


Media Information Role in Enhancing Sustainable Environmental Management Awareness: A Case Study of Chumbageni Ward in Tanga, Tanzania

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Abstract

The relevance of media in fostering awareness of sustainable environmental management is becoming increasingly significant, particularly in rapidly developing urban centres. This study evaluates the influence of media in enhancing sustainable environmental management in the community. A mixed-methods research design was employed, integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Chumbageni Ward, in Tanga City, was purposively selected, and 75 respondents were randomly sampled from three streets in the ward. Additionally, 5 media personnel and 3 street leaders were purposively selected as key informants. Data were collected using a semi-structured questionnaire and interviews. Quantitative data were statistically analysed using SPSS v20, while qualitative data were subjected to content analysis. The findings indicate that information about waste is a relatively high-profile environmental issue in the media, followed by climate change. Television emerges as the most highly approved media channel for broadcasting environmental news, while social media ranks second. Additionally, the respondents had varied views on the accuracy and reliability of environmental information presented in the media. The findings further indicate the acknowledged media's significant role in enhancing the community's awareness of sustainable environmental management. To improve ecological communication, media should fact-check content through expert consultation, share local environmental success stories to inspire action, tailor messages to specific audiences using appropriate formats and languages, and provide regular training for journalists to improve clarity, accuracy, and impact in environmental reporting.

Keywords: Media Information Role, Media Influence, Environmental Awareness, Sustainable Management, Community

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Introduction

The environment is a critical element that underpins the existence of all living beings. It encompasses all the resources that are essential for survival, including the air we breathe, the water that covers a substantial portion of the Earth's surface, and the source of our food (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) (IPCC, 2019). In general, the environment offers the prerequisites for the flourishing of all living forms. However, regrettably, there are significant repercussions from environmental deterioration (Fuller et al., 2022). The recognition of the magnitude of these challenges continues to increase (Nature Conservancy, 2017; Kapos et al., 2019). For instance, more than 2 billion people are estimated to be affected by desertification and land degradation in more than 100 countries worldwide (Kim et al., 2024). The situation might worsen due to the unsustainable use of soil and water under the current climate change scenarios (Gabathuler et al., 2009). The surge in population growth, rapid urbanisation, and anthropogenic activities has exacerbated environmental degradation (Shanahan et al., 2016). Furthermore, climate change has emerged as one of the leading global challenges, inducing considerable stress on ecological systems and depleting natural resources (Gupta, 2020).

Environmental threats have necessitated initiatives by researchers, policymakers, and other stakeholders to mitigate ensuing problems. Initiatives that promote and engage society in environmental protection activities are noticeable examples (URT, 2010; Khalid & Ullah, 2014). The environment has become one of the most significant public and political concerns of our time, and the media platforms have played a crucial role in shaping the communication of environmental information (Bhanye & Maisiri, 2022; Sunday & Obun-Andy, 2023).

According to Hansen (2011), people gain significant environmental knowledge through media platforms. The influence of the media extends beyond merely shaping our beliefs and awareness about environmental issues of public and political concern (Huang, 2016; Mavrodieva et al., 2019). It also profoundly affects how individuals, cultures, and societies perceive, value, and relate to their environment (Anderson, 2008, 2015). Investigating the role of media in environmental management aspects, Shintasiwi and Wasino (2020) credit the media's critical role in framing environmental discourse, influencing both public perception and policy agendas. Moreover, Luedecke & Boykoff (2017) highlight the fact that media representations shape societal values and attitudes towards environmental stewardship, thereby becoming integral to communities' broader ecological awareness and behaviour.

The last five decades have been characterised by the necessity of mass media and communication to influence ideas and the environment (Shintasiwi & Wasino, 2020). The media has been an important public space since the emergence of the modern environmental movement in the 1960s, whereby environmental issues were raised, and how natural resources could be used and abused were debated (Lonsdale, 2013). Huang (2016) associates the media's role as an agenda-setter with the essential impact on how people and policymakers perceive the environmental problem and prioritise it among other aspects. Moreover, Strombeck et al. (2020) emphasise that media platforms have played a significant role in shaping environmental discourse, thereby influencing how society perceives environmental issues and how it interacts with them. Furthermore, the literature has recognised that media platforms are essential tools in marketing and mobilising society to conserve biodiversity. According to Bergman et al. (2022), media platforms are now invaluable collaborators in the conservation and management of biodiversity worldwide. They have numerous functions, not only raising awareness of environmental issues and challenges that hinder the realisation of sustainability,

but also affecting human perception, beliefs, emotions, attitudes, and behaviour related to environmental protection (Zhao & Han, 2024).

