

## PUBLIC TIKTOK RESPONSES TO THE #STOPDEFORESTASI CAMPAIGN: AN ANALYSIS OF COMMUNICATION STYLE

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### ABSTRACT

*This study examines public responses to the #StopDeforestasi campaign on TikTok, focusing on the dynamics of communication style and the meanings produced by audiences in digital space. Using a qualitative content analysis approach, the data were collected through observation of content and user interactions on the account @zona.hening. The findings show that the campaign was able to generate strong emotional resonance through persuasive visuals and narratives, thereby encouraging public engagement in the form of comments, likes, and shares. However, such engagement did not fully represent in-depth understanding, as most responses remained affective and symbolic in nature. On the other hand, reflective, critical, and mobilizing responses were also identified, indicating the potential for a shift from slacktivism toward more substantive ecological awareness. This study confirms that the effectiveness of digital campaigns lies not only in their level of visibility, but also in the quality of the discourse they generate, although challenges remain in fostering critical and sustainable environmental literacy.*

**Keywords:** TikTok, digital campaign, deforestation, public response.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The development of social media has fundamentally changed the way people obtain information, form opinions, and respond to public issues, including environmental ones. Social media is no longer merely a space for entertainment but has become an arena for public communication, enabling the rapid, interactive, and participatory dissemination of information. In this context, TikTok occupies a crucial position due to its short, visual, emotional video-based nature, and its ease of sharing with a wide audience. Indonesia is even projected to have one of the largest TikTok users in the world by 2025, giving the platform significant potential for shaping public conversations on social and environmental issues (dataloka.id, 2025). The high usage of TikTok suggests that social media-based digital campaigns can be a strategic tool for building environmental

awareness, particularly among the younger generation, who actively consume and produce digital content (Ayuningtyas et al., 2025).

TikTok has a distinct communication logic compared to other social media platforms, as its primary strength lies in the combination of visuals, music, short texts, algorithms, and rapid user response. This platform allows environmental campaign messages to be packaged emotionally and persuasively through simple visual narratives, yet capable of generating powerful affective effects. In the context of environmental communication, TikTok can function as a digital advocacy medium because it can expand the reach of messages and foster public engagement through features like comments, likes, shares, and hashtags (Pera & Aiello, 2024). Environmental campaigns like #stopdeforestasi leverage these characteristics to bring the issue of forest destruction closer to the audience's experience. Messages about deforestation are conveyed not only through data or rational explanations, but also through visualizations of environmental damage, narratives of concern, and moral appeals that can evoke public empathy (Rahmawati et al., 2025).

The issue of deforestation is important to study because it is directly related to the climate crisis, biodiversity loss, ecosystem damage, and the declining quality of life for communities dependent on forests. Globally, tropical deforestation remains a serious problem because it contributes to carbon emissions and accelerates climate change (EARTH.ORG, 2022). In Indonesia, deforestation has also attracted public attention because its impacts are not only ecological, but also social, economic, and humanitarian. Forest destruction can affect environmental balance, threaten the living spaces of indigenous communities, exacerbate ecological disasters, and reduce the natural carrying capacity of future generations (Serafica Gischa, 2025). Therefore, the #stopdeforestasi campaign on TikTok can be understood as a form of environmental communication that seeks to connect ecological issues with public awareness through a more popular, concise, and accessible digital language.

However, the effectiveness of environmental campaigns on social media cannot be measured solely by the number of views, comments, likes, or re-distribution of content. In practice, public engagement on social media is often symbolic, emotional, and ephemeral. Users may express support through short comments, emojis, or the act of sharing content without always being accompanied by a deep understanding of the substance of the issue. This phenomenon is related to the concept of slacktivism, a form of digital participation that appears symbolically active but does not necessarily lead to concrete action or sustainable attitudinal change (Boulianne, 2015). Furthermore, low media literacy and the potential for misinformation also pose challenges in digital campaigns, as environmental messages can be superficially understood, simplified, or even driven solely by the logic of virality (Amalia et al., 2025). Therefore, public response to the #stopdeforestasi campaign needs to be analyzed not only in terms of the quantity of interactions, but also in terms of the quality of meaning, the form of engagement, and the depth of the discourse that emerges.

