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Environmental Activism Through Instagram (A Study of the Global Climate Strike Campaign by Greenpeace Indonesia)

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Abstract

Instagram is one of the social media products used by non-governmental organizations, Greenpeace Indonesia, in conducting the Global Climate Strike campaign. This study investigates the digital activism strategies employed by Greenpeace Indonesia in executing the Global Climate Strike campaign on Instagram. Adopting a descriptive qualitative research approach within a constructivist paradigm, the study gathered data through interviews and documentation. The research is guided by the concept of digital media and environmental activism, focusing on the dimensions of alert, amplify, and engage. Three interviewees contributed insights into Greenpeace Indonesia's communication practices, while documentations were used to support and validate the findings. The study's results indicate that Greenpeace Indonesia applied the three stages—alert, amplify, and engage—in their campaign. The alert stage served as an initial step to disseminate information, the amplify stage involved strategies to effectively communicate campaign messages to the public, and the engage stage facilitated the accommodation of public aspirations through social media interaction.

Keywords: Environmental Activism; Greenpeace Indonesia; Global Climate Strike; Instagram

INTRODUCTION

The media research institute Remotivi published a study in 2023 titled "Encouraging Media to Become a Solution to the Climate Crisis." The findings revealed that approximately 22.8% of respondents denied the existence of climate change, while 34.2% attributed it to natural processes of the Earth, another 34.2% believed it was caused by human activities, and about 54% felt that climate change should receive greater attention in public policy. Additionally, 13.8% of respondents stated they were unaware of the causes of climate change (Nastiti, 2023, p. 24). These results indicate that most respondents acknowledged the reality of climate change, with only 22.8% rejecting its existence. However, opinions about its causes varied significantly. Various community groups and environmental activists are actively working to raise public awareness about the impacts, causes, adaptation strategies, and mitigation measures for climate change. Greenpeace Indonesia is one such organization that promotes climate awareness through its Global Climate Strike campaigns, which involve

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public demonstrations to address climate issues. These campaigns have been conducted regularly since 2019, including in 2022 and 2023, urging individuals to adopt greener lifestyles and pushing the government to implement robust policies to combat climate change.

To enhance the reach of its campaigns, Greenpeace Indonesia leverages digital platforms like Instagram (@greenpeaceid). For the Global Climate Strike 2023, the organization utilized videos and reels to disseminate campaign information, making it more accessible to the public. Instagram supports campaigns by allowing users to share photos or videos with detailed captions and enabling hashtags to group specific issues or topics (Fajar, 2021). As part of the campaign, Greenpeace Indonesia encouraged the public to mention @greenpeaceid and use hashtags such as #BikinAksimu, #GlobalClimateStrike, and #PukulMundurKrisisIklim to amplify their message. The Global Climate Strike campaign is modeled after the movement initiated by Greta Thunberg, a Swedish climate activist born on January 3, 2003, in Stockholm (Robertua et al., 2024). This campaign builds upon previous iterations conducted in 2019 and 2022, aiming to disseminate information on climate change and its profound implications for various aspects of societal life, transcending social and economic distinctions. The adverse effects of climate change are significant, encompassing phenomena such as flash floods, heat waves, forest fires, landslides, rising sea levels, coral bleaching, water scarcity, and air pollution. The initiative seeks to mobilize public engagement by advocating environmentally sustainable lifestyle changes as a means of addressing climate-related issues. Furthermore, it emphasizes the necessity for governments to adopt comprehensive policies to mitigate climate change, including the transition to renewable and environmentally sustainable energy systems.

This study employs the concept of environmental activism to examine Greenpeace Indonesia's Global Climate Strike campaign conducted on Instagram. This framework focuses on how environmental activists utilize digital media to achieve their objectives (Pezullo, 2018). The process of achieving these objectives involves three key stages: Alert, Amplify, and Engage. The first stage, Alert, seeks to inform the public about the dangers of environmental issues, aiming to raise awareness of the increasingly critical state of the environment. The primary goal of this stage is to enhance public understanding of ongoing environmental challenges. Activists, community groups, and environmental organizations frequently incorporate digital platforms such as websites and social media into their advocacy efforts to foster sustainable advocacy practices. The central purpose of communication and warning

efforts in this stage is to prevent harm and mitigate the risks associated with current environmental crises.

