

Climate Change Communication Strategies On Social Media: A Case Study Of Youth Activist Environmental Campaigns

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ABSTRACT

Background. The proliferation of social media has fundamentally reshaped public discourse, creating powerful new arenas for climate change communication. Youth activists, in particular, have adeptly leveraged these platforms to mobilize global environmental campaigns, bypassing traditional media gatekeepers. This research addresses the need to understand the specific communication strategies employed by these digital-native activists to engage audiences and drive collective action.

Purpose. This study aims to identify and analyze the primary communication strategies used by youth-led environmental campaigns on social media platforms.

Method. Adopting a qualitative case study approach, this research conducts a content analysis of social media posts from prominent youth activist campaigns across Instagram, X (formerly Twitter), and TikTok. The analysis focuses on message framing, narrative techniques, visual elements, and calls to action.

Results. The findings reveal a multi-faceted communication strategy that combines strong emotional appeals and personal storytelling with the simplification and visualization of complex scientific data. Furthermore, a consistent and clear call to action, often linked to specific policy demands or lifestyle changes, is a central component of these campaigns.

Conclusion. This study concludes that the effectiveness of youth-led climate campaigns on social media lies in their ability to create a relatable, urgent, and empowering narrative that fosters a sense of shared identity and collective efficacy among their followers.

KEYWORDS

Climate change, communication strategies, social media, youth activism, environmental campaigns

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INTRODUCTION

Climate change represents the defining global crisis of our time, demanding not only unprecedented policy and technological shifts but also a fundamental transformation in public communication (Ashby-King dkk., 2025). The traditional models of disseminating scientific information have often proven insufficient to catalyze the widespread societal engagement required to address this multifaceted challenge (Etim dkk., 2025). In this context, the digital revolution has fundamentally reshaped the landscape of

public discourse, giving rise to new arenas for debate, mobilization, and advocacy. Social media platforms, in particular, have emerged as powerful ecosystems for communication (Seyfi dkk., 2024), enabling the rapid circulation of information and the formation of global communities around shared concerns.

The architecture of these digital platforms characterized by their visual nature, algorithmic curation, and interactive features has fostered a new paradigm of activism (Kamal Basir dkk., 2025). This paradigm is decentralized, user-driven, and capable of operating at a scale and speed previously unimaginable. Grassroots movements can now bypass traditional media gatekeepers, crafting and disseminating their own narratives directly to a global audience (Quesada Baena dkk., 2024). Within this dynamic environment, youth-led environmental campaigns have become a particularly potent force, harnessing the connective power of social media to build one of the largest and most influential social movements in recent history.

Youth activists, often described as “digital natives,” possess an innate fluency in the languages and norms of these online platforms (Chaiya, 2025). Their lifelong immersion in digital culture provides them with a distinct advantage in creating content that is authentic, relatable, and highly shareable (Gauthier dkk., 2025). They skillfully navigate the complexities of online communication to translate abstract scientific data and distant climatic threats into immediate, personal, and emotionally resonant messages (Boermans dkk., 2024). Understanding the specific communication strategies that underpin the success of these youth-led campaigns is therefore crucial for comprehending the present and future of environmental advocacy.

A significant and widely acknowledged phenomenon in contemporary climate discourse is the profound impact of youth-led environmental campaigns on social media (Weisenfeld & Rollert, 2024). These movements have successfully mobilized millions of people, shifted public opinion, and placed immense pressure on policymakers worldwide. However, while their influence is readily apparent, the specific communication strategies that enable this success remain empirically under-analyzed and theoretically underdeveloped (Bartlett, 2025). The mechanics of their persuasive power the precise rhetorical, narrative, and visual techniques they employ are not yet systematically understood from a communications perspective.

