalism protects individual freedom, while democracy emphasizes political equality and strives for social and economic equality. In the Pacitan election, the public space should have been filled with accurate and objective information regarding the leadership qualities of the candidates for the Pacitan 2020-2024 term. Ideally, the Pacitan 2020 election, as a form of direct democracy in the region, would prioritize power derived from and held by the people. The people should determine and provide direction in the governance of state affairs for the welfare of all individuals.

To summarize, Lintas7.net displayed bias in favor of certain candidates while portraying their opponents negatively. The media's framing techniques and selective presentation of information undermine the ideal of an accessible and objective public sphere. The independence of

the media relies on the abilities and ethics of journalists. The Pacitan election should have provided accurate and objective information, ensuring freedom of expression and social and economic equality. Baudrillard's theory highlights the distinction between industrial and post-industrial societies, while Cunningham emphasizes the importance of democracy, liberalism, and the role of online media in promoting informed decision-making.

### C. Maintaining Power in Pacitan

According to Noer Deliar (1983) [32], politics is all activities or attitudes related to power by influencing the society's structure to change or maintain its form. It is about changing or maintaining the social group's order by using power. Budiardjo M. (2007) [33] defines politics as activities within a political system related to the process of determining that system to achieve certain goals. Maintaining power in Pacitan is one of the goals of local online media, which does framing news by favoring political and economic interests. The rulers in Pacitan, who have been winners for decades, will hegemonize journalists to support candidates to win the Pacitan election in 2020.

Here is the data that shows the framing of the Lintas7.net online media to maintain political power in Pacitan. The local online media frames by emphasizing and highlighting the text "SBY calls people from Pacitan" to frame the candidate pair Indrata Nur Bayuaji-Gagarin. Quoted from the following news text.

"...Billboards posted in several Pacitan areas inserted the sentence SBY (Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono) calls people from Pacitan. According to Subiyanti, SBY's narrative is a hope for the people to succeed in the Pacitan Regent and Deputy Regent Election. This is a moment of public celebration to encourage people to go to the polls for the Pacitan Regional Election on December 9. Of course, vote for number 1, Indrata Nur Bayuaji-Gagarin....." (Lintas7.net, source: Member of East Java Provincial DPRD Sri Subiati, 11/24/2020).

One of the main challenges faced by mass media is the presence of a paternalistic culture within society and among media elites, who are typically the owners of media outlets. These media elites have the power to control information and news that align with their interests, leading to a lack of media neutrality. The local media has not yet fulfilled the necessary criteria to function as a guardian of democracy, as economic and political interests still dominate and influence the content of news. According to Baudrillard's theory, industrial society is represented by machines, while post-industrial society is symbolized by gadgets. A simulacrum, in Baudrillard's view, can imitate genuine symptoms but cannot be objectively categorized as either healthy or sick. Baudrillard's theory describes four stages of reality: the image reflecting the basic reality, distorting and perverting the basic reality, creating the absence of the basic reality, and relating to any reality, ultimately forming its pure simulacrum.



Based on interviews with community leaders in Pacitan, it is evident that Lintas7.net, the local online media outlet, engages in framing that benefits specific candidates to maintain power in Pacitan. The data collected from these interviews reveal that the local online media, in its coverage of the regional election, follows predetermined orders from certain parties. Through framing techniques that emphasize specific texts, the media creates positive images and influences public opinion regarding the candidates, the election organizers, and the independence of the Pacitan Regency government. Community figures, identified as IB, have stated in interviews that "local online media in reporting on the Pacitan regional election is already an order."

In summary, the challenges faced by mass media include the influence of a paternalistic culture within society and media elites, leading to a lack of media neutrality. The local media in Pacitan has not yet fulfilled the requirements for being a democratic guardian due to the dominance of economic and political interests. Baudrillard's theory distinguishes between industrial and post-industrial societies, emphasizing the concept of simulacra. Interviews with community leaders indicate that Lintas7.net follows predetermined orders in its reporting on the regional election, favoring certain candidates and influencing public opinion.

