

Review Article

## Virtual E-participation in Saving the Environment in the Digital Age Through Change.org

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### Abstract

The purpose of this research is to see how the role of the Change.org website and how the Change.org account interacts with Twitter social media accounts through mentions that are used to increase public awareness of the environment. This study uses qualitative research, which uses Q-DAS (Qualitative Data Analysis Software) to analyze the data using Nvivo 12 Plus and Vosviewer software. The results of this study indicate that Change.org, in voicing environmental cleanliness, uses social media as a media campaign. The social media used by Change.org itself is Twitter. The change.org Twitter account is one of the largest environmental petitions; the form petition carried out by Change.org is by calling on @Cocacola @McDonalds and BurgerKing, which contains various petitions to find solutions for plastic bottles, which many say are choking the environment. The ability of online petitions to facilitate requests for change in public policies and connect the public with policymakers shows that online petitions can increase individual and group political participation. The existence of a petition on the @Change.org Account can gradually save the environment.

**Keywords:** E-participation; social media; change.org

### 1. Introduction

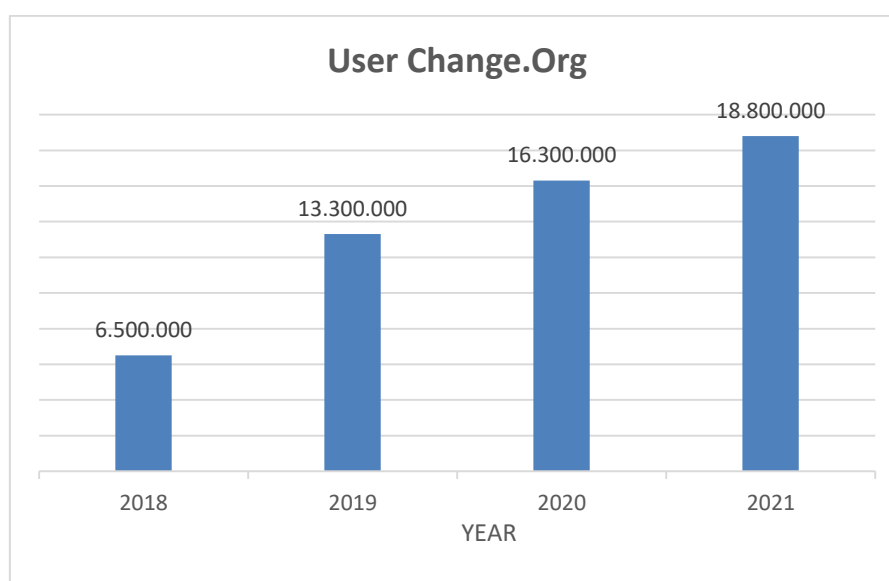
Democracy, or freedom that is truly free is a concept that has finally materialized in a virtual form (Boer, 2019). Not only do political elites shout echoes of democracy, but all sectors of human life also make the concept of democracy the primary basis for communication (Boer, 2019). Democracy through the internet or cyberdemocracy is a concept that sees the internet as a technology that has a transformative social influence and expands democratic participation (Juditha, 2018). In Indonesia, freedom of expression is also seen along with the communication revolution presented by the internet. The internet or digital media has the potential to improve public communication and enrich democracy (Bakti, 2015). The development of the increasingly massive use of the internet indicates that advances in the field of information and communication technology have brought democracy to a shift and the democracy of offline society towards online democracy (Asep A. Sahid Gatara, 2016). The Internet is beautiful because of its ability to connect geographically diverse people and those with limited time and interest in traditional participation and face-to-face meetings (Radja Erland Hamzah, 2015).

