

# The Role Of Facebook In Mobilizing Grassroots Environmental Campaigns

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## ABSTRACT

*This research paper situates itself in a pivotal position, arguing the key role of Facebook in fostering grassroots environmental campaigns across diverse global contexts. Being one of the prominent choices of social media, Facebook offers a unique type of digital infrastructure enabling decentralized activist behavior, quick dissemination of information, and huge public participation. By way of distributed multi-method probes involving case studies, content analysis, and participant interviews, the study seeks to understand how environmental movements such as Fridays for Future, Save Aarey, and Sunrise Movement (USA) have been utilizing Facebook in the coordination of activities, the education of their followers, and the cohesion-building of informal communities. The research findings display that Facebook seems to strengthen grassroots environmental activism through opportunities of real-time communication, wide reach into locations beyond local geographies, and enabling participatory discourse. However, the algorithmic architecture and sway to misinformation pose grave challenges for the platform: among them are limits on content visibility and climate change-related misinformation. The paper ends with some actionable insights for activists, policymakers, and platform developers on how to enhance the positive impact of Facebook while working to mitigate the risks.*

**Keywords:** Facebook, Environmental Campaigns, Grassroots Movements, Digital Activism, Climate Communication, Social Media Mobilization, Online Advocacy, Misinformation, Algorithmic Bias, Environmental Justice.

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## INTRODUCTION

In the digital era, social media platforms have changed the way social movements are organized, communicated, and furthered. Facebook, among these platforms, stands as an excellent tool for grassroots environmental campaigns, having a wide global reach, offering real-time interactivity, and providing a variety of options such as Groups-connection, Events, and Live Streaming. Through such channels, normal citizens can mobilize collective action to address pressing environmental concerns.

Often without institutional support, grassroots environmental movements emerge out of local community interests and heavily rely on horizontal communication tools to quickly disseminate information and engage emotionally with their constituents. The infrastructure offered by Facebook serves this purpose exactly; it allows the activists to bypass the traditional gatekeepers of mainstream media and political institutions. Initiatives have proven that Facebook can indeed harness public engagement around environmental issues, coordinate de-centralized protest actions from afar, and build transnational profiles for environmental campaigns. Large number of people are utilizing Facebook all over the world. The research paper focuses the role of Facebook in spreading the awareness of environmental campaigns.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

**Kavada, A. (2020)** Title: 'Creating Spaces for Politics: Affordances of Digital Media in the Context of Climate Activism' (Source: Global Media and Communication). This study explores Facebook as a tool of decentralized communication structures in climate activism, allowing for coordination, collective identity, and fast dissemination of calls to protest.

**Milan, S., & Treré E. (2021)** Title: 'Latin American Activism in Times of Platformization' (Source: Social Movement Studies). The paper focuses on grassroots movements on Facebook in the Global South, especially Latin America, with indigenous environmental campaigns resisting mining and deforestation.

**Wonneberger, Hellsten, & Jacobs, S. H. J. (2021)** Title: 'Framing Climate Action: NGO Communication Strategies on Facebook' (Source: Environmental Communication). The article addresses environmental NGOs as they frame climate action messages through emotion and visualization on Facebook, thereby enhancing user engagement and online mobilization.

**Uldam, J. (2020)** Title: 'Digital Activism and the Limits of Surveillance Capitalism' (Source: Information, Communication & Society). Analyzing Facebook's two-sided nature, Uldam shows activists are using this platform for environmental justice but are restrained by data collections and visibility algorithms.

**Velasquez, A., & Larose, R. (2022)** Title: 'Social Media and Sustainable Participation in Environmental Campaigns' (Source: Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication). The study examines the effectiveness of each platform and concludes that Facebook remains the most effective platform to provide sustained participation in grassroots climate movements.

**Barassi, V., & Treré, E. (2020)** Title: 'Data field Citizenship in the Age of Surveillance Capitalism' (Source: International Journal of Communication). This study investigates how Facebook's data practices affect the rights of digital citizens and the visibility of environmental campaigns, particularly for grassroots efforts.