Before the 1960s, political decision-making regarding the environment was primarily informed by expert and scientific evidence (Fotopoulos, 2023). Public debates and controversies on environmental topics are now deeply intertwined with efforts to sway public opinion. As Boykoff (2009) affirms that contemporary environmental battles are as much about winning public hearts and minds as about communicating scientific evidence. This shift highlights the crucial role of the media and communication in shaping environmental policy and public understanding. Tanzania, like most developing countries, continue to face numerous ecological challenges that necessitate attention and sustainable measures (URT, 2021). The loss of ecosystem services and functions adversely affects current and future generations. Despite ongoing deliberate initiatives, environmental threats of various kinds are significantly increasing and affecting most parts of the country. Deforestation and forest degradation are pressing ecological challenges in critical regions such as the Uluguru Mountains. These phenomena are mainly attributable to agricultural encroachment, unsustainable charcoal production, and escalating settlement activities. Furthermore, land degradation and desertification are particularly severe in Dodoma and Singida, primarily driven by over-cultivation and excessive grazing. These practices have led to significant soil depletion, adversely affecting agricultural productivity and ecosystem resilience (URT, 2007; WB, 2019).

It is important to note that the environment is increasingly threatened at the national and international levels, as it is the foundation of human survival and well-being. Tanzania is a clear example of the urgent problems of climate change, biodiversity loss, and land degradation, as the country is deforested and desertified in most regions and depleting its resources without international efforts to address these problems. Simultaneously, the media has become a powerful force that shapes the policy agenda and individual opinions, and encourages people to take action to preserve the environment (Kweka, 2011; Luedecke & Boykoff, 2017). This two-fold lens of environmental risks and media involvement enables examination of how communication platforms can motivate behaviour change, engage more people in environmental management, and raise awareness.

Theoretical Underpinning

The theoretical framework employed to analyse the role of Tanzanian media in environmental management draws on key perspectives that offer conceptual frameworks for understanding the dynamics at the intersection of media and management. This article adopts Gregory Bateson's Framing Theory, first proposed in 1972. According to this theory, the media not only select which topics to cover but also frame them in specific ways, shaping how audiences interpret and understand these issues within their familiar context.

The Framing Theory is a theoretical framework for understanding how word choice, connotation, and other factors influence individuals' interpretations and reactions to information (Entman, 1993). It examines how different frames shape ideas, beliefs, and values, thereby influencing perception and action across contexts. In the context of media coverage, the theory focuses on how specific content is selected and emphasised to achieve a particular framing effect (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). The Framing Theory has also been applied to the study of social media, virtual communities, and social movements, highlighting



its potential for understanding dynamic communication processes and the effects of online interaction (Meraz & Papacharissi, 2013; Güran & Özarslan, 2022).

Correspondingly, the theory provides a strong analytical tool for examining environmental stories, as it explains how media representations can influence public perceptions of environmental management strategies, drive policy discussions (Lonsdale, 2013; Calista & Yenni, 2023), and prompt behavioural responses. In the context of sustainable environmental management, it suggests that media outlets have the power to frame news stories around conflicts between different stakeholders, portray key personalities involved, emphasise the consequences of specific actions, moralise certain issues, and attribute responsibilities to various parties within communities (Nisbet, 2009). Additionally, media can control the discourse in society and shape societal attitudes and behaviours to sustainable environmental management practices by constructing environmental issues in specific ways (Wakefield et al., 2010). An example is media coverage of the adverse effects of environmental degradation or the positive outcomes of conservation projects, which can raise awareness and encourage support for conservation efforts (Mavrodieva et al., 2019).

The Framing Theory has been applied across diverse studies to examine how media platforms can communicate environmental information. An example was the analysis of the media coverage of climate change conducted by Boykoff (2008) and grounded in the theory. On the same note, research conducted by Antilla (2005) examined the media's framing of climate change. Nisbet (2009) applied the theory to explore how different frames used in news coverage affected public support for environmental policies. In the context of employing the theory (Tewksbury, 2006), mass media use the theory as a tool. Moreover, a study by Carvalho (2007) examined the framing of environmental degradation in European newspapers. For this reason, this article finds the theory helpful for understanding the media's role in communicating environmental information.

