

A Study on Social Media and Sustainable Development with special reference to Indore: An Exploratory Investigation

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ABSTRACT

This research paper explores the role of social media and sustainable development in India, focusing on its impact on economic growth and environment sustainability. In recent years social media has emerged as a transformative force in various sectors, influencing entrepreneurial activities, enhancing digital literacy, and fostering public awareness on critical issues. This paper delves into how social media platforms facilitate economic growth by providing new avenues for business promotion, market expansion, and skill development. This exploratory investigation examines how social media facilitates economic opportunities, enhances awareness about sustainable practices and drives policy advocacy. Leveraging a diverse range of sources, the study highlights that social media platforms facilitate economic growth by enhancing awareness, marketing eco-friendly products, and enabling investment through crowdfunding. As social media is one of the best sources to reach target audience and encourage them towards sustainable practices. Despite its potential, challenges such as misinformation, digital divide, and privacy concerns must be addressed to maximize the benefits of social media for sustainable development. The findings underscore the need for strategic and responsible use of social media to leverage its full potential in fostering sustainable growth and environmental stewardship in India. There are challenges and limitations that need addressing to maximize its potential in sustainable development.

Keywords: Sustainable Development, Social Media, Economic Growth, Environmental Awareness and Education

INTRODUCTION

Sustainable development is an approach to growth and development for human which meets the requirement of present generation without compromising the needs of future generation. For Sustainable development it is very necessary to balance the needs of the environment, economy and social well-being. (Purvis et al.,2019). In today's human life sustainable development plays a vital role focuses on environmental issues with socio-economic issues. It is an approach which covers all human activity. According to Balaswamy and Pallavi, (2017) stated that sustainable development has become everybody's concern which also includes different variety of areas like environmentalists, economists, ecologists, communication experts, human rights activists, lawyers, scientists and NGOs. World Commission on Environment and Development (2017) defined sustainable development as "the development which meets the requirements of the present time without compromising future generations needs and ability".

The *Rio Process* (1992) Earth Summit has introduced sustainable development concept on the international platform and hence it become a significant global phenomenon (Beatley, 2014). Harris, (2009) stated that in present scenario sustainable development (2030) or sustainable development goals has become need of an hour and updated targets of sustainable development

Three aspects of sustainable development are as follows:

- **Economic:** A system which is economically sustainable should be able to generate goods and services in accordance with long-standing principles. Foreign and government debts should be managed if system is economically sustainable and strong. It helps in removing sectoral imbalances that could harm agricultural and industrial output.
- **Environmental:** If resources are renewed through investments, an environmentally sustainable system should use only non-renewable resources, avoid exploitation of renewable resource systems or environmental investment functions, and consume resources that are stable enough to maintain their base. The preservation of biodiversity, atmospheric equilibrium, and other ecosystem services that are not categorized as commercial resources should also be a part of this process.
- **Social:** There is equitable distribution of health, equality, gender, education, social services and political right if the system is socially sustainable.

All these three aspects are interrelated constantly affecting each other. For long term sustainability, the balance and interdependency between these three

components is needed (Sahoo and Goswami, 2023). Public awareness campaigns and educational programs on sustainable development prevent environmental issues. It can change behaviours and attitudes which leads to more sustainable practices. (Manasa & Mehta, 2020; Chen et al,2020).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Social media

The main sources of getting information, news and real time updates by young generation is social media (Pabian and Pabian 2023). Social media is that platform where people discuss their issues, problems and opinions. It changes life styles of people (Balaswamy and Pallavi, 2017). Through social networking sites and blogs people can come in connect with each other easily (Siddiqui and Singh, 2016).

Pivec & Maček, (2019) stated in their study that social media refers as a technology which promotes information and sharing of ideas that includes text and visual information via different virtual networks and communities. They also state that social media engage young generation and helps in collaboration in different activities The highly used social media platforms are YouTube, Facebook, LinkedIn, WhatsApp, twitter, helps in gaining attention among youth and millions of people are using social networking services daily. Technical devices can be a powerful tool if used properly (Chugh & Ruhi, 2018).

Using smartphones and other mobile technology helps to reach globally at any time, it gives us real time updates (Hung & Yuen, 2010) through social networks and advancement of new technology people now quickly and easily contact, connect, create, converse, and collaborate with each other. According to Shellabarger, (2016) social media can be used to promote anything. Social media has both positive and negative impact both but when we are talking about positive implications it includes promoting awareness and knowledge about specific causes, promoting and advertising businesses which helps in economic growth and helps in increasing communication and contact, friendships between individuals.

