

CHRISTIAN ETHICAL EVALUATION OF THE ROLE OF THE NEW MEDIA IN ACHIEVING ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

In recent years, the transformative power of new media in Nigeria has opened up unprecedented opportunities for creating sustainability initiatives to preserve the environment. This paper delves into the emergence of new media in Nigeria, a game-changer in the communication landscape. It enables easy access and processing of information that could significantly contribute to environmental sustainability efforts. Through a comprehensive qualitative analysis, the paper explores various ethical considerations that must be carefully considered when utilising new media for environmental sustainability efforts. These include the potential for exploiting vulnerable populations, issues of privacy, and censorship. The paper also assesses anthropocentric, biocentric, and nature-driven ethical approaches to the environment, highlighting their potential to guide ethical decision-making. It further examines the potential challenges the technology industry faces in pursuing ethical and sustainable goals and the benefits of promoting environmental sustainability. Finally, given possible implications for policy-makers and stakeholders, the paper recommends steps that can be taken to ensure responsible and ethical use of new media in efforts to achieve environmental sustainability in Nigeria.

Keywords: New media, environmental sustainability, ethics, Nigeria

Introduction

The world is undergoing a communication revolution propelled by the internet. A decade ago, the founder of the World Wide Web, Berners-Lee (2014), announced that the number of websites had reached a billion. Today, it is 1.13 billion, 82% deactivated (Tambe & Aashika, 2023). In 2023, about 71% of businesses worldwide had websites, with Google driving the highest global internet traffic. The internet's availability and easy accessibility have paved the way for the explosion of new media, including social media platforms, news sources, marketing and branding platforms, and mobile applications. As part of the new media, these play a significant role in shaping public discourse, influencing behaviour, and even driving societal change. This paper, however, offers a unique and novel perspective. It delves into the ethical considerations and potential of new media in achieving environmental sustainability in Nigeria. This topic has not been extensively explored in the literature, inviting a fresh and intriguing discussion.

In Nigeria, where environmental challenges like deforestation, oil spills, and pollution are pressing concerns, new media holds immense potential for promoting environmental sustainability. The media plays a crucial mediatory role in information management and dissemination on environment. The ethical beliefs of creators of messages regarding the relationship between human beings and the environment influence the content and the style of presentation in the media. The level of one's ecological conversion determines how far the person can advance environmentally friendly media content and their passion for it. One's perception of the crucial place of nature and its relationship with human beings would influence how one uses new media to influence public opinion on the environment, mobilise the public to work for environmental sustainability, and help policymakers formulate policies that will either work for accountability and responsibility or destroy it.

One who sees the rest of non-human creatures as instruments for human gratification would ordinarily be a campaigner against environmental sustainability. The exploitation of nature by human beings would not make much meaning to them because the person would see it as part of our obligation towards nature. On the other hand, one who understands the natural world as having worth in itself and as intrinsically good would support efforts at curbing excessive exploitation of nature, destruction of natural habitats, and unbridled industrialisation. These involve ethical judgements and decisions by new media innovators, content creators, and end users.

Therefore, new media is inevitably crucial in promoting environmental sustainability, but it can also be dangerous if not guided by sound ethical foundations. It can be a tool for confirming biases against the environment, for misinformation and disinformation, among other challenges. This paper investigates these issues and proposes solutions to ensure better and more effective use of new media and avoid unintended harm.

Environmental Sustainability

Once sustainability is mentioned today, people almost immediately think of environmental sustainability. It is a subject of global concern and interest due to climate change and the dangers it poses to human beings. Ethical considerations are at the heart of the discussion on environmental sustainability. Zagonari (2023) affirms, “Environmental sustainability is an ethical issue.” Even though it touches almost all branches of knowledge, its affiliation with ethics appears profound. According to Thiele (2016, p. 4), “Sustainability is an adaptive art wedded to science in service to ethical vision.”

