

Environmental campaign in the documentary film *Ekspedisi 3 Sungai* episode *Juara Sampah Saset*

Lalita Hanief¹, Muhammad Ainani², Atik Nurfatmawati³

^{1,2}Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Universitas Lambung Mangkurat, Banjarmasin, Indonesia

³Islamic Broadcasting Communication Study Program, Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam Mulia Astuti, Wonogiri, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

Background: This research analyzes the function of environmental communication in the documentary film *Ekspedisi 3 Sungai* episode *Juara Sampah Saset* which highlights the crisis of plastic waste pollution in the Brantas River. **Purpose:** Using a social constructivism paradigm and a qualitative-interpretative approach, this research examines how documentary films construct and communicate environmental messages to their audiences. **Methods:** Data were collected through documentary analysis of the films and interviews with environmental communication academics, documentary film practitioners, and environmental activists. Data analysis used qualitative content analysis method with Cox's environmental communication function framework. **Results:** An effective visual strategy, namely the depiction of the contrast between community activities and river conditions and the use of analogies in the narrative diction, has succeeded in creating an emotional atmosphere for the audience. The film is also successful in bridging the gap between issues of global concern on polluting the environment with the real life of the locals. The results of the waste audit that showed significant generation of single-use products waste in big companies give a fresh insight into the CSR program on the plastic waste crisis. **Conclusion:** The documentary film *Ekspedisi 3 Sungai* episode *Juara Sampah Saset* demonstrates that visual media can be a productive method of bringing complex environmental topics into the mass consciousness, incorporating both technical information and compelling stories to make people think about them. By using effective visual imagery and a brand audit style, the movie underlines corporate accountability toward plastic pollution, and relates macro problems to the micro-level experiences of the communities involved in supporting a moral thinking of waste disposal practices. **Implications:** The study will help in development of effective environmental communication strategies in Indonesia. Recommendations on how the more tangible effect of documentary movies on behavioral and waste management policy changes within a community can be quantified.

Keywords: Documentary film; environmental communication; river pollution; plastic waste; qualitative content analysis

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Correspondence: Lalita Hanief, S.Sos, M.Si. Lambung Mangkurat University, Jl.H.Hasan Basry, Banjarmasin, 70123. *Email:* lalita_hanief@ulm.ac.id.

INTRODUCTION

Environmental problems caused by unsustainable waste management have become a serious challenge worldwide. In Indonesia, the situation is further complicated by the increasing amount of plastic waste, especially in river area that are the center of community activities. According to data from the Central Bureau of Statistics, during 2024, Indonesia produced 64 million tons of waste annually, with 12% of which is plastic waste (Waluyo, 2025).

National waste generation in Indonesia per year reaches 25.84 million tons, dominated by household waste at 56.79% (Kementrian Lingkungan Hidup dan Kehutanan Republik Indonesia, 2025). This problem is not only a technical issue in waste management, but also shows obstacles in more fundamental environmental communication (Surya & Andini, 2024). Based on environmental communication theory (ECT), environmental communication functions as a symbolic means to build public understanding of the relationship between human and nature (Hansen & Cox, 2022). In this case, visual-based media, especially documentaries, are able to integrate visual elements and storytelling to build awareness of critical environmental issues, while motivating changes in attitudes in the audience (Meisyanti & Rahmawati, 2021).

A number of previous studies have found the advantages of visual media in the context of environmental communication. The

application of attractive photographs and video recordings facilitates the effective transmission of messages through visual descriptions hence providing important information on environmental issues. This is compared to traditional writing more than ever. Research indicates that visual objects in communication can lead to better knowledge and engagement of the audience regarding environmental issues, thus encouraging environmental sustainability-congruent behavior (Yu et al., 2022). Conversely, Register (2015) highlighted that movies with environmental subjects have been confirmed to play a significant role in the perception of danger and mobilization of society towards concerted action.

How visual media influences the consciousness of people demonstrates that the influence of various kinds of visual media such as commercial products and the social media can be considered really effective in forming the opinion of people and their behavioral patterns. Visual media present information as a powerful tool of dissemination of knowledge, awareness and active engagement of people in the community in most social and political events. One very critical aspect of the influence of the visual media is its ability to raise communal political awareness.

