

## FROM MASS DEMONSTRATIONS TO DIGITAL CRITICISM: A DESCRIPTIVE COMPARATIVE STUDY OF CHANGES IN FUEL CONSUMER RESPONSES TO FUEL PRICE INCREASES IN INDONESIA FROM CONVENTIONAL MEDIA TO DIGITAL PLATFORMS, 2000–2026

Aldirafi Gani<sup>1\*</sup>, Dean Joshua Dotulong<sup>2</sup>, Farida Yuliaty<sup>3</sup>, Vip Paramarta<sup>4</sup>, Kosasih<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1,2,3,4,5</sup> Universitas Sangga Buana, Bandung

E-mail: [aldiraff@gmail.com](mailto:aldiraff@gmail.com)<sup>1\*</sup>, [deandotulong@gmail.com](mailto:deandotulong@gmail.com)<sup>2</sup>, [Farida.yuliaty@usbypkp.ac.id](mailto:Farida.yuliaty@usbypkp.ac.id)<sup>3</sup>, [vip@usbypkp.ac.id](mailto:vip@usbypkp.ac.id)<sup>4</sup>, [kosasih@usbypkp.ac.id](mailto:kosasih@usbypkp.ac.id)<sup>5</sup>

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### Abstract

Fuel price increases in Indonesia have long prompted public responses because fuel prices directly affect transportation costs, household expenses, purchasing power, and perceptions of economic justice. This study aims to analyze changes in fuel consumer responses to fuel price increases in Indonesia from 2000 to 2026, particularly the shift from mass demonstrations to digital criticism. This research uses a qualitative descriptive-comparative approach by examining documents, media reports, protest records, and public digital traces. The analysis compares three periods: 2000–2010, 2011–2016, and 2017–2026. The findings indicate that public responses have shifted from collective physical actions, such as demonstrations by students, labor groups, and civil society, to more dispersed digital expressions via social media comments, hashtags, memes, short videos, and online opinions. This transformation does not indicate declining public dissatisfaction, but rather a shift in the space and form of consumer expression.

**Keywords:** *Fuel Price, Consumer Response, Mass Demonstration, Digital Criticism, Indonesia.*

### INTRODUCTION

Fuel oil, or BBM (*Bahan Bakar Minyak*), is one of Indonesia's strategic commodities because it has a significant influence on the country's economic and social life. Changes in fuel prices affect not only transportation costs, but also distribution costs, the prices of basic necessities, household purchasing power, and consumption patterns. Therefore, fuel price increases often become a sensitive issue because their impact is directly felt by consumers, particularly those who depend on daily mobility, public transportation, private vehicles, and distribution-based economic activities. In perspective management, rising fuel prices can be understood as a price stimulus that influences consumers' attitudes and behavior. Consumers not only respond by adjusting expenditure, reducing consumption, or changing mobility patterns, but also by expressing social dissatisfaction. Sun et al. (2023) showed that increasing gas prices can influence travel behavior and energy consumption choices. A number of studies show that increased material burn can be related to social anxiety and public protest. Von Uexküll et al. (2024) explain that rising material burn prices can create economic grievances due to their impact on the cost of living and income in society. McCulloch et al. (2022) also found that shock-price material burn in large domestic areas can drive the emergence of unrest or protest related to material burn. In a developing-country context, Drabo et al. (2023) show that increased material burn prices can be related to social anxiety, especially when the public feels economic pressure and assesses the policy as unfair. In the Indonesian context, increased fuel prices not only raise economic problems but also become social and communication issues. Patria et al. (2025) explain that rising fuel prices in Indonesia have long been a controversial issue, sparking public and political debate. They also show that digital media play a role in shaping discourse on rising fuel prices, especially through the many actors who participated in framing the issue online. However, the problem is important in the study. Not only whether increasing fuel prices causes a response in society, but also how society responds to the changes over time. In the period when conventional media were still dominant, the response to rising fuel prices was evident in mass demonstrations, student and worker

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actions, and media coverage. On the other hand, in the era of digital platforms, the public responds more, with numerous appearances in social media comments, hashtags, memes, short videos, and online opinions.

Change related to the development of communication media and patterns of public participation. Bennett and Segerberg (2012) explain that the digital era encourages the emergence of connective action, namely, a form of participation that does not always depend on formal organization, but moves through digital networks, personal expression, and the dissemination of content. Castells (2012) also explains that social movements in the internet era are formed through digital network communication, which enables the public to express anger, hope, and demands more quickly. A number of studies also show that social media has become an important means for public response to increased fuel prices. Musyaffa and Kamayani (2022) found that discussion about fuel prices on Twitter is dominated by negative sentiment. Sitio and Nadiyahanti (2022) also showed that rising fuel prices have led to both pros and cons on social media. This strengthens the argument that public response to rising fuel prices occurs not only through physical demonstrations but also through digital expression.