Sustainability is often understood as the ability to use the resources at society’s disposal to solve society’s present environmental problems and meet its needs without compromising the future generation’s ability to solve their problems or meet their needs. In other words, it concerns present- and future-oriented strategies to maintain continued access to means necessary to surmount society’s environmental challenges. A process, project, or program is environmentally sustainable when maintained continuously over time, serving the present needs adequately and tailored to pave the way for a better future.

Craig (2023, p. 5) broadly classifies sustainability into reformist and more radical ecologist positions. Reformists often express their understanding of sustainability in developmental terms, hence the expression, sustainable development, which the United Nations Development Programme defines as “the expansion of the substantive freedoms of people today while making reasonable efforts to avoid seriously compromising those of future generations” (United Nations, 2011, p. 2). The reformists, Craig (2023) notes, believe that environmental sustainability could be achieved without changing the current economic systems and that environmental risks and challenges can be overcome with improved technology and prudent monetary policies. Within the reformist circle, such terms as “green economy” and the “triple bottom line” accounting that considers both financial results and social and environmental costs are ripe. The reformists, Craig notes, are often accused of being driven by the capitalist economy and using it to regulate the future of the natural world. They are also charged with privileging existing economic relations of production and consumption that place the developed nations at an advantage in their relation with the developing countries. According to Craig (2023), “when ‘sustainability’ is reduced to sustainable development, it can become a technical measure, subject to non-democratic control through forms of scientific and economic regimes of knowledge and power” (p. 8).

More radical ecological positions argue for an environmental concern that ensures that justice and equity prevail in the allocation of resources and that environmentalism be more holistic, considering the entire dimensions of the human person in their relationship with nature and one another. In line with Commoner's (1971) first law of ecology, which states that "Everything is Connected to Everything Else" (p. 3), it is easy to be convinced that sustainability encompasses humans' dynamic and complex interaction with the ongoing change process in the environment. In its broad sense, Craig (2023) understands sustainability "as the ongoing viability of the complex interconnection between the environment and human activity... fundamentally concerned with the nurturing of the health and productive capacity of the environment and all its constituent elements – land and soil, water, air, biodiversity, vegetation, and animal welfare" (p. 3).

Sustainability rests on three pillars—**social**, **economic**, and **environmental**. These pillars are informally called people, profit, and planet, respectively. While social sustainability deals with human relations within institutions, like workplace relations, social mobility, inclusion, job creation, and opportunities, economic sustainability ensures steady, long-term revenue that will positively impact society, and environmental sustainability centres on ecological concerns and the preservation of the mother earth. Hadfield (2009) observes that these three are deeply interconnected. Any meaningful, environmentally sustainable initiative must consider them. Taback and Ramanan (2014) add the fourth pillar – purpose. According to them, purpose drives all environmental efforts away from self-interest. Environmental sustainability focuses on long-term measures to maintain ecological integrity. Therefore, any project, program, or process that tampers with environmental integrity is not sustainable.

Christian Environmental Ethics

Christian environmental ethics formulates the moral obligation of humans to the environment. Based on Christian principles and standards, it formulates a guide on how humans ought to relate to the human and non-human world to achieve practical environmental protection. These principles should be formulated and applied according to social and ecological contexts. Concerning different contexts, the traditional knowledge of the indigenous people should be taken seriously. This knowledge may not be captured scientifically but developed through direct knowledge of the environment and long years of work experience by an outsider or by the indigenes. This knowledge may be available through taboos, myths, proverbs or other traditional forms of knowledge preservation and sharing (Nalukege, 2009).

Ethical decisions face challenges, like how the decision makers could balance the economic benefits of particular decisions, the social cost, and the environmental effects. To make sound ethical decisions while considering the contexts, three primary qualities are needed, as outlined by Taback and Ramanan (2014). These include competence to know what is right or wrong, good or bad, proper or improper, the confidence to take the correct line of action, and the willingness or commitment to do the right thing one has decided. In rural areas, there is also a "need to understand the relationship between poverty, population and the environment" (Nalukege, 2009, p. 102). In some communities, poverty could induce having more children, which could lead to a population explosion, and when the society is densely populated, it may eat up the environment.

