

# The Culture of Using Social Media of Environmental Discourse by The Youth in Tangerang City

*Irmulansati Tomohardjo*<sup>1\*</sup>, *Fauzi Nur Iman*<sup>2</sup>, and *Yulia Hidayati*<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Universitas Mercu Buana, Communication Science Study Program, Faculty of Communication Science, South Meruya West Jakarta 11650, Indonesia

<sup>2</sup>Universitas Mercu Buana, Informatics Engineering Study Program, Faculty of Computer Science, South Meruya West Jakarta Jakarta 11650, Indonesia

**Abstract.** This study explores the construction of environmental discourse in social media among the youth in Tangerang City, Banten Province, Indonesia, based on the perspective of environmental communication concept and social media perspective. The method incorporated was a case study by interviewing key informants, ten youths from Tangerang City, with qualitative descriptive analysis. The research found that almost all key informants have a common culture of environmental discourse in social media. Also, the research found that the youth socialize with others on social media who feel the need to grow and participate. In addition, the youth think that the discourse on a green environment refers to the desire to create an environment that is clean from garbage and has lots of trees and more plants, creating a peaceful, quiet, spacious environment with and preserving lots of green plants and animals.

Keyword: social media, environmental discourse

## 1 Introduction

The digitalization process is still growing and making a new phenomenon in human and environmental communication. In reality, public relations terminology can adopt environment communication, especially digital public relations. It means digitalization on one side and environment or green communication in the other can be synchronized for several purposes, such as supporting education for teenagers in senior high school. So, we decided to conduct research and interview several senior high school students to know how the culture of using social media promotes green living in their home, school, and environment.

To support this research, we must first understand the communication perspective. Indeed, in the communication aspect, we can find a mutual understanding, the same perspective between communicator and their communicant, to get a good reputation or to persuade their participation in communicator activities. For teenagers, we can strive with this concept, which relates to their outdoor and indoor activities, especially for green environments. Digital tools, like online media and social media, become a solution to its

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\* Corresponding author: [irmulan\\_sati@mercubuana.ac.id](mailto:irmulan_sati@mercubuana.ac.id)

problem in society. Online media and social media, as a digitalization process, become the way to endorse all green environment aspects to the youth, a place for teenagers to study and interact.

The process and efforts to maintain a green environment have now become a common agenda. It is an international agenda practiced in all countries, including Indonesia. We all know that every April 22, we commemorate World Earth Day. This commemoration is not just a celebration of the earth where we live. Rather, it is more about appreciating the earth we stand on. We use it as best we can to benefit our children and grandchildren in the future.

Principally, managing the environment requires a high awareness and a strong commitment. The environment must be optimized not only for the benefit of human life today but also must be prepared for our descendants in the future. The environment consists of water, air, land, and everything on and beneath it. All natural resources are owned by the state, which is regulated by special environmental regulations is to avoid abuse by certain person. This includes deforestation, eliminating the binding capacity of water sources upstream, causing flooding downstream, often the emergence of natural disasters such as landslides. These disasters may cause casualties as a follow-up impact of these deforestation activities.

On the other hand, today's life is increasingly eroding the environment, with a lot of cutting of trees in the forest, the higher the need for land for settlements, housing construction, factories, and industry. In addition, the emergence of air pollution caused by the number of motorized vehicles, especially in big cities, contributes the most to air damage. As a result, it causes many human diseases because it breathes dirty air.

From the aspect of environmental communication, it is necessary to study more deeply and precisely, so that stakeholders are able to manage the communication process effectively and efficiently. Meanwhile, regarding technology applications, it is an alternative solution for teenagers to contribute to environmental communication jointly.

So, there needs to be a massive education and socialization about environmental communication based on current technological developments and digitalization. The education must be supported by strategic environmental communication efforts, especially for teenagers. For this reason, this research was conducted from last February until March 2023, in Tangerang City Banten Province, with the problem of the culture of using environmental discourse through social media among teenagers in Tangerang City, Banten Province.

