

# Role of Media and Management Towards Sustainability

**Abstract:** This explores the role of media and management can play in contributing to a sustainable development. Sustainable development strives to achieve economic development that can be maintained well into the future and for all human beings. Since 1987 the term has seen a mass distribution and popularization to the extent that now practically every nation has adopted sustainable development as one of the official policy objectives. Global change requires joint action. The media, an information society, has the dual role of informing the general public of policies, development and current affairs especially those affecting them directly. The media is seen as a vital two-way tool, providing information from top to the grassroots and allowing their views ideas and opinions to filter back up to the policy maker. As it is said 'whosever controls the media controls the mind'. Increase democratization and decentralization are supportive factors which enable people to effectuate behavioral changes through provision of information needed for consciousness-raising and awareness-raising and through better communication with policy makers at all levels of government. The mass media, especially the radio are seen as the most cost effective way of providing information and a voice to all members of society including the marginable sections. The International Conference on Education for a sustainable future, the media has an important role in fostering debate, influencing public opinion and encouraging people to make behavioral changes towards sustainability. The United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) invites all electronic and print media organization as it feels that media influence and shape public opinion. It also seeks to contribute to media awareness and understanding of sustainability, as outlined by Agenda 21 Plan of Action for all nation endorsed at 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janerio.

*Keywords*— Sustainable, consciousness, democratization, decentralization

## Swati Jain

Research Scholar  
Department of Biotechnology  
Engineering,  
Faculty of Engineering and Technology,  
Manav Rachna International University,  
Faridabad-121004, Haryana  
E-mail: itswasijain83@gmail.com

## Pushpa C. Tomar

\*Associate Professor,  
Department of Biotechnology  
Engineering,  
Faculty of Engineering and Technology,  
Manav Rachna International University,  
Faridabad-121004, Haryana  
E-mail: pushpa.fet@mriu.edu.in

## I. INTRODUCTION

Sustainable development has been defined in many ways, but the most frequently quoted definition is from the 1988 Brundtland Report: "Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs"[1]. Sustainable development The concept of sustainable development means different thing to different people. It is a universal clarion call to meet the basic social needs of man. It can be balanced by acting either to reduce stresses or to increase "carrying capacities". The concept is aimed at fashioning out ways of protecting as well as preserving the natural environment. The quest to ensure this noble vision on a global scale was given prominence by Gro Harlem Bundtland's Commission on Environment and Development report titled "Our Common Future" in

1987[2]. The report particularly observed that fundamental issues concerning the environment and economy can no longer be treated separately[3]. Sustainability is nowadays a relevant issue that received in the last few years a growing attention from scholars and practitioners. Sustainability is a broad topic that concerns not only institutional policies and corporate choices, but also ordinary people consumption behaviors; in particular, food-choice is strongly connected to sustainability. The Mass Media play crucial roles in achieving developmental objectives at local, national and international level. The mass media has been recognized as an important resource for mobilizing an entire nation towards national development[4]. Pacific Media Assistance Scheme (PACMAS) capacity development advisor Dr Inga Mafileo – also a panellist – said one of the most important roles played by Pacific Island media bodies is to facilitate the journey towards

sustainable development.” Media plays a major role in changing mind sets and this means we play several roles—we need to be the watchdog and be at the forefront of closely monitoring and translating knowledge”[4].

## **II. MASS MEDIA AND THE MODERNIZATION APPROACH**

Most communication practice and scholarship in the Third World development literature were consistent with modernization theory[5]. At both the macro and micro levels, communication was viewed as a product and reinforcer of economic growth and development. At the macro level, communication scholars aligned with this perspective supported global and national policies that facilitated “free flows” of media and information technology content (news, advertising, entertainment, data) and hardware, as they viewed these products as crucial for Third World development and participation in the global economy. At the micro level, they supported persuasive marketing campaigns (in areas such as agriculture, population and health) as the most efficient means to transform traditional individuals and societies[5].

