

Content Analysis of Climate Change Coverage in Trinidad and Tobago's Print Media

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Climate change poses an existential threat to the planet. It is predicted that with it, climate change will bring several effects such as increased average daily temperatures, changes in precipitation patterns and intensity, and sea-level rise. Small Island Developing States (SIDS) such as Trinidad and Tobago are particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change [1]. To address this threat, it is important that the public is informed and empowered to act. The importance of public education and awareness in addressing the modern climate crisis is widely established and accepted [13]. Under the Paris Agreement, parties are asked to act on climate change education, training, public awareness, public participation, and public access to information [11]. Therefore, mainstreaming climate change reporting in mass media is important. Surveys conducted by the National Institute of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology (NIHERST) in 2013 and the Environmental Management Authority (EMA) in 2016 revealed that despite a moderate level of environmental awareness, few people consider climate change a serious environmental concern [15,16].

As the window for achieving the 1.5°C target of the Paris Agreement narrows, it is critical that the messaging on climate change carried by Trinidad and Tobago's print media be evaluated. Content analysis of print media has been used across multiple countries to better understand variations in public understanding of global environmental issues.

Khan et al investigate the coverage of climate change in newspaper articles written by local journalists and contracted columnists in Trinidad's print media over the period 30 July 2019 – 12 July 2021.



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Results indicate that the Newsday mentioned the topic of climate change the most with 127 articles passively covering the topic of climate change. The Guardian Newspaper had 80 articles and the Express had 30. Moreover, most of these articles mentioned climate change as a subtopic, in relation to other news, or as a passing reference. Explicit focus on climate change was found in 3.66% of the articles studied over the period of 30 July 2019 to 12 July 2021. Additionally, a general increase in climate change reporting around certain months in the year (June and July) was noted. This may be related to the annual hurricane season, significant environmental awareness days, and the timing of a media sensitization workshop. Furthermore, the science and impacts of climate change were the most discussed in print media with less emphasis placed on actions and citizen responsibility for climate change mitigation. Finally, the placement of articles was noted since it can influence who and how many people view specific pieces [28]. Climate change news generally appeared in the upper middle of the newspaper (around page 25), where fewer viewers were assumed to look at them.

What's next

Currently, the way climate change is portrayed and reported in the media does little to drive civil action against the matter. Editors and managers of local newspapers should be targeted for sensitization works to establish sustained improvements in climate change reporting. Additionally, there should be the establishment of a specific section for environmental news in the newspaper in Trinidad and Tobago.