Given this background, this study aims to analyze changes in public responses to fuel prices in Indonesia from 2000 to 2026. The study compares three periods: 2000–2010, 2011–2016, and 2017–2026. This periodization is used as an analytical framework based on technological developments and changes in communication spaces and public life in Indonesia. The period 2000–2010 was characterized by the dominance of conventional media and the early development of the internet, as internet usage in Indonesia remained relatively low, increasing from around 0.93% in 2000 to 10.92% in 2010 (UNdata, n.d.). The period 2011–2016 is understood as a phase of online media development and the early growth of social media, during which internet usage increased from 12.28% in 2011 to 25.45% in 2016. During this period, social media also began to play an increasingly important role in activism and the formation of public opinion in Indonesia (Lim, 2013; UNdata, n.d.). Meanwhile, the period 2017–2026 is characterized as a phase of digital platform consolidation, as internet usage in Indonesia expanded significantly, rising from 32.34% in 2017 to 66.48% in 2022 and reaching 72.78% in 2024, according to the World Bank (APJII, 2024; UNdata, n.d.; World Bank, n.d.).

The periodization is also supported by changes in the character of public participation in the digital era. Thus, the division of periods in this study is not intended to represent absolute boundaries in technological development, but rather serves as an analytical tool for understanding changes in fuel consumers' responses, from mass demonstrations to digital criticism. In addition, this study continues to consider the context of fuel price policy as an economic-political background. However, its main focus is directed toward changes in the forms of response by consumers and the public to increases in fuel prices.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Fuel Price Increase and Response to Social

Ascending fuel prices can put pressure on the economy for the House ladder because fuel is directly related to transportation costs and, in general, not directly related to the prices of goods and services. Drabo et al. (2023) stated that high fuel prices and instability can be a shock to the economy for households, governments, and companies, especially in oil-importing countries with oil. Higher fuel prices can also raise transportation costs and increase the cost of a better life. This condition helps explain why increases in fuel prices are often associated with public protests. Drabo et al. (2023) found that changes in fuel prices are positively associated with social unrest in developing countries, particularly anti-government demonstrations. Similarly, von Uexkull et al. (2024) showed that rising gasoline prices increase the likelihood of protest, especially when the public attributes the price increase to government responsibility or policy failure. In grievance and deprivation theory, people are likely to protest when they perceive unfair treatment or when they believe the social contract between the state and its citizens has been violated. Drabo et al. (2023) explain that this theory is relevant for understanding protests caused by fuel price increases because the public may view such increases as unfair policies, especially when vulnerable groups feel that they do not receive adequate benefits from public spending or social protection programs.

### Behavior Fuel Consumers in Perspective Management

In perspective management, consumer behavior can be understood as a process in which an individual or group feels a need, assesses information, forms an attitude, makes decisions, and takes action on products, services, or changes in market conditions. Consumer behavior is not only related to purchase decisions but also to perceptions, attitudes, intentions, experiences, and responses following exposure to a stimulus. Ajzen (1991) explains that individual behavior is influenced by attitude toward the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control, which then form the intention for perform the behavior. Price is one of the important stimuli that can

influence consumers' perceptions and behavior. Zeithaml (1988) explains that consumers not only evaluate price as the amount of money that must be paid, but also as related to sacrifices, value, benefits, and quality received. In this context, a price increase can change consumers' perceptions of a product, especially if they feel the increase is not commensurate with the benefits. Besides the perception value, an increased price is also related to the perceived justice price. Xia, Monroe, and Cox (2004) explain that consumers can evaluate the price of something as fair or unfair based on factors such as market conditions, prior experience, and comparisons with others. When the price is considered unfair, consumers may respond negatively, such as by making complaints, rejecting it, expressing dissatisfaction, or spreading negative word of mouth. Malc, Mumel, and Pisnik (2016) also showed that perceived unfair pricing can influence consumer behavior, including protective actions and negative responses toward the party considered responsible.