Several previous studies have discussed the role of social media in raising environmental awareness, the influence of TikTok content on ecological attitudes, and the effectiveness of digital campaigns in encouraging public participation (Alfachredz et al., 2024; Irhas & Reni, 2025; Perdana et al., n.d.). However, most studies still tend to position social media as a channel for message dissemination or measure the impact of content exposure on the general audience. Studies specifically examining how audiences interpret,

respond to, and reproduce environmental campaign messages through comments and digital interactions are still relatively limited. However, from an audience reception perspective, the public cannot be understood as passive recipients of messages, but rather as active subjects interpreting messages based on their respective experiences, knowledge, values, and social context (Hall, 1980). Therefore, analyzing public responses is crucial to understanding whether the #stopdeforestasi campaign only generates temporary digital attention or is able to open up a space for more reflective and critical ecological discourse.

Based on this background, this study focuses on the public response to the #stopdeforestasi campaign on TikTok, specifically on the account @zona.hening, which consistently produces content hashtagged #stopdeforestasi with a visual, symbolic, emotional, and persuasive approach. This account was chosen because it presents the issue of deforestation through a simple narrative that is able to trigger various forms of interaction, ranging from expressions of empathy, symbolic commentary, critical reflection, to calls for collective action. Using a qualitative content analysis approach, this study aims to examine the campaign's communication style, public response patterns, and the quality of discourse formed in the TikTok digital space. The novelty of this study lies in placing audience response at the center of the analysis of environmental campaign effectiveness, rather than simply looking at message construction or the number of digital engagements. Thus, this research is expected to contribute to the development of environmental communication studies, digital campaigns, and ecological literacy in the social media era.

## 2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative method with a content analysis approach (Alaslan, 2023). This approach was chosen because the study focused on examining the messages contained in the content and public responses to the #stopdeforestasi campaign on TikTok, without involving direct interviews with informants. Content analysis was used to identify, classify, and interpret the meanings contained in comments, expressions, and forms of user interaction with the campaign content. Through this approach, public responses are understood as a representation of attitudes, perceptions, and levels of environmental concern displayed digitally (Miles et al., 2013).

This study aims to describe the patterns and trends of public responses to the #stopdeforestasi campaign and to uncover how the issue of deforestation is interpreted through user interactions on social media. The results are expected to provide an overview of the forms of digital public participation in environmental issues, including informative, persuasive, and symbolic forms.

Data collection was conducted through non-participant observation of TikTok content by systematically observing videos, captions, and user interactions. Furthermore, documentation techniques were used to archive data in the form of screenshots, comment transcripts, and visual recordings as empirical evidence. Primary data was obtained directly from the TikTok platform, while secondary data came from literature studies that included books, scientific journals, articles, and research reports related to environmental

communication, social media, TikTok, and the concept of slacktivism to strengthen the theoretical foundation and analysis.

### 3. RESULT AND ANALYSIS

#### Forms and Patterns of Public Response to the #stopdeforestasi Campaign on TikTok

Public response to the #stopdeforestasi campaign on TikTok exhibited variations, reflecting users' varying levels of environmental knowledge, attitudes, and awareness. The interactions, such as comments, likes, and shares, not only indicate engagement but also demonstrate how the issue of deforestation is understood and interpreted by the public in the digital space. Some users demonstrated informative and reflective responses, while others were more emotional or simply followed trends. This confirms that public response patterns are not homogeneous, but rather provide an initial glimpse into the extent to which the campaign has been able to build environmental attention and awareness among TikTok audiences.

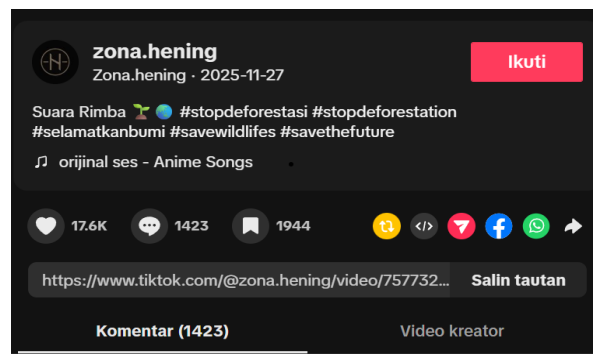


Figure 1. Accounts with the hashtag #stopdeforestasi

Video content from the TikTok account @zona.hening with the hashtag #stopdeforestasi demonstrated a high level of public engagement, as reflected in the significant number of likes, comments, and shares. This high level of interaction indicates that the issue of deforestation has both emotional appeal and social relevance for TikTok users. In terms of responses, the majority of users demonstrated affective and participatory engagement, such as providing empathetic comments about forest destruction and supporting the campaign message through the share and repost features. This aligns with the characteristics of the TikTok platform, which encourages rapid and broad interaction through short video formats, making it easier to disseminate environmental issues to a wider audience.

