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# How to Break Free From Plastic on Instagram

*The influence of Instagram on risk communication concerning  
ocean plastics and the role of #breakfreefromplastic*

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## Summary

This master thesis deals with the effects of Instagram on risk communication strategies focusing on the risk of ocean plastic pollution. Hence, this thesis aims to identify how certain features of this platform influence risk communication strategies. Therefore, theories of risk communication have been projected on Instagram posts published by NGOs and NPOs that used the hashtag #breakfreefromplastic.

The relevance of Instagram in risk communication occurred when corresponding literature was reviewed. Previous risk communication studies focused only on Facebook and Twitter which is why there is a gap in researching file-sharing platforms such as Instagram. Likewise, movements like #breakfreefromplastic gained more attention on these platforms recently. As social media are already acknowledged as an important factor in risk communication every platform must be analyzed. Besides, previous literature also revealed specific communication strategies but the connection between those and social media has not been made clear.

This gap is addressed in this research and investigated by using several types of qualitative research approaches. Thus, Instagram posts and organizations that published them are the foundation of the case study. The analysis consists of multiple steps starting with an affordance analysis that identifies the technical feature of Instagram. This is followed by a critical discourse analysis which represents the main research part. First, the CDA aims to prove that there is a connection between communication strategies that are used on Instagram and strategies that are based on risk communication theories. Therefore, a content analysis of 100 posts is implemented in the CDA. Second, these results were discussed within interviews with organizations that published these posts. Lastly, the outcomes of the previous steps were reflected on the discourse of ocean plastics on Instagram.

The thesis reflects on the influence of Instagram on risk communication strategies by highlighting the main criteria of each field. It investigates the relationship between the platform and organizations as well as the network that develops due to the BFFP movement. Further, the research includes the connection between information and emotions that refer to ocean plastics and the way it is represented on Instagram. Based on the assumption that Instagram has significant relevance in risk communication technical features and content are discussed that lead to new discoveries in Instagram's function as a risk communication platform and to pursuing researches for the future.

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## List of Abbreviations

|               |   |
|---------------|---|
| <b>BFFP</b>   | Break Free From Plastic                 |
| <b>CDA</b>    | Critical Discourse Analysis             |
| <b>CERC</b>   | Crisis and Emerging Risks Communication |
| <b>Et al.</b> | (lat.: et alia) and others              |
| <b>HCI</b>    | human-computer interaction              |
| <b>I</b>      | Interviewee                             |
| <b>NGO</b>    | Non-governmental organization           |
| <b>NPO</b>    | Non-profit organization                 |
| <b>P</b>      | Page                                    |
| <b>RQ</b>     | Research question                       |
| <b>SDG</b>    | Sustainable Development Goals           |
| <b>SQ</b>     | Sub-question                            |

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# 1 Introduction

Modern society is surrounded by risks that were created by humans. This is one of Beck's (1994) arguments why we live in a risk society and his approach is still valid today as we live in a world of risks that have been identified on a global scale and are caused by human activities, technology, and modernization processes (Kramm & Völker, 2018). The risk of ocean plastic pollution counts as one of them and is a worldwide known problem nowadays and evoked various discussions about how it originated and how it can be solved. The volume of plastic waste that gets into the ocean every year amounts to 4 to 13 million tons. In addition, Microplastics caused by cosmetics, for example, are also part of the pollution that is invisible. The impact of the pollution becomes visible in plastic soups also known as Gyres, plastic debris from fish and seabirds, or less obvious consequences like damages on marine fauna (Eriksen et al., 2014). Even more recent events like the COVID-19 pandemic have a heavy impact on plastic pollution as single-used hygiene products end up in natural environments (Silva et al., 2020).

At the same time, it appears that the way modern society is communicating about risks changed which might be influenced by digital media (Renn, 2008). Social media became increasingly important to communicate a risk like ocean plastics (Anderson, 2014). Corresponding content is not only shared by NGOs, NPOs, or other activists but by a whole network of users where each of them can add, transform, or create new content to inspire and motivate others (Carrasco-Polaino et al., 2018). Instagram, for example, offers the opportunity to share images and videos that transport emotions and gain attention, but it is still lacking research in comparison to Twitter or Facebook (Hodson et al., 2018). This is the reason why this thesis focuses on risk communication on Instagram.

Yet, environmental movements spread all over Instagram such as the #breakfreefromplastic movement which is one of the most popular hashtags against plastic pollution on Instagram (2021a) and became part of communication strategies for NGOs and NPOs. The advantages of low human resources and costs and at the same time the great potential of reach and interaction made social media important for an organization's communication strategies that do not work for profit (Carrasco-Polaino et al., 2018). Likewise, social media have become a major part of everyday life especially for young people of the age of 18 to 24 (Nielsen et al., 2020). In total, 95 % of NGOs and NPOs around the world are using social media for increasing brand awareness, creating social change, fundraising, or recruiting volunteers. However, only 54 % use Instagram for their social media strategies (Funraise, 2019).

The following thesis aims to answer the main research question: *How does Instagram shape risk communication concerning ocean plastics by making use of #breakfreefromplastic?* Hence, it discusses the risk of ocean plastics and the corresponding discourse around it on Instagram. This also leads to sub-questions like: How might Instagram's affordances be used to communicate risks? How might environmental organizations connect the communication of ocean plastics with Instagram? What role does the #breakfreefromplastic play in risk communication concerning ocean plastics on Instagram? To answer these questions, the role of the movement #breakfreefromplastic is put into context. In the theoretical framework, theories and different approaches to risk communication are reviewed including the impact of social media and Instagram. Building upon these discoveries, the research study investigates communication strategies concerning risks and Instagram by carrying out an affordance analysis and a critical discourse analysis. The findings are reflected and interpreted within the discussion chapter. In the end, the conclusion sums up the main outcomes of this thesis.

## 2 The Risk of Ocean Plastics

The risk of plastic pollution distinguishes it from others because it is more observable, and society is mostly aware of its extent. At the same time, plastics are a crucial part of daily life and people are familiar to use them (Syberg et al., 2018). The term risk can be defined as “the likelihood that an undesirable state of reality (adverse effects) may occur as a result of natural events or human activities” (Renn, 2008, p. 50). As soon as risk becomes global it is harder to analyze its potential damage and the case comes along with a high degree of uncertainty and ambiguity. At this moment, risk management including risk communication strategies is applied to prevent potential hazards (Kramm & Völker, 2018).

Today, we can trace back the usage of synthetic materials to the 1800s and the development of rubber technologies. Since then, researchers have investigated more plastic materials with different functions and characteristics. In combination with mass production, plastics became one of the most popular materials in modern society (Lambert & Wagner, 2018). Although plastics came up in the 1940s and grew rapidly over the following years (Crawford & Quinn, 2017), Syberg et al. (2018) state that the first impact on ocean pollution was mentioned in the 1960s by the notion of seabird debris in a newspaper article. Only after authors like Carpenter and Smith investigated plastic pollution in the 1970s, it became a well-known problem. By then corresponding industries were aware of the pollution but decided to deny responsibility for the plastic production and promote recycling and waste management strategies instead (CIEL,

2017). In 1976 plastic materials were the most used materials in the world (Crawford & Quinn, 2017). The investigation of ocean plastics has caught global attention which is the reason why the United Nations included the issue in the sustainable development agenda from 2015 until 2030. This agenda contains 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) including the rescue of the ocean by reducing the utilization of single-use plastics and packaging (SDG 14) (The Plastic Soup Foundation, 2020). Hence, it is necessary to understand where the pollution is coming from as there are various routes. One of the main pathways is through land littering which is a major public issue as each region in the world has its waste management systems (Lamber & Wagner, 2018). The main pathways into maritime areas for plastic besides land littering are sewage and the fishing industry which are all connected to human activities (Bauske, 2018; Haward, 2018).

On the contrary, authors like Stafford and Jones (2019) argue that ocean plastics are a highly overrated topic that distracts from other major issues like climate change and overfishing. Furthermore, the issue gained a lot of attention in the media already and thereby yielded basic lifestyle changes, like reusable drinking bottles. They also criticize organizations that came up with 'quick fix' technologies and clean-up operations as the only way to solve the problem is a radical change in behavioral, political, and economic systems (Stafford & Jones, 2019). Besides, the effectiveness and accountability from originations like non-governmental (NGO) and non-profit organizations (NPO) in general are difficult to prove (Lecy et al., 2012).

Nonetheless, there are 10 million NGOs and NPOs around the world that operate in the fields of the economic and social sphere, sustainable development, social development, and women-related issues (Carrasco-Polaino et al., 2018). These organizations take action in movements like the #breakfreefromplastic movement that started in 2016. Over 1.000 NGOs and NPOs worldwide joined the movement to reduce single-use plastic and encourage to fight against plastic pollution in the first year (Vince & Hardesty, 2018). The #breakfreefromplastic was shared over 251.000 times only on Instagram until today (Instagram, 2021a). Organizations are collaborating with local governments to implement zero waste programs and supporting cooperation with sustainable companies (Vince & Hardesty, 2018). Nowadays, the #breakfreefromplastic is operated by several NGOs and NPOs that fight against ocean plastics. For example, The Plastic Pollution Coalition, Greenpeace, and We Sea Foundation that are environmental NGOs and NPOs dealing with ocean plastics mention the hashtag underneath their posts frequently to reinforce their engagement against plastic pollution (Instagram, 2021b). Moreover, the BFFP movement promotes a social media toolkit on their website in which they offer images that can be posted on social media by using their hashtag (Break Free From Plastic Movement, 2020).

Up to now, modern society is aware of the situation but still struggles with perceiving this circumstance of ocean plastics as a risk (Syberg et al., 2018). According to Syberg et al. (2018), communication and social structures can influence human behavior towards a conscious lifestyle. The communication of risks is essential for the perception and acceptance by society which is why organizations develop strategies to achieve their goals (Lundgren, 2018). Likewise, risk communication follows its own requirements which is why the role of powerful digital media such as Instagram must be defined.

### 3 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework deals with risk communication theories and approaches including social media especially Instagram. Hence, risk communication is defined, and the risk of ocean plastic pollution is positioned by referring to different models and approaches. Furthermore, the impact of social media on risk communication is explained as well as the unique features and functions of Instagram. Therefore, the focus is on communication strategies that will later serve as the foundation for the research study.

#### 3.1 Risk communication

Risk communication is subordinate to technical communication which means that its nature consists of information, education, and occasional persuasion. Further, it can involve stakeholders from every social level including children, scientists, industries, or governments. However, risk communication differs from technical communication as it consists of interaction. In other words, risk communication seeks for dialogs with the audience (Lundgren, 2018).

Thus, risk communication can be defined as any communication from private or public stakeholders about individual or social risks, containing an intentional message transmitted by any channel to any recipient (Plough & Krinsky, 1988). Another definition is made by the National Research Council (1989, p. 2) of the United States which argues that risk communication is “an interactive process of exchange of information and opinion among individuals, groups, and institutions”. Reynolds and Seeger (2018) specify risk communication by saying it contains a public message about negative consequences based on scientific, technical information, and cultural beliefs to persuade the public. This form of communication

is strategic and focused on long-term development to increase awareness and achieve change in public behavior. As the effects of risk communication can have a significant impact on society, experts disagree on its content (Morgan et al., 2002). According to Baker (1990, p. 355), risk communication can fail because:

1. the audience lacks the experience or education necessary to understand the message,
2. the message is not effectively presented,
3. the communication may emphasize the wrong things, omitting the needed balance of benefits or information about the trustworthiness of the risk managers,
4. too much information is presented so that the audience is unable to pick out the relevant information,
5. contradictory information is presented,
6. emotion is aroused that clouds perception of the information.

To avoid failure, risk communication builds upon advertisements and public education campaigns that stir up fear of the potential outcome of risks. These messages present threats that only can be defeated by behavioral change (Reynolds & Seeger, 2005).

