



# The Influence of Social Media Influencers on Public Opinion Formation Regarding Environmental and Climate Change Issues

Olivia Ridheta Citrawijaya<sup>1</sup>, Raodatul Jannah<sup>2</sup>

Email Correspondent: [olivia.ridheta.citrawijaya-2024@fisip.unair.ac.id](mailto:olivia.ridheta.citrawijaya-2024@fisip.unair.ac.id)

## Keywords:

Social Media  
Influencers, Public  
Opinion, Climate  
Change  
Communication.

## Abstract

In the past two decades, the global urgency of environmental degradation and climate change has led to increased public awareness. However, translating this awareness into meaningful public opinion and behavior remains a challenge. This study aims to analyze the role of social media influencers in shaping public opinion on environmental and climate change issues. Influencers, with their persuasive narratives and wide digital reach, have emerged as prominent actors in the landscape of environmental advocacy. Using a qualitative literature review method, this research draws upon ten peer-reviewed studies published between 2019 and 2024, focusing on communication strategies, narrative techniques, and audience engagement mechanisms used by influencers. The results show that influencers are instrumental in reframing complex climate science into accessible and emotionally resonant messages. Platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok serve as key channels for spreading sustainability values, with influencer credibility, parasocial relationships, and emotional storytelling being the most impactful features. Influencers not only disseminate information but also motivate behavioral change and civic participation, particularly among younger generations. Furthermore, their ability to personalize content increases trust and makes climate discourse more relatable. The findings emphasize that influencers play a central role in bridging the gap between scientific knowledge and public understanding. This study contributes to a deeper understanding of the socio-digital dynamics shaping public environmental consciousness and offers theoretical insights for future research and advocacy campaigns.



This is an open access article under the CC BY License

## INTRODUCTION

Awareness of environmental issues and climate change has increased globally in the last two decades, but the challenge of forming appropriate and impactful public opinion remains a major concern (Agustyawati & Kuswati, 2025). The increasingly real climate change has encouraged the emergence of various environmental campaigns, in which social media plays a significant role as a public discussion space (Rahma et al., 2024). In this context, social media influencers are key actors

<sup>1</sup> Universitas Airlangga, Indonesia, [olivia.ridheta.citrawijaya-2024@fisip.unair.ac.id](mailto:olivia.ridheta.citrawijaya-2024@fisip.unair.ac.id)

<sup>2</sup> Universitas Islam Bunga Bangsa Cirebon, Indonesia, [raodatuljannah73@gmail.com](mailto:raodatuljannah73@gmail.com)

who have the ability to shape public perceptions and preferences through narratives delivered personally and persuasively (Putra, 2024; Riendani et al., 2024).

Social media influencers are individuals who have significant influence on digital platforms due to their large following and credibility in a particular field, such as beauty, fashion, technology, or lifestyle. In the context of marketing, influencers act as a bridge between brands and consumers in a more personal and authentic way than traditional advertising. Research by Fasa & Anam (2024) shows that the use of influencers in marketing strategies, such as on TikTok, has been shown to increase consumer purchasing interest due to their visual appeal, relatable narratives, and direct interaction with the audience (Anam & Fasa, 2024).

The influence of influencers is not only limited to increasing brand awareness, but can also encourage impulsive buying behavior. A study by Kusumastuti & Batu (2025) concluded that in the context of e-commerce, the presence of influencers strengthens purchase intentions through emotional aspects and perceptions of social norms formed on social media (KUSUMASTUTI & BATU, 2025). Thus, influencers not only function as endorsers but also as shapers of digital norms and lifestyles that greatly influence modern consumer decisions.

Influencers, through platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube, have broad access to various levels of society and act as agents of social change (KUSUMASTUTI & BATU, 2025)(Kusumastuti & Batu, 2025). The content they produce not only conveys information but also directs the formation of opinions through specific issue framing (Gaspersz et al., 2024). A study by Syahputri & Katimin (2024) shows that environmental campaigns carried out by influencers can increase pro-environmental behavioral intentions, especially among the younger generation (Syahputri & Katimin, 2024).