Keeble & Wilkinson, (2017) stated that technology made this possible to receive information in different form from its real sense. We can access any information without our physical presence. Without our physical presence we are able know what is going on in another place. We can get information but we can't experience or feel it as everything is available at online platforms

Digital India campaign is successful as it has created numbers of job, literacy rates has improved, technological advancements, eliminating corruption etc. It also improved living standard of people living in rural areas by providing education, health and financial services (Vijayan 2019).

Sustainable Developmental Goals

United Nations has given the Agenda of Sustainable Development goals United which is to be fulfilled by 2030. In the agenda they mentioned 17 sustainable development goals which include some global challenges like clean water and sanitation, poverty, hunger, climate, environmental problems, peace and justice, prosperity and inequality etc. For making our nation sustainable in all spheres all the member countries of United Nation have to work for achieving these 17 sustainable development goals. Brundtland Commission, (1987) has defined sustainable development was “fulfilling the needs of the current generation without compromising future generation ability and needs”. (Vijayan 2019)

Sustainable Development and Social media

With the advancement of new information technologies there is rapid growth of different social networks. At first it aimed to make communication between individuals or groups easy, but now it has changed lifestyle of people. These social networking platforms are now used by thousands and millions of people to share their views on political issues, economic preferences or personal emotional states (Can and Alatas, 2017). The information and updates given by these social media platforms on sustainable development have reached to an incredible size. Social media creates environmental awareness (Sharma et al., 2024). Different environmental campaigns and initiatives can be promoted by social media. Elkhodari, (2022) stated that, for engaging young population or reach to target audience social media plays a significant role. Riaz et al., (2024) explores in their study that entrepreneurship is the key approach for economic growth and long-term sustainability. SME Entrepreneurs' use social networks to generate and mobilize available resources, better utilize knowledge and competencies, and helps to meet challenges (Aftab et al., 2022). social media has made entrepreneurs work easy as they can contact, connect and interact with different stakeholders like investors, customers, competitors, suppliers, and regulators etc. (Dossou et al., 2023).

Environment and individual both influenced each other. Environment can be kept neat and clean by planting more and more trees, recycling waste products,

minimising use of available resources and by adopting family planning (Balaswamy & Pallavi, 2017).

According to Hajri and Daife, (2024) it is found in their study that the main purpose of using social media platforms is to engage young generation to make them aware about environmental issues. They showed concern and making other people aware about plastic use.

In the study of Nugroho and Angela, (2024) it is found that role of social media analytics was very important in order to take strategic decisions in different small and medium enterprises. They focused on innovational activities and adaptability to make business environment dynamic.

METHODOLOGY

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to find out the role and impact of social media on sustainable development with reference to economic growth and environmental sustainability. For achieving these objectives some variables are considered like demographic, usage pattern, awareness and perception for promoting sustainable development. These are some objectives:

1. To study about the effect of demographic variables such as gender, age, educational qualification, city and occupation on the use of social media for promoting economic growth and environment sustainability.
2. To study the usage of social media tools for creating awareness and perception in promoting sustainable development goals.
3. To study the effectiveness of Social Media tools for raising awareness about sustainable development goals.
4. To recommend which is effective social media tool in spreading economic growth and environmental sustainability objectives

Research Question

In order to find out the impact of social media for creating awareness about sustainable development and the role of social media in promoting sustainable behaviour there are some research questions and the aim of this study is to find out the answers of these research questions.

RQ1: Does demographic variable significantly affect the use of social media for promoting sustainable development?

RQ2: Does Frequency/ Purpose of usage of social media significantly affect the promotion of sustainable development?

RQ3: Does awareness about sustainable development goals significantly affect economic growth of the country or society?

RQ4: Does social media significantly impact the awareness on sustainable development,

Research Design

Survey method was used in the present study. A self-administered questionnaire was used to collect data from the target sample. The data was collected from 102 respondents in Indore, Madhya Pradesh. This study adopted an exploratory research design. The data for the study is collected through Google forms.

The questionnaire was segregated into two sections. First section consists demographic variables and second section consists purpose, frequency, awareness and uses of social media for the promoting sustainable development. It includes information from the public about how social media plays a significant role in sustainable development with reference to environmental sustainability and economic growth. Descriptive statistics like frequencies, pie charts, percentages and graphs were used to analyse data.

DATA ANALYSIS

The study aimed to find out the impact of social media on sustainable development with reference to economic growth and environmental sustainability.

