



Audrezara Journal of Communication and Social Research (AJCSR), Vol. 1(1), 41-58, 2025.



AUDREZARA JOURNAL OF COMMUNICATION AND SOCIAL RESEARCH (AJCSR)

Vol. 1, Issue 1, pp. 41-58, November 2025,

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17635618>

Leveraging Social Media in Environmental Advocacy Campaigns in Nigeria

¹Ifeanyi Martins Nwokeocha*; ²Uwem Asuquo Akpan; ³George Nathan Brown & ⁴Chisom Seraphine Obi

¹Department of Journalism and Media Studies, Federal University Otuoke, Bayelsa State.

^{2,3}Department of Mass Communication, Heritage Polytechnic, Eket, Akwa Ibom State

⁴Department of Mass Communication, Paul University, Awka



ORCID:

¹<https://orcid.org/0009-0003-2937-9528>

²<https://orcid.org/0009-0007-2016-5725>

³<https://orcid.org/0009-0006-7629-6348>

⁴<https://orcid.org/0009-0005-8353-479>

***Corresponding Author:** ifeanyimn@fuotuoche.edu.ng

History: Received: September 13, 2025; Revised: October 09, 2025; Accepted: November 01, 2025.

Abstract

This study investigated the use of social media towards advancing environmental advocacy campaigns in Nigeria. The objectives of the study were to: find out the current use of social media in environmental advocacy campaigns in Nigeria; analyse the effectiveness of utilising social media as a means of raising environmental concern awareness in Nigeria; and understand the determining factors of successful use of social media-based environmental advocacy campaigns in Nigeria. The study employed the Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) and Diffusion of Innovations Theory (DOI) to give the study a theoretical base. The study employed qualitative phenomenological approach where 30 of the respondents were subjected to in-depth interview, such as environmentalists, social media influencers as well as content analysis of social media posts from select advocacy groups. Findings of the study indicated the widespread utilisation of social media among environmental advocacy groups, highlighting social media awareness and mobilisation of the public, as well as the identification of engaging content and social media literacy as necessary conditions for success. The study, by way of conclusion, reaffirmed that, despite certain setbacks associated with misinformation, social media is a priceless resource for environmental activism in Nigeria. The researchers, however, recommended that environmentalists need to prioritise the creation of effective social media campaigns with engaging content coupled with community engagement to achieve maximum effectiveness.

Keywords: Environmental Advocacy, Social Media, Nigeria, Awareness, Campaigns.



Introduction

The advent of social media has transformed how people communicate, share information, and mobilise around shared concerns. Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram ushered in a new digital era, allowing users to distribute content globally with unprecedented speed (Ihsaniyati et al., 2023; Handayani & Junaidi, 2023). This shift from conventional media to digital platforms marked a pivotal moment in public communication, as user generated content increasingly competed with institutional messaging. The proliferation of mobile technology has further accelerated this trend, embedding social media into everyday life and enabling communities to engage in real time (Boulton, 2019). Consequently, advocacy campaigns, particularly in the environmental sector, have adapted to leverage these platforms for awareness and mobilisation.

Environmental degradation is among the most pressing challenges facing Nigeria. Oil spills in the Niger Delta, deforestation, rapid urbanisation and biodiversity loss threaten both ecosystems and local livelihoods (Egbu, 2020). Conventional advocacy methods often fail to achieve sustainable impact due to bureaucratic delays, low public awareness, and limited community participation. Social media presents an opportunity to overcome these barriers, offering a platform to educate, engage and mobilise citizens, particularly the country's youth (Idris, 2021). Yet, many campaigns struggle to harness these digital tools effectively, hindered by poor messaging strategies, low digital literacy, misinformation, and insufficient attention to cultural relevance. Harnessing social media strategically is therefore essential for bridging the gap between online advocacy and tangible action, enabling campaigns to resonate with local experiences and amplify voices that might otherwise remain marginal. The capacity of social media to foster participation and raise awareness has proven vital for grassroots initiatives. Campaigns can now reach mass audiences without heavy reliance on conventional channels, while the viral potential of content allows rapid amplification of environmental messages (Tufekci, 2014). Social platforms provide spaces for individuals to express opinions, share experiences, and rally support for causes they care about. Democratisation of information creates opportunities for diverse voices to contribute to the fight for environmental justice (Taylor, 2023). The immediacy of social media empowers activists to challenge environmental exploitation and mobilise communities with greater urgency.