According to a study done by Arpandi (2023), the visual media, in particular, is the most influential in encouraging individuals to take part in the political process all during the general election among other online media

outlets. This media not only offers the necessary knowledge to comprehend the complexity of the political process but also helps engage the community in electoral processes. Regular and informative advertisement content on most social media platforms including Instagram can influence purchasing behavior and brand awareness, therefore demonstrating how visual stimuli in the media could influence consumer attitude and behavioral patterns (Mulyawan et al., 2021).

The visual media is also strategic in promoting different social issues campaigns. Social media platforms have become critical tools in social justice struggle where people and businesses apply them to create awareness of social issues and promote good change (Marshall-Lee et al., 2020). This phenomenon shows that visual media can be not only a pleasant instrument but also a channel of spreading important messages that target to raise awareness among the population.

The effects of visual narrative could be demonstrated very well through social media environmental campaigns. Images of adverse effects of pollution or deforestation, such as, can provoke strong emotions and raise the level of awareness of people regarding the significance of environmental conservation. Numerous analyses assert that picture-based data visualization and the manner of narrating narratives help the audience understand how complicated environmental issues are and encourages them to participate in conservation

efforts (Lee et al., 2015). Visual storytelling, therefore, is not just a form of communication, but a way to raise awareness, as well as a way to promote behavior change.

Furthermore, the research by Maranatha and Kusmayadi (2020) indicated that news of natural events such as land and forest fires can attract the attention of the population to the environmental concern through the print and online media platforms. Also, the visual presentation of targeted storytelling allows the spectators to be emotionally connected to environmental problems. The examples of films such as *An Inconvenient Truth* and *Blackfish* are documentaries that employ excellent visual storytelling to create awareness among the population on the issue of animal cruelty and climate change. The analysis of the characteristics of these films, the methods of editing and characterization, and the application of visual aesthetics has revealed that they are used to explain the continued influence of these films on the minds and actions of the population (Ryan et al., 2023).

The media can motivate the audience to participate in real-life environmental conservation efforts by creating captivating and educative stories. According to (Faiz et al., 2021), the movie *Sexy Killer* is supposed to be a trigger to create awareness to the people on the importance of protecting the environment by lessening coal power consumption and turning to cleaner solar energy sources.

But visual stories must be accompanied

with accurate and responsible information if one wants best outcomes. Inaccuracy in the way information is presented has the power to diminish public confidence in the message being given, therefore undermining initiatives toward environmental consciousness. Content developers should therefore make sure that their visual storytelling not only entertain but also fact-based and instructive (Yadav & Pathak, 2016).

Documentary films have great possibilities in environmental communication as they are a visual tool combining factual stories with emotive aspects. Research by Majesty and Irwanto (2025) discovered that by up to 67% more precisely than written material, environmental documentaries may raise viewers' knowledge and sympathy for environmental problems. Documentary films have great possibilities in environmental communication as they are a visual tool combining factual stories with emotive aspects. Environmental documentaries may raise viewers' knowledge and sympathy for environmental problems (Majesty & Irwanto, 2025). Documentary movies have great force as they let the spectator feel the abstraction of environmental facts into a reality. The difficulties of environmental communication in the digital era are not only related to how to transmit knowledge properly, but also how to overcome the phenomena of "environmental fatigue" or tiredness towards environmental issues experienced by many people due to too much negative news on the ecological

crisis. Research shows that the documentary medium is able to change the way viewers view environmental issues and encourage them to become actively involved in solutions (Podara et al., 2021).

Environmental films have strategic value in the Indonesian setting given the cultural traits of the society more sensitive to visual communication and narrative. Mehta et al. did research on visual-based communication's ability to close knowledge gaps amongst various community groups in developing nations with varied degrees of literacy. Local films like *Ekspedisi 3 Sungai* are more readily received and assimilated by local viewers because they tell stories anchored in the sociopolitical setting of Indonesian culture.

In this sense, local documentaries have an advantage as they may show recognizable individuals and circumstances that local viewers can quickly identify, therefore fostering a closer relationship with the problems brought out. Though their immense potential, the impact of environmental films in the Indonesian setting has not yet been thoroughly investigated. Earlier research seems to concentrate on evaluating environmental initiatives depending on traditional mass media or social media channels (Zuliansyah & Jatmika, 2025). On the other hand, the potential of independent documentary films in building local environmental narratives and mobilizing community action has not received sufficient attention in the academic literature. This creates

an important research gap to address, given the strategic role of local documentary films in connecting global environmental issues with the realities of Indonesian society.