The relative importance accorded to human beings, other living beings, and non-living beings also affects decisions on concrete actions to take in a specific situation. Assigning more intrinsic value to human beings makes selfish preoccupation of human beings so much that the protection of the interest of non-human beings is little considered a moral obligation. Human welfare and interest are promoted over and against those of non-human beings, leading to their exploitation and depletion and the environmental cost that follows. However, the paradox is that such exploitation and depletion of the environment will affect humans today or in the future. If relative worth is assigned to the non-human section of the environment and the moral obligation of human beings towards them is adequately evaluated, then greater responsibility could be assumed by human beings to protect and nurture the environment. Three ethical positions could be taken depending on the emphasis: anthropocentrism, biocentrism, and nature-driven ethics.

Anthropocentrism

This approach makes human beings the centre of the universe and measures success in terms of the usefulness of the environment to human beings. The value of the whole of creation is calculated from the point of view of its benefit or otherwise to us. As regards the environment, the attitude that human beings should adopt towards it depends on its value in furthering the cause of human well-being. In Judeo-Christian tradition, reference is often made to the injunction of God to the first human beings created by him, Adam and Eve, to subdue the earth: “So God created man in his image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. Moreover, God blessed them, and God said unto them, ‘Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moves upon the earth’” (Gen. 1:27-28). This traditional anthropocentrism has been behind much of the exploitation of nature, often without thought about consequences. This has driven modern industrialisation and the destruction of nature in the quest for human beings' economic and social well-being. Theologians today have improved traditional anthropocentrism and are advocating for a more environmentally friendly anthropocentrism. These theologians believe that the anthropocentric view of human beings' relationship with the environment could be understood not as human beings' unrestrained dominion over the environment but as a duty of stewardship and care of the natural world.

French (2008) distinguishes two schools of thought about stewardship: human-centred stewardship and creation-centred stewardship. Human-centred stewardship, even though it tilts to the side of paying greater attention to the benefits accruing to human beings in their relationship with the environment, can still be eco-friendly when human self-interest is combined with human beings' dependency on the rest of creation, especially when robust ecological data inform it. Creation-centred stewardship sees creation as intrinsically valuable regardless of its relationship with or usefulness to human beings. Therefore, plants, animals, and ecosystems are believed to possess inherent dignity. French (2008) notes that, despite its weaknesses, stewardship thinking is significant in recognising the human agency that has fashioned most of the world's ecological crisis, thus marking us out from the rest of creation. Again, it also acknowledges that humans are responsible for improving things for planet Earth.

Biocentrism

This focuses on human and non-human life and sees it as a value that should be preserved. Biocentrism teaches that the lives of plants and animals should not be valued based on their usefulness or benefits to human beings; instead, they should be valued because they have dignity and are worth preserving. The way animals feel the pain of the loss of loved ones and the way they celebrate reunions with their group should tell us that they do not need the needless and careless maltreatment from human beings. They have the right to enjoy themselves and live without being endangered by human cruelty.

Many experts today talk about biotic rights or rights of nature. The debate has been intense, with sophisticated arguments being propounded. Nash (1989) chronicles the history of this debate within the field of ethics. The point in contention, according to Nash (1993), is,

Are moral concepts of justice, in addition to the concepts of benevolence, applicable to human interactions with nonhuman lifeforms or ecosystems? If so, who or what has rights that humanity must honour, and what are these rights?... Can abiotic elements have rights? Where does one draw the line of rights, if at all?" (p. 235)

Many theologians believe that biotic lives have these rights and that the above moral concepts should be applied to the relationship between human beings and non-human lives on earth. This is part of what has made many Christian thinkers, as French (2008) notes, adopt vegetarianism as a form of life – to protect the rights of animals and reduce their excessive industrial exploitation. Some have even extended the concept of one's neighbour to include the non-human occupants of the earth. Therefore, the Christian call to love their neighbour is also a call to extend love to them.