Literature Review

Environmental challenges are among the issues reported by the media to inform people either how to protect themselves from potential harm or ways to restore damage that has already occurred. According to Lonsdale (2013), the concept of the environment was introduced to the media landscape at the end of the 20th century. However, the advent of environmental communication can be traced back to the 1960s, marked by Rachel Carson's seminal work "Silent Spring" (1962). This publication highlights the significant risks posed by pesticide use to human health and the broader environment.

Traditional media, including newspapers, television, and radio, have played a crucial role in disseminating knowledge and shaping representations and ideologies within societies (León et al., 2022; Fotopoulos, 2023). Moreover, social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter (now X), YouTube, and Instagram provide dynamic spaces for information exchange and mobilisation. Research indicates that social media can substantially enhance public engagement with environmental issues (Arias, 2019). Indicatively, local environmental initiatives have been reported to attract greater participation through social media campaigns (Zhang & Skoric, 2018). It is important to note that demographic factors, such as age, education, and geographic location, largely determine which media platforms people prefer for receiving and acting on environmental messages. Research indicates that younger generations are more likely to use digital and social media channels for information (Jason,

2025). A large proportion of younger people use social media sites, such as Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube, to access news and information, including environmental news (Majerczak & Strzelecki, 2022). This observation suggests that social media may become the most efficient tool for environmental campaigns among younger audiences (Pick et al., 2019). On the other hand, traditional media such as television, newspapers, and radio remain highly active among older adults and require a mixed-media strategy to reach them fully (Reijo, 2007).

One's educational background also plays a critical role in media platform preferences. Research indicates that individuals with higher educational attainment are more likely to utilise a variety of media sources, including both traditional and digital platforms, to stay informed about environmental issues (Hargittai, 2010). These individuals often seek and engage with long-form content such as documentaries and in-depth news reports. Consequently, ecological organisations aiming to reach a well-educated audience may benefit from producing high-quality, detailed content and ensuring it is accessible across multiple platforms, including reputable news websites and specialised environmental portals.

Additionally, geographic location further influences media preferences, with significant disparities between urban and rural areas (Laniado et al., 2018). In urban settings, there is generally greater access to high-speed internet and a higher prevalence of digital media usage. Urban residents are more likely to follow environmental organisations on social media, participate in online forums, and subscribe to digital news handles (Pick et al., 2019). In contrast, rural areas may have limited internet access, making traditional media more dominant. Studies have shown that in these areas, community radio and local newspapers are vital sources of information.

More importantly, understanding how environmental issues are portrayed across diverse media platforms is crucial for grasping the narratives and information that shape public perceptions and responses (Aneta, 2024). Castrechini et al. (2014) emphasise the pivotal role of media in shaping environmental discourse and influencing public opinion. Furthermore, Zhang (2018) highlights the dynamic nature of media consumption, particularly with the rise of digital platforms, which increasingly influence public awareness of environmental concerns. An analysis of ecological reporting across various media platforms reveals a diverse range of strategies employed by different outlets in presenting these topics, as observed by Zhang & Skoric (2018). Conversely, Salaudeen & Onyechi (2020) contend that digital media platforms provide opportunities for more intricate and participatory engagement with environmental content.

Credibility and reliability are perceptions that largely determine how individuals respond to environmental information presented across different media outlets. Credibility, in the meaning of this word used by Liao (2023), is the trustworthiness, accuracy, and impartiality of the media sources as perceived by the audience. Credibility is the most critical factor in environmental reporting, as it directly affects the population's readiness to accept and act on information about urgent ecological issues. Reliability, as Strombeck et al. (2020) note, is the complement of credibility and stresses the similarity and reliability of the environmental content across various media outlets. When people perceive the environmental information provided as reliable, they tend to use it when making decisions and to increase their behaviour aimed at addressing ecological issues. Ecological information has credibility and reliability, which are influenced by factors affecting audience perceptions. Reijo (2007) and Li and Suh (2015) observe that aspects of sources, such as reputation, expertise, and perceived bias, are



very important factors in influencing judgements of credibility. Indicatively, news viewers would regard official environmental news sources with a track record of competence in reporting over others with a vested interest or known as sensationalists. Also, other aspects, including transparency in reporting methods and adherence to journalistic principles, can enhance the credibility and reliability of environmental information, thereby positively influencing trust among the audience.

However, there are noted challenges in maintaining the media's credibility and reliability in environmental reporting. The complex nature of environmental issues, combined with the rapid dissemination of digital media, can lead to the spread of misinformation and conflicting narratives (Liao, 2023). Moreover, the rise of social media as a primary source of environmental information introduces new dynamics in which information may lack verification and fact-checking, potentially undermining credibility and reliability.