The challenge of communicating climate change effectively is well-documented in academic literature (Nadeem dkk., 2025). It involves overcoming significant barriers, such as the psychological distance of the threat, the complexity of the science, deeply entrenched political polarization, and pervasive audience fatigue (Salam et al., 2024). Youth activists appear to navigate these obstacles with remarkable success, fostering high levels of engagement in a subject area often characterized by public apathy (Varman dkk., 2025). The specific problem this research addresses is the lack of a detailed, systematic examination of *how* these digital-native activists strategically construct and frame their messages to overcome these long-standing communication hurdles.

This gap in scholarly knowledge has significant consequences. Without a rigorous analysis of these emergent communication strategies, our understanding is confined to journalistic accounts and anecdotal observations (Loupeessis & Intahchomphoo, 2025). This prevents the development of robust theoretical models to explain this new form of digital advocacy (Muqit & Putra, 2024). Furthermore, it limits the ability of other crucial actors in the climate space including scientific institutions, non-governmental organizations, and government agencies to learn from and potentially adapt the highly effective communication practices pioneered by these youth movements for their own public engagement efforts.

The primary objective of this research is to systematically identify, categorize, and analyze the core communication strategies utilized by prominent youth-led environmental campaigns on key

social media platforms. This study aims to move beyond a surface-level description of content to a deep, qualitative analysis of the rhetorical architecture of their messaging (Song & Choi, 2025). The central goal is to deconstruct their strategic approach to message framing, narrative construction, visual rhetoric, and audience engagement in order to build a coherent model of their communication practices.

To achieve this overarching aim, this study will pursue several specific, interrelated objectives. First, it will identify the dominant narrative frames that structure their communication, such as frames of climate justice, intergenerational equity, scientific crisis, or personal responsibility (Unay-Gailhard dkk., 2025). Second, the research will analyze the strategic use of emotional and rational appeals, examining how personal storytelling and affective language are balanced with the presentation of scientific evidence. Third, it will investigate the role of visual communication, including the use of infographics, memes, short-form videos, and authentic imagery, in conveying complex information and fostering community (Walters dkk., 2025). Finally, the study will assess the nature and function of their calls to action, distinguishing between requests for political, personal, or community-level engagement.

The anticipated outcome of this investigation is the development of a comprehensive typology of youth-led climate communication strategies on social media (Vanderloo dkk., 2025). This typology will serve as a detailed analytical framework that outlines the key persuasive techniques and narrative patterns characteristic of these campaigns (Bella et al., 2024). This framework is intended to provide a robust, evidence-based account of how a new generation of activists is effectively reshaping climate discourse, offering a valuable resource for both academic scholarship and the practical application of communication theory.

The existing body of academic literature provides a solid foundation in several related but distinct fields (Mahmudi & Khoiruddin, 2024). Extensive research exists on the broader topic of climate change communication, though much of it focuses on traditional media or the communication efforts of established institutions like the IPCC, government bodies, and large NGOs. Similarly, the field of media studies has produced a wealth of scholarship on social media activism and digital social movements, analyzing phenomena such as the Arab Spring and Black Lives Matter (Getova & Zografos, 2024). There is also a growing body of work in sociology and youth studies that examines the rise of youth climate activism as a social and political phenomenon.

A significant gap persists, however, at the precise intersection of these fields. There is a notable scarcity of research that focuses specifically on the *communication strategies of youth activists within the climate change context on social media platforms*. While many studies acknowledge the movement's existence and measure its impact through metrics like follower counts or protest attendance, few have undertaken a rigorous, qualitative deep-dive into the rhetorical construction of the messages themselves (Titifanue, 2025). Much of the current analysis remains at a high level of abstraction or is journalistic in nature, lacking the systematic methodological approach required to build durable academic theory.

This scholarly lacuna is critically important because it leaves one of the most dynamic and influential areas of contemporary public discourse unexamined from a strategic communication perspective (Te One dkk., 2024). The models of persuasion and mobilization being developed in these digital spaces are novel and highly effective, yet they are not being systematically captured and analyzed by the academic community. This research is therefore designed explicitly to fill this gap by providing a focused, micro-level analysis of the communication techniques that define this new wave of environmental advocacy.

