

UDC 316.77:504

SOCIAL COMMUNICATION AS A TOOL FOR FORMING ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS

Davydova I.V.*c.agr.s., assoc. prof.*

ORCID: 0000-0001-6535-3948

*Zhytomyr Polytechnic State University, Zhytomyr, Chudnivska, 103, 10005***Davydova L.V.***c.soc.s., assoc. prof.*

ORCID: 0009-0000-2232-3538

*Zhytomyr Ivan Franko State University, Zhytomyr, Velyka Berdychivska, 40, 10008***Herasymchuk L.O.***c.t.s., as.prof.*

ORCID: 0000-0002-3166-5588

Zhytomyr Polytechnic State University, Zhytomyr, Chudnivska, 103, 10005

Abstract. *The paper explores the role of social communication as a tool for forming the population's environmental awareness. The main communication channels, in particular traditional and modern digital platforms, are analyzed, their advantages and disadvantages are identified. The mechanism of the influence of information on environmental behavior is considered and examples of the practical implementation of environmentally responsible actions are given. The main problems and barriers to effective communication are identified, including the low level of environmental culture, distrust of information sources and information overload. Ways to increase the efficiency of communication processes in the field of ecology are substantiated, which include the development of education, the use of digital technologies, the openness of environmental data and public involvement. It is established that social communication is an important factor in the formation of environmental awareness and increasing the level of environmental culture of society.*

Key words: *social communication, environmental awareness, environmental culture, environmental information, environmental education, communication channels, sustainable development.*

Introduction.

In the current conditions of aggravation of global environmental problems, in particular climate change, environmental pollution and depletion of natural resources, the issue of forming the population's environmental awareness is becoming particularly relevant. The environmental situation increasingly depends not only on technological solutions, but also on the level of environmental culture of society, which determines the behavioral practices of people in interaction with the environment.

At the same time, in the modern information society, social communication processes play an important role, ensuring the dissemination of knowledge, the formation of values, and the influence on public opinion, since it is through information

flows, educational practices, and the media that society's attitude towards environmental problems is formed.

Analysis of scientific sources indicates the growing attention of researchers to the problem of environmental awareness and the role of communication in its formation. Thus, the works of Anthony Giddens emphasize the importance of social institutions and information processes in the formation of behavioral practices in the context of global risks [1]. Robert Cox's research identifies environmental communication as a key tool for influencing environmental policy and public participation [2].

Matthew C. Nisbet's work emphasizes the importance of strategic communication and framing of environmental information to increase its acceptance by different social groups [3]. At the same time, Lorraine Whitmarsh's research demonstrates that the level of environmental awareness does not always translate into appropriate behavior, indicating the need to improve communication approaches [4].

The goal of our research is to determine the role of social communication in the formation of environmental awareness and to substantiate directions for increasing the effectiveness of communication processes in this area.

Main text. The main channels of social communication play a key role in the process of forming environmental awareness, since it is through them that information is transmitted, values are formed, and the behavior of the population is influenced. In modern conditions, it is advisable to distinguish between traditional and modern channels of communication, each of which has its own characteristics, advantages, and limitations (Table 1).

Traditional channels of social communication include education and media. Education is a basic tool for the formation of environmental thinking, ensuring the systematic nature of knowledge and a long-term impact on the individual. Through curricula, educational courses and educational events, environmental values and responsible models of behavior are formed. The media, in turn, provide broad information to the population about environmental problems, contribute to the formation of public opinion and the actualization of environmental topics in public discourse.

Table 1 - Comparison of social communication channels

| Communication Channel | Audience Reach | Speed of Dissemination | Level of Impact | Main Advantages | Main Disadvantages |
|-----------------------|----------------|------------------------|-----------------|--|--------------------------------|
| Education | Medium | Low | High | Systematic knowledge, long-term effect | Slow implementation of changes |
| Media | High | Medium | High | Mass reach, shaping public opinion | Limited depth of understanding |
| Social Media | Very High | High | Medium | Speed, interactivity, accessibility | Risk of misinformation |
| Online Platforms | High | High | Medium | Access to structured information | Need for digital literacy |

Modern communication channels are represented by social networks and online platforms, which significantly expand the possibilities of interaction with the audience. Social networks allow you to quickly disseminate information, involve users in discussing environmental issues and form communities of interest. Online platforms, including specialized sites, environmental services and interactive resources, provide access to structured information and contribute to raising the level of environmental awareness.

