

Environmental issues and new media: An examination of how social media can be used to spread environmental awareness and encourage Ecotourism.

القضايا البيئية ووسائل الإعلام الجديدة: دراسة وصفية تحليلية لكيفية استخدام وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي لنشر الوعي البيئي وتشجيع السياحة البيئية.

Dr. Louati Rabiaa

University of Algiers 3, Faculty of Media and Communication Sciences - Algiers (Algeria),
louati.rabiaa@univ-alger3.dz

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Abstract:

Since the beginning of the 20th century, the role of the media in addressing environmental issues has grown as societies have become increasingly reliant on the media to deepen environmental awareness among citizens. Furthermore, media and environmental awareness are an important and pivotal issue for the world, particularly in light of future characterized by globalization and technological revolution, so that it can benefit from new media.

it can also be exploited in promoting eco-tourism areas, given the great advantages of this new media, especially social networking sites that enjoy flexibility, rapid spread, and a wide audience, which are characteristics that contribute to enhancing interaction and dialogue to discuss issues and direct individual behavior towards more sustainable behavior, to achieve a better life for the individual and society. This research explores the cognitive, theoretical, and conceptual foundations of social media's role in raising environmental awareness and promoting eco-friendly tourism using an inductive, descriptive, and analytical approach.

Keywords: New media; social media; Environmental issues; Environmental awareness; Ecotourism.

JEL Classification Codes : F18, H23.

ملخص:

منذ بداية القرن العشرين تنامي دور وسائل الإعلام في معالجة القضايا البيئية، حيث أصبحت المجتمعات تعتمد بشكل متزايد على وسائل الإعلام لتعميق الوعي البيئي بين المواطنين، و علاوة على ذلك يعد الوعي الإعلامي والبيئي قضية مهمة ومحورية للعالم، خاصة في ظل المستقبل الذي يتسم بالعولمة والثورة التكنولوجية، بحيث يمكن الاستفادة من وسائل الإعلام الجديدة، كما يمكن استغلالها في الترويج لمجالات السياحة البيئية، خاصة الإعلام الجديد و مواقع التواصل الاجتماعي التي تتمتع بالمرونة، وسرعة الانتشار، وجمهور واسع، وهي خصائص تساهم في تعزيز التفاعل والحوار لمناقشة القضايا وتوجيه السلوك الفردي نحو سلوك أكثر استدامة، لتحقيق حياة أفضل للفرد والمجتمع، و من ثمة يستكشف هذا البحث الأسس المعرفية والنظرية و المفاهيمية لدور وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي في رفع الوعي البيئي وتعزيز السياحة الصديقة للبيئة من خلال الاعتماد على مقارنة وصفية و تحليلية .

كلمات مفتاحية: الإعلام الجديد، مواقع التواصل الاجتماعي، القضايا البيئية، الوعي البيئي، السياحة البيئية.

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Corresponding author: Louati Rabiaa, **e-mail:** louati.rabiaa@univ-alger3.dz

INTRODUCTION:

The media has a significant role to play in instilling correct environmental values and behaviors, as well as spreading environmental culture. It also has a great ability to influence positive environmental trends by giving environmental issues priority within media programs, providing information on the state of the environment, and enabling the public and those interested in environmental affairs to actively participate in the repercussions of environmental issues.

The media has an important place in any society because of its effective role in shaping and activating the various aspects of life and linking channels of communication between individuals, peoples, and nations. The issue of preserving the environment was considered an educational and awareness issue in the first place, whose responsibility rests with the role of the various media in instilling correct concepts about the environment in all segments of society.

Talking about environmental issues in various media has been neglected for long periods, and attention to this topic is relatively recent compared to the extent of the deterioration experienced by large areas of the world, especially in developing countries. Political actions and their effects on the media system, and their role in taking care of and dealing with environmental issues, can also be linked to cultural, social, and economic roles and functions.