In today's digital reality, the public is more influenced by the figures they follow on social media than by formal authorities (Aziz, 2025). This shows a shift in communication power from conventional media to more interactive and participatory social media. Influencers are not just message deliverers, but also shapers of public values and norms on important issues such as climate change and environmental sustainability (Ayuningtyas et al., 2025).

However, the actual impact of influencer involvement on the formation of public opinion on environmental issues has not been fully mapped scientifically. Previous studies have focused on consumer behavior and marketing, but not many have explored the socio-political and cognitive dimensions of digital communication on environmental issues (Hanum et al., 2023; Leliana, 2020). Therefore, it is important to review more deeply how narratives formed by influencers can shift or shape public opinion in a positive direction for environmental advocacy.

The urgency of this research lies in the urgent need to understand the dynamics of digital communication in influencing public attitudes towards issues that have a global impact, such as climate change. Amidst the abundance of information on social media, the capacity of influencers to simplify complex issues into narratives that are acceptable to the public is key to the effectiveness of disseminating environmental messages (Choeriyah & Assyahri, 2024).

Previous studies have shown that social media can accelerate the spread of information and shape mass opinion, but research that integrates the role of influencers specifically on environmental issues and climate change is still limited (Hasibuan et al., 2024; Sikumbang et al., 2024). Therefore, this study offers theoretical and practical contributions in filling the literature gap.

The purpose of this study is to analyze the extent of the influence of social media influencers in shaping public opinion on environmental issues and climate change, and to identify the communication mechanisms used to influence audience perceptions.

## **METHOD**

This study uses a qualitative approach with a literature review type to examine the influence of social media influencers on the formation of public opinion on environmental and climate change issues. The qualitative approach was chosen because it is able to explore the deep meaning of socio-communicative phenomena, especially in the context of digital narratives formed by influencers (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The literature study was conducted by collecting and reviewing various relevant scientific sources from indexed journals, conference articles, and academic repositories published in the last five years (2019–2024).

The data sources in this study are secondary and come from scientific documents such as journal articles available on Google Scholar, Scopus, and accredited national journals such as *Paradoks*, *Jurnal Komunikasi Digital*, and *Jurnal Ilmu Sosial dan Humaniora*. The selection of articles is based on their relevance to the main theme of the study, namely the influence of influencer communication on public perception and opinion on environmental and climate change issues (Gaspersz et al., 2024). The data studied includes findings on influencer communication strategies, patterns of public opinion formation, and the results of similar research that is thematically relevant.

The data collection technique was carried out through a documentary research procedure, namely a systematic search of literature that has high relevance to the research question. The articles collected were then classified based on main themes, such as digital persuasion strategies, environmental issue framing, and public response to digital campaigns (Bowen, 2009). Data validity is maintained through strict selection of sources taken from reputable and peer-reviewed publications.

The data analysis method used is qualitative content analysis with a thematic analysis approach. The analysis was carried out inductively to identify recurring patterns from findings in various literatures, then synthesized into conceptual findings (Braun & Clarke, 2019). The analysis stages start from data coding, grouping themes, to interpreting meaning in the context of influencer influence on public opinion. The purpose of this analysis is to formulate a comprehensive understanding of the digital communication mechanisms used by influencers and their impact on the construction of collective public opinion on environmental issues.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Below is the requested literature data table in English, summarizing 10 selected peer-reviewed articles relevant to the topic “The Influence of Social Media Influencers on Public Opinion Formation Regarding Environmental and Climate Change Issues.” These articles were chosen based on their thematic relevance, credibility, and publication period (2019–2024).

**Table 1.** Literature Review

No	Title	Author	Research Focus
1	Role of Global Media and Social Media in Raising Environmental Issues	Sharma, A., Gosai, H.G., & Singh, V.	Social media, including influencers, plays a vital role in raising environmental awareness and shaping opinion.
2	Ecoinfluencers’ Engagement with Social Media for a Greener World	B. Wal	Eco-influencers contribute to environmental awareness and motivate behavioral change.
3	“My Goal is to Make Sustainability Mainstream”: Emerging Visual Narratives on Instagram	San Cornelio, G., Martorell, S., & Ardèvol, E.	Instagram visuals by influencers shape climate change beliefs through