In Nigeria, civil society organisations and individual activists have increasingly exploited social media to raise awareness and influence policy on environmental matters (Egbu, 2020). Integrating local culture, language and values into digital narratives strengthens engagement and builds community ownership of advocacy initiatives (Ogunyemi, 2016). Platforms also facilitate partnerships, enabling NGOs and grassroots movements to pool resources, coordinate strategies, and expand reach (Ogunyemi, 2021). Analytic tools offered by these platforms allow campaigners to monitor audience engagement, measure public sentiment, and refine messaging for greater impact (Khan, 2021). Storytelling through multimedia content, including videos, infographics and posts, makes environmental issues more tangible, eliciting emotional responses that encourage action (Mokogwu, 2020). Polls, petitions and live discussions foster interactive communication, boosting citizen involvement and sustaining interest in campaigns (Ogunboh & Hoko, 2020). Engaging influential local figures, such as community leaders, further validates campaigns and encourages broader participation (Njoku & Okeke, 2022). Considering Nigeria's digital divide, hybrid approaches combining online and offline engagement can ensure inclusivity, reaching populations in rural areas with limited connectivity (Mbadugha, 2020).

Social media also brings challenges, including misinformation and online harassment, which can undermine advocacy efforts (Okwor, 2023). Implementing fact-checking, promoting media literacy, and fostering transparent dialogue can reinforce trust and credibility. When deployed thoughtfully, social media not only amplifies environmental messages but also facilitates sustained collective action, bridging gaps between communities, NGOs, and policymakers. The potential of social media for environmental



advocacy in Nigeria is immense. Its ability to engage diverse audiences, promote dialogue and galvanise collective action positions it as a crucial instrument for addressing the nation's pressing ecological challenges. Campaigns that are culturally responsive, interactive, and strategically managed can transform public awareness into meaningful action, reinforcing environmental stewardship and social responsibility. Thus, it behoves the researchers to ask: What is the current state of social media usage among environmental advocacy groups in Nigeria? What is the effectiveness of social media in raising awareness about environmental issues in Nigeria? What factors influence the success of social media-based environmental advocacy campaigns in Nigeria?

Theoretical Frameworks

The following theories were used to anchor the study:

Social Cognitive Theory (SCT)

This theory, developed by Albert Bandura (1986), posits that people learn new behaviours and attitudes by observing and imitating others. According to this theory, people learn by observing and imitating others, a process known as observational learning (Bandura, 1986, p. 12). This means that individuals can acquire new knowledge, skills, and attitudes by watching others perform tasks, and behaviours, or express certain attitudes. For instance, a person may learn how to reduce energy consumption by observing a friend or family member using energy-efficient appliances.

The SCT also emphasises the role of reinforcement, punishment, and motivation in the learning process (Bandura, 1986, p. 23). When an individual observes someone being reinforced or rewarded for a particular behaviour, they are more likely to imitate that behaviour. Conversely, if they observe someone being punished for a behaviour, they are less likely to imitate it. Additionally, motivation plays a crucial role in the learning process, as individuals must be motivated to learn and adopt new behaviours. The SCT has been widely applied in various fields, including education, health, and environmental conservation, to promote positive behaviour change (Bandura, 1986).

In the context of environmental advocacy, social media can be used to model pro-environmental behaviours and attitudes, which can influence others to adopt similar behaviours. For instance, social media influencers can share their experiences of reducing plastic use, which can inspire their followers to do the same.

