

Public Perception of Climate Change Media Coverage

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The study examines the public perception of climate change coverage in media. The study adopted a quantitative research methodology using the quantitative survey as the research tool. The study focuses on people's understanding of climate change, the role of media, and how visual representation catalyzes the public understanding of the topic. This provides an in-depth understanding of how people perceive climate change news in the media and how visual representation could be effectively used to convey climate change and its implications.

Keywords: Climate change, Media coverage, Public perception, Media consumption, Visual representation.

1. Introduction

In recent years, the issue of climate change has become increasingly prominent in public discourse, with the media playing a crucial role in shaping public perception and understanding of this complex phenomenon. How climate change is portrayed in the media can significantly impact how it is perceived and responded to by the general public.

One study highlights the importance of developing climate literacy and awareness in Pakistan, noting that as a nation, it is necessary to generate public response against the imminent threat of climate change (Jan et al., 2020). The modern-day concept of climate change reflects the environmental changes brought about by human involvement in the ecosystem, which has become one of the gravest issues the world has ever witnessed (Kakaki, 2013).

Another study from Africa found that climate change literacy, similar to the effects of political knowledge, helps people understand the impact of climate change on their interests and life situations, constituting a key element of instrumental rationality (Helbling et al., 2021).

The existing research on this topic highlights several key themes. First, studies have shown

that the level of attention given to climate change in news coverage can vary significantly across different national contexts and journalistic cultures. (Hase et al., 2021) For instance, regulatory quality and unemployment trends are significant predictors of the level of media attention to climate change. (Barkemeyer et al., 2017) This suggests that the social and political context in which climate change is reported on can influence the salience of the issue in the public eye.

Second, research has indicated that the framing and narratives used in media coverage of climate change can have a significant impact on public attitudes and behaviors towards climate science and environmental policies(Nisbet, 2009). For example, uncertainty frames in news coverage tend to confuse lay audiences about the state of climate science, potentially undermining public support for action(Gustafson & Rice, 2019).

Additionally, research indicates that the framing of climate change in the media can shape public attitudes and beliefs. Specific frames, such as those emphasizing uncertainty or the social impacts of climate change, can either confuse or inform audiences about the scientific consensus and the urgency of addressing this issue(DiPeso, 2010).

Ultimately, the existing literature highlights the critical role that the media plays in shaping public understanding and engagement with climate change.

However, the relationship between media coverage and public perception is not straightforward. While the media can play a significant role in shaping public discourse, individuals' personal experiences, values, and beliefs also contribute to their understanding and acceptance of climate change(Happer & Philo, 2015).

Racial, ethnic, and cultural identities, as well as social perceptions, have been identified as important factors that influence public engagement with climate change (Pearson & Schuldt, 2015). This underscores the need for a more nuanced and inclusive approach to climate communication, one that recognizes the diversity of perspectives and experiences that shape how climate change is perceived and addressed(Princeton Site Builder, 2023).

In conclusion, the public perception of climate change is a complex and multifaceted issue, with the media playing a crucial role in framing and understanding it. Ongoing research in this area can help inform more effective and inclusive strategies for communicating the urgency of climate action to diverse audiences. (Tavares et al., 2020) (Twyman-Ghoshal et al., 2022) (Pearson & Schuldt, 2015) (Hase et al., 2021)

2. Research Questions and Objectives

This study aims to analyze the public perception of climate change media coverage in Kerala.

The researcher aims to address the following questions:

1. Evaluate public awareness of Climate Change
2. Identify Sources of Climate Change Information
3. Examine coverage of Climate Change in media sources
4. Understand public perception on the media's role

5. Assess the efforts to understand Climate Change Science by the public
6. Evaluate the impact of visual elements in media

Based on the research questions, the following objectives have been formulated,

To study the awareness level of the public about Climate change

To assess the role of media in communicating climate change

To analyze the impact of visual representation on climate change

3. Methodology

This research used a quantitative approach. The variables of the study identified are Public perception as the dependent variable and media coverage of climate change as the independent variable.

The online survey was used as a data collection method, with Google Forms as the data collection tool. A questionnaire consisting of 12 close-ended questions was administered to the samples through various social media platforms. The researcher used a simple random sampling method. The population of the study was Keralites who had access to any mode of news consumption medium. Descriptive statistics and chi-square tests were conducted to analyze the results.

4. Results

The results of 100 responses were presented to analyze the perception of public perception of Climate change and their media engagement. 91% of the respondents were aware of the climate change. Of which the online media is a prominent source of news source about climate change. 55% relied on online media while 25% relied on newspapers. Even though television is a popular medium for news consumption only 18% relied on television for news on Climate change and just 2% relied on magazines.

The most preferred ways to learn more about climate change are through visual representations (40%) and videos (37%).

Table 1 Chi-Square Test of Independence: the visual elements in the media and persuasiveness to engage in the news on climate change

Variable Pair	χ^2	df	N	p
The visual elements in the media and persuasiveness to engage in the news on climate change	0.14	1	100	.707

Table 1 indicates the chi-square test conducted between the visual elements in the media and persuasiveness to engage in the news on climate change, which shows no significant association between the visual elements in the media and persuasiveness to engage in the news on climate change as the p-value is .707, which is greater than the significant level 0.05. Hence the null hypothesis is accepted.

A chi-square test was conducted to examine the association between the perceived adequacy

of media coverage of climate change and the feeling of climate change intensity through visual elements in media.

Table 2 Chi-Square Test of Independence: Perceived Adequacy of Media Coverage and Feeling of Climate Change Intensity Through Visual Elements

Variable Pair	χ^2	df	N	p
Adequacy of Media Coverage \times Feeling of Climate Change Intensity	7.77	4	100	.100

The results in Table 2 suggest that the p-value being .100, which is >0.05 , shows no statistical significance between both the variables implying that there is no association between the perceived adequacy of media coverage on climate change and the feeling of climate change intensity through visual elements in media.

96% of the respondents believe the media is responsible for covering environmental news. Still, only 40% actively make efforts to understand climate change science.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

Based on the analysis of the survey results, several key conclusions can be drawn:

The results from the survey response indicate a high level of awareness of climate change among the respondents. This indicates that climate change is a widely recognized issue among the public. The prevalence of online news platforms over other news mediums in disseminating information on climate change suggests the potentiality of platforms to persuade people to mitigate and adapt to climate change. The findings also indicate that traditional media, such as newspapers and television, still play a significant role in information dissemination about this issue. The public overwhelmingly expects that the media will play a key role in informing and educating them about environmental issues, including climate change. The need for regular and in-depth coverage of climate change in media to ensure the public is well-informed about this critical issue is hence identified.

There are ambivalent efforts to understand climate change science, suggesting a need for more accessible and engaging communication of climate change science to encourage greater public understanding. Visual elements in media fulfil the role of conveying the impact of climate change. This catalyses the communication to boost public understanding of the urgency and gravity of climate change. However, there is no significant association between the perceived adequacy of media coverage of climate change and the feeling of climate change intensity through visual elements in media.

To conclude, the respondents hold significant expectations from the media to cover news on the topic of climate change. Visual elements in these mediums have an impact on communicating climate change. Online media is the most prominent medium of climate change information for the respondents. Respondents' preference for visual representation and videos on climate change influence impactful news consumption of the topic through these mediums.

Media outlets can enhance their communication strategies to effectively inform and engage the public on climate change, ultimately contributing to a better-informed and more actively

engaged society on this critical issue.

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