Referring to the description before, it is necessary to review in particular the basic concepts of environmental communication, communication technology, and digitalization. We must begin with the umbrella concept, namely Integration Theory and Attitude Change. Basically, the task of communication practitioners is to inform, persuade, influence and persuade and even change the mindset of the audience to take a certain action. In this context, it is doing environmental communication, how communication practitioners communicate, with the content of messages about efforts to maintain a green environment, with the target audience of high school students. Because teenagers are the spearhead of future community change, there needs to be early education about the importance of maintaining a green environment and living a green lifestyle.

Along with the times and technology, many green environments have become victims of development, especially in big cities in Indonesia. The existence of a green environment is very important for humans because it has an important function, namely supplying oxygen, reducing pollution, and, most importantly, reducing the effects of global warming.

Efforts to preserve and restore the function of the green environment are not only the government's responsibility but also our responsibility, especially for the younger generation. This can be started by raising awareness and concern for the younger generation (millennials). The younger generation can become Agents of Change in the process of

preserving the green environment, where the younger generation can contribute and become pioneers in the green environmental conservation movement. A simple example is that we can start by doing greenery around the house or the environment where we study.

In line with technological developments, many media can be used to support the success of this idea. Furthermore, it is necessary to review how communication technology and digitization are used as environmental communication media, starting from understanding social media versus social communication. The following is a review that the author quotes from Blanchard [1]. Basically, what happens in the interaction between individuals through social media is the process of talking to each other and sharing their thoughts, opinions, information, photos, videos, podcast broadcasts, blog posts, articles, data, resources and whatever they get. The social web also allows them to play with each other, send invitations to various events, send birthday reminders, and keep each other's friends informed about their latest location at any given time. At its core, people communicate and interact on the social web.

Furthermore, according to Blanchard, the term social media describes the pipe, and social communication and social interaction describe what people do to it. The difference between social media and social communication, or a more precise term, according to Blanchard, is social digital communication, i.e., social media indicates infrastructure. In contrast, social communication indicates activities within and between them. Blanchard also explained that the fully implemented social media program is an integrated communication mechanism that strengthens the impact of every function within an organization by leveraging the power of human networking through social networking platforms [1].

Meanwhile, communication technology through the internet can contribute to meaningful social interaction and public debate. On the downside, it can be accused of replacing human interaction with superficial online chatter and cultivating hate. Internet content can be defined in terms of the major varieties of protocols used, including e-mail, file transfer, and document display. Most issues revolve around the control of the internet. Some agree policies aim to keep the internet open and diverse, such as by protecting individual privacy, preventing monopolization by corporate interests, providing equal access for all, and keeping it free of taxation or direct control by the national government [2].

Furthermore, it is necessary to study the process of environmental communication. The researcher quotes from the results of previous studies as the results of research findings. Tan et al [3] describe the application of environmental communication measures. At this stage, it can be observed that the Department of the Environment obtains a planning strategy by knowing the habits of the community, seeing the potential that will result from environmental impacts, and providing direction through communication activities. In addition, the Environment Agency also communicates through online media, websites, Facebook, and WhatsApp Groups. At the same time, they are conducting socialization and demonstrations about the environment around the Mandeh area, inviting the community to participate in environmental conservation.

The review of the stages of environmental communication was also previously reviewed by Wahyudin [4], with more detailed stages. Stage 1, the assessment stage, contains situation analysis and problem identification, analysis of the parties/actors involved, and objective communication (to increase knowledge, influence behavior). Stage 2 is planning, which includes developing communication strategies, motivating and mobilizing the public, and selecting the media. Stage 3 is the design of the message to be conveyed, and a pre-test accompanies media production. Stage 4 is action and reflection, which is the dissemination through the media and its implementation, as well as documentation, monitoring, and evaluation. Robert Cox mentioned that environmental

communication is a pragmatic and constitutive goal to provide people with an understanding of the environment and our relationship with the universe. It is a symbolic medium used to create environmental problems and negotiate differences in responses to environmental problems. Environmental communication is used to create an understanding of environmental issues.