Table No. 1 Shows Demographic Profile for the Study

		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Female	44	48.1%
	Male	58	56.9%
Age	Under 18	1	1%
	18-25	76	74.5%
	26-35	22	21.6%
	36-45	3	2.9%
Educational Qualification	Doctorate	2	2.0%
	High school	2	2.0%
	Other	1	1.0%
	Post Graduate	69	167.6%
	Under Graduate	28	27.5%
Occupation	Employed	24	23.5%
	Other	1	1%
	Self Employed	13	12.7%
	Student	61	59.8%
	Unemployed	3	2.9%

Descriptive Statistics (n= 102)

Demographic variables: A total of 102 responses received. (see table 1) Out of these 102 responses 44 respondents (43.1%) were females and the 58 (56.9%)

were males. According to statistics, 76 respondents (74.5%) belonged to age group 18-25 years, 22 respondents (21.6%) belonged to 26-35 years, 3 respondents (2.9%) belonged to 36-45 years and 1 respondent (1%) belonged to under 18 years of age group. Out of 102 respondents 69 respondents (67.6%) were post graduate, 28 respondents (27.5%) were undergraduate, 2 respondents (2%) were high level and 2 respondents (2%) were Doctorate and 1 respondent (1%) is other. Out of 102 respondents 61 respondents (59.8%) were students, 24 respondents (23.5%) were employed, 3 respondents (2.9%) were unemployed, 13 respondents (12.7%) were self-employed and 1 respondent was classified as “other”.

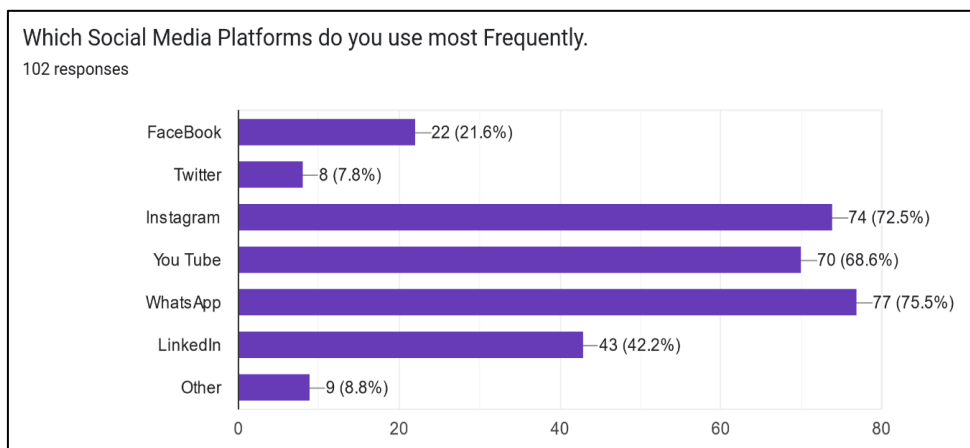
Frequency and purpose of usage of social media

Table No. 2 Shows Frequency of People Using Social Media Platforms

	Frequency	Percent
Daily	89	87.3%
Entertainment	31	31.04%

A total of 102 responses received. Out of these 102 responses 89 respondents (87.3%) were using social media daily, 4 respondents (3.9%) rarely and 9 respondents (8.8%) were using social media weekly. According to statistics, 14 respondents (13.7%) used social media for educational purposes, 31 respondents (31.04%) for entertainment, 30 respondents (29.4%) for news and updates, and 10 respondent (9.8%) for professional networking, 12 respondents (11.8%) for socializing and 4 respondent (3.9%) were using social media for other purposes. social media can play a role in promoting sustainable development in India 38 respondents (37.3%) were strongly agreed 46 respondents (45.1%) were agreed and 2 respondent (2%) was strongly disagreed.