The findings reveal that “Pulau Plastik” successfully transcends superficial environmental criticism (shallow ecology). The film does not merely demand policy reform but implicitly encourages a fundamental value shift from anthropocentrism to ecocentrism. It challenges the audience to recognize themselves as an integral part of the entire biosphere. The film *Pulau Plastik* serves as a powerful environmental pedagogy tool, promoting the profound ecological consciousness essential for sustainable solutions to the environmental crisis (Wafa et al., 2026).

The documentary *Ekspedisi 3 Sungai* Episode *Juara Sampah Saset* is a Watchdoc work that will be aired in 20 different episodes. Quoted from *TribunJabar* news, the damaged state of rivers on Java Island due to garbage pollution is shown through the documentary film *Ekspedisi 3 Sungai*. This film is a form of collaboration between researchers, journalists and residents who explore the main rivers on Java Island. According to the Director of Ecological Observation and Wetland Conservation (Ecoton), Prigi Arisandi, said “This documentary film records how rivers are damaged by poor waste management. The three rivers recorded are the Brantas River in East Java, the Citarum River in West Java, and the Bengawan Solo River” (Nilawati, 2022).

The documentary *Ekspedisi 3 Sungai* episode *Juara Sampah Saset* talks about the condition of the Brantas River that flows in the Malang area. The Brantas River is polluted by diapers, plastics and also food packaging sachets, laundry soap and others. This movie reveals the river water that is polluted with garbage and the impact that will be caused by garbage pollution. The majority of riverbank residents throw garbage in the river until it flows downstream to the Brantas River. This research aims to interpret the meaning of environmental communication in the movie *Ekspedisi 3 Sungai* episode *Juara Sampah Saset* which is associated with the concept of environmental communication function.

The key element of documentary films is the presentation of facts. Documentary films deal with real characters, objects, moments, events and locations. Documentary films do not create an event or incident, but record an event that really happened (authentic). Documentary films do not have a plot, but have a structure generally based on the theme or argument of the filmmaker (Pratista, 2017).

However, there is still a gap in research on how local documentary films can function as an effective medium of environmental communication in Indonesia’s specific socio-cultural context. Previous studies tend to focus on content analysis of mainstream media or conventional environmental campaigns, but have not explored in depth how independent documentary films can build narratives and

frame local environmental issues. Research in the field of environmental communication still tends to focus on analyzing mainstream media or conventional communication campaigns, several researchers have indicated that the use of alternative media, such as independent documentary films for local environmental narratives, remains relatively underexplored. In this regard, content analysis for environmental campaigns research is usually mediated via mainstream media, especially when seen from the standpoint of quantitative methodologies and overall communication campaigns (Riffe et al., 2024). This is consistent with studies by Temper and Shmelev (2015), who examined how media may help environmental justice but pointed out that this approach is usually restricted to big campaigns reinforced by mainstream media, without any in-depth analysis of independent documentary efforts.

Although they did not especially concentrate on storylines in independent films, (Russell Neuman et al., 2014) research in the *Journal of Communication* found using Agenda-Setting Theory that mainstream media greatly influences public emphasis on environmental concerns. Marschütz et al. (2020) also emphasize that mainstream media has a great influence in framing public issues, including environmental issues, in the form of broad campaigns and often does not dive in depth, a characteristic that is actually a characteristic of the independent documentary approach. Similarly, Valenzuela and McCombs (2020) in

their work *Setting the agenda: Mass media and public opinion* highlighted the strategic role of mass media in influencing public views on various topics, including the environment, but with a tendency towards a more mainstream campaign-oriented approach. Based on the results of this study, it can be concluded that there is a need for more extensive exploration of alternative.

Watchdoc's documentary *Ekspedisi 3 Sungai* Episode *Juara Sampah Saset* offers a unique case study to fill this gap. As a product of collaborative environmental journalism, the film not only records the physical reality of river pollution, but also constructs a narrative about the community's relationship with the river environment through a community perspective (Nilawati, 2022). Using a qualitative content analysis approach based on Hansen and Cox (2022) environmental communication function framework, this research aims to interpret how the documentary constructs and communicates environmental messages to its audience.