Nature-Driven Ethics

Here, non-living beings are considered subjects of rights just as living beings are. Based on this, humans have an ethical responsibility towards nature and to preserve natural environments. Jonas (1979) asserts that the future of humanity lies in its ability to rise above its frontiers and expand the ethic of responsibility to include beings yet unknown and unborn generations of humanity. Nature-driven ethics regard nature's beauty as an intrinsic value that should be preserved. Land, forests, wilderness, water bodies, and natural minerals have aesthetic, spiritual, and environmental significance on account of which they should be conserved. It highlights the long-term impacts of human activities on the environment and emphasises the need to consider the value of nature for future generations. Shiva (2022) connects the rights of nature to human rights and contends that whenever we fight for the former, we are also fighting for the latter. Referring to the rights of indigenous people, she points out that "Conservation is not just about protecting nature, it's about protecting human rights – the rights of indigenous people who have lived in harmony with nature for generations" (p.12). Leopold (1949) considers it ethically imperative to leave the land better than one finds it. Therefore, efforts should be geared towards fashioning theoretical and practical approaches to make land more prosperous, productive, and habitable. For Rolston (1998), the only thing that can make human beings stop the abuse of land and treat it with love and dignity is their acknowledgement that together with it, they form a community. In that case, it ceases to be a commodity belonging to them (p.28). One's attitude towards nature depends on whether one sees these as subjects of rights.

Christians believe that nature is sacramental. According to Pope Francis (2015), nature is a gift of God's love and a manifestation of God. He writes, "Every creature is thus the object of the Father's tenderness, who gives it its place in the world" (para. 77). As a manifestation of God, one should seek God in one's relationship with nature. It should not be exploited because the universe has its ideal fullness in God (Muonwe, 2021). The Catechism of the Catholic Church (1994) teaches, "Each creature possesses its own particular goodness and perfection... reflects in its own way a ray of God's infinite wisdom and goodness. Man must therefore respect the particular goodness of every creature, to avoid any disordered use of things" (para. 339).

New Media and Environmental Sustainability: Positive Contributions

Before the boom in the new media, Murdock and Golding (1974) noted that the mass media "are first and foremost industrial and commercial organizations which produce and distribute commodities" (p. 205-206). This is truer for the new media, which provide explosive platforms for commodification. Through them, ideas, digital and physical goods, and services are initiated, created, ventilated, cross-fertilized, negotiated, renegotiated, sold, bought, or repudiated. Significantly, they offer people freedom of expression and individualised space to form alliances and motivate positive actions. Social media, for example, which Meikle (2016) defines as "*networked database platforms that combine public with personal communication*" (p. 19, author's italics), creates ample opportunity for individual and individualised communications. This includes Twitter, which creates space for microblogging; Instagram and Flickr for photography sharing; LinkedIn for professional networking services; and YouTube for video sharing. These provide avenues for exchange between people far and near on environmental concerns. In Nigeria, they can significantly contribute to ecological sustainability if the innovators, content creators, and end users have a robust ethical background and convictions. Below is an examination of how they could help to enhance environmental sustainability in Nigeria.

Raising Awareness

Concerning the power of the new media to raise public awareness of environmental concerns, Boycoff (2011) asserts that "New media platforms provide more opportunities for diverse voices and perspectives on climate change to be heard, potentially fostering a more informed and engaged public" (p. 402). New media does this because it can effectively disseminate information on environmental issues, reaching diverse audiences. In Nigeria, youths are more actively engaged with the new media than adults. When adequately informed and directed, their energy and creativity can create an enormous impact. This can foster a sense of collective responsibility. Because social media thrives on visuals, platforms like Instagram, YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook can be used to share stunning photos and videos of nature and spread far news about ecological degradation, success stories, and upcoming events, raising public awareness and igniting discussions. Moreover, bite-sized infographics, educational videos, and blog posts can break down complex environmental concepts into easy-to-understand pieces for the masses to digest easily.