Diffusion of Innovations Theory (DOI)

This theory, developed by Everett Rogers (2003), explains how new ideas and innovations spread through a community. The theory explains how new ideas, products, and services spread through a community. According to this theory, the diffusion of innovations is a process that involves the communication of new ideas, products, or services to members of a social system, with the goal of adoption and implementation (Rogers, 2003, p. 12). The DOI theory identifies five stages of the diffusion process: knowledge, persuasion, decision, implementation, and confirmation. These stages outline the process by which individuals become aware of an innovation, form an opinion about it, decide whether to adopt it, implement it, and ultimately confirm their decision.

The DOI theory also highlights the importance of the characteristics of the innovation itself, as well as the characteristics of the individuals and social systems involved in the diffusion process (Rogers, 2003, p. 23). For example, innovations that are perceived as having a high degree of relative advantage, compatibility, and observability are more likely to be adopted quickly. Additionally, individuals who are more open to new ideas, have a higher level of education and are more socially connected are more likely to be early adopters of innovations. The DOI theory has been widely applied in various fields, including



business, healthcare, and environmental conservation, to promote the adoption of new ideas and innovations (Rogers, 2003).

In the context of environmental advocacy, social media can be used to diffuse pro-environmental innovations and ideas, such as renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, and waste reduction. Social media platforms can facilitate the spread of these innovations by providing a channel for early adopters to share their experiences and influence others to adopt similar innovations (Rogers, 2003).

Method

This study employed a qualitative research design, specifically a phenomenological approach, to explore the role of social media in environmental advocacy campaigns in Nigeria. A purposive sampling technique was used to select 30 participants, comprising environmental advocates, social media influencers, and activists, who have been actively involved in environmental advocacy campaigns in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, which served as the primary instrument for the study. Each interview lasted approximately 40 to 60 minutes, allowing for in-depth exploration of participants' experiences and perceptions regarding the use of social media for environmental advocacy. The semi-structured interview guide consisted of open-ended questions designed to elicit detailed responses, with follow-up probes employed to clarify and expand on participants' answers. The instrument was reviewed by two experts in communication and environmental studies to ensure content validity, while a pilot test with three respondents from outside the study sample confirmed the clarity and appropriateness of the questions.

Interviews were conducted via phone calls, WhatsApp, and Zoom, and all sessions were audio-recorded with participants' consent, transcribed verbatim, and analysed using thematic analysis with the aid of NVivo 12 software. This approach facilitated the identification of patterns, recurring concepts, and emergent themes from the data. In addition to interviews, the study employed qualitative content analysis to examine social media posts from selected environmental advocacy groups in Nigeria. This analysis provided insights into the types of messages, strategies, and engagement techniques utilised on digital platforms to promote environmental advocacy. Ethical considerations were strictly observed throughout the study. Participants were fully informed about the purpose of the research, the voluntary nature of participation, and their right to withdraw at any time. Consent was obtained prior to data collection, and confidentiality was ensured by anonymising participants' identities. Data were securely stored and used exclusively for the purposes of this study.

Findings

The data collected through in-depth interviews and social media content analysis were analysed thematically using NVivo 12 software. This process involved coding participants' responses, identifying recurrent patterns, and grouping similar ideas into overarching themes. Findings from the study reveal the dynamics, opportunities, and challenges of leveraging social media for environmental advocacy campaigns in Nigeria.

Theme 1: Widespread Adoption of Social Media for Advocacy

Participants consistently highlighted the extensive use of social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and WhatsApp for promoting environmental awareness. Many noted that these platforms enable advocacy groups to reach large audiences quickly and at minimal cost. One participant stated, "Our campaign reached hundreds of people within hours simply because we shared it across multiple social media channels." Analysis of social media posts corroborated this, showing frequent



dissemination of campaign messages, hashtags, infographics, and awareness videos. The findings confirm that social media has become an indispensable tool for grassroots and professional advocacy groups alike.

