



Research Paper

Role of Social Media in Environmental Public Awareness Campaign

Dr.Satyabrata Das, Dr.Sagarika Dash

Assistant Professor-III, Amity School of Communication, Amity University Chhattisgarh, Raipur
Associate Professor, Amity School of Communication, Amity University Chhattisgarh, Raipur

Abstract

Now-a-Days we are so much into Social media. By facilitating quick information sharing, civic participation, and interaction with legislators, social media has emerged as a revolutionary force in increasing public awareness of environmental issues. This study looks at how social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter are used in campaigns to raise public awareness of environmental issues. This study examines case studies of effective digital advocacy campaigns, like #FridaysForFuture and #BeatPlasticPollution, to show how social media promotes sustainable behaviour, global engagement, and public opinion. The study also looks at issues including false information, feeling tired, overwhelmed, or less motivated from constantly engaging in online activism, such as signing petitions, sharing awareness posts, or joining virtual campaigns and the disconnect between online and offline action. The results imply that social media is an effective instrument for raising environmental consciousness, but in order to maximize its effects, it requires effective and well planned communication and cooperation with traditional media and policymakers.

Key Words: Social Media, Awareness, Environmental issues, Information, Campaign

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I. Introduction

Environmental issues such as climate change, deforestation, pollution, and biodiversity loss require immediate global attention. We need to have more awareness for such glowing issues. Such issues have a great impact on our daily life directly or indirectly. Although our government has taken many initiatives to address these issues but somehow or the other we fail to achieve spreading of environmental public awareness among the public. Traditional awareness methods, such as print media and television, have now been supplemented—and in some cases, replaced—by social media. This paper examines how social media facilitates public engagement, spreads environmental knowledge, and influences policy-making.

The Role of Social Media in Environmental Awareness

1. Widespread Reach and Accessibility: Social media has transformed environmental awareness by making information more accessible and ensuring a widespread reach across diverse audiences. Traditional media, such as newspapers and television, often have geographical and financial limitations, whereas social media provides instant, cost-effective, and global dissemination of information.

Social media platforms enable organizations and individuals to disseminate information instantly to a global audience. Viral campaigns have the potential to educate millions within hours.

* Instant Information Sharing

Social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok allow environmental organizations and activists to share news, research, and urgent alerts in real-time. This ensures that environmental concerns, such as deforestation, pollution, and climate change, reach a global audience within minutes.

* Breaking Geographical Barriers

Unlike traditional awareness campaigns that may be limited to specific regions, social media platforms help spread environmental messages across continents. Even individuals in remote areas can access and share environmental information, contributing to a more inclusive global conversation.

*** Viral Campaigns for Maximum Awareness**

Hashtag campaigns such as #ClimateAction, #PlasticFreeJuly, and #SaveTheOceans have gained massive traction, reaching millions worldwide. Viral trends encourage people to participate, educate themselves, and take action, making environmental advocacy more engaging and widespread.

***Free and Open Access to Environmental Knowledge**

Unlike print media or paid subscriptions, social media provides free access to environmental content. NGOs, scientists, and activists can publish reports, infographics, and videos without restrictions, allowing anyone with internet access to stay informed and take action.

The widespread reach and accessibility of social media have revolutionized environmental awareness by eliminating barriers to information, engaging diverse audiences, and enabling global participation. However, for its full potential to be realized, efforts must be made to combat misinformation and sustain long-term engagement.

2. Engagement and Interactivity: Social media has significantly enhanced public engagement and interactivity in environmental awareness campaigns. Unlike traditional media, which is often one-way communication, social media enables direct interaction between environmental organizations, activists, and the general public. This fosters real-time discussions, collective action, and widespread participation in environmental advocacy. Unlike traditional media, social media allows direct interaction through comments, shares, and live discussions. Hashtags like #ClimateAction and #PlasticFreeJuly promote participation and awareness.

*** Two-Way Communication and Public Participation**

Social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok allow users to comment, share, and discuss environmental issues. This interactive engagement helps people express their opinions, ask questions, and contribute to global environmental conversations.

*** Use of Hashtags and Online Movements**

Hashtags play a vital role in mobilizing people and creating global environmental awareness. Examples include:

#ClimateAction – Encouraging people to take steps toward climate solutions.

#PlasticFreeJuly – Promoting a plastic-free lifestyle and sustainable alternatives.

#FridaysForFuture – A youth-led movement inspired by Greta Thunberg to push for climate policy changes.

These campaigns create engagement-driven awareness, as users participate by sharing posts, joining discussions, and pledging actions.

*** Live Streams, Polls, and Q&A Sessions**

Many environmental organizations and influencers use live video streams on YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook to discuss pressing environmental issues. Features like polls and Q&A sessions allow the audience to actively engage with experts, NGOs, and policymakers, leading to better awareness and understanding.

*** Gamification and Challenges for Awareness**

Interactive challenges, such as the TrashTag Challenge, where people post before-and-after pictures of cleaned-up areas, encourage environmental action in a fun and engaging way. These activities inspire wider participation and real-world impact.

Social media's interactive nature has transformed environmental awareness by making it more engaging, participatory, and action-oriented. By allowing direct communication, fostering viral movements, and utilizing interactive tools, social media ensures that environmental advocacy reaches and actively involves people worldwide.

3. Mobilization and Advocacy: Social media has become a powerful catalyst for mobilizing individuals and communities toward environmental advocacy. Unlike traditional media, which primarily raises awareness, social media drives action, enabling people to organize protests, sign petitions, and push for policy changes.

