

THE ROLE OF MEDIA IN ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS: AN OVERVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Several environmental issues related to the change of landuse pattern, air pollution, climate change and water availability as well as water quality are found as an important topic and the awareness for environment protection is taking place as an important aspect among society through print and online media. The present study was compiled from available literature to know environmental awareness and the role of online and offline media. The circulation of environmental issues may be delayed through print media while the social media like Facebook and/or WhatsApp and/or Tweeter do not delay conveying the message within the state, country or worldwide because of web based platform. This study may help academicians, media and journalism researchers and other authorities to know the present status and the role of media communications on environmental awareness.

Keywords: *Environmental Awareness, Environmental Issues, Mass Media, Offline and Online Media.*

Introduction

The print (offline) and online media (social media) are the suitable platforms for the communication of social, political, and economical news of the country. In the early twentieth century, awareness for environment protection took place an important aspect among society through print and online media. As a conceptual aspect, the concept of environment means the "natural environment" where animals, plants, and microbes, ultimately human can interact with the mother earth for food, shelter, and reproduction to a new life form. On the other hand, Ruse (1995) described the meaning of nature based on three divisions such as (a) nature can be meant as the universe and its contents, (b) the living world and (c) everything in nature.

In 2007, the former U.S. Vice-President Al Gore awarded Nobel Peace Prize with the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) for his research in communicating about climate change, which made him the most distinguished environmental communicator to date (Meisner, 2015). Through an earlier history, it is seen that the nature is demarcated as a separate entity from human development.

The word 'Environment' is derived from the French word as 'Environner', which means to encompass or surround (Bhattacharyya & Jana, 2015). All the biotic and a biotic factors comprise of the environment. It helps in making sustainable development through ecological balance. With this concept, The World Commission on Environment and Development (1987) has described Media as a key facilitator for Sustainable Development.

Generally, the role of media is mainly emphasized on the characters of the society, and this has incredible effect on the mankind. From past, it was widely accepted that media mobilized to support, formed the norms, initiated behavioral change and an impact on the policy for various social issues (Wilkins, 2003). An important role of media is to shape culture, politics, and social life at a larger level in the society. It has been established that the society is influenced by media's activities and media is so authoritative and overwhelming, which delivers people's philosophies and illustrations about their reality (Bhattacharyya & Jana, 2015).

The present study was compiled from available literature to know environmental awareness and the role of online and offline media.

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Environment Awareness and Role of Media

From last decades, journalists were writing about the issues related to the environment to provide a vital link between field workers, policy makers and the people who are layman in the field. It is undeniable that the media have played a big role to aware people about various environment issues (Bavadam, 2010; Bhattacharyya & Jana, 2015; Jana, 2016). Poornananda (2008) reported that mass media has attributed an important role for the environmental awareness issues. A layman can be experienced its surrounding environment through media reports, which instinctively outlines their lives (Boycoff, 2009).

A book on "Environment Risk and Media" has explored the ways in which environmental risks, threats and hazards are represented, transformed, and contested by the media. At a time when popular conceptions of the "environment" are regarded as a stable and "natural" in the world in which human interferences are being increasingly challenged, the media's methods of communication encouraged audiences to think about environmental risks (Allan et al., 1999). Even, the layman's knowledge about the environment is expressed and circulated by mass media (Chapman et al., 1997). It is well established that newspaper report is very much important and influential to public agenda and discourse on environmental issues while rigorous media coverage can act as a catalyst by directing the public attention over some social issues (Paimre & Loit, 2011). In Indian context, media has specified people that sphere to create opinion and argument regarding any issue (Jana, 2016).

There are several environmental issues related to the change of land use pattern, air pollution, climate change and water availability as well as water quality, which are described by Sovacool (2014). It is a necessary challenge to prevent these issues and maintain sustainable development through the awareness on environment. Jharotia (2018) described the different types of media such as (1) print media that delivered news in newspaper, magazines, and advertisement; (2) broadcast media through the television and radio and (3) social media as internet-based reporting.

For the saving of our nature, environmental awareness performs critical role among environmentalist, regulatory authorities, government and non-government organization, academicians, researchers, students for creating interest in environment. The environmental awareness leads to environmental protection.