The significance of this research lies in its contribution in: (1) enriching the theoretical understanding of the role of documentary films in environmental communication in Indonesia, (2) identifying effective strategies in communicating environmental issues through visual media, and (3) providing practical recommendations for policy makers and environmental communication practitioners in developing more effective environmental campaigns.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses the social constructivist paradigm, which holds that symbolic interaction shapes society and so defines reality. Emphasizing how knowledge is created by social interactions and cultural settings, the social constructivist paradigm inspired mostly by Lev Vygotsky's ideas, this paradigm stresses that learning is an active process in which people create meaning by means of interactions with others in their social context (Al-Qaysi et al., 2020). This paper aims to investigate how different interpretations of environmental communication are generated and presented in documentary works by using a qualitative-interpretive method. This approach was chosen as it may reveal levels of significance concealed in the documentary film narrative and visual text. Documentary films might be used as a substitute method in communication studies in line with (Jati, 2021), conclusions as they help researchers deliver messages in a more imaginative and dynamic way.

The investigation revolves around the Watchdoc documentary film *Ekspedisi 3 Sungai* episode *Juara Sampah Saset* available on the YouTube site. The fact that this item is a valuable instrument for environmental journalism tackling Indonesia's critical waste management issue motivated the selection. Scenes include visual components expressing environmental messaging in the socio-cultural milieu underlying the units of study in the research, conversations and narratives concerning environmental concerns, and environmental communication

messages. Data gathering drew mostly from two main sources—primary and secondary ones.

The most essential facts were collected through the careful interviewing of professionals and analysis of film documentaries. Documentary research was comprised of the strict film watching, narrative and dialogues transcription, and additional visual description of all the important situations. In-depth interviews were also conducted with two documentary filmmakers, three environmental communicators working in the field, and two environmental activists to have a full picture. Secondary data was generated through academic publications, policy papers, research reports and related coverage in the mass media.

The selection of the scenes to be analyzed was performed using a purposive sampling technique on the basis of specific criteria such as the content of explicit environmental communication messages, the presentation of pragmatic or constitutive functions, the relevance of waste management issues, and the presentation of interaction of the community with the environment. The approach allowed the researcher to focus on the aspect that was most pertinent to the objectives of the investigation.

The analysis of data was based on the qualitative content analysis (QCA) technique created by (Charmaz & Thornberg, 2021). The analysis was conducted in three phases: open coding to determine the units of meaning and give them conceptual terms, axial coding to group the data in terms of

environmental communication processes and uncover relationships patterns and selective coding to amalgamate the categories and coming up with theoretical propositions. The analytical framework would be the functions of environmental communication as proposed by Cox (2010), which breaks down the functions of environmental communication into pragmatic and constitutive functions.

The data validity was ensured by the combination of triple data source, data collection methods, researcher and theories triangulation to guarantee the quality of the research. The reliability of the research was enhanced by standardized coding measures, the two independent researchers coded the measures twice, and the calculation of intercoder reliability using Krippendorff alpha. The whole research work was well registered to provide transparency and credibility.

Ethical aspects of the research were maintained through obtaining permission to use film materials, maintaining informant confidentiality, providing informed consent to participants, and reporting findings objectively. The researcher is aware of the limitations in terms of the generalizability of the findings, access to filmmakers, temporal and geographical contexts, and analytical perspectives. However, these limitations do not diminish the significance of the findings in providing an in-depth understanding of the role of documentary films in environmental communication.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The documentary begins with a scene from the previous episode showing a woman throwing 1 bag of garbage into the Brantas River. Table 1 (Scene minute 0.01) shows a woman who wants to throw 1 bag of household waste into the river. When the expedition team asks her where she usually dumps her garbage, the woman says that she dumps it here directly (in the river).

The students of the Islamic University of Malang who are members of the expedition team are sorting plastic waste found in the Brantas River in Malang city. People around the river still throw garbage in the river, even though the Brantas River is used for bathing purposes. Dialogue: The students began to research the types of waste, and find out who the biggest producers of waste in the river are.

Dialogue: What is this called? Waste audit, waste characteristics. What do you want to see? Composition. So, we want to know, from the household what kind of waste, what is the dominant one.

Scene minute 3.45 showing dialogue of Daru Setyorini, a river researcher, said in this scene that after collecting household waste thrown into the river, researchers will categorize the waste to find out which waste can be recycled and which cannot. In addition, can find out what technology can be used to manage household waste. Daru also explained that the need for waste segregation starts from home to be utilized as compost for organic waste, while for recyclable waste can be sold again for the recycling industry.