In the fuel context, an increase in price can be understood as a price stimulus that influences consumers' perceptions, attitudes, and actions. Consumers can respond by changing their consumption, reducing mobility, transitioning to fashion transportation, adjusting their household budgets, or expressing dissatisfaction. Sun et al. (2023), for example, showed that increasing gas prices can influence journey behavior and the intention to purchase a new vehicle. Thus, behavior fuels consumers in the study. This is understood not only as a decision to buy or reduce fuel consumption, but also as a response to social communicative factors that raise fuel prices. Responses can appear in the form of acceptance, rejection, media criticism, digital criticism, mass demonstrations, and economic adaptation. Therefore, the study of behavior encourages a broader view of consumers, namely, a connection among price stimuli, perceptions of justice, economic impacts, and the ways the public expresses its attitudes toward increased fuel prices.

### **Media, Digitalization, and Change Public Response**

The development of media changes the method of public expression of attitudes toward the government. In the era of conventional media, the public response depended on the news, television, letters, radio, organizations, students, unions, workers, political parties, and social movements concentrated in physical space. Demonstration mass is one of the main forms of expression because the digital public has become a broad arena for participation. In the digital era, social media and online platforms make it possible for the public to convey criticism without having to be physically present in a demonstration. Patria et al. (2025) explain that digitalization changes the landscape of political communication, blurring the lines between top-down communication and discourse-based, participatory, public government. Digital media allow more actors, including ordinary and non-elite public actors, to follow a narrative policy. Patria et al. (2025) also stated that the media not only function as transmitters of information but also participate in shaping social reality through election actors, framing narratives, and reinforcing certain drafts. In the context of a fuel price hike, the media can choose whether to display a policy as a need for state fiscal burden, failure of communication by the government, or social injustice.

### **Collective Action, Connective Action, and Digital Public Space**

The change in response to rising fuel prices can be understood as a shift from collective action to connective action. Collective action is generally marked by the involvement of an organization, the mobilization of the masses, a sense of identity, and physical presence in public spaces. In context, increased fuel prices have led to forms such as student demonstrations, labor actions, organizational demonstrations, and street protests. Responses like this were more prominent in the era of conventional media, when the public needed a formal organization and a physical space to express rejection of the government's policy. As digital media develops, patterns of participation in public experience change. Bennett and Segerberg (2012) explain that the digital era encourages the emergence of connective action, namely, public participation that does not always depend on formal organizations but instead moves through digital networks, personal expression, and the dissemination of content. In this pattern, society can convey criticism through social media comments, hashtags, memes, short videos, opinions, and online discussions. Thus, criticism of rising fuel prices does not always have to take the form of physical demonstrations, but can take the form of widespread, easy digital expressions.

Change is also related to the formation of a digital public. Castells (2012) explains that social movements in the internet era are formed through digital network communication, which enables the public to express anger, disappointment, and demands more quickly. In this context, social media becomes a new space for the public to express opinions, spread criticism, and strengthen public awareness of issues. Therefore, the response of BBM consumers in the digital era cannot be seen only in the number of physical demonstrations, but also in the conversations and criticisms that develop in online spaces. However, digital criticism does not always directly lead

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to policy change. Tufekci (2017) explains that digitally based movements can spread quickly and reach large numbers of people, but they often face limitations in building sustained political pressure. This is relevant to the phenomenon of fuel price increases in Indonesia, where digital criticism may reflect public dissatisfaction but does not necessarily lead to direct changes in fuel pricing policy. Such policy changes are still influenced by fiscal considerations, subsidies, global oil prices, exchange rates, and political decisions. Thus, the theories of collective action, connective action, and digital public space help explain the change response, fueling consumers' actions from mass demonstrations to digital criticism. Changing "No" means the public becomes passive, but rather shows a transformative channel of expression for the public. In the era of conventional media, dissatisfaction is more evident in mass action on the streets, whereas in the era of digital platforms, it appears more through fast, personal, distributed, and fragmented digital expression.

## METHOD

### Type and Design of Research

This study employs a qualitative descriptive-comparative historical approach. This approach is appropriate because the study seeks to understand the meaning, patterns, and changes in public responses to fuel price increases, rather than to examine statistical relationships among variables. Qualitative research emphasizes an in-depth understanding of social phenomena and focuses more on meaning than on generalization (Sugiyono, 2017). The descriptive aspect of this study is used to explain the forms of fuel consumer responses to fuel price increases, including mass demonstrations, media criticism, digital criticism, and economic adaptation behavior. Meanwhile, the comparative aspect is used to examine changes in public response patterns across three periods: 2000–2010, 2011–2016, and 2017–2026. The historical-comparative design was chosen because this study examines changes in public responses over a long period, from the era of conventional media dominance to the era of digital platforms. Through this design, fuel price increases are viewed not merely as economic events but also as social phenomena that elicit various forms of public response. Previous studies have shown that fuel price increases can be associated with social unrest and demonstrations, particularly when people experience pressure from rising living costs and link the price increases to government policy (Drabo et al., 2023; von Uexkull et al., 2024).

