Are We Going Green: Navigating the Trends and Challenges of Green Filmmaking Practices in the Chhattisgarhi Film Industry

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Introduction and Problem Statement

Sustainable film production refers to filmmaking that consciously acts towards environmental, economic, and social responsibilities. It involves eco-friendly and socially responsible choices throughout the pre-production and production stages. This collaborative approach is applied across all production departments to implement substantial measures that promote Sustainability. A popular website on Green Filmmaking defines "Making a film that has as little of an impact on the environment as possible is known as 'green filmmaking." Chhattisgarh was founded on November 1, 2000, by partitioning ten Chhattisgarhi and six Gondi-speaking south-eastern districts of Madhya Pradesh. The film industry of Chhattisgarh, also called Chhollywood, is a growing industry in and around the capital city, Raipur. The filmmaking practices here involve low-budget films, ranging from 50 lakhs to 3 crores, which are often executed with the help of a limited cast and crew, as well as limited resources. As every other film production work involves waste outcomes and other environmental challenges, the Chhattisgarhi film industry is not untouched by this issue. Some of them are using non-sustainable materials (such as plastic) for set design and props, littering at the shoot locations, and relying on non-renewable energy solutions. This research work aims to explore the trends in filmmaking processes that concern the environmental scenario and to identify the challenges involved in this process, with the goal of gaining a better understanding of the issue and developing a sustainable solution that leads to a safe future.

Sustainable or green filmmaking emphasizes energy efficiency of the tools, reduction of the waste, e.g. using digital documents, recycling/composting, reusing sets/props, sustainable logistics like fuel-efficient transport and local sourcing, and conscious material choices (recycled materials and no single-use plastics), along with regularly reducing costs and promoting community involvement. The concept of Sustainability in films began to be part of the discussion in the early 1990s. The Hollywood Reporter and Variety reports that, however, the attention was established in environmental content, environmental activism, and the philanthropy of celebrities rather than the production operations. A recently held panel discussion on Sustainability and Storytelling at the 56th International Film Festival of India (IFFI) brought filmmakers from India, Japan, Spain and Australia to examine how ecological responsibility is influencing global filmmaking cultures. Along with many international filmmakers from across the globe, Nila Madhab Panda argued that cinema has a significant carbon footprint and stressed that even low-budget productions should take sustainable measures. At the same time, Spanish producer Anna Saura emphasized Sustainability as a creative responsibility, highlighting the cumulative impact of small eco-friendly decisions. In contrast, Australian director Garth Davis reflected on the power of storytelling to encourage environmental awareness and behavioural change among audiences. By the conclusion, Sustainability was framed not only as an industrial guideline but as a cultural mindset shaping filmmaking processes, narrative content, and future cinematic responsibilities. As mentioned in one of the points of the Chhattisgarh movie shooting manual released by the Directorate of Culture & Archaeology, along with other objectives of film shoots in the state, environmental protection is one of the key areas of concern that they care about and will ensure that security considerations are not compromised. This study aims to examine the trends and practices of regional film production processes that are directly related to the environmental scenario, and to navigate the challenges and best practices involved in this process, which can provide sustainable solutions for both society and industry professionals.

Literature Review

An in-depth review of literature from academic journals, books, websites, and reports has been conducted to understand the concept of green filmmaking, sustainable practices, and related areas. The review addresses concepts such as green filmmaking, the environmental impact of film production, and Indian film production practices, highlighting films that discuss these issues.

01. Victory (2015) explores the growing importance of ecologically friendly methods in modern filmmaking, also known as "green filmmaking." To mitigate ecological impacts and foster environmentally conscious economic growth in the international film industry, the article outlines how sustainability initiatives are being integrated into the production process. The study examines global initiatives and emphasizes the growing institutional emphasis on environmental responsibility in global filmmaking cultures. The paper also identifies challenges that persist due to long-standing consumption habits within the film industry and concludes by proposing policy measures aimed at expanding sustainable production frameworks.

