

The Effectiveness of Instagram as an Environmental Communication Platform: A Study on @gajah.indonesia Account

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Abstract

This study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of Instagram as an environmental communication platform, focusing on the account @gajah.indonesia. The account actively disseminates information related to elephant conservation, utilizing the power of visuals and social interaction to reach a wider audience. The content analysis method was used in this study to see how @gajah.indonesia sends conservation messages and how audiences respond to the content. The study shows that Instagram can capture users' attention through engaging images, videos, and emotional and educational narratives. In addition, there is an increased awareness and concern for elephant conservation issues, as shown by user engagement, which includes leaving comments and sharing content and responses to campaign content on elephant conservation issues. This study found that the success of environmental communication on social media relies on a combination of vital visual elements and active interaction. The findings provide important insights for environmental communication practitioners in maximizing Instagram's potential as a tool to increase public awareness and participation in environmental issues, particularly in endangered species conservation efforts.

Keywords: Effectiveness, Instagram, Environmental Communication, Elephant Conservation, Information Dissemination

INTRODUCTION

The conservation of Sumatran and Bornean elephants (*Elephas maximus*) is currently highly threatened. Ecologically, these animals play an essential role in maintaining the stability of forest ecosystems, especially in Sumatra and Kalimantan. Sumatra and Bornean elephants are categorized by IUCN (The World Conservation Union) as endangered ("endangered" and "critical," respectively), which is the worst status before being categorized as "extinct". Meanwhile, CITES (Convention on International Trade of Endangered Fauna and Flora) has categorized elephants in Appendix I, which contains animal species whose circulation is regulated extra strictly (FKGI, n.d.).

The conversion of forest land into industrial and residential areas is at the root of the demographic problems faced by Sumatran elephants today. Data from the Wildlife Fund Indonesia (2019) shows that more than 100 elephants have died since 2004, and more than 70% of Sumatran elephant habitat has been destroyed in the last 25 years, just in Riau. The elephant population has declined by 84% over the past 25 years. The two leading causes of elephant deaths are conflict with humans and poaching. The reduction in elephant migration and

browsing routes, which has led to elephant herds becoming scattered in several locations and surrounded by human settlements, is caused by habitat fragmentation into agricultural, plantation, industrial and urban areas. (Hardanu & Firdaus, 2024).

According to Robert Cox, in his book entitled *Environmental Communication and the Public Sphere* quoted in (Herutomo & Istiyanto, 2021) states that environmental communication is a constitutive and practical tool for conveying information about the environment and how it affects our perceptions, ourselves, and our relationship with the environment. Environmental communication and environmental policy are related to each other. These two factors affect the environment because communication provides environmental information to all environmental stakeholders actively and not monotonously (Herutomo & Istiyanto, 2021). In addition, environmental communication conveys public demands for environmental management, including forest environmental issues.

Information dissemination exists to help groups or individuals understand information, receive it, and utilize it. Using media as a conduit for information also increases the effectiveness of information dissemination. The use of social media such as Instagram is one example because it is a global network that can convey information, videos, and documents to its users (Kusumajanti *et al.*, 2018). Then Kusumajanti (2018), stated that disseminating information is closely related to communication activities. The line of similarity between communication and information lies in the elements that play a role when the activity takes place, as well as the dissemination of information, which is the dissemination of messages containing facts to create an accurate and clear explanation and foster the same understanding of the message being disseminated.

Nowadays, the internet has caused many significant impacts and changes in human life. The internet makes communication between humans unlimited, including when we want to access and obtain information. Sisson and Pontau state that the internet is a world technology in the form of information and communication. This technology has progressed rapidly and is currently used by the general public to find various information and communicate their needs (Fadli & Sazali, 2023). Munir emphasized that at this time technology dramatically affects human life in carrying out activities in any field, especially in information and communication. (Anam *et al.*, 2021)

One of the fast-growing internet technologies used by many people today is Instagram. We Are Social data shows that the number of global Instagram users reached 1.63 billion as of April

2023. This number has increased by 12.2% compared to the previous year. Instagram ranks as the fourth most popular app in the world as of April 2023, showing its high popularity as one of the leading apps in the technology industry. In Indonesia alone, there are 106 million Instagram users as of April 2023 makes Indonesia the fourth most-used country in the world.