### Approach Research and Object Study

With a qualitative descriptive-comparative historical approach, the data collected in this study are qualitative in nature and are obtained from documents, news reports, and digital traces. The descriptive aspect of this study lies in providing a detailed and in-depth description of:

- 1). The forms of public responses to fuel price increase policies, such as mass demonstrations, media criticism, digital criticism, and economic adaptation behavior;
- 2). The dominant narratives that appear in news coverage and public criticism;
- 3). The reasons why people reject or accept fuel price increases;
- 4). Changes in public expressions over time;
- 5). The shifting position of consumers from actors in physical demonstrations to actors in digital criticism; and
- 6). The shifting position of consumers from actors in physical demonstrations to actors in digital criticism; and

Meanwhile, the comparative aspect of this study lies in comparing these response patterns across three different periods, namely 2000–2010, 2011–2016, and 2017–2026. The comparison is conducted qualitatively by examining changes in response forms, narratives, and contexts across periods, rather than by calculating frequencies or proportions. Therefore, the main focus of this study is to understand the meaning behind public responses and how these response patterns have changed qualitatively over time.

### Data Sources

Data sources in study This consists of from:

- 1). Documents policy on government-related fuel prices;
- 2). Archives mass media and online media news;
- 3). Report or documentation demonstration related to fuel price increase;
- 4). Comments public, social media posts, hashtags, memes, and digital opinions;
- 5). Supporting data like fuel prices, inflation, world oil prices, and the development of internet/ social media usage.

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All of the data used to understand how public response changed from the conventional media era towards the digital platform era.

**Data Collection Techniques**

Data collection techniques were carried out through study documentation. Data collected through browse document policies, archival news, report actions, and related public digital footprints amid increased fuel prices.

Data collected based on the increase in incidents has caused certain fuel prices to increase. Every incident is analyzed using documents and news that appear before, during, and after the policy announcement. Thus, research can capture the beginning of the response, peak criticism, and the development of the narrative among the public.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**Overview of Research Data**

This section provides an initial overview of the periodization used in the analysis. The division of periods is intended to show changes in public responses to fuel price increases, particularly in the channels through which those expressions were conveyed. The period 2000–2010 represents a phase in which public responses were more visible through conventional media and mass actions. The period 2011–2016 represents a transitional phase, in which online media and social media began to be used as spaces for criticism. Meanwhile, the period 2017–2026 represents a phase in which digital criticism became stronger across various platforms.

This periodization provides the basis for examining changes in fuel consumer responses over time. The key characteristics of each period are summarized in Table 1 below.

**Table 1. Data Distribution Based on Period**

Period	Media Characters	Data Types	Focus Analysis
2000–2010	Conventional media and the early internet	Newspapers, television, radio, and archives demonstration	Demonstration mass and media a criticism
2011–2016	Online media and social media acceleration	News portal, online commentary, social media beginning	A combination of early digital demonstrations and critiques
2017–2026	Established digital platform	Social media, hashtags, memes, online comments, short videos	Digital criticism and opinion, public platform- based

Source: Processed researcher, 2026

Based on the table, research shows that this does not treat every period as an absolute technological limit. Conventional media still existed after 2010, and social media had already begun to develop before 2017. However, the distribution is used to see which media is the most dominant in terms of public response in each period.

**Frequency Change Form Response Fuel consumers**

Quantitative content analysis was conducted using the count-frequency emergence form in response to public opinion on increasing fuel prices. Form response is classified into five categories, namely demonstration mass, media criticism, digital criticism, adaptation economy consumers, and acceptance or passive reception.

