

THE ROLE OF MASS MEDIA IN SHAPING PUBLIC AWARENESS ON SUSTAINABILITY**Nutan Vasant Naik**

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ABSTRACT

Mass media plays a vital role in shaping public awareness and understanding of sustainability by informing, influencing, and engaging society on environmental and social issues. Through newspapers, television, radio, digital platforms, and social media, mass media serves as a bridge between scientific knowledge, policymakers, and the general public. By presenting information on climate change, resource conservation, renewable energy, and sustainable lifestyles, media helps make complex sustainability concepts accessible and relevant to everyday life.

Mass media plays a powerful role in shaping public awareness, attitudes, and behavior toward sustainability. Through its reach and influence, it can educate, motivate, and sometimes mislead the public on environmental, social, and economic sustainability issues.

Media outlets influence what people think about and how they think about it. When sustainability topics receive consistent coverage, they gain importance in public discourse.

Mass media serves as a vital conduit for sustainability information, influencing public awareness, shaping policy agendas, and mobilizing action through various platforms, but faces challenges like misinformation, requiring strategic, consistent, and in-depth reporting to effectively promote sustainable practices and achieve global goals.

The relationship between sustainability and the role of media is complex and multifaceted. Media plays a crucial role in raising awareness, fostering dialogue, mobilizing action, and holding stakeholders accountable for advancing sustainable development goals. Through news reports, documentaries, social media campaigns, and interactive platforms, media outlets can inform, engage, and empower audiences to address pressing environmental, social, and economic challenges.

Terms: *Sustainability, Mass Media, Public Awareness, Environmental Communication, Climate Change, Sustainable Development.*

INTRODUCTION

The print (offline) and online media (social media) are the suitable platforms for the communication of social, political, and economical news of the country. In the early twentieth century, awareness for environment protection and climate along with all respective fields took place an important aspect among society through print and online media. As a conceptual aspect, the concept of environment means the "natural environment" where animals, plants, and microbes, ultimately human can interact with the mother earth for food, shelter, and reproduction to a new life form.

The media – television, the press and online – play a central role in communicating to the public what happens in the world. In those cases in which audiences do not possess direct knowledge or experience of what is happening, they become particularly reliant upon the media to inform them. That is not to say that the media simply tell us *what* to think – people do not absorb media messages uncritically. But they are key to the setting of agendas and focusing public interest on particular subjects, which operates to limit the range of arguments and perspectives that inform public debate. Drawing on a multi-dimensional model of the communications process, this article examines the role of the media in the construction of public belief and attitudes and its relationship to social change. We look at these both at the governmental level, in terms of change through policy action, and at the level of the individual, through commitments to behavioral change. Through discussions of findings from a range of empirical studies, we illustrate the ways in which the media shape public debate and input into changes in the pattern of beliefs. The conditions under which people accept or reject a message when they are aware of a range of alternatives are fundamental to this process, and are discussed in depth. We then discuss the ways in which such attitudinal shifts facilitate changes at the level of policy. Finally, we examine the way in which audience beliefs and understandings relate to changes in commitments to alter

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individual behaviors' in their intersection with structural support – and the impact of such changes for wider social change.

The study recommends enhancing public education and awareness of climate change through new media platforms. Utilizing social media platforms and collaborating with online news sources and influencers can effectively facilitate public campaigns.

It is recommended that the government implement legislation and policies that promote environmentally sustainable practices, facilitate the expansion of renewable energy, and prioritize climate change in national development agendas. Mitigating climate change would enhance public confidence and incentivize individuals and entities to engage in climate action.

Mass media acts as a primary source through which information about climate change is communicated to the general public. It functions not only as a disseminator of scientific data but also as a key influencer in shaping societal attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors regarding environmental issues. The media has the power to amplify or downplay the urgency of climate change, depending on the framing and emphasis within news stories or programs. Moreover, the reach and accessibility of mass media channels make them influential in shaping public discourse and policy agendas. News coverage, documentaries, visual imagery, and social media discussions contribute to the formation of public opinion, influencing how individuals perceive and respond to climate-related challenges.

