



4. Mapping the Practice of Environmental News Reporting in News Channels: A Perception Survey of News Channel Media Professionals

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to investigate the views, attitudes, and influences that shape environmental news reporting in Indian news channels. With a particular emphasis on the dynamic relationship that exists between the personal convictions of journalists, their educational backgrounds, and the editorial landscape, the study investigates the ways in which these elements contribute to environmental journalism in news channels. In order to provide insights into the intricate dynamics of environmental reporting in India, it investigates the role that content relevance, commercial considerations, and editorial perspectives have in the process. To serve the objectives of the research, Gate keeping theory was applied by researcher. The study is quantitative in nature, employed survey method for investigation. Five point likert basis questionnaire of Dhiman (2018) highlighting factors influencing gate-keeping variables was adopted by researcher. The findings of this study contribute to a deeper comprehension of environmental communication within the context of the media, drawing attention to the ethical and practical factors that are involved in environmental journalism.

Keywords: Environmental Journalism, Gate keeping, News channels, Perception.

Introduction

Environmental degradation is a worldwide issue that involves many parties (Beck, 2009). The last two decades have seen a surge in environmental research in the media. National case studies, longitudinal studies, cross-sectional studies, and comparative studies have been conducted. Print, electronic, and internet news contexts have been studied (Hansen, 2015; Schafer & Schlichting, 2014; Sharif & Medvecky, 2018). Over the past two decades, the number of newspapers with weekly scientific sections has dropped by 66% (Pew, 2009; Carroll, 2006). Journalists across the Global South struggle to understand and report on environmental policy and research. They also struggle to quickly obtain accessible and understandable climate-related resources and imagery (Panos, 2006; Shanahan, 2009).



Journalists, editors, and organizations that have survived financial and personnel cuts must now cover environmental news in less time while meeting the needs of multiple platforms (blogs, Twitter, Glogs, YouTube, audio, and text and video). In order to streamline workflow, journalists have covered a wide range of topics, making it harder to accurately convey environmental issues. The tremendous external forces overwhelm journalists and editors who report impartially and accurately (Boykoff, 2007; 2010).

The Indian environmental journalism landscape is complex and diversified, like its ecology. The country has faced many economic issues due to its rapid population growth. Therefore, environmental journalism, especially on news channels, is crucial to public understanding of complicated environmental concerns. In 22 of the 30 most polluted cities, air quality is often dangerous (IQAir, 2021). The Indian government's policy think tank, the NITI Aayog, has identified twenty-one major cities, including Chennai, Hyderabad, Delhi, and Bengaluru, that are at risk of negative groundwater levels by 2020, threatening 100 million people's access (NITI Aayog, 2018).

These environmental challenges make Indian news networks crucial. Nearly 400 news stations are among India's 900 satellite TV channels (MIB, GOI, 2020). This expansion gives environmental journalism a significant chance to influence public discourse and policy. Issues include content quality, sensationalism, and editorial independence. Environmental journalism in shifting media requires nuance. Media professionals from several Indian news networks were surveyed to determine how staff affect environmental news perception. This study contributes to environmental communication discourse by merging facts and media experience.

Review of Literature

The environment remains a topic that is consistently neglected by mainstream media, despite having been recognized as a subject of interest since the late 1960s (Sachsman et al., 2002). Friedman & Friedman (1988) assert that the reporting of environmental concerns is a challenging undertaking for journalists, which is distinct from other stories due to many significant factors:

- i. Proficiency in various disciplines such as science, sociology, politics, economics, and media reporting is essential for environmental reporting.
- ii. Environmental and scientific articles are often referred to as 'the journalism of uncertainty.' Oftentimes, specialists have differing opinions regarding the causes or effects. Furthermore, it is possible for one scientist to challenge or dispute the conclusions reached by other scientists.
- iii. Environmental reporting is frequently characterized by technical language, making it challenging for the audience to comprehend. A reporter has the duty to elucidate technical terminology in order to facilitate comprehension. Frequently, environmental issues can be reduced to a conflict of perspectives over technological data.

According to Friedman & Friedman (1989) and Ninan (1990), print and TV editors prefer to overlook surrounding.

Gaber et al. identified two environmental journalism concerns in 1997. Some environmental stories on TV are beneficial. Environmental narratives are expensive, adding to the problem. Gaber (1993) also remarked that media organizations lack the capacity to send reporting teams internationally to get high-quality environmental footage. India and other developing Asian nations face environmental issues.