The public is now often critical of their opinions through internet channels, starting to criticize government policies, economic politics, and social and environmental issues. Environmental issues have become a fundamental problem in our lives as people in the world; all activities carried out by the

community will impact the environment. Environmental issues are vital for human life and other living things (Sanjaya, 2017). Environmental issues continue to attract attention, resulting in many positive voices using technology to convey their aspirations about worldwide environmental issues (Adiansah *et al.*, no date). The internet is one way to call for actions to care for the environment, such as saving endangered animals (Krzywoszynska, 2019). The petition is the most popular method to date that is still used by the public (Rachel Durso, J. Craig Jenkins, 2016). Online petitions are one of the collective actions that arise from internet users through mailing lists or websites and, technically, websites (Lestari, 2018). The online petition platform simplifies traditional petition forms, making it easier for people to petition to garner support without spending much effort, time, and money. Online petition platforms connect people, so their concern for specific issues becomes easier and faster to spread, and support for those concerns becomes easier to obtain (Simamora, 2018).

Along with the progress of civilisation with the development of information technology, there are many ways to express opinions, protest, criticise and convey public aspirations. One is signing the petition virtually on the Change.org Indonesia online petition platform. Change.org is the most popular online space for electronic petitions (Destrity, 2018). Change.org Indonesia was officially established in 2012 and is still actively promoting policy change until 2022. Change.org Indonesia facilitates users to initiate and raise support through online petition signing. The petition platform lets petitioners and proponents connect directly with policymakers as petition targets. Each supporting signature will automatically send an email containing the petition to the petition target. Therefore, this online petition platform has the potential to be used by social marketers to connect with policymakers as upstream actors targeted to take action on specific social issues.

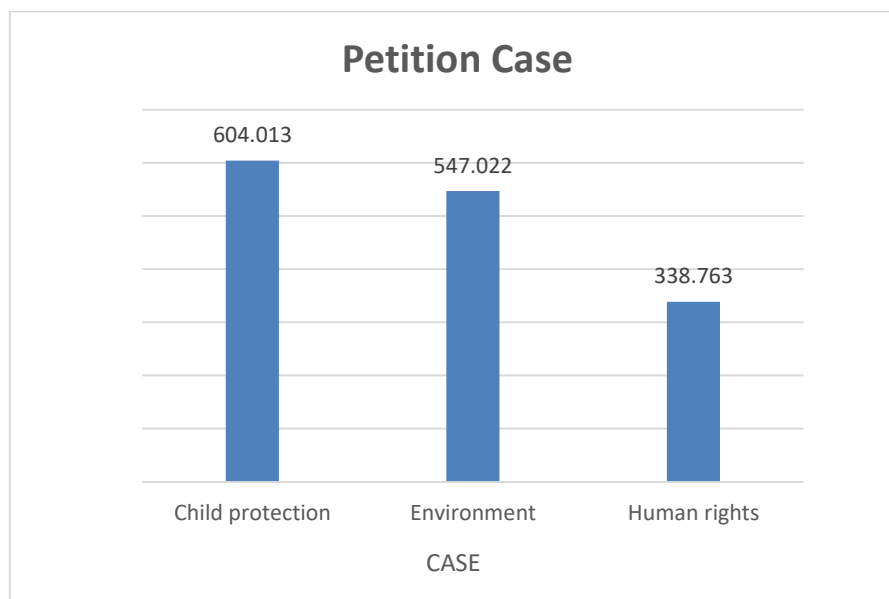
Change.org is one way that opens and encourages people to be more courageous in expressing their opinions and actively participating in opinions on public sector problems. This is indicated by the data on the number of users who use/access the Change.org site every year, which has increased.



**Figure 1.** Change.org. site user data  
Source: Website Change.org

Change.org is an online petition platform that people can use to express their aspirations. This online petition platform provides a space for people to participate in creating change. Communities can petition for change by garnering support through virtual petition signing. Each supporting signature automatically sends an email containing the petition to the intended target, namely policy makers. Through this automatically sent email, the public becomes more connected to government institutions and private corporations as policy makers (Syahril, 2018). Through the Change.org online petition,

petitioners are able to mobilize support from various levels of society to jointly demand justice and voice their aspirations.