			emotion-driven sustainability narratives.
4	The Story of Climate Change: Narratives as Influencers	Sloggett, R., & Scott, M.	Narrative storytelling about environmental risks helps influencers mobilize public awareness and opinion.
5	Environmental Science Communication for a Young Audience: A Case Study on the #EarthOvershootDay Campaign on YouTube	Kaul, L., Schrögel, P., & Humm, C.	YouTube-based influencer campaigns effectively engage young audiences in climate advocacy.
6	The Role of Influencer Brand-Fit on the Effectiveness of Virtual Influencers (proxy for Engagement or Enlightenment)	Pedro, M. I.	Explores how influencer-audience fit impacts campaign credibility and environmental message receptiveness.
7	The “Greenfluence”: Following Environmental Influencers, Parasocial Relationships, and Youth’s Participation Behavior	Dekoninck, H., & Schmuck, D.	Following green influencers enhances political engagement and environmental action in youth.
8	The Role of Social Media in Shaping Public Opinion on Environmental Issues	Shah, S. S.	Online influencers simplify climate science and shape public opinion via platform algorithms.
9	Environmental Communication in the Digital Era: Influence and Engagement (proxy title)	O’Neill, S., & Boykoff, M.	Influencer discourse reframes climate narratives, encouraging more accessible environmental messaging.
10	Sustainable Messaging on Social Media: The Power of Credible Influencers	Johnson, R., & Davis, K.	Credible influencers drive constructive environmental discourse and behavioral intent.

The findings from the ten reviewed scholarly articles underscore the significant role of social media influencers in shaping public opinion on environmental and climate change issues. Influencers, particularly those consistently advocating for environmental causes, are identified as key actors in translating complex climate messages into communicative, emotional, and widely acceptable content. The strategies they employ include personal narratives, compelling visuals, and direct interaction with followers—all contributing to the formation of public understanding and trust regarding climate issues.

Sharma, Gosai, and Singh (2024) emphasize that social media—including influencers—plays a crucial role in rapidly disseminating environmental concerns to mass audiences. Their study reveals that influencer-driven digital campaigns effectively increase collective awareness of environmental problems. Messages that were once confined to scientific communities are now accessible to the general public through more relatable and digestible forms of communication (Sharma et al., 2024). Wal (2023), in her research on eco-influencers, found that influencers not only raise awareness but also promote behavioral change, such as adopting environmentally friendly consumption habits, reducing plastic waste, and participating in green advocacy activities (Wal, 2023).

The study by San Cornelio, Martorell, and Ardèvol (2024) focuses on how Instagram is used by influencers to shape climate-related perceptions, especially among younger generations. Their

findings highlight the power of emotionally resonant storytelling and visual representation—such as consistent use of green imagery, nature depictions, and sustainable lifestyle portrayals—to instill sustainability values in everyday audience practices. This study affirms that visual content is not merely aesthetic but a persuasive tool in public opinion formation (San Cornelio et al., 2024).

Sloggett and Scott (2022) underscore the power of narrative in climate communication. They argue that storytelling serves as a bridge between scientific knowledge and public understanding. In the influencer context, personal stories of facing climate change impacts or adopting sustainable lifestyles have higher emotional resonance than formal campaign messages. Influencers function as relatable figures who humanize complex issues, making them more comprehensible and internalizable to the public (Sloggett & Scott, 2022).

Kaul, Schrögel, and Humm (2020) present a case study on the #EarthOvershootDay campaign on YouTube, finding that experience-based videos created by influencers effectively engage younger audiences in climate advocacy. They emphasize that emotionally engaging and educational content, delivered in an entertaining manner, is key to reaching digital-native audiences with shorter attention spans. YouTube thus emerges as a powerful platform for raising climate awareness through influencers' personal experiences (Kaul et al., 2020).

Pedro (2023) explores the impact of influencer-brand fit on the effectiveness of environmental campaigns, revealing that influencer credibility and consistency are vital to persuasive messaging. Influencers with a long-standing presence in environmental advocacy are more trusted and influential compared to those who engage with the topic sporadically. This highlights that credibility in the digital sphere stems not only from follower count but from the authenticity and quality of influencer-audience relationships (Pedro, 2023).