Recently, social networking sites have become an important part of our daily lives and have invaded various areas of our daily lives. Therefore, investing in social networking sites is very necessary because of the advantages that make it the most effective means of contributing to raising awareness among individuals about environmental issues. This is done by introducing the awareness activities carried out by various official bodies and institutions, non-governmental organizations, associations, and even individuals.

Face book is one of the most popular sites used by users, and it has captured the attention of many specialists, associations, and environmental protection organizations in order to spread awareness in order to achieve benefit and development, as well as to achieve the goals of achieving environmental awareness, tourism promotion of eco-destinations, and eco-friendly places.

Based on the foregoing, the main problem of this research paper revolves around two questions:

- **How can new media be used to raise environmental awareness?**
- **What are the most important roles of social networks in promoting eco-tourism destinations?**

1- Rresearch Méthodology:

In this study, we relied on the inductive approach, which expresses a set of steps used to describe a specific matter, and this description helps the conclusion process. The inductive approach in scientific research is the collection of information through observation to reach results.

The inductive approach is based on description, definition, and classification, and then searching for links and relationships between similar phenomena, which is what we decided to rely on through this research, which is concerned with knowing the relationship and roles that new media play in raising awareness and sensitivity to environmental issues in addition to knowing how it can be exploited to promote ecotourism.

2- Defining Concepts and Terms:

2-1 Social Media:

Social networking began to appear in 1997, but it did not spread widely until after 2004, and the most prominent of these networks is the Face book site for comprehensive social applications, which was invented by the American university student "Mark Zuckerberg."*

Social media are sites and applications that begin with the user creating an account on a social networking site on the global Internet, allowing him to build a personal database, a launch platform, an electronic presence, and a virtual personality, to publish data, comments, documents, and messages, photos, and videos, and then progress to the stage of networking and sharing with others by acquiring friends and forming groups or affiliations with previously formed groups or affiliations.

Social media also refers to "the various activities that integrate technology, social interaction, and content creation." Through such social media, individuals or groups of individuals who collaborate create web content, organize content, index it, modify it, make comments, or combine it with personal creations. (Thierry Wellhoff, 2011, p.55)

According to some scholars and researchers in the field, the concept of electronic social media is a narrow concept from the concept of social media, which is defined as "sites and applications that allow users to create or provide certain contents to others or to participate in social communication (Al-Suwaidi Jamal Sanad, p 22.) , and accordingly, some of these researchers classify social media into six types, including social media.

Social networking sites are defined as "the new ways of communicating in the digital environment, allowing smaller groups of people to meet and gather via the Internet and to exchange benefits and information, and it is an environment that allows individuals and groups to make their voices and the voices of their communities heard for the whole world (Bushra Jamil, p 47).

It is also expressed as "systems associated with one or more types of interdependence that include shared values, visions, and ideas; social contact; kinship; conflict; financial and commercial exchanges; joint membership in organizations and groups participating in a particular event; and many other aspects of relationships." (Mamdouh Abdullah, 2012, p. 31)

They are "communication channels that create an open, interactive social structure capable of innovation without compromising the shape of this structure, with the difficulty of setting a specific goal for these innovative social cells through technical and information development." (Bin Dadush Iman, p22).

* Mark Zuckerberg became famous after developing the Facebook mashup site, and after that, his Harvard colleagues contacted him and agreed on a website for communication between students, which was called Harvard Connection. From this idea, he developed his project in partnership with three of his colleagues, where they created the Facebook website from within the walls of the university. In 2004, he left the university and devoted his time to work on Facebook, after the number of users reached more than one million.

The French social media specialist Cavazza* defines it as "a set of services that allow the development of conversations and social interactions on the Internet or while navigating it." (Cavazza, 2017)

The researcher Ballas defines social networks as "electronic programs used to build virtual groups on the Internet, where individuals can communicate with each other and interact for different purposes;" (Dnnah Ellison Boyd, June 2007) , as defined by researchers Ellison and Boyd as "sites that are formed within the Internet space and allow individuals to provide a glimpse into their social life and allow them to form different social relationships, interact with their list of friends, express their point of view, and comment on various issues." (Zafarani Reza and Others, 2014, p. 21)

Kaplan and Henlein also define social networks as "a group of Internet-based applications that rely on Web 2.0 underpinning technology and that allow the creation and sharing of user-generated content." (Thierry Wellhoff,,2011, p17).

