



Frequency and Adequacy of Media Information on the Sustainable Development Goals: A Ghanaian Case Study

Eric Opoku Mensah, PhD

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4178-6615>

Department of Communication Studies, University of Media, Arts and Communication, Ghana

Email: eric.opokumensah@gij.edu.gh

***Daniel Odoom, PhD**

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6093-7474>

Department of Communication Studies, University of Media, Arts and Communication, Ghana

Email: ankahodoom@gmail.com

Lawrencia Agyepong, PhD

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0512-3427>

Department of Communication Studies, University of Media, Arts and Communication, Ghana

Email: agyeponglawrencia@gij.edu.gh

***Corresponding Author:** ankahodoom@gmail.com

Copyright resides with the author(s) in terms of the Creative Commons Attribution CC BY-NC 4.0.

The users may copy, distribute, transmit and adapt the work, but must recognize the author(s) and the East African Journal of Education and Social Sciences

Abstract: This study examined public perception on frequency and adequacy of media information on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Ghana, using the descriptive survey design. The study population was made up of Ghanaians who were 18 years or above. Convenient sampling method was used to select 431 Ghanaians. Data was gathered through questionnaire administration. Analytical techniques for the study included frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations. The study found that social media was the most dominant source of information among Ghanaians, followed by television, with newspapers identified as the least dominant source of information. Generally, Ghanaians perceived the level of frequency of media information on SDG 1 (Ending poverty) as high. Again, the level of frequency of media information on SDG 2 (Ending hunger and achieving food security), SDG 3 (Healthy life) and SDG 5 (Gender equality) was moderate. However, the level of adequacy of media information on SDG 9 (Industry, and infrastructure), SDG 10 [Reduced inequality] and Goal 11 [Sustainable cities and communities] was very low. As a recommendation, Ghanaian media should pay increased attention to the use of the new media especially social media when covering and reporting issues related to the SDGs. Furthermore, media organizations in Ghana should consider the use of radio and television as critical sources of frequent and adequate information on the SDGs. Finally, media organizations should re-examine their daily and weekly programs to ensure that equal attention is given to all the 17 SDGs.

Keywords: Agenda setting theory; media; SDGs; information; public opinion; governance.

How to Cite: Mensah, E. O., Odoom, D., and Agyepong, L. (2023). Frequency and Adequacy of Media Information on the Sustainable Development Goals: A Ghanaian Case Study. *East African Journal of Education and Social Sciences* 4(3), 84-96. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.46606/eajess2023v04i04.0306>.

Introduction

Media constitute a significant part of the development of every nation. Through information,

education and entertainment the media largely acts as a critical force in transforming the lives of people (World Bank, 2009). In various ways, the media has

been described as the fourth estate, agenda setter, watchdog, force multiplier and gate-keeper (Broeckert, 2003; Norris, 2006). They epitomize an important tool for shaping public opinions and promote democratic rule and good governance (Broeckert, 2003; Jacobs & Schillemans, 2016; Nikoi & Avle, 2022). Media influences behavior, facilitates nation-building and promotes public and social policies which guarantee improved lives of people (Hornick, 1998; Waisbord, 2001). Generally, media acts as vanguard for political, economic, social and cultural development (Nikoi & Avle, 2022). Literature (McCombs & Reynolds, 2002; Sciarini & Tresch, 2019) shows that media has the capacity to dictate the kind of issues which are deemed relevant to the public. By so doing, media influences the citizens on the types of topics which should become the agenda of society (McCombs & Reynolds, 2002; Sciarini & Tresch, 2019).

According to the World Bank (2009), the media sector plays a major role in the social and economic development of the society. Social and economic contributions of the media to the development of any society largely depend on the nature of the media contents delivered. Media landscape helps to highlight the needs of the poor and the vulnerable in society (Arthur, 2010). It also contributes to development across sectors including health and roads (Kpienbaareh et al. 2021). Shanahan (2011) argues that the media plays a major role in promoting sustainable development. The media also help stakeholders to institute measures to promote development (Shanahan, 2011). Omwoyo (2022) asserts that the media's role as an agenda setter and as a key stakeholder in improving society has become more relevant especially because of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Sustainable Development Goals are global goals which were developed by the United Nations (UN) General Assembly as a build-up of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and were formally adopted by all the 193 member nations in September 2015. There are 17 SDGs, 169 targets and 300 indicators which represent the most significant global efforts towards sustainable development. The goals are a call to action to improve human lives, reduce poverty and protect the environment by 2030. The goals also envision a society where there is manifest evidence of prosperity for all, good governance, social inclusion and cohesion. Among the unique features of the

SDGs are their universal and intricately complex nature which promotes collaboration and partnership among stakeholders, including governments, academia, private sector and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) (Addis Ababa Action Agenda Report, 2015). Collaboration and partnership are at the heart of the attainment of the SDGs because it is believed that the goals cannot be achieved without interaction inter-linkage and interdependency between socio-economic, political and environmental systems (Kumi, 2019).