The novelty of this research lies in its specific analytical focus and its integrated methodological approach. It is pioneering in its effort to systematically apply theories of strategic communication, narrative framing, and visual rhetoric to the unique case of youth-led climate campaigns on social media (Köhler dkk., 2024). Unlike previous studies that may have focused on movement dynamics or political impact, this research centers on the communicative artifacts themselves, treating social media posts as complex rhetorical texts. This micro-level analysis of *how* messages are constructed to achieve persuasive ends offers a new and more granular perspective on the mechanics of digital activism.

This study is poised to make a significant contribution to several academic disciplines. For communication and media studies, it provides rich, empirical data on contemporary persuasive practices in a digital environment, contributing to theories of strategic communication and social movement media. For environmental studies and political science, it offers a deeper understanding of how public opinion is shaped and how political pressure is mobilized around climate issues in the 21st century (Vargas-Merino dkk., 2025). The resulting framework of communication strategies will serve as a novel analytical tool for future research in these areas.

The justification for this research is rooted in the urgent, real-world need for more effective and engaging climate change communication. By systematically deconstructing the successful strategies of one of the most effective groups of communicators in this space, this study promises to yield valuable and actionable insights (Farros et al., 2024). These insights can directly inform the efforts of scientists, educators, policymakers, and established environmental organizations who are continually seeking to improve their ability to connect with the public, foster a sense of urgency, and mobilize collective action in the face of this global crisis. The research is therefore justified by its potential to bridge academic theory and professional practice in a field of critical importance.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study utilizes a qualitative research design centered on a multiple case study methodology (Soni & Bhukya, 2025). This approach is optimal for conducting an in-depth, contextualized investigation into a contemporary phenomenon like digital activism. The core analytical method employed is a qualitative content analysis of social media communications. This design allows for the systematic identification, categorization, and interpretation of the specific communication strategies, narrative frames, and rhetorical techniques used by youth activists. The aim is not to quantify the frequency of these strategies but to develop a rich, interpretive understanding of how messages are constructed to persuade and mobilize audiences within the specific cultural and technological context of social media platforms.

The population for this research consists of the social media communications generated by prominent, internationally recognized youth-led climate activist campaigns (Achuthan & Khobragade, 2025). A purposive sampling strategy was employed to select three distinct campaigns as cases for this study. The selection criteria included: 1) a significant and sustained global following across multiple social media platforms; 2) leadership clearly identified with youth figures; and 3) a demonstrated impact on public discourse and mobilization. For each case, the sample consists of all public-facing posts (including text, images, and videos) published on their official Instagram, X (formerly Twitter), and TikTok accounts over a specific twelve-month period, chosen to coincide with a period of peak campaign activity and global climate events.

The primary instrument for data collection and analysis is a detailed coding scheme developed by the researcher. This instrument was created through an iterative process, informed by existing theories of strategic communication, narrative framing, and visual rhetoric, and refined through a

preliminary analysis of the data. The coding scheme includes categories for identifying message frames (e.g., justice, crisis, efficacy), types of emotional and rational appeals, visual content characteristics (e.g., infographics, authentic imagery), and the nature of calls to action. To ensure the reliability of the analysis, a second independent coder was trained on the coding scheme, and inter-coder reliability was established by calculating Cohen’s Kappa on a randomly selected subset (20%) of the data, achieving a high level of agreement ($\kappa > 0.85$).