According to Cox's review in (Yenrizal [5]), environmental communication and public sphere, environmental communication is a constitutive and pragmatic means of understanding human beings with the environment and human relations with nature. Cox also stated that environmental communication includes two main functions: pragmatic and constitutive. Pragmatically, this is related to education, awareness, convincing, mobilizing, and helping humans to overcome environmental problems. Whereas constitutive understanding includes aspects of regulating, compiling, and representing nature and environmental problems as subjects for human understanding.

Furthermore, according to Corbett [4] environmental communication is:

1. Presented in values, words, actions and daily practices.
2. Interpreted and negotiated individually.
3. Rooted historically and culturally.
4. Has ideological roots.
5. Embedded in a dominant social paradigm that gives instrumental value to the environment and believes it exists to serve humans.
6. Complicated with pop culture, especially advertising and entertainment.
7. Framed and reported by the media in a way that generally supports the status quo.
8. Mediated and influenced by social institutions such as government and business.

Oravec and Klurke [4] mention that environmental communication is a study of the human perspective in seeing, knowing and building socio-culturally on the natural surroundings, using language and certain symbols, as materials in acting and guiding human behavior towards the environment.

Furthermore, it is related to Information Integration Theory, which explains how individuals can be influenced by information. Information is considered as the essence of persuasion activities because information can affect attitudes, then attitudes are possible to interact with each other and influence the intent of certain behaviors. "Behavior is the result of attitudes toward an action and beliefs about the social expectations of other individuals who agree or disagree with that action." [5]

So, in the environmental communication process applied in this program, the content or information highlighted is how to maintain a green environment and green living in the daily lives of teenagers. They apply this information through a digital communication medium, namely an interactive socialization application, which is specially designed by the writing team in this community service program.

According to Rachmat [6], this theory can be applied by communication practitioners in campaign programs to change public attitudes. The messages in the campaign are designed to change the direction of negative and positive information, or provide information to add new beliefs related to a topic or organization. Dissemination of this information can be done through various communication media, such as newsletters, magazines, websites and advertisements, and social media.

Based on the discussion above, the purpose of this research to know the culture of using environmental discourse through social media by teenagers in Tangerang City, Banten Province.

## 2 Methodology

The method used in this research activity is a qualitative descriptive perspective and case study method, also using the constructivism paradigm for this research process. Several key informants can give information and general knowledge about the culture of using environmental discourse through online media by teenagers in Tangerang City, Banten Province.

Based on qualitative research perspective, members of culture society are not applicable in genuine habitat. They are not to be holistic but also a part of culture or group life surrounding. Even though the research subject are not only a group, but also individual. This means, the research is a “case study”. [7].

All kinds of research that have a qualitative perspective consists of several themes. First, it has a theoretical benefit in the human interpretation process. Second, focus on human act study and spiritual artifact with social situation. Third, the research might use humans as the main research instrument. Fourth, it can be used as a narrative template for riding and writing for audience consumption. [8] According to Yin, case study is a research strategy for asking “how” and “why”. If the researcher have little opportunity to control event - event which can be researched, besides that research focus on contemporary phenomena in real life [9].

In the data collecting techniques for qualitative perspective the process from gathering data was taken from many resources, such as in-depth interviews, observation, and personal data. In addition, the data was validated using the triangulation technique with data checking [10]. Primary data in this research is taken from in depth interview. Meanwhile, the secondary data was taken from many sources including distributing questionnaire to several respondents. With such procedure, this research is inductive.

The goal of the interviews is to make the researchers familiar with the organization and the person, and to understand some symbols or culture from a subjective perspective [11]. The data collection process and in-depth interviews were conducted in February until March 2023. There were ten key informants who were senior high students from Tangerang City, ranging from 15-17 years old, and are mix of males and females.