Offline Media Communication and Environmental Awareness

In the case of offline media, different newspapers communicate as the predominant media which influence the people for various ages and can play a greater role in the environmental awareness and protection of the environment (Boycoff, 2009; Kushwaha, 2015; Khan, 2016; Jharotia, 2018; Saneh, 2018). However, newspapers cover the environmental issues that are not covered always in a regular basis. Environment document is a basic demand for all human beings because what they need at every moment, is essential part and parcel depend on the environment. It is mandatory to be aware about environment and finally protect the environment otherwise the existence of life on the planet Earth would not be sustainable (Saneh, 2018). The study of related articles on the role of offline media and environmental awareness are as follows:

Ward (2002) confirmed that there is a connection between environmental coverage and significant environmental issues, e.g., broad gauge rail track in north Bengal led to death of wild animals in each year. As a result, the role of media requires as a "watchdog" and it will educate the readers about these issues. Hence, the establishment of environmental journalism as a separate course is important to provide a better public meeting for environmental argument.

Friedman (2004) opions that few mainstream media have the space to document less dramatic problems, such as loss of biodiversity or the impacts of new synthetic chemicals. Moreover, the environmental issues may be an important concern and print media are compelled to underreport environment problems or to cover them in highly exaggerated ways.

From a survey, Meisner's (2004) reported in a wide-ranging investigation of the Canadian media that included newspaper, magazines, and prime time television shows reported that the most prominent representations of nature found in these media could be classified according four major topics: (i) nature as a victim, (ii) nature as a sick patient, (iii) nature as a problem (threat, annoyance etc.) and (iv) nature as a resource.

Das et al. (2009) performed a study to explore the coverage of environmental issues in the daily newspapers of Bangladesh, a South-Asian country facing the assault of global warming because of its low-lying deltaic plains having overpopulation. They examined of the content of environmental reporting

in 3 types of national daily newspapers (2 in Bengali language and 1 in English-language) throughout June 2007. As per illustration on field theory and analytical frames for journalism studies, their study examined the principles of journalistic methods as indicated by the content of these publications. Moreover, these findings revealed that environmental journalism is a powerful subfield in Bangladesh media, which constructed its own authenticity in the way that considered the social, economic, and political contexts of each publication.

Simon et al. (2010) evaluated the information about science and technology by the offline media which are mainly from television (44.0%), newspapers (18.0%), magazines (16.0%) and books (2.0%), respectively among people.

Jana (2017) attempted to assess some leading newspapers such as Ananda Bazar Patrika, Times of India, Hindustan Times and Indian Express of West Bengal, India and reported printed news on environmental issues viz. in sea level rise in Sundarbans area, salinity in the river Ganga, oil spill and impact on dolphins, cyclones, river pollution with an enormous amount of domestic and industrial effluents by the tributary rivers. man-made disasters, overfishing, arsenic toxicity, man-animal conflict especially elephant death, solid waste dumping and diseases like dengue, Chikungunya, encephalitis, etc. and the trend of environmental reporting as per agenda setting.

Abou-Doun (2019) reported that the lack of information and knowledge available for journalists reporting on environmental issues, complicates their assignment to recreate, visualize and represent environmental realities since accompanying disasters contain abstract and probable science, laws, politics, theoretical economics, and the complex interaction of people and their societies.

Manzoor & Akram (2019) conducted to determine the role of mass media in recognizing environmental awareness among the residents of Poonch district of J&K. They studied on fieldwork, which included household survey and interviews regarding the effectiveness of the mass media (radio, television, newspaper, and internet) in creating environmental awareness such as climate change, conservation of natural resources, deforestation, soil erosion, pollution and global warming, etc. They concluded that media play an important role in creating environmental awareness and in mounting positive attitude towards the environment among the people of the Poonch district.

Milless & Larouz (2020) studied regarding the coverage of environmental issues in the three Moroccan newspapers viz. As-Sabah, Al-Akhbar, and Al-Massae. This study explored to know the frequency of articles that covered environmental issues and investigated the newspapers' professionalism to write environmental reports on manmade violations of the natural environment through the agenda of eco-linguistics for categorizing and analysing all environmental news that extended during the period of March-July 2020. They identified environmental articles such as environment, forest, animals, water, pollution, air, irrigation, deforestation, and overgrazing. Their findings indicated that the total environmental articles published by the 3 newspapers during the period of SARS-COV-2 were of about 92 articles (1.8%) among 4922 articles published by 73 types of issues. According to them, the role of print media is a determining factor in covering environmental topics for the protection of environmental resources during the SARS-COV-2 pandemic situation.

Online Media Communication and Environmental Awareness

Generally, social media contribute environmental awareness particularly in the raising issues among the target group, which is important because of creating greater environmental influence on growth of sustainable environment (Saneh, 2018).