The media can actively promote environmental management. Well-made documentaries, news stories, and social media campaigns help sensitise the population to major ecological issues (Boykoff, 2009; Mavrodieva et al., 2019). According to Hansen et al. (2018), media platforms can be a potent tool for informing people about issues affecting our planet, including climate change, habitat destruction, biodiversity loss, and waste (Sharif & Medvecky, 2018; Strauss et al., 2022). Sontotirto (2019) noted that the media is an appropriate catalyst in shaping people's attitudes and behaviour, thereby contributing to successful environmental management initiatives (Shintasiwi & Wasino, 2020). In line with this, the media is crucial for informing the masses by spreading information on environmental issues and influencing policy (Singh, 2015). Through the media, campaigns can produce positive changes in the masses and avert negative changes in environmentally associated behaviours (Wakefield et al., 2010; Kite et al., 2018).

The impact of media platforms on enhancing environmental awareness and sustainability in Tanzania has been discussed in several studies. For example, the survey by Lusagalika (2020) focused on media platforms as providers of ecological knowledge and awareness to people living in Dar es Salaam. Equally, Owiny et al. (2014) investigated the role of media in disseminating information on the preservation of natural resources. Despite such encouraging research results, other studies highlight critical limitations in media effectiveness. According to Pasape et al. (2022), factors that contribute to minimal awareness among grassroots community members of environmental management and other activities include limited access to environmental information and language barriers. According to Rija and Kideghesho (2020), fewer than 5% of newspapers covered ecological research. In most instances, the information was distorted, indicating poor skills of the local journalists. Further, Kweka (2011) noted that media coverage of climate change has been limited, but Elia (2019) opined that coverage has increased in a few English-language newspapers. Although the literature has established the strengths and weaknesses of media interventions on environmental issues in Tanzania, most studies have been conducted at the metropolitan level, particularly in Dar es Salaam.

Tanga, like other coastal regions of Tanzania, confronts a multitude of environmental challenges, including pollution, overfishing, mangrove deforestation, and an alarming rate of coastal erosion averaging two meters per annum (URT, 2011). These issues are primarily exacerbated by rapid urbanisation and industrial activities, which pose significant threats to local ecosystems, fisheries, and community resilience (URT, 2024). In response to these challenges, targeted interventions, such as mangrove restoration and sustainable fishing

practices, have emerged (Mwanja et al., 2024). Additionally, contemporary media outlets, including Tanga television and various social media platforms, are instrumental in advancing these initiatives. They facilitate public discourse and promote sustainable practices, exemplified by the ‘Msaragambo’ campaigns focused on waste management.

Nevertheless, the media's contribution to shaping the broader concept of sustainable environmental management remains unclear. The actual efficacy of media as a catalyst for substantial behavioural change towards sustainable practices in Tanga has not yet been assessed. Therefore, this study seeks to bridge this gap by examining the media’s influence on environmental awareness in Tanga City. The following key research questions guide it: i) Which media platforms are most effectively utilized by residents for accessing environmental information?, ii) To what extent does the media prominently cover environmental issues in Tanga City?, iii) How do residents perceive the credibility and reliability of environmental media content?, and iv) In what ways does media coverage influence community awareness in sustainable environmental practices?.

Methodology

Study Location and Justification

This study was conducted between July and August 2024 in Chumbageni Ward, Tanga, due to the urban setting and the suitability of the location for the subject. Similarly, Chumbageni Ward in Tanga City was selected among 27 wards based on its accessibility and population diversity (Figure 1).