**Figure 2.** Number of change.org online petition cases  
Source: Website Change.org

The online petition platform Change.org has contributed to change globally and locally, namely in Indonesia. As an online petition, Change.org provides facilities to the public to submit suggestions, ideas, and public demands for a policy. The changes show that the Change.org Indonesia online petition platform has played a role in supporting the success of policy advocacy. Several petitions have brought about a change in society (Simamora, 2018). Change. Id itself has echoed many issues ranging from politics and legal injustice to environmental issues. Director of Change.org Indonesia Arif Aziz said the number of net citizens in 2017 was 117 people, and in 2018, there was an increase in voicing environmental issues, namely 17 times or 2.1 million people (Amaliyyah, 2021). The petition also succeeded in achieving its objectives, such as demanding that the government give punishment to forest arsonists and supporting 2 IPB academics, Bambang Hero and Basuki Wasis. They were sued for giving testimony as experts in the case of forest burning and corruption (Susanto, 2014).

The purpose of this research is to see how the role of the Change.org website and how the Change.org account interacts with Twitter social media accounts through mentions that are used to increase public awareness of the environment. By carrying out social movements that can be manifested in various fields of social movement, one of which is a social movement towards the environment. From members of social movements, social movements provide guarantees for the availability of resources that the community movement will manage so that their expansion is maintained.

## 2. Methods

This study uses a qualitative approach using Qualitative Data Analysis Software (Q-DAS) to analyze social media data. As well as data processing using tools or research tools including the NVivo 12 Plus and Vosviewer. Furthermore, the data is obtained using the Ncapture feature on the Nvivo 12 plus. The N capture feature is a web browser extension developed to capture web content in the form of the website content, social media, and other document content. In addition, the researcher collects data from various international publications that can be accessed through Scopus and processes it using Vosviewer to answer, explain, and analyze the data. After the researcher completes a series or phase of the investigation, the researcher documents the findings in a journal-style results report.

### 3. Result and Discussion

#### 3.1. Analysis of the Quality of Social Media Accounts (Twitter) @Change.org

This online petition on the change.org site, which utilizes the internet network so that it can be reached by all audiences and all walks of life, has become a place to accommodate aspirations. Audiences can channel or voice their opinions through petitions created and also get support from others. Audiences who voice their opinions through online petitions on the change.org site are trying to gather as many votes as possible to support the petition they have made through a signature. This petitioner attracts audiences who do not know about an issue or even who know but ignore it to line up with their thoughts through the writings contained in their petition. Campaigns through social media are proven to produce social change. Social media is a virtual gathering place and can indirectly mobilize the masses with the same goal.

Online petitions cannot be separated from the role of email, social media such as Facebook and Twitter, blogs, and Youtube. These channels broaden the campaign's reach and build a public conversation about the issue being petitioned. This online campaign activity is carried out to educate the public and garner public support, or it can also be used to mobilize supporters. This online activism is also supported by offline campaign activities, such as taking to the streets to expand public support and concern. One of the popular types of social media that supports uploading and sharing photos and videos is Twitter. Twitter is a website owned and operated by Twitter that offers a social network in the form of a microblog that allows its users to send and read messages called tweets.

