



MEDIA MEDIATING THE ECOLOGY AND ECONOMICS OF ECOTOURISM: AN ANALYSIS

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Abstract

Mediated mass communication of humans has become universal. The ubiquitous TV had done its best part by spreading the word and the visual of all things, and done so for Ecotourism too. School curricula have made the concepts of ecological destruction, global warming, sustainable development, etc., common knowledge among youth the world over. The interest generated on natural environment has led to the growth of ecotourism, but the moot question remained as to whether this is leading to ecological conservation and sustainable development benefitting the real stake-holders or is it all just 'green washing' and packaging; with best practices ignored. The word of mouth has gone digital and social media mediated communication is transacting economy too and so also ecotourism. This paper analyses the progress of ecotourism industry, its economics and promotion; the ways in which social media is mediating both the ecotourism operators and the Eco tourists and whether the principals of ecotourism and sustainability are being followed by both. It concludes that critical discourses on social media are essential for an ecotourism which respects the integrity of environments, promotes the well-being of local people, enhances environmental quality, upholds values of rights and equity, and promotes conservation, sustainability and research.

Key words: Social Media, Ecotourism, Sustainability, Ecology, Economy, Best Practices, Rights And Equity, Conservation.

Role of Media in Environmental Awareness

The picture of the Earth photographed from space that hit the front pages of all newspapers in the 1960s; ushered in the awareness of the earth as a whole system – fragile and finite. The awareness led to insight into issues environmental, as media led campaigns through newspapers, radio and television and now digitally integrated media and social media. A leading example is the 'Jal Bachao Abhiyan' campaign of Dainik Bhaskar, a leading Hindi newspaper; that organizes a special drive every summer to appeal to people to 'Save Water'. The initiative received an 'Award of Honour' from the Union Government. Newspaper campaigns were highly successful, but radio fell short of its potential in creating environmental awareness. At 138 minutes per day television dominates the Mediascape, with more than 50% Indians watching television for 2 to 3 hours per day. Discovery, National Geographic, Animal Planet and other channels create a stream of interest on ecology and environmental issues. It was never on the main agendas of the editors, but campaigns like 'NDTV-Toyota Greenathon (2008), India's first nationwide campaign for creating awareness about environmental issues; changed that, when they saw Nobel laureates, ministers, entrepreneurs and film artists participating and supporting the 'Greenathon'. Another success was the initiative by Zee Media Corporation, 'My Earth My Duty', which tries to bring about a behavioural change among the youth, so that they take positive steps to conserve the Earth. India Water Portal is a website that shares knowledge and builds communities around water and related issues in India. Managed by Arghyam, the Portal has become a valuable archive of resources, working papers, reports, data, articles, news, events, opportunities and



discussions on water. India Water Portal is a platform that empowers the youth to share experiences and solutions, talk to experts, join conversations and learn about the work that others are doing to conserve our fast depleting water resources.

Environmental awareness can be considered a strategic communication process to promote the knowledge of environment, keep people updated on catastrophic impacts of human development and provide information on sustainable development. Communication has gone digital and digitally integrated new media is presently dominated by social media. According to the Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI), India has the second largest number of internet users in the world and growing at 17%. Social Media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, LinkedIn, WhatsApp, are being used by industry and governmental agencies for communication with the general public.