The pattern of public response also revealed variations in the depth of understanding of the issues raised. Some users responded more reflectively, linking the content to the reality of deforestation and its impact on the environment, while others tended to provide brief responses or follow trends without further elaboration. This phenomenon suggests that while the campaign succeeded in generating widespread awareness, not all engagement reflected a deep understanding. Thus, the public response to the #stopdeforestasi campaign on TikTok can be understood as a spectrum that moves from

mere symbolic engagement to the potential for critical awareness, although still influenced by the characteristics of fast content consumption on social media.

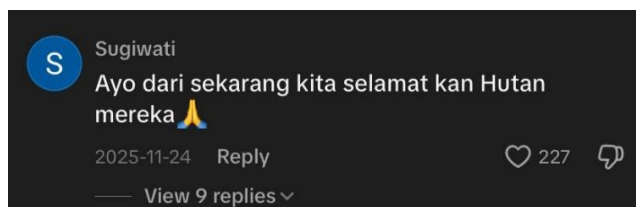


Figure 2. User comments

The brief comment featuring the word "they" on the image reflects a strong affective response with minimal cognitive elaboration. The use of "they" suggests empathy or sympathy for specific parties impacted by deforestation, such as local communities or damaged ecosystems, although this is not explicitly stated. Meanwhile, the praying hands emoji reinforces the emotional and spiritual dimension of the response, indicating concern, hope, or moral support for the issues raised in the #stopdeforestasi campaign.

In terms of public response patterns, this type of comment falls into the category of symbolic engagement commonly found on TikTok, where users briefly express their feelings without providing arguments or additional information. Nevertheless, the high number of likes on this comment indicates that this simple emotional expression still has collective resonance among the audience. This indicates that the campaign successfully touched the emotional side of users, but at the same time, it also indicates that most responses remain at the affective level and have not yet fully developed into reflective or knowledge-based responses.

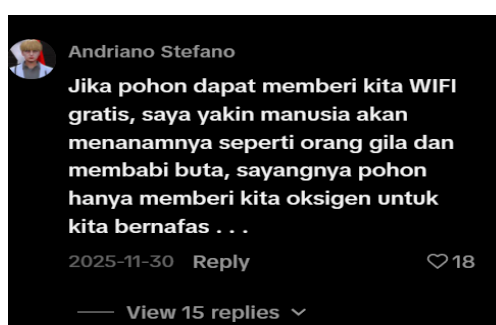


Figure 3. User comments

The comments shown in the image demonstrate a form of public response, both reflective and satirical, to the environmental issues raised in the #stopdeforestasi campaign on TikTok. The user's narrative highlights the paradox of human behavior: people tend to value something only when it offers immediate, practical, and technologically convenient benefits. The phrase, "If trees could provide us with free Wi-Fi, I'm sure people would be planting them like crazy," serves as a sharp social critique of the mindset of modern society, which is more responsive to digital benefits than to the far more fundamental ecological benefits of oxygen for survival. In the context of environmental campaigns on social media, comments like this demonstrate how the

public responds not only informatively but also uses irony to reinforce the moral message about the importance of protecting forests.

Judging from the pattern of responses, this comment can be categorized as a neutral response with a critical nuance, rather than a negative response to the campaign. Although the comment uses a seemingly cynical expression regarding human behavior, the direction of the criticism actually reinforces the campaign's message. The user implicitly asserts that humans often fail to recognize the ecological value of trees because their benefits are considered "ordinary," even though oxygen is a fundamental necessity for life. In the discourse patterns on TikTok, this type of response often appears as a form of reflective support, namely comments that do not explicitly praise the campaign but rather expand the meaning of the campaign message with social criticism that raises public awareness.