In a democratic country like India, media is a fourth pillar of the democracy due to its social responsibilities. Media of India consist of several different types of communications media: television, radio, cinema, newspapers, magazines, and Internet-based Web sites. Many researchers have now been conducted into the representation of climate change in the media. Specifically, the communication of climate change from scientists and policy-makers to the public via the mass media has been a subject of major interest because of its implications for creating national variation in public understanding of a global environmental issue. However, to date, no study has assessed the situation in India. The role of mass media in shaping public understanding of environmental issues has been well documented in recent years . Much research has theorized on and now established the role of the mass media in 'framing' and re-forming climate change issues, whether scientific or political. This study clearly states that majority of the respondents (89.96 per cent) have television in their homes. It is evident from the study that (80.74 per cent) of the respondents daily read newspaper and (71.85 per cent) of the respondents watch television daily. A close observation of the study shows that there are (21.48per cent) of the respondents read Deccan Herald , The majority of the respondents spend their time for particular media in a day is, newspaper (15-30min), television (1- 2 hours), radio (15-30min) and internet (1-2hours). Nearly half of the total respondents (43.70percent) say that internet is the following media as major source of information. All the respondents of the study know about the climate change. A large percentage of respondents (42.96per cent) know about the climate change through television. A great majority of respondents (49.02percent) come to know about the climate change by news columns in newspapers, (53.33percent) know through news in radio, (55.17percent) of the TV watchers come to know through news, and (30percent) of the respondents know through social network discussion and advertisements in internet. A large percentage of respondents (60percent) say that the media content regarding the climate change is relevant and (86.67percent) of the respondents says that they get complete information regarding climate change through media and (77.78percent) utilize media content in their life and amongst them (63.81percent) use that for some extent. Thus, in Television is the most popular media among people to know about climate change, followed by Newspaper, Radio and Internet respectively.

Digital Media & Social Platforms: Offer vast reach, instant sharing, and direct citizen engagement, amplifying grassroots efforts and reaching wider, younger audiences.

Challenges: Digital platforms also facilitate the spread of misinformation and fake news, requiring media to focus on factual, in-depth reporting and media literacy.

In essence, media translates complex sustainability science into relatable information, drives public discourse, and pushes for accountability, making it indispensable for achieving sustainable development.

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OBJECTIVE

The role of media is very important in shaping public awareness about global climate change and associated actions, when we discuss about role of media, we focus on three key issues.

To inform, to educate and to entertain. Traditionally, there have been the tools like radio, television and newspapers which have been playing an important role for spreading awareness among the people for climate change and environment protection at the faster rate than the personal contacts. Further they have been enriched by the production and distribution of printed materials such as books magazines and brochure which has helped in transfer of new and current awareness whereas radio and television are important tool for quick information.

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Mainly divided media sources into:

- Traditional media, like that of radio, television, newspaper and magazines.
- Print media which includes newspapers, magazines and advertising.
- Institutional media, such as the schools, government officials or non-governmental organizations work, and
- Social media which include the blogs (blogger), social networking websites (Facebook), and micro blogging websites (Twitter).

The main objectives are:

- Raising Awareness
- Content analysis:
- Public Engagement:
- Educational initiatives:
- Influencing Public Opinion
- Perception studies
- Media Framing:
- Challenges Faced by Media
- Political and Economic Pressures
- Resource constraints
- Addressing audience engagement challenges

Our exploration of "Mass Media Representations" we find ourselves at the intersection of media influence and environmental awareness. Through a meticulous journey spanning the intricacies of media framing, diverse coverage types, and the impact of language and visuals, we have unearthed the pivotal role media plays in shaping public perceptions of climate change. The examination of biases and challenges faced by journalists has illuminated the complexities inherent in reporting accurately on this critical issue. Additionally, the ever-evolving landscape of social media and online platforms has been highlighted, emphasizing their profound influence on information dissemination and public opinion. As we move forward, armed with insights into the challenges and responsibilities associated with media representations, we encourage you to critically engage with environmental narratives. Recognize the power media holds in influencing societal attitudes and fostering meaningful change. Whether you are a student, journalist, or an environmentally conscious individual, your

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active participation in dissecting media representations can contribute to a more informed and sustainable discourse on climate change.