On the National Pollution Control Day – 2nd December, 2021, CNBC-TV18 started a campaign named ‘Sense and Sustainability’; along with TV broadcasts highlighting the endeavours of companies working towards a sustainable and eco-friendly future. It also launched an ‘Instagram Live’ with posts and videos on solution-driven action points from environmental experts. On World Environment Day 2021, a digital marketing agency ‘Social Beat’, launched a social media campaign on Instagram and Facebook named ‘#DoNotBackSlide’; with an appeal not to go back to our toxic ways. ‘Green Impact’ is a campaign launched by Panasonic Life Solutions, India, across all media platforms; highlighting that environment included water bodies, green patches, or ice glaciers is being impacted by climate change and encourages people to make a difference by being champions of change. The Earth Day Network India Trust launched in 2010, calling on citizens to rise up and come together to engage the public, educate people about environment and act to make positive and sustainable changes to protect the earth that we all live on. Earth Day is not a day, but a movement to take environmental literacy to 10 million youth by 2026. It distributes an e-book on the biodiversity of species in India and the conservation efforts and how citizens can help in the effort. It coordinates with government agencies, corporate sector, academic institutions, NGOs, media houses and the general public. The massive environmental campaign ‘Cauvery Calling’ is setting the standards for how India’s rivers can be revitalized. The ambition is to enable 5.2 million farmers to plant 2.42 billion trees in the Cauvery River Basin in a span of 12 years. The media had played a major role in inspiring all the stakeholders from all sections of society including farmers, scientists, civil society groups, state government and the citizens. The vision is to establish a blue print for Tropical River Restoration that can be replicated across the planet.

‘Green Awards’ started recognizing excellence in preserving and sustaining the environment. The reality show ‘Green Champion’ launched by NDTV and Godrej Group of Industries, raising awareness among youth and highlighting that even the smallest of efforts can create a positive ‘green’ effect.

The 12th Olive Crown Awards 2022 (hosted by the Indian Chapter of the International Advertising Association (IAA), to acknowledge the work of those individuals or corporations who highlight the message of sustainability or ‘Green Advertising’ across 16 categories. Centrick Marketing Solutions won 3 Gold Awards in the categories – Digital, Events and Green Campaign of the Year’. Shreerang Charitable Trust won 6 awards. Ogilvy won the category ‘Press Un-released’ with their campaign ‘Disappearing Stories’. Reliance Industry is the Green Brand of the year’. ‘Green Crusader of the Year’ award was presented to Sadhguru for ‘Save Soil’ and his 100 day long motorcycle journey campaigns. ‘Green NGO of the Year was Chirag Rural Development Foundation and People for



Animals / Wildlife Rescue and Conservation Centre's 'Zero Waste Film Shoot' is the 'New Age Green Initiative' of the Year.

Environmental Awareness and Education

The National Policy on Education states 'there is a need to create consciousness of the environment which must permeate all ages and all sections of the society beginning with the child. Environmental consciousness should inform teaching in schools and colleges and should be integrated in the entire education process. Environmental awareness is presently built into the educational curriculum from the primary stage and is outlined in the National Curriculum Framework. This has helped motivate children at an early age to deal with problems of environmental pollution. However as Bandhu (1999) observed that environmental education concepts in terms of awareness and knowledge seem to be adequately covered, while the development of skills for the study of environment and environmental ethics, attitudes and actions need strengthening. Environmental Science is now a compulsory subject for all undergraduates and an independent subject at the post-graduate level. However, problems of availability of competent teachers to teach environmental issues extensively and effectively remain, and it is still unknown if awareness is altering behaviour of children in a more environmentally friendly way.

A survey of high school students reveals that children with strong educational background, good educational institution, well-educated family are well aware of environmental issues; compared to other children. The most contributing factors were educational institution and media. The role of media cannot be over emphasized (Ahmad, F. 2014). The role of media in environmental education cannot be overemphasized. Even though environmental education is introduced in formal education, it has to start from within the family and continue throughout the person's social life and social relationships. Hence, media is essential for environmental education and can even be considered as a kind of school.

Environment is a social policy area and this means that the state takes the greatest responsibility. But every citizen, social organizations and institutions have duties and responsibility towards environment and sustainability. The state is prioritizing environmental education as part of its policy. Communication regarding environment is needed at the local, national and international levels and projects should be developed for incorporating the principle of life-long educational programmes on the environment. Only then can the problems of sustainability be solved. The government is using all media to promote environmental awareness and promote policies and action.