In the case of online media platform, four aspects such as documentaries and amateur videos, Blogs, Wikis, Forums and educational portals, virtual environments, and e-museums as well as e-learning mode are well documented (Saneh, 2018). This is a web-based platform in which users make comments, share, and put videos, photos, and posts on social networking site at a remarkable rate of internet. According to Ottino (2003), a quoted definition is "seeing and representing are inextricably linked to understanding". It was also known that through the internet, users have an instant, cost free and unlimited access to a great number of environmental documentaries. The study of related articles on the role of online media and environmental awareness are as follows:

Simon et al. (2010) evaluated the information about science and technology by the online media, mainly from the internet access (9.0%) among people.

Arli et al. (2011) reported that the environmental emergency needs to be addressed and analysed "within a social frame of reference". According to them, in our daily life we are living with an actual environmental crisis by means of air, water, soil and food quality deterioration in which research

indicates that still people are unaware of the seriousness of the environmental problems and least bother to save the planet. The digital media can and should be contributed towards the understanding of the media dynamics especially towards improvement of the environmental issues.

Rahim et al. (2012) determined the level of environment awareness and insight on green technology to know in the youth of Malaysia through the usage of online advertising promoted by the government. The survey was carried out to gather responses from online respondents using the social media website. The result indicated that the younger group of Malaysia have some awareness on the term 'green living'. However, those who practiced green living were smaller numbers. They exposed to green advertisement, but few participants did not follow green living due to the lack of complete understanding of the concept. The younger group of Malaysia exhibited positive perception towards green advertising.

Reilly & Hynan (2014) made an empirical research to explore the corporate social responsibility (CSR) reports to communicate about environmental sustainability among 16 global corporations from four different industry sectors-retail, technology equipment, food/beverage/tobacco, and consumer goods through the usage of social media platforms such as the Facebook, Twitter as well as letters from chief executive officer within the annual reports and CSR or sustainability reports, and other corporation documentations were also examined and compared the content and scope of these firms' (green and not green) corporate communication using "Newsweek's Greenest Company 2012 ranking". A comparison was also performed for differential use of social media and corporate reports. The results from the study observed that communication varies across firm and industry regarding types of sustainability initiatives reported, metrics employed, and communication media utilized, and that green firms are more dynamic than not green firms through addressing sustainability as per social media activity.

Rahim & Jalaladeen (2016) described about social media communication platform gradation as Facebook, YouTube, Instagram and Twitter have been observed the position of number one, two, three, and four, respectively as per the level of priority of environmental interest among students.

Scholtz et al. (2016) examined the environmental awareness of staffs in a Higher Education Institution (HEI), Africa through the social media campaign. The campaign was constructed based on a theoretical model and employed in a case study of a South African HEI. They used a centralised website together with selected social media for formed the technological foundation of the campaign. The campaign information regarding environmental management was allocated thoroughly by means of these technologies to selected staff members in the case study. Their findings indicated that the campaign had many positive benefits, particularly for promoting environmental awareness.

Aimiwu (2017) studied on global warming and climate change to save the earth through social media communications. Their single qualitative case study was to explore to increase the use of green technology by using social media, which can reduce the cost of environmental sustenance. According to the cohesive sustainability framework, it was served for the conceptual framework in this study. They reported that firms should be included for green practices in their business processes and extend green culture to their customers, and increased their green market share for the sustenance of the environment. Their results indicated that social media usage is encouraging the humans for increasing the use of green technology to mitigate the threat of global warming and climate change.

Saneh (2018) performed a study to know the role of the media, which can play in contributing to a sustainable society. The study emphasized that the media could play a vital role in waking up people from their inactivity as it is potential enough to deliver specific message to an individual and every doorstep. It also analysed the media's contribution towards protecting the environment. Among several news on environment, the climate change issues are getting the highest priority and making the headlines in the electronic media.

Severo et al. (2019) analysed the social media based study on environmental awareness and the social responsibility of "Baby Boomers as well as X and Y generations", in the regions of South and Southeast Brazil. They performed quantitative and descriptive research by means of the Structural Equation Modelling. This result highlighted that person who was exposed to information from videos, photos and messages could be related to social responsibility and environmental sustainability and were found positively influenced in the formation of social and environmental awareness. Nevertheless, Y generation represented the lowest levels of responses to search knowledge on environmental and social issues.

Conclusions

From the present study, it is known that both print media, broadcasting media as well as social media may communicate the environmental issues and aware people to protect the environment. Moreover, the circulation of environmental issues may delay through print media while the social media like Facebook and/or WhatsApp and/or Tweeter do not delay conveying the message within the state, country or worldwide because of web based platform. This compilation of available research and review articles may help academicians, media and journalism researchers and other authorities to know the present status and role of media communications on environmental awareness. More news in the offline and online media may lead to more awareness on environmental issues and more protection for their surrounding environment at the local and global levels.

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