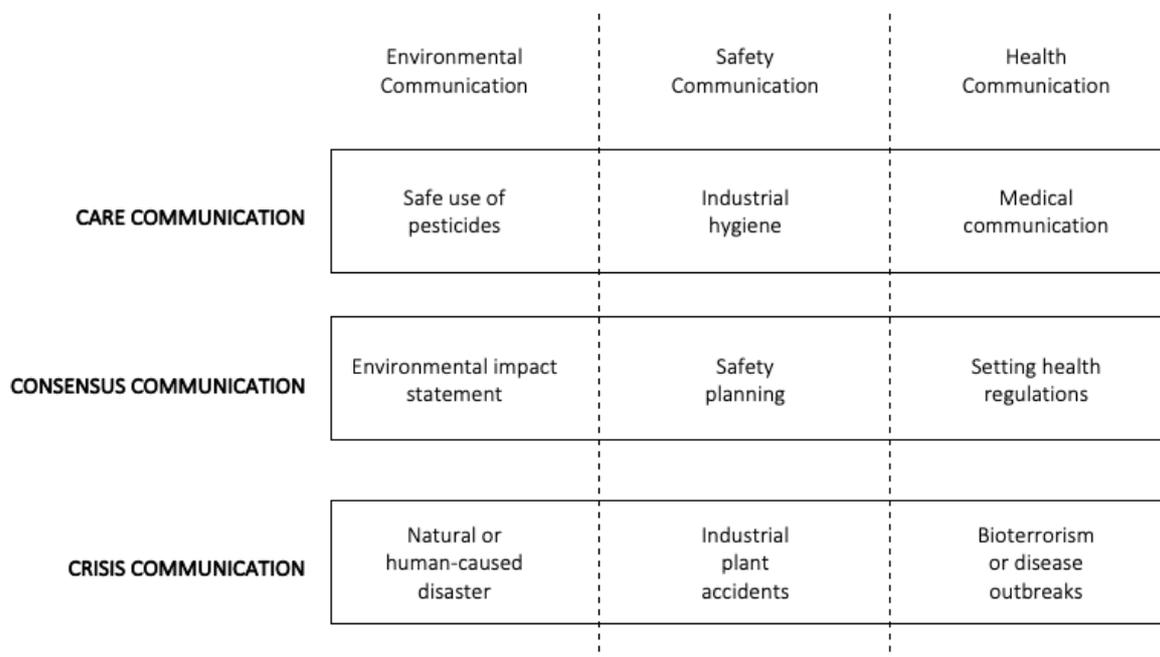


Figure 1 Examples of various types of risk communication (Lundgren, 2018, p. 4)

This form of communication is structured on a problem-solution approach (Witte et al., 2001) that has been criticized by experts as it often appears as a form of ‘brainwashing’ (Jasanoff, 1989).

However, the content of risk communication typically focuses on environmental, safety, and health risks. Therefore, Lundgren (2005) distinguishes risk communication between care communication, consensus communication, and crisis communication.

Table 1 Different approaches to risk communication

| Approach                                 | Description  |
|--|--|
| <b>Communication Process Approach</b>    | This is the traditional model of communication by Shannon (1948). The approach consists of a message that is created by a source and shared through a channel to reach a receiver (Lundgren, 2018).  |
| <b>Consensus Communication Approach</b>  | This approach by Rogers (1981) refers to the idea of long-term risk communication processes in which values of an organization such as culture, experience, and background are transmitted. Interaction and negotiation of groups help to achieve a common ground. Therefore, the audience needs to be involved into the communication process from the beginning (Lundgren, 2018). However, this approach aims for a consensus between every stakeholder which is an unrealistic result (Stafford and Jones, 2019).   |
| <b>Social Network Contagion Approach</b> | Organizational studies like the one from Scherer and Cho (2003) showed that social networks have a strong influence on behavior and attitudes in workplaces. Furthermore, they were able to find out that it changes the perception of the world. This also affects behavioral and emotional adaptations when it comes to presented risks on social networks. This impact evolves over time and does not need to be intentional. Nevertheless, the influence from social networks on human's behavior increases as more people use social media like Instagram. Thus, the communication might not focus on the individual but on the community this person is related to. Based on the assumption that social media can encourage risk participation of communities, it can play a crucial role in consensus communication (Lundgren, 2018). |
| <b>Social Trust Approach</b>             | The social trust approach was particularly researched by Cvetkovich and Winter (2001). It deals with the trust from people in institutions such as NGOs and NPOs. This confidence is built up on the understanding of an organization's goal, motives, and actions in relation to personal values and beliefs. Based on this connection individuals perceive organizations as capable to manage risks and the risk appears less threatening (Cvetkovich and Winter 2001). Trust is a major aspect in connection with risk management as it controls the way individuals accept risks on a personal level (Cvetkovich and Winter 2001).   |

In the case of ocean pollution, the discourse is about environmental risks and thereby consensus communication. The core of consensus is to inform and encourage groups to persuade them to collaborate and create solutions (Lundgren, 2018) based on stakeholder

participation that also includes the consensus between government and industry experts. Nevertheless, some environmental hazards cannot be managed by the government on its own like ocean plastics which is why the voluntary engagement of organizations and individuals is crucial (Baker, 1990).

The main objective of risk communication is to inform the public by translating technical and complex information into clear and persuasive messages (Reynolds & Seeger, 2005). Nonetheless, scientists like Morgan et al. (2002) argue that the ideal of a well-informed public is unrealistic as emotions play an important role when it comes to risk perception. Another reason why risk communication has been criticized is because of the difficult measurement of success (Morgan et al., 2002).

The different approaches of risk communication, displayed in table 1, demand planning and management. These approaches build the foundation for risk communication strategies and demonstrate how complex a successful execution is. Especially the social trust and social network contagion approaches serve interesting findings that can be adapted to Instagram and the discourse around the risk of ocean plastics. Knowing how risk communication is defined and where the risk of ocean plastics is positioned helps to understand why this process needs strategic approaches. To achieve interaction, networks, or trust, organizations come up with campaigns and strategies. The process of creating an appropriate risk communication plan depends on several criteria.

### 3.2 Risk Communication Process

The risk communication process by Lundgren (2018) begins when a potential or actual danger for the environment, human health, or safety appears. As part of risk management, risk communication is an important step that needs to be accomplished during a long process that involves risk assessment on a scientific level and discussions about the scope and potential solutions. It is a form of stakeholder involvement that requires certain communication strategies seeking to increase perception, provide information, consider benefits, and transmit resolution (Lundgren, 2018). In case of environmental issues like plastic pollution of the oceans, stakeholders such as individuals, NGOs, NPOs, and other institutions take part in a scoping process in which the participants discuss the evaluation of the risk. This happened during conferences of the United States' National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) in the 1950s and workshops by the National Academy of Sciences in 1975 that resulted in a report named *Assessing Potential Ocean Pollutants* (CIEL, 2017). Today, these discussions take place in more public spaces such as social media. Thus, not only experts or

scientists are involved but also society (Anderson, 2014). By taking part into movements like #breakfreefromplastic virtual platforms like Instagram become places to exchange opinions.

As soon as it comes to appropriate strategies a few basic aspects must be considered. The form to communicate depends on purposes and objectives as well as newness and visibility. “If the risk is relatively new and not very visible, you will have to first raise awareness before you can communicate more technical information, encourage behavior changes, or build consensus. If this risk is something that has been discussed for years and has been visible for some time, the audience may be apathetic, and you may have to find new ways to awaken audience interest and concern” (Lundgren, 2018, p. 112).

|                       |   |                            |
|-----------------------|---|----------------------------|
| <b>Highly visible</b> | Deal with fear, hostility, or other emotional reactions from the audience | Build on audience interest |
|                       | Raise awareness in the audience   | Share new information      |
|                       | <b>New</b>  | <b>Old</b>                 |

Figure 2 Primary purpose of risk communication related to newness and visibility of the risk (Lundgren, 2018, p. 112)

As displayed in figure 2, the primary purpose of risk communication of a risk that is old and highly visible is to build on audience interest. In addition, the needs of the audience must be central in the communication strategy. To be able to start communicating these messages, the organization needs to decide on the right channel or tool (Lundgren, 2018). Risk communication models can help to structure the process and to find the right strategy.

The crisis and emergency risk communication model (CERC Model) developed by Reynolds and Seeger (2005) deals with the interweaving relationship of risk and crisis communication. The foundation of the model is the distinguishment between risk and crisis communication. Therefore, the authors provide different definitions of risk and crisis communication concluding

that risk communication involves public messages that inform about negative consequences on a scientific and technical level as well as cultural beliefs.

These messages are constructed to persuade the public in the form of advertisements and public education campaigns. It is a strategic communication focused on long-term development to increase awareness and evoke change. Crisis communication, on the other hand, concentrates on current situations based on a specific event or emergency. In general, crisis communication originates from Public Relations and thereby uses news and media to warn the public in a short amount of time. It is less strategic and reacts in correspondence to the crisis. To sum up, crisis communication is used for hazards that suddenly appear and react fast which is why it is less strategic while risk communication deals with hazards that build up over a long period and is therefore plannable (Reynolds & Seeger, 2005). The case of ocean pollution belongs to risk communication rather than crisis communication as it is a hazard that occurred decades ago and will have a long-term impact in the future as well. Therefore, the communication must be planned strategically.

As illustrated in figure 3, the CERC model consists of five stages: pre-crisis, initial event, maintenance, resolution, and evaluation. These stages identify the current development of the risk which is important to consider the communication strategy. The model's purpose is to reduce uncertainty concerning risks and crises and serve adequate communication procedures. However, Reynolds and Seeger also admit the limitations of their approach. According to Seeger (2002, p. 51) "all crises can be expected to have unforeseen, nonlinear dimensions and interactions that preclude managers from making precise predictions."

The risk of ocean plastics is presently in the stage of resolution which leads to organizations and governments that are publishing corresponding agendas and campaigns (Tyller & Nyman, 2018). Based on the CERC model this can include updates on current clean-up projects, discussion about responsibilities, information for a better understanding, and call-to-actions. As maritime pollution through plastics is already a well-known problem, organizations can focus on resolution strategies instead of increasing awareness or creating a common knowledge of the issue (Syberg et al., 2018). Digital media made it easier for an organization to communicate which is why social media became a major part of the distribution process (Anderson, 2014).

Besides the classification of the different stages of risk communication, the CERC model connects a theoretical approach with the execution process. By implementing the CERC model it provides the research with a theoretical understanding of risk communication

strategies. It further describes several aspects that are part of the #breakfreefromplastic movement and can therefore be investigated during the upcoming analysis.

### **I. Precrisis (Risk Messages; Warnings; Preparations)**

Communication and education campaigns targeted to both the public and the response community to facilitate:

- Monitoring and recognition of emerging risks
- General public understanding of risk
- Public preparation for the possibility of an adverse event
- Changes in behavior to reduce the likelihood of harm (self-efficacy)
- Specific warning messages regarding some eminent threat
- Alliances and cooperation with agencies, organizations, and groups
- Development of consensual recommendations by experts and first responders
- Message development and testing for subsequent stages

### **II. Initial Event (Uncertainty Reduction; Self-efficacy; Reassurance)**

Rapid communication to the general public and to affected groups seeking to establish:

- Empathy, reassurance, and reduction in emotional turmoil
- Designated crisis agency spokespersons and formal channels and methods of communication
- General and broad-based understanding of the crisis circumstances, consequences, and anticipated outcomes based on available information
- Reduction of crisis-related uncertainty
- Specific understanding of emergency management and medical community responses
- Understanding of self-efficacy and personal response activities (how/where to get more information)

**III. Maintenance (Ongoing Uncertainty Reduction; Self-efficacy; Reassurance)** Communication to the general public and to affected groups seeking to facilitate:

- More accurate public understandings of ongoing risks
- Understanding of background factors and issues
- Broad-based support and cooperation with response and recovery efforts
- Feedback from affected publics and correction of any misunderstandings/rumors
- Ongoing explanation and reiteration of self-efficacy and personal response activities (how/where to get more information) begun in Stage II.
- Informed decision making by the public based on understanding of risks/benefits

### **IV. Resolution (Updates Regarding Resolution; Discussions about Cause and New Risks/New Understandings of Risk)**

Public communication and campaigns directed toward the general public and affected groups seeking to:

- Inform and persuade about ongoing clean-up, remediation, recovery, and rebuilding efforts
- Facilitate broad-based, honest, and open discussion and resolution of issues regarding cause, blame, responsibility, and adequacy of response.
- Improve/create public understanding of new risks and new understandings of risk as well as new risk avoidance behaviors and response procedures
- Promote the activities and capabilities of agencies and organizations to reinforce positive corporate identity and image

### **V. Evaluation (Discussions of Adequacy of Response; Consensus About Lessons and New Understandings of Risks)**

Communication directed toward agencies and the response community to:

- Evaluate and assess responses, including communication effectiveness
- Document, formalize, and communicate lessons learned
- Determine specific actions to improve crisis communication and crisis response capability
- Create linkages to precrisis activities (Stage I)

*Figure 3 A working Model of CERC (Reynolds & Seeger, 2005, p. 52)*

### 3.3 Risk Communication on Social Media

Social media have become one of the main tools for environmental organizations to communicate about risks like ocean plastics (Anderson, 2014). According to Pickard (2019, p. 429), there is “a particularly important evolution in campaigning methods of social movements and protest networks“, especially on social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram which influence civic engagement and activism. This is the reason why this thesis concentrates on the BFFP movement. Anderson (2014) agrees with Lundgren and argues that social networks have a growing popularity in campaign organizations.