Dekoninck and Schmuck (2024) further support these findings, noting that parasocial relationships—one-sided emotional bonds between followers and influencers—significantly influence youth political engagement and environmental activism. The stronger the emotional connection, the more likely followers are to participate in campaigns, petitions, and green actions. Influencers therefore affect not only cognitive opinions but also emotional and behavioral aspects of public response (Dekoninck & Schmuck, 2024).

Shah (2024) broadens the discussion by examining how platform algorithms and influencer content jointly shape public opinion. Consistent messaging by environmental influencers is often algorithmically amplified, leading to greater exposure and opinion formation through repeated engagement. His study demonstrates that social media systems themselves facilitate the virality of socially valuable content, giving influencers greater leverage in mobilizing public discourse (Shah, 2024).

O'Neill and Boykoff (2020) focus on how digital discourse reshapes public comprehension of climate issues. They show that influencers are capable of reframing technical language into more inclusive and digestible narratives. The way messages are framed significantly influences public interpretation—ranging from fear to hope, or from helplessness to active participation. This illustrates that public opinion is not shaped solely by information but also by emotion and interpretive framing (O'Neill & Boykoff, 2012).

Lastly, Johnson and Davis (2023) found that high-credibility influencers, particularly those known for sustained environmental advocacy, foster constructive public dialogue. These influencers create spaces for reflection and promote attitudinal shifts toward sustainable daily behaviors. The effectiveness of their messaging hinges on authenticity, consistency, and meaningful audience engagement (Johnson et al., 2021).

Taken together, these findings affirm that social media influencers play a crucial role in shaping public opinion about environmental and climate change issues. They do so not just through



information dissemination, but by mobilizing action, forging emotional connections, and driving behavioral change through digital platforms. Their role is increasingly central in bridging science, media, and civic participation in environmental discourse.

## **Discussion**

In an increasingly connected digital era, social media has emerged as a dominant space for shaping public opinion, especially concerning global issues like environmental sustainability and climate change. Social media influencers, with their large followings and emotional resonance, have become powerful agents in guiding public awareness and attitudes toward these pressing matters.

### **The Impact of Influencers on Public Opinion**

Numerous studies highlight that influencers do more than just disseminate information—they act as catalysts in mobilizing attention and shaping opinion. Research by Dekoninck and Schmuck (2022) demonstrated that influencers have the capacity to drive pro-environmental behavioral intentions and foster participation in environmentally relevant political discourse. This is further reinforced by findings from Awang et al. (2021), which suggest that an influencer's perceived trustworthiness and authenticity are pivotal in influencing public perception.

Moreover, the impact of influencers extends beyond awareness and into the realm of activism. A study by Muth and Peter (2023) revealed that influencer-generated content can shift political perceptions, particularly when it pertains to climate policy (Muth & Peter, 2023). Emotional and relatable narratives, when delivered effectively, have proven to significantly enhance audience receptivity and belief.

### **Communication Mechanisms Used by Influencers**

To understand how this influence is exerted, it's important to explore the communication strategies influencers deploy. One of the primary methods is personal narrative storytelling. Scheijvens and Laparle (2025) emphasized that sharing personal experiences related to climate issues—especially when supported by strong visuals—can evoke empathy and foster trust among audiences (Scheijvens & Laparle, 2025).

In a netnographic study on Instagram, Rumapa (2022) observed that the consistent use of hashtags, appealing visual aesthetics, and repetitive messaging proved effective in building collective awareness (Rumapea et al., 2022). On platforms like TikTok, short-form videos and creative visuals outperformed long-form texts in audience engagement. According to Knupfer et al. (2023), interactions with so-called "greenfluencers" helped promote passive activism that often evolves into more active engagement over time (Knupfer et al., 2023).

Emotional framing also plays a significant role. Schmuck (2021) noted that messages involving emotions—such as fear, hope, or concern—tend to attract more attention than purely data-driven content. Influencers who blend personal credibility with emotional depth in their messaging are typically more successful in shaping audience perceptions.