Table 1 Environmental Communication Function in the *Ekspedisi 3 Sungai* episode *Juara Sampah Saset*

	Environmental Campaign Messages	Environmental Communication Function	Minute scene
	A woman and man throw garbage into the river	Pragmatic function: Littering is bad behavior, so it's not worth emulating.	0.01
	Students research the types of waste in the Brantas River	Pragmatic function: Educating the audience about the findings of the types of waste in the Brantas River	3.45
	The woman threw 1 bag of garbage into the river; the expedition team asked the woman where she usually throws garbage?	Pragmatic function: Providing information about the bad behavior of residents who consider it normal to throw garbage into the river.	4.41
	Waste audit and waste characteristics	Pragmatic function: Providing information related to the findings of the types of household waste in the Brantas River.	5.12
	Woman throwing garbage bags, while a man is fishing and 2 small children are swimming in the river.	Pragmatic function: To educate people about the bad portrait of a river that is used as a dumping ground for garbage, while the river is also used for fishing and bathing by children.	10.30
	The boys say not to throw garbage in the river. In this scene, Daru also reminds the children to tell their mothers not to throw garbage into the river, so that the river does not stink.	Pragmatic and constitutive functions; Preventive action by stating the environmental communication message not to throw garbage into the river. In addition, the message of not throwing garbage into the river also emphasizes that the river is polluted with odors and piles of household waste.	12.28
	All waste dumped in the Brantas River will end up in the Sengguruh reservoir in Kepanjen.	Pragmatic function: Informative message that garbage dumped along the Brantas River will be washed away and end up in the Sengguruh reservoir.	12.59
	The 4 tons of garbage in the reservoir is equivalent to 3 times the size of a football field	Constitutive function: The use of the analogy of 3x as much garbage as a soccer field gives an idea that the garbage washed away in the Brantas River is very large.	17.38
	Brand audit, Daru conveyed the message that avoid using packaged products.	Pragmatic function: The message to avoid using sachet products is a warning about the dangers of waste generation because sachet packaging cannot be recycled.	22.07

Source: Author, 2025

Table 1 (Scene minute 5.12) explain that recycling is not a solution, that's why the government should limit especially types of plastic such as mica. In many places, mica waste is not sold because it is disposable. 60% of household waste is disposable.

Scene minute 10.25 shows a woman throwing a garbage bag into the Brantas River. The frame also shows a man fishing and children swimming in the river. This behavior of throwing garbage in the river is a bad habit of residents around the Brantas River. The condition of the riverbanks looks a lot of piles of household waste, even though the river water is also used for bathing by the surrounding children.

Scene minute 12.28 shows the scene of 3 boys saying the message that:

“Don't throw garbage in the river”.

After the scene was recorded with a smartphone, Daru said a message to convey to the children that:

“Mom, don't throw garbage in the river. Later I can't swim, I have to swim with garbage”.

Scene minute 12.59 showing all the waste dumped along the Brantas River in Malang will end up in the Sengguruh Reservoir located in Kepanjen, Malang Regency, East Java. Forty cubic meters of waste per year is equivalent to 3x the area of a football field with the height of the pile reaching a dozen meters. This waste is only from 1 sluice gate; there are still 6 dams that face sedimentation and waste piles. The

waste is dredged using heavy equipment and piled up in the field. Some of the garbage has become a source of income for scavengers.

From each brand auditing piles of garbage from the river, the most brand packaging found is from the wings group because of its diverse products such as cleaning fluids, food, seasonings, instant noodles, also from Indofood a lot because it likes instant noodles. The third most common brand is Unilever. In addition, there were also many found waste packaging of sachet coffee drinks. Daru emphasized the public to avoid consuming sachet drinks because the waste cannot be recycled.

Based on table 1, the *Ekspedisi 3 Sungai* episode *Juara Sampah Saset* shows a grim portrait of the bad behavior of people around the Brantas riverbank who throw various household waste into the Brantas River. The expedition team conducted a waste audit and found plastic food packaging, diapers, soap packaging, and various other household waste. The movie presents the fact that sachet packaging is the most common finding in the waste pile in the Brantas River. The Brantas River is still used for children's swimming and there are anglers fishing in the river.