Communication campaigns need to involve channels so that the public can receive the message. Venus (2002) define campaign channels as any medium to convey messages to audiences. This can be paper used to write messages, telephone, public dialogue, counselling, posters, banners, internet/social media, newspapers, radio, or television. Nowadays, the use of media in delivering communicationcampaign messages is considered effective (Venus, 2018).

Social media has quickly become popular as one of the campaign channels that has a significant influence on campaign messages. This can be said because of the characteristics of social media that are interactive, easily accessible, able to enter the private sphere of individuals, personal and able to encourage participatory democracy (Venus, 2018).

This is in line with the utilization of Instagram by the Indonesian Elephant Conservation Forum (FKGI) to disseminate information about elephant conservation to the public. The Instagram account @gajah.indonesia is an account initiated by FKGI that aims to illustrate various effortst o conserve elephants from extinction. FKGI is a forum as a gathering place for individuals who care about elephant conservation. The establishment of FKGI aims to provide solutions needed to encourage the formation of an elephant conservation policy and strategy that aligns with sustainable development in Indonesia. Another thing is to find solutions to resolve conflicts between elephants and humans through relevant institutions and agencies.

METHOD

In this study, researchers used a qualitative approach. Qualitative research basically produces descriptive data in the form of text that seeks to capture the meaning of a symptom, fact, orreality (Raco, 2010). Then, research that has a descriptive type is a research method with an effort to describe and interpret objects as they are (Zellatifanny & Mudjiyanto, 2020). Meanwhile, according to Bogdan & Biklen (1982), qualitative is one of the research procedures that produces descriptive data in the form of speech or writing and the behaviour of the people observed. Researchers use qualitative methods to understand the detailed processes and dynamics of relationships that occur in an organization or community in this study.

The object of this research is the information dissemination process in conveying environmental communication on Instagram @gajah.indonesia. To get actual information, there

are also subjects in this study, namely Instagram Admin @gajah.indonesia and Instagram Followers @gajah.indonesia. Data collection is obtained from primary data sources, namely observation, which in this study is carried out via the internet or commonly referred to as e-observations by observing the content on Instagram @gajah.indonesia social media. This is done to obtain an overview of digital activities recorded in various contents on the @gajah.indonesia Instagram platform. Data collection is also obtained from secondary data in the form of relevant documents or literature relevant to the study.

Support the research. In the data analysis step, data is collected and then checked repeatedly. Furthermore, the process of selecting, focusing attention, and identifying relevant, important, and interesting informant data is part of data reduction. In the final step, researchers interpret their conclusions by referring to the theories and concepts used.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Forum Konservasi Gajah Indonesia (FKGI), an organization that focuses on elephant conservation in Indonesia, manages an Instagram account under the name @gajah.indonesia. It is a website that aims to disseminate information about elephant protection, encourage conservation, and raise public awareness about threats facing elephants, such as poaching and habitat degradation. FKGI hopes to capture the audience's attention and inspire real action to conserve Indonesia's elephant population through educational content in the form of photos, videos and infographics.



Figure.1 Instagram Profile @gajah.indonesia

Instagram @gajah.indonesia is dominated by content accompanied by information about elephants. The captions used from each content category also vary depending on the content shared. Based on researcher observations, @gajah.indonesia posts shared from January 1, 2023, to September 13, 2024, have long and informative captions. According to Kusumajanti (2018),

this is in accordance with the requirements for effective information dissemination. The use of long and informative captions can be understood and easily understood by followers, so that it causes a lot of interaction in each post.