Social media can be defined according to the following five pillars (Al-Hamamy Al-Sadiq, 2016):

- Participation: Everything is done to encourage users to contribute and express their opinions, thus removing the barrier between the public and the media.
- Openness: Social media is based on the principles of cooperation and information exchange. Everyone can participate, and there are no barriers to entry.
- Conversation: Although traditional media tend to "tell" or convey a message, social media is more into dialogue, which involves listening attentively.
- Community: Social media can build like-minded communities.
- Interconnection: Most social media develops through interconnection by making use of links to other sites, resources, or people.

The term "social media" also refers to a wide category of applications based on several functions, such as interaction with users, publishing and distributing content, and building networks of social relations. Social media applications are distinguished from each other due to the specific functions they provide and the nature of the purposes for which they are designed. Some applications are designed to build social relationships, such as Face book, which is the most important model for the so-called social networks, which represent the most prominent category of social media, while others are designed to exchange photos and videos. (Forsé Michel, 2008, pp. 10-19.)

Michel Forsé defines a social network as "a set of relationships between a group of actors such that this group can be organized (a company, for example) or not (such as a network of friends). These relationships can be of very different natures (authority, exchange of gifts, advice, etc.); they can also be specialized or asymmetric; and the actors are most often individuals, but they can be families, associations, etc. (Forsé Michel, 2008, pp. 10-19)

* Frédéric Cavazza is a digital specialist and founding partner of SYSK, he has worked in the internet professions since 1997, i.e. 25 years of experience in digital acquired with agencies, He is the author of the blog FredCavazza.net which he has been writing for over 18 years and on which he has published nearly 4,000 articles. He is also the author of two books : "Social Business" published in 2014 and "Mobile Internet" published in 2015. He presents himself as a "Marketing Technologist", a hybrid profile combining the potential of new technologies with market opportunities

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It follows that virtual social networks share three main characteristics, as follows:(Panteli Niki, 2009, p. 27.)

- **Multimedia:**

Virtual social networks are spaces where multiple media intersect (such as audio, video, text, blogger, and captionable images), collide, and interact in multiple and even unexpected ways. Jenkins refers to this phenomenon of "media convergence" that characterizes Web 2.0 sites, and access to these dynamic Web 2.0 sites allows the development of the network and the promotion of a culture of participation despite being unfamiliar with other participating individuals.

When individuals do not have access to or do not understand how these types of technology work, they can be excluded from virtual networks and subsequently from digital society, but when they have access to these media, networking opportunities, both personal and professional, are countless.

- **Huge:**

This characteristic is related to the size of the network membership. Social or other virtual networks depend on the participation and commitment of members, so those networks may have several thousand or even several million members. For example, Facebook, which was founded only in 2004, is said to have 80 million active users (Facebook website, July 10, 2008). Research has shown that users who spend more time in these communities are more likely to develop personal and emotional relationships with this community and thus increase the frequency of visitation

- **Versatile:**

Emerging social networks can support simultaneous interactions between several (sometimes hundreds or even thousands) of users, such as in so-called multi-user online games, which can have up to thousands of user-players competing against each other, so that the true identity of the players in these sites does not matter, and in such environments, these networks are used for multiple purposes not only related to playing but also for interaction and e-commerce.

2-2 Environmental Media:

Environmental media, through its various means, is a branch of media. It is one of the most important means for developing awareness of environmental issues and problems, deepening the citizen's sense of his duties and responsibilities towards the environment, and spreading the concepts of sustainable development. In particular, after the increase in social, economic, and political pressures on the environment and its components and elements and the increasing need of societies for environmental news and knowledge of the effects of disasters, environmental pollution incidents, and climatic changes on social and economic conditions,

The term "environmental media" appeared almost in the seventies of the last century, and its concept and use developed as it was merely a means of conveying environmental news and press excitement to achieve high sales.