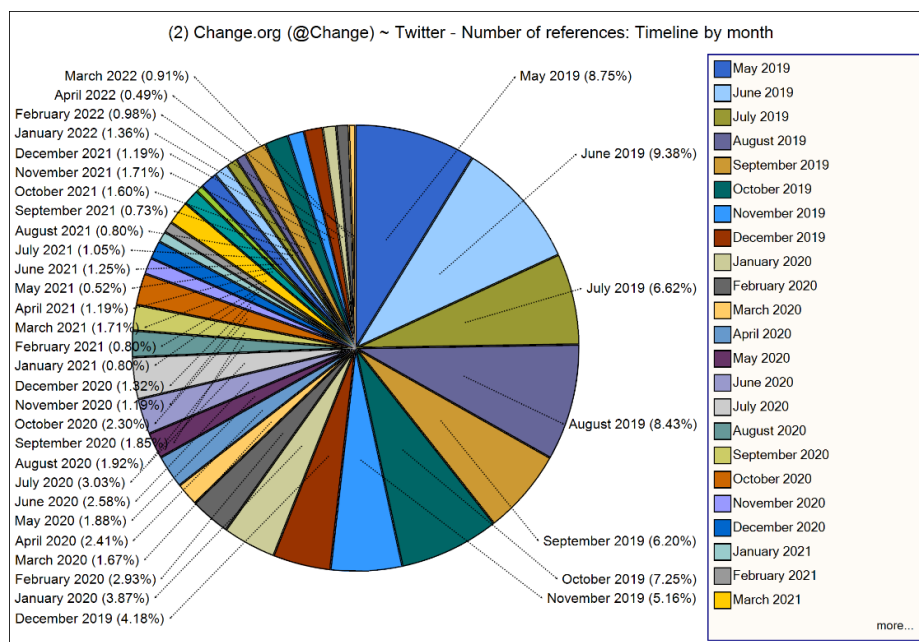


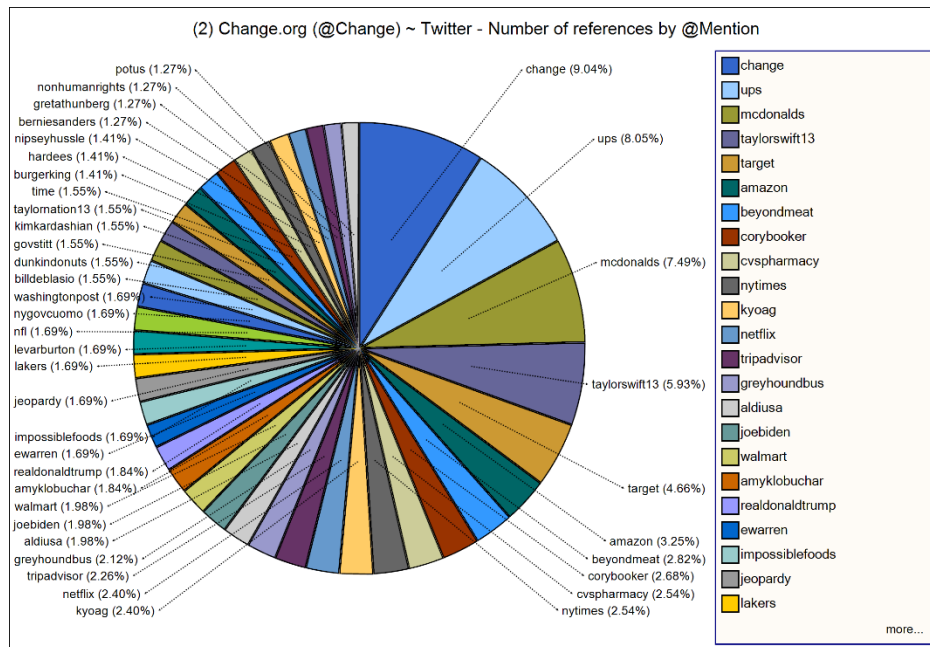
Figure 3. Greenpeace account activity by month

The image above shows that the Twitter @Change.org account activity data has decreased from 2019 to 2022 due to inconsistencies in the dissemination of information, communication, and socialization. The intensity of @Change.org activity in 2019 is more stable. It tends to be high compared to 2021, the lowest overall, while in 2020 information activity tends to be stable, with the highest activity only occurring in January, February, August, November, and December.

From the picture above, we can see that in 2019, the issue that was most discussed and raised in a petition was the environmental issue. Talking about environmental issues is endless. Campaigns about the environment are often voiced worldwide. Environmental issues have become a topic widely raised in online petitions both globally and in Indonesia. Almost every year, petitions about the environment come with different issues. For example, In Indonesia, Riau Province has several environmental issues submitted through the online petition site Change.org. One of the issues raised in

the petition in Riau Province is regarding forest and land fires repeated yearly. Various negative impacts are felt by the community, both in terms of economy, education, health, and even awareness of transportation. Campaigns through social media have been proven to result in changes in social media being used for virtual gathering places. They can indirectly mobilize the masses who have the same goal. It is noted that many have used change.org to campaign for environmental safety. It can be seen from the picture above that many people use change.org in voicing to save the environment, which from 2019 to 2022 experienced ups and downs.

