

Wired to Change: The Role of Digital Messaging in Boosting EV Awareness Among Indonesian Millennials

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ABSTRACT

In response to the global climate crisis, electric vehicles (EVs) have emerged as a sustainable alternative to gasoline-powered transportation. In Indonesia, PT PLN has leveraged Instagram to promote EV awareness among millennials. This study investigates the effectiveness of PLN's digital messaging in enhancing awareness and shaping attitudes toward EVs. Using a quantitative survey method with 100 respondents aged 22–42, this research measures the relationship between message exposure, awareness, and attitude. Findings reveal that exposure to digital content significantly boosts both awareness and attitude, with awareness having a stronger impact. Regression analysis supports all four hypotheses, confirming that visual, informative, and relevant Instagram content leads to greater cognitive engagement and positive perception of EVs. The study underscores the role of social media in environmental communication, affirming the Elaboration Likelihood Model's applicability in digital campaigns. These insights offer theoretical contributions to persuasion and consumer behavior studies, while also providing practical guidance for public-sector digital campaign strategies in emerging markets.

Keywords: Electric Vehicles, Digital Messaging, Instagram, Environmental Communication, Indonesian Millennials

INTRODUCTION

In the face of escalating climate change and environmental degradation, the urgency to shift toward sustainable energy solutions has never been more pressing. One such solution is the transition from conventional gasoline-powered vehicles to electric vehicles (EVs). In Indonesia, the government and state-owned enterprises have begun to embrace this transition, most notably through the promotion of electric mobility by PT Perusahaan Listrik Negara (PLN). As part of its broader sustainability agenda, PLN has utilized social media, particularly Instagram, as a strategic tool to raise awareness and influence public attitudes toward EV adoption.

The rise of digital campaigns through social networking platforms has opened new avenues for environmental messaging. Unlike traditional media, Instagram allows for real-time engagement, visual storytelling, and personalized content delivery—qualities that resonate particularly well with millennial audiences. Indonesian millennials, who constitute a significant portion of the consumer population and are highly active on social media, represent a critical demographic in the nation's effort to accelerate EV adoption (Kemp, 2023). However, awareness

alone does not necessarily translate into attitudinal or behavioral change. Therefore, it is essential to understand how message exposure, message quality, and relevance affect this generation's response to such campaigns.

This study draws upon the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) proposed by Petty and Cacioppo (1986), which identifies two primary routes of persuasion: central and peripheral. The central route involves thoughtful consideration of arguments and content, while the peripheral route relies on cues like visuals, attractiveness, or source credibility. Applying this framework, the study explores how digital messaging strategies on Instagram, as used by PLN, influence awareness and attitudes among Indonesian millennials toward electric vehicles.

Previous research has highlighted the potential of social media-based environmental campaigns to engage users and foster more positive environmental attitudes (Huang et al., 2022; Lăzăroiu et al., 2020). Yet, limited empirical evidence exists within the Indonesian context, especially in the intersection between digital campaign content and EV-related public perception. This gap provides the rationale for the present study, which seeks to analyze how PLN's Instagram campaigns function not only as information tools but also as persuasive mechanisms capable of shaping environmental attitudes and preferences.

Hence, this article aims to (1) examine the effectiveness of PLN's Instagram campaign in enhancing millennial awareness of electric vehicles, and (2) investigate the extent to which these digital messages influence their attitudes toward adopting EVs. By focusing on the Indonesian millennial demographic, this study contributes both theoretically—to the discourse on persuasive communication in environmental contexts—and practically—to the formulation of more targeted and effective social media campaigns for sustainable transitions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Digital campaigns have emerged as powerful tools in shaping public discourse and encouraging behavioral shifts, particularly in environmental communication. With the increasing penetration of social media, platforms like Instagram offer dynamic, visual-centric environments for persuasive messaging. Huang et al. (2022) argue that digital campaigns that utilize message framing and personal relevance are more likely to engage audiences and drive awareness on environmental issues. Furthermore, studies have shown that such campaigns can foster both informational awareness and emotional engagement, which are crucial in the adoption of sustainable technologies like electric vehicles (Lăzăroiu et al., 2020).

