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How do young Indonesians engage with environmental issues?

Kembali ke Hutan (*Return to the Forest*)

December 2022

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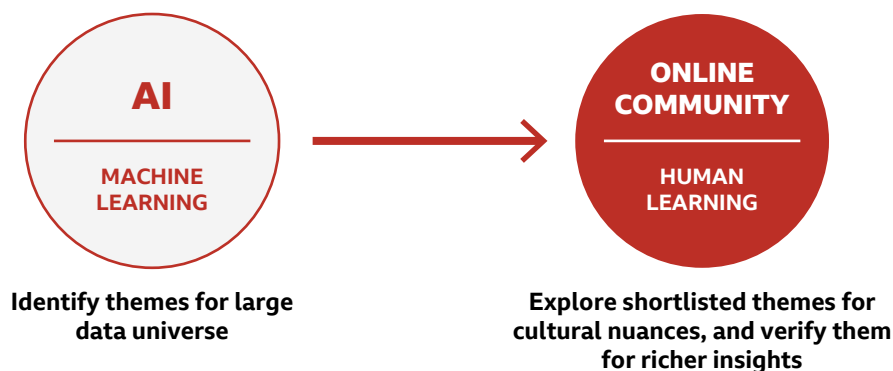
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Introduction

BBC Media Action wanted a greater understanding of the online behaviour of young urban Indonesians.

1. How do they engage with politics, environmental issues, social movements and influencers?
2. What are the drivers of their online engagement?
3. How do they see environmental issues and their impact on their lives?

BBC Media Action used Artificial Intelligence (AI)/machine learning and digital intelligence approaches to provide key insights into research questions and help to refine the digital strategy.



A mixed methodology approach was used:

1. Online data was collected from 118 sources including community forums, blogs, journals, online magazine and social media and an AI semiotics model was used to analyse this data.
2. Discussions with online communities of urban youth in Jakarta & Medan in November 2020.

Findings

As result from the study, the urban youth Indonesian was categorized into segments:



Regular Consumer

These are the most common consumers, those who do not belong to any other segments.



Guardians of Future Generations

As parents and educators, these millennials want to ensure that Indonesia's children and grandchildren get to enjoy the same, beautiful world that they do.



Aesthetic Indulgence

These millennials are moved to environmentalism by an aesthetic appreciation of Indonesia's rich, stunning biodiversity and natural landscape.



Quiet Heroes

These millennials believe that activism does not always have to happen in the spotlight. It can take place in small and private, yet meaningful, ways.



Ethical Consumers

These millennials believe in intelligently 'voting with their wallets', i.e. boycotting socially and environmentally harmful products.



Loud and Proud Crusaders

These millennials are not content to sit back and watch injustice unfold, but want to be front and centre in the action.

Regular Consumer

They live a simple life filled with basic routines. Yet, they do some travel to channel their desire to explore new things.

LIA (20 years old, Jakarta)

Every day, Lia has a simple and set routine, such as completing college assignments, going to the gym, and hanging out with friends. Lia likes to try new things and must be up-to-date with current trends, she feels a great FOMO and does not want to get missed out. Despite that, Lia hates conflict and hopes to have good academic achievements and a stable job in the future. Lia has a strong intention to show appreciation for her parents and society. Like other young Indonesians, Lia uses social media as a platform to express herself, as a source of information when trying new things, and as a medium to stay connected with others.



Figure 1. Celebrity



Figure 2. Culinary

"I think it would be cool if I could be more productive, rather than just lying around at home. But, in fact I spend most of my time at campus and at home."

In terms of environmental issues, Lia is aware of them from casual discussions among friends and social media. She is aware of the issues that have a direct impact on her life, such as pollution, plastic waste, flood and waste management.

"In my position as a college student and in the middle class economy, I don't think I can do anything about it. I don't think my voice would be heard."

Quiet Heroes

They prefer to lead by example, rather than actively persuading people to do something. They want to be seen as adventurous and participate in a diverse range of activities.

ARDI (23 years old, Medan)

Ardi is an optimistic, kind and often remind people to care about the environment and livelihoods. Ardi has a lot of activities, such as study, community, family, travelling, so he has time management problems. He wants to learn about as many subjects as possible, ranging from entertainment (stand-up comedy, music, etc) to content that can give him additional knowledge (automotive tutorial, cooking recipes, news, and traveling vlogs).