Post in fig.2 is the top post with the most interactions, both from likes, comments and also the number of impressions on the reels post.

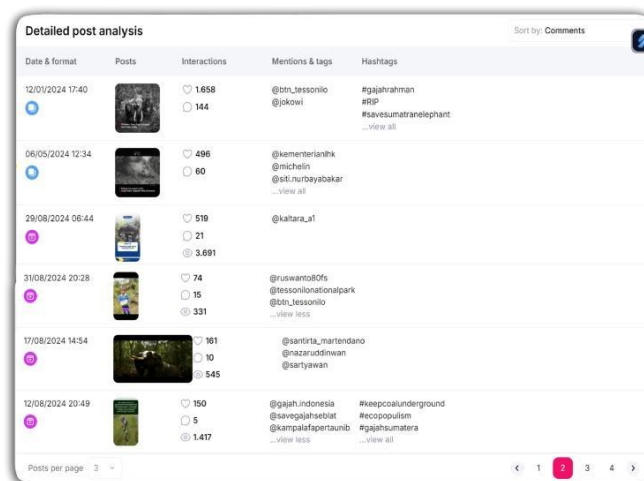


Figure 2. Posts with the Most Interactions

In the period January 1, 2023 to September 13, 2024, researchers have monitored and observed the posts of the @gajah.indonesia Instagram account. In using qualitative methods, the first stage is to determine the uploads to be selected, on the @gajah.indonesia account there are 189 posts during the period January 1, 2023 to September 13, 2024. In the next step, the posts that have been selected in the first stage will be analyzed based on their relationship and relevance to the discussion to be discussed in the study.

After analyzing all the posts selected during this period, we found that posts from the @gajah.indonesia Instagram account played an important role in spreading information about elephant conservation and educating followers to take part in elephant conservation.

In the next process, the researcher interpreted the posts on the @gajah.indonesia Instagram account. In this stage, the researcher develops and divides the groups or categories of posts on the @gajah.indonesia account during the research period. In this stage, the researcher starts by monitoring and determining groups or categories.

Campaign Media

The @gajah.indonesia Instagram account often conducts campaigns related to the protection of Indonesian elephants. According to Maryam *et al.*, (2021) campaigns can be carried out using instruments or new media or digital media such as social media. Then Fadli *et*

al., (2023) stated that social media is also more effective in providing information on certain topics or conducting online campaigns to raise awareness of certain issues, such as education about elephant conservation and inviting people to be more sensitive to issues regarding elephants. In other words, social media serves as a link between the social media account manager and the public who use social media.