Instagram, as a visual-based platform, has become particularly influential among millennials due to its focus on storytelling, aesthetics, and interactivity. Indonesian millennials are among the most active Instagram users globally (Kemp, 2023), making the platform a strategic channel for environmental and technological campaigns. According to Tafesse and Wood (2021), Instagram campaigns can foster a sense of brand intimacy and increase cognitive engagement when content aligns with users' values and lifestyle aspirations. In the case of PLN, promoting EVs through visually appealing and informative posts may help bridge the knowledge gap and shape more positive attitudes.

Although EVs are gaining traction globally, public perception in Indonesia remains relatively underdeveloped due to limited infrastructure, higher purchase costs, and unfamiliarity with the technology. Research by Sari et al. (2022) highlights that awareness levels significantly

influence attitudes toward EV adoption, especially among younger consumers. This underscores the need for targeted messaging that not only educates but also persuades. Digital media, when appropriately designed, can play a pivotal role in transforming such perceptions by linking environmental consciousness with national progress and modern lifestyle values.

The theoretical foundation of this study is grounded in the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) proposed by Petty and Cacioppo (1986). ELM distinguishes between two routes of persuasion: the central route, which involves cognitive processing of information, and the peripheral route, which relies on surface cues such as visual appeal, tone, or credibility of the messenger. The use of Instagram for EV promotion can potentially engage users via both routes—combining rational messaging about benefits and technical aspects of EVs (central route) with visual aesthetics, branding, and influencer endorsements (peripheral route). This dual-pathway mechanism provides a useful lens to assess how millennials internalize campaign messages and whether awareness translates into attitude change (Heath & Heath, 2007; Wathen & Burkell, 2002).

Despite the increasing global attention toward electric vehicles (EVs) and the rise of digital environmental campaigns, there remains a noticeable gap in empirical studies that link Instagram-based messaging with EV awareness and attitudinal shifts, particularly in the Indonesian context. Prior studies such as that of Zhou et al. (2020) examined the impact of digital marketing and environmental concern on EV purchase intention in China, while Rezvani et al. (2015) explored psychological and contextual influences on EV adoption in developed markets. Although these studies provide valuable insights into behavioral factors, they primarily focus on economic or policy-related variables and overlook the role of visual-centric digital persuasion strategies deployed via social media platforms. Furthermore, research by Goh et al. (2019) identified social media as a useful space for engaging environmentally conscious consumers but failed to isolate its effect on awareness and attitudes related to specific technological products like EVs.

In the Indonesian context, research remains limited and fragmented. For instance, Sari et al. (2022) identified a correlation between environmental awareness and millennial interest in EVs but did not consider the influence of media exposure or message design. Meanwhile, Wulandari and Nugroho (2021) conducted a study on environmental campaigns in Indonesia using Facebook, focusing more on environmental conservation than green technology adoption. Additionally, while Tafesse and Wood (2021) offered insights into follower engagement on Instagram, their study centered around influences in lifestyle and fashion sectors, rather than corporate campaigns for sustainability. These gaps highlight a clear opportunity to explore how state-owned institutions like PLN utilize digital messaging on Instagram to influence EV-related perceptions among millennials. This study thus positions itself at the intersection of digital communication, environmental psychology, and technological adoption, seeking to bridge the empirical void left by earlier works.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a quantitative research approach to examine the relationship between digital messaging—specifically PLN's Instagram campaign—and millennial awareness and attitudes toward electric vehicles (EVs) in Indonesia. The research utilizes a survey method with structured questionnaires to gather data from a targeted population of Instagram users aged 22–42, representing the Indonesian millennial cohort.