**T. H., & Luong, T. N. (2021)** Title: 'Using Facebook Live for Environmental Disaster Response in Vietnam' (Source: Asian Journal of Communication). It focuses on the use of Facebook Live as a real-time tool to mobilize community support and pressure local authorities in cases of flooding and typhoons.

**Alosno, M., & Fernández, L. (2023)** Title: 'Digital Resistance in the Forest: Facebook's Role in Anti-Deforestation Campaigns in Latin America' (Source: Media, Culture & Society). This article points out environmental protests that successfully moved out of Facebook activism and into real world legal actions to secure land.

**Rahimi, B., & Lee, S. (2022)** Title: 'Algorithmic Exposure and the Politics of Eco-Content on Facebook' (Source: New Media & Society). The writers look at the way Facebook algorithms curate environmental content and shape the political persuasion of users, sometimes enabling activism but at others green-washing.

**Chukwuere, J. E., & Ngoepe, M. (2024)** Title: 'Facebook as a Tool for Environmental Awareness in Africa' (Source: African Journal of Information and Communication). This paper shows that the local environmental campaigns through Facebook launched in indigenous languages had high outreach and were successful in modifying behaviors.

## HYPOTHESES

- The research examines how environmental grassroots organizations utilize Facebook for organizational activities and information distribution and supporter interaction.
- The research investigates whether Facebook tools (groups, pages, events) help environmental campaigns gain offline participation and awareness.
- The research aims to determine what factors hinder Facebook-based environmental advocacy from reaching its full potential because of misinformation and algorithmic bias.

## RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- ✚ To see how the grassroots environmental movements use Facebook for organizing, information dissemination, and supporters' engagement.
- ✚ To examine if Facebook tools (groups, pages, and events) can engender offline participation and awareness for environmental campaigns.
- ✚ To identify the challenges that dents or undermines the reliability and outreach of environmental advocacy via Facebook, e.g., misinformation and algorithmic bias.

## DATA COLLECTION

The research is qualitative utilizing the case study approach to look into the neighboring environmental campaigns that strategically used Facebook: Fridays for Future (Global), Save Aarey (India), Sunrise Movement (USA), POP Movement, Protect Mauna Kea (USA), Amazon Watch (Brazil-USA), and Reclaim the Power (UK). Data came from publicly accessible Facebook pages, groups, events, videos, and multimedia posts created between 2018 and 2023. Each campaign was picked because it saw a high rate of Facebook engagement and far-reaching real-world impacts. The chief methods included content analysis, digital ethnography, and visual observation. Textual data were coded for recurrent themes using software such as NVivo, whereas in cases where post engagement and reach were available, Crowd Tangle and Facebook Insights were utilized. Important aspects are post frequency, types of content (videos, infographics, calls-to-action), levels of user interaction (likes, shares, comments), and the coordination of offline activities. Data collection was also centered around understanding how Facebook was used to create awareness, community engagement, and protest coordination and fundraising all relevant data were descend able-ethically. No personal or private information was accessed. The systematic structure facilitated insights interchangeable with diverse geographical, cultural, and political settings regarding Facebook's strategic leverage for grassroots environmental mobilization.

In this section, we will discuss some eminent grassroots environmental campaigns that were able to successfully use Facebook for mobilization, outreach, and advocacy. These campaigns were selected because of their strong presence in organizational infrastructure, strategic use of Facebook tools, and actual offline impact.

**Fridays for Future (Worldwide):** The Fridays for Future movement was initiated in 2018 by Greta Thunberg and rapidly evolved as a youth-led worldwide climate strike. Greta Thunberg was a Swedish environmental activist. She addressed the problem of climate change. Facebook became the main instrument to organize local chapters, establish and promote global climate strike events, and circulate protest materials. Facebook Groups were employed to organize within a highly decentralized manner across some 150 countries, and through Facebook Events, logistics were carried out and mobilized millions of students for simultaneous action.

