

**ROLE OF VLOGGERS IN ENHANCING ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS AND SUSTAINABILITY – A CASE OF SINDHUDURG DISTRICT OF MAHARASHTRA**

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**Abstract:**

Videoblogs (vlogs) have emerged as a new form of communication in a virtual community. During Corona, pandemic viewers on various online platforms increased due to a number of phases of lockdown. The objective of this study was to explore and understand the video vlogger community, its content, and its impact on viewers. The number of vlogs has increased significantly in the last few years. Video blogs (or vlogs) are blogs where each post is a video. Vlogs have become increasingly popular over the recent years. The use of videos allows the video bloggers (vloggers) to express their opinions/views and interact with their viewers/subscribers more directly and interactively. Most vloggers look to other vloggers and friends for feedback and support (Luers, 2007). Luers (2007) also identified a few social needs fulfilled by vlogging- being connected, finding validation for one's experience and ideas, and being a producer as well as a consumer (Luers, 2007). As vlogs are becoming increasingly popular, their potential business applications cannot be overlooked. Sindhudurg is the smallest district in Maharashtra with a population of 849,651 (2011 census). Located in one of the hotspot regions in Western Ghat increasingly witnessed by many events. Especially mining, sons of soil issues, power projects, road projects, deforestation, elephant migration, tourism, etc. Vlogs can not only serve as web-based journals for everyday users but also can be used as a motivation factor. Hence this paper is an attempt to understand the role of regional vloggers in creating awareness about the environment and sustainability

**Key Words:** *Vloggers, Subscribers, Sustainability.*

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**Introduction:**

YouTube, Insta, Facebook, Daily Motion, etc are the major platforms used by vloggers to post their videos on social media. According to the latest official figures, YouTube has 2.6 billion users (Statista, 2022) As of January 2022, India was the country with the largest YouTube audience with approximately 467 million users. The United States followed, with around 247 million YouTube viewers. Indonesia came in third, with 139 million users watching content on YouTube.

Vlogs are sites where authors post stories and/or information about themselves in the form of video, rather than text, as traditional blogs include. They are public spaces for self-expression where authors control the content published. Vlogging initially became popular due to the decreasing barriers to entry of internet video publishing. Much of the initial success of vlogs comes from video hosting websites such as blip.tv, which offer free hosting. These video hosting sites allowed vloggers to combine current blogging technology with hosted videos to create vlogs. Unlike traditional media such as broadcast television, it appears that a major motivation for vlogging is to receive feedback

and support from other vloggers and find friendships in the vloggers' community (Luers, 2007).

This new form of vlog has three aspects. Location, Bonding, and Shared Objective or Purpose

**Location** - virtual communities can be thought of as a place where people can develop and maintain social and economic relationships and explore new opportunities (Wang, Yu, & Fesenmaier, 2002). It involves information, discussions, identity, conflict resolution, community, and lifestyle of a particular location.

**Bonding** - The members of a virtual community have a sense of membership either formally or informally. They also form personal relationships with other members in the community (Sproull & Faraj, 1997), and sometimes they become addicted to the community (Hiltz & Wellman, 1997). Gupta and Kim (2004) note that such commitment to the community is the notion of bonding (Gupta & HeeWoong, 2004). It may result in collective movement.

**Shared objective or purpose** - Virtual communities are formed around a primary purpose which may vary from enjoyment such as in a fantasy, gaming, community to information and knowledge sharing, to building relationships or transacting (Armstrong & Hagel, 1996).

### **Study Area:**

The Vlogosphere is the fastest-growing source of environmental information in recent years (Cox, 2012, p. 180). To assess the role of vloggers in enhancing environmental awareness and sustainability through vlogs Sindhudurg district selected, which is located in south Konkan. The district knows for its natural landscape, white sand beaches, hill stations like Amboli, Temples and festivals, folk art like Dashavatar, seafood, rich mineral resources base, and tropical evergreen to the semi-evergreen forest. A number of vloggers created videos on various places and issues in the Sindhudurg district but recently there are a number of vloggers emerged themselves from local ideas and from the local community, who enlightens the rich socio-cultural natural diversity of the district and also focus on the issued created. Although not all vloggers are involved in environmental awareness but somewhere some portions or parts are directly or indirectly related to sustainability. Globalization – closeness to Goa and Mumbai is responsible for the increase in pressure on the environment of the region. Hence the vloggers are playing and can play a crucial role in sensitizing the various issues related to the environment and sustainability.