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A non-probability purposive sampling technique was employed to select 100 respondents who actively follow or are exposed to PLN's Instagram content related to electric vehicles. This method was chosen to ensure the respondents had relevant exposure to the campaign being studied. The research instrument was distributed online and contained three main sections: (1) demographic information, (2) exposure to and perception of PLN's Instagram campaign, and (3) indicators of awareness and attitudes toward EVs.

The questionnaire used a Likert scale (1–5) to measure responses, with indicators constructed based on the Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). Central route processing was captured through items evaluating message relevance, content clarity, and logical arguments, while peripheral route cues included message visuals, aesthetics, and the credibility of the campaign source.

Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics to profile respondents and summarize variable distributions, and inferential statistics (e.g., correlation and regression analyses) to test the relationship between Instagram campaign exposure and the levels of awareness and attitude toward EVs. Reliability testing using Cronbach's Alpha was applied to ensure the internal consistency of constructs, while validity testing ensured each indicator measured the intended concept.

This methodological framework allows for a systematic and replicable examination of how digital environmental campaigns—when delivered through a platform like Instagram—can influence public consciousness and support policy goals related to sustainable transportation.

RESULTS

A. Research Hypotheses

The hypotheses formulated for this study are as follows:

- H1** : There is a significant influence of digital message exposure on millennial awareness of electric vehicles (EVs).
- H2** : There is a significant influence of digital message exposure on millennial attitudes toward electric vehicles.
- H3** : There is a significant influence of millennial awareness on attitudes toward electric vehicles.
- H4** : There is a simultaneous influence of digital message exposure and awareness on millennial attitudes toward EVs.

B. Respondent Profile

The demographic profile shows that 66% of respondents were female and 34% male, indicating that women were more actively engaged in this survey. A dominant 82% of participants were between 22–25 years old, representing younger Indonesian millennials, who are typically more responsive to digital content. Most of them (73%) use Instagram for more than 3 hours per day, a strong signal that this population is highly exposed to digital media, especially content from corporate or public campaigns such as PLN's electric vehicle (EV) messaging.

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TABLE 1. RESPONDENT PROFILE

| Demographic Variable | Category | Frequency (n) | Percentage (%) |
|-----------------------|-------------|---------------|----------------|
| Gender | Female | 66 | 66% |
| | Male | 34 | 34% |
| Age | 22–25 years | 82 | 82% |
| | 26–30 years | 18 | 18% |
| Instagram Use per Day | > 3 hours | 73 | 73% |
| | 1–3 hours | 23 | 23% |
| | < 1 hour | 4 | 4% |

This demographic structure confirms the relevance of using Instagram as a strategic platform for environmental and technological awareness campaigns, given the consistent engagement of millennials with visual, social, and interactive content.

C. Descriptive Analysis of Variables

To examine respondents' perceptions of the constructs, mean scores were calculated (scale: 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree).

1. Digital Message Exposure

This table indicates that respondents had a high level of agreement with all indicators of message exposure. The highest mean (3.83) was found for *informational content*, suggesting that PLN's Instagram messages were perceived as highly informative. This was followed by message clarity (3.81) and visual appeal (3.77), indicating that the campaign effectively combines both content quality and visual design. The overall means suggest a successful digital communication strategy that balances form and function.

TABLE 2. MEAN SCORES OF DIGITAL MESSAGE EXPOSURE

| Indicator | Mean | Interpretation |
|--|------|----------------|
| Frequency of exposure to PLN Instagram posts | 3.72 | Agree |
| Perceived message clarity | 3.81 | Agree |
| Visual attractiveness | 3.77 | Agree |
| Perceived relevance | 3.65 | Agree |
| Informational content | 3.83 | Strongly Agree |

B. Millennial Awareness of EVs

The highest awareness score came from *knowledge of EV benefits* (3.91) and *understanding of environmental impact* (3.89), reflecting a solid grasp of how EVs contribute to sustainable living. Although awareness of PLN's EV initiatives (3.74) was slightly lower, it still fell within a positive range. These findings indicate that campaign content enhanced cognitive engagement with EV-related information, helping users connect environmental values with technological adoption.