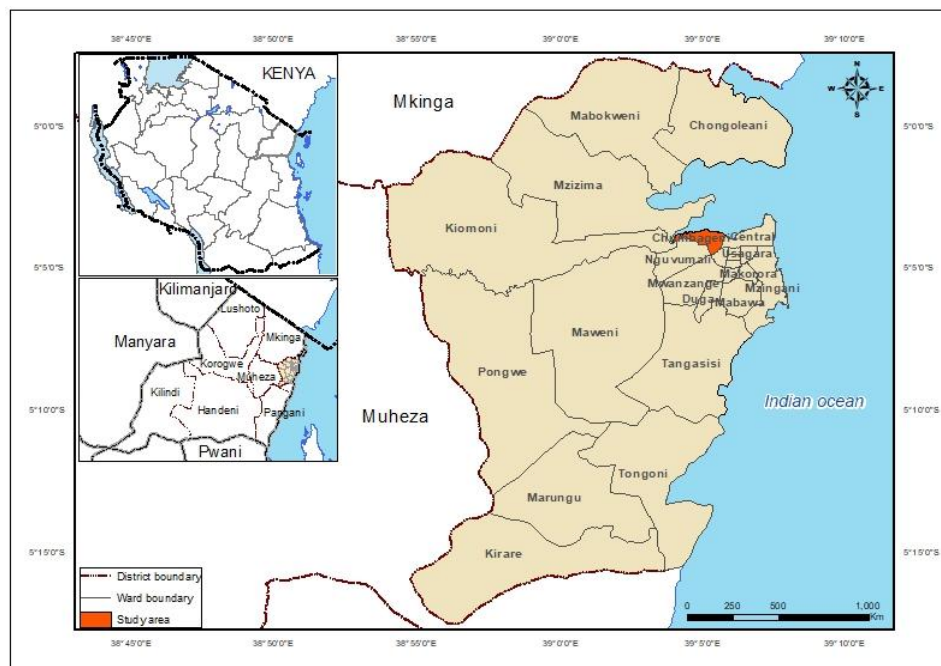


Figure 1: Map of the Area of Study

Source: URT (2024)



Research Design and Approaches

This study utilised a mixed-methods research design, chosen for its usefulness in integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches (Khanday, 2019). This design is well-suited to the study's objectives, as it provides insight into the research problem. The quantitative data facilitated the identification of patterns and measurable trends, while the qualitative data provided more profound insights into respondents' perceptions, attitudes, and experiences. By combining these two approaches, the study explored not only the extent of media influence on environmental management but also the underlying factors and contextual nuances shaping community responses.

Study Population and Sampling Procedures

Purposive sampling was employed to select Chumbageni Ward and the key informants (respective environmental leaders) from the three streets. Additionally, five media personnel were conveniently selected for the study; these were located at the City Council Office, where they had gathered for one of the city's events. Furthermore, simple random sampling was employed, ensuring that every eligible respondent in the identified ward and three streets had an equal opportunity to participate in the study. A total of 75 respondents were sampled from the three streets to complete the questionnaire, with a key question about how the media plays its part in raising the community's awareness of environmental management practices. The 75 respondents were deemed sufficient to make this study representative and provide helpful information.

Methods of Data Collection

Data were collected through semi-structured questionnaires and interviews, using an interview guide to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the research problem. The semi-structured questionnaires were administered to 75 randomly selected respondents to collect quantitative data on the community's exposure to media platforms, its environmental awareness levels, and its perceptions of media credibility. This method allowed the collection of standardised responses suitable for statistical analysis while still allowing brief open-ended input. In-depth interviews were conducted with key informants, including community leaders and media practitioners, to gain qualitative insights into media outlets' strategies. These interviews provided rich, context-specific data that complemented the survey findings.

Data Analysis and Presentation

Quantitative data were analysed using SPSS version 20, employing descriptive statistics to identify trends in the dataset. Qualitative data from interviews were transcribed, coded, and finally analysed using thematic content analysis to capture recurring themes. Both qualitative and quantitative findings were integrated to provide insight into how media platforms can promote sustainable environmental management within communities. The quantitatively analysed outputs are presented in tables and figures, while direct quotes and narrative summaries present the qualitative data.

Study Findings

Residents' Perceptions of the Most Utilised Media for Environmental Information

To understand residents' preferences for media platforms for accessing environmental management information, respondents were interviewed to identify the channels they consider

most effective. The findings, presented in Figure 2, reveal a clear tendency among households in the selected streets to rely on a mix of media sources. Television emerged as the most popular medium, with 45% of respondents identifying it as their primary source of environmental information. Social media platforms, particularly Facebook and Twitter, were preferred by 23% of respondents, while 21% reported the radio as a commonly used source. In contrast, newspapers and websites were cited less frequently, indicating a relatively minor role in disseminating environmental updates.