02. The author of the article "Kadwi Hawa to Kantara: How Indian Cinema Championed the Fight Against Climate Change" contends that an increasing number of Indian films, including Kadvi Hawa, Kantara, Sherdil, Kaadan, Boomika, and Sherni, have highlighted environmental issues, climate change, and human-nature relationships through their stories and settings (Dey, 2023). These movies highlight the ways that marginalized communities, rural farmers, and indigenous or dependent on forests populations are impacted by climate disruption, ecological degradation, and socio-environmental injustice. The filmmakers urge viewers to reevaluate humanity's impact on the planet and emphasize the critical need for sustainable living by incorporating environmental concerns into their stories through realistic depictions of drought, deforestation, wildlife conflict, and cultural ties to nature.

03. Özdemirci (2016) highlights the frequently disregarded environmental effects of film and television production and explores how sustainability practices are being integrated within the modern motion picture industry. This article highlights the industrial infrastructures and material processes that influence environmental impact during production, in contrast to studies that mainly concentrate on ecological themes within screen texts. Using the British film and television industry as a case study, the author identifies real-world difficulties in incorporating green measures through interviews and particular examples. The article positions environmental responsibility as a structural issue that requires industry-wide cultural transformation, rather than merely isolated technical adjustments.

04. According to the article, Bollywood has paid little attention to its own environmental effects despite being one of the biggest film industries in the world. This is despite film production generating a significant amount of carbon emissions due to travel, energy-intensive sets, CGI/VFX work, and wasteful production methods (Arif, 2025). The author contends that, in contrast to several international examples where ecological standards and incentives guide filmmaking, policy frameworks, carbon audits, and sustainable production guidelines are largely absent in India, despite a few films addressing environmental themes. The article concludes that the Indian film industry must adopt climate-conscious production, carbon tracking, and green storytelling to reduce its environmental footprint and contribute meaningfully to climate action.

05. According to Sharma et al. (2025), there has been a significant shift in the production of films worldwide toward ecologically and socially sustainable methods. They contend that Sustainability now encompasses several stages of the filmmaking process, from production design to distribution and exhibition. The chapter highlights how digital solutions, eco-friendly materials, renewable energy sources, and emerging technologies can help the industry cut waste and carbon footprints. Overall, the chapter positions Sustainability as a comprehensive transformation of filmmaking processes oriented toward ecological responsibility and socially conscious production cultures.

06. Hayward (2024) provides a practical, department-by-department examination of strategies for integrating environmental Sustainability into film production processes. Moving beyond general ecological principles, such as reducing and recycling, the book emphasises concrete actions that film workers and students can adopt to minimise their environmental footprints during filmmaking. Designed for emerging professionals, the text positions sustainability not only as a technical requirement but as an ethical responsibility for future generations of filmmakers and audiences.

07. The article by Qureshi A. titled 'Eco-cinema and sustainable filmmaking: Examining environmental practices in film production' discusses how eco-cinema and sustainable filmmaking have emerged in response to global ecological crises, emphasizing the film industry's responsibility for environmental harm and its recent efforts to reduce carbon impact through renewable energy, waste reduction, green sets, and carbon offsetting. Qureshi argues that the filmmaking with ecological responsibility is necessary not only for reducing harm but also for promoting socially meaningful change.

08. Masili (2025) examines the ongoing shift toward Sustainability in the Italian film industry by identifying emerging strategies aimed at reducing environmental impact throughout the audiovisual production process. The chapter highlights current initiatives focused on lowering carbon emissions, improving resource management, and reducing production waste, presenting these measures as essential elements of contemporary sustainable filmmaking.

Purpose and Research Design

The purpose of this study is to identify the current trends and practices employed by regional filmmakers, specifically whether they are taking care of the environment when producing films, Music Videos, or Documentary Films. Diving deep to identify best practices from industry professionals and gathering more environmentally sensitive suggestions is another objective of this research work.

This work follows a qualitative research approach, where the literature has been explored and reviewed to gather secondary data. Along with this, Interviews have been conducted with producers, directors, set designers, and other persons directly involved in the filmmaking of regional films to gather in-depth information. The proposed study has the potential to create awareness and guide the Chhattisgarhi film fraternity toward adopting environmentally responsible production practices.