The subsequent stage, Amplify, focuses on effectively disseminating advocacy campaign messages to the public through social media platforms. Social media serves as a powerful tool that can either support or hinder the promotion of environmental communication, given the rapid news cycles and the public's limited attention span. For instance, critical environmental messages on social media can quickly lose traction when overshadowed by other trending topics or issues. The primary goal of the Amplify stage is to broaden the reach of the campaign message and ensure it engages a larger audience. To achieve this, the information shared must be presented in a clear, concise, and easily comprehensible manner. Additionally, incorporating compelling visuals is crucial, as they capture the audience's attention, encourage them to engage with the content, and enhance their understanding of the campaign's objectives (Hafilliana, 2023). The final stage, Engage, emphasizes the importance of encouraging community participation in addressing environmental issues within public spaces, particularly on social media. This stage plays a vital role in promoting social change by fostering active involvement. The primary objective is to cultivate community engagement in environmental discussions, allowing environmental organizations to gather and represent public aspirations through a bottom-up approach. This participatory approach enables initiatives such as petitions, which encapsulate community concerns about environmental issues and serve to exert pressure on governments to prioritize the public good. Social media, as an internet-based platform, facilitates conversations and interactions among users. To effectively foster engagement, specific strategies must be implemented. These strategies include communication, collaboration, education, and entertainment, all of which are essential in creating meaningful connections and driving active participation (Rini & Shihab, 2019). Several prior studies have explored digital campaigns by Greenpeace, such as those focused on reducing plastic waste (Ramadhani, 2019; Sunardi, 2021). Additionally, research on climate change campaigns has been conducted by Pramana et al. (2023), though it did not specifically address the Global Climate Strike campaign. Building on these studies, this research seeks to address the gap by focusing on Greenpeace Indonesia's digital campaign for the Global Climate Strike. Utilizing the framework of environmental activism through digital media, this study examines how Greenpeace Indonesia implements the three stages—alert, amplify, and engage—in its Global Climate Strike campaign on Instagram.

METHOD

This study employs a descriptive qualitative methodology. Qualitative research is a procedure that generates descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words derived from individuals and observed behaviors. Data collection techniques utilized in this research include interviews and documentation, conducted through visits to the research site and observations of individual behaviors (Creswell, 2018). Interviews were carried out with informants to obtain detailed information regarding the stages of environmental activism undertaken by Greenpeace Indonesia in the Global Climate Strike Campaign on Instagram. The first informant is a Public Engagement Campaigner at Greenpeace Indonesia who was directly involved in the Global Climate Strike 2023 campaign. The second informant works in the Digital and Communications division of Greenpeace Indonesia and participated in the Global Climate Strike campaigns in 2019, 2022, and 2023. The third informant represents the Jeda Iklim organization and was involved in the Global Climate Strike 2023 campaign as a member of the Steering Committee. To enhance the credibility of the interview findings, this study also incorporates documentation data, such as Instagram image captures and engagement rates.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As of December 18, 2024, Greenpeace Indonesia's Instagram account boasts 761,000 followers and 4,492 posts, with these numbers expected to grow as the account remains active. The account serves as a vital platform for disseminating information on environmental issues in Indonesia, positioning itself as a key communication channel for engaging a broader audience. This is highlighted by a statement from one of the informants.

> *"Greenpeace maximizes several accounts on various social media platforms, with Instagram being one of its core channels. We believe that campaigns must be communicated through the platforms we manage, and Instagram is one of them."* (Informant 2, 2024).

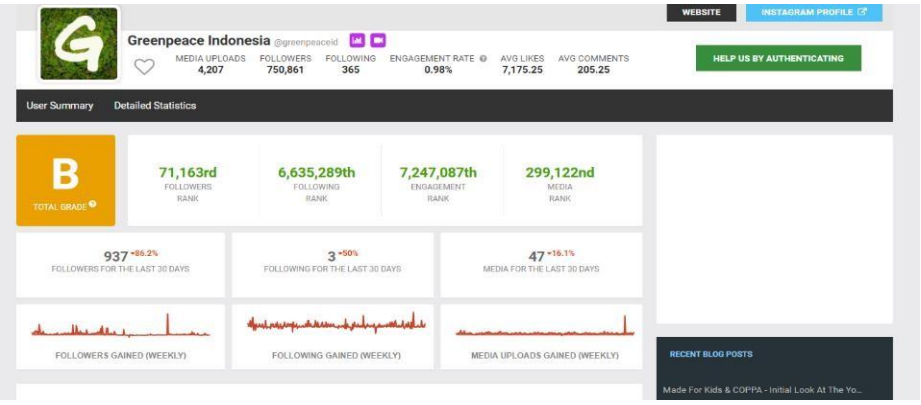


Figure 1. *Engagement rate* of Greenpeace Indonesia's Instagram
Source: Social Blade

With its active focus on communicating environmental messages and its substantial follower base, Greenpeace Indonesia demonstrates strong information credibility. This credibility is further illustrated in Figure 1, which presents data on the engagement rate of Greenpeace Indonesia's Instagram account.