**Save Aarey (India):** The Save Aarey campaign started in 2014 in Mumbai bloomed to champion the undisturbed existence of the Aarey Forest, whose fragility was bound to be sundered by a metro project. Activists took to Facebook to offer moment-by-moment updates, environmental data, and protest schedules. The platform became very vital to garnering public support, facilitating legal intervention, and exerting media pressure. It also enabled gossiping amongst environmentalists, students, and urban citizens. Although the construction of a car shed in the green zone could not be prevented, the Save Aarey Movement achieved a major milestone in 2020. That year, the state government designated 812 acres of undeveloped land in Aarey as reserved forest—representing roughly one-fourth of the area that once comprised the Aarey colony.

**Sunrise Movement (USA):** The Sunrise Movement is a U.S.-based grassroots political organization, classified as a 501(c) (4), that focuses on climate action and broader progressive issues. Founded in April 2017 by Varshini Prakash and Sara Blazevic, the movement initially aimed to support candidates advocating for renewable energy during the 2018 midterm elections—beginning with the Democratic primaries and continuing through the general election on November 6, 2018. Since then, Sunrise has concentrated on reshaping public discourse around climate policy, working to bring the Green New Deal to the forefront of national conversations. The organization is dedicated to combating climate change while promoting the creation of sustainable, green jobs.

**POP Movement:** The Protect Our Planet (POP) Movement is a global initiative that emphasizes youth engagement in climate action and sustainability efforts. Launched on Earth Day in 2016, the movement is

dedicated to reducing carbon emissions and minimizing waste through education, innovation, and community involvement. It actively uses platforms like Facebook to promote its mentorship programs and connect young climate advocates across the globe. Though international in scope, the POP Movement has established a strong presence in cities such as Delhi, India, and Masdar City, UAE, and has carried out impactful initiatives in countries including Nigeria and Zambia.

**Protect Mauna Kea (Hawaii, USA):** This movement, led by Indigenous peoples, was seeking to stop the Thirty Meter Telescope's construction on Mauna Kea, a sacred mountain. Protests were livestreamed on Facebook, and cultural stories deepened global solidarity. Organizers circulated educational material, raised funds to organize peaceful resistance to enhance the voices of Native Hawaiian communities.

Efforts to safeguard Mauna Kea, a sacred mountain in Hawaii, have spanned several decades, with major demonstrations and activism occurring long before 2019 and persisting today. The core issue involves opposition to the proposed Thirty Meter Telescope (TMT), which many Native Hawaiians view as a violation of a culturally and spiritually significant site..

**Amazon Watch (Brazil-USA):** The NGO, while attempting to save the rainforest, collaborated with the Indigenous groups to stop deforestation and extractives in the Amazon. Facebook was developed as a strong visual storytelling tool-sharing satellite images, videos of forest fires, and testimonies from the affected communities. It was also used to coordinate days of global action and fundraising efforts that supported the frontline defenders.

Established in 1996 and headquartered in Oakland, California, Amazon Watch is a nonprofit organization committed to safeguarding the Amazon rainforest and promoting the rights of Indigenous communities across the Amazon Basin.

**Reclaim the Power (UK):** Founded on climate justice principles, Reclaim the Power was a UK-based organization using Facebook for mass direct actions in fossil fuel infrastructure campaigns and for systemic change. The group used Facebook Events and private Groups for organizing protests, training activists and sharing policy documents. Their ability to mobilize large numbers through Facebook became a key feature in their successful campaigns against coal and fracking projects. The Reclaim the Power movement is thriving, with a national gathering set for February 22-23, 2025, in Manchester. This event comes on the heels of a planned protest camp at the Drax power station in August 2024, which was shut down by police before it could even begin. Reclaim the Power is dedicated to tackling climate justice and taking direct action against industries that pollute our planet.

The Reclaim the Power movement continues to gain momentum, with a nationwide gathering approach in Manchester. This gathering follows an attempted protest at the Drax power station which was prevented by police before it commenced. Focused on climate justice, Reclaim the Power engages in direct action to challenge environmentally harmful industries and advocate for a sustainable future.