*** Social Media as a Tool for Activist Movements**

Social media has fueled the growth of global environmental movements by helping activists reach millions. Notable examples include:

Fridays for Future (FFF) – A youth-led climate movement inspired by Greta Thunberg that started as a small school strike and became a global phenomenon through social media platforms.

Extinction Rebellion (XR) – Uses social media to organize climate protests and demand urgent environmental policies.

These movements have successfully mobilized millions of people worldwide through social media engagement and advocacy.

*** Online Petitions and Digital Activism**

Social media makes it easier for people to participate in digital activism through online petitions and crowdfunding campaigns. Platforms like Change.org and Avaaz allow users to sign petitions urging governments and corporations to take environmental action. Successful cases include:

The European Union's ban on single-use plastics, influenced by widespread social media advocacy.

Amazon Rainforest Protection petitions, which gathered millions of signatures and pressured policymakers to address deforestation.

*** Viral Awareness Campaigns and Fundraising**

Social media has facilitated successful fundraising campaigns and viral movements, such as:

#TeamTrees – Led by YouTuber MrBeast and the Arbor Day Foundation, this campaign raised over \$23 million to plant 23 million trees worldwide.

Australian Bushfire Relief (2019-2020) – Social media campaigns mobilized millions in donations and international aid for wildlife and forest restoration.

These campaigns demonstrate how social media can turn awareness into real-world impact.

*** Influencing Policy and Corporate Accountability**

Social media pressure has forced governments and corporations to adopt eco-friendly policies. For example:

Coca-Cola and Nestlé faced backlash for plastic pollution, leading to commitments to reduce plastic waste.

Governments have declared climate emergencies due to growing online activism and public pressure.

By amplifying public voices, social media serves as a bridge between citizens and policymakers, urging them to take environmental action.

Activist movements such as Fridays for Future, led by Greta Thunberg, have gained international traction due to social media exposure.

Social media is a game-changer in environmental mobilization and advocacy. It empowers individuals, drives large-scale movements, and holds corporations and governments accountable. By leveraging digital activism, viral campaigns, and grassroots organizing, social media has transformed environmental advocacy into a global movement with real impact.

4. Influencing Policy and Decision-Making: Online petitions, digital protests, and trending topics often push policymakers to address environmental issues.

Social media has emerged as a powerful tool for influencing policy and decision-making on environmental issues. By amplifying public concerns, mobilizing activists, and pressuring governments and corporations, social media plays a crucial role in shaping environmental policies and sustainable practices.

*** Public Pressure on Governments and Policymakers**

Social media allows citizens to directly engage with policymakers and demand action on environmental issues.

Viral campaigns and trending hashtags create a sense of urgency, leading to government responses.

Example: Climate Emergency Declarations – Many governments, including the UK, Canada, and the European Union, declared climate emergencies due to widespread social media activism and online petitions.

#ActOnClimate – This movement has successfully pushed policymakers to adopt stricter environmental laws and carbon reduction targets.

*** Online Petitions and Digital Advocacy**

Petitions on platforms like Change.org and Avaaz gain traction through social media shares, compelling leaders to respond.

Example: EU Ban on Single-Use Plastics – A social media-driven petition helped influence the European Parliament's decision to ban plastic straws, cutlery, and other single-use plastics.

Example: Protecting the Amazon Rainforest – Millions signed online petitions pressuring world leaders to take action against deforestation in the Amazon.

*** Holding Corporations Accountable**

Social media exposes corporate environmental violations and forces companies to adopt sustainable practices.

Example: Coca-Cola and Nestlé Plastic Waste Campaigns – Online activism highlighted their role in plastic pollution, pushing both companies to pledge major reductions in plastic use.

Example: Fashion Industry Sustainability – Campaigns like #WhoMadeMyClothes pressured brands to adopt eco-friendly and ethical production practices.

* Real-Time Policy Discussions and Collaboration

Policymakers and global leaders now use social media platforms to engage with the public, discuss policies, and collaborate on environmental issues.

United Nations Climate Conferences (COP Summits) – Social media campaigns increase public engagement, allowing activists and citizens to directly influence negotiations.

Example: Greta Thunberg's Social Media Influence – Her viral posts and speeches have shaped global climate discussions, influencing world leaders to prioritize climate action.

Social media is a driving force in influencing environmental policy and decision-making. By amplifying public voices, holding corporations accountable, and facilitating direct engagement with policymakers, social media ensures that environmental issues remain a priority on political and corporate agendas. To maximize its impact, continued collaboration between activists, governments, and organizations is essential.

II. Case Studies

1. #TeamTrees Campaign: Launched by YouTuber MrBeast in partnership with the Arbor Day Foundation, this initiative raised over \$23 million to plant 23 million trees.

2. The Plastic-Free Challenge: Social media users shared their commitment to reducing plastic waste, leading to increased corporate and individual participation in sustainable practices.

3. Australian Bushfire Awareness (2019-2020): Social media platforms facilitated global donations and support for wildfire relief efforts, highlighting environmental concerns.

Challenges and Limitations

1. Misinformation and Greenwashing: Not all environmental claims on social media are accurate. Some corporations engage in greenwashing, misleading the public.

2. Short Attention Span: Viral trends often lose momentum quickly, making it difficult to sustain long-term engagement.

3. Algorithm Influence: Social media algorithms prioritize engaging content over educational material, sometimes limiting the reach of critical environmental messages.

III. Conclusion and Recommendations

Social media plays a crucial role in raising environmental awareness and fostering activism. However, to maximize its effectiveness, stakeholders must combat misinformation, ensure sustained engagement, and leverage algorithms strategically. Governments, NGOs, and influencers should collaborate to amplify reliable environmental messaging and inspire collective action.

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