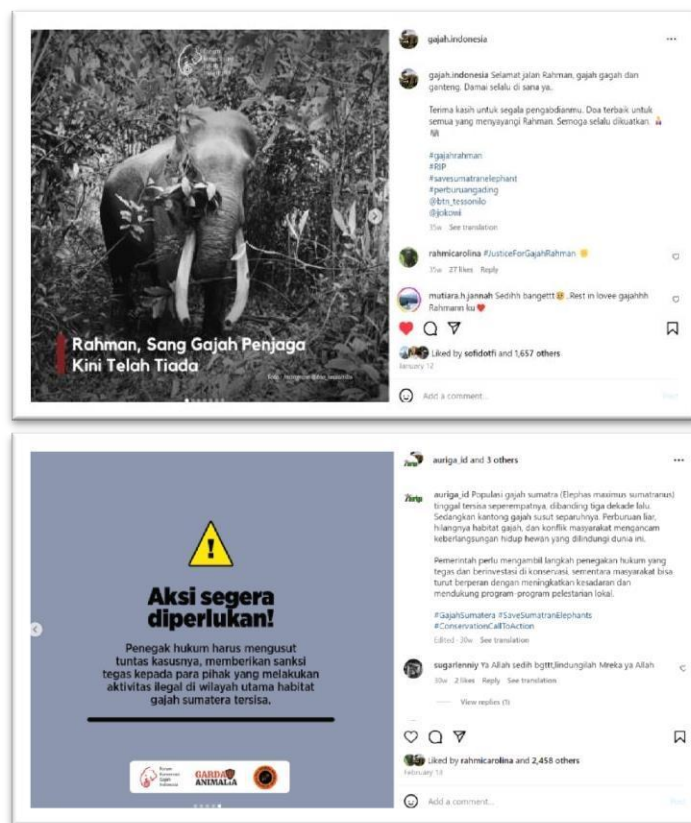


Figure 3. Campaign Posts

As in picture.3 of the @gajah.indonesia account post about efforts to seek justice for the death of a Sumatran elephant in Tesso Nilo National Park, Riau. In addition to inviting followers to care about the issues that are happening, @gajah.indonesia also provides a social media platform.

For education on elephant protection, the response from followers was overwhelming, as this post was among the posts with the most interactions.

Information Media

In the @gajah.indonesia posts in this information media category, researchers found 84 content with 3 types of content. First, infographics dominate, then there is information in the form of the latest news on elephant issues and information through researcher reviews. The

dissemination of information by the @gajah.indonesia Instagram account is dominated by infographics on issues and facts about elephants in general.



Figure 4. Information Posting

The use of concise graphics (infographics) to illustrate information makes it possible to increase readership. Evaluation of the use of Infographics shows that Infographics are three times more likely to be viewed than the original article because data visualization can increase attention on social media. Infographics show that they are attractive, effective, persuasive, focused, easy to read, artistic, easy to track or find again, highly digestible data, easy to share, memorable, informative, and easy to understand. Infographics provide a concise and interesting presentation of information with acceptable visuals. In addition, infographics are easy to view and share on social media platforms (Kazarian *et al.*, 2021)

Entertainment

The @gajah.indonesia account makes an effort to create interaction with followers by presenting entertainment content. Posts with this entertainment category, researchers found 42 contents in the form of giveaways, rhymes and viral videos about elephants. This is supported by the high enthusiasm of followers in the entertainment content presented by the @gajah.indonesia account. The entertainment content presented always contains information about elephants.



Figure 5. Entertainment Posts

Entertainment content is used as a medium for disseminating information with the use of relaxed messages to make it easier for the audience to accept. In addition, in presenting entertainment content, it is necessary to pay attention not to overdo it and get out of the context of the image that is owned. (Nafsyah *et al.*, 2022)

Content effectiveness is measured using an insights feature that shows affordability, readability, and follower demographics. Interested content is usually seen from the achievement of interaction and engagement. Audience response to elephant conservation content is positive, especially for knowledge-sharing content. Interviewees also revealed that they receive suggestions or criticism, especially from followers who have expertise in related fields, such as on content regarding elephant deaths due to viruses. The use of Instagram as a communication medium is considered effective in disseminating information about elephant conservation.

One of the challenges faced in disseminating information through Instagram is the need for a team that specifically and consistently produces content. Interviewees also gave advice on continuing to innovate and create more creative content, strengthening online activities with offline activities, and increasing the amount of content taken from the field.

CONCLUSION

The study found that Instagram, especially through the @gajah.indonesia account, is a useful tool for sharing information about the environment, especially in terms of elephant conservation. The account can capture users' attention and raise awareness about conservation issues by using engaging infographics, images and videos. In addition, entertainment content such as giveaways and viral videos help to spread information in a more relaxed and engaging way for followers, so that the message is conveyed more widely.

Instagram offers many opportunities for conservation communication, but there are some issues that need to be overcome, such as the need for a consistent team to create content and

generate new ideas. To achieve environmental communication goals, active interaction and a strong visual component are essential, as shown by the evaluation of content through the insights feature. The results enable environmental communication practitioners to better utilize social media to raise public awareness of pressing environmental issues.

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