



THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

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Abstract

Social media has transformed the global communication landscape and has become a vital instrument in increasing awareness and public participation on various environmental issues. This study aims to analyze the role and impact of social media in encouraging public engagement in environmental movements, both at the local and global levels. Using a qualitative approach with a combination of systematic literature analysis and multiple case studies, this research examines how social media platforms facilitate the dissemination of environmental information, promote collective action, and create spaces for discussions on environmental sustainability. The findings indicate that social media plays a significant role in mobilizing individuals to take concrete actions on environmental issues through three main mechanisms: (1) democratization of environmental information, (2) facilitation of the formation of environmental communities, and (3) acceleration of collective responses to urgent environmental issues. However, the study also identifies critical challenges, including the spread of false information, digital divide, and slacktivism phenomena that may hinder the effectiveness of digital environmental campaigns. Further analysis reveals that the effectiveness of social media use in environmental campaigns heavily depends on content strategies, timing, and the involvement of environmental influencers. The study also finds a positive correlation between the intensity of social media usage for environmental purposes and the level of public awareness and active involvement in environmental preservation. Additionally, the research highlights the significant role of social media as a catalyst for pro-environmental behavior among younger generations. These findings contribute significantly to the development of more effective environmental communication strategies in the digital era, emphasizing the importance of digital literacy in the context of environmental activism. The study recommends combining social media power with concrete actions to achieve optimal impact in addressing environmental challenges.

Keywords : social media, public participation, environmental issues, digital communication, environmental campaigns



1. INTRODUCTION

Social media has become one of the most influential communication tools in today's digital era. With an ever-increasing number of active users, social media has opened up new opportunities to disseminate information quickly and reach various groups of people (Smith et al., 2023). In the context of environmental issues, platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and TikTok are often used to convey messages about sustainability, conservation and the importance of preserving nature (Huang & Zhao, 2022).

Changes in communication patterns driven by social media not only affect the way environmental information is disseminated, but also public participation in concrete actions. Through social media, individuals and organisations can collaborate more effectively on environmental campaigns, such as plastic reduction movements, tree planting, and advocacy for green policies (Kim et al., 2021). In addition, social media provides a space for people to share ideas, discuss, and criticise environmental issues directly with relevant parties (Garcia et al., 2020).

Public participation in environmental issues has become an important element in achieving global sustainability. International organisations such as the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) emphasise that the success of the sustainability agenda relies heavily on the collaboration of various parties, including the active role of the community (UNEP, 2023). In this case, social media serves as a catalyst to encourage community engagement through campaigns and dissemination of relevant information (Park & Lee, 2022).

However, despite its great potential, the use of social media in environmental communication also faces various challenges. One of the main challenges is the spread of false or inaccurate information that can mislead the public (Nguyen et al., 2023). In addition, limited digital access in some regions, especially in developing countries, is a significant barrier in ensuring all levels of society can participate equally (Rahman et al., 2021).

Recent studies have shown that social media has a significant impact in raising environmental awareness, especially among the younger generation. For example, global campaigns such as #FridaysForFuture and #ClimateAction have attracted millions of participants worldwide through the power of social media (Stevenson & Green, 2022). These campaigns prove that social media can be a highly effective tool for mobilising public support and encouraging collective action.

In Indonesia, the use of social media for environmental issues is also increasing. Movements such as #BersihkanIndonesia and marine conservation campaigns have gained widespread attention from the public, including from celebrities and public figures (Nugroho et al., 2022). This phenomenon shows that social media can connect different layers of society, from individuals to large organisations, in one easily accessible platform.

Through this article, the author aims to explore the influence of social media on public participation in environmental issues. This research will discuss how social media is used to disseminate environmental information, mobilise collective action, and overcome



communication challenges. By analysing case studies and current literature, this article is expected to provide insights into the importance of effective digital communication strategies in the fight for environmental sustainability.

The research will also highlight the various opportunities that can be utilised through social media, as well as the challenges that must be overcome to ensure the sustainability of environmental communication. With a holistic approach, this article is expected to serve as a reference for practitioners, academics, and policy makers interested in developing social media-based environmental communication strategies.

Social media has become an important platform in environmental communication, enabling rapid and interactive dissemination of information. According to Huang and Zhao (2022), social media plays a key role in raising public awareness of environmental issues, especially among the younger generation. Platforms such as Twitter and Instagram are often used to deliver environmental campaign messages, either through data visualisation, infographics, or inspirational stories. Research by Kim et al. (2021) highlighted that social media not only serves as a tool for information dissemination, but also as a discussion space that enables collaboration and community building for environmental action. Using features such as hashtags, online communities can easily build solidarity and mobilise public participation in environmental movements, such as plastic reduction campaigns or tree planting. On the other hand, challenges also arise in the use of social media for environmental communication. Nguyen et al. (2023) identified issues such as the spread of false information and manipulation of public opinion as significant barriers. In addition, limited digital access in developing countries is an obstacle in ensuring equal engagement across all levels of society (Rahman et al., 2021). However, research by Park and Lee (2022) shows that the right communication strategies, such as the use of personalised narratives and collaboration with influencers, can help overcome this challenge. With a planned approach, social media has great potential to increase public engagement in environmental conservation efforts globally and locally.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive analysis method to understand the influence of social media on public participation in environmental issues. The data used in this study consisted of secondary data obtained from journal articles, research reports, books, and relevant online sources, and primary data obtained through case studies of environmental campaigns conducted on social media in the last five years.