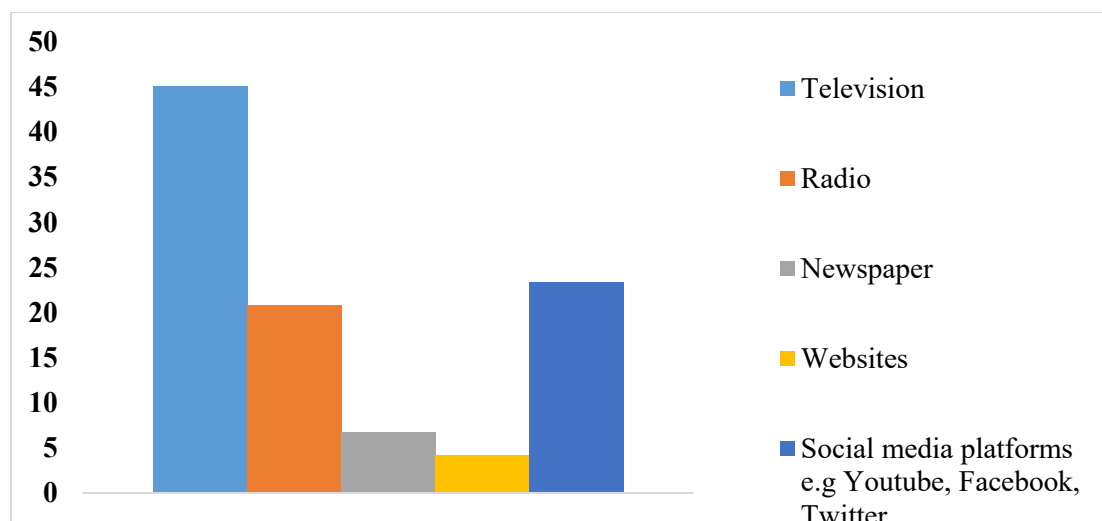


Figure 2: Media for Environmental Information

Source: Field Data (2024)

Results show that most respondents access environmental content frequently or occasionally. This implies considerable media exposure, a crucial factor in raising awareness and fostering a positive attitude towards the environment. This strong preference for television stems from its effectiveness in delivering both the visual and audio components of messages. This is because this medium enhances message retention and accessibility, particularly for groups with varying literacy levels. This term conveys that television remains a potent instrument for mass environmental education, especially in reaching vast numbers of voters and audiences with diverse geographic backgrounds, both in cities and in peri-urban regions.

The increasing trend toward such social media use, which is still not dominant, indicates a shift toward participatory communication. It is an interactive medium that enables two-way communication, user-generated content, and rapid dissemination of information. This would mean that combining the social media approach with other media, such as television, would go a long way toward enhancing outreach, particularly among younger people. More specifically, cities are the areas that will benefit from this hybrid form of communication, which combines the trustworthiness (credibility) of television with the range and interactivity of digital media.

Prominence of Environmental Concerns in Local Media

In this study, participants were asked to identify the primary environmental concerns that receive the most attention in media coverage. The findings indicate that waste management was the most frequently cited issue, accounting for 24% of responses, followed closely by climate change at 22%. 14% of respondents identified air pollution as a significant concern. Other environmental issues, including biodiversity loss, deforestation, and various additional problems noted by participants, accounted for only marginal percentages, as detailed in Table 1.

Table 1: Prominence of Environmental Concerns in Local Media

Environmental issues	Frequency	Percent
Deforestation	11	8.3
Water pollution	21	15.9
Air pollution	18	13.6
Waste management	32	24.2
Climate change	29	22.0
Biodiversity management	12	9.1
Other	9	6.8
Total	132	100.0

Source: Field Data (2024)

The research results indicate that waste management was a relatively frequently mentioned environmental topic in the media, suggesting increased awareness of environmental problems related to waste disposal, recycling, and pollution in the local setting. This ranking implies that media houses are responding to growing public concern about the state of the city and the environment. Climate change has also become a serious subject of reporting, indicating that larger global environmental issues are affecting local communities. Air pollution, deforestation, biodiversity, and water pollution were less frequently cited, suggesting that the media might not prioritise them highly, even though these problems are important to the state of the environment. The unequal distribution of media coverage can only serve to widen gaps in general understanding and involvement, as recent results suggest. The following was the submission of one of the interviewees:

Our approach to determining which environmental topics to cover is diverse and comprehensive. We consider several factors, including community reports, our research, and alignment with global concerns such as water pollution and climate change. Additionally, we consider the severity of problems as reported by the community. This comprehensive approach ensures that our environmental news coverage remains responsive, well-informed, and relevant to both local and global contexts (Media personnel interviewee No.4, August 2024).

The strategic and multifaceted approach to environmental news coverage, as the quote shows, means that a combination of independent research, grassroots contributions, and alignment with global environmental priorities informs their role. Although the articulation of international concerns, such as water pollution and climate change, shows that the issue under consideration aims at locating the local concerns in the context of the environmental discourse, the emphasis on regional issues reported by the communities highlights the bottom-up approach to the ecological issue through the value of the local voices and experiences.