The fact is that the waste flowing from the Brantas River will end up in the Sengguruh reservoir in Kepanjeng, Malang Regency. Heavy equipment is used to dredge the waste in the Sengguruh reservoir. Some of this waste becomes a field of sustenance for residents who scavenge garbage. The team conducted

a waste audit in the Sengguruh reservoir area, the results showed that the Wings brand ranked first in the largest pile of waste, second was the Indofood brand and third was Unilever. The river expedition team urged the audience to avoid using products with sachet packaging because they cannot be recycled.

According Pratista (2017) that the main key of documentary film is the presentation of facts. The film *Juara Sampah Saset* fulfills the function of informing, educating and persuading. Environmental communication messages provide new views to audiences to raise awareness of the dangers of river pollution. This film fulfills the functions of environmental communication in the form of pragmatic functions and constitutive functions.

Research on the documentary *Ekspedisi 3 Sungai* episode *Juara Sampah Saset* reveals some significant results in the framework of environmental communication and how the waste management problem in Indonesia is presented successfully. As described in the present context, documentaries have evolved into a vital tool for raising awareness and organizing environmental activity by (Katsouris & Pavlogeorgatos, 2020). This video exposes the contradictory circumstances along the Brantas River, where garbage disposal methods directly interact with everyday activities like swimming and fishing, therefore producing remarkable inconsistencies in the environmental story. Through this narration method that science and local real life are brought together in this

documentary. Such an approach aligns with the concept of narrative persuasion, promoted by Luo and Luo (2017). This supports the fact that the emotional involvement of the viewer to environmental issues might be elevated with the help of human experiences. It is supported by the results of the studies conducted in this way (Ko et al., 2023; Schreiner et al., 2018). This indicates that the narrative style works better in shifting attitudes even when giving information. Drawing on their meta-analysis studies, (Vesely & Klöckner, 2020) have shown that personal tales improve information recall and motivate change in pro-environmental behavior when compared to more conventional environmental communication approaches.

The documentary *Ekspedisi 3 Sungai* episode *Juara Sampah Saset* presents a strong environmental communication posture by means of the “narrative bridge” strategy, which helps viewers to relate macro issues like river pollution to the daily lives of individuals affected by it. The strategy fits the idea of local narratives as presented in the literature on environmental communication which emphasizes the significance of connecting the international implications to the personal in order to produce an emotional appeal (Ingram et al., 2019; Marschütz et al., 2020). The documentary highlights the repercussions of the environmental catastrophe on the local economy by means of the testimony of fishermen who have lost their livelihoods owing to plastic contamination, therefore enabling viewers

to firsthand experience the socioeconomic consequences of waste.

The different in visual techniques in documentary works is used to connect ideologies with the audience (Harry et al., 2021). The visual technique used in this documentary facilitates effective environmental visual communication. Long vistas and visual framing in Environmental Visual Communication (EVC) help the film to depict the real degree of river pollution. This approach follows the findings of (Luederitz et al., 2017). Those underscored how important visualization is to better understanding of environmental issues. This framing is also equated with a solution-oriented narrative style that minimizes the chances of ecological anxiety due to overly focused negative outcomes (Fernández-Llamazares & Cabeza, 2018). This strategy also emphasizes the importance of local populations in conservation campaigns hence encouraging what is popularly referred to as solution-based environmental communication.

According to the trash audit by the documentary crew, most of the rubbish in the river started from single-use products largely produced by three large companies. This result is in line with studies revealing a significant contribution to plastic waste in the aquatic environment created by fast-disposable consumer goods sector (Cortes Arevalo et al., 2020). According to the figures mentioned, 60% of this trash is single-use packaging, which aggravates the problem of plastic pollution in the surroundings.

Previous studies also confirm the importance of the visual analogues in the documentary, including matching garbage volume to football field measurements. As an instance, Anderson and McLachlan (2016) discovered that by up to 70%, simple, understandable analogies help public knowledge of environmental problems grow. Combining quantitative data and visualizations with real-world context, this visual approach produces a powerful data-visual combination that increases public understanding of the scope and severity of environmental problems. Furthermore, the documentary highlights youngsters as the main messengers of environmental messages, therefore adding an emotional element that can inspire viewers. Datta (2018) Children's messages sometimes seem more convincing, particularly in environmental advertising, according to studies as they allow viewers to relate to the personally felt effects they directly encounter. This project is also pertinent to emotional bridging theory, in which public attention is more effectively captured by messages conveyed via narrative and visual media featuring people who could inspire empathy (Abu et al., 2020).