Social media has helped with this awareness creation in Nigeria, be it flooding that often submerges houses in cities like Lagos and Abuja, the collapse of a flyover in Port Harcourt that the social media attributed to heavy downpours, which, as noted by Naku (2022), the government later debunked as fake news, attributing the collapse instead to an accident from heavy equipment;

the flooding that often cuts off Lokoja-Ajaokuta Road and sacks residents, the most recent ones being in 2020 and 2022 (Nse, et. al., 2022); the oil spill in the Niger Delta, among others. The graphic images from the scenes of these natural disasters were very touchy. They moved many Nigerians to question the competence of the government to respond to such issues and measures to curtail their recurrence.

An interesting aspect of new media is its ability to create a unique forum for people to express their views and get feedback on them, most of the time instantly. Besides, this exchange of information occurs freely and voluntarily. Robinson's (2015) appreciation of social media for offering "a unique opportunity for two-way communication on environmental issues, allowing for more participatory and democratic approaches to raising awareness" is, therefore, apt. (p. 12). Through it, individuals and communities impacted by environmental issues or leading sustainable initiatives can share their stories through the new media and get feedback, thus creating a solid emotional connection with the audience. It can also feature live online question-and-answer sessions, and polls can be organised through which people express their initiatives or worries regarding the environment. In the Niger Delta region of the country that has witnessed lamentable environmental degradation resulting from oil spillage and flaring, the natives have used this avenue to alert the world on the dangers such activities pose to their environment (Idumange, 2012). More efforts need to be made in this direction.

Empowering Citizen Action

Awareness of environmental concerns can help a lot in influencing people's attitudes and behaviour toward the environment. In their research on the relationship between social media and changes in attitude toward the environment, Kaur and Chahal (2018) observe that more than any other media type, social media has the power to "persuade users to bring change in attitude towards environmental issues" (p. 26). McCaffrey (2014) remarks that "Social media has become a powerful tool for environmental activism, enabling young people to connect, share information, and mobilize action on a global scale" (p. 3). Raising awareness of people's environmental concerns can help empower individuals and communities to participate in environmental protection efforts. Platforms can organise online petitions, hold virtual discussions, and share knowledge on sustainable practices like waste management and renewable energy. This fosters a sense of agency and encourages individuals to take action in their communities. By connecting citizens across geographic boundaries, new media can foster a sense of global solidarity around environmental issues. This can lead to the creation of powerful social movements pushing for change.

Holding Institutions Accountable

New media allows citizens, including corporations and government agencies, to hold institutions accountable for their environmental practices. New media fosters transparency and accountability by allowing citizens to document and share environmental violations by corporations and governments. The new media can expose unsustainable practices and pressure institutions to adopt and implement environmentally friendly policies.

Ethical Concerns and Challenges

Despite the outstanding achievements of the new media in promoting environmental sustainability, its usage presents some ethical concerns and challenges. It is a double-edged sword that must be

harnessed appropriately; otherwise, it can negatively impact individuals and communities. These are discussed below.

Misinformation and Disinformation

The rapid spread of information on new media platforms also enables the dissemination of false or misleading information, also known as “fake news.” Sundar (2016), while appreciating the positive impact of social media in the production, dissemination, and consumption of information, notes that “it has also created challenges in distinguishing between credible and fabricated content” (p. 12). Because of this challenge, many consume fake news as if it is authentic information and act in that direction. This can hamper environmental sustainability efforts by concealing real dangers, confusing the public, and undermining the credibility of legitimate information sources. Wardle decries the scale and the speed with which new media platforms spread fake news and proposes media literacy and critical thinking skills as crucial to combat this challenge. Boyd (2017) notes that for one to effectively address the issue of fake news in the new media, one needs to interrogate and understand the fundamental information ecosystems that facilitate its thriving, including “the role of algorithms, social networks, and economic incentives” (para. 3).

Echo Chambers and Confirmation of Bias

The algorithmic nature of many social media platforms can create echo chambers, where users primarily encounter information that confirms their existing beliefs and biases (Lovink, 2011). As Fogarty (2019) stresses, because people tend to share and believe things that confirm what they already have, attention to the accuracy of information is not often considered. This can limit exposure to diverse perspectives and hinder constructive dialogue on complex environmental issues.