### **Objectives:**

This study aims to contribute to understanding the influence of personal green blogs on the viewers. The focus of this paper is on *environmental* sustainability, which we understand as “meeting the resource and services needs of current and future generations without compromising the health of the ecosystems that provide them” (Morelli, 2011). This research paper focused on a methodological approach of vloggers consisting of three parts, namely: (1) Exploring the landscape; (2) Sustainable lifestyle, and 3) Sustainable Economic activities. It is aimed to find the role of vloggers in environmental awareness and the challenges and lacuna in vlogs of the Sindhudurg district.

### **Research Methodology:**

Broadcasting channels like YouTube and Facebook are frequently visited to collect relevant information. In total bloggers with more than 25 thousand subscribers are covered in this study. The main criteria to select the vloggers are there was a core theme of vlogs presented by vloggers that must be related to Sindhudurg District. The socio-cultural-Environmental dilemma is a major theme in the vlogs of selected vloggers.

Randomly 25 % of vlogs were selected from YouTube channels for observation and documentation. Conclusions were drawn to meet the objectives of the study.

To collect the information from various vloggers' channels following indicators were used:

- 1) Language vlogging
- 2) Duration
- 3) Frequency of vlogs(weekly)

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- 4) Core theme
- 5) Major sub-themes
- 6) Socio-cultural information
- 7) Economic information
- 8) Environmental information

**Observations:**

Social media vloggers are playing a sensitive role in reporting on the environment and climate change in particular (Boykoff, McNatt, & Goodman, 2015, p. 222)

Along with the rise of other social media, the expansion of the vlogosphere entails a radical broadening of the sources and platforms for environmental communication (Cox, 2012); Conventional news outlets, such as newspapers or radio channels, no longer have exclusive access to the mass public. Instead, any organization or individual can in principle reach and interact with the public that extends far beyond personal and immediate social networks. New voices on the environment can make themselves heard on blogs, <sup>2</sup> as well as Twitter and Facebook (Lester & Cottle, 2015)

**List of vloggers with highest subscribers in Sindhudurg District  
(April 2022)**

Sr. No	Name of a vlog channel	Vlogger Name	Subscriber	Videos	Themes	Year of creation
1	Konkani Ranmanus	Mr. Prasad Gawade	176000	390 ( 2per week)	Sustainability, Environment, Ecotourism, Bicultural society, and Environment Protection	2017
2	Goshta Kokanatali	Mr.Aniket Rasam	314000	522	Rural Lifestyle, Rural Tourism, Agriculture	Dec 2017
3	Pragat Loke	Mr.Pragat Loke	274000	740 (6 per week)	Tours and Tourism, Economic activities	Aug 2009
4	Malvani Life	Mr. Lucky Kambali	295000	412 (3 per week)	Rural Lifestyle, Sustainable economic activities, and employment	Feb 2009
5	Kokan Vastu	Mr.Omkar Bhatkar	210000	297 (2 per week)	Property information	April 2019
6	Kokan Property Expo	Mr.Ganesh Khamkar	161000	261	Property information	Sept 2017
7	Mukkam Post Konkani	Mr.Shashank Thakur	26500	253 (2 per week)	Rural Lifestyle and economic activities	Jun 2018
8	Best of Sindhudurga	-	27002	134	Festivals, tourist places, and Development projects	Sept 2018
9	Krushni Tantra Niketan-Devgad	Mr.Vinayak Thakur	89900	140	Agricultural research and techniques and methods	Sept 2019
Source - <a href="https://www.youtube.com">https://www.youtube.com</a>						

Following themes were observed while analyzing the various video vlogs uploaded by vloggers of Sindhudurg

District. Which are the reflections of environmental awareness and sustainability.

#### **Rural life:**

Ranmanus and Gostha Koknatali these vlogs show the rural life of the Sindhudurg district on a prime basis although other vloggers also covered the same but not on regular basis. Topographically it covers the villages of coastal, hilly, and plateaus region. (Called locally as Sada). Especially in Ranmanus, traditional sustainable living attracts more comments and replies from subscribers. Vloggers emphasized original rural life which is missing today in urban areas.

#### **Employment:**

Malvani's life as a vlog gravity towards the local employment opportunities available to natural resources. Many episodes of this channel are focusing the opportunities in the primary sector related to fishing, agriculture, livestock rearing, and cottage industries.

#### **Regional Cuisine:**

Malvani cuisine is a very popular food cuisine among Maharashtrians. It's being liked now by people from other parts of the country as well.