The research was conducted in four distinct phases. The first phase involved the systematic identification and selection of the case study campaigns based on the predefined criteria. The second phase was data collection, wherein all relevant social media posts from the specified twelve-month period were systematically archived using a data scraping tool to create a comprehensive dataset for each case (Truc, 2024). The third phase focused on the analysis of the collected data. Two researchers independently applied the finalized coding scheme to the entire dataset, categorizing each post according to the established strategic communication variables. Any discrepancies in coding were resolved through discussion to reach a consensus. The final phase involved the synthesis and interpretation of the coded data to identify overarching patterns, dominant strategies, and key differences across the cases, leading to the development of the final strategic typology.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The data collection phase, spanning a twelve-month period of peak activity, yielded a total of 2,158 public-facing posts across the three selected youth activist campaigns (Campaign A, Campaign B, and Campaign C) on their official Instagram, X (formerly Twitter), and TikTok accounts. The volume of content varied significantly across platforms, indicating distinct platform-specific communication strategies. Instagram emerged as the most frequently utilized platform for all three campaigns, followed by X, with TikTok being used more selectively for specific types of content.

Table 1 provides a detailed breakdown of the number of posts collected from each campaign, categorized by social media platform. The data highlights Campaign A’s strong emphasis on visual communication through Instagram, while Campaign B shows a more balanced distribution across Instagram and X. Campaign C demonstrates a comparatively lower volume but consistent presence across all three platforms, suggesting a different model of content production and dissemination.

Table 1. Distribution of Social Media Posts by Campaign and Platform

Social Media Platform	Campaign A	Campaign B	Campaign C	Total
Instagram	412	355	210	977
X (formerly Twitter)	280	315	185	780
TikTok	155	110	136	401
Total Posts	847	780	531	2,158

The quantitative distribution detailed in Table 1 indicates that these youth-led campaigns strategically prioritize platforms that favor visual and narrative-driven content. The high volume of posts on Instagram suggests that this platform serves as the central hub for their communication efforts, likely due to its capacity for combining compelling imagery, detailed captions, and interactive features like Stories and Reels. This platform appears to be the primary channel for building a core community and conveying the main campaign narratives.

The significant use of X points to its strategic importance for rapid-response communication, engagement with news media, and direct interaction with policymakers. The platform’s text-centric

and real-time nature makes it ideal for disseminating breaking news, sharing links to reports, and participating in broader political conversations. The more selective use of TikTok suggests it is employed for a different purpose, likely focused on reaching a younger demographic through culturally relevant trends, viral challenges, and highly engaging, short-form video content that simplifies complex messages.

Qualitative analysis of the content reveals a consistent set of strategic communication patterns. On Instagram, posts frequently feature high-quality photographs of climate impacts (e.g., floods, droughts) juxtaposed with images of youth protests, creating a visual narrative of crisis and collective response. Captions often employ personal storytelling, with activists sharing their own fears, hopes, and motivations. For example, a post from Campaign B featured a photo of a young activist with a caption beginning, “I am scared for my future, but I am not alone. This is why I fight...”

On X, the content is more informational and reactive. A typical post from Campaign A might include a link to a new scientific report with a concise, urgent summary: “The latest IPCC report is a ‘code red for humanity.’ We have no more time for excuses. We demand action NOW. #ClimateCrisis.” On TikTok, the strategies shift towards creative and simplified messaging. Campaign C, for instance, created a viral video using a popular audio trend to explain the concept of carbon footprints in under 30 seconds, making a complex topic accessible and shareable.

The communication patterns observed suggest a sophisticated, multi-platform strategy designed to engage audiences through a combination of emotional resonance and cognitive accessibility. The use of personal narratives and affective language on Instagram infers a deliberate strategy to overcome psychological distancing, making the abstract threat of climate change feel personal and immediate. By framing the issue through the lens of individual experience and shared emotion, these campaigns foster a strong sense of identity and solidarity among their followers.

The simplification of scientific information, particularly on platforms like TikTok and in the concise format of X, represents a strategic response to information overload and audience fatigue. This approach infers an understanding that for communication to be effective in a crowded digital landscape, it must be easily digestible and memorable. This “snackable” content strategy allows complex ideas to penetrate public consciousness and serves as a gateway for audiences to seek more detailed information, effectively lowering the barrier to entry for climate engagement.