Digital Divide and Accessibility

Van Dijk (2005) defines the digital divide as “the gap between those who have access to digital technologies and those who don’t” (p. 396). He states, however, that “the divide goes beyond access and includes issues of affordability, skills, and usage” (p. 396). Warschauer re-echoes this when he remarks, “The digital divide is not just about computer access; it’s about the skills and knowledge needed to use technology effectively” (p. 17). One could live in an environment where internet access is complimentary, yet it remains inaccessible because of the unaffordability of the requisite technology and digital literacy to operate it. This difficulty limits the reach and effectiveness of new media in promoting environmental sustainability. Benhabib (2006) states that it can also worsen existing social disparities. Thus, it risks further marginalising those lacking access to technology “from civic participation and economic opportunities in an increasingly digital world” (p. 12). Efforts are needed to bridge this gap and ensure inclusive participation in online ecological discourse.

Difficulty in Censorship

Censorship is a complex issue that has been debated for decades. While some argue that protecting individuals and society from harmful or offensive material is necessary, others believe it can violate free speech and expression (Vareba et al., 2017). Additionally, with the rise of the internet and social media, censorship has become even more problematic as regulating all the shared content is difficult. In environmental sustainability, it would be difficult to regulate and police what people post online, for there are millions within seconds, and they can be viewed by millions

worldwide immediately after they are shared. Besides, web users become more sophisticated daily, and their censorship heavily burdens governments and agencies. Sometimes, recorded achievements in the censorship drive do not justify huge investments made. Censoring new media often leads to a technological arms race between censors and users. Sensors develop more sophisticated blockers; users develop tools that are harder to detect, finding ways to circumvent restrictions by developing new software (Dixon et al., 2016). Many countries have different laws and regulations when it comes to censorship, which can further complicate the issue. Overall, finding a balance between protecting individuals and allowing for free expression can be a challenging task.

Recommendations for Ethical Use

Having examined the ethical challenges posed by new media to environmental sustainability efforts, crucial questions that need to be addressed include: What could be done to meet these ethical challenges? What measures can one take to make new media better serve the environment's needs without much ethical compromise?

Fact-Checking and Verification

Users should critically evaluate information encountered online, using reliable sources and fact-checking websites. Proverbs 18:17 reminds us, “The first to present his case seems right, till another comes forward and questions him.” It stresses the need for critical assessment and reflection on the information we consume to arrive at a balanced conclusion. St. Paul, writing to the Thessalonians (1 Thes 5:21), encourages them to test everything and be firm with whatever is good.

The church has always cautioned about the adverse effects of fake news and urged people to be sure facts are checked. Pope Paul VI (1972), in his message for World Communication Day, notes that a reporter “must observe the facts carefully, he must check their accuracy, make a critical evaluation of the sources of his information, and finally, pass on his findings, all the time taking due care that nothing essential is overlooked or suppressed” (no. 1). At his meeting with members of the International Catholic Media Consortium, Pope Francis (2022) urges them to apply a rigorous method of fact-checking of information before publishing and always respect people’s opinions. In addition to the COVID-19 pandemic ravaging the world at the time, the pope decried what he called an “infodemic,” which distorts information because of fear. According to him, it is a human right to get proper information and “to be helped to understand situations based on scientific data and not fake news... Correct information must be ensured above all to those who are less equipped, to the weakest and to those who are most vulnerable” (para. 6).

Promoting Diverse Perspectives

Platforms should encourage healthy debate and the presentation of diverse viewpoints on environmental issues. It is crucial to actively seek out and elevate voices from various backgrounds and experiences. Additionally, it is essential to actively engage with and learn from different cultures, traditions, and beliefs (Özbilgin & Chanlat, 2017). This allows for a more nuanced understanding of complex challenges and fosters constructive dialogue. By embracing diverse perspectives, organisations and communities can foster innovation, creativity, and a greater sense of unity and understanding among people from all walks of life.