Media framing is a critical aspect that shapes how information about all parameter is presented, interpreted, and understood by audiences. The diverse frames used by the media play a significant role in shaping public perceptions, attitudes, and responses toward all types of issues.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this section I presented the review of literature for my topic,

The Sustainability provide a comprehensive framework for addressing global challenges, including poverty, inequality, climate change, environmental degradation, and social injustice. Media can play a crucial role in advancing the goals by raising awareness, fostering dialogue, mobilizing action, and holding stakeholders accountable. Here are some potential synergies between media and the Sustainability.

- **The Role of Media in Raising Awareness:** Media has been found as a major facilitator in popularizing the SDGs as various studies have suggested that the SDGs are being fuelled by communication and media with the United Nations making the importance of communication and media clear to drive the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development. Various studies and researches have also indicated that television, radio, print media and digital media are also effectively popularizing the SDGs by reaching a wide range of masses.
- **Strategies for Promoting SDGs:** Each of these different types of media has diverse ways of promoting the SDGs through storytelling, framing and partnering with other groups.
- **Impact of Media on Public Perception and Policy-Making:** The media's influence extends beyond raising awareness to shaping public perception and influencing policy-making.
- **Challenges in Promoting SDGs:** Despite the positive impact, media organizations face several challenges in promoting the SDGs like poor funding, Political and commercial interests and Audience interest.

LIMITATION AND ANALYSIS

The media also faces challenges in covering sustainability issues, including green washing, misinformation, and limited coverage of underrepresented voices and perspectives. To enhance the effectiveness of media in promoting sustainability, it is essential to prioritize accuracy, transparency, and diversity in media representations, as well as to promote media literacy and critical thinking skills among audiences.

Mass media's role in sustainability awareness has drawbacks like promoting eco-anxiety through doom-and-gloom framing, leading to apathy; spreading misinformation or shallow coverage; creating unrealistic expectations; and focusing on sensational issues over complex solutions, resulting in public confusion, disengagement, or misdirected action instead of genuine behavior change, despite its power to inform and mobilize.

- **Misinformation:** Digital media can spread fake news, creating confusion and undermining legitimate climate science.
- **Bias & polarization:** Sensationalism or biased reporting can distort issues and divide public opinion.
- **Information Overload:** Constant, overwhelming news can lead to apathy or desensitization.
- **Action paralysis:** Presenting overwhelming problems without clear, actionable pathways (like policy changes, community efforts) leave people feeling powerless.
- **Focus on individualism:** Media often promotes individual consumer choices (buy this eco-product) over systemic changes (policy, corporate responsibility), deflecting from larger structural issues.

Analysis & Policy

- Media coverage influences policymakers by gauging public sentiment and creating pressure for environmental legislation and funding.
- It helps connect causes (human activities) with effects (extreme weather, resource scarcity), leading to greater public understanding and reflection on sustainability issues.

CONCLUSION

From the present study, it is known that both print media, broadcasting media as well as social media may communicate the environmental issues and aware people to protect the environment and also related climate elements. Moreover, the circulation of environmental issues may delay through print media while the social media like Facebook and/or WhatsApp and/or Tweeter do not delay conveying the message within the state, country or worldwide because of web based platform. This compilation of available research and review articles may help academicians, media and journalism researchers and other authorities to know the present status and role of media communications on environmental awareness along with public awareness. More news in the offline and online media may lead to more awareness on fields and more protection for their surrounding at the local and global levels.

Now a-days social Media also play a very important role in the promotion of public awareness among people. It is observed that social media has been growing rapidly as a type of online communication where user share their feeling, make comment, put videos, photos and post on social networks. Thus social media is a one of the most important tool that has altering the way of communication and reshaping the world. It helps us to give information around the happenings of the globe and therefore contributing a lot in the promotion of environmental awareness among the masses worldwide.

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