This development can be explained by the many advantages of social media. Besides the low costs and human resources required to create and maintain a social media account, organizations have easy access to their audience and new potential followers. The platform users, on the other hand, have the power to decide which profile they want to follow. This is the reason why there is a potential for strong interest and engagement once a user starts following an organization. This can be transformed into the willingness to change behavior in the long term. Another important aspect of social media is the quick communication flow. Content can be published instantly and reach a big audience within seconds. At the same time, followers can immediately respond to it, share it, and create their content to spread the information (Lundgren, 2018). As already mentioned in the *Social Network Contagion Approach*, the constant contact between individuals and social media influences behavior and attitudes towards risks. Likewise, the organizations must gain trust and credibility by distributing relevant and valid content which can also be connected to the *Social Trust Approach* (Lundgren, 2018). However, there are also downsides concerning the usage of social media for risk communication purposes. Organizations must remember that social media is not accessible for everyone and some demographic groups are not represented which is why the target audience must be analyzed beforehand. Further, fake news spread easily on network platforms and is hard to eliminate. Therefore, Lundgren (2018) recommends reacting fast and publishing correct information to diminish further confusion. According to a survey of crisis and emergency management by Haataja et al. (2016), the main reasons for organizations to avoid social media are lack of knowledge, time, and experience in implementing strategies in their traditional hierarchies. Nevertheless, as soon as an organization becomes part of a community or movement like #breakfreefromplastic the impact on its audience increases, and risk communication provides results (Lundgren, 2018).

Another aspect that makes social media relevant for environmental organizations is the evaluation of risk communication measurements. The initial procedure consists of different

levels starting with the most basic level of evaluating the effort of the quality and quantity of the activities. The next level concentrates on the overall performance and outcome in terms of changing attitudes and behavior. The following stage compares the performance with the risk assessment to evaluate the adequacy. Further, the costs are considered, and the efficiency of the risk communication is determined. Lastly, the overall process gets analyzed to find out why the measurements lead to a positive or negative result. Nonetheless, this form of evaluation is usually based on interpretations (Baker, 1990). Social media provide data that give evidence to certain outcomes and support the evaluation process with numbers and figures (Lundgren, 2018).

Apart from the advantages and disadvantages of social media as a communication channel, digital activism on these platforms has been criticized for being superficial and ineffective (Pickard, 2019). Other authors like Dennis (2018) define this phenomenon as ‘slacktivism’ by saying that it is a form of micro-activism. Further, likes and shares do not have a strong impact on politics, or the way risks are communicated (Dennis, 2018). Anderson (2014) mentions the effect of ‘clicktivism’ in his book which is also related to slacktivism. These forms of passive interaction create a false reality in which real activism cannot be distinguished from clicktivism (Anderson, 2014) or slacktivism (Dennis, 2018). However, Anderson (2014) and Lundgren (2018) conclude that social media is an important tool within risk communication but cannot supplement everything.

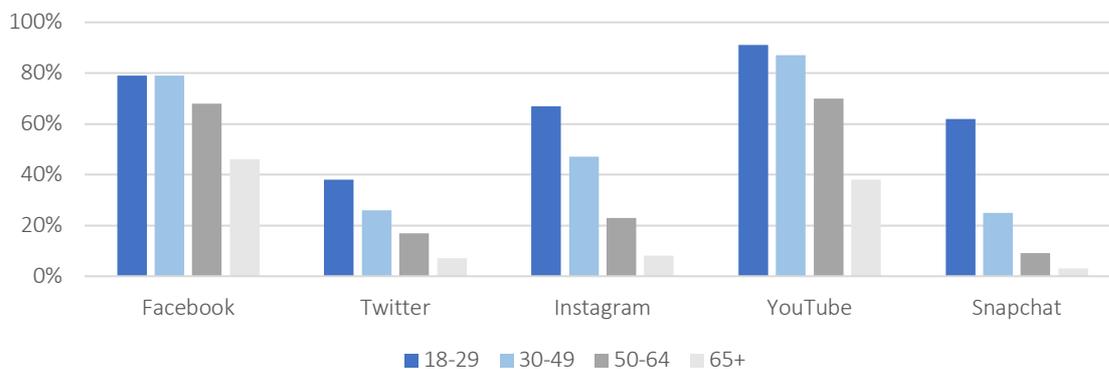


Figure 4 Social Media Users per Age in the USA (PEW, 2019)

There are different types of platforms that all provide special features to share content. However, past research for environmental risk communication focused mainly on Facebook and Twitter (Hodson et al., 2018) but file-sharing platforms like Instagram or YouTube have a big young audience as well as presented in Figures 4 and 5. Moreover, the functions and

features offer new forms of risk communication by following special strategies (Anderson, 2014).

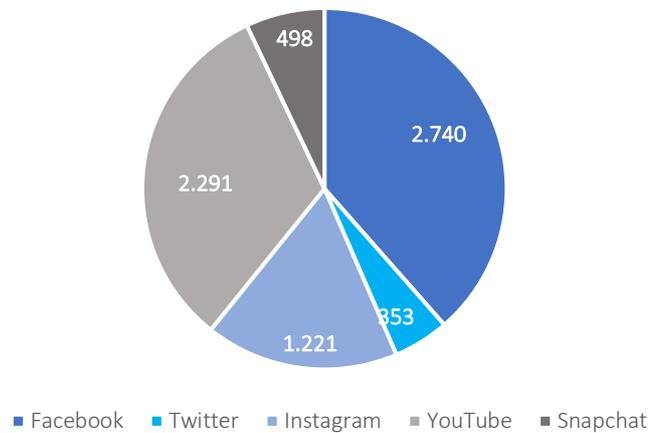


Figure 5 Social Media Users in millions per Platform January 2021 (Tankovska, 2021)

As mentioned earlier, networking platforms such as Facebook and Twitter have been researched more than any other platform concerning risk communication (Hodson et al., 2018). Instagram, on the contrary, offers similar features when it comes to networking even though it is a file-sharing platform (Kreutzer, 2018). Since Instagram offers both, networking, and file-sharing characteristics, it provides a broad range of features that can be used for communication strategies. This becomes an important factor for movements such as BFFP as social movements benefit from networks. At the same time, sharing files can transfer powerful messages easier by using visual representation. Further, organizations that are involved in #breakfreefromplastic on social media can benefit from existing communication strategies on Instagram.

### 3.4 Communication Strategies on Instagram

Instagram was published in 2021 by Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger. Since then, Instagram is an ad-supported platform on which its users can share visual content in combination with a short description. This content can be commented on, liked, or shared by the community (Richter, 2017). As displayed in figure 5 Instagram has 1.221 million users which are mainly between 18 and 29 years old (figure 4) and the network is still growing. Instagram represents itself as a platform that connects and inspires people (Instagram, 2021c).

Besides the earlier mentioned advantages and disadvantages of social media platforms, Instagram owns special functions that distinguish it from others. Content published on Instagram does not necessarily have to be professional or editorial to gain attention but rather authentic and current (Ceyp & Scupin, 2013). Visual representation of risks through graphical elements and little texts containing risk messages can have a strong effect on its audience. Likewise, visual representations have a high probability to be memorized by color, shape, and imagery with persuasive language. Although the content contains little information, visuals are easy to translate into different languages and mostly have a mutual interpretation basis. Further, it entails technical information that must be adapted clearly and reasonably in which no misunderstandings can occur (Lundgren, 2018).

Instagram's potential for persuasive communication and its increasing user base are reasons why this channel is important for risk communication (Hodson et al., 2018). Based on Ballew, Omoto, and Winter (2015) Hodson et al. argue that social networks can transfer complex scientific information into attractive and comprehensible content for the broad public. Even though Hodson et al. link this opportunity to climate change it can also be projected on the issue of ocean pollution. Moreover, the corresponding content is not only shared by NGOs, NPOs, or other activists but by the whole network of users where each of them can add, transform, or create new content to inspire and motivate others. This form of content sharing is called crowdsourcing which is applied for gathering new content, information, or any other input from the community. Thereby, organizations benefit from public intelligence and can observe trends (Kreutzer, 2018). Further, images are still related to reality and are perceived as true. This new form of visual communication created a new phenomenon called 'activism' which is a combination of art and political and social activism (Carrasco-Polaino et al., 2018).

One way of collecting visual content under a certain topic is to include hashtags like #breakfreefromplastics. These hashtags also transfer a certain message and can be understood as a clear statement of belonging (Faßmann & Moss, 2016).

Another strategy to increase awareness is to involve opinion leaders, that already enjoy the trust of a community. According to Hodson et al. users on Instagram adapt content from influencers more than from other accounts. The term influencer is not defined in that article, but a general definition is given by Kroebel-Riel & Gröppel-Klein, (2013) influencers are opinion leaders with a strong influence on the behavior and beliefs of their community. Likewise, they are independent and usually experts in a certain field which is why they are perceived as authentic. Nonetheless, influencer marketing is a business strategy in which the

influencer receives benefits from a company in forms of money, discounts, or products (Kreutzer, 2018) which is why this strategy might not be suitable for NPOs and NGOs.

An alternative risk communication strategy on Instagram is storytelling. This form of communication is especially interesting for consensus communication as it takes time and long-term planning (Lundgren, 2018). By telling a story of ocean plastics, for example, experiences and connections are created which lead to permanent memories and recognition. Throughout these structures, in the human brain relationships build up and the user feels a sense of community (Wieskamp, 2016; Häusel, 2006). Based on this emotional connection the user feels more engaged and behavioral change can be achieved (Sielaff, 2020).

However, the most popular topics that are represented on Instagram are lifestyle, fitness, design, travel, and fashion which are usually visualized in positive and aesthetic images or videos (Bannour, Grabs & Vogl, 2017). Plastic pollution, on the contrary, is more related to negative feelings and is perceived as a threat. Even though it is a risk that is visual and observable, ocean plastics might not fit into the typical Instagram content expectations.

On the contrary, more than half of existing NGOs and NPOs use Instagram as a communication channel and participate in movements like BFFP. The usage of Instagram and its unique strategies might influence risk communication which is why the following study research centers on communication strategies applied by environmental organizations. It will reflect on how risk communication and Instagram communication strategies are operationalized and the role BFFP movement.

## 4 Methodological Framework

The methodology of this master thesis consists of two parts namely affordance analysis and critical discourse analysis. Both methods have a qualitative nature as the focus of the research will concentrate strongly on the interpretation of the relationship and not on quantitative aspects of the collected data.

Social media consists of information and communication technologies that come along with certain affordances for its users (Albert et al., 2013). This is the reason why an affordance analysis on Instagram is the first step of this study. The affordance analysis is based on

approaches from Gibson (1979), Norman (1988), and Curinga (2014) defining the capabilities of the software.

The main research will focus on a critical discourse analysis based on approaches from Fairclough (1992) and van Dijk (2011). The CDA is an appropriate method for this research purpose as it provides insights into social change and the discourse of power and socio-cultural practices which are key factors for analyzing social movements (Albert et al., 2013). According to Pickard (2019, p. 429), there is “a particularly important evolution in campaigning methods of social movements and protest networks” especially on social media platforms such as Instagram which influence social change.

#### 4.1 Research Design

The research consists of different types of analyzes starting with an affordance analysis. The results of the affordance analysis will explain how Instagram operates focusing on its technical features to spread risk communication messages. This will later serve as the foundation for the content analysis to prove whether an organization takes advantage of Instagram’s affordances for its communication strategy. The following CDA includes a content analysis that will serve to analyze the textual dimension of the data and represents the main research task. However, since content analyzes are based on the researcher’s subjective selection and interpretation of the data (van Dijk, 2011) it is followed by interviews with organizations that are part of the content analysis. This data will assist for the last step of Fairclough’s (1992) three-dimensional model of CDA which is the social practice. Lastly, the gathered information will be analyzed and the results reflected upon in relation to the RQ.