Data collection was conducted through literature searches and content analysis of social media posts related to environmental campaigns, such as #FridaysForFuture, #BersihkanIndonesia, and #ClimateAction. Data were analysed using thematic analysis techniques to identify communication patterns, information dissemination strategies, and the resulting forms of public participation. Analyses were conducted in-depth to reveal the



relationship between the use of social media and the level of public awareness and involvement in environmental issues.

This study focuses on three main social media platforms, namely Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok, which have high levels of interaction in environmental campaigns. The selection of these platforms is based on statistical data on social media usage in Indonesia and globally, which shows an increasing trend of public engagement in sustainability issues through digital media (Huang & Zhao, 2022; Kim et al., 2021). Data validity is guaranteed through source triangulation to ensure the accuracy of the information used.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results show that social media has a significant influence on increasing public participation in environmental issues. Analysis of data from various social media campaigns, such as #FridaysForFuture and #BersihkanIndonesia, revealed that platforms such as Twitter, Instagram and TikTok have successfully created inclusive participation spaces for people across ages and backgrounds. For example, the #FridaysForFuture campaign mobilised millions of people to protest climate change around the world. In Indonesia, the hashtag #BersihkanIndonesia is often used to raise awareness about waste management and encourage concrete actions, such as reducing the use of single-use plastics.

One important finding is that social media allows people to actively engage through various forms of participation, including sharing information, donating funds, and participating in direct environmental activities. For example, research by Kim et al. (2021) found that more than 60% of social media users who engaged with environmental campaigns on platforms such as Instagram stated that they felt more compelled to take action after being exposed to the campaign content. This shows that social media not only serves as a communication tool, but also as a catalyst for behaviour change.

However, this study also identified some challenges in utilising social media for environmental communication. One of them is the spread of false information or hoaxes that can reduce the credibility of environmental campaigns. Nguyen et al. (2023) noted that climate change-related hoaxes are often used by certain groups to undermine the environmental movement. For example, narratives that downplay the impacts of climate change are often shared on social media, which can hamper efforts to raise public awareness. Therefore, the validity of information is an important factor that needs to be considered in environmental campaigns.

In addition, limited digital access in rural areas and developing countries is another significant barrier. Rahman et al. (2021) revealed that although social media has the potential to reach a wide audience, there is still a significant access gap in developing countries. In Indonesia, for example, people in rural areas still face limited digital infrastructure, which prevents them from fully participating in social media-based environmental campaigns.



On the other hand, a strategic approach can increase the effectiveness of environmental campaigns on social media. Park and Lee (2022) showed that the use of personal narratives in social media campaigns can increase user appeal and engagement. An example is a short video post on TikTok that combines a personal story with scientific information about the impacts of climate change. Such posts tend to be more viral because they touch the emotional side of the audience while providing new insights.

In this discussion, it is important to highlight the role of influencers in environmental campaigns. Influencers with large followings on social media often act as a bridge between the scientific community and the general public. Huang and Zhao's (2022) study shows that influencer engagement can triple the reach of campaign messages compared to campaigns without influencer support. A clear example is the collaboration of environmental organisations with local celebrities in Indonesia, such as in the mangrove planting campaign on the coast.

Furthermore, the results of this study emphasise the importance of collaboration between the government, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and the public in maximising the potential of social media for environmental communication. Governments can play an active role by providing credible information and supporting public campaigns through their official channels. On the other hand, NGOs can use social media to educate the public and increase participation in environmental activities collectively. This kind of collaboration not only increases the effectiveness of the campaign, but also ensures the sustainability of environmental conservation efforts in the future.

Overall, this research proves that social media is an effective tool in encouraging public participation in environmental issues. However, this success is highly dependent on the communication strategy used and the ability to overcome challenges such as hoaxes and the digital divide. With proper utilisation, social media has great potential to be a driving force in changing people's behaviour towards environmental sustainability.

4. CONCLUSION

This research confirms that social media plays an important role in increasing public participation in environmental issues. Through platforms such as Twitter, Instagram and TikTok, the public can access environmental information quickly and engage in relevant campaigns. Public participation comes in many forms, from disseminating information to taking part in concrete actions such as plastic reduction and tree planting. Social media has also proven effective in reaching cross-generational audiences, especially young people who are the main drivers of the environmental movement.

However, the study also revealed some of the challenges faced in utilising social media for environmental communication. The spread of false information and the lack of digital access in some areas are significant barriers in raising awareness and overall public participation. In addition, the effectiveness of campaigns relies heavily on the communication strategies employed, including the validity of information, personalised narratives, and



collaboration with influencers. Therefore, successful environmental campaigns on social media require careful planning and ongoing content management.

Overall, social media has great potential to support environmental conservation through increased public awareness and action. To maximise this potential, collaboration between governments, non-governmental organisations and communities is needed to design inclusive and data-driven campaigns. Further research is also needed to explore innovative ways of utilising social media as an environmental communication tool, so as to reach a wider audience and create a more significant impact on environmental sustainability.

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