These seven case studies showcase the important role Facebook played with grassroots environmental organizing. Through its real-time communication, community, and multimedia tools, Facebook has set the platform for decentralized campaigns, mobilizing supporters, influencing policies and challenging environmental injustices at local, national and international levels.

## DATA ANALYSIS

The study used a content analysis of the major environmental grassroots campaigns on Facebook which included Fridays for Future (Global) and Save Aarey (India), Sunrise Movement (USA): and Protect Mauna Kea (USA) and Amazon Watch (Brazil-USA), Reclaim the Power (UK). The selected campaigns demonstrated strong Facebook activity together with high levels of public participation and effective offline environmental coordination. Public Facebook Pages, Groups, Events along with multimedia posts provided data which covered the period between 2018 and 2023. The research implemented a structured coding framework to analyze content by dividing posts into four specific categories:

(1) Informational – sharing data, news, or policy updates; - (2) Mobilizing – organizing protests, petitions, or community meetings; - (3) Emotional/Narrative – highlighting personal stories, cultural heritage, or environmental loss; - (4) Visual/Multimedia – using infographics, videos, or livestreams.

NVivo software processed textual and multimedia content to detect patterns which included climate justice together with Indigenous rights and biodiversity protection and anti-extraction narratives. The performance of posts was measured through Facebook's native tools and Crowd Tangle (when available) by analyzing engagement metrics - likes, shares, comments and reactions. The six campaigns consistently relied on emotional and visual content to reach their audience. Emotional and visual content consistently produced the greatest engagement across six different campaigns. The youth climate anxiety stories shared by Fridays for Future protestors sparked a major increase in activity for the movement. Protect Mauna Kea built worldwide support by showing videos which displayed Indigenous ceremonies alongside their resistance activities. The Save Aarey campaign used photographs showing fallen trees and present-time updates to activate urban environmentalists while Sunrise Movement (USA) used infographics with political action directives to affect public discourse. Facebook Events together with comment threads and Live sessions enabled two-way communication which kept community members actively engaged. Campaigns deployed pinned posts along with featured media to lead followers toward external petitions or fundraising links. The use of closed Facebook Groups for volunteer coordination and resource sharing and internal strategy discussions shows how Facebook functions both as a public platform and an internal planning tool. The content analysis shows Facebook functions beyond a simple digital noticeboard because it provides a vibrant interactive environment which supports grassroots activism. The platform enables campaigns to reach broader audiences while strengthening participant engagement through storytelling and visual elements and real-time mobilization to achieve concrete environmental results.

## INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION

The strategic significance of Facebook for present-day environmental activism becomes evident through the content analysis of the major grassroots environmental campaigns—Fridays for Future (Global), Save Aarey (India), Protect Mauna Kea (USA), Sunrise Movement (USA), Amazon Watch (Brazil-USA), and Reclaim the Power (UK). These movements transformed the platform beyond basic communication functions into an integrated digital system that enabled awareness development and resource management and emotional connection and public support activation. Emotional storytelling combined with visual elements existed as a fundamental approach for every campaign. The platform generated more user engagement and content distribution when posts featured powerful images together with authentic stories and Indigenous viewpoints. The global youth movement Fridays for Future built momentum by sharing individual climate stress experiences yet Protect Mauna Kea achieved worldwide support through showcasing Native Hawaiian cultural and spiritual experiences. The research shows Facebook users respond better to environmental campaigns when they present issues through personal stories and emotional connections to local communities. The organizational functions of Facebook Events together with Groups enabled decentralized actions that included climate strikes and petitions and protest marches. The increased visibility of the campaign combined with enhanced supporter confidence. The use of Facebook Live enabled immediate advocacy through real-time engagement which created transparency and strengthened supporter trust for increased campaign exposure. The study demonstrated multiple obstacles through its evaluation. Facebook's algorithm promotes viral content which results in simplifying environmental issues that are inherently complex. The analysis found that posts with entertainment value or outrage content achieved better performance than educational or policy-based content. The system drives campaigns to develop emotional content which sometimes reduces the depth and complexity of their messages. People worry about digital exhaustion along with content overload and their dependency on the platform. Facebook serves as a starting point for building momentum but organizations need to unite digital methods with grassroots efforts and institutional support and