Previous research related to this research was conducted by (Wijaya, Prihantoro and Binastuti, 2019). with the title "The Effectiveness of Online Petitions About Environmental Issues on The Change.org Site Users" This study uses 100 followers of the Instagram Change.org account who have distributed questionnaires as research subjects. This also shows that research on change.org has a novelty because it uses the Twitter account @change.org and the website change.org as research subjects, where Twitter is recognised as the most popular medium. Social media is chosen as a means of communication than print media. Promotion is the most in-demand because it is considered easy, cost-effective, and effective in tourism marketing for an area (Kurniawati, 2017). Next, see the frequently used hashtags in **Figure 2.**



**Figure 4.** Mentions change.org's twitter account related to save the environment

According to picture 2, the Twitter account @Change.org communicates through mentions from the Coding results using Nvivo12 Plus, showing that 40 accounts frequently mention; one of the highest in the @Change account, in addition to the accounts that often interact with @Change.org, namely @mcdonalds account. Change.org account voicing environmental cleanliness in various ways. For example, by using the Twitter account Change.org, one of the most significant environmental petitions is calling for @Cocacola to find a solution for plastic bottles, which many say are choking the environment and creating a lot of pollution. There was also a petition about sisters Ella and Caitlin. They gathered 500 people to demand that @McDonalds and @BurgerKing remove plastic toys from children's food to protect the environment. When shops around the country removed single-use plastic bags, buyer @Target Theresa hoped the chain would step up to help save the environment from plastic waste. Finally, there's a petition about Ella, a 75-year-old advocate and petition starter struggling to protect her community, water, and the environment from the harmful effects of the proposed Atlantic coast pipeline. When communities can move together using the right platforms, they can effectively drive change. The ability of online petitions to facilitate requests for change in public policies and





from the petition signers in the form of their aspirations. The signatories' aspirations can also be seen on the Change.org website. Third, the dissemination of the petition so that more people know and participate in signing and getting media cooperation. Fourth, bring the petition physically in the form of a demo or directly to the target of the petition. Fifth, through the column on the reasons for signing the petition. Change.org, as an online media, provides a space for interaction between various groups to voice their aspirations. Those scattered in various places with the same opinion are united through a petition the user has initiated. With a place for anyone, Change.org makes users seem to have lost boundaries in space, time, and social class.

### 3.2. E-participation

The development of the times makes democracy not have to be physically involved; participation continues to adapt to the sophistication of technology. Participation is meaningful because it is an essential plan for changing a country; citizen involvement is one of the barometers of the progress of a nation. The objectives of the existence of e-participation are (1) to expand the reach to increase citizen participation; (2) the use technology to facilitate different communication techniques in society; and (3) to provide information that is relevant and easier for citizens to understand so that they are willing to engage more deeply (deliberatively).