Alert

In its efforts to disseminate information to the public, Greenpeace Indonesia aligns with the concept of issuing alerts, as evidenced by posts on its Instagram account. During the campaign, Greenpeace Indonesia leveraged the momentum of the 2024 presidential election to issue a warning and voice a motion of no confidence in the government. The accompanying posts highlighted the government's actions—or lack thereof—on environmental issues, providing the public with critical information on the administration's track record. This initiative was carried out in the context of the ongoing environmental advocacy efforts following the Global Climate Strike 2022 campaign. The posts underscored the perceived inadequacy of the government's commitment to addressing environmental challenges in a serious and sustained manner.



Figure 2. Feeds Instagram's post of Greenpeace Indonesia
Source: Instagram @greenpeaceid

Amplify

Greenpeace Indonesia leverages Instagram as a key platform for public communication, supported by a dedicated Digital and Communications team. This team is responsible for producing press releases, creating video content, managing feed posts, and fostering collaborations. The team is further divided based on specific issue areas, such as climate and energy, oceans, forests, and urban concerns. This specialization ensures that each issue is

addressed effectively, as illustrated in the following interview except:

> *"Yes, it's called digital and communications. We prepared for the Global Climate Strike campaign for about a month and a half because it involved various points, right? And the production includes posts or other formats on Greenpeace; in one day, there are several uploads."* (Informant 1, 2024).

For the Global Climate Strike 2023 campaign, Greenpeace Indonesia utilized Instagram features such as feeds and reels to communicate its messages. The feeds included infographics highlighting environmental issues in Indonesia, while reels featured engaging video content. Over the course of the campaign, the digital team created thirteen pieces of content, all published on Greenpeace Indonesia's Instagram account (@greenpeaceid). The posts aimed to inform the public about pressing environmental problems and clarify key terms related to the climate crisis, as demonstrated in the accompanying image.



Figure 3. Feeds Instagram Post
Source: Instagram @greenpeaceid

Greenpeace Indonesia has created informational content, such as a climate glossary, to educate the broader public on the climate crisis and highlight the experiences of directly affected communities. This initiative aims to amplify the voices of these communities and encourage greater public awareness and engagement with climate-related issues. The glossary introduces key terms related to the climate crisis, contextualized by the lived experiences of impacted populations. In addition to static content, Greenpeace Indonesia utilizes Instagram's reels feature to engage the public with dynamic, short videos that showcase environmental issues occurring across Indonesia. Reels are particularly effective for storytelling due to their concise format, which allows for creative and engaging presentation of information. As one informant noted:

> *"In the Global Climate Strike, we highlighted young people's concerns about climate change and used social media, especially Instagram reels, to share posts. Reels are currently popular due to their short duration—2 minutes maximum—and are considered the most effective way to convey an event."* (Informant 3, 2024)

By using short video reels, Greenpeace Indonesia provides a vivid portrayal of environmental challenges, particularly those faced by communities outside Jakarta. This approach fosters a shared sense of urgency and concern about the climate crisis among diverse audiences. Aligned with the concept of amplification in communication, Greenpeace Indonesia ensures that its messages are conveyed clearly and effectively. This involves using simple, comprehensible language and supporting content with visually appealing elements to capture the audience's attention, enhance message retention, and deepen public understanding of the campaign's goals.

Engage

Greenpeace Indonesia actively addresses environmental issues in various regions by engaging directly with communities experiencing the effects of the climate crisis. Through on-site visits, Greenpeace witnesses these challenges firsthand and collaborates with local communities to amplify their voices. For the Global Climate Strike 2023 campaign, which has been ongoing for two years, Greenpeace Indonesia has helped these communities, enabling them to articulate their concerns more effectively. This approach is highlighted in the following interview excerpt:

> *"Greenpeace has assisted communities. If they have issues, we can amplify them because we have a digital channel with many followers,"* (Informant 2, 2024).

During the 2022 Global Climate Strike campaign, Greenpeace-supported communities actively participated to raise awareness about environmental issues. This global initiative served as a platform for communities to express their concerns and critique environmental problems in a secure and supportive space. In 2022, Greenpeace Indonesia facilitated community members' travel to Jakarta to join the Global Climate Strike. However, for the 2023 campaign, the strategy shifted, as participants were encouraged to hold actions in their local areas to raise awareness within their immediate circles. Greenpeace continued to support these efforts by providing guidance and resources, as noted by an informant:

> *"In 2022, we brought these assisted communities to Jakarta for the Global Climate Strike. In 2023, we felt they should conduct their actions locally to inform their closest circles, with support from several Greenpeace colleagues. This localized approach allows communities to engage directly with their surroundings, fostering grassroots advocacy and amplifying awareness of environmental challenges across diverse regions,"* (Informant 2, 2024).