community-based activities to maintain long-term involvement. The platform Facebook provides strong support for grassroots environmental movements through its accessible features that enable large-scale mobilization across national borders. Maximum effectiveness depends on combining Facebook with narrative strategy along with visual impact and a well-defined offline action plan. Future environmental campaigns need to keep adjusting to platform modifications while emphasizing authentic messaging and inclusive approaches and resilient communication strategies.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### CONCLUSION

The analysis of the major grassroots environmental initiatives including Fridays for Future (Global), Save Aarey (India), Sunrise Movement (USA), Protect Mauna Kea (USA), Amazon Watch (Brazil-USA) and Reclaim the Power (UK) shows Facebook's crucial role in environmental mobilization. The platform delivers effective decentralized organization possibilities while building strong emotional connections with users which enables online advocacy to drive real-world action. The Facebook platform provided campaigns with tools to elevate voices from Indigenous and local communities who otherwise faced marginalization. Key factors driving audience engagement included emotional storytelling combined with multimedia content and rapid communication through real-time channels. Facebook Groups and Events played an essential role for campaigns to sustain their momentum while organizing collective actions. The study found multiple challenges including misinformation and algorithmic biases alongside platform dependency and surveillance risks. Research reveals Facebook functions as a dual-natured platform which both empowers users and requires strategic management for environmental activism.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- ❖ A mixed-content strategy should combine emotional storytelling with evidence-based information to achieve credibility and audience reach.
- ❖ Facebook Groups serve as a tool for activists and supporters to maintain community connections as well as coordinate internally.
- ❖ Facebook Events and Live features enable activists to arrange immediate protests and webinars together with real-time awareness campaigns.
- ❖ The organization should dedicate resources to creating visual and multimedia content that includes infographics together with short videos and livestreams to enhance user interaction.
- ❖ Organizations should use multiple platforms through cross-posting their content on Instagram and X (Twitter) and WhatsApp or Telegram to reduce dependency on Facebook.
- ❖ The organization should educate digital volunteers to handle misinformation and lead conversation moderation while sustaining constructive discussions within comments and discussion threads.
- ❖ The organization should analyze engagement data regularly through CrowdTangle and Meta Insights to develop better content strategies.
- ❖ Environmental influencers should join forces with campaigns to help them reach more people and broaden their appeal.
- ❖ Activists should protect their data privacy by refraining from discussing sensitive topics on public threads while using encrypted communication methods when needed.
- ❖ The organization should support changes in platform policies which provide clearer algorithms and show preference for content that serves public interests especially environmental and climate-related topics.

### FUTURE USE OF THE RESEARCH

- ❖ **Policy Development for Digital Environmental Advocacy:** This study provides essential guidance for policymakers and digital rights organizations when establishing protective frameworks that safeguard online environmental activism and address content visibility issues and misinformation management and activist privacy concerns.
- ❖ **Strategic Planning for NGOs and Campaigners:** Environmental NGOs together with grassroots organizers and digital campaigners can implement study results to build Facebook-based outreach programs that merge emotional storytelling with multimedia elements and platform capabilities to generate maximum results.
- ❖ **Educational Integration in Media and Communication Studies:** The research serves educational institutions by offering a practical example for environmental communication and social media study courses as well as digital activism programs which demonstrates actual world applications.
- ❖ **Platform Design and Algorithm Optimization:** The study serves as a reference point for social media companies to enhance their platforms' civic and environmental cause support by developing algorithms that boost verified content with social impact.
- ❖ **Comparative Research Across Platforms and Regions:** Researchers who want to study Facebook's effects against other social media platforms (e.g., Instagram, TikTok, X) or region-specific environmental digital movements can use this paper as their starting point.

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