Following the theoretical paradigm put out, this documentary effectively integrates pragmatic and constitutive roles in environmental communication (Rathwell & Armitage, 2016). While its constitutive function inspires viewers to be actively engaged in addressing the issue of plastic trash in their surroundings, the pragmatic

function is expressed in easily digested technical knowledge on waste management. Therefore, in keeping with the idea of “environmental collective efficacy” which is supposed to be able to inspire group action for environmental preservation, this movie not only offers knowledge but also motivates collective action (Cairney & Oliver, 2017).

This paper illustrates the extent to which effective environmental films can be efficient tools in raising awareness and promoting action among the population. These results support the need to use solution-based stories with impressive images to address the increasing problem of environmental anxiety. By taking a mix of these factors, the film *Ekspedisi 3 Sungai* can become a significant example of a contextual and pertinent environmental communication strategy in Indonesia, where the issue of plastic pollution in significant rivers is a key concern.

A close look at the documentary titled *Ekspedisi 3 Sungai* episode *Juara Sungai* reveals several strategic points of interest in environmental communication in need of further research. The film generates a complex narrative of the relationship between society, enterprises, and aquatic life together with recording the real reality of the pollution of rivers. Resting on the research results, it is possible to define the fact that this film implements some of the innovative approaches in terms of communicating the environmental crisis.

The narration technique in this documentary is a blend of investigation journalism with a personal account. The formation of a balance between the emotional appeal and the empirical information. Scientific and personal narratives in environmental communication have been proven to be more effective to accept the message than those based on one of them only (Hansen & Cox, 2022). The contrast between the visuals of the waste sorting research activity by students in the film *Ekspedisi 3 Sungai* to the testimonies by local residents forms a narrative bridge, a technique that bridges the macro (scientific data) and micro (9 individual experiences) aspect.

One of the major strengths of this documentary can be seen through the application of stark visual contrast to give the audience an emotional experience. The irony in the relationship between the society and the environment is seen in the scene of children playing in the same river as the landfill. This aesthetic device is a skillful way of applying the idea which urges the viewer to think morally about his or her connection with nature.

The brand audit method discussed in this movie is an important development in environmental communication that puts the emphasis on corporate responsibility instead of personal one. The findings of the audit that have indicated the prevalence of the packaging waste of three major companies (Wings, Indofood, and Unilever) offer an additional insight into the origin of the plastic pollutions

issue. The methodology is consistent with the recent studies which propose that proper environmental communication should be in a position to recognize and examine the position of corporate players in the environmental crisis (Agrawal & Lemos, 2007). Transparency of corporate donations to the environmental disaster thru visual media might inspire more ecologically friendly company policies and economic operations.

The film *Ekspedisi 3 Sungai* deftly combines constitutive and pragmatic roles of environmental communications. The way the factual data on the waste volume and the outcome of the brand audit is presented reveals their pragmatic value. Concurrently, the framing of the story that affects the audience's view of the interaction between people and rivers reflects the constitutive character. A transforming learning process that not only improves knowledge but also alters views and behavior depends on the integration of these two purposes.

Analogies and visual comparisons used in the movie, including equating the amount of garbage to the area of a football field, help audiences picture the scope of environmental issues often difficult to understand in abstract figures. Additionally using a "solution-oriented framing" technique which is progressively acknowledged as an excellent practice in modern environmental communication the documentary If one over emphasizes the negative effects of the environmental situation

without offering concrete solutions, people may become apathetic regarding environmental problems as they feel powerless. Presenting doable alternatives like garbage sorting and cutting the usage of single use sachet items helps *Ekspedisi 3 Sungai* escape this trap.

The documentary's capacity to link the local reality of living on the banks of the Brantas River with the worldwide concern of plastic pollution is one of its major contributions. This is a strategy that focuses on how the global environmental issues can be contextualized in a local context so that it makes the message more relevant and resonant. Environmental accounts that tie the world effects into the local experience may enhance the sense of urgency and personal interest over those that only emphasize the global view.

The communicative strategy of using children to deliver environmental messages in the film is a great idea and it should be given a better coverage in the literature of communication of the environment. Studies on the communication of the environment have established that environmental messages targeting youths possess a special persuasive effect towards environmental awareness development (Ojala, 2012). This phenomenon insinuate that children are viewed as most affected by long term environmental damages. Thus, their voices are more moral voice in environmental discussion.