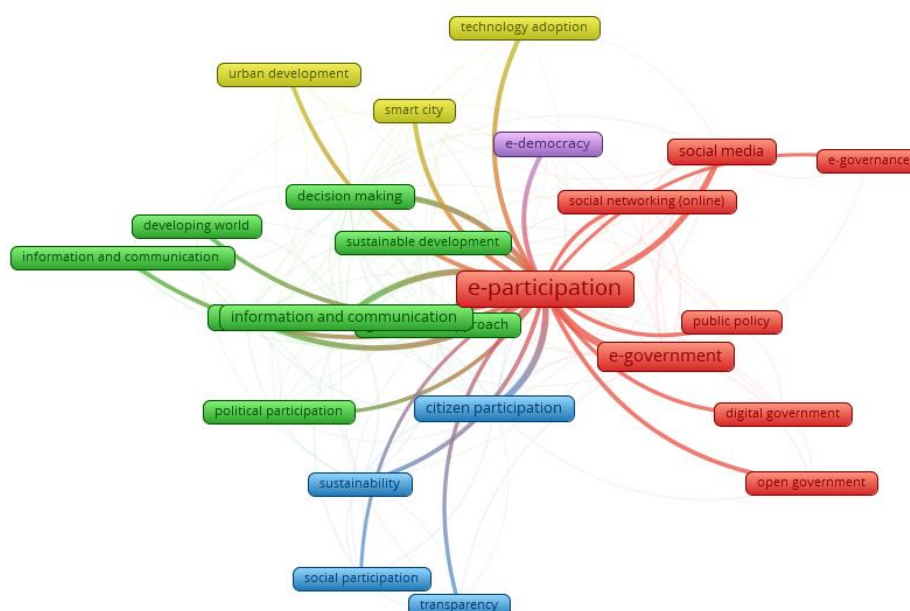


Figure 6. Network visualization of e-participation

Based on Figure 4 above, the concept of participation continues to develop along with the dynamics. Likewise, the way of participation which has also experienced a change in traditional participation, requires direct community involvement in a program/activity. These developments are greatly influenced by technological development, especially ICT; in this case, technology has become a mediator of participation in the digital era. This technology not only plays a role in transforming traditional participation models but also provides new channels of participation for citizens. The Change.org petition is a form of e-participation to control Indonesia's current and future threats to environmental conditions. Activities in cyberspace in the petition are pretty simple; just by affixing a signature, it has become a form of e-participation itself, so it is hoped that this condition will be able to move down-top communication patterns.

One of the petitions circulating since June 2022, **“Jakarta is a Pollution Emergency! Governor Anies Baswedan approves the Governor of DKI Jakarta, Anies Baswedan, which has been**

uploaded on the Change.org website and so far has received the support of 3,904 people through this petition. The validity period expires on October 16, 2022. And there is also a petition regarding the protection of animals, namely "**Stop buying and selling body parts of protected animals,**" which has received 7,295 support so far. It indicates that change.org is a platform that is easy to understand people. And there is also a petition about "Stop the Andesite Mining Plan in Wadas Village" the petition says that most of our village will be dredged and used as an andesite mine site to supply the Bener Dam material. 28 springs in the village will be damaged. They will lose their livelihood. Their agricultural land will be damaged, and landslides will often hit their village; they have rejected the plan to socialize their land pegging, but the officers are instead pulling, hitting, kicking, stepping on, and grabbing them so that one of the residents chose to voice through the petition.

Change.org is a popular online space for electronic petitions; the Indonesian Cleansing Movement uses this platform as a social marketing communication strategy. Concrete actions related to the use of fossil energy, one of which is reducing the use of private vehicles, to support the Movement to encourage stakeholders to act immediately. One petition was "Reject the Construction of PLTU 9 & 10, Save Banten from the Threat of Toxic Dust". Using an online petition, the Movement could garner support from the public with 17,016 signatures as a form of support (Dona Rahayu, M. Dicky Prabhawa, 2016). To maximize this social marketing communication strategy, the Indonesian Clean Movement also utilizes the communication network of each member to market the online petition to each other.

It can be seen from several explanations above that the form of conveying these aspirations through a petition on Change.org is the delivery of aspirations through online media. This communication medium has advantages and practicality. Change.org also guides creating good petitions so that people who don't understand the petition issue can understand. Language can make it easier for petitioners to communicate the tangible impact of a problem. So that people easily understand that change is significant to do.

#### 4. Conclusions

The formation of public awareness of the environment through the Change.org site has brought a new chapter in the participation of citizens in the world. It presents a unique phenomenon and can bring positive impacts such as changes. Easy and exciting steps can reach various groups and are conveyed on social media, attracting the wider community's attention quickly and effectively. Change.org Indonesia helps facilitate petitioners to connect with policymakers directly through lobbying activities. Especially environmental issues that always lose to political issues. Environmental issues are increasingly being heard as problems where the action is quick to respond. Everything is because of technological developments that make all elements of human life easier.

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