The Pacitan Regency government, which has been controlled by a certain party for over 15 years, clearly has the desire to maintain its power in Pacitan. Government independence is also crucial in the Pacitan Regional Election 2020. The researcher refers to the results of interviews with IB sources as follows.

".....If from the news coverage of the two local online media, it is very clear that the Pacitan Regency Government, which should be neutral in supporting the implementation of the regional election to be conducted directly, publicly, freely, secretly, honestly, fairly, and healthily, instead supports one of the candidate pairs or certain candidate pairs..." (Lintas7.net, source, IB community figure).

Baudrillard's theory distinguishes between industrial society, which is characterized by machines, and post-industrial society, symbolized by gadgets. According to Baudrillard, a simulacrum can imitate genuine symptoms but cannot be objectively categorized as either sick or healthy. He presents four stages of reality, which include the image reflecting the basic reality, distorting and perverting the basic reality, creating the absence of the basic reality, and relating to any reality, ultimately forming its pure simulacrum.

Local online media in Pacitan has functioned more as public relations for the election organizers, specifically the KPU (General Election Commission) and Bawaslu (Election Supervisory Body). Their role as guardians of information, providing accurate and objective reporting on the KPU and Bawaslu as the organizers of the Pacitan Pilkada, has been neglected. According to Lewin K. (2016) [34] and Barzilai-Nahon (2009) [35], the media engages in a process of information filtering before dissemination through various channels such as publication, broadcasting, and the Internet. Local online media should act as information guardians, ensuring that the information shared with the public is reliable and unbiased.

As emphasized by J. Shoemaker (2009) the media plays a crucial gatekeeping role in public life, selecting and transforming information into news.

However, in the context of the local election in Pacitan, democratic principles have been violated and concealed by biased local online media that favor the election organizers, namely the KPU and Bawaslu. These media outlets have failed to serve as watchdogs, providing actual and objective information about the election organizers. Instead, they have acted as public relations for the KPU and Bawaslu. The media need to uphold their independence, educate the public, and ensure that democratic principles of free, fair, and honest elections are maintained.

Drawing on Baudrillard's perspective, industrial society is associated with machines, while post-industrial society is characterized by gadgets. Baudrillard argues that a simulacrum can exhibit genuine symptoms but cannot be objectively categorized as sick or healthy. In his theory, Baudrillard describes four stages of reality: the image reflects the basic reality, distorts and perverts the basic reality, creates the absence of the basic reality, and ultimately forms its pure simulacrum. This perspective highlights the complexity of postmodernism, where reality is not solely a culture of signs but rather a culture of simulacra.

In summary, local online media in Pacitan has failed to fulfill their role as information guardians and instead served the interests of the election organizers. Upholding democratic principles and ensuring the independence of the media is crucial for providing accurate and objective information to the public. Baudrillard's theory further emphasizes the complex nature of reality and its representation in the postmodern era. For local online media to play an independent and significant role as one of the pillars of democracy in Pacitan, there is a need for future evaluation efforts. This evaluation should focus on ensuring that local online media operates independently and fulfills its responsibility in selecting qualified leaders for Pacitan. The roles of journalists, media owners, the government, the private sector, the KPU (Election Commission), Bawaslu (Election Supervisory Board), and other relevant parties should provide space for journalists to work independently and professionally as guardians of information for the public.

In summary, Baudrillard's theory distinguishes between industrial and post-industrial societies, highlighting the concept of simulacra. Future evaluation efforts are necessary to establish the independence of local online media and position it as a crucial component of democracy in Pacitan. Various stakeholders, including journalists, media owners, government, private sector, KPU, Bawaslu, and related parties, must create an environment that allows independent and professional journalism, ensuring accurate and objective information for the public.

Based on other interview data, the Pacitan Regency government supports a certain candidate to maintain its power. As stated in the following interview quote:



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"... The Pacitan Regency government, which should be neutral in supporting the implementation of the direct, public, free, confidential, honest, fair, and healthy election, instead supports a certain candidate or candidate pair ..." (Lintas7.net, source IB).