Conferences and Seminars play a vital role in disseminating latest research on environment related issues among academicians and professionals.

For media to be more sensitive to the subject of environment, journalists specializing on environmental issues need to be trained. Towards this universities and environmental organizations need to develop joint education-training projects.

Green Revolutions

Environmental Social campaigns that have become movements in their own right and are no longer in the control of the parent organization, are Green Revolutions. Five such major Green Revolutions in India are –



1. Garnier Power Light a Village – is a social initiative started by the brand ‘Garnier Men’ in 2013, in collaboration with Chirag Rural Development Foundation with an aim to light up rural households in India, which do not have electricity. It is estimated that 72,000 villages and 72 million Indians have no access to any light. This project is so designed that every action made on the social media would translate into actual energy donation on the ground. The moment someone clicks on the Facebook application to like, share or comment; 10 watts of energy gets contributed. Garnier will provide one solar-lamp with an in-built mobile charging unit, a solar tube light and a solar panel for charging. This campaign was part of the ‘Men Who Matter’ initiative of Garneir Men, India which was started in 2012 and around 2 million men took part in it on Facebook and Twitter. A string of influencers joined this movement leading to the hash tag # PowerLightAVillage trending on Twitter for 7 days in a row. A 2 minute short digital film was released in the 2nd phase, which went on to garner 2 million views across all digital platforms. The initiative had a total reach of 23,000,000 on Facebook.
2. Stayfree Women for Change – is an initiative undertaken by Johnson and Johnson in partnership with Samitha Social Ventures Pvt. Ltd. and Nadathur Trust’s ‘Support a Woman’ health programme; to support marginalized women and girls with equal opportunities by providing them improved health and hygiene facilities through health education, training and access to health and hygiene amenities; thus empowering them. The campaign urges people to contribute Rs. 330. The initiative includes – 2 medical check-ups and counselling in a span of 6 months, 2 haemoglobin tests in 6 months, 3 months course of iron and folic acid tablets and 6 months free supply of Stayfree sanitary napkins. The campaign reached 100,000 women and girls.
3. Vodafone Selfie4school – is a campaign for social change undertaken by a Vodafone, in partnership with ‘Breakthrough’ a human rights NGO; wherein one had to click a selfie and then upload it on social media sites like FB and Twitter with the hash tag #selfie4school. For each selfie uploaded, Vodafone Foundation promised to send 10 girls to school. The campaign was launched with a target of 25,000 girls, but soon surpassed the target. A frivolous activity like taking a selfie, was transformed into a tool for bringing social change. The campaign has an exclusive website which one can log on to via FB, Google+ and Twitter, which has a selfie wall where one can see the selfies of all the people who have participated. The initiative reached a total of 47,410 under privileged girls.
4. Sab Miller Respect the Road – was launched by Sab Miller, the second largest beer company in India, owning 10 breweries with popular brands. The ‘Respect the Road’ campaign was launched in 2011 and is still running. It urges people to behave responsibly after drinking alcohol by either calling a cab, asking for a driver or friend to drop them home. This campaign won the Best Social Media Campaign Award of FICCI International Sustainability Awards, 2013.
5. Google India’s Reach the Sky Campaign – was launched by Google India in collaboration with Unilever, Future Group and Axis Bank, to empower women to use the internet; as studies have proved that if women used internet, it would have a very positive impact on their lives and on the society at large. The target is to introduce 50 million additional women to the digital world. Google partnered with Johnson and Johnson, India times, Babyoye and others to create content that would provide relevant information to the women.



The above campaigns have shown the potential of social media to bring about social change on issues related to sustainability, while simultaneously helping the company's business interests. People associate themselves directly with the initiatives and indirectly with the company brands. (Adapted from Tripathi, V., and Bhattacharjee, D. 2016).