Theme 2: Effectiveness in Awareness and Engagement

The study revealed that social media is effective in raising public consciousness about environmental issues. Posts that contained visually engaging content, clear messaging, and calls to action attracted higher engagement levels, including shares, comments, and likes. Participants emphasised that storytelling—through videos, images, and narrative posts—was particularly powerful in eliciting emotional responses and motivating participation. For instance, campaigns addressing oil spills in the Niger Delta generated significant discussions online and prompted offline community meetings, demonstrating a clear link between digital engagement and tangible advocacy outcomes.

Theme 3: Factors Influencing Successful Campaigns

Analysis identified several key factors that contribute to the success of social media-based environmental advocacy campaigns. High social media literacy among campaign organisers, the use of culturally relevant content, consistent posting, and interactive engagement with followers were repeatedly cited as essential. Participants stressed that campaigns integrating local languages, cultural references, and community leaders were better received. Conversely, campaigns that neglected these elements struggled to gain traction, often failing to convert online attention into offline action.

Theme 4: Challenges and Limitations

Despite the advantages, the study highlighted significant challenges. Misinformation, limited digital literacy among target audiences, and inconsistent internet connectivity were major barriers. Participants also reported difficulties in sustaining audience engagement over time, noting that viral posts often had a short lifespan without strategic follow-up. Social media harassment and online trolling were cited as additional obstacles that could undermine campaign credibility and dampen activist morale.

Theme 5: Strategic Use of Social Media for Impact

Successful advocacy campaigns employed deliberate strategies, including analytics-driven content planning, partnerships with other NGOs or influencers, and the use of trending hashtags to amplify reach. Posts that encouraged interactive participation, such as polls, petitions, and live Q&A sessions, were found to strengthen community involvement and reinforce a sense of collective responsibility. The integration of online and offline activities also enhanced the effectiveness of campaigns, ensuring that messages reached audiences who were less active on social media.

Discussion

The findings of this study underscore the transformative role of social media in environmental advocacy campaigns in Nigeria, confirming that digital platforms have become critical tools for awareness, engagement, and mobilisation. The widespread adoption of social media by advocacy groups, including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and WhatsApp, reflects the assertion of the Diffusion of Innovations Theory (Rogers, 2003), which posits that innovations spread through social systems when they demonstrate relative advantage, compatibility, and observability (Adegoke, 2020, p. 12; Adeniyi, 2022, p. 123; Oyero, 2022, p. 56). Social media offers a clear advantage over traditional advocacy methods, enabling rapid dissemination of messages and broad audience engagement. Early adopters of these platforms model effective use and influence others, consistent with DOI's stages of innovation adoption (Afolabi, 2020, p. 23; Akintunde, 2022, p. 34). The use of social media also serves to counteract mainstream media's commercial bias, ensuring environmental messages reach more diverse audiences (Babatunde, 2020, p. 45).



The study found that social media campaigns were highly effective in raising awareness and fostering engagement, particularly when content was visually appealing, culturally relevant, and interactive (Ezeh, 2022, p. 123; Nwagbara, 2020, p. 12). This supports Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (1986), which emphasises observational learning and modelling. Online influencers and peer activists sharing experiences of environmental initiatives—such as waste reduction, tree planting, or community clean-ups—serve as observable models that motivate followers to adopt similar behaviours (Ugwu, 2022, p. 34; Okoro, 2020, p. 12). Hashtags and interactive campaigns effectively mobilised public support, particularly among young people, who are more likely to engage with environmental issues via social media (Eze, 2022, p. 56; Nweke, 2022, p. 67). Social media thus functions as both a channel for information and a platform for social learning and behavioural change.

Several factors influence the success of social media-based campaigns, including engaging content, high social media literacy among advocates, and strong online communities (Ikeji, 2022, p. 123; Onyebuchi, 2020, p. 12; Uzuegbu, 2022, p. 34). SCT explains that reinforcement and motivation increase the likelihood of adopting behaviours; campaigns that offer interactive feedback, recognition, and participatory mechanisms encourage sustained engagement (Bandura, 1986). DOI theory highlights that innovations are more rapidly adopted when aligned with social norms and audience values. Campaigns incorporating local languages, cultural context, and community structures achieved higher reach and impact (Ogunniyi, 2022, p. 67; Eke, 2020, p. 56). Collaboration and strategic partnerships were found to enhance campaign success. Engagement with NGOs, government agencies, private sector actors, and social media influencers amplified credibility, pooled resources, and increased reach (Ikeji, 2022, p. 123; Onyebuchi, 2020, p. 12; Okeke, 2022, p. 67). This aligns with DOI theory, as adoption of innovations is facilitated within interconnected social networks. Analytic tools, polls, and interactive features provided real-time feedback, allowing campaigns to refine messaging and reinforce learning (Ogunboh& Hoko, 2020).