Now, it has a legal entity, policies, and plans to achieve various environmental goals by informing the recipients and target audiences of the environmental message and media material with all objective facts and information in a manner that contributes to rooting sustainable

environmental development and enlightening the targets to form a correct opinion on the environmental issues and problems raised.

Environmental media is defined as a tool that works to clarify concepts by providing all objective facts and information to the receiver and target audience of the environmental media message in a way that contributes to rooting sustainable environmental development and enlightening the target audience with a sound opinion on the issues and environmental problems raised (Abdullah Ahmad Al-Shaya Abdul Aziz, 2003, p. 18.)

The World Bank also defined environmental media as the transmission of environmental information by agencies or non-governmental organizations to enrich the public's knowledge and influence its opinions, ideas, and behaviors towards the environment (Ali Ajwa, 2004, p. 120.)

Environmental media is one of the most important wings of environmental awareness, and it is a tool that, if properly invested, has a positive impact on advancing environmental awareness and spreading sound awareness of environmental issues. (Gamal El-Din El-Sayed Ali Saleh, p. 93)

2- Social Networks and The Environmental Relationships, Roles and Importance:

In recent decades, the role of the media has emerged in educating the public about environmental preservation and urging the practice of a lifestyle that preserves natural resources, through rationalizing the use of water and energy and urging the use of methods that ensure the continuation of industrial and technological development and meet human needs today, as well as the sustainable continuation of the development wheel.

Without prejudice to the natural resources of future generations, this led to the emergence of a specialized branch of media, the environmental media, which directs its message to serve environmental issues, sheds light on environmental problems and their effects, and raises awareness of their dangers using the traditional means and channels of media to reach the target audience.

Environmental media aims to clarify and simplify environmental concepts and to form environmental awareness among the masses by highlighting the existing environmental problems and ways and methods of solving them and addressing a media discourse to stakeholders and decision-makers, urging them to take decisions and measures that ensure the protection of the environment, reduce the depletion of its resources, and limit the harmful effects of environmental degradation.

With the development of modern means of communication and the growing use of the Internet as a widespread medium for transmitting news and information and the emergence of the term "new media" and the spread of social media, environmental media had a large share of this technical revolution, and the term "environmental electronic media" or "green media" emerged, which shared goals and messages with traditional media but relied on modern technologies, web services, applications, and social sites so that it could take advantage and combine the traditional form of media messages with the features made possible by the new media, such as widespread interactivity and the use of multimedia to deliver more effective and more persuasive messages.

The new media also made it possible for new groups to exercise their role in spreading environmental awareness and drawing attention to environmental issues. This role is no longer

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limited to ministries and official bodies but extends to individuals, civil society organizations, researchers, media professionals, writers, and bloggers.

Several channels and pages that raise environmental issues and problems have emerged on social networks, led by Face book, YouTube, and Twitter, by providing information and news related to the environment and its problems, calling for voluntary activities and campaigns, and creating environmental awareness among users, as the Face book network has a large base of those who can involve them in environmental and development issues.

A study conducted several years ago by researcher Fatiha Kihel, entitled "New Media and Spreading Environmental Awareness," concluded that a high percentage of social media users who were included in the study use Face book regularly.

The respondents acknowledged, at a high rate, that Face book contributes to spreading environmental awareness among them, as it plays multiple roles that are not limited to the social role of entertainment, but rather go beyond it to other more effective roles, as it has become a means of accessing information and news in addition to its awareness role in various fields.

The study concluded that Facebook contributes to crystallizing and spreading environmental awareness among the masses of users as one of the new media applications in particular that can be employed to serve environmental media (Zaher Hisham, 2019).

In addition to the role that social networks play in spreading environmental culture and creating awareness of environmental issues and problems, a clear role has emerged in the field of new media for websites, blogs, and news sites in achieving the goals of environmental media and communicating its message.