Furthermore, in the data analysis process, simplification from all data that can be read and interpreted. Qualitative data analysis can be used as a tool to organize, manage, and to synthesize until patterns or systems can be gathered, learned, and decided to share with others [10]. In this research, all data covered from many sources was analyzed with the interview results and document analysis using triangulation technique.

## 3 Findings

The study shows that teenagers in the city of Tangerang have formed a culture of using green environmental discourse through social media. In general, the key informants assessed the importance of social media in everyday life. Teenagers Tangerang city explained that every day, key informants had a habit of viewing social media content, especially tutorial and drama content, listening to songs and reading stories. On weekends, these young people like viewing funny football and entertainment content on social media via Twitter, YouTube, WhatsApp, Instagram, Pinterest, Telegram and Tik Tok. At school, teenagers only open social media three times a day. The key informants often use social media such as Tik Tok and Instagram; mostly, they open account such as Quotes for it is touching. In addition, the youths also like to view educational content, Korean dramas, funny content, culinary, K-pop photos, and inspirational videos. Social media is used as a way to dispel boredom and confusion about what to do at a certain time.

Teenagers define a green environment as a nature that is beautiful, healthy, fresh, and well-maintained. They add, a green environment is one with trees and plants so that it

feels calm and pleasing to the eye, a clean, beautiful, peaceful environment with lots of trees and flowers. They also include that there should be organic and non-organic trash bins.

Moreover, the youth also have their definition of a green environment at school, at home, and in the surrounding environment. A Green school environment should have lots of plants and trees, lots of trash bins, and comfort. There should be a field corridor that has lots of plants. A green environment in schools can also mean not using plastic excessively. At home, the green environment is dire as students do not feel comfortable due to the lack of planted plants and air pollution. The green environment at home could mean planting and greening the neighborhood. The surrounding environment is beautiful, and lots of plants. The green environment at home includes planting herbs and medical plants in pots. People are also advised to clean clogged drains so that the environment in the house is cool and healthy.

In discussing green environment discourse with the closest people, the key informants admitted that they often discussed the issue with teachers during talks or teaching. There was one family that closed the holes that became rat nests. It discusses more about cleanliness around it so it does not get dirty and preserves existing plants. In addition, a student said that when they were in junior high school, they separated the waste bottles and watered the trees around the field. Meanwhile, each of family member also discuss about piles of garbage and plastic. Also, when together with friends, they keep reminding each other to maintain a green environment.

The researcher reviews the grouping of general themes, namely the meaning of the green environment. The grouping begins with the results of the introduction and understanding of youth about the green environment, along with the review of the urgency of research and problem formulation. Next is describing the grouping of themes based on the explanations from all the key informants starting with identifying and analyzing green environmental aspects.

First, a beautiful and well-maintained environment is needed, litter-less habit is very important. Key informants explained the context of the green environment in terms of the beauty and care of the environment includes planting plants, trees, the physical environment, and waste management. This assumption arises because if the environment is not maintained a few green plants will create an arid and uncomfortable environment. The presence of waste that is disposed carelessly will certainly damage the beauty of the environment.

Second, the environment should have a vast area of trees and plants so that it feels cool and pleasing to the eye. Coolness and pleasing to the eye are the requirements of a green environment. The presence of trees and plants will create a cool environment that is pleasing to the eye. Third, an environment that has lots of plants and goes green. Here is included the go green aspect, which includes saving energy and managing organic and non-organic waste.

Fourth, a clean environment should have lots of trees and flowers and organic and non-organic trash cans. The existence of organic and non-organic waste bins is one of the conditions for a green environment, as stated by the key informant. These young people demand not only the presence of green plants but also separate trash bins for organic waste such as leftovers, vegetables, and fruits and non-organic waste such as plastic, cans, glass and materials that are difficult to decompose. The separation of trash bins further supports environmental sustainability (sustainable environment).

Fifth, the green environment is beautiful and peaceful. A peaceful environment is an aspect of a green environment. This informant demands harmony between neighbors to be the basis for creating a beautiful and peaceful environment. Neighbors must consult each other in overcoming environmental problems such as the problem of scattered garbage.