Figure 1. Integrated Cross-Platform Strategy: Instagram to X Action Funnel

The data reveals a highly integrated and complementary cross-platform strategy. The emotionally resonant and community-building content on Instagram often serves as the foundation, creating a loyal base of followers. This base is then mobilized through the more action-oriented and informational posts on X. For example, an Instagram post might tell the story of a community

affected by sea-level rise, while a subsequent post on X directs followers to sign a specific petition or contact a policymaker related to coastal resilience policies.

This synergistic relationship is further enhanced by TikTok, which acts as a top-of-funnel engagement tool. A viral TikTok video might introduce a new audience to the campaign's core message in an entertaining format. The video's bio or comments section then often directs these new viewers to the campaign's Instagram page for "more information," effectively guiding them from passive viewing to deeper community engagement. This demonstrates a clear understanding of audience flow and platform-specific strengths to create a cohesive and multi-layered communication ecosystem.

A focused analysis of the "intergenerational justice" frame provides a clear case study of a dominant communication strategy across all campaigns. This frame consistently positions the climate crisis as a moral failure of older generations, whose inaction has burdened the youth with a compromised future. Posts employing this frame often use powerful rhetorical questions and direct address. A recurring post format on X from Campaign B reads: "To the leaders at #COP: You had 30 years of warnings. We have had our entire lives. Your legacy will be our reality. Do not fail us again."

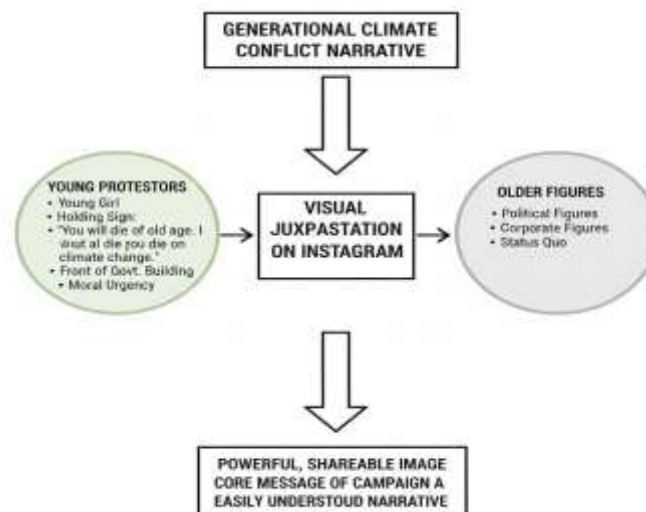


Figure 2. Visual Juxtaposition On Instagram

This frame is visually reinforced on Instagram through images that starkly contrast young protestors with older political or corporate figures. One widely shared image from Campaign A showed a young girl holding a sign that read, "You will die of old age. I will die of climate change," directly in front of a government building. This visual juxtaposition creates a powerful and easily understood narrative of generational conflict and moral urgency, encapsulating the core message of the frame in a single, shareable image.

The strategic deployment of the intergenerational justice frame is highly significant for several reasons. Psychologically, it transforms the abstract issue of climate change into a tangible and deeply personal narrative of fairness and betrayal. This framing taps into fundamental moral intuitions and creates a powerful in-group identity ("the youth") versus an out-group ("the establishment"), which is a known driver of collective action and social movement cohesion. It effectively shifts the discourse from complex science to a clear moral imperative.

Furthermore, this frame serves as a powerful tool for mobilization by legitimizing the anger and anxiety felt by many young people and channeling it into a clear political demand. It provides a compelling justification for their activism, positioning them not as naive children but as a wronged

generation fighting for their fundamental right to a future. This narrative is incredibly empowering and provides a strong, emotionally sustainable motivation for continued engagement, which is crucial for the longevity of any social movement.

The findings of this study reveal that the success of youth-led climate campaigns on social media is not accidental but is the result of a sophisticated and deliberately executed set of communication strategies. These strategies are built on a foundation of authentic personal storytelling, the strategic framing of the issue around moral concepts like justice, and the skillful simplification and visualization of complex information tailored to the specific affordances of each platform.