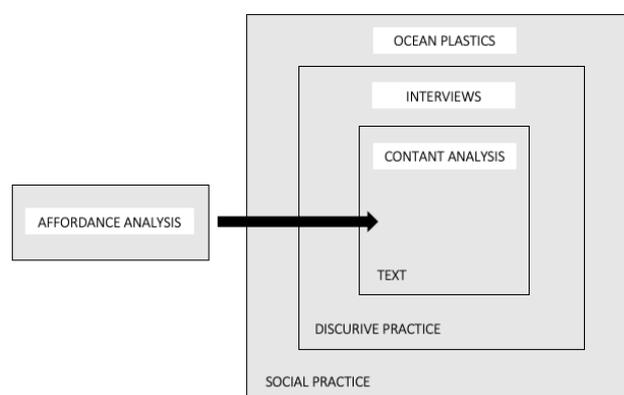


Figure 6 Research Design based on Fairclough’s three-dimensional model (1992)

## 4.2 Affordances of Instagram

To begin with, I will analyze Instagram concerning its affordances to present the platform's features, functions, and displays for a clear understanding of the possibilities. The affordance analysis was developed by Gibson (1979) to explain how animals interact with their environment regarding behavior and actions. As the environment provides different affordances for different animals, it is necessary to look at the relationship between these both. Thus, the environment and the actor have compatible attributes to interact with each other (Curinga, 2014). Norman (1988), on the other side, argues that affordances are closely related to perception. Based on human-computer interaction (HCI) studies, Norman (1988, p. 9) describes affordances as "a design element, perceived by the user, that enables an action". Further, this approach explains how users interact with certain platforms which is why this method can be applied to social media (Curinga, 2014). Referring to Norman's approach, Curinga (2014) mentions several components that are relevant for understanding software in terms of its affordances such as features, goals, and perception. By analyzing Instagram regarding its affordances, I will investigate how content about ocean plastics can be distributed and how hashtags like #breakfreefromplastic as well as other functions change risk communication.

Instagram is a file-sharing platform with the main purpose to share images and videos with its community. Therefore, Instagram can be accessed via an email address through computers, smartphones, or tablets. The function to upload content can only be accessed with mobile devices (Richter, 2017). The platform's affordances provide several areas to share content such as the personal profile feed, and stories. A post on the profile feed consists of visual content and a description text. Instagram allows three different affordances to tag the post: hashtags, account tags, and location tags. Thus, hashtags have been offering researchers a new perspective on the affordances of social media (Highfield & Leaver, 2015). Likewise, to the connection of certain communities through the collective implication of hashtags which was describes by Faßmann and Moss (2016), they also transmit a form of metacommentary to express opinions and identities (Daer et al., 2014). A hashtag is signified by the pound sign (#) whereas account and location tags are preceded by the at sign (@). By tagging other accounts and locations on content, users can reach beyond their followers towards any other person looking for the same tag (Bannour, Grabs & Vogl, 2017).

Next to the personal feed, users can create stories that last 24 hours on their accounts. This offers opportunities to create spontaneous and current content as well as live streams (Freese, 2019). Instagram also allows the affordances to interact with other users by containing stickers such as surveys, hashtags, accounts, and location tags (Firsching, 2019). Further, since 2017

it is possible to keep stories online by including them into highlights which are sorted by categories (Firsching, 2017).

### 4.3 Critical Discourse Analysis

According to van Dijk's (1996) approach to critical discourse analyzes the discourse in social media must be put into the context of power and access as power is the foundation of the formation of discourse. This power is owned by social groups, organizations, or other institutions that aim to influence people's behavior and beliefs. Anderson (2014, p. 3) argues that "various social actors including scientists, industry, policymakers and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) battle to influence public perceptions. How the problems and solutions are framed has the potential to critically shape political and public responses. Environmental issues are often deeply contested." Based on the overall research question, the role of Instagram and how it is shaping risk communication must be analyzed. To capture the power relations between organizations and Instagram as well as the influence on risk communication in the context of ocean plastics, a CDA (Fairclough, 1992; Fairclough, 2013) will be performed combined with textual analysis in form of a content analysis based on Saldana (2009).

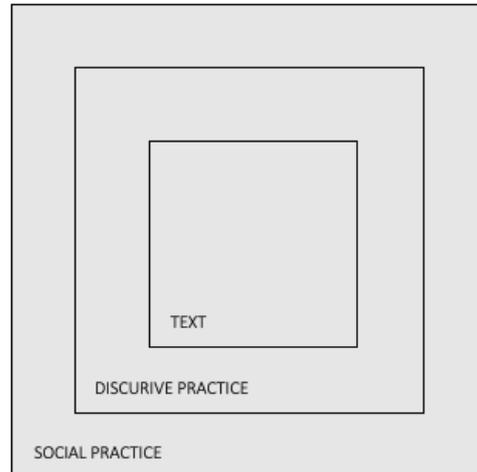


Figure 7 Fairclough's three-dimensional model for critical discourse analysis (1992, p. 73)

This data will be analyzed in the CDA according to Fairclough's (1992) three-dimensional model which represents an analytical framework for empirical communication research. First, is the textual analysis which focuses on the linguistic features of the text. However, in this study research, the textual analysis will be carried out as a content analysis (Saldana, 2009)

as the sample data consists of text and visual content. The content analysis is therefore part of the critical discourse analysis. According to van Dijk (2011) content analysis is necessary to research media as it provides insights into media discourses. Nevertheless, content analysis can only capture a limited number of messages and thus is subjective as it is depending on the selection of the researcher. On the contrary, it provides quantitative data for qualitative studies (van Dijk, 2011). Therefore, the qualitative data will be coded and categorized into a researcher-generated construct that is used to interpret the information. Next, is the discursive practice that describes the relations between production and consumption of the text. Fairclough (1992) focuses on the interweaving of language and discourse within the immediate context. To reflect on the data from previous analyzes this research continues with interviews. The interviewees are organizations involved in the sample data and are therefore able to provide valid information on the discourse. The data from the interview will be analyzed based on the categories of the previous content analysis to connect the information. Lastly, this outcome is put into social practices including the larger ideologies (Fairclough, 1992). The case of this study involves the discourse of ocean plastics and their representation in digital media.

The difficult part is to connect the micro-, meso-, and macro-scale of the discourse by including the textual analysis into the discourse analysis. To be able to join the different social levels van Dijk (1993, p. 257) introduces social cognition to the process: "Hence social cognitions mediate between micro-and macro-levels of society, between discourse and action, between the individual and the group. Although embodied in the minds of individuals, social cognitions are social because they are shared and presupposed by group members, monitor social action and interaction, and as they underlie the social and cultural organization of society as a whole."

CDA is generally criticized because of subjective decisions of researchers on the scale of discourse they choose to put their attention on. At the same time, textual analysis is mostly disconnected from any of the surrounding contexts. The conclusion is that discourse analyzes have a lack of empirical relevance which is filled by textual analysis. Still, the main challenge remains to create connections between this data on all social levels (Dittmer, 2010) which are described as micro-, meso-, and macro-scale above. The micro-level involves individuals and small groups whereas the meso focuses on communities, and institutions. The macro-level stands for the whole society and social systems (van Dijk, 1993).

By carrying out the CDA I will answer the following sub-questions that will lead to the overall research question:

SQ1: How can Instagram's affordances be used to communicate risks?

SQ2: How might environmental organizations connect the communication of ocean plastics with Instagram?

SQ3: What role does the #breakfreefromplastic play in this discourse?

The questions will be answered by the results of the content analysis. The categories in which the Instagram posts will be sorted are made in correspondence to the questions. The outcome will be interpreted and concluded within the following steps of the CDA namely, discursive, and social practice.

#### 4.4 Data Collection

Based on Highfield and Leaver (2015, p. 18), this study builds upon a hashtag “as an initial point of departure for studying activity on Instagram”. As #breakfreefromplastic is specifically used for content related to plastic pollution and/ or ocean plastics, the research material of this study includes content created by a variety of organizations, setting this study apart from studies especially focused on environmental organizations (Duffy, 2017).

The posts were selected by the #breakfreefromplastic and were mainly published NPOs and NGOs but also alliances, movements, and projects as well as registered associations that have no commercial interest by using Instagram as a communication tool. To be able to compare a variety of communication strategies from different organizations the posts from the first 25 organizations that applied the #breakfreefromplastic was the starting point of gathering sampling data. The next step was to collect the most recent posts on the accounts that also use the hashtag which is why their number of posts per organization differs from 1 to 11. As ocean plastic is a global risk, these organizations are settled in eleven different countries in North, Central, and South America as well as Europa and Asia.

All of them are dealing with environmental issues mainly focusing on oceans, plastic pollution, or beach cleanup. They have officially registered organizations and have active Instagram accounts with frequent activities that they employ for their communication strategies. One factor that was left out for the selection process was the number of followers as in this research the analysis of the quality of the posts is important and not the quantity of reach.

Table 2 List of sample organizations

| Organization                               | Type                   | Country     | Posts |
|--|------------------------|-------------|-------|
| 5 Gyres Institute                          | NPO                    | USA         | 11    |
| 5 Minute Foundation                        | NPO                    | Costa Rica  | 3     |
| Break Free From Plastic Movement           | Movement               | Global      | 9     |
| Center for International Environmental Law | NGO                    | USA         | 1     |
| Clean Miami Beach                          | NPO                    | USA         | 1     |
| Gili Eco Trust                             | NGO                    | Indonesia   | 2     |
| Greenpeace                                 | NPO                    | Canada      | 9     |
| Greenpeace_PH                              | NPO                    | Philippines | 1     |
| GreenSeas Trust                            | NPO                    | UK          | 4     |
| IbizaPreservation                          | NPO                    | Spain       | 3     |
| Oceana                                     | NPO                    | USA         | 1     |
| Oceana_PH                                  | NPO                    | Philippines | 4     |
| One Earth - One Ocean e.V.                 | Registered Association | Germany     | 3     |
| Pacific Environment                        | NPO                    | USA         | 1     |
| Peace Mural Foundation                     | NPO                    | USA         | 4     |
| Peak Plastic Foundation                    | NPO                    | USA         | 1     |
| Plastic Pollution Coalition                | Alliance               | USA         | 11    |
| Pocono Heritage Land Trust                 | NPO                    | USA         | 1     |
| Projeto Desengarrando Mentas               | Project                | Brazil      | 7     |
| Surfrider Foundation                       | NGO                    | USA         | 1     |
| Surfrider Foundation Europe                | NGO                    | France      | 1     |
| Surfrider Foundation Germany e.V.          | Registered Association | Germany     | 2     |
| The Plastic Soup Foundation                | NPO                    | Netherlands | 9     |
| WeSea Foundation                           | NPO                    | France      | 10    |

Another criterium for the selection of content was the language abilities of the researcher. The sample posts had to be written in the English, Dutch, Spanish or German language.

In total, 100 posts -Images and Videos- were collected from the period between 01.07.2018-31.03.2021. The movement started in 2016 and therefore has already developed up to over 240.000 posts on Instagram using #breakfreefromplastic. As this research has a qualitative nature, the sample posts were individually selected by actuality and publisher. The posts will give valid information about the technical functions operated by the organizations to spread their message but also about the content of the message itself. Hence, the message will be analyzed by certain criteria such as communication strategies, visual representation of the risk, emotional levels, and forms of resolution strategies based on the CERC model. The next step is to analyze the posts based on the content.

## 4.5 Coding Data

Coding is one method to analyze qualitative data by using a short phrase or a word as an inquiry that sorts language-based or visual data into categories based on its attributes. Thus, the analysis consists of two cycles to collect data. Within the first cycle, the coding process focuses on data that can entail single words, images, or entire videos. The second cycle

includes another coding process in which the data is put into categories that links data that is connected (Saldana, 2009).