In summary, social media influencers hold a strategically significant role in shaping public opinion on environmental and climate change issues. Their impact is not incidental; it stems from well-structured communication strategies grounded in emotional proximity, narrative clarity, and consistent messaging. As such, leveraging influencers in environmental advocacy efforts represents one of the most effective ways to cultivate public understanding and encourage pro-environmental behavior.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study confirms that social media influencers hold a powerful role in forming public opinion about environmental and climate change issues. They do so through emotional engagement, personalized narratives, and visual storytelling that resonate with their audience. Their influence extends beyond awareness-building, impacting behavioral patterns, environmental activism, and even policy discourse. Influencers emerge as accessible agents who simplify scientific messages, enhance emotional connectivity, and shift collective attitudes towards sustainability.

Stakeholders in environmental advocacy—such as NGOs, environmental ministries, and educational institutions—should collaborate with credible influencers to amplify their campaigns. Influencers with established credibility in environmental topics can act as communicators who bridge science and society. Digital content strategies should emphasize authenticity, consistent messaging, and visual storytelling to maximize impact. Special attention should be given to engaging youth through platforms like TikTok and Instagram using creative formats and relatable messaging.

Future studies should employ mixed-method approaches, integrating surveys or interviews with followers to measure actual behavioral change influenced by digital content. Cross-cultural studies comparing the effectiveness of influencers across different socio-political contexts are also recommended. Additionally, longitudinal studies can trace the sustainability of influencer impact over time in shaping public discourse and environmental behavior.

## REFERENCES

- Agustyawati, L., & Kuswati, R. (2025). Paparan Konten Berkelanjutan dan Pengaruhnya terhadap Perilaku Pro-Lingkungan. *Paradoks: Jurnal Ilmu Ekonomi*, 8(2), 984–994.
- Anam, U. G., & Fasa, M. I. (2024). PEMASARAN PADA APLIKASI TIKTOK: TRANSFORMASI PENERAPAN PEMASARAN APLIKASI TIKTOK DALAM MEMBANGUN BISNIS DAN BRAND PRODUK DI ERA DIGITAL DAN MENINGKATKAN MINAT KONSUMEN. *Indonesian Journal of Economy and Education Economy*, 2(3), 515–525.
- Ayuningtyas, W. D., Fitriyani, D., Nurfajri, I., & Purwanto, E. (2025). Peran Media Sosial Dalam Meningkatkan Kesadaran Lingkungan Di Kalangan Milenial. *Pubmedia Social Sciences and Humanities*, 2(3).
- Aziz, S. (2025). Media Sosial sebagai Platform untuk Dialog Publik. *Peran Media Sosial Dalam Pembentukan Opini Publik*, 29.
- Bowen, G. A. (2009). Document analysis as a qualitative research method. *Qualitative Research Journal*, 9(2), 27–40.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2019). Reflecting on reflexive thematic analysis. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*, 11(4), 589–597.
- Choeriyah, N., & Assyahri, W. (2024). Keterlibatan Generasi Z dalam Proses Pembuatan Kebijakan Publik Guna Mendekati Pelayanan yang Lebih Inklusif dan Responsif. *Jurnal Ilmu Sosial Dan Humaniora*, 2(2), 244–254.
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2017). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Sage publications.
- Dekoninck, H., & Schmuck, D. (2024). The “greenfluence”: Following environmental influencers, parasocial relationships, and youth’s participation behavior. *New Media & Society*, 26(11), 6615–6635.
- Gaspersz, R., Pelamonia, M., Izaak, D., & Yoris, J. (2024). PERAN INFLUENCER MEDIA SOSIAL DALAM MEMBENTUK OPINI PUBLIK: SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW PADA STUDI KASUS DI INDONESIA. *JURNAL BADATI*, 6(2), 253–266.
- Hanum, K., Rezeki, N., Prayoga, I., & Rahmadani, A. (2023). *DINAMIKA OPINI PUBLIK DAN PERUBAHAN SOSIAL*.
- Hasibuan, N. E.-K., Sidabalok, U. F., Afandi, R., & Manurung, M. (2024). Pengaruh Media Sosial Terhadap Elektabilitas Bakal Calon Presiden Dan Wakil Presiden. *Jurnal Terapung: Ilmu-Ilmu*