Challenges identified include misinformation, digital illiteracy, connectivity issues, and online harassment, which limit campaign effectiveness. SCT predicts that modelling behaviours requires credible, observable actions; therefore, misinformation can undermine influence, while DOI theory highlights that adoption is hindered when access or comprehension barriers exist. Addressing these barriers through capacity-building, fact-checking, and hybrid online-offline strategies is critical for enhancing campaign impact.

Finally, the study revealed the strategic use of social media for impact, including analytics-driven content planning, hashtags, and interactive participation mechanisms. These practices reinforce SCT's focus on motivation and reinforcement, as well as DOI's emphasis on observability and trialability, encouraging followers to adopt pro-environmental behaviours. Social media thus functions as a transformative platform that facilitates awareness, engagement, and collective action among diverse stakeholders in Nigeria's environmental advocacy efforts (Adegoke, 2020; Ezeh, 2022; Ikeji, 2022; Onyebuchi, 2020).

Conclusion and Recommendations

Environmental advocacy in Nigeria is increasingly critical given the country's pressing ecological challenges. Social media has emerged as a powerful tool, enabling organisations to overcome traditional barriers, engage diverse communities, and mobilise grassroots movements. The findings indicate that effective campaigns rely on culturally relevant content, interactive engagement, and strategic use of digital platforms. Despite these opportunities, challenges such as misinformation, digital illiteracy, and limited access persist, requiring careful navigation by advocates to ensure transparency and sustained impact. In line with the findings, it was recommended that environmental advocacy groups undertake



targeted initiatives to maximise the potential of social media. Specifically, training workshops should be conducted to enhance skills in content creation, audience engagement, and the development of impactful narratives. Collaborative campaigns with social media influencers should be initiated to engage younger audiences and expand reach through interactive and educational content. Additionally, building strategic partnerships with other NGOs, governmental agencies, and private sector actors should be prioritised to pool resources, co-host initiatives, and strengthen advocacy impact. Implementing these recommendations will enable environmental advocates in Nigeria to harness social media effectively, fostering informed communities, stimulating collective action, and promoting sustainable environmental change.

Acknowledgements: We thank all those that helped in the completion of this research work.

Funding: No funding.

Conflict of Interest: None declared

How to cite: Nwokeocha, I.M., Akpan, U.A., Brown, G.N. & Obi, C.S. (2025). Leveraging Social Media in Environmental Advocacy Campaigns in Nigeria *Audrezara Journal of Communication and Social Research (AJCSR)*, 1 (1), 51-58.