Table 3 Coding table

| Category              | Code                        | Description   |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------|---|
| Instagram Strategy    | Break Free From Plastic Tag | Is the movement directly connected to the post?   |
|                       | Tagging                     | Does the organization tag a location or account to increase the reach?                  |
|                       | Hashtags                    | Is the organization using hashtags to target certain communities?                       |
|                       | Crowdsourcing               | Does the organization benefit from user-generated content to engage with its community? |
|                       | Influencer                  | Are opinion leaders involved in the campaign?   |
|                       | Storytelling                | Does the organization use storytelling as a strategy?                                   |
| Resolution Strategy   | Information                 | Does the campaign include technical information about the risk?                         |
|                       | Engagement                  | Does the campaign show or asks for the engagement of the user?                          |
|                       | Clean Up                    | Is a clean-up project involved in the campaign?   |
|                       | Responsibility              | Does the campaign discuss who is responsible for the solution?                          |
|                       | Threat                      | Is the risk of ocean plastics presented as a threat?                                    |
| Visual Representation | Plastic                     | Is plastic displayed in the campaign?   |
|                       | Water                       | Is an ocean, lake, or river displayed in the campaign?                                  |
|                       | Artivism                    | Is art used as a tool to visualize the risk?  |
|                       | Children/animals            | Are animals or children displayed in the campaign to create compassion?                 |

As illustrated in table 3 the scope of this research, the collected posts were analyzed by 14 different codes that are sorted into three categories: Instagram strategy, resolution strategy, and visual representation. The category 'Instagram Strategy' builds up on Instagram's affordances such as tagging and hashtags, as well as communication strategies like crowdsourcing, influencer, and storytelling. By checking whether an organization made use of these attributes it is possible to find out if it takes advantage of the medium and its features to

spread messages. Further, it is important to expose whether an organization follows risk communication strategies.

Since ocean pollution is in the stage of resolution there are certain recommendations based on the CERC model for how to deal with this risk. By investigating this area, it should be evaluated if Instagram can be operationalized for risk communication purposes.

The last category is 'Visual Representation' which concentrates more on visual aspects of the posts as Instagram's main feature is to share visual data. This leads to results on how the risk is presented on Instagram.

## 5 Results of the CDA

The findings will be separated into three categories based on the coding structure as each of them has its criteria. Therefore, the 'Instagram Strategy' concentrates on findings concerning the platform's features and strategies whereas 'Risk Communication' is more related to the CERC model. 'Visual Representation' is important as it belongs to Instagram's special characteristics as a file-sharing platform. Afterward, the results of the content analysis (textual dimension) and the interviews (discursive practice) will be compared and at the same time interpreted in the context of ocean plastics within the social practice which is the final step of the CDA.

### 5.1 Textual Dimension - Content Analysis

#### 5.1.1 Instagram Strategy

Analyzing which strategies were used to spread messages on Instagram has presented that there are some strategies that more common than others. For example, every organization practices storytelling on its account presenting the impact of plastic pollution. This theme is mainly focused on oceans but organizations like Greenpeace or the Pocono Heritage Land Trust deal with nature and human's impact on it in general.

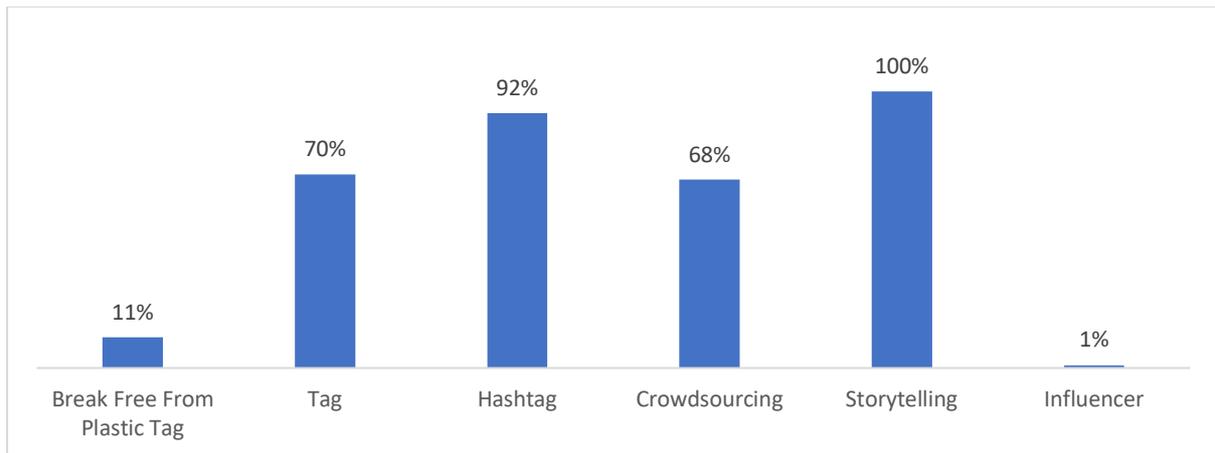


Figure 8 Results - Instagram Strategy

Nevertheless, storytelling as the foundation for the Instagram account is applied by every organization involved in this study. On the contrary, there was only one post including an Influencer which leads to the assumption that this strategy is not utilized often when it comes to communicating about the risk of ocean plastics.

Table 4 Top 30 Hashtags

| Hashtag              | Number |
|----------------------|--------|
| plasticpollution     | 45     |
| plasticfree          | 38     |
| savetheplanet        | 21     |
| zerowaste            | 21     |
| plasticpollutes      | 19     |
| beachcleanup         | 17     |
| plasticfreeoceans    | 16     |
| ocean                | 15     |
| plastic              | 15     |
| plasticwaste         | 15     |
| pollution            | 14     |
| NoPlastic            | 13     |
| saynotoplastic       | 13     |
| beachlife            | 12     |
| zerowasteliving      | 12     |
| environment          | 11     |
| plasticfreeliving    | 11     |
| plasticsoup          | 10     |
| saveourseas          | 10     |
| sustainability       | 10     |
| sustainableliving    | 10     |
| beatplasticpollution | 9      |
| ecofriendly          | 9      |
| plasticsucks         | 9      |
| recycle              | 9      |
| singleuseplastic     | 9      |
| eilat                | 8      |
| oceanconservation    | 8      |
| plasticfreeplanet    | 8      |
| reducereuserecycle   | 8      |

However, another strategy that is more likely practiced is crowdsourcing. In total, 68 % of the organizations take advantage of content posted by the community. They share images and videos on their accounts and tag the creator underneath the post. The function of tagging is not only used to repost content but also to connect directly with other accounts. 70 % tagged under the posts of the sample data but only 11 % tagged the BFFP movement in addition to the hashtag. This might occur out of the circumstance that the #breakfreefromplastic was already employed to link to the movement which makes the tag itself redundant.

Hashtags, on the other side, are the most common function on Instagram as 92 % put them in their posts. It is noticeable that there are hashtags that are more popular than others. Seven out of the top 30 hashtags are directly addressing the ocean whereas 14 involve plastic. They are mainly focusing on sustainability and protection of the environment which illustrates that these organizations target the same kinds of communities and reach out to like-minded people. At

the same time, they communicate the same goals and interests. To sum up, there is a strong interest from organizations in creating a community on Instagram that follows related accounts and searches for certain hashtags. Thus, they practice Instagram strategies such as storytelling and crowdsourcing to transmit their message.

### 5.1.2 Risk Communication Strategies

Besides Instagram's functions and communication strategies, organizations create risk communication strategies to reach their goals. As ocean plastics are a well-known risk that has already been existing for decades. It has reached the stage of resolution and therefore requires certain strategies based on models like the CERC model to persuade the public.

The main strategy found in the sample data is to encourage users to engage with the risk of ocean plastics by directly or indirectly inviting them into the discussion. This happens in the description text through invitations to clean-ups or asking the users to do something such as buying reusable products instead of plastic ones.

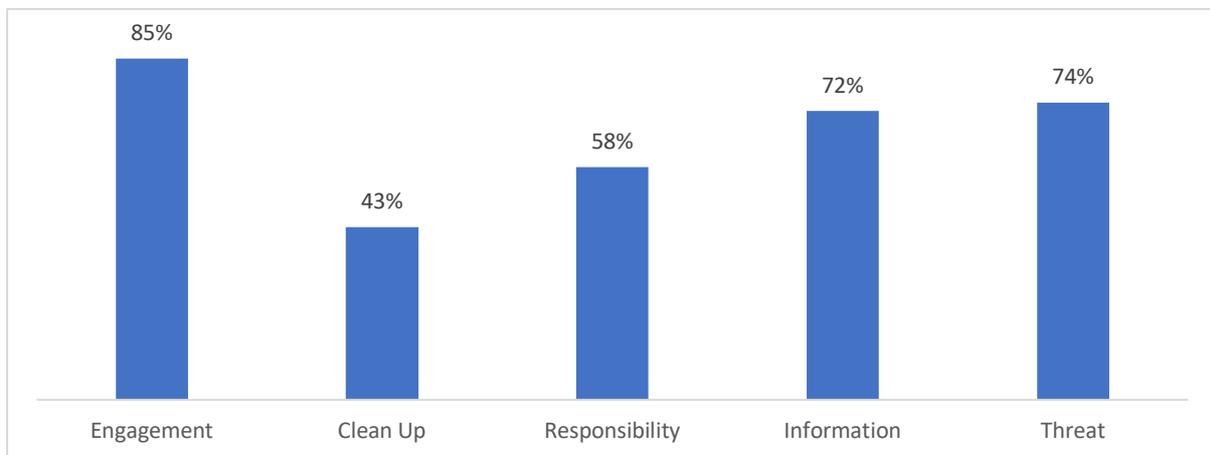


Figure 9 Results - Risk Communication Strategies

Clean-up projects are the topic of 43 % of the collected posts mostly displayed in images and videos that show the volunteers with their findings (figure 10). Another major strategy is to supply information about plastic pollution including numbers of the damage and its impact, statistics from studies, as well as background information. Furthermore, the organizations talk about responsibility. 58 % of the provided information involves companies and their plastic production, governments that should take responsibility, or consumer responsibility.

Therefore, some posts refer to the Brand Audit 2020 a study published by the BFFP founders that blame particular companies like Coca-Cola or Nestle for their plastic production. These companies are often presented visually in the posts (figure 10).

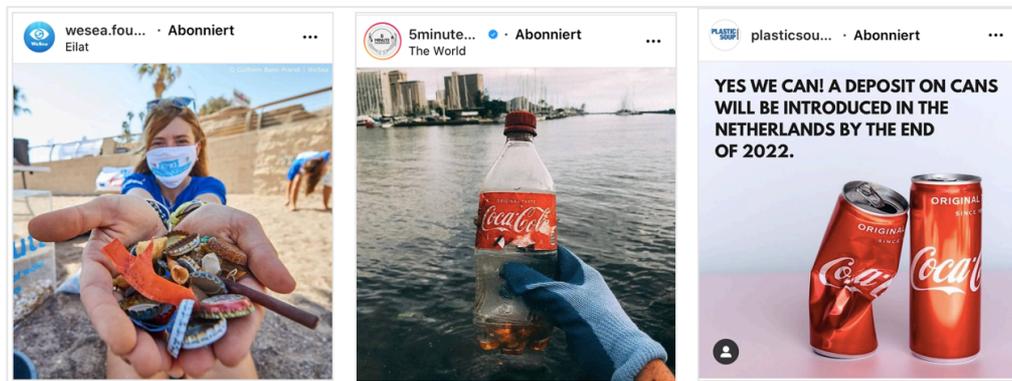


Figure 10 Examples - Risk Communication Strategy (Instagram, 2021d)

Nonetheless, in 74 % of the posts plastic pollution is represented as a dangerous threat that followers should fear and fight against. From 100 posts 62 contained information combined with the threat of ocean plastics. This illustrates the connection between providing information and persuading users on an emotional level.

Every post can be linked to at least one risk communication strategy which demonstrates that organizations communicate risks on Instagram by applying certain campaigns.

### 5.1.3 Visual Representation

As a platform that focuses on visuals, it is important to research how ocean plastics as a risk is displayed on Instagram. The collected posts consist of 89 images and eleven videos that mainly show plastics. Likewise, the ocean is a popular motive for pictures and the combination of ocean and plastics appears in 45 cases out of 100.