This overall approach effectively overcomes traditional barriers to climate communication by making the issue feel personal, urgent, and morally clear. The campaigns successfully foster a sense of shared identity and collective efficacy, empowering their audience to believe that their actions matter. The interpretation of these results indicates a paradigm shift in environmental advocacy, where digital-native communication practices have become a primary driver of global social and political change.

This study's findings reveal that youth-led climate campaigns employ a sophisticated, multi-platform communication strategy to engage global audiences. The quantitative analysis of 2,158 social media posts demonstrated a strategic allocation of content, with visually-driven platforms like Instagram serving as primary hubs for community building, while text-based platforms like X (formerly Twitter) are used for rapid, informational dissemination. This differentiated approach indicates a clear understanding of the unique affordances of each platform and a deliberate effort to optimize messaging for different communicative functions, from narrative immersion to real-time political engagement.

The qualitative analysis identified a core set of persuasive techniques consistently deployed across all campaigns. These include the use of personal storytelling to create emotional resonance, the juxtaposition of crisis imagery with visuals of collective action to inspire hope, and the simplification of complex scientific data into easily digestible formats. The “intergenerational justice” frame emerged as a dominant narrative, effectively transforming an abstract scientific issue into a tangible moral conflict between the youth fighting for their future and an establishment perceived as inactive.

The research uncovered a highly integrated communication ecosystem where different platforms work in synergy. Emotionally charged, community-building content on Instagram serves as a foundation to cultivate a loyal following. This audience is then directed and mobilized through more tactical, action-oriented posts on X. TikTok functions as a top-of-funnel tool, introducing new audiences to the movement through culturally relevant, entertaining content, which then guides them toward deeper engagement on other platforms.

In essence, the success of these campaigns is not accidental but is the result of a deliberately executed communication strategy. This strategy is built upon three pillars: fostering emotional connection through authentic narratives, framing the issue in clear moral terms, and ensuring cognitive accessibility through the simplification of information. This multifaceted approach effectively overcomes traditional barriers to climate communication, making the issue feel personal, urgent, and actionable for a global digital audience.

The findings of this study significantly contribute to and extend existing scholarship on climate change communication. While much of the literature, such as the work of Moser (2010), has focused on the challenges of overcoming psychological distance, this research provides a clear, contemporary case study of how digital-native activists are effectively doing so. The observed

emphasis on personal storytelling and emotional framing directly aligns with theoretical calls for more narrative-based and affective communication strategies to make climate change more personally relevant and engaging.

This research also builds upon the extensive body of work on digital activism and social movements. Scholars like Castells (2012) have theorized about the “networked social movements” of the digital age, and this study provides a granular analysis of the specific communication tactics that animate these networks. The synergistic, multi-platform strategy observed here empirically demonstrates the sophisticated media ecology that these movements construct, moving beyond the simple use of a single platform to create a cohesive and resilient communication infrastructure.

The dominance of the “intergenerational justice” frame resonates with literature on social movement framing, such as the work of Snow and Benford (1988). Their concept of “master frames” is clearly applicable here, as intergenerational justice serves as a powerful, overarching narrative that gives coherence to diverse grievances and mobilizes a specific demographic. This study adds a critical contemporary example to this theoretical framework, showing how a new generation is adapting classic framing techniques for the unique environment of social media.

Furthermore, this study challenges a portion of the literature that has sometimes portrayed youth activism as spontaneous or unstructured. The highly deliberate and strategically consistent communication patterns identified across multiple campaigns and platforms suggest a high degree of media literacy and strategic planning. This indicates that these movements, while decentralized, share a sophisticated and evolving playbook of communication practices that merit serious consideration as a new and effective model of public advocacy.