Traditional recipes especially fish curry varieties are the main attractions of almost all channels. But one of the most remarkable ones is the preparation of kokum butter in the traditional way on the Ranmanus channel

#### **Festive Coverage:**

The people of Konkan are festive by nature. The love for celebration is deeply ingrained in their culture and it finds expression through various occasions like Ganesh Chaturthi, Shimga, Nag Panchami, and annual fairs devoted to local deities. Palkhi and Bhajans are the main attractions of all these festivals. Which is mainly covered in a well-documented manner by YouTubers on their channels. The urban people who are not able to attend physically all these festivals are experiencing through virtual mode all the traditional practices.

#### **Temples:**

Vloggers also highlight the attractive tourist destinations and religious places in the region. Many deities like Sateri, Bhadrakali, Shantadurga, Vetoba, Bhumika, Mauli, etc are always in the prime light in themes of vloggers. These all deities are related to nature, they are part of nature, and it is observed that very few alternations are shown on YouTube channels, the originality of temples, information as such shown by vloggers.

#### **Economic activities:**

Farming is one of the primary economic activities carried out in the district along with fishing and increasing Horticulture area of mango and cashew nuts are also covered in vlogs. Krushi Tantra Niketan channel run by Prof Vinayak Thakur opened the virtual training of advanced agricultural practices. The emphasis was given to local crops like coconut, mango, cashew nuts, Paddy, bamboo, etc.

Tourism is also the ever-growing economic sector in Sindhudurg. Concepts of rural tourism, agro-tourism, adventure tourism, religious tourism, wildlife tourism, eco-tourism, etc are introduced and published in videos by almost all vloggers. Amboli night camps become a benchmark after the vlogs of Ranmanus.

In Sindhudurg tourism, the Dodamarg tehsil becomes a destination for wildlife tourism, on the other hand, Vengurla, Malvan achieved more glorified heights in beach tourism, as many YouTube channels showed the unseen sites and locations of Sindhudrug district in an exotic manner. Mangroves' safaris and cuisine are also covered in many episodes of vloggers from the district. 'Mangar stay' is become a brand introduced by Prasad Gawade in Ranmanus.

#### **Livestock resources**

Life of the traditional Dhangar community on flat Sadas (Plateaus) their folk dance Chapai, the livestock biodiversity, local breeds like Kokan Gidd cow, Kokan Kaniyal goat also brought to YouTube through vlogs.

Many peoples are unaware of this rich heritage of Sindhudurg.

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### **Local technology:**

With modernization and globalization, old-age technology was erased in many parts of the world, Sindhudurg is also not an exception to this, but these vloggers attempted to bring following traditional and modern technological aspects to the audiences.

- ✓ Saku - the wooden bridge constructed over the rivers or stream
- ✓ Fish and crab catching methods both on freshwaters and saline water (creek and sea)
- ✓ Use of mini tillers, paddy cultivators
- ✓ Traditional plowing
- ✓ Methods of cultivations- modern and traditional
- ✓ Food preservation technologies
- ✓ House construction technology
- ✓ Handicrafts

### **Environment protection:**

Finally, very few vloggers directly talk about the environmental issues faced by the district today, Ranmanus is the only channel that frequently talked and organized live discussions on channels regarding many issues, Like the Kalane mining accident, Deforestation in Dodamarg, Land grabbing, Oil refineries in Rajapur. The response to such videos from audiences is remarkable. Recent protests for oil refinery at Rajapur taluka center also covered by some channels from South Konkan. Which is actually one step ahead toward the sustainable development measures. Responsible tourism and tourism ethics are always a part of vloggers in their content.

### **Conclusion:**

With more than 1200 million-plus vloggers in India, the number of Indian YouTube channels with more than one million subscribers has grown from 16 in 2015 to over 1,200 now. The video-streaming platform expects similar growth over the next few years, with a rise in the number of internet users in the country allowing more people to use video as a medium to create and share content. Compare to state, national, and international levels vloggers the vloggers of the Konkan region yet not crossed 1 million but still, their work in terms of culture, and the environment is remarkable. From an awareness point of view still, many miles of stones are needed to achieve. The issues of Mining, Deforestation, Migration of the young population towards cities, biodiversity loss, and problems of fishermen need more attention. The lacking some areas like education and health-based themes in vlogging also need to be addressed. The participation of female vloggers is also minimum. The subtitles to vlogs in Hindi or English May help to raise the subscribers or viewers from outside Konkan.

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