**Table 2. Form Response Fuel consumers**

<b>Form Response</b>	<b>2000–2010</b>	<b>2011–2016</b>	<b>2017–2026</b>
Demonstration mass	Dominant	Still appearing	Decreasing, but still there is an issue with certain
Media criticism	Strong through television, radio, and letters news	Shifting to online news portals	It still exists, but it competes with social media.
Digital criticism	Not yet dominant	Starting to grow through social media, beginning	The more dominant through comments, hashtags, memes, and short videos
Adaptation economy consumer	Savings and reduced consumption start to appear	Starting to be discussed through online media	More seen through narrative cost of living, transportation, and expenses, House ladder
Acceptance/passive	Savings and reduced consumption start to appear	Appear in the form of a resigned or accepted reason for subsidy	Appear in the form of a reception, limited, but still accompanied by digital criticism

Source: Processed researcher, 2026

Based on Table 2, it can be seen that response fuel consumers to increasing prices experience a pattern of change over time. During 2000–2010, mass demonstrations became the most prominent response. This can be understood because during this period, conventional media such as television, radio, and print news remained the primary channels for disseminating information and shaping public opinion. In the condition said, demonstration becomes the most visible way for the public for show rejection of the policy to increase fuel prices. In the period 2011–2016, the pattern of response start experience shifted. Demonstration mass still appears, but criticism through online and social media begins to develop. This can be understood as a phase transition, in which the public not only expresses responses through physical action but also uses digital space to convey criticism, complaints, and opinions to the government.

In the period 2017–2026, digital criticism is increasingly strengthened as one of the main forms of response to society. Criticism appears not only in online media coverage but also in social media comments, hashtags, memes, short videos, and opinion posts. This pattern shows that the public "No" must always be presented physically to express rejection or dissatisfaction. Criticism can be delivered faster, more widely, more spontaneously, and more repetitively through digital platforms. Thus, the change in the pattern of responses to the No can be interpreted as a sign of public dissatisfaction with rising fuel prices. On the other hand, changes in the show's existence shift the room-expression public from an action collective in space to a more critical presence spread across digital space. This is in line with Patria et al. (2025), which explains that digitalization has changed room communication politics in Indonesia, making it more participatory and fragmented, so that issues related to fuel prices are debated not only through official government narratives but also through opinions and public criticism in digital spaces.

**Response Consumers in the period 2000-2010: Mass Dominance Mass Demonstration**

During 2000–2010, the public response to rising fuel prices led to large-scale demonstrations. Dominant actors in the period include students, workers, organizations, society, the party, political opposition, and public civil groups. The response that emerges tends to be collective and organized, and occurs in a public space. Demonstrations during the period. This can be understood as a form of expression of dissatisfaction with the government's public policy. Increased fuel prices are perceived not only as a problem for the economy but also as a form of social injustice because of their impact on the costs of living in society. From the perspective of grievance and deprivation, society protests when it feels the government violates the hopes or contract it has formed. Drabo et al. (2023) explain that rising fuel prices can be perceived as unavoidable, especially when the public feels that the government fails to protect power purchase and public welfare.

**Table 3. Thematic Narrative 2000–2010 period**

<b>Dominant Theme</b>	<b>Explanation</b>
Rejection increase price	The increase in fuel prices is considered a burden on the people
Cost burden of life	People are worried the price need main come along for the ride
Criticism of the government	The government considered not taking sides for the common people
Mobilize students and workers	Demonstration become channel main expression of the public
Conventional media as an amplifier of the issue	Television, radio, and newspapers expand news demonstration

Source: Processed researcher, 2026

Thus, the response fuels consumer demand during the period. This is seen as a collective physical action. Consumers respond not only as fuel buyers but also as citizens affected by the policy price of energy. The increase in fuel prices has raised issues that can unite various groups in the public. Because the impact is felt widely.

**Response Consumers in the Period 2011–2016: Mixed Phase Between Mass Action and Early Digital Criticism**

The period 2011–2016 shows a mixed response pattern. The demonstration mass still took place, but digital criticism began to grow across online news portals, reader comments, Facebook, Twitter, and digital forums. In this phase, society starts to create more channels for convey its attitude toward increasing fuel prices. This shows a shift from fully response-based action on the street to responses that also occurred in the digital space. However, digital criticism in this period has not yet fully replaced the demonstration of physical. Both walk in a way simultaneously.

**Table 4. Comparison of Physical and Digital Responses in the Period 2011–2016**

<b>Form Response</b>	<b>Characteristics</b>
Demonstration physique	Carried out by students, workers, organizations public
Online media criticism	Appear through opinion, comment, news, and online articles
Social media criticism begins	Delivered via Twitter, Facebook, Kaskus, and other online forums
Response adaptive	Consumers start talking about savings, changes in mobility, or adjustments to expenditure

Source: Processed by Researchers, 2026

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This is important because it marks the beginning of a shift in consumer behavior and communication. Consumers not only become the object of policy price, but also start to become the manufacturer's opinion through digital space. This is an expanded form of public participation, although the intensity and range of digital criticism are as big as the period after 2017. Von Uexkull et al. (2024) explain that increased fuel prices can become a trigger for protests when the public links the increase in price to policy or government failure. During the 2011–2016 period, the attribution error began to spread not only on the streets but also through online and social media channels.