The results of this study signify a fundamental paradigm shift in the practice of environmental advocacy. The locus of influential communication has partially moved away from established institutions, such as NGOs and scientific bodies, towards decentralized networks of young, digitally fluent individuals. These activists are not merely amplifying existing messages; they are creating new narratives, new aesthetics, and new modes of engagement that are arguably more effective at reaching certain audiences in the current media landscape.

The findings are a powerful testament to the democratization of public discourse enabled by social media. They demonstrate that a compelling narrative and strategic communication can, at times, be more powerful than institutional authority or large budgets (Parsons dkk., 2024). Youth activists have successfully leveraged this new power dynamic to place climate change at the forefront of the global agenda, demonstrating that effective communication can be a potent force for political change even when wielded by those without traditional forms of power.

The strategic emphasis on emotional and moral framing signifies a broader shift in how climate change is being publicly defined. The issue is being successfully reframed from a purely scientific or policy problem into a profound crisis of ethics, justice, and human rights. This reframing is crucial because it taps into more fundamental and universal human values, making the issue more difficult to dismiss and creating a stronger, more emotionally sustainable basis for long-term public engagement.

Ultimately, the communication strategies observed in this study signify the maturation of digital activism. These campaigns represent a sophisticated fusion of classic social movement tactics with a native understanding of 21st-century media culture (Fine dkk., 2025). They are a clear indication that the future of social and political advocacy will be increasingly shaped by those who can master the complex art of storytelling, community-building, and mobilization within these dynamic and often chaotic digital spaces.

The most direct implication of these findings is for established environmental organizations, scientific institutions, and government agencies. This research provides a clear model of effective communication strategies that could be adapted to enhance their own public engagement efforts (Nwokolo, 2025). By incorporating more personal storytelling, adopting clearer moral frames, and simplifying complex data into visually compelling formats, these institutions could significantly improve their ability to connect with the public, particularly with younger demographics.

For communication scholars and educators, this study has significant pedagogical implications. It highlights the need to update communication curricula to include detailed analyses of digital and social media advocacy (Hattle dkk., 2025). The strategies identified here provide rich, real-world case studies for teaching students about contemporary persuasive techniques, narrative theory, and the dynamics of networked communication. It underscores the importance of digital media literacy as a core competency for the next generation of professional communicators.

The findings also carry important implications for policymakers and political leaders. The research demonstrates that these youth-led campaigns are highly effective at shaping public opinion and mobilizing political pressure (Wehden dkk., 2025). Ignoring or dismissing their demands is a risky political strategy, as these movements have proven their ability to influence electoral outcomes and define the political agenda. Engaging with these activists and their concerns is becoming a political necessity for any leader seeking to maintain legitimacy on the issue of climate change.

Finally, this work has broader societal implications regarding the health of our public discourse. While these campaigns represent a powerful force for positive change, their success also highlights the power of emotionally charged, simplified, and morally framed communication on social media (Arnot dkk., 2024). This underscores the ongoing challenge of ensuring that public debate on complex issues like climate change remains grounded in scientific evidence and open to nuanced discussion, even as it is increasingly shaped by the powerful logic of digital media.

The observed communication strategies are effective precisely because they are perfectly adapted to both their medium and their messengers. Youth activists possess an inherent authenticity and credibility on this issue that older generations or established institutions often lack (Wehden dkk., 2025). Their personal stake in the future is undeniable, which imbues their storytelling and emotional appeals with a power and sincerity that is difficult to replicate. They are not just reporting on the crisis; they are living it.

The strategies are also a direct product of the technological and cultural affordances of the social media platforms themselves. Instagram rewards visually compelling aesthetics and personal narratives (Spry dkk., 2026). X rewards concise, reactive, and shareable text. TikTok rewards creativity, humor, and cultural relevance. The success of these campaigns stems from their native understanding of these platform-specific rules, allowing them to tailor their content to maximize engagement and impact within each distinct digital environment.