Figure 4. Community demonstration assisted by Greenpeace Indonesia
Source: Instagram @greenpeaceid

Greenpeace Indonesia facilitates the actions of its assisted communities by encouraging them to document and share their campaigns on Instagram. These posts tag the @greenpeaceid account, which are then reshared on Greenpeace Indonesia's official Instagram page, thereby extending their reach. As noted by an informant:

> *"In the end, those who carry out the action will tag the Greenpeace account, which will then be rebroadcast on the Greenpeace Instagram account."* (Informant 2, 2024).

Research findings reveal that Greenpeace Indonesia's environmental activism on Instagram follows a structured three-stage process: Alert, Amplify, and Engage. In this initial stage, Greenpeace Indonesia raises awareness by posting information content highlighting government inaction and irresponsibility regarding environmental conservation. For example, posts have criticized actions such as pardoning 3.3 million hectares of illegal palm oil plantations encroaching on forests and the State Electricity Company (PLN) obstructing the installation of rooftop solar panels. During the 2024 presidential election period, the Global Climate Strike 2023 campaign continued to voice a motion of no confidence in the government and politicians as a form of warning. Greenpeace also shared campaign posters featuring the activity agenda and the theme "Together for Climate Justice," emphasizing community solidarity in advocating for climate justice and living spaces.

The second stage involves disseminating advocacy messages to the public through social media. This includes publishing posts about real-life issues faced by communities and providing explanations from credible sources. Greenpeace Indonesia's Digital and Communications team plays a key role in this stage, developing content such as press

releases, videos, and feed posts. The team conducts weekly meetings to plan posts, supported by thorough research. They are divided into sub-teams focused on specific issues, such as Climate and Energy, Oceans, Forests, and Urban concerns. For the Global Climate Strike 2023 campaign, the team created infographic feeds and short video reels to communicate their messages effectively and creatively. The final stage emphasizes fostering community involvement in addressing environmental issues. Greenpeace Indonesia supports communities in various regions, encouraging them to participate in the Global Climate Strike campaign. Since its inception in 2019, the campaign has grown to include diverse local actions, with the 2023 iteration seeing communities in Bandung, Demak, and Malang conducting their campaigns locally. These actions were documented and shared on Instagram as a form of engagement, inviting the broader public to contribute actively to the climate crisis discourse. This multi-stage approach highlights Greenpeace Indonesia's comprehensive use of Instagram to amplify its campaigns. Previous research by Suherman and Saparilla (2023) noted that Greenpeace effectively utilized Instagram features like feeds and stories to build public awareness of climate change. This study further elaborates that Greenpeace does not merely post content but follows a deliberate process—Alert, Amplify, and Engage—each serving a distinct purpose in mobilizing public awareness and action.

CONCLUSION

The research findings indicate that Greenpeace Indonesia employs a structured approach in its environmental activism through Instagram, which encompasses three stages: Alert, Amplify, and Engage. At first stage, Greenpeace Indonesia focuses on raising public awareness about the climate crisis by sharing informative content, including explanations of key terms related to the issue. This effort aims to enhance public understanding of the climate crisis and its implications. As part of its warning strategy, Greenpeace also created campaign posters detailing the activity agenda and the theme, "Together for Climate Justice," to rally collective action and emphasize the importance of solidarity in addressing climate challenges. Greenpeace Indonesia's Digital and Communications team is instrumental in second stage, producing information content specifically for Instagram. The team is tasked with creating press releases, feed posts, and short video reels. To ensure efficiency, the team is divided based on specific issue areas, including Climate and Energy, Oceans, Forests, and Urban issues. The Global Climate Strike campaign falls under the Climate and Energy category. Weekly meetings are held to discuss potential topics for dissemination, supported by thorough research to ensure the credibility and accuracy of the information. For the 2023

Global Climate Strike campaign, the team created various posts, including infographics in feeds and dynamic short video reels, designed to engage and educate the public effectively. In final stage, Greenpeace Indonesia works closely with its assisted communities, empowering them to carry out climate actions in their respective regions. These communities, which had previously participated in campaigns in Jakarta, now play an active role locally, documenting and sharing their activities on Instagram. By tagging Greenpeace Indonesia's Instagram account, the communities help amplify their messages, extending the campaign's reach across social media platforms.

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