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TABLE 3. MILLENNIAL AWARENESS OF EV'S

| Indicator | Mean | Interpretation |
|---------------------------------------|------|----------------|
| Knowledge of EV benefits | 3.91 | Strongly Agree |
| Awareness of PLN's EV initiatives | 3.74 | Agree |
| Understanding of environmental impact | 3.89 | Strongly Agree |
| Familiarity with EV features | 3.67 | Agree |

C. Attitude Toward EVs

Respondents expressed a highly positive attitude toward EVs, especially in terms of *environmental contribution* (4.01) and *interest in trying EVs* (3.84). These results suggest that the Instagram campaign not only raised awareness but also shaped favorable emotional and behavioral intentions. The scores reflect that informative and visually engaging content leads to favorable public sentiment toward new technologies like EVs.

TABLE 4. ATTITUDE TOWARD EVS

| Indicator | Mean | Interpretation |
|--|------|----------------|
| Interest in trying EVs | 3.84 | Strongly Agree |
| Belief in EV's environmental contribution | 4.01 | Strongly Agree |
| Willingness to support EV development | 3.78 | Agree |
| Positive perception of EV-related technology | 3.82 | Strongly Agree |

The mean values for all variables fall within the 3.65–4.01 range, indicating a generally high level of agreement. This implies that PLN's Instagram campaign messages are well received and contribute to both awareness and positive attitudes toward EVs.

D. Data Quality Testing

A. Validity Testing (Pearson Correlation)

All indicators in the survey met the validity requirement, with Pearson correlation coefficients exceeding 0.30, confirming that each item is valid and effectively measures the intended construct. This ensures that the data used in further statistical tests are sound and representative of the study variables.

B. Reliability Testing (Cronbach's Alpha)

Cronbach's Alpha values were all above 0.80 for the three main variables—Exposure (0.832), Awareness (0.861), and Attitude (0.847)—which exceeds the generally accepted reliability threshold of 0.70. These results confirm that the measurement tools were internally consistent, and the responses were statistically dependable.

TABLE 5. DATA QUALITY TESTING

| Variable | Cronbach's Alpha | Interpretation |
|--------------------------|------------------|----------------|
| Digital Message Exposure | 0.832 | Reliable |
| Awareness | 0.861 | Reliable |

| | | |
|----------|-------|----------|
| Attitude | 0.847 | Reliable |
|----------|-------|----------|

E. Statistical Hypotheses Testing

1. Simple Linear Regression: Exposure \rightarrow Awareness

With an R^2 value of 0.318, this test indicates that 31.8% of the variance in awareness can be explained by exposure to PLN's Instagram messages. The significance value ($p < 0.05$) and beta coefficient ($\beta = 0.564$) confirm a moderate to strong and statistically significant effect, supporting Hypothesis 1 (H1).

TABEL 6. SIMPLE LINEAR REGRESSION

| Coefficient | Value |
|----------------|-------|
| R Square | 0.318 |
| F Sig. | 0.000 |
| β (Beta) | 0.564 |

2. Simple Linear Regression: Exposure \rightarrow Attitude

This test produced an R^2 of 0.282 and $\beta = 0.531$, indicating that exposure to digital messaging has a significant influence on shaping positive attitudes toward EVs. Hypothesis 2 (H2) is thus supported, reinforcing the idea that visual and consistent messaging affects not just what people know, but also how they feel.

TABEL 7. SIMPLE LINEAR REGRESSION

| Coefficient | Value |
|----------------|-------|
| R Square | 0.282 |
| F Sig. | 0.000 |
| β (Beta) | 0.531 |

3. Simple Linear Regression: Awareness \rightarrow Attitude

This relationship yielded an R^2 of 0.363 and a strong beta of 0.602, making it the strongest direct relationship among all individual tests. The result shows that higher awareness leads to more favorable attitudes toward EVs. This supports Hypothesis 3 (H3) and aligns with theories of persuasion and knowledge-attitude behavior models.