Perceptions of the Credibility and Reliability of Environmental Media Content

Respondents were asked to share their perceptions regarding the accuracy and reliability of environmental reports presented by various media platforms. The findings reveal that a relatively large portion of respondents (39%) held a neutral stance on the matter. Meanwhile, 35% of respondents considered the information to be somewhat accurate and reliable, indicating a moderate level of trust in media coverage of environmental issues. A smaller segment of participants perceived the reports as very precise and reliable, demonstrating a high level of confidence in the media's ecological reporting. Conversely, a relatively small proportion found the information to be neither very accurate nor very reliable. In contrast, an even smaller percentage indicated that the reports were not at all correct, reflecting minimal trust in media coverage of environmental topics (Table 2).

Table 2: Perceptions of the Credibility and Reliability of Environmental Media Content

Rating	Frequency	Percent
Neutral	29	38.7
Not at all accurate and reliable	1	1.3
Not very accurate and reliable	2	2.7
Somewhat accurate and reliable	26	34.7
Very accurate and reliable	17	22.7
Total	75	100.0

Source: Field Data (2024)

The widespread scepticism regarding the accuracy and reliability of environmental information reported by the media suggests a lack of confidence in the quality of such reports. The accuracy and trustworthiness of the information signify a carefully cultivated trust in media coverage of environmental reports. In the meantime, another significant but thin layer of information was identified, which was considered very precise and confirmed, indicating high confidence in some media sources. Nonetheless, the fact that some respondents viewed the reports as not very accurate or not accurate at all suggests that a certain degree of doubt



remains in reporters' minds, likely due to inconsistencies in reporting, a lack of verification, or gimmickry. This means that, although the media has remained a significant source of environmental information, its role has been limited due to questions about its reliability.

Media Coverage and Public Awareness of Environmental Sustainability

To assess the media's role in fostering environmental awareness, respondents were asked whether they believed the media contributed to environmental consciousness. The findings indicate that the majority of respondents (68%) acknowledged the media's positive role in promoting environmental awareness. In contrast, 32 per cent of the participants either did not believe the media contributed to promoting environmental awareness, were unsure, or were unsure about its impact on environmental education (Figure 3).

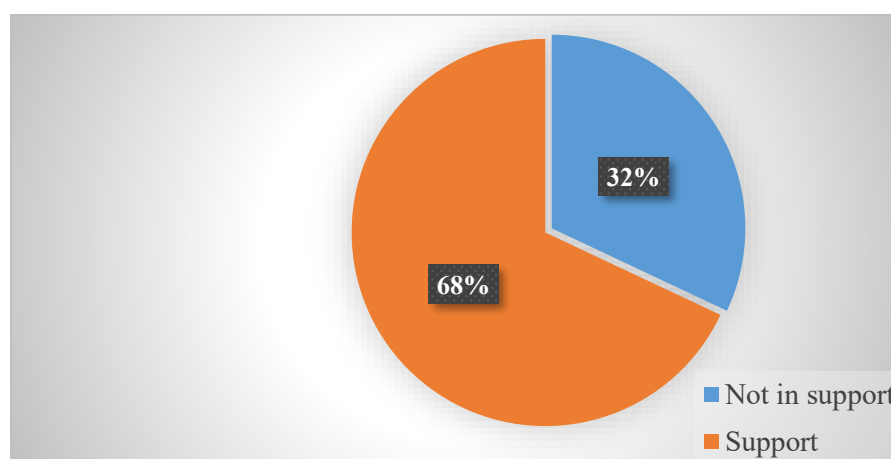


Figure 3: Role of Media Platforms in Influencing Awareness

Source: Field data (2024)

Moreover, in assessing the media platforms' role in fostering environmental awareness, several key aspects were evaluated, including their contributions, the extent of public exposure, and the strategies employed. Insights from face-to-face interviews with key informants shed light on the approaches media platforms adopt to foster awareness of environmental issues. Notably, one media platform reporter had this to say:

In our approach to environmental coverage, we adopt a comprehensive strategy that encompasses a variety of methods. This includes investigative reporting, news features, documentaries, and interviews. We aim to provide our audience with diverse and engaging content that effectively communicates environmental issues (Media personnel No. 1, August 2024).

Another key informant asserted:

The media significantly contributes to providing us with environmental information. For example, Tanga City Television broadcasts about the 'Msalagambo Campaign', in

which every Saturday is designated a weekly cleaning day (A street leader, No. 3, August 2024).