Fig No. 1 Frequently usage of Social Media Platforms



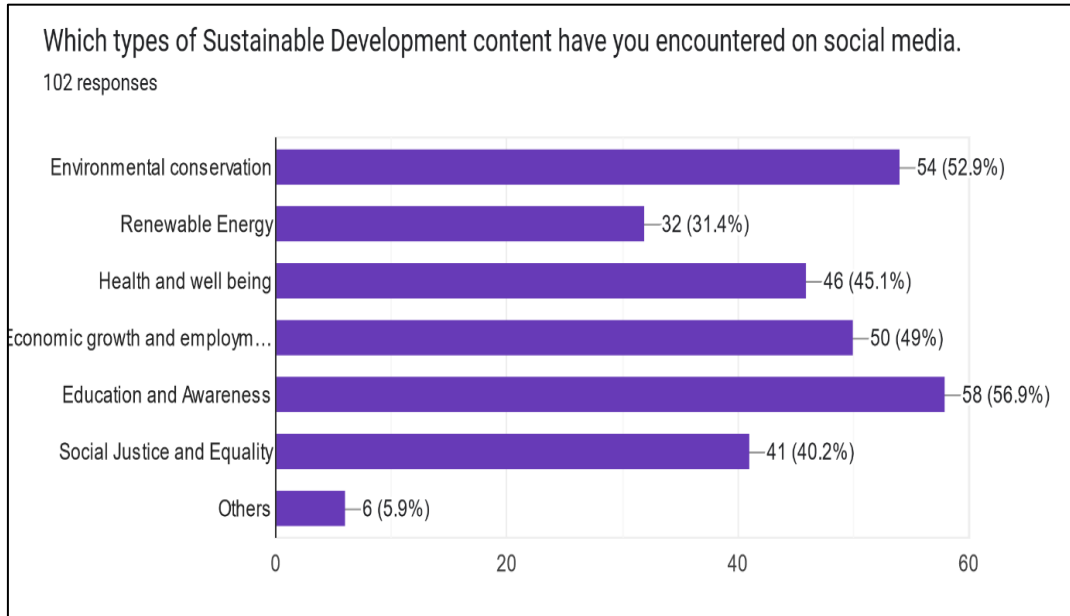
According to statistics social media platforms used by the people (see fig no. 1) 75.5% respondents using WhatsApp, 74% respondents are using Instagram, 70% respondents are using YouTube, 42.2% respondents are using LinkedIn, 21.6% respondents are using Facebook and 8.8% people using other social media platforms.

Table 3 Shows Prior Awareness and Perception about Sustainable Development Goals

Awareness and promotion of sustainable development	Frequency	<u>Percent</u>
Sustainable development goals		
Yes	89	87.3%
No	13	12.7%
Content related to SDGs		
Yes	66	64.7%
No	8	7.8%
Maybe	28	27.5%
Engagement on social media account for promotion		
Yes	46	45.1%
No	22	21.6%
Maybe	34	33.3%

The above table no. 3 reveals that out of 102 responses 89 respondents (87.3%) were aware about sustainable development goals. According to statistics 57 respondents (55.9%) said sustainable development is very important and 36 respondents (35.3%) said important and 8 respondents (7.8%) were neutral. 66 respondents (64.7%) came across content related to Sustainable Development on social media. According to statistics, 46 respondents (45.1%) were engaged in social media accounts that promote sustainability. 20 respondents (19.6%) always participate in social media campaigns, 14 respondents (13.7%) never participate, and remaining participate sometime, or rarely.

Fig No. 2 Depicts Sustainable Development Content shown on Social Media



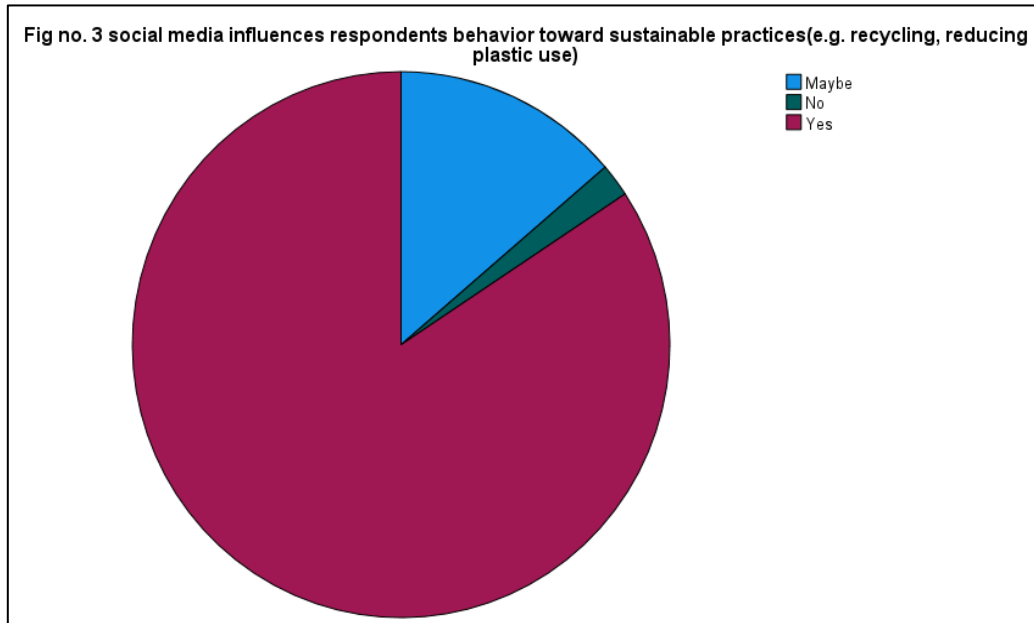
From the above fig 2 it is shown that majority of people 56.9% encountered with content related to education and awareness about sustainable development on social media. 52.9% faces content related to environmental conservation, 49% faces content related to economic growth and employment, and rest of the respondents encountered with content related to renewable energy, health and well-being, social justice and equality and 5.9% respondents see other content on social media related to sustainable development.