## Response Consumers in the Period 2017–2026: Digital Critique

In the period 2017–2026, the pattern of public responses will increase as more events take place in the digital space. Criticism of rising fuel prices does not always take the form of demonstrations but spreads through social media posts, comments on online news, memes, short videos, hashtags, and opinion pieces. Main features period. This is an increasing expression of positive criticism, fast, viral, personal, and fragmented. Society can criticize fuel price policy without joining a formal organization. Criticism can come from individuals, digital communities, drivers of online transportation, content creators, influencers, and general netizens.

**Table 5. Forms of Digital Criticism in the 2017–2026 Period**

Forms of Digital Criticism	Dominance of Response Content
Social media comments	Complaint to increase fuel prices and cost lives
Hashtags	Invitation rejection, sarcasm, or criticism of the government
Meme	Satirical criticism of policy price and also stakeholders' policy
Short video	Explanation of the impact of fuel price increase on daily expenditure
Comment on online news	Pros and cons debate about subsidies and prices of world oil

Source: Processed by Researchers, 2026

Table 5 shows that the response is public. No loss, but a shift in form. If, in the period 2000–2010, the public response was more physical, then in the period 2017–2026 it was more widespread in digital form. In other words, there is a transformation from demonstration mass to digital criticism. Patria et al. (2025) showed that, in the digital era, discourse on fuel price increases is fragmented. Digitalization allows more Actors to enter the debate, so that issues related to rising fuel prices are not only framed as a fiscal or subsidy problem but also as problems of the cost of living, inequality, and government accountability.

## The Shift in the Dominant Narrative: From the State Budget Burden to the Consumer's Life Burden

Analysis shows that the public's narrative responses to rising fuel prices are shifting. In the period beginning, the narrative that emerges is one of rejection, rising prices, and criticism of the government. In the digital era, narratives have become more diverse, including the cost of living, subsidies, the lack of appropriate targets, inequality, prices of basic necessities, and trust in the government.

**Table 6. Changes in the Dominant Narrative Interperiod**

<b>Period</b>	<b>Dominant Narrative</b>	<b>Narrative Characters</b>
2000–2010	Reject the fuel increase, burden the people, take action, students, and mass demonstrations.	Collective, political, based action mass
2011–2016	Subsidies, APBN, power buy, and transportation price	A mixture of technocratic and social
2017–2026	Cost life, injustice, digital criticism, subsidies.	Personal, digital, emotional, fragmented

Source: Processed by Researchers, 2026

## Discussion

### Government and Fuel Price Policy in Response to Consumer

Ascension fuel prices in Indonesia cannot be released from the context of the current government in power. Every period has its own conditions, economy, direction, policies, energy, communication strategies, and political challenges. Therefore, changes in responses among fuel consumers are influenced not only by the development of communication media but also by how the public interprets the policy price as a government decision. In the early 2000s, Indonesia was still in a phase of consolidating reforms and recovering the political economy post-crisis. In this context, rising fuel prices are understood by the public as a policy that directly impacts the cost of living. Response to society in the period. More lots appear through demonstrations, mass media criticism, and student or laborer mobilization groups. This shows that in the era of conventional media dominance, policy on higher fuel prices is often debated in public forums and through mass media coverage.

During Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono's administration, the fuel price policy was strongly framed as a matter of fiscal policy and state subsidies. However, for society, rising fuel prices remain a burden on the economy, affecting transportation costs, basic necessities, and power bills. Therefore, although the policy is often associated with burden subsidies and conditions in the state budget, public responses still take the form of demonstrations, public rejection, and criticism of the partisan government. During the Joko Widodo administration, the pattern of public response has started to show clearer shifts. Whether fuel prices increase or remain the same, public criticism remains the same, but room delivery is more Popular through online and social media. The public responds not only through demonstrations but also through digital commentary, hashtags, satirical memes, short videos, and online opinions. Thus, during the period, it is evident that policy fuel prices remain unchanged and become issue-sensitive, while public response exerts a greater influence on the development of digital platforms.