“It annoys me the most when I see people littering. Sometimes when you reprimand them, they become fiercer. So instead of fighting, I choose to make a change in myself on the simplest things, such as not littering.”

Ardi often share images on Instagram which portray the idea of himself as adventurous, as many of the posts are about having a good time travelling or hanging out. Motivational or meaningful posts also something that he is interested in and likes to share with others. Moreover, Ardi feels that content about politics is highly unfavourable (less relevant and powerless to contribute).

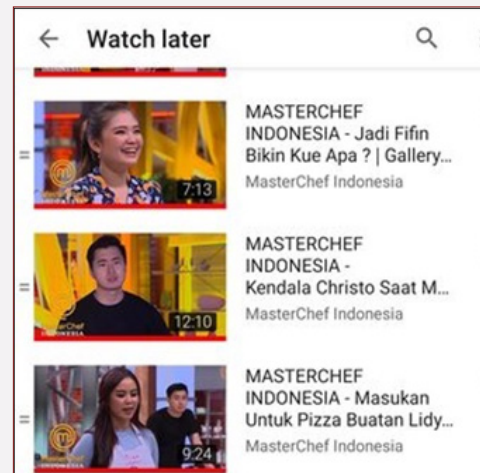


Figure 3. Culinary

“The challenges faced by Indonesian youth are about how to become a confident person with the knowledge that we have. It is hard at first, but slowly I learn to be confident and overcome the barriers.”

Guardians of the Future Generations

They show strong traits of being altruistic as they aspire to be helpful to many people. Their intention is to set a good example for their students/children that leads them to explore more about the environment.



TINA (25 years old, Jakarta)

Tina works as a teacher of pre-school in Jakarta. She always wants to set a positive example for others such as biking to work, garbage collection, etc. She likes to post things that are meaningful and can be useful to other people on social media. She has a high concern for social issues like religion and environment, while politics is the topic that she hates. She perceives politics as something negative, “dirty”, and can provoke people easily.

“As I’m now a preschool teacher, my aspiration is to help my students in pursuing their goals and becoming moral leaders. I hope five years from now I can see them becoming someone that other people can be proud of.”

Figure 4. Volunteering

Tina regularly participates in the organisation's activities to pick up rubbish and educate people about the environment. Her desire to be a role model for her students also makes her think about unique and creative ideas to save the environment.

"The challenge is when I do my volunteer activities, I am often underestimated by others. When I pick up trash with the community, we often get scolded and told that we don't need to pick up the trash because there are already janitors."

Ethical Consumer

They have distinct passions and interests, yet their desire to be seen as socially conscious can make them vulnerable when they do not get acknowledgement from others.



Figure 5. Environmental movement

FANI (14 years old, Jakarta)

As a young worker, Fani has a strong interest in things and strong desire to make things happen. Fani would like to build an eco-friendly coffee shop full of plants in the future. While some people might underestimate her, she sees it as a challenge that motivates her to put in more effort to succeed. As an active user of social media, Fani wants to raise awareness about environmental issues that matter to her. She has a strong passion about it and is really mindful about the content she posts on social media, especially Instagram.

"The challenges that I frequently experience are being mocked or underestimated, and not receiving support from people around me who think that my dreams are only a fantasy."

Talking about her environmental journey, Fani realizes that her purchasing habit may negatively affect the environment. She picks ending the use of plastic bags as an entry point for the eco-movement. She focuses on reducing plastic waste, waste, which requires her to be more mindful of using products that can damage the environment. She joins the **#30dayswithoutplastic** movement and she hopes the movement will inspire others to do the same.

Aesthetic Indulgence

They have a sense of selflessness when it comes to enjoying nature to the fullest. They are more active in campaigning for nature preservation.

ANGGA (27 years old, Medan)

Angga sets travelling as the top priority of his life. Travelling provides both personal and professional fulfilment for most, it is also introducing him to other interests such as the environment and a healthy lifestyle. He sees travelling as a space for him to reflect on himself and on nature.



Figure 6. Nature & traveling

“I have been doing sports since my childhood. Such interest brings me to love travelling. And now, I develop a new interest in preserving the environment.”