TABEL 8. SIMPLE LINEAR REGRESSION

| Coefficient | Value |
|----------------|-------|
| R Square | 0.363 |
| F Sig. | 0.000 |
| β (Beta) | 0.602 |

4. Multi Linear Regression: Exposure & Awareness \rightarrow Attitude

The combined regression model showed an R^2 value of 0.467, indicating that both exposure and awareness together explain 46.7% of the variance in attitude. Awareness had a higher contribution ($\beta = 0.470$) compared to exposure ($\beta = 0.296$), though both were statistically

significant ($p < 0.05$). This supports Hypothesis 4 (H4) and reveals that message-driven awareness has a more profound impact on attitude than exposure alone.

TABLE 9. MULTI LINEAR REGRESSION

| Variable | β (Beta) | Sig. (p-value) |
|-----------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| Exposure to Digital Message | 0.296 | 0.000 |
| Awareness of EVs | 0.470 | 0.000 |
| R Square | 0.467 | |
| F Sig. | 0.000 | |

F. Hypotheses Testing Summary

The hypothesis testing summary confirms that all four hypotheses are supported. The strongest predictor of attitude was *awareness*, followed by *message exposure*. The findings validate the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), suggesting that both central (message content) and peripheral (visual design, frequency) routes to persuasion are important—but cognitive engagement (awareness) has a more sustained effect on shaping attitudes. This highlights the importance of crafting meaningful and educational content in digital campaigns for social change.

Table 4. Hypotheses Results

| Hypothesis | Result | Conclusion |
|---|-----------|-------------------------------|
| H1: Exposure \rightarrow Awareness | Supported | Significant |
| H2: Exposure \rightarrow Attitude | Supported | Significant |
| H3: Awareness \rightarrow Attitude | Supported | Significant |
| H4: Exposure + Awareness \rightarrow Attitude | Supported | Significant ($R^2 = 0.467$) |

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study confirm the significant role of digital messaging, particularly through Instagram, in shaping both awareness and attitudes of Indonesian millennials toward electric vehicles (EVs). This discussion delves into the possible explanations behind these results by connecting them with theoretical frameworks and previous research.

1. Why Did Digital Message Exposure Significantly Influence Awareness and Attitudes?

The descriptive analysis showed high average values across all indicators of digital message exposure, including clarity, visual appeal, relevance, and informational content. The informational dimension was rated the highest, suggesting that the messages were not only attractive but also perceived as educational and trustworthy. This aligns with the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), which posits that message recipients will engage in central route processing—characterized by critical evaluation—when the content is perceived as relevant and informative (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). Since PLN's Instagram campaign emphasized both

cognitive and affective elements, users likely processed the information deeply, thus increasing their awareness and ultimately influencing their attitudes.

Moreover, in the inferential analysis, exposure was a significant predictor of both awareness ($\beta = 0.564$) and attitude ($\beta = 0.531$). This is supported by Kotler and Keller (2016), who argue that effective marketing communication relies on message delivery channels that are not only frequent but also engaging and customized to the audience. Instagram, as a highly visual and interactive platform, enables PLN to present EV-related messages that resonate with millennial lifestyles. This aligns with the findings of Kemp et al. (2021), which show that digital media campaigns targeting environmental behavior are more successful when they utilize platforms that are already integrated into the daily routines of the target audience.

2. Why Did Awareness Have a Stronger Influence on Attitude than Exposure Alone?

Among all predictor variables, awareness emerged as the strongest predictor of attitude toward EVs ($\beta = 0.602$). This highlights the crucial role of cognitive understanding in shaping positive perceptions. According to the Knowledge-Attitude-Behavior (KAB) model (Pavlou & Fygenson, 2006), individuals must first acquire sufficient knowledge before forming favorable attitudes and then translating them into behavioral intentions. The campaign messages that provided detailed explanations about the environmental benefits, features, and innovations of EVs seem to have effectively enhanced the respondents' awareness, which in turn led to stronger support and willingness to adopt EV-related behaviors.