Sixth, a green environment should have fresh air. Key informants associated a green environment with fresh air, more precisely without air pollution. The existence of many trees and green plants will produce more oxygen. The dominant oxygen composition in the air will create fresh air and comfort people.

The discourse on the green environment is divided into the desire to create a greener environment and what is expected of a green environment, including:

- a. The desire to create an environment that is clean from trash and lots of trees.
- b. More plants are planted.
- c. Want to create a peaceful, quiet, spacious environment with lots of green plants and animals.
- d. Want to open a better living environment and in every one green environment, and there is a place to exercise.
- e. Wanting to create a greener environment, trees are planted on the side of the road so it does not get too hot.
- f. Want to create a greener environment that is free from cigarette smoke.

Students also like to have discussions on green environment movement on social media. They like to discuss the green environment on social media such as when the school take part in Adiwiyata competitions. The students also like to watch Pandawara group community programs and view inspirational content on how to maintain a green environment with their courage and struggle to create a better environment.

After we see how teenagers interpret the concept of a green environment, we might conclude that their interpretation is simple in accordance with the learning process they experience or the expectations they give about the concept of a green environment. This interpretation is very important for the future survival and sustainability of the environment. What is imprinted in the minds of these teenagers will try to be realized in efforts to preserve the environment to become a better condition.

In interpreting the concept of a green environment, it seems not only in terms of the abundance of green plants but there is a fundamental and deep interpretation such as a culture of caring for the environment and the separation of organic and non-organic waste, an energy-efficient environment, a peaceful environment, and a fresh environment. These all refer to an environment-friendly and go-green culture (care for the environment).

The phenomenon and spirit that emerges in the context of this meaning is the need to create a green environment physically. From the people themselves, the point is how to get used to cultivating a culture of clean living, caring for the environment, and being environmentally friendly.

So, what the key informants experienced was relevant to their online media culture, especially in understanding how a green environment was formed. When referring to behavior change, there are elements of community support, the environment, and the reality that teenagers experience in their daily lives. Besides, personal orientation and how they accept the reality of life also shape this meaning. At the same time, their shared values, beliefs, ideas, and behaviors are reflected in their experiences and the real world.

Furthermore, the research also explores the young people's reviews of their knowledge and opinions about the government's current policy. In this case, the key informants interpreted it based on their thinking patterns, habits, judgments, images, and experiences, divided into government policies regarding the green environment they know and whether they agree with. Their knowledge related to government policies on green environment is as follows:

- a) RPTRA gardens were made for children's play and a place to plant many trees.
- b) Lack of knowledge of government policies regarding reforestation

- c) Lack of knowledge of government policies on the environment but have watched a campaign on TV about disposing of waste in its place.
- d) Knowing there is a green environment competition, namely the Adiwiyata competition.

Their opinions on government policies are expressed as follows:

- a) Agree with the government's policy of making RPTRA parks because the air becomes cleaner and makes people aware of the importance of a green environment.
- b) The government must emphasize the green environment because there is currently global warming.
- c) The government is less assertive in dealing with the green environment, such as the problem of littering.
- d) The government seems weak; there are even rare trash cans in the area where they live.
- e) The government should do a lot of greening in crowded places or meeting points of many people.
- f) The government's policy is good though it is still concerned with caring for the environment. The government should help anyone who wants to clean up the environment, like the Pandawara community, not just order people and pay for it.
- g) Agree that with the Adiwiyata competition, the community will be encouraged to reforest.
- h) The government should take firm action because there are still many parties destroying the environment.
- i) The government doesn't take care of the environment, so there is the Pandawara community or people who want to help, here the government has to intervene.

According to the key informants, the application of an environmentally friendly and environmentally caring culture must begin with the motivation to preserve the environment, starting from the home, school and residential environment. Such as cleaning the environment, planting green plants, providing trash cans, reducing plastic waste, planting medicinal plants, and clear clogged drains.