## **III. ROLE OF THE MEDIA IN ACHIEVING A SUSTAINABLE SOCIETY**

30 Years ago Bhutan had little of the infrastructure associated with a modern nation state and the life for the vast majority of the people was both harsh and short. In the past three decades Bhutan has undergone a major transformation (and seen) progress unmatched by other developing countries. More social and economic development has happened in the past 30 years than compared to the previous 300 years [6]. But, at the same time, increased development, rising living standards, and increased consumption and production result in increased pressure on the environment, threatening the long-term sustainability of the earth’s life-support systems. Vision 2020 phrases it as follows (Planning Commission Secretariat 1999: 36): “Although the natural heritage is still largely intact, we cannot take it for granted (as) it is subject to increasing pressures[7]. Ecological systems are particularly vulnerable, and pressures will certainly mount in the years ahead.” In

the presentation on the State of Bhutan’s Environment by the Deputy Minister of the National Environment Commission to the National Assembly in 2005, it was stated that although Bhutan’s natural environment is still largely intact, growing population and development activities, especially in urban areas, reduce the air quality in 461 urban areas and lead to localized water pollution and land pollution in the form of deforestation and waste. The media plays a crucial role in educating and making individuals, communities, and society conscious about sustainable development, the need for more sustainable patterns of production and consumption, and encouraging them to take action directed towards change and a more sustainable future. It is generally acknowledged that not scientists nor politicians, but rather the common man is the most effective agent of change. Once the civil society is familiar with the complex environment and development related issues, it will gain the confidence to act appropriately, leading towards sustainability. A major point for understanding the role of the media in achieving a sustainable society is that ESD does not only target those in the regular educational system (i.e. school going children and adults attending non-formal education), but the majority of the public. These people can most efficiently be reached through all available mass media including newspapers and other printed media, radio, television, and the internet[7]. Just like ESD is currently not yet well-entrenched in the Bhutanese formal and non-formal education system, at the same time the role of the media in disseminating ESD is rather limited. Kuensel regularly publishes news articles regarding issues and problems of sustainable development, for example on waste management, the situation of forests in Bhutan, industrial and chemical waste, and road and hydropower construction. These articles, however, merely present the news as it is without going very much in-depth and are not based upon additional research. Moreover, and more importantly, by merely presenting the news they don’t actually encourage action, although these articles have led to improved conditions and action, mostly on the part of the government. Government agencies, such as the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Agriculture, regularly publish health and environment related messages that explain existing or new rules and regulations and encourage or discourage certain

behaviors. The first issue of the Bhutan Times issued on April 30th 2006, had a similar message on forest protection and forest fire prevention [6].

#### **IV. AMERICAN MASS MEDIA AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

The American Mass media (AMM), particularly films and television programs, are widely believed to influence consumer behavior. This is occurring both domestically and, increasingly, internationally, as affluence levels rise in developing countries. Social responsibility is increasingly taken to include environmental responsibility, as awareness of issues such as biodiversity loss, global warming, pollution, and resource depletion spreads. The AMM do address environmental issues, but, at least in big budget movies and prime time television programming, they address only disasters. In contrast to, for instance, the Japanese film industry, no attempt is made to address the everyday, taken-for granted wasteful lifestyle that is killing our planet. The American mass media overwhelmingly promote a consumer culture, while paying scant attention to the effects this culture has on the environment. American film and television, especially, is reaching more and more people worldwide, thus promoting wasteful overconsumption on a global scale by encouraging people to abandon traditional, sustainable lifestyles and to aspire to an unsustainable consumerist lifestyle. Hollywood has produced many highly successful movies addressing major social issues, including environmental issues such as chemical pollution, nuclear radiation, and global warming, yet it fails to tie these concerns to the consumerist behavior that is at the root of these problems. Although it may be too much to expect the American mass media to actively promote sustainable development, it is surely irresponsible to promote consumerism as if it had no adverse environmental consequences. Of course, ultimate power rests with the consumer, without whom there would be no audience to make movies for; but the decision about which movies to make, and where to release them, is in the hands of production companies. They have responsibilities not only to present generations but also to future ones [8]. An early example of movies changing consumer behavior was an unintended result

of the Motion Picture Production Code (“Hays Code”), which was adopted by the industry in 1930 in response to claims that it was promoting “immorality”. It declared: “the motion picture within its own field of entertainment may be directly responsible for spiritual or moral progress, for higher types of social life, and for much correct thinking.”

