



Proceeding Paper

The Role of Environmental Journalism and Documentaries as a Means of Informal Education for Environmental Citizenship [†]

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Abstract: The documentary is one of the genres most commonly used in Environmental Journalism to inform, educate and raise awareness among citizens about the conservation and defense of the environment. The objective of this paper is to analyze the role of documentaries as tools for Informal Environmental Education, by means of case studies, in order to examine how they can contribute to Environmental Citizenship. The main conclusions that can be highlighted are that the in-depth treatment of the issues, showing the images that reflect the attacks against nature and using expert scientific sources make the public know the problems, reflect on them and develop a critical awareness.

Keywords: documentary; informal education; environmental citizenship; mass media; environmental journalism



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1. Introduction

The media fulfill the triple function of educating, informing and entertaining, acting as agents of socialization and as channels for the Informal Education of citizens. In the case of Environmental Education, the role of Environmental Journalism should be highlighted, because it is an area of specialization that has a marked didactic function, since it not only informs and denounces damages and attacks against nature, but also seeks to educate and raise awareness among citizens, so that they become committed to the conservation and defense of the environment (Esteve and Fernández del Moral, 1999) [1]. One of the genres most commonly used in Environmental Journalism to the compliance of these functions is the documentary. It is a genre that has a double informative and didactic aspect, which addresses the issues in depth, from multiple viewpoints and in a critical manner, with the aim of making the public reflect on them (Rabiger, 1989) [2]. These characteristics make the documentary an appropriate informal educational resource for the environmental awareness of citizens.

2. Objective, Materials and Methods

The objective of this paper is to analyze the role of documentaries as tools for Informal Environmental Education, by means of case studies, in order to examine how they can contribute to Environmental Citizenship. The main elements under study are the subjects addressed (what is expounded), the sources utilized (who talks about the topic) and the resources used for environmental education (how it is explained). The documentaries studied are 'Buy, throw away, buy. The secret history of planned obsolescence' [3] (Cosima Dannoritzer, 2010), 'Sonic Sea' [4] (Michelle Dougherty and Daniel Hinerfeld, 2016), 'A Plas-

tic Ocean' [5] (Craig Leeson, 2016), 'Climate Change: The Facts' [6] (Serena Davies, 2019) and the web documentary 'No Ecological Footprint' [7] (Lab RTVE, 2018).

3. Results

Each documentary focuses on an aspect of interest for Environmental Education: planned obsolescence of producing, reusing and recycling; ocean noise pollution and how it seriously harms whales and other marine species; plastic pollution of the oceans; climate change; and the ecological footprint and ways to reduce our footprint.

4. Conclusions

The main conclusion that can be highlighted is the role of documentaries in the Environmental Education of citizens, since the in-depth treatment of the issues, showing the images that reflect the attacks against nature and using expert scientific sources make the public know the problems, reflect on them and develop a critical awareness.

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