Social Media and Sustainability

Social media rests on five pillars – Participation, Openness, Conversation, Community and Interconnection. Participation happens when all users participate to give their opinions. Openness happens as social media itself is built on the principles of collaboration and information exchange. Open participation leads to healthy conversation between users and conversations lead to building of communities of people who share the same values and interests. The interconnections that develop on social media lead to establishment of links with other websites, resources or people (Welhoff, 2012).

The motivational constructs of online social media are – Entertainment, Interaction, Trendiness, e-WoM, dependency and trust. Entertainment – its a universal proxy for advertising, plays a significant role in influencing attitudes of consumers, increases customer loyalty and an entertaining advertising message is perceived more positively by the audience. Interaction – used for initiating conversations with followers, inviting people to share their environment related stories; which in-turn attracts other users to also visit their page and helps create online communities which provide arenas to connect, feel part of through building a sense of community and attachment. Trendiness – attracts users' attention with latest information and trends. E-WoM or the electronic word of mouth – has the most powerful effect on purchase intention, regardless of the type of social community; helps build communities and positive environmental behaviour. Dependency – people perceive social media as a trustworthy medium for information on environment and sustainable practices and hence depend on it for making purchase decisions. Trust – in social media is one of the main reasons for consumers shifting to online buying, as trust directly affects purchase intentions.

70% of adults who are active users of social media sites, do shopping online and 53% of them follow a brand. Influencers on the social media sites have a major influence on the market. Onete, Dina & Vlad (2013) found that social media is providing a good platform for sustainable businesses. In fact it provides support for different functions of business. It allows customers to gather information about products and services and compare the information with other vendors and the flow of information is continuous between consumers and manufacturers. The relationship between them is strengthened using various tools of social media viz., blogs, discussion forums, newsletters, etc. These social media tools are used for communication, marketing, advertising and help in better promotion of the products and services, at low cost and with an instant local to global reach.

The usage of social media is itself a sustainable practice, as it reduces energy and paper usage in organizations and also helps them achieve economies of scale. The social media motivational factors that drive consumer's concern for the environment are – word of mouth, interaction, entertainment, trendiness, dependency and trust. (Gupta, M and Syed, A.A. (2022).

Ballew et al., (2015) opined that the sources of influence by which social media technologies generate and facilitate pathways to pro-environmental action can be personal, social or contextual. Personal factors are the strong bond and positive attitude of the person towards environment. Social factors are the influence of other people and contextual factors are the different features of settings such as



cultures and communities. Hence social media technologies have functions which can be used to generate and facilitate the above influences towards environment friendly behaviour.

Social media also has a positive impact on human rights by providing multi-vocality in discussions, increasing awareness on rights and providing solutions.

Corporate Sustainability and Social Media

Corporate sustainability is defined as a corporation's initiatives to assess and take responsibility for their effects on environment and social well being (Chen, 2000). Companies share their reports on projects and activities related to sustainability on social media, for it is understood that sustainability addresses global issues and social media addresses a global audience. Further, the progress is shared in real-time and engages directly.

A Nielson research reveals that 58% of online consumers trust messages found on company websites, 86% of consumers are likely to trust a company that reports its sustainability results, 82% are more likely to purchase a product that clearly demonstrates the results of the company's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives (Cone Communications, 2012). Social responsibility must be accompanied by environmental responsibility. For corporate, sustainable initiatives can be for conserving the environment, respecting employee rights, practicing gender equality, supporting social causes, aiding in health and nutrition, etc. as all these are part of the concept of sustainability.

The consumers' intention to purchase was subject to their dependency on social media for sustainability information. This means that consumers who depend on social media are more likely to purchase sustainable products (Saeed, 2019). Valdes (2019) states that, "when used effectively and ethically, social media and sustainability have a collective ability to empower a company to drive substantial change through garnered stakeholder support."