Several screenshots of TikTok user interactions show a diverse pattern of public responses to the #stopdeforestasi campaign, ranging from emotional to symbolic to reflective engagement. The high number of likes, comments, and shares on the content demonstrates that the issue of deforestation has captured attention and sparked user participation, although the depth of understanding demonstrated varies. Some users responded affectively through simple expressions of empathy, such as short comments or the use of emojis, indicating emotional support but not accompanied by in-depth argumentation or explanation. On the other hand, there were also more reflective and critical responses, such as satirical comments highlighting the human tendency to value practical benefits over the ecological value of trees. This variety of responses indicates that the #stopdeforestasi campaign on TikTok has succeeded in generating public attention and opening up a space for discourse on environmental issues, although most engagement remains at the initial level of awareness influenced by the nature of fast-paced content consumption on social media.

### **The Effectiveness of the #stopdeforestasi Campaign in Transcending Slacktivism and Promoting Environmental Awareness**

The effectiveness of the #stopdeforestasi campaign on TikTok can be seen in its ability to transcend symbolic engagement or slacktivism, typically characterized by simple activities such as liking, commenting briefly, or sharing content. While most user interactions remained at the level of quick and simple digital participation, findings in the comments section indicate that the campaign also elicited more reflective and critical responses to the issue of deforestation. Some users not only expressed empathy for environmental damage but also connected the campaign's message to human behavior and broader ecological impacts. This suggests that the #stopdeforestasi campaign has the potential to build more meaningful environmental awareness in the digital space. Thus, despite the characteristics of the TikTok platform that tend to encourage instant engagement, the campaign was still able to open up public discourse and serve as an initial step in encouraging attitudinal change and increasing public awareness of the issue of deforestation.

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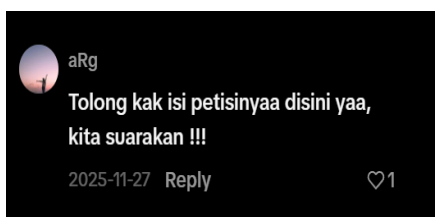


Figure 4. User Comments

Comments on the image that read "Please fill out the petition here, let's make it heard!" demonstrate a public response that extends beyond symbolic engagement and toward mobilizing more concrete support. In the context of the #stopdeforestasi campaign on TikTok, calls to sign petitions indicate that some users are not simply responding to content with likes or short comments, but are instead seeking to encourage others to engage in collective action. Petitions, as a form of digital participation, are often used in environmental movements to garner public support for forest protection and environmental policies. Therefore, these comments reflect an awareness that the issue of deforestation requires collective action, not just fleeting attention on social media.

From a campaign effectiveness perspective, the presence of comments like these demonstrates that the #stopdeforestasi campaign has the potential to transcend slacktivism, a passive and symbolic engagement in the digital space. Calls to sign petitions demonstrate a push toward more active participation, albeit still within the realm of online activism. This indicates that the campaign has not only succeeded in increasing the visibility of the deforestation issue but has also begun to build environmental awareness that encourages concrete action from some users. Thus, this kind of interaction is an indicator that the campaign is able to open up space for transformation from mere information consumption to a more meaningful form of public participation in supporting environmental protection efforts.

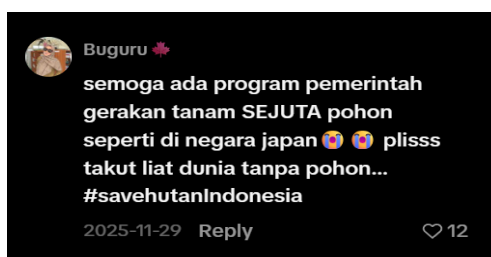


Figure 5. User Comments

Comments on the image stating, "I hope there's a tree-planting movement like in Japan, because if the trees disappear, we can't breathe," reflect a public response that demonstrates a fairly reflective level of environmental awareness. Users not only responded to the #stopdeforestasi campaign content but also linked it to conservation practices in other countries as examples perceived as positive. The mention of the Japanese tree-planting movement demonstrates users' efforts to compare environmental conditions and imagine possible solutions. This indicates that the campaign, spread through TikTok, has been able to trigger a broader process of meaning-making, where the

issue of deforestation is understood not only as a local problem but also as part of a global issue requiring collective awareness and action.

From the perspective of campaign effectiveness, these comments demonstrate that some audiences have moved beyond symbolic engagement or slacktivism. Rather than simply offering brief responses, users expressed views that reflected on the importance of trees for human survival and expressed hopes for more concrete conservation efforts. Responses like these demonstrate the potential for fostering deeper environmental awareness, as users begin to connect the campaign's message with ecological values and the need for concrete actions, such as tree-planting movements. Thus, this kind of interaction is an indication that the #stopdeforestasi campaign not only raises public awareness but also encourages critical thinking and collective awareness regarding the importance of preserving forests.