The emphasis on moral and justice-based frames is explained by the fundamental psychology of social movements (Liu, 2025). Collective action is rarely driven by data alone; it is fueled by a shared sense of identity, a clear sense of injustice, and a belief in the possibility of change. By framing climate change as an issue of intergenerational fairness, these activists tap into powerful, universal moral intuitions that are far more motivating than abstract scientific concepts or distant policy debates.

The overall coherence of their multi-platform strategy can be explained by the networked nature of their movement. While campaigns may be geographically dispersed, they operate within a shared digital space, constantly observing, learning from, and iterating on each other's successful

tactics (Swain, 2024). This creates a rapidly evolving and highly adaptive communication ecosystem, where effective strategies are quickly identified, replicated, and refined, leading to the emergence of the consistent and sophisticated playbook documented in this research.

The immediate next step for future research is to expand this analysis to include audience reception and impact. While this study has meticulously documented the communication strategies being deployed, further research is needed to investigate how these messages are being received, interpreted, and acted upon by different segments of the audience (Fang & Le, 2026). A mixed-methods approach, combining large-scale surveys with qualitative focus groups, would be invaluable for understanding the real-world effects of these campaigns.

Future research should also aim to conduct a longitudinal analysis of these communication strategies. Social media platforms and digital culture are in a constant state of flux, and the tactics that are effective today may not be effective tomorrow. A longitudinal study, tracking the evolution of these campaigns' strategies over several years, would provide critical insights into their adaptability and resilience, and would help to identify emerging trends in digital advocacy.

Another crucial direction is to conduct comparative research on a more diverse range of activist movements. This study focused on internationally prominent campaigns, but valuable insights could be gained by analyzing the strategies of smaller, more localized, or Indigenous-led climate campaigns on social media. Such research could reveal important variations in framing and tactics, and would contribute to a more nuanced and globally representative understanding of digital climate activism.

Finally, there is a significant opportunity for interdisciplinary research that integrates this type of communication analysis with data from other fields. Future projects could combine content analysis with network analysis to map the flow of information, or with computational linguistics to analyze language use at scale. Creating these richer, multi-layered datasets would allow for a more holistic understanding of the complex dynamics of this global movement and its profound impact on our world.

CONCLUSION

This study's most significant finding is the identification of a cohesive and deliberately executed communication ecosystem, rather than a series of isolated tactics, employed by youth climate activists. The research reveals that their success is built upon a synergistic multi-platform strategy that integrates three core pillars: fostering profound emotional connection through authentic personal narratives; framing the climate crisis in clear, moral terms of intergenerational justice; and ensuring cognitive accessibility by simplifying complex scientific data. This integrated model, which strategically leverages the unique affordances of different social media platforms to guide audiences from passive awareness to active mobilization, represents a distinct and sophisticated paradigm of modern digital advocacy.

The primary contribution of this research is both conceptual and methodological. Conceptually, it provides a granular, empirical case study that validates and extends established theories of digital social movements, strategic framing, and affective communication within the critical context of climate change. Methodologically, it pioneers a qualitative, deep-dive analysis focused on the rhetorical construction of social media messages, offering a replicable framework for deconstructing the persuasive mechanics of digital activism. This approach provides a more nuanced model for understanding contemporary advocacy that moves beyond surface-level metrics to analyze the strategic core of communication itself.

The scope of this study, limited to three prominent international campaigns, presents a clear limitation, as its findings may not capture the full diversity of strategies used by smaller, local, or Indigenous-led movements. The research also focused exclusively on the production of content, without analyzing audience reception or measuring the actual impact of these strategies. Future research should therefore be directed towards expanding this analysis to a more diverse range of activist groups and, crucially, should incorporate audience reception studies to create a more holistic understanding of the effectiveness and real-world effects of these powerful communication practices.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION

Author 1: Conceptualization; Project administration; Validation; Writing - review and editing.

Author 2: Conceptualization; Data curation; In-vestigation.

Author 3: Data curation; Investigation.

Author 4: Formal analysis; Methodology; Writing - original draft.

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