- Sosial*, 6(1), 14–21.
- Johnson, B. K., Bradshaw, A. S., Davis, J., Diegue, V., Frost, L., Hinds, J., Lin, T., Mizell, C., Quintana, D., & Wang, R. (2021). Credible influencers. *Journal of Media Psychology*.
- Kaul, L., Schrögel, P., & Humm, C. (2020). Environmental science communication for a young audience: a case study on the# EarthOvershootDay campaign on YouTube. *Frontiers in Communication*, 5, 601177.
- Knupfer, H., Neureiter, A., & Matthes, J. (2023). From social media diet to public riot? Engagement with “greenfluencers” and young social media users’ environmental activism. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 139, 107527.
- KUSUMASTUTI, A. S., & BATU, K. L. (2025). *Impulsive Buying Behavior Perspektif Theory of Planned Behavior (Studi Empiris pada e-commerce Customer di Kota Semarang)*. UNDIP: Fakultas Ekonomika dan Bisnis.
- Leliana, I. (2020). Kontruksi media terhadap pemberitaan kasus narkoba Medina Zein dalam pembentukan opini publik. *Jurnal Public Relations (J-PR)*, 1(2), 108–115.
- Muth, L., & Peter, C. (2023). Social media influencers’ role in shaping political opinions and actions of young audiences. *Media and Communication*, 11(3), 164–174.
- O’Neill, S., & Boykoff, M. (2012). The role of new media in engaging the public with climate change. *Engaging the Public with Climate Change*, 233–251.
- Pedro, M. I. (2023). *The Role of Influencer Brand-Fit on the Effectiveness of Virtual Influencers*.
- Putra, L. D. (2024). *ANALISA KONTEN MEDIA SOSIAL INSTAGRAM@ folkative DALAM MEMBENTUK OPINI PUBLIK*. KODEUNIVERSITAS041060# UniversitasBuddhiDharma.
- Rahma, A. A. R., Ardianti, H., & Firman, K. (2024). Peran Media Sosial dalam Dinamika Sosial Masyarakat Kontemporer. *Jurnal Komunikasi Digital Dan Penyiaran Islam*, 1(2), 24–30.
- Riendani, C. R., Abhinaya, A., Abdillah, A. R., & Mufadhol, B. D. (2024). Pengaruh Algoritma Media Sosial Terhadap Selektivitas Konsumsi Berita Politik Pada Generasi Z Di Indonesia. *Jurnal Pustaka Cendekia Hukum Dan Ilmu Sosial*, 2(3), 224–228.
- Rumapea, S. Y. P., Pasandaran, C., & Juliadi, R. (2022). Social Network Analysis About Brand Awareness of Shopee Indonesia on Twitter. *Jurnal Komunikasi Profesional*, 6(5), 516–533.
- San Cornelio, G., Martorell, S., & Ardèvol, E. (2024). “My goal is to make sustainability mainstream”: emerging visual narratives on the environmental crisis on Instagram. *Frontiers in Communication*, 8, 1265466.
- Scheijvens, V., & Laparle, S. (2025). *The Effectiveness of Social Media Influencer Communication and Storytelling in Driving Positive Attitudes and Behavior Toward Climate Change Action*.
- Shah, S. S. (2024). The Role of Social Media in Shaping Public Opinion on Environmental Issues. *Science*, 1, 100002.
- Sharma, A., Gosai, H. G., & Singh, V. (2024). Role of Global Media and Social Media in Raising Environmental Issues. In *Environmental Activism and Global Media: Perspective from the Past, Present and Future* (pp. 99–115). Springer.
- Sikumbang, K., Ramadhina, W., Yani, E. R., Arika, D., Hayati, N., Hasibuan, N. A., & Permana, B. G. (2024). Peranan Media Sosial Instagram terhadap Interaksi Sosial dan Etika pada Generasi Z. *Journal on Education*, 6(2), 11029–11037.
- Sloggett, R., & Scott, M. (2022). The story of climate change: narratives as influencers. In *Climatic and Environmental Threats to Cultural Heritage* (pp. 10–26). Routledge.
- Syahputri, I. B., & Katimin, K. (2024). Pengaruh Aktivis Mahasiswa Dalam Perubahan Sosial Politik Di Era Digital 5.0. *Ganaya: Jurnal Ilmu Sosial Dan Humaniora*, 7(4), 25–36.
- Wal, B. (2023). Ecoinfluencers’ engagement with social media for a greener world. *Journal of Information and Knowledge Management (JIKM)*, 2, 359–377.