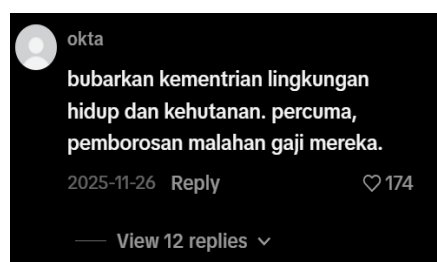


Figure 6. User Comments

The image represents a netizen's comment on social media that explicitly voices distrust of state institutions on environmental issues, particularly with calls to disband the relevant ministry, deemed ineffective and a waste of funds. This narrative demonstrates a shift from simply consuming environmental campaign content to expressing a more direct, critical stance. In the context of the #stopdeforestasi campaign, this response can be read as an indication that the campaign's message has crossed the line of slacktivism, symbolic participation with minimal commitment, and begun to trigger more political and confrontational articulation of opinions. Rather than stopping at passive actions like liking or sharing content, audiences demonstrate deeper cognitive engagement by questioning the effectiveness of policies and institutional actors behind deforestation.

This depth of response also opens up ambiguity about the campaign's effectiveness. On the one hand, the emergence of sharp criticism indicates growing public awareness and courage to speak out; on the other hand, the simplistic and emotional nature of the expression suggests that the transformation of knowledge into comprehensive structural understanding has not yet been fully achieved. The #stopdeforestasi campaign has succeeded in triggering affective resonance, but it does not necessarily lead audiences to constructive and solution-oriented environmental literacy. Thus, the campaign's effectiveness in transcending slacktivism is measured not only by the intensity of participation but also by the quality of the resulting discourse—whether it fosters knowledge-based dialogue or becomes mired in populist rhetoric that simplifies the complexity of environmental issues.

Overall, the effectiveness of the #stopdeforestasi campaign on TikTok demonstrates a complex dynamic between symbolic engagement and meaningful participation. On the

one hand, the campaign remains dominated by quick and instant forms of slacktivism; however, findings in the comments section reveal a shift toward more reflective, critical, and even mobilizing engagement. User responses not only reflect empathy for environmental damage but also develop into calls for collective action, such as petitions, cross-country comparisons of conservation practices, and even criticism of institutional actors. This indicates that the campaign has succeeded in opening a space for public discourse that goes beyond mere content consumption and sparks ecological awareness that is beginning to connect with concrete action. However, the quality of the resulting discourse remains ambiguous: amidst the rise of awareness and courage to speak out, there is a tendency toward simplification and emotional expression, indicating that structural understanding of the deforestation issue is not yet fully developed. Thus, this campaign was effective in sparking initial awareness and participation, but still requires strengthening to encourage more critical, in-depth, and solution-oriented environmental literacy.

The results of the study indicate that the #stopdeforestasi campaign on the @zona.hening account employed a predominantly emotional and persuasive communication style. This is evident in the use of visuals depicting forest destruction and narratives that touched the audience's emotions. This communication style influenced public responses, which tended to show empathy, concern, and support for environmental issues, as reflected in comments expressing sadness and concern and calls to protect forests.

## **Discussion**

This research shows that the #stopdeforestasi campaign on TikTok operates within a digital communication landscape characterized by speed, visuality, and open participation (Assegaf et al., 2022). The variety of public responses, ranging from affective, symbolic, to reflective, indicates that audiences are not merely recipients of messages but also participate in producing and reconstructing the meaning of the deforestation issue. This also aligns with the perspective of ecological ethics in Islam, which emphasizes the harmonious relationship between humans and nature (Muhammad et al., 2024). More broadly, this reinforces the view that social media has shifted campaign communication patterns from a one-way model to a dialogical space that allows horizontal interaction between users. Thus, environmental campaigns on TikTok function not only as a means of disseminating messages but also as a discursive arena where environmental awareness is collectively negotiated (McCright et al., 2013).