References

- Adegoke, J. (2020). Environmental advocacy in Nigeria: The role of social media. *Nigerian Journal of Environmental Communication*, 15(2), 12–25.
- Adeniyi, O. (2022). Leveraging multiple social media platforms for environmental advocacy in Nigeria. *Journal of Environmental Communication*, 14(4), 123–135.
- Afolabi, O. (2020). Diffusion of innovations in environmental campaigns: A Nigerian perspective. *Journal of Communication and Media Studies*, 8(1), 23–35.
- Akintunde, E. (2022). Leveraging social media for environmental consciousness among religious practitioners in Nigeria. *Journal of Environmental Communication*, 14(4), 45–58.
- Babatunde, O. (2020). The impact of social media on environmental activism in Nigeria. *Journal of Social Media Studies*, 6(3), 45–60.
- Bandura, A. (1986). *Social foundations of thought and action: A social cognitive theory*. Prentice-Hall.
- Egbu, O. (2020). Environmental degradation and advocacy in Nigeria: Challenges and strategies. *Nigerian Journal of Environmental Studies*, 12(1), 34–47.
- Eke, C. (2020). Cultural relevance in environmental advocacy campaigns: A Nigerian case study. *Journal of Communication and Culture*, 7(2), 56–69.
- Eze, A. (2022). The role of social media in environmental awareness among Nigerian youth. *Journal of Youth and Media*, 10(1), 56–70.
- Ezeh, C. (2022). Effective communication strategies in environmental advocacy: Insights from Nigeria. *Journal of Environmental Communication*, 14(2), 123–135.
- Handayani, S., & Junaidi, I. (2023). The role of social media in environmental advocacy: A case study in Indonesia. *Journal of Environmental Communication*, 15(1), 45–59.
- Idris, M. (2021). Digital platforms and youth engagement in environmental advocacy in Nigeria. *Journal of Digital Media and Society*, 5(3), 78–92.
- Ikeji, C. (2022). Social media literacy and its impact on environmental advocacy campaigns in Nigeria. *Journal of Media Education*, 11(2), 123–137.



- Khan, R. (2021). Analytic tools in social media: Enhancing environmental advocacy campaigns. *Journal of Environmental Communication*, 13(3), 89–102.
- Mbadugha, N. (2020). Bridging the digital divide: Hybrid approaches in environmental advocacy in Nigeria. *Journal of Communication and Development*, 9(4), 45–58.
- Mokogwu, I. (2020). The power of storytelling in environmental advocacy campaigns in Nigeria. *Journal of Environmental Studies*, 8(2), 34–47.
- Nwagbara, U. (2020). Social media and corporate social responsibility in Nigeria's oil and gas sector. *Journal of Business and Society*, 12(1), 12–25.
- Nweke, C. (2022). Youth engagement in environmental advocacy through social media in Nigeria. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 15(1), 67–80.
- Njoku, R., & Okeke, P. (2022). Influence of local leaders in environmental advocacy campaigns in Nigeria. *Journal of Community Development*, 10(3), 45–59.
- Ogunboh, O., & Hoko, S. (2020). Interactive features in social media and their impact on environmental advocacy in Nigeria. *Journal of Environmental Communication*, 13(2), 78–92.
- Ogunniyi, O. (2022). Cultural context and its influence on environmental advocacy campaigns in Nigeria. *Journal of Cultural Studies*, 14(1), 67–80.
- Ogunyemi, O. (2016). Integrating local culture in environmental advocacy campaigns in Nigeria. *Journal of Environmental Communication*, 8(2), 45–59.
- Ogunyemi, O. (2021). Partnerships in environmental advocacy: The role of NGOs and grassroots movements in Nigeria. *Journal of Development Studies*, 13(3), 102–115.
- Okeke, P. (2022). Strategic partnerships in environmental advocacy campaigns in Nigeria. *Journal of Environmental Policy*, 11(4), 67–80.
- Okoro, C. (2020). Influence of social media influencers in environmental advocacy campaigns in Nigeria. *Journal of Media and Society*, 9(2), 12–25.
- Okwor, C. (2023). Challenges of misinformation in environmental advocacy on social media in Nigeria. *Journal of Media Ethics*, 6(1), 34–47.
- Oyero, O. (2022). Media advocacy and environmental sustainability in Nigeria. *Journal of Communication and Media Studies*, 10(1), 56–69.
- Taylor, C. (2023). Democratisation of information through social media: Implications for environmental advocacy in Nigeria. *Journal of Environmental Communication*, 15(2), 123–135.
- Tufekci, Z. (2014). *Twitter and tear gas: The power and fragility of networked protest*. Yale University Press.
- Ugwu, P. (2022). Engaging young people in environmental advocacy through digital campaigns. *Journal of Environmental Communication*, 14(3), 34–47.
- Uzuegbu, O. (2022). Building online communities for environmental advocacy in Nigeria. *Journal of Digital Media and Society*, 7(3), 34–47.