Ninan (1990) showed how foreign pressures affect Indian environmental news. Gader et al. (1997) noted that Indian media must translate environmental technical phrases from English to their native language. Some organizations don't even have an environmental news section (Friedman, 2015).

Mishra (2020) also noted that mainstream media prioritizes growth over environmental conservation, especially when administration and protestors clash.

The literature lacks a detailed investigation of how media job classifications affect environmental news output. These gaps highlight the need for more advanced research in the area, particularly on media professionals' obligations and environmental information delivery. To solve these issues would improve scholarly discourse and increase public environmental involvement. Large mainstream media organizations rarely cover environmental stories unless they are significant.

Objectives:

The objectives of this research paper are as follows:

1. To Investigate the Perception of Media Professionals of News Channels towards factors influencing environmental news.
2. To Examine the Factors Influencing Environmental News Reporting in News Channels.

Theoretical Framework:

In the study, the researcher utilizes the media studies notion of gatekeeping. The term "gatekeeping" originated from Kurt Lewin's food selection research. Gatekeepers choose which information to accept and reject, according to Lewin (1947). Lewin defined sociality as dynamic interaction between people and groups. D. Manning White (1950) elaborated on the idea for the news industry and media. Gate keeping study first focused on the news editor's story selection, but following studies expanded on this. Gate-keeping had extended to include news selection, evolution, and many other factors affecting the process (White & Bogatti, 1994).. The researchers investigated how News Channel media professionals and attempts to understand perception towards gate-keeping forces relative to environmental news forces and its influences. Derived from literature of Gate-keeping, variables like personal experiences attitudes, beliefs, educational background, news value, institutional constraints are investigated in the study.

Research Methodology

The study is Quantitative in nature and employed survey method for data collection. Five point likert scale (Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Neither agree nor Disagree (3), Agree (4), Strongly Agree 5) based questionnaire of Dhiman (2018) is adopted by researcher. The survey employed purposive sample technique as it was deemed appropriate to include those individuals from the media fraternity who closely align with the research topic. In the study, Media professionals working in News channels are surveyed. The survey was conducted for (n=100) respondents. The respondents were all (20<55+) years of age working in news channels and belong from the job profile of field reporting or desk job.

Data Analysis

The dataset presented offers insightful details into the demographic and professional attributes of individuals involved in environmental journalism. With an average age of 34.43 years and a predominant gender found is male, the sample suggests a young, slightly male-skewed demographic. The respondents boast an average of 9.51 years of experience, indicating a professionally seasoned group. The job profile, with an average score of 1.53, constituting field reporters or news gatherers at 47% and Desk 53%. However, the standard deviations, particularly in the years of experience and political influence, hint at a diverse range of responses. This diversity reflects the varied backgrounds and perspectives within the field, potentially impacting the nature and focus of environmental news stories produced.

Demographic Attributes: Table 1

- Predominant gender: Male (63% (63)) Female (37% (37)).
- Average age of respondents: 34.43 years.
- Average years of experience: 9.51 years.
- Job Profile : Field Reporters (47% (47)) and Desk Workers (53% (53))

Table 1: Demographic Distribution

		Age	Gender	Years of experience	Job Profile
N	Valid	100	100	100	100
	Missing	0	0	0	0
Mean		34.43	1.37	9.51	1.53
Median		33.50	1.00	8.00	2.00
Mode		28	1	1 ^a	2
Std. Deviation		8.113	.485	6.494	.502
Sum		3443	137	951	153

Table 2 : Perception towards Factors Influencing Reporting of Environmental News

		Statements				
		My decision to write an environmental news story is influenced by - story: [My political beliefs:]	My decision to write an environmental news story is influenced by - story [My personal values:]	My decision to write an environmental news story is influenced by - [My personal attitudes:]	My decision to write an environmental news story is influenced by - [My educational background:]	My decision to write an environmental news story is influenced by [My job role:]
N	Valid	100	100	100	100	100
	Missing value	0	0	0	0	0
Mean		2.58	3.96	4.22	4.12	3.65
Median		3.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00
Mode		1 ^a	4	4	4	4 ^a
Std. Deviation		1.296	.898	.811	.868	1.329
Sum		258	396	422	412	365