During the Prabowo Subianto administration, which began in 2024, discussions regarding fuel and energy have remained relevant, particularly at the governmental level. This period is better understood as a continuation of the digital platform era, in which the public has become increasingly accustomed to evaluating and criticizing energy policies in digital spaces. Therefore, responses to fuel price policies during this period need to be examined not only in terms of conventional public reactions, but also from the perspective of how public opinion is formed through digital conversations. With this, the change in government during the 2000–2026 period became contextually important for understanding the change response, fueling consumers. However, researchers note that changing the president is not the only one reason for the change in response. Change in response to consumers is understood to result from the interaction among the government's policy price, economic conditions, the development of communication media, and the ways the public expresses dissatisfaction.

### Shift Response No Means Decreasing Dissatisfaction

The findings of the study are important. This means that a decline in physical health cannot be directly interpreted as a decline in societal dissatisfaction. In the digital era, dissatisfaction can spill over into the online space. Public criticism can take the form of comments, memes, videos, and hashtags that do not always prompt a physical crowd response but still signal a public reaction to policy. Thus, research rejects the assumption that a digital-era society becomes more passive in response to rising fuel prices. What happened is a change in the form expression. In the era of conventional media, dissatisfaction is more easily readable through mass demonstrations.

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In the age of digital platforms, dissatisfaction is more readily discernible in online conversations and platform-based criticism. This also shows that the government faces a different communication challenge in each era. In the conventional media era, the government faces pressure from demonstrations and media coverage. In the digital era, the government faces pressure from rapidly spreading public opinion that is difficult to control and can go viral. Patria et al. (2025) stated that digital media play an important role in shaping public perception of policy, although they do not always directly influence policy decisions. This explains why digital criticism of rising fuel prices can be very busy; however, price changes are still largely determined by government policy and economic mechanisms.

## Fuel Price Increase as a Behavioral Issue: Consumers and Public Policy

In perspective management, increased fuel prices can be analyzed as a price stimulus that influences consumer behavior. Not only in the form of a decision to buy or reduce consumption, but also in the form of expressing dissatisfaction with the policy price. Thus, the behavior of fuel consumers has two dimensions, namely economic and social-communicative. The dimensions of the economy are seen from the effort of consumers to adapt expenditure, reduce mobility, or look for alternative transportation. Sun et al. (2023) showed that rising gas prices can influence travel behavior and vehicle choice among consumers, making energy prices an important factor in consumer decision-making. Dimensions social-communicative, as seen in the methods consumers convey responses to policy. In the Indonesian context, increases in fuel prices are often understood as a government policy affecting society's welfare. Therefore, the response consumer can change to become responsive to politics, good-form demonstration, and digital criticism. With this, the understanding of consumer behavior expands. Fuel consumers are not only positioned as buyers but also as social actors who can assess, criticize, and respond to government policy and prices.

## Why Digital Criticism Isn't Always Changing Fuel Price Policy?

One of the important findings in the study is that massive digital criticism does not always produce a direct change in policy or in fuel prices. This happens because policy fuel prices are affected not only by public-opinion pressure but also by fiscal factors, subsidy structures, fluctuations in world oil prices, state budget burdens, and government political decisions. In the context of energy policy, changes in prices and material burn are often understood as decisions that lie between a pressure economy and a socio-political risk (McCulloch et al., 2022; von Uexküll et al., 2024). Drabo et al. (2023) also showed that increased material price burn can trigger social anxiety, especially when the public feels pressure to live and judge policies as a form of economic injustice. In a digital context, public criticism of rising fuel prices can spread quickly through social media, online comments, hashtags, memes, and short videos. However, the speed-distribution criticism is not always equally strong for the change policy. Bennett and Segerberg (2012) explain that digitally based action is often more personal and distributed, and does not always depend on formal organization. This makes digital criticism capable of expanding public participation, but not yet. Of course, it has its own strong structure and pressure, like demonstrations organized by the masses.

More digital criticism often serves as an indicator of public perception, namely, anger, disappointment, disbelief, or rejection of the policy that is fueling price increases. However, criticism of the Not yet Of course direct becomes pressure-effective politics if not followed by collective mobilization, organizational movement, or channeled advocacy for a clear policy. Tufekci (2017) explains that digital movement can grow very fast, but often faces limitations in building organizational capacity and pressure on political terms in the long run Thus, digital criticism can strengthen public discourse, expand the distribution of issues, and shape public perception of fuel price policy, but it does not always produce direct policy change. This is in line with Patria et al. (2025), which shows that digital media play an important role in shaping public perception of fuel prices in Indonesia and influence the decision-making process in a concrete way. Therefore, digital criticism of more fuel issues is appropriately understood as a form of public expression, not as a direct mechanism for lowering or changing fuel prices.