According to additional interviews, it has been revealed that the Pacitan Regency government is actively supporting a specific candidate to maintain its hold on power. Despite the expectation that the government should remain neutral in supporting a direct, public, free, confidential, honest, fair, and healthy election, it is instead favoring a particular candidate or candidate pair. This situation highlights the concept of power, as defined by Paramartha D. (2015) [37], which refers to the ability or capacity of a person, team, or organization to influence others. In Pacitan, the Democratic Party, which has consistently held power in the region through previous elections, leverages its influence to sway support for a particular candidate in the 2020 Pacitan election. The party enjoys continuous support from the local population, especially those who feel they are under the party's control. The objective of maintaining power involves using framing techniques employed by local online media outlets to secure electoral victories for specific candidates.

The article examines the issue of media framing in Pacitan, Indonesia, where local online media outlets have demonstrated a bias towards specific political interests. These outlets employ framing techniques to support the political power of certain individuals and parties in Pacitan. Baudrillard's perspective (Baudrillard, 2018: 137) distinguishes industrial society, represented by machines, from post-industrial society, symbolized by gadgets. According to Baudrillard (1988), a simulacrum can produce genuine symptoms but cannot be objectively categorized as sick or healthy. Postmodernism, from Baudrillard's viewpoint, is not solely a culture of signs but rather a culture of simulacra.

In the context of the Pacitan elections, local online media outlets have been accused of favoring specific candidates and parties due to the influence of economic and political interests held by their owners and elites. Consequently, these media outlets lack neutrality in their reporting and fail to uphold democratic principles. The article emphasizes the need to evaluate the role of local media in Pacitan and take measures to enhance their independence and strengthen their position as a fundamental pillar of democracy in the region.

### D. Covering up Violations in the Conduct of Regional Elections

According to Abdulkarim A. (2007) [38], the principles of democracy encompass popular sovereignty, majority rule, minority rights, human rights, free and fair elections, equality before the law, due process, constitutional constraints, social, economic, and political pluralism, values of tolerance, pragmatism, cooperation, consensus, and advocating for the welfare of society. However, in the context of the Pilkada in Pacitan, these democratic principles have not been democratically implemented, prioritizing the principles of democracy from the people, by the people, and for the people. The Pilkada, as a form of direct democracy, cannot avoid the partiality exhibited by local online media, which tends to

favor political and economic interests. Their news discourse is framed with a bias towards the organizers, namely the KPU and Bawaslu, who have successfully conducted the stages of the Pilkada in Pacitan.

Based on an interview with a source named AHY, a member of the editorial board, a member of SMSI, and the Pacitan journalist forum, it is stated that:

Local online media functi, "...Bawaslu and local online media related to alleged political money that did not go through further processes handled by Bawaslu need attention. Society needs local online media for information that can educate residents to choose leaders with quality and credibility. Don't let those who have money and resources get support from the Pacitan voters. In carrying out their duties, sometimes the media is offered money as a form of transportation allowance, which can influence their reporting. Independence is difficult due to the large number of media outlets. The media acts as an information spokesperson for officials and agencies related to the Pilkada, namely the KPU, and Bawaslu..." (Lintas7.net. Source data AHY).

Local online media has not functioned as a guardian of information by reporting actual and objective information related to the KPU and Bawaslu as the organizers of the Pacitan Pilkada. According to Lewin K. (2016), and Barzilai-Nahon (2009), media performs a process of information filtering to be disseminated, whether for publication, broadcasting, the internet, or other communication methods. Local online media should be a guardian of information that is published in the public domain.

According to N Pamela J. Shoemaker (2009) [36], the crucial role of media in public life is gatekeeping, as billions of events occur in the world, the public relies on media mediators to transform information in the form of messages into news. This gatekeeping process of democracy is not only about determining which information is chosen but also the content and nature of the message, such as news, in the future.

The violation of democratic principles in the organization of the local election (Pilkada) in Pacitan has been covered up by the local online media that tends to favor the election organizers, namely the KPU and Bawaslu. The media has not functioned as a watchdog that provides actual and objective information related to the election organizers. Instead, they have served as the public relations of the KPU and Bawaslu. The media should play a crucial role in guarding the information that is published in the public sphere. As gatekeepers of democracy, the media should not only select which information to be disseminated but also determine the content and nature of the message, such as the news. However, in reality, some local online media tend to be biased toward political and economic interests, which could influence the outcome of the election. Therefore, the media's independence is crucial in providing education to the public and ensuring that the democratic principles of free, fair, and honest elections are upheld.