Previous studies, such as Rosdiana et al. (2022) also Iswanto and Khairunnisa (2021), similarly found that environmental knowledge significantly influences attitudes toward sustainability innovations. This means that while exposure creates initial interest and attention, awareness serves as the cognitive bridge between attention and deeper commitment. This may explain why in the multiple regression model; awareness had a greater impact ($\beta = 0.470$) than exposure ($\beta = 0.296$) on attitude formation.

3. Why Did the Digital Messaging Campaign Succeed with Indonesian Millennials?

The success of the campaign can be attributed to the media consumption behavior of millennials, who favor platforms like Instagram due to its interactive, real-time, and visually rich features. According to We Are Social and Hootsuite (2023), more than 70% of Indonesian users aged 18–34 access Instagram daily for news, trends, and entertainment. This finding correlates with the respondent profile, where 73% use Instagram for more than 3 hours daily. The Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT) support this outcome, emphasizing that media is chosen based on users' needs for information, identity, integration, and entertainment (Katz et al., 1973). PLN's campaign appears to have effectively fulfilled these needs, especially by combining educational content with visual storytelling.

Furthermore, Alamsyah et al. (2020) found that millennials are particularly responsive to sustainability content when presented through personalized and entertaining formats. The use of Instagram Reels, infographics, and influencer collaborations by PLN likely enhanced message recall and engagement, supporting both attention and retention stages of the AIDA model (Kotler & Armstrong, 2018).

4. Why Do These Findings Matter for Public Sector Campaigns?

The findings underscore the power of digital storytelling in public campaigns—especially when the central message is aligned with social values like sustainability and innovation. In contrast to traditional public service announcements, digital campaigns like PLN's allow two-way interaction, hashtag participation, and user-generated content, which boost credibility and viral potential. This aligns with Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (2001), which states that individuals learn through observation and interaction within social environments, something that Instagram campaigns can facilitate effectively.

Thus, the high explanatory power of the combined model ($R^2 = 0.467$) is not only statistically meaningful but strategically important. It suggests that nearly half of the variance in millennial attitudes toward EVs can be influenced through well-structured, informative, and engaging digital campaigns.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that digital messaging—specifically through Instagram—plays a critical role in enhancing awareness and shaping positive attitudes toward electric vehicles (EVs) among Indonesian millennials. Through statistical evidence, it was confirmed that both exposure to PLN's digital content and the awareness it generates significantly influence the development of favorable attitudes toward EV adoption. Notably, awareness had a stronger impact than exposure, emphasizing the importance of informative, clear, and engaging message content over mere frequency or visibility. These findings reinforce the relevance of cognitive theories such as the Elaboration Likelihood Model and Knowledge-Attitude-Behavior models in understanding digital campaign effectiveness.

From an academic standpoint, this research contributes to the growing body of knowledge on digital environmental communication and consumer behavior in emerging markets. It demonstrates how social media platforms can be operationalized as strategic tools for public education, environmental advocacy, and behavioral change. Future research may build upon this by exploring behavioral outcomes (e.g., purchase intention or trial behavior), or by examining other demographic groups beyond millennials.

Practically, this study offers valuable insights for government institutions, marketers, and environmental campaigners. It highlights that successful digital campaigns must go beyond aesthetics, instead prioritizing message clarity, relevance, and educational value to foster awareness and long-term attitude change. For PLN and similar public agencies, this research confirms the strategic advantage of leveraging Instagram not just as a promotional tool, but as a platform for environmental storytelling that connects with the values and lifestyles of younger generations.

In summary, the path toward sustainable transportation in Indonesia may be accelerated through smart, well-targeted digital messaging—wired not only to inform, but to inspire change.

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