## Dialectics Change Response Fuel consumers

Changes in fuel consumers' responses to government policy and prices can be understood as a dialectical process. Dialectics in study. This is used not primarily as a method, but rather as a framework for reading the connection between pattern long response, pattern response new, and understanding the new emerging from both. In this framework, the thesis can be understood as a pattern beginning, the antithesis as a form of conflict or change to the pattern early, whereas synthesis is understanding newly formed from the connection between the two (Fragkandreas, 2025). However, the use of the terms thesis, antithesis, and synthesis in this study is not intended to

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make a strict philosophical claim, but rather to function as an analytical tool for explaining changes in patterns of public response (Mueller, 1958). In this context, this thesis examines the period during which the public responds to rising fuel prices. Lots appear as mass demonstrations. In the era of conventional media, society tends to express rejection through physical actions, such as student demonstrations, labor actions, and organizational demonstrations, and criticism through mass media. Demonstrations become the most visible response because digital space has yet to become a main channel of public expression. Temporarily, antithesis emerged in the digital platform era, when the public response "No Again" always shaped physical action in public spaces. Criticism of rising fuel prices is growing, with many comments shared on social media, through hashtags, memes, short videos, and online discussions. This pattern shows that the public creates its own space to convey dissatisfaction without having to present it directly to a large audience.

From the relationship between thesis and antithesis, it can be understood that the synthesis addresses the needs of fuel consumers, whose responses do not truly disappear or weaken, but rather undergo a transformation. The general public remains dissatisfied with increases in fuel prices, but the way this dissatisfaction is expressed has changed along with the development of communication media. Thus, mass demonstrations and digital criticism are not two completely separate phenomena, but rather two forms of expression that emerge from different social and media contexts. This dialectic reinforces the understanding that fuel consumers should be positioned not only as economic actors who purchase and use fuel but also as social actors who evaluate, criticize, and respond to government pricing policies. Therefore, the shift from mass demonstrations to digital criticism does not indicate the disappearance of public criticism, but rather a change in the space of expression from collective physical action to faster, more dispersed, and more fragmented digital expression.

## CONCLUSION

The conclusion that can be drawn from the study is:

- 1) This study shows that the response of fuel consumers towards policy prices in Indonesia is experiencing a change from time to time. The response, initially more of a mass-based demonstration, gradually shifted into digital criticism on social media and other online platforms.
- 2) In the period 2000–2010, the public response to increasing fuel prices tended to appear in the form of physical action, such as student demonstrations, labor actions, organizational demonstrations, and criticism through conventional media. At this time, television, radio, and letters were still the main channels of forming public opinion.
- 3) In the period 2011–2016, the pattern of public response started to experience a change. The demonstration still took place, but criticism on social media grew. Period. This can be understood as a transitional period during which the public begins to use digital spaces to voice complaints and express rejection.
- 4) In the period 2017–2026, digital criticism has increasingly become a dominant form of response. Society does not always go down the road, but conveys criticism through social media comments, hashtags, memes, short videos, opinion uploads, and online discussions. With this, space protests are not only on the streets but also moving into digital space.
- 5) Decline in the demonstration of physique. No one can directly infer that the public is becoming more accepting of higher fuel prices. Dissatisfaction is still there, but his expression has changed. In the digital era, society can more easily convey criticism quickly, broadly, and spontaneously through digital platforms.
- 6) Ascension fuel prices are not only understood by the public as a problem of the economy, but also as a problem of social justice. Society assesses policy fuel prices by the impact on living costs, transportation expenses, price pressures, power-buying, and government partisanship among affected groups.
- 7) In perspective, fuel consumers cannot only be seen as buyers or users of material burn. Consumers are also part of society that has attitudes, perceptions, and responses to policy prices. Therefore, consumer responses can take the form of savings, changes in mobility, public criticism, and even digital protests.
- 8) Changes in communication media are one of the important factors in the change pattern response. When conventional media remain dominant, mass demonstrations become a primary means for attracting public attention. However, as digital platforms become stronger, public criticism can spread without the need for organized physical action.
- 9) This study also shows that digital criticism has strength in forming public opinion, but it does not always directly change policy or fuel prices. Fuel prices remain unchanged, influenced by factors such as subsidies, global oil prices, fiscal conditions, exchange rates, and government decisions.

- 10) Fuel consumer responses in Indonesia have transformed from collective physical actions into digital expressions. This transformation does not indicate the disappearance of public criticism but rather reflects a change in how people express dissatisfaction with government pricing policies.

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