Building construction sector is a hard-to-decarbonise sector. Debnath, R., Barhan, R., et al (2022) undertook a data-driven analysis of global level climate action on emissions reduction in the building sector, using 256,717 tweets across a 13 year time frame between 2009-2021. They found that public sentiments on social media are reactive to climate policy actions; as follows –

- a) Between 2009-12 – discussions around green building-led emission reduction efforts were highly influential in shaping online public perceptions of climate action.
- b) Between 2013-16 – communication around low-carbon construction and energy efficiency significantly influenced online narrative.
- c) Between 2017-21 – Significant interactions on net-zero transition, climate tech, circular economy, mass timber housing and climate justice; shaped the online climate discourse.

They concluded that positive sentiments are more prominent and recurrent and comprise a larger share of the social media conversation. However, negative sentiments rose by 30-40% after major events like the Paris Agreement and the EU Green Deal that suggested restricting climate change to 1.5oC; which required rapid and extensive changes around energy use, building design and broader planning of cities and infrastructure. The Paris Agreement included net-zero carbon building commitments of USD 1.2 trillion by the World Green Building Council; a Race-to-Zero through the C40 Cities – Clean Construction Action Coalition, that includes 1049 cities representing around 722 million people and committed to reducing 1.4 gigatons of CO2 equivalent by 2030.



Czarnecka, M., Kinelski, G., et al (2022) studied the effects of social media engagement in shaping Green Energy Business Models, through an online survey published on the internet, which received 2137 responses. The results show that the perception of energy companies' activities are to a greater extent related to the level of consumer involvement in various pro-ecological behaviours in social media and trust in social media.

Green Marketing

E-commerce relates to consumer engagement for online transaction with vendors, whereas social-commerce relates to the participation of consumers in direct and indirect commercial transactions. (Pavlou and Fygenson, 2006). Direct transaction refers to the purchasing phase of consumers using social media networks, while indirect transaction refers to electronic word of mouth (EVoM), information search, referral activities, suggestions, etc. (Zhang et al., 2014).

Consumer Surveys reveal that even though 65% of the consumers think positively about eco-friendly products and services, only 26% of them go on to actually buy brands that advocate sustainability. This gap between intention and action has to be narrowed, for meeting corporate sustainable goals and ultimately the planet. Greenhouse gas emissions depend on the products the customers choose and how they use and dispose them. The onus is on the corporate to initiate actions to drive customer attitude towards eco-friendly products and services. White, K., et al (2019) identified five actions that companies can take to bring about pro-environmental behaviour in consumers; which are – 1) Social Influence, 2) Shape Good Habits, 3) Leverage the Domino Effect, 4) Decide whether to talk to the heart or the brain and 5) Favour experiences over ownership. Social influencing can be done simply by telling online shoppers that other people are buying eco-friendly products and this can lead to a 65% increase in making shoppers purchase at least one sustainably produced product. When it comes to Shaping Good Habits – a good example is the campaign by Jack Daniel's which used tag lines like – “With all due respect to progress, the world could use a little less plastic” and “Even Jack Daniel's waste is too good to waste”. The company sells its waste and unused resources to other industries and does not send any waste to landfills. It makes barbecue briquettes for grilling, with charcoal from the waste produced in its processing vats. Without losing its standing as a rugged masculine brand, it was able to link sustainability with quality and great taste.

The concept of Green Marketing was introduced in India in the 1990s and the Government of India (GoI) even initiated an Eco Mark scheme in 1991; but it did not pick up pace. However the growing problems associated with pollution, climate change, global warming, discrimination and a pandemic; led to increased awareness among the people. All these problems are in some way or the other related to the life style and consumption habits of its societies and can surely be rectified by incorporating sustainability into the practices. People are understanding this and have become receptive to brands that are doing their bit towards sustainability. The brands are taking up many Green Marketing initiatives and marketing agencies are gearing up for that, through – assisting in designing the new eco-friendly packaging, curating the best communication strategy, making necessary cultural shifts internally, etc. to align their activities with SDGs and create a long term impact for the brands. Subscriber-based electronic newsletters are highly effective and should form part of the overall travel marketing mix.