Impact of social media on the awareness about sustainable development

Table No. 4 Shows Effectively usage of Social Media Campaigns Promoting Environmental Sustainability by the Respondents.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Effective	48	47.1	47.1	47.1
	Neutral	25	24.5	24.5	71.6
	Very effective	27	26.5	26.5	98.0
	Very ineffective	2	2.0	2.0	100.0
	Total	102	100.0	100.0	

According to statistics (see table 4) Out of 102 responses 48 respondents (47.1%) were effectively participated in social media campaigns related to sustainable development. 27 respondents (26.5%) very effectively participated in social media campaigns related to sustainable development.



According to statistics (see fig no. 3) 86 respondents (84.3%) said yes that social media influences behaviour toward sustainable practices (e.g. recycling, reducing plastic use). 2 respondents (2%) said that social media does not influence individuals' behaviour toward sustainable practices and 14 respondents (13.7%) are not sure about it.

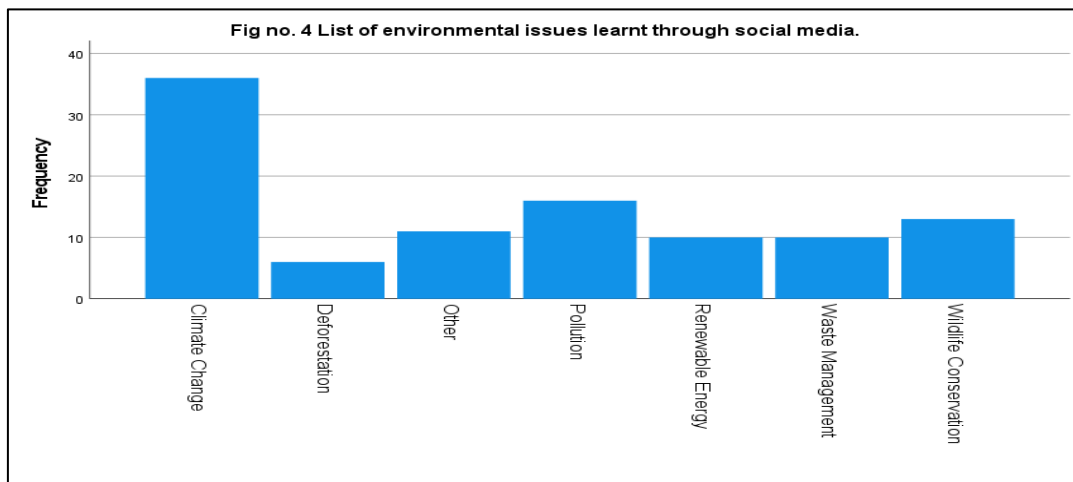


Fig no. 4 shows list of environmental issues like climate change, deforestation, pollution, renewable energy, waste management, wildlife conservation and other. Respondent came to know about these issues through social media. 36 respondents (35.3%) were learning about climate change, 16 respondents (15.7%) about pollution, and remaining respondents learn about deforestation, renewable energy, waste management, wild life conservation through social media.