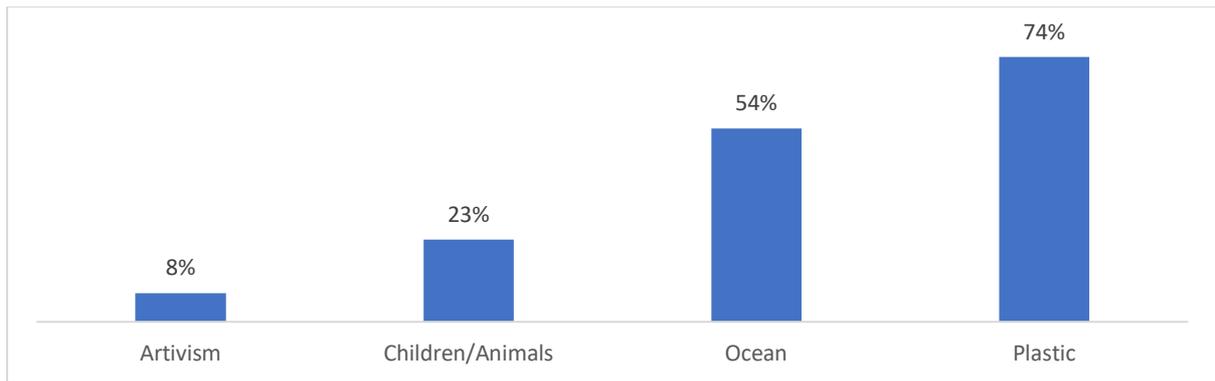


Figure 11 Results - Visual Representation

As demonstrated in figure 12 animals or children can be part of the content as well. In most of these posts, there are animals wrapped or captured in plastic waste which is again pointing at the threat of ocean plastics. The minority of visual representation is activism. The combination of art and plastic waste is shared via crowdsourcing, but it is not a communication strategy created by the organizations themselves.

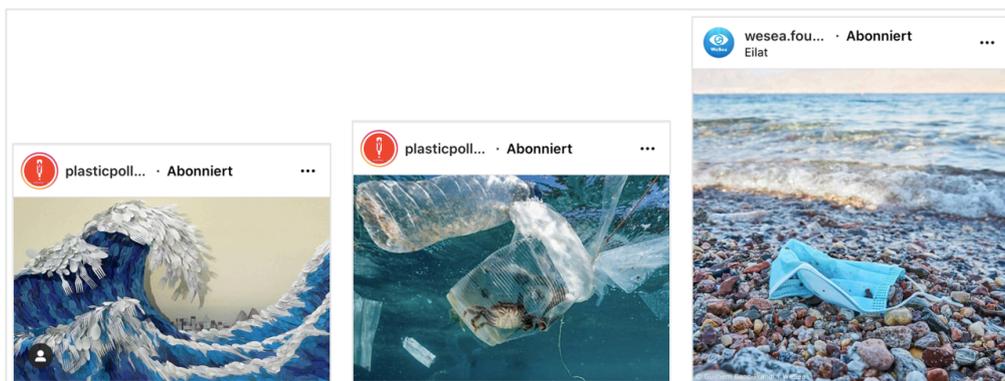


Figure 12 Examples - Visual Representation (Instagram, 2021e)

## 5.2 Discursive Practice - Interviews

Interviews with experts, in this case, NGOs and NPOs, offer an external impact on the research in which interviewees can express their opinion on the matter (Flick, 1991). It is another qualitative method to gather data that will relate to the outcome from the content analysis. The interview partners are experts in the field of risk communication of ocean plastics on Instagram and are therefore representatives for the community (Mayring, 2015). From 25 organizations that are part of this research, five accepted an interview. The representatives

came from different organizations: Ocean Clean Up Miami, One Earth One Ocean, Plastic Soup Foundation, Plastic Free Ibiza, and Gili Eco Trust.

*Table 5 List of interviewees*

|    | <b>Position</b>            | <b>Organization</b>     |
|----|----------------------------|-------------------------|
| I1 | Social Media Management    | One Earth One Ocean     |
| I2 | Communications Manager     | Plastic Soup Foundation |
| I3 | Marketing & Communications | Gili Eco Trust          |
| I4 | Coordinator                | Plastic Free Ibiza      |
| I5 | Founder                    | Clean Miami Beach       |

Due to the COVID19 pandemic still has a strong impact on daily life, the interviews were arranged via email and Zoom. According to Lupton (2020, p. 6), interviews have certain advantages. They allow open answers of the interviewee and provide relevant results from individuals with specific expertise.

Since the interviews were mainly arranged via email, they had a structured nature of three questions. These questions are based on the categories from the content analysis. Hence, they focus on Instagram strategies, risk communication strategies, and visual representation. Nevertheless, there was an emphasis on the #breakfreefromplastic movement to understand how the organization relates to the movement.

To be able to connect the data from the content analysis with the interviews, the information of the interviews will be analyzed in correspondence to the categories of the content analysis and went through the same selection of criteria. The findings of both analyzes will take place in the social practice which is the final step of the CDA.

### 6.2.1 Instagram Strategy

One of the main findings from the interviews is that all the participants agreed that social media is important to connect with people and to create networks as well as communities. Thus, I1, I2, I3, and I5 create strategies for their content that inform about plastic pollution and add hashtags or tags to increase the reach of their posts and awareness of the issue. I4 mentioned that they only share scientific information and try to connect with other NGOs. Additionally, I3 points out that Instagram is helping her to share spontaneous information, for example, when there is a huge amount of trash at the beach that needs to be cleaned.

Another strategy was discussed by I5 namely influencers. According to I5 the reason why it is not that common to see influencers working for NGOs or NPOs is that they often do not support the same values as the organization: “We had this one really big influencer that wanted to celebrate her 1 million followers with us. So, she came to us and helped us for one day and said that she will never use plastic straws again and one week later she posted in her story pictures of cocktails with plastic straws in them. That is not really what we stand for.” Further I5 argued that most of them want to get paid which is hard for small organizations with low budgets.

### 5.2.2 Risk Communication Strategies

Concerning risk communication strategies there is one theme which is positivity. Four of the interviewees emphasized that they try to avoid negativity by creating encouraging and engaging content. I1, I2, I3, and I5 aim to motivate their community by telling them that they are not alone and can be part of the greater good by joining the movement. Further, I1, I3, and I5 organize clean-up events via Instagram whereas I2 and I4 more focus on exchanging scientific information and connect with other networks. I2 mentions that it is important to prove recent studies to counteract false news. I3 supports the fact that Instagram can be utilized to educate people but I5 argues that education must be fun and easy to understand, otherwise users reject it. Besides that, I1 operationalizes Instagram to present people within the organization that is responsible for their projects. I3, on the other side, needs Instagram to collect donations for their projects. Even though the organizations follow different goals they all approved that social media increases their impact and empowers them to fight against plastic pollution.

Especially through movements like #breakfreefromplastic they represent solidarity and share expertise to tackle the problem at its source (I2 & I5). According to I3, the #breakfreefromplastic creates power by demonstrating unity as, referring to I4 and I2, it works as an umbrella under which individuals and organizations are coordinated. I1 and I2 emphasized that movements on social media have a high impact as they increase awareness beyond national boundaries. Moreover, I3 stated that eco-friendly movements are trending on social media in general. This does not only help the movement itself but also the organizations that take part in it as they receive more attention (I1).

### 5.2.3 Visual Representation

Only two out of five interviewees mentioned visual representation in particular. However, I1 and I5 agreed that visual language is important so that the users can understand the messages quickly and easily. I1 adds authenticity as one of the main criteria to reach their community.

## 5.3 Social Practice – Ocean Plastics

The third part of the critical discourse analysis is the dimension of social practice in which the textual and the discursive practices are combined to understand the connections or processes between them within society. The society that this research is situated in is spread all over the world concerning activists and organizations but also individuals that have an interest in sustainability and protecting nature. The two main discourses discovered by the previous steps of the CDA are creating communities that engage in this issue and increasing awareness by sharing information.

The results of both analyzes explain why communities are important for the discourse of ocean plastics on Instagram. Organizations try to reach for new followers by using hashtags or tagging each other. Besides, by applying the #breakfreefromplastic they connect themselves to this specific network. The interviews demonstrated that these organizations want to support this movement to express unity and power. In other words, the organizations employ community-building strategies like crowdsourcing to grow with the aim of gaining power. They want to benefit from this power and stop plastic pollution at its source namely to put pressure on industries and governments.

Likewise, organizations want to increase awareness in a global society. By convincing individuals to change their behavior, for example, taking part in clean-up projects or stop buying plastic products, they tackle the risk from a different angle. Providing information and encouraging people to take part in the movement are the risk communication strategies they use to persuade the public. However, there is a contradiction between the results. The content analysis showed that the risk of ocean plastics is often described as a threat whereas the interviews concluded that organizations try to be positive about the risk. This dilemma is hard to overcome as ocean plastics are dangerous and bad while Instagram is a platform where people like to see pretty pictures rather than plastic trash.

Both analyzes proofed that Instagram became an important tool for communicating the risk of ocean plastic. Thus, they serve two major discourses namely power relations between social media communities and society as well as education about the risk itself.

## 6 Discussion

By carrying out the CDA and additional methods namely content analysis and interviews results were found that give evidence to certain phenomena concerning risk communication about ocean plastics on Instagram. Further, the research provided answers to the previously asked sub-questions that support the overall research question. Therefore, the CDA gave information about the discourse on different social levels.

The first SQ dealt with Instagram's affordances and how they can be used to communicate risks. Based on Lundgren's (2018) theories on consensus communication a successful risk communication process can only be achieved through exchanges of knowledge, interactions with participants, and negotiations with the public until they find a common ground to agree on. This research proofed that organizations operationalize Instagram for this exact purpose. They want to create a dialogue between organizations and users to collaborate on solutions. Further, they create communities to strengthen their network to influence industries and governments. Besides, social media is suitable for long-term communication goals which match the procedure of consensus communication (Lundgren, 2018). Besides the technical affordances of connecting namely tagging or hashtags, Instagram offers its own communication strategies that organizations benefit from. Storytelling, for example, is practiced by every organization that took part in this study. Nevertheless, other Instagram strategies are used to spread messages such as crowdsourcing. By spreading their messages, they follow the Social Network Contagion Approach that described the influence of social media in their daily lives (Lundgren, 2018). Anderson (2014) already argued that social media became a major part of the distribution process for organizations. They try to reach individuals to convince them to change their behavior (micro-level). At the same time, they build communities involving individuals and other organizations that are often connected to movements like #breakfreefromplastic to gain power (macro-level).

Likewise, this research focused on risk communication strategies based on the CERC model from Reynold and Seeger (2005). This is why SQ2 questions the connection between risk communication and Instagram. Therefore, the connection had to be analyzed to understand what organizations publish on Instagram concerning ocean plastics. The CDA demonstrated

that the sample posts fulfilled at least one of the suggested strategies from the CERC model. However, the analysis also discovered that the risk of ocean plastics is often represented as a threat. This can be related to the problem-solution approach mentioned by Witte et al. (2001) that is often referred to as manipulation. Nevertheless, the CERC model has its limitations as risks can change and differ from each other (Seeger, 2002). Visual representation of the risk itself was one of the most popular chosen methods to increase awareness. Likewise, the CERC model suggests promoting clean-up projects which is also often represented by organizations. By sharing content in form of crowdsourcing organizations increase the open discussion about ocean plastics and clarify responsibilities. It can be said that organizations follow closely recommendations for the resolution process based on the CERC model.

Usually, the organizations choose a combination of Instagram and risk communication strategies. For example, storytelling provides information that increases awareness as users feel emotionally connected with the story (Sielaff,2020). Another possibility is to increase engagement by tagging other accounts or insert hashtags to promote clean-up projects. Crowdsourcing serves to build stronger communities and organizations can benefit from public intelligence (Kreutzer, 2018). This form of interaction distinguishes Instagram from other platforms such as Facebook and Twitter as storytelling and crowdsourcing are highly visual strategies. Even though, networking platforms can also offer file-sharing functions, it is Instagram's main affordance which is why users communicate via visuals and thereby emotions. Hence, the combination of both strategies offers organizations new possibilities to transmit their messages by focusing mainly on images, graphics, or videos.

The Plastic Soup Foundation argued in the interview that Instagram changed in the past years from an entertainment platform to a news source. Other participants stated that they use Instagram to share scientific studies. Therefore, the message is supported by visual representations mainly displaying the ocean and plastic. On the contrary, fake news was mentioned in the interviews. It is a lot of work for organizations to work against false information once it spreads all over social media. Further, the representative from One Earth and One Ocean revealed that hate speech and threats can be part of Instagram as well. However, most of the interviewees argued that one of the main advantages of social media is that they can see their impact as users send them feedback, like and share their content, or tag them. Moreover, they observe more activism apart from Instagram as more people attend clean-ups, become an active member of the organization, or donate money.