Further, the present governmental regulations require businesses to reduce their carbon footprint in demonstrable, measurable and time-bound fashion. The consumers started making brand choices based



on the green credentials of the businesses. The more honest and committed the brand is, the better trust and credibility it will command.

A survey reveals that 97% of Indians say that they will discontinue using a product or service, if they come to know that it damages the environment. This has made it inevitable for companies to be responsible and caring towards environment sustainability. The CEOs have realized that to be responsible professionals in today’s world, they all need to be aware on the 17 Sustainable Development Goals and relate their company’s efforts towards fulfilling some of these and convey the same to its customers through Green Marketing.

An elaborate survey research by Gupta, M. and Syed, A.A. (2022) explored –a) the relationship between online social media motivational factors and environmental concern of citizens, b) observed the impact of environmental concern on attitude towards green products and c) measured the influence of this attitude towards green products on willingness to pay. It found that Indian citizens in general showed concern for the environment and expressed willingness to purchase green products; and that social media offers the best tools for marketing green products because of its objective nature and the participation of both individuals and organizations. The study recommends that marketers who invest in social media should do it more consciously and correctly to keep up the trust. The findings and their implications are presented below –

Findings	Implications
Social media dependency is an important antecedent for consumer’s environmental concern. Consumer’s environmental consciousness and concern was found to be more likely to be governed by their dependency on social media for sustainability information.	Marketers should update the social media account and post content regularly without over saturating the account as it will annoy audience. Improve website search engine optimisation which will display the website on top list and hence increase audience views. Start social media giveaways which will engage people and will influence them to try your business making them more dependable. Be transparent and communicate openly with a surety to promote brand’s environmental services, learning, performance, improvement and collaboration
With increased trust in social media, user’s social media involvement increases	Green firms should foster relationships based on mutual gain and mutual interest. This can leverage customer loyalty.

The marketing agencies undertaking the work of Green Marketing for the companies have a moral responsibility to follow sustainability principles in their own companies. This is a narrative that has gained momentum within the marketing agencies’ associations and the consensus is to have third-party assessments of the carbon footprint of the advertising and media industries. This may not be happening soon, as it will take some time for the whole ecosystem to adapt. Both Brands and Agencies will need a unified focus on sustainability.



Green Consumers

They are people who are sensitive towards environment and express environmental concern and are influenced by the green campaigns, by green brands. Surveys reveal that consumers having a high concern for environment have positive intention of buying green products. Green consciousness impacts the attitude and intention of people towards green products. According to Theory of Planned Behaviour and Theory of Reasoned Action, Purchase Intention is an attitudinal attribute, whereas willingness to pay is a behavioural attribute, and that, in decision making processes; attitude is an antecedent of behaviour. Hence it can be said that attitude leads to willingness to pay.

Green consumer behaviour has been mostly towards food and non-food products for the household. These consumers prioritised products that were organically produced or met the 5R criteria of – refuse, reduce, reuse, repurpose and recycle. The green products in these categories were subjects of intensive advertisement campaigns. This trend has encouraged companies in other sectors to develop green strategies and communicate them to customers. It can be expected that as environmental awareness increases, consumers will try to recognize the possibilities of expanding their consumption towards greener products in other sectors too.

Presently environmental awareness and sustainable development are issues that are essential to take into consideration in customer relations. Also, a favourable investment climate, supportive regulation, new partner ecosystems, better technologies and new business models, green energy investments, etc. are more capable of delivering very good returns in the near future (Czarnecka, M., Kinelski, G., et al., 2022).

Social Media Mediating Ecotourism

The International Ecotourism Society (TIES) defines Ecotourism as ‘Responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people’.