The effectiveness of documentary films as an environmental communication tool cannot be

fully evaluated without analyzing their ability to influence behavioral change and policy change. Visual displays of collective action such as those presented in the garbage sorting exercise by the students in the film can make viewers more certain that they can be part of the solution to the environmental issues. Nonetheless, the connection between actual behavioral change and the shift in attitude is a complicated one. In the context of the film *Ekspedisi 3 Sungai* conclusions of a brand audit that indicates the role of businesses in the plastic trash disaster give new insights into what legislative solutions should do to supplement individual behavior change.

The introduction of documentary films in Indonesia presents a superb tool of communicating about the environment, yet they create contextual issues when introduced. The availability of digital media in some regions of Indonesia may curb the publicity and distribution of films such as *Ekspedisi 3 Sungai*. In a developing nation such as Indonesia, differences in access to digital media in cities and rural regions may lead to differences in the interpretation of environmental messages.

Another challenge comes from the many sociocultural settings of Indonesian civilization. One's interpretation of environmental message is much influenced by personal political preferences and cultural values. Documentaries within Indonesia's diverse culture have to take these variances in values into account if they are to avoid dividing the nation and rejecting

the message. Local values' environmental messages are more in demand than those based on a worldwide viewpoint.

To overcome these challenges, combining documentary films with the bigger digital media ecosystem seems very promising. The "Transmedia Storytelling" method serves to show how environmental stories might be spread throughout many media platforms to provide viewers interesting and immersive encounters. This technique allows the narrative of a documentary such as *Ekspedisi 3 Sungai* to match numerous media sources and teaching strategies.

Based on the analysis of the film *Ekspedisi 3 Sungai* and current body of research in the field of environmental communication, some recommendations may be made to increase the potency of environmental documentaries in Indonesia. First of all, the development of "community-based participatory documentaries" may improve local relevance and community ownership of environmental narratives. This approach defines local populations as not just subjects but also co-creators in the documentary making process.

Second, the long-term influence of documentary films may be enhanced by means of media and environmental literacy campaigns within academic institutions. Combining environmental films with critical analysis and reflection exercises is supposed to help viewers to become more capable of evaluating and reacting to environmental messages.

Measurement of the success of documentary films as a tool of environmental communication depends on the creation of a thorough impact assessment system. Increasing responsibility and openness in environmental communication practice in Indonesia depends on this evaluative method.

CONCLUSION

The documentary *Ekspedisi 3 Sungai* episode *Juara Sampah Saset* demonstrates how well visual media could present difficult environmental problems to the audience. By means of the examination of environmental communication functions, this paper provides several important results. First, by use of evidence presentation and persuasive narratives, this documentary effectively integrates the pragmatic and constitutive roles of environmental communication. The way technical data on trash volume, brand audit findings, and environmental effects is presented shows the pragmatic value. The framing of communications promoting public awareness and behavioral modification shows the constitutive role in meanwhile. Second, viewers are deeply emotionally engaged with excellent visual methods such comparing the amount of rubbish to a football field and showing the difference between people's regular activities and the state of a contaminated river. Such combination of narration and visualizing styles demonstrates enormous potential of documentaries as the means of environmental

communication capable of making people aware and contributing to social transformation. This documentary is artfully connected between macro (scientific facts) and micro features (personal experiences) through a narrative conduit. This method allows the viewers to relate the global issue of plastic pollution to the local facts about the life of people along the Brantas River. The method of brand audit as shown in this film is a major experiment in the field of environmental communication that changes the custom of individual responsibility to corporate responsibility. The data about the prevalence of the packaging waste of three giant companies (Wings, Indofood, and Unilever) in the audit give another understanding of the origin of the plastic pollution issue. The research work will help in coming up with efficient environmental communication strategies, especially in the Indonesian setting. Nevertheless, more studies are necessary to quantify the real effect of this documentary on the transformation of community behavior and waste management policies.

In the future, the development of environmental documentary content needs to consider aspects of solutions and community empowerment to create a more sustainable impact. Recommendations for future research include evaluating the long-term impact of environmental documentaries on policy changes and community behavior, as well as exploring more effective content distribution strategies to reach a wider audience. Challenges to

implementing environmental documentaries in Indonesia include limited access to digital media in some regions and the diverse sociocultural context of Indonesian society. To address these challenges, integrating documentary films with the broader digital media ecosystem and developing “community based participatory documentaries”.

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