According to the findings, the media remains a vital channel for disseminating environmental information to the general public. This level of agreement with the media's role is high. It demonstrates a general acceptance of the importance of various media outlets, including radio, TV, newspapers, and social media, in enhancing community awareness of environmental issues such as climate change, pollution, biodiversity loss, and proper waste management.

Discussion of Findings

This study examined the media's influence on promoting sustainable environmental management within the community of Tanga City, Tanzania. Specifically, it answers the questions: a) Which media platforms are most effectively utilized by residents for accessing environmental information?, b) To what extent does the media prominently cover environmental issues in Tanga City?, c) How do residents perceive the credibility and reliability of environmental media content?, d) In what ways does media coverage influence community awareness in sustainable environmental practices?. The findings of this study indicate that residents in Tanga City rely on multiple media platforms to access environmental information, with traditional and digital channels serving complementary roles. Consistent with previous research, television emerged as the most influential medium, likely due to its wide coverage, ability to present complex information visually and audibly, and its familiarity among both literate and illiterate audiences (Watson & McIntyre, 2020). Similarly, the growing use of social media among digitally active populations in this study mirrors trends observed elsewhere, where social platforms provide 24-hour accessibility, interactive features, and opportunities for mass mobilisation (Liao, 2024). Radio continues to play a key role in reaching less digitally connected audiences, whereas newspapers and websites remain limited in their environmental impact, reflecting findings reported in other studies (Schäfer & Painter, 2021).

Regarding content, this study found that the media prioritise environmental issues with immediate, tangible impacts on human health and community well-being, including waste management, climate change, and air pollution. This observation is in line with previous studies showing that environmental topics with visible consequences and strong public relevance are more likely to be highlighted by media platforms, whereas less observable issues such as biodiversity loss and deforestation tend to receive limited coverage (Siddiqua et al., 2022; Abubakar et al., 2022; Babuji et al., 2023). The study also supports the literature suggesting that prioritisation is influenced by local dynamics, programme schedules, socio-economic conditions, and political agendas (Matar, 2020), confirming that media coverage is context-dependent.

The perceptions of credibility and reliability in this study further align with prior findings. Although many residents expressed moderate to high trust in media reports, a notable portion remained neutral or cautious, reflecting careful evaluation of environmental information. This pattern echoes observations by Tilt and Xiao (2010), who reported that the media played a proactive role in informing the public during a 2005 pollution incident, while delays in government communication emphasised the importance of trusted reporting. Similarly, research during the COVID-19 pandemic revealed how varying perceptions of media



reliability can influence public engagement with critical information (Liu, 2022; Gibson et al., 2022). Moreover, the study supports findings that media-use bias can affect perceived credibility and audience engagement.

Importantly, the positive influence of media on environmental awareness and community engagement observed in this study is consistent with prior research. The majority of respondents acknowledged that media coverage promotes environmental consciousness, suggesting that repeated and context-relevant messaging strengthens knowledge and encourages proactive behaviour (De Meyer et al., 2021; Gibson et al., 2022). Challenges such as sporadic reporting and underrepresentation of environmental topics have also been reported elsewhere, highlighting the need to address coverage gaps (Antonopoulos et al., 2019; Majerczak & Strzelecki, 2022). Well-designed media campaigns, such as tree planting, waste management, and climate initiatives, have been shown in other studies to effectively mobilise public participation and foster long-term environmental stewardship (Östman, 2014; Hajri & Daife, 2024). The variety of approaches used by the media in Tanga aligns with global findings that show media outlets adopt different methods and frequencies to communicate environmental issues effectively (Schäfer & Painter, 2021).

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study demonstrates that the media plays a pivotal role in promoting sustainable environmental management in Tanga City by shaping public awareness, knowledge, and engagement. Residents rely on multiple platforms, with television emerging as the most influential medium and social media increasingly gaining prominence among digitally active populations. Media coverage tends to prioritise environmental issues with immediate and visible impacts, such as waste management, climate change, and air pollution, while less tangible concerns receive limited attention. The credibility and reliability of media content further influence public trust and participation, with repeated, context-relevant messaging fostering proactive environmental behaviour. These findings highlight that well-designed media campaigns can effectively mobilise communities and enhance environmental stewardship, consistent with global research. Based on these insights, it is recommended that policymakers and environmental practitioners collaborate with media outlets to: a) ensure consistent, accurate, and transparent reporting of diverse environmental issues, including underrepresented topics such as biodiversity and deforestation; b) strategically leverage both traditional and digital platforms to reach broader audiences and engage youth; and c) implement regular, interactive, and community-focused campaigns to strengthen awareness, participation, and long-term sustainable environmental practices.

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