Ecotourism is widely noticed on social media platforms, mainly Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, et al. The kinds of usage, the information available on these social media sites is put to, is limitless. The information is available under many themes – around locations, organizations, travel & leisure, local businesses and communities, etc. Free videos of ecotourism destinations are available on You Tube. LinkedIn has an active ecotourism network group for tourism and related professionals. The result is that everything about the destination is known before planning to travel there and social media has become part of travel experience. Social media gives people the ability to have hands-on experience of the location and simultaneously act as a newsfeed with updates and constant communication. Social Media and Ecotourism has become a new way of life.

An online survey of university students by Clark, M., Clark, P. And Latta, M. (2019) reveals that millennials are interested in ecotourism and gather information about it from friends and social media and that they would choose an ecotourism destination if money were not an issue. They believe it is a good cause and plan to visit an ecotourism destination within the next year. This finding is promising for ecotourism marketers targeting millennials, as it will be easier to persuade them to book a visit. Based on their survey the researchers suggest that ecotourism marketers should utilize a multi-platform approach, put out positive reviews via social media; consider budget-friendly options; and focus on the natural environment and animal conservation efforts. Further, marketers could potentially partner with universities to provide learning opportunities, marketing internships and other opportunities to students.



A study on the role of social media marketing in ecotourism, by Thong, J.Z., Lo, M.C. Ramayah, T. And Mohamad, A.A. (2022) reveals that tourists perceived that destination accessibility acts as an important determinant of ecotourism competitiveness along with tourism infrastructure. Tourists perceived that social media marketing as a significant digital marketing tool which helps them to understand and be aware of the important attributes of the destination. The results demonstrated that social media marketing positively moderated the relationship between tourism infrastructure and destination accessibility, while showing no positive and significant moderation between range of activities, quality of tourism services and destination competitiveness.

A study by Siddique, M.M., Yasir, M., et al. (2022), used the concept of the Theory of Planned Behaviour and empirically tested the relationship between digital marketing strategies and ecotourism behaviour based on the conservation of natural areas, community development, and environmental education. They found that, a) Several organizations have adopted digital marketing strategies (blogs, mobile applications, search engine optimisation, and social media); b) Digital marketing strategies are employed as the control behaviour mechanism as a theoretical complement to planned behaviour implementation; c) Destination image, which is used as the intention that leads to actual behaviour; d) The use of digital media in environmental education conveys the message of responsible behaviour.

Social media and blogging are extensively utilised to spread information on ecotourism, offering a fantastic opportunity for locals to use these platforms to promote the local natural environment, destination image, and cultural values to tourists. This also benefits the local community economically and sends a message to tourists about responsible behaviour.

Another survey on the role of digital media on ecotourism by Akash, J.H. and Aram, I.A. (2018), reveals that most of the respondents stated that digital media can persuade, while newspapers can provide access for more credible and complete information that satisfies the information completeness and authenticity. As digital media is more persuasive, most of the organizations use digital media as a broadcasting platform to magnify messages from traditional media sources such as radio, television, and print media. Digital media can be entirely a new way of approach for reaching the target audience and fast feedback for the content. It has a pivotal role for effective communication of informing and creating awareness. Digital media allows the users to access in any platform (including desktop, laptop, tablets, and mobile phones – in a convergence form). It is a fascinating medium. The respondents ranked digital media as top in contributing to public environmental awareness. By generating awareness in the host community (regional people) and guest community (tourists) through the right media can reduce the negative impacts of mass tourism and for attaining sustainable development along with ecotourism.

Conclusion

Media is surely mediating ecotourism and social media most of all is mediating the entire spectrum of ecotourism activities and moderating these activities amongst all the stakeholders of the ecotourism industry, be they tourism enterprises, tourists, governmental / regulatory agencies, local communities or any other. The prospects for intensification of social awareness of all issues environmental, is very good and will surely lead to sustainability principles being followed by all stakeholders of ecotourism. Critical discourses on social media will ultimately force all the stakeholders to respects the integrity of environments, promotes the well-being of local people, enhances environmental quality, upholds values of rights and equity, and promotes conservation, sustainability and research.



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