The statistical data from this survey reflects the multifaceted nature of decision-making in environmental journalism. Personal attitudes (mean: 4.22) and educational background (mean: 4.12) emerge as the most influential factors, suggesting that journalists' individual beliefs and academic training significantly shape their approach to environmental news stories. Interestingly, the influence of political beliefs on the decision to write environmental news stories averages at 2.58, suggesting a moderate level of influence. Personal values, with a mean of 3.96, also play a crucial role, underlining the ethical and moral considerations that journalists bring to their work. Interestingly, the timeliness of a story (mean: 3.86) is seen as moderately influential, pointing to the balance journalists strike between current relevance and personal or professional perspectives. The job role, while still important (mean: 3.65), appears to have a slightly lesser impact, indicating that individual convictions and expertise might override organizational roles in shaping environmental narratives. The data,

characterized by moderate standard deviations across these factors, suggests a consensus among journalists about these influences, albeit with a range of individual variances.

Table 3: Factors Influencing Environmental News Reporting

		Statements			
		News Values that influences the environmental news story written or scripted by me – is [Timeliness of the story:]	News Values that influences the environmental news story written or scripted by me – [Relevance of the story:]	To file an environmental news story, the decision gets influenced by – [My Editors knowledge and interest environmental issues:]	To file an environmental news story, the decision gets influenced by – [If the story may bring in advertising revenues:]
N	Valid	100	100	100	100
	Missing value	0	0	0	0
Mean		3.86	4.28	4.28	3.77
Median		4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00
Mode		4	4	4	4
Std. Deviation		.985	.817	.753	.920
Sum		386	428	428	377

The statistical analysis reveals key insights into the factors influencing environmental news reporting. Both the relevance of the story and the editor's knowledge and interest in environmental issues stand out as primary determinants, each scoring a mean of 4.28. This indicates a high valuation of content relevance and editorial perspective in shaping environmental narratives. The consensus on these factors is further underscored by the consistent median and mode values of 4.00, suggesting a strong agreement among journalists on their importance. In contrast, the potential for advertising revenue, while still considered a significant factor (mean: 3.77), holds a somewhat lesser influence, as reflected in its lower mean score and higher standard deviation (0.920). This divergence points to a more varied opinion among journalists regarding the impact of commercial interests on environmental

reporting. Overall, the data underscores a journalistic environment where content relevance and editorial attitudes are paramount, but commercial considerations also play a notable role.

Summary of Results

Factors Influencing Environmental Journalism:

- Personal attitudes and educational background are the most influential (means: 4.22 and 4.12, respectively).
- Personal values also crucial (mean: 3.96).
- Job role slightly less impactful (mean: 3.65)
- Influence of political beliefs on environmental news stories: Moderate (average 2.58).

Influences on Environmental News Reporting:

- Relevance of the story and editor's knowledge/interest in environmental issues: High importance (means: 4.28).
- Potential for advertising revenue: Notable but lesser influence (mean: 3.77).
- The timeliness of a story moderately influential (mean: 3.86).

Findings

The results demonstrate that personal attitudes, educational background, and personal beliefs have a crucial role in shaping environmental journalism.

The attitude of journalists to environmental news topics is substantially influenced by their personal values and academic background, highlighting the ethical and moral issues that they incorporate into their job.

The study emphasizes the significance of content pertinence and the editor's expertise and enthusiasm in environmental matters in constructing environmental narratives.

The influence of financial considerations, such as advertising revenue, on the content is less significant compared to the relevancy of the content and the editorial perspectives.

Conclusion

The objective of the study was to investigate the perspectives and opinions of media professionals working in mainstream media News channels as well as forces that impact the reporting of environmental news on Indian news channels. In conclusion, the findings underscore the undeniable impact of personal attitudes, educational background, and individual beliefs on the shaping of environmental journalism. Journalists' perspectives on environmental issues are notably molded by their values and academic foundations, accentuating the ethical dimensions inherent in their reporting. This study emphasizes the pivotal role of content relevance, coupled with the expertise and passion of editors in



environmental affairs, as key elements in constructing impactful environmental narratives. Furthermore, it suggests that while financial considerations play a role, they are overshadowed by the paramount importance of content relevance and editorial perspectives in determining the quality and depth of environmental journalism. This study enhances the the discourse surrounding coverage of environmental news by combining factual information with media expertise, highlighting the intricate nature of environmental journalism in India. The statement highlights the necessity of adopting a sophisticated approach in environmental journalism, which considers the various aspects that shape the perception and coverage of environmental news.

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