Through his social media posts, Angga tries to balance fun with education for his viewers. Common themes on his social media page include “holidaying” and “immersing in nature”. When Angga is traveling, he feels irritated to see people littering or damaging tourist sites to their travel sites and it becomes more and more concerning, as it affects how people enjoy nature.

“I really enjoy exploring new places. I often carry my notebook and write down my reflection on life. Now I am working as a travel guide because I want people to enjoy nature as much as I do.”

Just like political issues, Angga also found that environmental issues are a topic that can spark confrontation. People may become upset when Angga reminds them to avoid littering, so he thinks of how to address the issue collectively.

Loud and Proud Crusaders

They use their environmental activism to define their personal identity. They aspire to deliver impactful results on environmental issues.

RINI (23 years old, Jakarta)

As an activist on campus and in the community, Rini has spent several years focused on education and campaigning about the environment. When doing a campaign, she is sometimes labelled as too much or extremist, so she tries to use creativity to counter reluctance among her audience. She tends to be concerned with how to gather and mobilise people to become interested and participate in environmental movements, such as the community-based recycling movements. Her actions in support of the environment are at a high level.



Figure 7. Youth movement

“If I can make a change for the environment, I want it to be impactful, so I need to gather people around me to do the same.”

Rini uses her social media as a campaign platform to actively spread information on environmental preservation. Her social media posts build and strengthen her image as an environmentalist. She has a 'pay it forward' mindset and it is important for her to let people know about others' good deeds, to spread positivity.

“It has been six months since I began using biopore infiltration holes to dispose of my organic garbage. At the same time, I know I am feeding small animals within the soil, and it doubles my happiness.”

In her daily life, Rini tries out various aspects of an eco-friendly lifestyle, such as minimal living, zero-waste cooking and 'real' food consumption. Her actions on environmental issues are driven mainly by intense discussions and heavy exposure in her community, as well as threatening visuals about environmental damage in the media.

“Since I joined the club and began taking part in environmental events, some of my friends have commented that I am going too far with my eco-friendly actions.”

Summary

	REGULAR CONSUMERS	QUIET HEROES	ETHICAL CONSUMERS	AESTHETIC INDULGENCE	GUARDIANS OF FUTURE GENERATIONS	LOUD & PROUD CRUSADERS
CHARACTER	Aware about environmental issues, but it's not their main priority as they tend to focus more on topics related to lifestyle & indulgence	Tackle environmental issues via personal contribution. Not feeling capable & knowledgeable enough to advocate to others	Like Quiet Heroes, they tend to focus on personal contribution & only use social media to amplify their initiative	More active in promoting eco-friendly initiatives to others since they need active participation from their social circles		Eco-friendly initiatives have become their life mission – they consistently and actively advocate for them
BARRIERS TO DO MORE	Hassle and impracticality to initiate eco-friendly activity; having higher priorities in life, for instance, work, study and fun activities.	Social dismissal when trying to promote environmental issues to others; lack of competence & knowledge	Hesitate to get more actively involved out of fear that environmental issues are not interesting to others	Avoid confrontation when promoting environmental issues	Limited awareness from others and formulating actionable initiatives	To be seen as extreme which cause people to feel hesitant to join their proposed initiatives

Communication Strategy

1. The journey to convert: From Regular Consumers to Quiet Heroes/Ethical Consumers

The regular consumers are interested in other issues rather than environment, it is important to make environmental issues more available and urgent to them with the scheme below:

- A. To increase awareness of environmental issues and invite influencers to promote their environmental activities.
- B. Lead by example, focus on simple and actionable initiatives that don't require a lot of time and effort.
- C. Use story telling to create engaging narratives and increase knowledge.

2. The journey to convert: From Regular Consumers/Quiet Heroes/Ethical Consumers to Aesthetic Indulgence & Guardian of Future Generations

These segments prefer to take an action for themselves rather than persuade others. They need to feel an urgency to get involved in promoting environmental issues to others by using the following strategy:

- A. Provide in-depth knowledge about environmental issues – i.e. expose the impact of environmental damage to things that matters most to consumers: traveling and food.
- B. Create a community to share, endorse & reinforce each others' initiatives.

Environmental issues, especially deforestation are distant issues for most, especially regular consumers who are predominantly young, urban Indonesians. To bridge the gap, it is necessary to create urgency around how deforestation can impact people's daily life and provide high exposure for young Indonesians who are making real contributions, with actionable and concrete initiatives.