Informants' understanding of the importance of a green environment is almost the same. They feel that environmental preservation is not only the responsibility of the government but also the responsibility of society and ourselves as members of society.

This green environment discourse is not only echoed in the real world but also cyberspace/digital world, such as on YouTube: Pandawara Community, Instagram, and in various communication media such as on television in the form of public service advertisements about cleanliness and greening.

Especially for the Pandawara community, the content they produce really inspires the younger generation with their courage and struggle to create a better environment. One of their content on YouTube went viral when this community asked 4,000 Lampung residents to clean the second dirtiest beach in Lampung, namely Sukaraja Beach. Even so, this action has somewhat sparked controversy, namely the reduction of coastal land formed from garbage. However, actions towards environmental improvement must be initiated and spearheaded so that they become the attention of all parties. Content about environmental care discourse from the Pandawara community is considered successful in raising public awareness of the importance of environmental preservation.

The community's concern for the environment is reflected in the understanding of the informants that as individuals and members of the community it is necessary to have



concern and effort to preserve the environment. At the same time, these teenagers expect more from the government's concern and efforts to preserve a green environment, such as campaigning more about global warming, being more assertive in implementing regulations regarding waste disposal, providing waste disposal facilities and trash cans, planting more greenery, acting decisively against those who damage the environment, giving more respect to those who care about the environment, such as giving the Adiwiyata award and activating the Kalpataru award to inspire people to preserve the environment.

Research into the culture of managing online media that focuses on green environmental content from youth in the city of Tangerang, which represents citizens of Banten province, needs to be followed up with further research. Banten is unique as it borders the island of Sumatera, separated by the Sunda Strait. As the beach and the sea are an environment that is a source of life for both humans and the marine life, it is hoped that the discourse on green environment through social media for the young generation can build a culture of caring for the environment (go green) and environmentally friendly (environment friendly) in order to realize environmental sustainability in future generations.

According to the description and the interview results, it appears that the participants received five components in the digital process in supporting communication about the green environment. First, the communication process is carried out through online and social media, with content management focusing on the green environment. Second, the participants carried out activities on social media in particular, starting with the simulation first. Third, the green environment message includes how to protect the school environment, home environment and the environment in general so that it remains green and sustainable. Another informative message is how to use social media proportionally, according to relevant needs. People should not use social media as a medium for disseminating "garbage" information, so that the concept of a green environment is not only a real environment in society, but also builds a "green environment" in discourse, dialogue, and massive two-way communication through social media.

Fourth, the environmental communication process must be managed properly. Fifth, all the youth think that the discourse on a green environment refers to the desire to create an environment that is clean from garbage, as well as having lots of trees and plants, creating a peaceful, quiet, spacious environment, and having lots of green plants and animals. Furthermore, teenagers also think that opening a better living environment and everyone a green environment, and there is a place to exercise and a greener environment that is free from cigarette smoke. All this information and hope become an obligation that must be continuously informed through online media consumed by teenagers.

## **4 Conclusions and Advice**

The conclusion focused on sustainability communication and digitizing public relations in communicating a green environment, by optimizing social media, the internet, and technology, which is not only supporting reputation formation but also how audience participation builds discourse in online media so that a green environment is maintained. The results of this research also show that students acquire the knowledge, understanding, and attitudes to apply digitalization activities in support of environmental communication when they apply them in culinary practices (in the form of attitudes to use clean, healthy, and green food sources) and also hospitality practices (in the form of optimizing no-smoking rooms, using in-door plants).

Applying an environmentally friendly and environmentally caring culture must begin with the motivation to preserve the environment, starting from the home, school, and residential environment. Few simple actions include cleaning the environment, planting green plants, providing trash cans, reducing plastic waste, planting medicinal plants, and

clearing clogged drains. Finally, this research suggest the process of strengthening discourse on social media about environmental information and sustainability communication, it is necessary to apply communication ethics on social media so that negative arguments do not arise.

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