Methodological Approach

As the Chhattisgarhi film industry is emerging and small in scale, purposive sampling proved suitable for the qualitative research work. A total of 30 Film industry professionals, including High, Mid and entry-level professionals, were selected for the responses. The respondent categories were distributed among producers, directors, set designers, line producers, and other technical crew working in the Chhattisgarhi film industry. Award-winning veteran film director and producer Mr Manoj Verma, Mr Pooran Kiri, emerging film director Mr Srinjay Thakur, Pushkar Sahu, who works mainly in the music video industry, and Mr Prashant Pradhan, a seasoned cinematographer, are among those included. The sampling was purposive, and the respondents were interviewed online via digital platforms such as Google Meet and other Video calling/conferencing tools. The interview questions were framed within the Awareness level, covering current practices, challenges, and the perception and attitude of interviewees involved in the study. The received data were compiled, coded, and analyzed thematically within the research framework.

Findings

While many case studies with Western references are mentioned, the Sustainable Entertainment Alliance demonstrates that numerous Hollywood films have been produced with environmental care and sustainable filmmaking processes at their primary focus, while telling captivating stories (SEA, n.d.). The current research focuses on regional filmmaking practices. The interview data were analyzed using qualitative thematic analysis. Initial open coding was conducted to identify recurring concepts, which were then grouped into axial codes and final themes related to sustainable filmmaking practices in the Chhattisgarhi film industry.

Open Codes

No formal sustainability guidelines	DG vans and fuel dependency
Use of eco-friendly products	Solar energy preference
Reliance on natural locations	Littering by crew members
Minimal budget impact	Challenges in forest locations
Waste segregation on sets	Need for government support
Use of leaf plates (pattal)	Training and awareness gaps
Limited availability of biodegradable materials	

After the initial coding the open codes were grouped into axial codes as follows:

Axial Codes	Description
Informal Sustainability Practices	Sustainability without formal policy
Production Design & Resource Use	Sets, locations, energy
Waste Management Behaviour	Disposal, littering, segregation
Economic Perceptions	Budget concerns and feasibility
Ecological Sensitivity	Forests, wildlife, rural locations
Structural Gaps	Policy, funding, training

Final Findings

The final finding of the study indicates that there is a lack of formal Sustainability Guidelines in the regional cinema industry. Production teams currently operate without any formal guidelines for sustainable filmmaking. Instead, Sustainability is practised informally, driven by individual awareness and ethical responsibility. Filmmakers have adopted several eco-friendly practices, including the use of leaf plates (pattal) instead of plastic disposables, avoiding non-biodegradable set materials, and relying on existing locations rather than constructing large decorative sets. These practices were perceived as cost-effective and ecologically less destructive. Waste management emerged as a dominant concern among industry professionals, who described the use of separate waste bins at shooting locations and the implementation of strict instructions to prevent littering as essential in the upcoming times. However, respondents also acknowledged that some crew members continue to disregard these environmental norms. A preference for natural energy sources, such as solar power, was chosen wherever possible. Respondents were hopeful about emerging technologies such as virtual production and artificial intelligence, which were seen as future pathways to reduce physical sets, travel, and environmental impact. Professionals find that filming in reserved forests and ecologically sensitive zones presents specific challenges, including limited vehicle movement, crowd size, and noise levels, which must be mitigated to prevent disturbance to wildlife. While most respondents expressed a strong personal commitment to environmentally responsible filmmaking, they stressed that widespread adoption of sustainable practices requires institutional support. Three critical factors were repeatedly highlighted: government policy intervention, dedicated funding mechanisms, and structured training and incentive systems. Respondents strongly advocated for government-led sustainability policies that are linked to subsidies, certifications, or rewards.

The sources emphasise the importance of environmental responsibility, as Chhattisgarh's film production largely depends on natural landscapes and outdoor shooting locations. Therefore, environmental responsibility from the film fraternity becomes most important and makes sustainable conduct essential. Overall, despite some exceptions, the fact was established that the industry is taking sustainable measures to go green and showing its responsibility towards a safe future ahead.

Conclusions

1. In Chhattisgarh, there are no official rules or regulations governing the informal practice of sustainable filmmaking.

2. The adoption of environmentally friendly production methods is not substantially hindered by financial limitations.

3. On shooting locations, waste management and crew behaviour continue to be significant environmental challenges.

4. Stricter environmental responsibility is required when filming in forests and other ecologically sensitive areas.

5. AI and virtual production are seen as future tools for reducing ecological damage.

6. Policy support, funding, and training are essential for institutionalizing sustainable filmmaking.

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