Each of these channels has its advantages and disadvantages. Traditional channels are characterized by a high level of trust and depth of influence, but are characterized by a slower speed of information dissemination. In contrast, modern digital channels provide speed, interactivity and wide audience coverage, but may be accompanied by risks of spreading inaccurate information.

Digitalization plays an important role in the development of social communication, contributing to the transformation of traditional channels and the integration of various forms of communication. Thanks to digital technologies, educational, media and social platforms are combined, which increases the effectiveness of influencing the environmental awareness of the population and creates new opportunities for involving the public in solving environmental problems.

It is worth noting that the effectiveness of these social communication channels directly depends on a set of factors that influence the formation of environmental awareness. Key ones include education, media, social networks, public policy, and culture (Table 2).

Table 2 - Factors in the formation of environmental awareness

| Factor | Description of Influence | Main Tools of Influence |
|---------------|---|--|
| Education | Shapes basic knowledge, environmental awareness, and responsible behavior | Educational programs, courses, trainings |
| Media | Disseminate information about environmental issues and shape public opinion | News, reports, analytical materials |
| Social Media | Ensure rapid information dissemination and audience engagement | Facebook, Instagram, Telegram, TikTok |
| Policy | Defines the regulatory framework and environmental priorities of the state | Laws, programs, strategies |
| Culture | Shapes values, traditions, and environmental ethics of society | Art, traditions, social norms |

Education ensures the formation of basic knowledge and environmental thinking, while the media and social networks perform the function of prompt information and updating of environmental issues. At the same time, state policy determines the regulatory framework and priorities of environmental development, and culture forms a system of values and behavioral models in society.

The interaction of these factors creates a complex impact on environmental consciousness, where social communication acts as an integrating element that combines information flows, social practices, and institutional mechanisms. Thanks to such integration, not only the level of environmental awareness is increased, but also its transformation into practical environmentally responsible behavior is ensured.

The impact of social communication on environmental awareness is manifested primarily through a change in behavioral attitudes and the formation of a responsible attitude towards the environment (Fig. 1). Information received through various communication channels affects the level of awareness of the population, forms environmental values and stimulates practical actions.

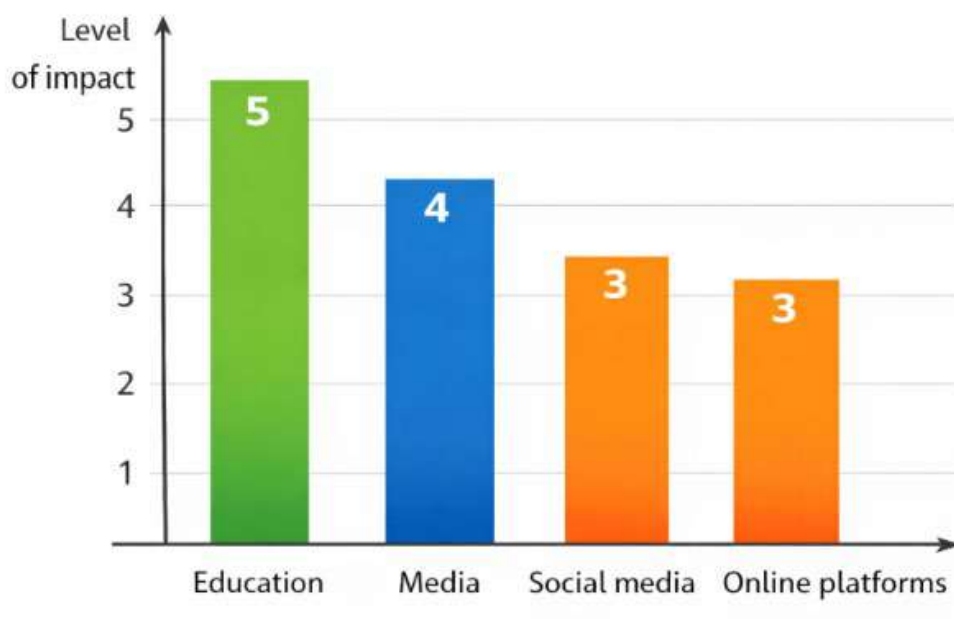


Figure 1 - The level of influence of social communication channels on environmental awareness (conditional scale)

The mechanism of this influence consists in the gradual transformation of knowledge into beliefs, and beliefs into behavior. The more accessible, understandable and relevant information is, the higher the probability of its impact on real human actions. An important role is also played by the repetition of informational messages and their adaptation to different target audiences.