#### **V. MASS MEDIA AND CHALLENGES OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA**

Media is not always able to successfully promote sustainable development. Nigeria is an example, where several factors stood like obstacle in the way of sustainability. Being an integral part of the social system, the mass media is a major stakeholder in the realization of sustainable development in Nigeria [9]. However, several factors like corruption, poor communication channels, illiteracy, inadequate infrastructure, poor implementation framework and political instability has continued to pose great challenges to the achievement of sustainable development in Nigeria. The study is anchored on the theory of functionalism and development media theory. Considering the fundamental role the mass media occupy in national development, studies argues that for sustainable development to become a reality in Nigeria, the identified issues that impede the achievement of sustainable development in Nigeria should be addressed, so that the mass media can effectively championed sustainable development efforts in all the sectors of the economy.

Since the concept of sustainable development cover a wide range of areas like health, human rights, gender equality, economy, climate change and good governance. The media therefore has a strategic role to play in covering these issues in the environment. The media is vested with the responsibility to create awareness about issues that affect the common man in the society. They also expose dangers on issues that could negatively affect the people within their immediate environment.

Study has examined the role of the media in promoting sustainable development in Nigeria. Nigerian media has been on the frontline in preaching the gospel

of sustainable development in the country. Some write-ups argued that for sustainable development to be achieved in Nigeria the issue of corruption, political instability, and security should be look upon with all sense of seriousness. Even though some acknowledged the giant role of the media in promoting sustainable development however, the media still faces several difficulties in her efforts to bring the needed change the country desired. One issue that keeps reoccurring and which undermines media efforts is the complex nature of the environment within which the media operate in Nigeria. As long as the environment is beclouded with all kinds of social vices that negate development, achieving sustainable development will be a mirage [3].

## **VI. THE SUSTAINABILITY AND THE ROLE OF THE MASS MEDIA: REPRESENTATION, VALUES AND BEHAVIORS AMONG CONSUMERS IN ITALY**

Among consumers there is a weak knowledge of the subject, the very word “sustainability” takes on different meanings and values for consumers/citizens. Relationship between communication and the representation of sustainability and the connection between sustainability and the food consumption behavior are well studied topics. The declared awareness of the role of sustainability does not always coincide with the habits and behavior of consumers. Comparing the data to the representation of sustainability (since 1992) in media communication and the effects on the attitudes of the young people can detect the presence of the existence of a “sustainable generation” influenced by the way in which communication has addressed the issue of sustainability. In particular, the Internet is the best channel for the collection and acquisition of general or specific information about sustainable of the products and the companies; social media are recognized the most effective tools available, as they break down geographical boundaries and allow an active participation of the consumer on the sustainable choices; the traditional media are viewed with suspicion because they are not independent and tied to economic and political interests; personal relationships, family and

friends, are considered the most reliable source of information, as invested with a high degree of confidence (word of mouth) [2]. In Europe and in Italy, EMAS, the Environmental Management and Audit Scheme [9] is regarded as the reference scheme for environmental certifications. Italy has endorsed EU Regulation 1836/1993 - later updated by Regulation 761/2001-through the 1996 Ministerial Decree which introduces EMAS .EMAS is a voluntary instrument, to be associated with direct regulation provisions such as “command and control” measures, finalized to internalize environmental quality objectives into the managing processes of organizations and enterprises. EMAS provides companies with the opportunity of a public recognition and the possibility to spread information on the improvement of their environmental performances. Every EMAS - certified manufacturing site is recorded on the Gazette of the European Union and gets a quality mark by the Commission for the registration of EMAS sites and ecological marks, which operates in Italy since 1997 [10].

## **VII. DISCUSSION**

Role of media management in obtaining and maintaining sustainability has been discussed in this write-up. Media is involved in the awareness programmes in every country. Sometimes showing the reality and sometimes showing the future possibilities. In this paper, contribution of media and management towards sustainability in different countries in different ways has been studied and compiled. America and Bhutan have taken various useful steps towards preserving the present heritage for the future ones. Nigeria is still struggling but has taken initiatives which gave visible results. In Italy too, laws are powerful to continue with sustainability. Media is quiet able to spread the aim of sustainability in every house of every country. Now it is up to the individual’s capacity to achieve this goal of sustainable development. This paper comparing sustainable approaches of various countries is also a step towards sustainable development. It is to learn from the mistakes as well as from the achievements from others and improve & move in a right direction.

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