By increasing their reach through hashtags and tagging mentioning the BFFP movement organizations gain power. This is one of the answers to SQ3 but there is more to it. The CDA provided results that demonstrate that there is a relationship between power and social

movements (Albert et al., 2013). Even though, power relations were not the focus of this research the influence of #breakfreefromplastic on the community was one of the strongest outcomes. Pickard (2019) already mentioned that social media campaigns are a method to strengthen social movements to achieve social change. However, the answers from the interviews were agreeing on the increasing power through supporting #breakfreefromplastic on Instagram. As a global risk ocean plastic involves global society which is why social movements like #breakfromplastic have such a big audience and relevance on social media. This reach and power are used to pressure industries and governments to stop plastic production and change consumption systems worldwide (meso-level).

To conclude the discussion, it can be said that Instagram strongly shapes risk communication which was proved in this thesis and thereby refers to the main research question. The content analysis not only showed that organizations use risk communication theories on Instagram but also benefit from the platform's technical features. The relevance was also revealed by the interviews that concluded in unanimous results concerning the community-building aspects of the platform especially through movements like BFFP. The benefit of communities appeared more important than visual representation which was an unexpected result. However, the advantage of global networks is to show unity and power from which smaller organizations worldwide can profit. This research discovered several aspects of how Instagram as a digital medium changed risk communication. It provides several answers to the main research question and how Instagram shapes risk communication by using the #breakfreefromplastic.

## 7 Conclusion

As Instagram has been neglected by former risk communication research on social media, this thesis especially focused on this platform. Throughout the research previous literature on risk communication theories and the influence of social media was reviewed. The results of this evaluation presented several criteria for risk communication strategies and Instagram strategies. These criteria were analyzed within sample data collected on Instagram based on the environmental movement #breakfreefromplastic which has a current relevance on Instagram. The study was carried out by an affordance analysis and a critical discourse analysis. The CDA was split into three parts as recommended by Fairclough (1992). Inside the first section, the collected data was analyzed by a content analysis that included a quantitative approach within qualitative research. The main finding was that the posts contained criteria from both strategies of risk communication and Instagram. The research

framework was adapted to the interviews which represented the discursive part of the CDA. The participants agreed on the advantages of Instagram and its importance for the #breakfreefromplastic movement. However, there were contradictions between the collected data and the interview as the interviewees emphasized positivity whereas most of the posts contained threatening messages. The outcome of both results was put in the overall discourse of ocean plastic pollution during the social practice. By embedding the research results into context two major discourses became evident. One of them was the relationship between power and social movements. The discussion indicated that the research of power relations exceeds the scope of this thesis. The findings of the research were limited to organizations that use #breakfreefromplastic to discuss ocean plastics whereas the hashtag also deals with plastic pollution in general. Further, the chosen methods, especially the interviews, provided insights into the discourse around Instagram but focused only on environmental organizations that share content but not on other stakeholders or users. Nonetheless, the research gave valid results that Instagram has a major influence on increasing awareness, sharing knowledge, and educating society about ocean plastic. By reflecting on previous research and carrying out several analyzes this thesis aimed to answer the research question: *How does Instagram shape risk communication concerning ocean plastics by making use of #breakfreefromplastic?* The discussion demonstrated that Instagram shapes not only communication strategies of environmental organizations but also provides a platform to create networks that lead to increasing power of the movement and the organizations themselves.

This thesis came up with questions about risk communication theories and Instagram which, at the same time, revealed the demand for continuing research. For example, the role of visual representation and its impact on users. This angle focuses more on social studies and therefore can investigate this topic from another perspective. This could also include the limitations of Instagram that have not been researched within this thesis but deserve more attention in the study of risk communication and social movements. Further potential research belonging to citizen science approaches like Syberg et al. (2018), could focus more on persuasion of organizations that try to reach social change by influencing the users. Another possibility is to concentrate more on network aspects and include Castells' (2009) theories on network societies that also lead to discussions of power relations.

To sum up, Instagram influenced risk communication on different social levels. It provides a platform on which organizations can constantly interact with all kinds of stakeholders and become part of global movements to increase their reach and power. At the same time, this power becomes crucial when it comes to discussions of social, governmental, and industrial change.

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## Statutory Declaration

I herewith formally declare that I have written the submitted dissertation independently. I did not use any outside support except for the quoted literature and other sources mentioned in the paper.

I clearly marked and separately listed all of the literature and all of the other sources which I employed when producing this academic work, either literally or in content.

I am aware that the violation of this regulation will lead to failure of the thesis.

Imogen Kuetgens

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Student's name



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Student's signature

Den Haag, 12<sup>th</sup> of June 2021

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City, date











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|--------------------------------|------------|---|-------|-------|----|---|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|                                |            | #TurtleTuesday reminder: baby steps count, but to save our marine wildlife, we must do more.<br><br>#5 out of 7 sea turtle species in the world can be found in the Philippines. Unfortunately, all of them are already endangered and threatened with extinction. Besides ingesting plastics, sea turtles now have fewer nesting and hatching grounds since our beaches are already heavily polluted.<br><br>We can save these turtles by helping end plastic pollution in our ocean. It is high time that we stop plastic pollution at the source. Demand our policy makers to go #ZeroSingleandReusablePlastic by calling for the ban on single-use plastics. Join our email blast in the link in our bio.<br><br>Julian Wisemann  | Image | 266   |    | #toxicplastic #climatecrisis #climateaction #corporateresponsibility #plasticpollution #plasticfree #environmentaljustice #socialjustice #indonesia #usaspacific #asia #environmentalactivism #plasticban #plasticfree  | https://www.instagram.com/p/CM6f90nE/    | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 |   |   |
| Oceania PH                     | 16.03.2021 | LOOK @zmrfr of @breakfreefromplastic member. @didkip calls out corporations for their plastic waste, that are mostly IMPOSSIBLE to manage and end up burdening coastal communities.<br><br>Doesn't really matter where this is because it could be anywhere. It is already everywhere.<br><br>This is a coastline that is cleaned every day. Can you imagine what other coastlines, among Indonesia's 17,000 islands, look like?<br><br>Can you imagine telling coastal communities to recycle? When the machine or value to recycle sachets and cap lids DOESN'T EXIST?<br><br>The Ministry of Environment (in Indonesia) has said plastic bags, straws, cutlery and sachets will be banned nationwide by 2030. For shame's sake, companies, just do it sooner. I can't believe you need a regulation to tell you what's the right thing to do.<br><br>SHARE this post and FOLLOW @didkip to show your support 🙌   | Image | 1,043 | 38 | #biza #revisa #plasticzero #zerowaste #plasticfree #plasticfreebiza #stopplastic #stopplasticpollution #plasticpollution #breakfreefromplastic #plasticfreebalance  | https://www.instagram.com/p/CM45mM8BQJ5/ | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 |   |
| Break Free From Plastic        | 16.03.2021 | Hoy es el día del Consumo Responsable, y la verdad, aunque vayamos avanzando poco a poco, aún estamos lejos de poder celebrarlo.<br><br>Cada vez somos más los que luchamos por un mundo más sostenible, en embargo, siguen existiendo islas de plásticos en los océanos, nuestros mares están plagados de residuos y cuando miramos al suelo no paramos de encontrar basura por todas partes.<br><br>¿Cómo puedes consumir de manera más responsable? Aquí van algunas ideas:<br><br>🛒 Compra local. Es mucho más ecológico comprar productos que se ha producido de forma cercana, que comprar un producto que viene de muy muy lejos.<br><br>Seguro que @biza produce te puede ayudar a encontrar productos de consumo local y sostenible. ¡Echale un vistazo!<br><br>📝 Organiza tu compra. Si planificas qué necesitas es más "fácil" comprar cosas que realmente necesitas".<br><br>♻️ Reutiliza y reduce. Piensa en la de vida útil de las cosas que ya tienes y aprende a rechazar las que supongan un gasto de recursos.<br><br>👉 En nuestras manos está cambiar la imagen de nuestras playas.<br><br>.....<br><br>Today is the day of Responsible Consumption, and the truth, although we are progressing little by little, we are still far from being able to celebrate it.<br><br>Onde o "lao" ganha vida e saiga a alma!!!<br><br>🛒 📝 ♻️ 👉 | Image | 98    | 11 | #desengarrafandomentos #maresias #educacaoescolica #surf #stopplastic #educacaoescolica #naturlovers #beachlife #pranchadepastico #lovewhereyoulive #saveetheplanet #sustentabilidade #saveearth #madefofocean #surfboard #childrenpower #mar.docula #perforia #wearallconnected #surfoadma #ckeanocean #coronalm #breakfreefromplastic #northshorpaulista #children #ecowarrior #surplanetourhome#stabitube #enscricançãas | https://www.instagram.com/p/CM45v0VLG6s/ | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 |   |
| Plastic Free Ibiza             | 16.03.2021 | Hoy es el día del Consumo Responsable, y la verdad, aunque vayamos avanzando poco a poco, aún estamos lejos de poder celebrarlo.<br><br>Cada vez somos más los que luchamos por un mundo más sostenible, en embargo, siguen existiendo islas de plásticos en los océanos, nuestros mares están plagados de residuos y cuando miramos al suelo no paramos de encontrar basura por todas partes.<br><br>¿Cómo puedes consumir de manera más responsable? Aquí van algunas ideas:<br><br>🛒 Compra local. Es mucho más ecológico comprar productos que se ha producido de forma cercana, que comprar un producto que viene de muy muy lejos.<br><br>Seguro que @biza produce te puede ayudar a encontrar productos de consumo local y sostenible. ¡Echale un vistazo!<br><br>📝 Organiza tu compra. Si planificas qué necesitas es más "fácil" comprar cosas que realmente necesitas".<br><br>♻️ Reutiliza y reduce. Piensa en la de vida útil de las cosas que ya tienes y aprende a rechazar las que supongan un gasto de recursos.<br><br>👉 En nuestras manos está cambiar la imagen de nuestras playas.<br><br>.....<br><br>Today is the day of Responsible Consumption, and the truth, although we are progressing little by little, we are still far from being able to celebrate it.<br><br>Onde o "lao" ganha vida e saiga a alma!!!<br><br>🛒 📝 ♻️ 👉 | Image | 111   | 6  | #desengarrafandomentos #maresias #educacaoescolica #surf #stopplastic #educacaoescolica #naturlovers #beachlife #pranchadepastico #lovewhereyoulive #saveetheplanet #sustentabilidade #saveearth #madefofocean #surfboard #childrenpower #mar.docula #perforia #wearallconnected #surfoadma #ckeanocean #coronalm #breakfreefromplastic #northshorpaulista #children #ecowarrior #surplanetourhome#stabitube #enscricançãas | https://www.instagram.com/p/CM45BkU8p5U/ | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Projeto Desengarrafando Mentes | 15.03.2021 | Transformar com as próprias mãos sempre foi tema por aqui!!!<br><br>Seja você a mudança que espera do mundo!!!<br><br>🛒 📝 ♻️ 👉  | Image | 53    | 1  | #desengarrafandomentos #maresias #educacaoescolica #surf #stopplastic #educacaoescolica #naturlovers #beachlife #pranchadepastico #lovewhereyoulive #saveetheplanet #sustentabilidade #saveearth #madefofocean #surfboard #childrenpower #mar.docula #perforia #wearallconnected #surfoadma #ckeanocean #coronalm #breakfreefromplastic #northshorpaulista #children #ecowarrior #surplanetourhome#stabitube #enscricançãas | https://www.instagram.com/p/CL0l-Belaf/  | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Projeto Desengarrafando Mentes | 23.02.2021 | 2 gerações separadas por décadas e unidas pelo mesmo propósito, transformar com as próprias mãos!!!<br><br>É nisso que acreditamos, faça você mesmo!!!<br><br>🛒 📝 ♻️ 👉  | Image | 72    | 8  | #desengarrafandomentos #maresias #educacaoescolica #surf #stopplastic #educacaoescolica #naturlovers #beachlife #pranchadepastico #lovewhereyoulive #saveetheplanet #sustentabilidade #saveearth #madefofocean #surfboard #childrenpower #mar.docula #perforia #wearallconnected #surfoadma #ckeanocean #coronalm #breakfreefromplastic #northshorpaulista #children #ecowarrior #surplanetourhome#stabitube #enscricançãas | https://www.instagram.com/p/CKGfPY1BtNf/ | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Projeto Desengarrafando Mentes | 29.01.2021 | Da série "Humanos e seus estranhos hábitos..." 🛒 📝 ♻️ 👉   | Image | 77    | 4  | #desengarrafandomentos #maresias #educacaoescolica #surf #stopplastic #educacaoescolica #naturlovers #beachlife #pranchadepastico #lovewhereyoulive #saveetheplanet #sustentabilidade #saveearth #madefofocean #surfboard #childrenpower #mar.docula #perforia #wearallconnected #surfoadma #ckeanocean #coronalm #breakfreefromplastic #northshorpaulista #children #ecowarrior #surplanetourhome#stabitube #enscricançãas | https://www.instagram.com/p/CKYUqYD8207/ | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Projeto Desengarrafando Mentes | 14.12.2020 | Transformar com as próprias mãos sempre foi tema por aqui!!!<br><br>Seja você a mudança que espera do mundo!!!<br><br>🛒 📝 ♻️ 👉  | Image | 64    |    | #desengarrafandomentos #maresias #educacaoescolica #surf #stopplastic #educacaoescolica #naturlovers #beachlife #pranchadepastico #lovewhereyoulive #saveetheplanet #sustentabilidade #saveearth #madefofocean #surfboard #childrenpower #mar.docula #perforia #wearallconnected #surfoadma #ckeanocean #coronalm #breakfreefromplastic #northshorpaulista #children #ecowarrior #surplanetourhome#stabitube #enscricançãas | https://www.instagram.com/p/CYKXOC8Dq/   | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Projeto Desengarrafando Mentes | 23.01.2021 | Saudades gigantes dessa energia aglomerativa!!!<br><br>🛒 📝 ♻️ 👉   | Image | 104   | 3  | #desengarrafandomentos #maresias #educacaoescolica #surf #stopplastic #educacaoescolica #naturlovers #beachlife #pranchadepastico #lovewhereyoulive #saveetheplanet #sustentabilidade #saveearth #madefofocean #surfboard #childrenpower #mar.docula #perforia #wearallconnected #surfoadma #ckeanocean #breakfreefromplastic #northshorpaulista #children #ecowarrior #surplanetourhome#stabitube #enscricançãas           | https://www.instagram.com/p/CjDscGBTm/   | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Projeto Desengarrafando Mentes | 08.12.2020 | Humanos e seus estranhos hábitos... 🛒 📝 ♻️ 👉  | Image | 65    | 2  | #desengarrafandomentos #maresias #educacaoescolica #surf #stopplastic #educacaoescolica #naturlovers #beachlife #pranchadepastico #lovewhereyoulive #saveetheplanet #sustentabilidade #saveearth #madefofocean #surfboard #childrenpower #mar.docula #perforia #wearallconnected #surfoadma #ckeanocean #breakfreefromplastic #northshorpaulista #children #ecowarrior #surplanetourhome#stabitube #enscricançãas           | https://www.instagram.com/p/CH7ALHHRJ5/  | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Projeto Desengarrafando Mentes | 23.11.2020 | Humanos e seus estranhos hábitos... 🛒 📝 ♻️ 👉  | Image | 65    | 2  | #desengarrafandomentos #maresias #educacaoescolica #surf #stopplastic #educacaoescolica #naturlovers #beachlife #pranchadepastico #lovewhereyoulive #saveetheplanet #sustentabilidade #saveearth #madefofocean #surfboard #childrenpower #mar.docula #perforia #wearallconnected #surfoadma #ckeanocean #breakfreefromplastic #northshorpaulista #children #ecowarrior #surplanetourhome#stabitube #enscricançãas           | https://www.instagram.com/p/CH7ALHHRJ5/  | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |





|              |            |  |       |    |   |   |  |   |    |    |    |    |     |   |    |    |    |   |    |    |    |    |    |
|--------------|------------|--|-------|----|---|---|--|---|----|----|----|----|-----|---|----|----|----|---|----|----|----|----|----|
| onearthocean | 25.02.2021 | <p>The oceans give us life, we give them plastic 🌊</p> <p>What's one thing you'll do to protect the oceans in 2021?</p> <p>🇮🇩 Guanabara Bay Rio</p> <p>Die Ozeane geben uns Leben, wir geben ihnen Plastik 🌊</p> <p>Was ist eine Sache, die du 2021 tun wirst, um die Ozeane zu schützen?</p>  | image | 88 | 1 | <p>#ocean #neartheocean #oceanplastic #plasticpollution #plasticfree #zerowaste #environment #ecofriendly #pollution #beetherechange #plasticsucks #ocean #sustainability #saveplanet #recycle #plasticfreeking #breakfreefromplastic #ocean #clean #ecofriendlyproducts #sustainableliving #nature #plasticfreeforthesea #plasticfreeoceans #plasticocean #ocean #oceanreinigung</p> | https://www.instagram.com/p/CLuaBMHujf/  | 0 | 1  | 1  | 1  | 1  | 0   | 1 | 1  | 1  | 0  | 0 | 1  | 1  | 0  | 1  |    |
| onearthocean | 02.12.2020 | <p>Brand new 🌟 The #Seelhamsters optimized conveyor belt!</p> <p>The industrial metropolis Bekasi has around 3 million inhabitants and is located in one of the areas with the highest environmental pollution in Indonesia. We can't wait for our new Seelhamster to get started there very soon!</p> <p>P.S.: Keep your fingers crossed for tomorrow 🌟, because the ceremony for the German Sustainability Award will take place on December 3rd &amp; 4th! We are really excited 🌟🌟🌟</p> <p>Brand neu 🌟 der Seelhamster erstmals mit einem neumodernen Förderband!</p> <p>Die Industriemetropole Bekasi hat rund 3 Mio Einwohner und liegt in einer der Gegenden mit der höchsten Umweltverschmutzung Indonesiens. Unser Seelhamster kommt dort ganz bald zum Einsatz!</p> <p>P.S.: Morgen heißt es Daumen drücken 🌟, denn am 03. &amp; 04.12. findet die Preisverleihung vom Deutschen Nachhaltigkeitspreis statt! Wir sind schon ganz aufgeregt 🌟🌟🌟</p> | image | 95 | 1 | <p>#ocean #neartheocean #drip13 #nachhaltigkeitspreis #sustainability #cleanup #oceancleanup #plasticpollution #breakfreefromplastic #plasticfree #plasticfreeforthesea #plasticpollution #plasticfree #breakfreefromplastic #beetherechange #ocean #rivercleanup #plasticfreeoceans #sewaste #marinelifelife #environment #plasticsucks #saveplanet #ocean #plastic</p>              | https://www.instagram.com/p/CI7pIS-n8Gf/ | 0 | 0  | 0  | 1  | 1  | 0   | 0 | 1  | 0  | 0  | 1 | 0  | 1  | 1  | 1  | 1  |
|              |            |  |       |    |   |   |  |   | 11 | 70 | 68 | 92 | 100 | 1 | 74 | 54 | 23 | 8 | 72 | 74 | 85 | 43 | 58 |

## Appendix II – Interviews

Dear Sir or Madam,

My name is Imogen Kuetgens and I am studying New Media & Digital Culture at Utrecht University. Currently, I am writing my master thesis that deals with the influence of Instagram on communicating the risk of ocean plastics by focussing on organizations that follow the #breakfreefromplastic movement.

To research this topic, I am carrying out a critical discourse analysis on Instagram posts. Based on individually selected criteria, your organization takes part in my study. This is the reason why I would like to ask you some questions to make my research more valuable.

The foundation of the following questions builds up on risk communication theories and Instagram strategies. By answering them, I would like to get an impression of how you position Instagram in your communication strategy and why it is or is not important for transmitting your message to the community.

1. Do you follow certain guidelines when communicating about the risk of ocean plastics on social media?
2. Do you think it makes a difference to support movements like #breakfreefromplastic on social media?
3. How do you assess the influence of Instagram on your communication strategies?

You can answer the questions via email, Zoom, or phone until the 11th of April. I appreciate your interest in supporting my thesis and therefore I would like to share my results with you. Please let me know if you would like to receive a summary at the end of the research process.

Thank you for taking the time to answer the questions and if you want a call via phone or Zoom, I am looking forward to organizing a meeting.

I wish you and your organization great success with stopping plastic pollution and cleaning our oceans!

Kind regards,

Imogen Kuetgens  
 Email: [i.m.kuetgens@students.uu.nl](mailto:i.m.kuetgens@students.uu.nl)  
 Phone: +49 15152532309

| Category   | Answer  | Interviewee  |    |
|--|---|--|----|
| Instagram Strategy   | Social media is important to get attention.   | I1   |    |
|  | Certain topic for certain target groups.  | I1   |    |
|  | Interaction with the community  | I1   |    |
|  | Writing messages, getting tagged, and receiving feedback.   | I1   |    |
|  | Create dynamic content and creates awareness  | I2   |    |
|  | Show people in their daily lives to make a difference   | I2   |    |
|  | Instagram changed towards a news source   | I2   |    |
|  | Creating more informative and shareable posts   | I2   |    |
|  | More content about plastic pollution  | I3   |    |
|  | More reach beyond the Gili Islands.   | I3   |    |
|  | Networking is important to activate people.   | I4   |    |
|  | I use hashtags to increase our community and to reach a wider audience  | I5   |    |
|  | Instagram helped to build up a community  | I5   |    |
|  | Instagram makes us stronger and increases our impact  | I5   |    |
|  | Influencers are good to gain some reach but often they are not authentic  | I5   |    |
|  | “We had this one really big influencer that wanted to celebrate her 1 million followers with us. So she came to us and helped us for one day and said that she will never use plastic straws again and one week later she posted in her story pictures of cocktails with plastic straws in them. That is not really what we stand for.” | I5   |    |
|  | Risk Communication Strategy   | Positivity and peace   | I1 |
|  |   | Everyone can make a difference   | I1 |
|  |   | Present the people in the organization that are responsible            | I1 |
|  |   | Share content that raise awareness and is related to plastic pollution | I1 |
| Organizing clean ups through Instagram.                                    |   | I1   |    |
| Seeing the impact of the work more.  |   | I1   |    |
| Use information from recent studies and debunk myths, exposing false news. |   | I2   |    |
| Science is very important  |   | I2   |    |
| Trying to stay positive  |   | I2   |    |
| Active participation builds up communities                                 |   | I2   |    |
| Make people feel part of the solution and inspire them.                    |   | I2   |    |
| Local communities and facts about them                                     |   | I3   |    |
| Spontaneous information whenever a risk occurs                             |   | I3   |    |
| Showing positivity and do not blame  |   | I3   |    |
| Receiving donations via Instagram to help local businesses                 |   | I3   |    |
| Reaching the local community to attend clean ups and tree-planting events. |   | I3   |    |
| Educating people to influence them to make better choices                  |   | I3   |    |
| Empowerment through the community.   |   | I3   |    |
| Connecting studies of NGOs   |   | I4   |    |
| Sharing scientific data.   |   | I4   |    |
| Positivity   |   | I5   |    |
| Encouraging to take part into movements                                    |   | I5   |    |
| Information to educate people.   |   | I5   |    |
| Break Free From Plastic  |   | I5   |    |
| Supporting it on Social Media is important to increase awareness.          |   | I5   |    |
| Reach more people also for their own organization.                         |   | I5   |    |
| Diverse movement that is crossing national boundaries.                     |   | I5   |    |
| Strength in numbers.   |   | I5   |    |
| Solidarity and sharing expertise on the subject.                           | I5  |  |    |
| Risk Communication Strategy<br>BFFP  | BFFP makes it possible to connect with like-minded individuals and organizations.   | I1   |    |
|  | Eco-friendly campaigns are trending on social media   | I1   |    |
|  | Initiates hope and encouragement  | I2   |    |
|  | Close contact with the movement to share information  | I2   |    |
|  | It creates power by showing unity   | I2   |    |
|  | Education, awareness, and activism.   | I3   |    |
|  | It supports smaller movements and is important.   | I3   |    |
|  | Supports NGOs   | I4   |    |
|  | Umbrella to coordinate individuals and organizations.   | I4   |    |
|  | Strong force and unity.   | I5   |    |
|  | This study already shows that BFFP connects people  | I5   |    |
|  | The message of the movement is important  | I5   |    |
|  | Encourages cause it shows that you are not alone in this  | I5   |    |
|  | It helps to tackle the problem at its source.   | I5   |    |
|  | Visual Representation   | Visual language that is authentic                                      | I1 |
| Visual platforms allow messages to spread quickly and easily.              |   | I1   |    |
| The visual impact of content is important                                  |   | I5   |    |
| Visuals reach people better.   |   | I5   |    |