Practical manifestations of the influence of communication on environmental awareness can be traced in the spread of such behavior patterns as waste sorting, rational use of energy resources, and participation in environmental initiatives. In particular, information campaigns on separate garbage collection contribute to increasing the level of participation of the population in relevant practices. Likewise, the promotion of energy conservation through educational and media channels encourages the reduction of resource consumption. Social networks, in turn, actively involve citizens in environmental actions, volunteer activities and public initiatives.

Despite the significant potential of social communication in the formation of environmental awareness, its effectiveness is limited by a number of problems and barriers that complicate the process of information transfer and its transformation into practical behavior.

One of the key problems is the low level of environmental culture of the population, which is manifested in insufficient awareness of the importance of environmental issues and the absence of sustainable environmentally responsible practices. In such conditions, even the availability of information does not always ensure its proper perception and use.

A significant barrier is also the insufficient quality of environmental information, which is distributed through various communication channels. Informational messages are often fragmented, simplified or do not take into account the specifics of the target audience, which reduces their effectiveness.

Another problem is the lack of systematic communication in the field of ecology. Information campaigns often have an episodic character, are not coordinated among themselves and do not form a coherent strategy of influence on society. This leads to low performance even in the presence of significant information resources.

An important factor limiting the effectiveness of communication is mistrust of information sources. When citizens doubt the authenticity of messages or do not perceive the source as authoritative, the level of influence of such information is significantly reduced.

In addition, in the conditions of the modern information society, the phenomenon of information overload is becoming increasingly widespread. An excessive amount of information coming through various channels complicates its perception, reduces attention to environmental issues and can cause a loss of interest in the relevant problems.

Increasing the effectiveness of social communication in the field of ecology requires a comprehensive approach, which involves a combination of educational, informational and management tools. Given the identified problems and barriers, it is advisable to single out the main directions for improving communication processes.

One of the key directions is the development of environmental education, which ensures the formation of systemic knowledge, ecological thinking and responsible behavior. It is important to integrate environmental topics at all levels of education, as well as the development of non-formal education through trainings, educational events

and information campaigns.

Equally important is the use of digital technologies, which significantly expand the possibilities of communication. Social networks, mobile applications, and interactive platforms allow you to quickly disseminate information, engage users in interaction, and form ecological communities. The use of digital tools helps to personalize information and increase its accessibility for different population groups.

An important aspect is ensuring the transparency of environmental data, which involves open access to information about the state of the environment, the level of pollution and environmental risks. Transparency of information increases the public's trust in sources, contributes to the formation of informed decisions and stimulates citizens to actively participate in solving environmental problems.

Involvement of the public is another important direction of improving the effectiveness of communication. Active participation of the population in public discussions, environmental actions and initiatives contributes not only to raising the level of awareness, but also to the formation of a responsible attitude towards the environment.

Of particular importance is the development of communication in the "government - community - business" format, which ensures coordination of the interests of various parties and increases the effectiveness of environmental policy. Such interaction allows creating complex solutions aimed at reducing the negative impact on the environment and ensuring sustainable development.

Summary and conclusions.

The role of social communication in the formation of environmental awareness has been studied and its importance as a tool for influencing the behavior of the population has been determined. The main channels of communication were analyzed and the growing role of digital technologies in the dissemination of environmental information was established.

Key barriers to effective communication were identified: low level of environmental culture, insufficient quality of information, mistrust of sources and information overload.

The main directions for improving the effectiveness of communication are substantiated, including the development of environmental education, the use of digital tools, ensuring the openness of data and active involvement of the public.

It has been established that effective social communication is an important prerequisite for the formation of environmental awareness and sustainable development of society.

References:

1. Giddens A. *The Politics of Climate Change*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009.
2. Cox R. *Environmental Communication and the Public Sphere*. Sage Publications, 2013.
3. Nisbet M.C. *Communicating Climate Change: Why Frames Matter for Public Engagement*. *Environment: Science and Policy for Sustainable Development*. 2009. Vol. 51(2). P. 12–23.
4. Whitmarsh L. *Behavioural responses to climate change: Asymmetry of intentions and impacts*. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*. 2009. Vol. 29(1). P. 13–23.

Sent: 23.02.2026

© Davydova I.V.