Bridging the Digital Divide

Bridging the digital divide is a complex challenge that requires a multifaceted approach. The causes of the digital divide include poverty, illiteracy, infrastructural deficiency, and the unavailability or instability of the internet. It requires a combined effort of the government, communities, and individuals. Initiatives promoting digital literacy and expanding internet access are crucial to ensure that all segments of society can participate in the discussion and contribute to achieving environmental sustainability.

Ethical Conversion

Conversion is often used in religious contexts to describe a profound shift in a person's values and behaviours, a shift that touches the heart, the centre of religious devotions. It signifies a change towards living more ethically, often aligned with religious principles. For Christians, it is a movement from sin to righteousness and re-ordering one's life through the supernatural grace and promptings of the Holy Spirit, with Jesus Christ occupying the centre of one's life. Conversion, according to the Catechism of the Catholic Church (1994), is

a radical reorientation of our whole life, a return, a conversion to God with all our heart, an end of sin, a turning away from evil, with repugnance toward the evil actions we have committed. At the same time, it entails the desire and resolution to change one's life, with hope in God's mercy and trust in the help of his grace. (para. 1431)

Such a conversion is needed in our relationship with the environment. Pope Francis (2015) says, "The ecological crisis is a summons to a profound interior conversion. People have to realize that a true change is needed. It requires a conversion which can lead us to appreciate the interconnectedness of everything" (para. 218). It entails re-evaluating one's relationship with nature, recognising its intrinsic value and interconnectedness with human well-being, reducing one's environmental impact through actions like reducing consumption, adopting eco-friendly practices, and advocating for environmental policies.

The current drive for profit among multinationals and individuals that influences most of their attitudes to and relationship with the environment needs to be critiqued and changed. The Niger Delta region of Nigeria has so many companies that make billions of Naira profits yearly. However, the level of environmental catastrophe in the area remains high, affecting subsistence agricultural practices, partly contributing to about 70% of its population being on or below the poverty level (Idumange, 2012). Human beings should not see other created realities merely from the perspective of their instrumental benefit to them. They should be seen as having values in themselves. This would help to reposition humans in their passion for quality policy-making to promote environmentally friendly practices. Moreover, the use of new media needs to undergo profound conversion, too. Often, efforts are made to maximise profit, thereby sacrificing truth for financial gain, popularity stunts, regional or national proclivity, or religious sentiments. By undergoing an ethical conversion for the environment, individuals can become powerful agents of change, contributing to a more sustainable and harmonious relationship between humanity and the natural world.

Conclusion

New media is a powerful avenue for promoting environmental sustainability in Nigeria. For a program or process to be environmentally sustainable in a given society entails the society's ability to use its resources to solve its present environmental problems and meet its needs without compromising the future generation's ability to solve their problems or meet their needs. It must be maintained over time to qualify as being environmentally sustainable. The ability of new media to raise awareness, empower citizens, and hold institutions accountable positions it as a powerful tool for positive change towards environmental sustainability. However, environmental sustainability is a function of genuine ethical considerations. These considerations must guide the use of new media in promoting environmental sustainability because of its great potential to shape public discourse and influence behaviour. To do this, there must be a genuine movement away from exaggerated anthropocentrism, which often denies nature and other lifeforms any intrinsic value and assesses their worth merely from the point of view of their usefulness to human beings. Biocentric and nature-driven ethics should serve as a check to this and bring about a relationship with the environment that considers it a subject of rights with inherent values. Combating the spread of misinformation, promoting diverse perspectives, and bridging the digital divide are crucial steps towards harnessing the true potential of new media for environmental sustainability. Ultimately, fostering ethical conversion among content creators, users, and institutions is essential for ensuring that new media acts as a catalyst for a more sustainable future in Nigeria. It entails re-evaluating our connection to nature and emphasising its inherent worth and link to human well-being. This translates to eco-friendly actions and practices that lessen environmental impact. By harnessing the potential of new media while addressing ethical concerns, individuals, communities, and institutions can work together to create a more informed, engaged, and environmentally responsible society. The key lies in fostering responsible use, promoting critical thinking, and ensuring an inclusive information environment.

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