### E. Shaping the Opinion on the Democratic Pilkada in Pacitan 2020

The local online media's framing to shape the opinion on the democratic Pilkada in Pacitan is evident in an interview with one of the political party secretaries in Pacitan, EW. According to EW.

"....The legitimacy of citizens towards the process and results of the election is a characteristic and result of a democratic election. A democratic election cannot be achieved without the awareness and knowledge of citizens about political rights, forms of citizen participation in the election, citizen rights and obligations in the election, and the intelligence of voters in determining their choices in the election....."

According to the secretary of a political party in Pacitan, the level of legitimacy citizens attribute to the democratic process and the results of the local election (Pilkada) in Pacitan will impact the elected candidate. If the prevailing opinion is that the Pilkada was conducted democratically, the elected leader will be expected to perform their duties as a leader of Pacitan for the 2020-2024 term better. However, in reality, their election is solely based on the candidate's electability rather than their qualities as a leader in Pacitan.

Local online media should provide balanced information to educate the public and realize Pancasila democracy, which is democracy by the people, for the people, and of the people. The Pilkada is seen as a democratic festival in the region to select quality leaders in Pacitan. Young (2010) [39] values democracy for reasons such as expanding active citizenship, developing critical thinking, evaluation, and collaboration skills, and providing equal opportunities for people to become leaders.

Democracy is highly revisable, and the unpredictability of public opinion poses uncertainty for democracy (Young, 2010). Public opinion can be shaped through media framing, and local online media should serve as a pillar of democracy in Pacitan. According to Curran, J., & Seaton (2018) [40], the requirements for media as one of the pillars of democracy include empowering the community, supporting group identity and interests, closely monitoring the government, guaranteeing protection for marginalized groups, and serving as a public space for open discussion of dissenting opinions.

Considering the reasons for local online media framing, prioritizing the provision of actual and objective information to the public should take precedence. Although online media acts as a constructing agent for the candidates, its primary role should be that of an information watchdog to ensure a democratic election and the selection of quality leaders.

In this analysis, the framing by local online media contributes to the construction of a hyperreality that prioritizes electability over leadership qualities, distorts the perception of the democratic process, and shapes public opinion in favor of the organizers. The framing acts as a simulacrum, creating a reality that deviates from the actual state of affairs. Overall, Baudrillard's theory of simulacra helps shed light on how the framing by local online media in the Pacitan Regional Election contributes to the construction of hyperreality and influences public perception and opinion. It highlights the need for media transparency, independence,

and a focus on objective and accurate information to ensure a truly democratic election and the selection of quality leaders.

Lintas7.net's biased reporting during the 2020 Pacitan Regional Election deviated from the ideal role of the media in direct democracy. By favoring specific candidates and portraying negative images of others, the media outlet undermined the principles of an accessible and objective public sphere. The challenges faced by mass media, such as the influence of paternalistic culture and media elites, further contributed to a lack of media neutrality. For local online media to fulfill their role as democratic guardians, there is a need for future evaluation efforts to ensure independence, transparency, and the selection of qualified leaders. Baudrillard's theory of simulacra helps analyze the construction of hyperreality and emphasizes the importance of objective and accurate information for a truly democratic election.

### V. CONCLUSION

The actions of Lintas7.net during the 2020 Pacitan Regional Election demonstrated biased reporting and the construction of a hyperreality that deviated from the actual qualities and leadership abilities of the candidates. By favoring specific candidates and portraying negative images of others, particularly targeting Yudi Sumbogo, the media outlet undermined the principles of an ideal public sphere as proposed by Habermas. Instead of providing objective and accurate information, Lintas7.net contributed to the saturation of biased information that hindered open and critical discourse. In a direct democracy, the media should play a role in promoting freedom of expression, determining governance, and fostering social and economic equality. However, Lintas7.net's actions did not align with this ideal, as they prioritized political and economic interests over journalistic integrity.

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