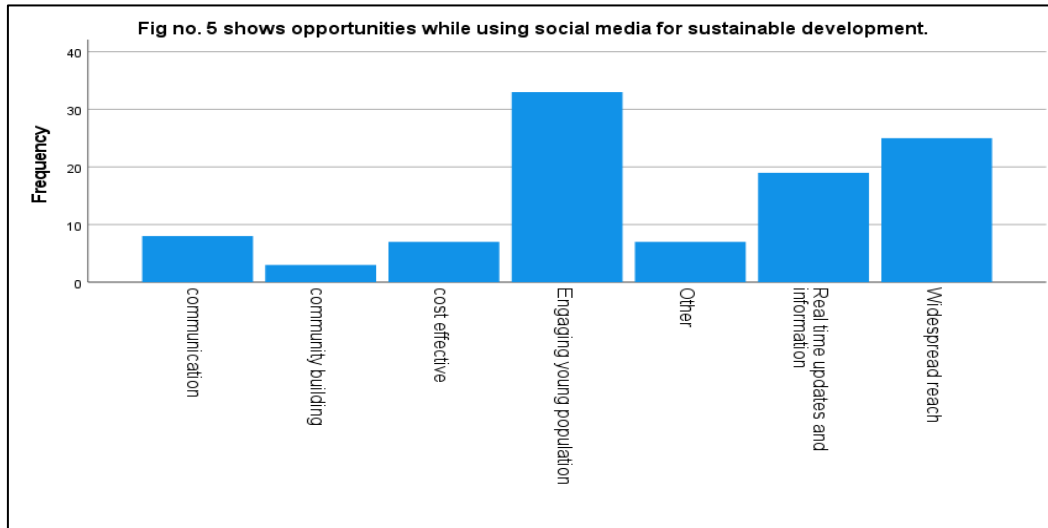


Fig No. 5 shows different opportunities like communication, cost effectiveness, engaging young population, real time updates and information, widespread reach, community building and other. By proper utilizing these opportunities we can use social media for sustainable development. According to statistics, 33 respondents (32.4%) engaged young population using social media that promote sustainability. 25 respondents (24.5%) said that widespread reach through social media is also another opportunity to promote sustainable development.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

It is found from the study that social media plays a very significant role in sustainable development. Most of the youngsters using social media platforms daily for the purpose of promoting and creating awareness about sustainable development and achieving sustainable development goals. The highly used social media platforms like Instagram, you tube WhatsApp and LinkedIn. They are using these platforms for news and updates and for entertainment mostly. They get information related to environmental conservation, renewable energy, economic growth, health and well-being, education and awareness, employment and social justice and equality. Due to its widespread reach and real time updates, it engages more than thirty five percent young population to use social media that raise awareness about sustainable development. After analysing demographical variables, it was understood that these variable does not significantly affect the use of social media for promoting sustainable development.

It is also found that the links between sustainable development and the impact of social media in promoting sustainable development are very important for the younger generation, as they are using social media mostly. Social media provides knowledge and information about sustainability which changes their attitude towards environmental and social issues. (Pabian and Pabian, 2023). Usage of

social media for Sustainability is essential for long term performance. When people see content related to sustainability on regular basis on social media it motivates people to engage in sustainable Behavior. (Li et al., 2024)

Our study is supported by Nugroho and Angela, (2024) they said in their study that social media analytics plays a very vital role in making strategic decision in SMEs. In this way social media helps in decision making, making business environment more dynamic, innovative and adaptable. Social media analytics used online data and use it in innovative work and coping with changing market conditions.

CONCLUSIONS

Using social media, a person is able to share thoughts, ideas, products, services, and cultural norms and practices with thousands and millions of people worldwide. Social media can help meet all the goals established by sustainable development, even though it is an integrated and comprehensive approach. It requires involvement and engagement from individuals, groups, organizations, the public, and governments at the local, regional, national, and international levels. Different Social media platforms like YouTube, Twitter, Facebook etc are essential for accomplishing this, and they are also used by environmental organizations to gain access to user minds. In the future, information and counselling services via free direct calls, interactive social networking, and online forums will probably be increasingly crucial.

All the information posted on social media platforms encourage young generation to involve in the activities and campaigns related to environmental issues. There should be practical information that motivates people to work for protecting environment, solve problems and take action for the benefit of the society. (Pabian and Pabian, 2023).

Li et al., (2024) stated in their study that social media used for communication, advertising and marketing commercial products, creating awareness about all the concepts related to environmental issues. False and misleading information on social media may affect individuals' behaviour and perception. Different social media tools like WhatsApp, messenger, video sharing platforms etc used in proper way to achieve sustainable development.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Social media tools like Instagram, you tube, WhatsApp and LinkedIn should be used more frequently to involve the youth interest towards sustainable development goals.

Some features like high quality visuals, search and share buttons, emojis etc helps in increasing youth engagement and adopting sustainable behaviours.

It is suggested to the organisation who are dealing in sustainable development to achieve sustainable development goals can use these tools and features for promoting the goals so they can reach to the youth more efficiently and effectively.

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