These findings demonstrate that public engagement ranges across a broad spectrum, from slacktivism to the potential for substantive participation. The dominance of emotional and symbolic responses indicates that most audiences are still at an early stage of awareness, influenced by the logic of rapid social media consumption. However, the emergence of reflective, satirical commentary, and calls to collective action signal a shift toward deeper engagement. In the general context of the digital environmental movement, this reflects the fact that social media can serve as an "entry point" for developing ecological awareness, although the transformation into concrete action requires a more complex and ongoing process. (Rustanta, 2025)

Ambivalence is also a key finding in this study. High levels of interaction do not always equate to depth of understanding, so campaign effectiveness cannot be measured solely by the quantity of engagement. More broadly, this suggests that digital campaigns face challenges in transforming virality into critical literacy. Therefore, while the #stopdeforestasi campaign successfully opened up public discourse, the quality of that discourse is still influenced by tendencies toward simplification, emotionality, and algorithmic logic that shape how users interact with content (www.theguardian.com, 2025).

Compared with research by Amalia et al., 2025, the results of this study demonstrate a shift in focus from the effects of media on individuals to the dynamics of collective responses in the digital space. Research by Alfachredz et al., 2024 emphasized that exposure to TikTok content can linearly increase students' environmental knowledge and attitudes. Meanwhile, this study found that environmental awareness is formed not only through exposure but also through social interactions such as comments, discussions, and the reproduction of meaning. Thus, this study extends previous findings by demonstrating that environmental awareness on social media is dialogic and collective, not solely the result of individual internalization.

Reviewing research by Andhrawan & Wardhana, n.d., there is a fundamental difference in the locus of analysis. That study focused on message construction, framing, and persuasive strategies designed by communicators. However, the results of this study demonstrate that campaign effectiveness is determined not only by how messages are constructed but also by how they are interpreted and negotiated by the audience. The variation in public responses demonstrates that campaign meaning is not fixed but is continually reproduced through user interactions. Thus, this study complements the message analysis approach with an audience reception perspective in digital spaces.

Compared to research by (Perdana et al., n.d.), this study provides a more specific and contextual contribution. While Perdana et al. observed a general relationship between social media use and environmental concerns, this study reveals how these concerns manifest in digital communication practices on TikTok, specifically regarding the issue of deforestation. The results show that environmental concerns are reflected not only in attitudes but also in diverse digital responses, ranging from emotional expressions to structural critiques. Thus, this study deepens our understanding of how environmental concerns are shaped and expressed within specific social media ecosystems.

From the perspective of audience reception theory, these findings indicate that TikTok users actively interpret campaign messages according to their individual social backgrounds, experiences, and mindsets. This is evident in the diverse responses that emerge, ranging from simple empathy to satirical and political criticism. Thus, the audience cannot be viewed as a passive entity, but rather as a subject with autonomy in interpreting the message. This variation in interpretation also explains why the quality of the resulting discourse is not homogeneous, as each individual brings a different perspective to the deforestation issue (Hall, 1980).

Within the framework of digital campaign theory, the results of this study indicate that campaign success is measured not only by reach and engagement levels, but also by the ability to create meaningful interactions. The #stopdeforestasi campaign successfully leveraged TikTok's characteristics to capture attention and build emotional resonance, but the primary challenge lies in encouraging audiences to engage more substantively.

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Thus, the effectiveness of a digital campaign depends heavily on its ability to manage the transition from visibility to action, and from symbolic engagement to critical awareness (Irhas & Reni, 2025).

The novelty of this research lies in its critical-qualitative approach, which examines public response as a key indicator of the effectiveness of environmental campaigns on social media. Unlike previous research that focused on media effects or message construction, this study places user interaction at the center of analysis to understand the dynamics of environmental awareness in the digital space. By focusing on the TikTok platform and the specific issue of deforestation, this study offers a new perspective: campaign effectiveness is determined not only by what is conveyed but also by how audiences respond to, interpret, and reproduce those messages in everyday communication practices.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the #stopdeforestasi campaign on TikTok, particularly through the @zona.hening account, was able to build public attention to the issue of deforestation through an emotional, symbolic, and persuasive communication style. The public response that emerged showed a diverse spectrum of engagement, ranging from expressions of empathy, symbolic support, reflective commentary, social criticism, to calls for collective action. These findings indicate that TikTok has the potential to be an effective environmental communication space because it can broaden the visibility of the issue and open public discourse on forest destruction. However, high digital interaction does not always reflect a deep ecological understanding, as some responses are still affective, brief, and tend to be at the level of slacktivism. Therefore, the effectiveness of a digital campaign cannot be measured solely by the number of likes, comments, and shares, but rather by the extent to which the campaign is able to encourage environmental literacy, critical awareness, and more substantive and sustainable public participation.

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