3- The Relationship and Significance Between Social Media and Eco-Tourism:

Tourism's growth and prosperity are the result of its interaction with the place and the environment. A good environment is one of the most important resources that help advance tourism and increase its movement, and the development of tourist areas should not harm the social and economic interests of the population, the environment, or natural resources, which are the main attraction. tourism, (Ahmed El-Gallad, p. 42.)

Accordingly, the rational management of tourism must make an effective contribution to the protection and development of the natural environment and the human and cultural heritage of societies.

The term "ecotourism" appeared in the eighties of the last century as an inevitable result of the development of the global tourism movement and the emergence of mass tourism, which led to the emergence of a large number of environmental and social negatives in countries around the world.

It came to express a new type of environmentally friendly tourism activity practiced by man, preserving the natural and cultural heritage of the environment in which he lives and practices his activities and his life.

The World Environment Fund defines ecotourism as "traveling to natural areas that have not been polluted and whose natural balance has not been disturbed in order to enjoy their scenery, wild animals, and civilization in the past and present."(Marzouq Ayed Al-Aqeed and others, 2001, p. 57).

Ecotourism is about enjoying nature in the first place, and it is linked to several activities such as sea fishing, mountain climbing, marine sports, trips to the forests, desert safaris, roaming in archaeological and historical areas, and other forms of ecotourism.

One of the most important requirements of eco-tourism is not to disturb the ecological balance resulting from human behavior and the pollution and damage it may cause.

Ecotourism is also defined as "traveling to visit natural sites to enjoy nature and the accompanying cultural landmarks in a spirit of environmental responsibility that ensures the preservation of natural sites and does not affect them, reduces the negative effects of the visit as much as possible, and provides opportunities for economic participation and social services for the local population" (Dabour Nabil, 2004, p. 16.)

Ecotourism includes important aspects related to the preservation of biodiversity using the tourism activities themselves through:

- Protecting the bio-environmental and cultural biodiversity through the establishment and management of natural reserves and the development of appropriate ecological systems to preserve environmental resources
- Raising awareness of the importance of rational use and preservation of natural and environmental resources by emphasizing the role of these resources in attracting tourists and thus creating job opportunities.
- Integrating the local community in the activities stemming from ecotourism and making them part of the planning and management process of the ecotourism destination

This is largely related to the challenges facing tourism, which are generally represented in: (Gharibiya Khalif Mustafa, 2008, p. 44.)

- How to preserve natural sites and achieve economic returns at the same time.
- Developing the tourism industry to ensure the benefit of the local community.
- Minimizing the negative social impacts of tourism on local cultures as much as possible.

It is not possible to talk about eco-tourism without talking about the eco-tourist, who is defined as the person on the move to enjoy nature or adventure and learn about the customs, traditions, and culture of other peoples, with an interest in preserving the environment. (Akram Atef Rawashdeh, 2009, p. 73)

It is also described as an individual looking forward to a tourist experience in which he resides in ecological places for some time to enjoy the scenery of nature while preserving the environment. (Hamza Alwan , p. 55).

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Conclusion:

At the end of this research paper, we can say that the new media through social networks has contributed to raising awareness of the environment, where this new media is considered a tool of conscious change directed towards achieving a balanced society capable of interacting positively with its environment by developing the skills of the general public and their sense of responsibility towards their environment, which will cause a real change in their behavior towards the environment.

Environmental media through social networks as a means to achieve sustainable development still lacks a specialized, experienced, and qualified media cadre through building an environmental communication strategy capable of effectively targeting users. And then there is the need to pay attention to presenting environmental issues and issues in the digital space within the framework of an integrated vision and strategy.

Focusing on the contents and forms of the subject of the environment and the role of the public in contributing to the possibility of solving some environmental problems, where the environmental behavior of the masses is one of the axes of solutions, the public may have an interest in the environment, but it does not extend to the practice of sound environmental behavior.

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