It is generally believed that for the SDGs to be achieved, all stakeholders have a vital role to play (Odoom et al., 2023; UNESCO, 2016). As major stakeholders, media organizations also have a crucial role to play in the attainment of the SDGs (Media Development Investment Fund, 2022). Omwoyo (2022) maintains that media has the capacity to effectively monitor progress in the SDGs, outline the gaps in implementation and give strategies for success. In the views of Shanahan (2011), quality media coverage of climate change (SDG 10) can inform vulnerable communities of potential impacts and adaptation strategies required. Hansen (2007) argues that media discourses shape and set parameters of discussion and understanding of environmental issues leading to social and policy decisions. According to the World Economic Forum (2020), media industry is a critical stakeholder in the realization of the SDGs. For example, in Japan, media houses actively help in providing relevant information on the SDGs to the public (World Economic Forum, 2020). Media has an important role for promoting peace and justice (SDG 16) (Omwoyo, 2022).

It is believed that in the US and Europe, media environment has promoted awareness about the SDGs. However, media reports and content have not seen consistent intensification in the continents (Brookings Institution Report, 2018; Kapur, 2011). The situation is not very much different from the African continent since public awareness of the SDGs is low in the continent (Akinlolu et al., 2017; Odoom et al., 2023; OECD, 2017). Chatterjee (2020) believes that media has an essential role to play in promoting awareness about the SDGs. Media can contribute to the efforts to drive change towards the SDGs. For example, poverty reduction (SDG 1), economic growth (SDG 8) and innovation and industrialization (SDG 9) cannot be achieved without the contribution of the media (Media Development Investment Fund, 2022; Stiglitz & Islam, 2002).

As a signatory to the SDGs, Ghana has and indeed continues to align her development priorities in line with the goals (National Development Planning Commission (NDPC)). In fulfilling the SDGs, the country has initiated a number of development programs and policies to improve the life of citizens (Government of Ghana, 2019). Notable examples of policies are the *Free Senior High School* (SDG 4) and the *Planting for Food and Jobs* (SDG 2). The *Planting for Export and Rural Development* program was initiated in line with the country's commitment to the SDGs. Besides, the establishment of the Ministry of Sanitation and Water Resources (SDG 6) is a clear testament of the country's strategies to achieve the SDGs. Beyond these programs and policies, Ghana has set up an SDG Implementation Coordinating Committee (ICC) to strengthen coordination and partnerships across the various sectors of the country. Furthermore, Ghana has set up an SDG Technical Committee to, among others, provide support to local authorities and other stakeholders. The Committee helps in the implementation, awareness creation, public education and advocacy issues related to the goals (Government of Ghana, 2019). Clearly, Ghana is putting in place measures to fulfill the goals.

Despite the above measures initiated by Ghana, there are concerns about the level of public awareness of the SDGs. It is reported that Ghanaians have low level of awareness about the SDGs and this hinders public support, ownership and participation in policies and programs related to the SDGs. The issue of low public awareness on the SDGs among Ghanaians led the then Minister of Planning, Prof. Gyan-Baffour to call on the media to help in promoting awareness about the goals (News Ghana Report, 2019; Government of Ghana, 2019; Odoom et al., 2023). Arguably, the issue of low public awareness raises doubts about the seriousness with which the Ghanaian media landscape has contributed to the realization of the SDGs in the country. A question of concern is, how frequent have media organizations in the country been providing SDG-related information to the citizens? How much information related to the SDGs has the Ghanaian media been providing to the general public? Against this background, this study sought to establish the views of Ghanaians on the frequency and adequacy of media information on the SDGs in the country.

Literature Review

The role of media in ensuring frequent and adequate information has been echoed theoretically. From the perspective of the agenda setting theory, media has an amazing power to set a nation's agenda and to focus public attention on issues which the public must consider as vital. Historically, an agenda-setting role of the media originated from the works of Walter Lippmann in 1922. In his book titled *Public Opinion*, Lippmann contended that media is a strong force in shaping public discourses (McCombs & Valenzuela, 2007). Following the 1968's study which tested the empirical relevance of the theory, several other studies have been done to establish a correlation between the issues media considers as important agenda and those issues which are key on the agenda of the public (McCombs & Valenzuela, 2007; Nowak-Teter, 2018). McCombs (1977) outlined two core assumptions of the agenda-setting theory. One, the media landscape does not mirror reality. This means the media only highlights what exists to generate public interest and directs the discourse on that reality in a way to (re)shape public opinion by consciously choosing messages that reverberate with the public. Two, the decision of the media to focus on a few topics and issues causes the public to consider those topics and issues as more relevant to society. According to Cohen, as cited in Kpienbaareh et al. (2021), the media's focus on certain issues influences the public on what topics and issues they need to think about and how to think about those topics and issues.

As a way of impacting development, media organizations provide contents which are relevant to various aspects of society. Media contents are often covered in various formats to serve societal needs. They help to develop public awareness and support for policies and activities (Jacobs & Schillemans, 2016). According to Norris (2006), media promotes accountability in both private and public sectors, which often helps to reduce corruption. Media also assists in creating an enabling investment setting and ultimately improved economic growth and development (Alam & Ali Shah, 2013). To this end, there has been an increasing call for pluralization of the media space. A plural media environment, also known as participatory or two-way process media environment, enhances access to information and wider diffusion of knowledge within a given society. Plural media environment helps to promote

informed decision making, increased accountability, responsiveness and anti-corruption efforts (Jacobs & Schillemans, 2016; Waisbord, 2001; World Bank, 2007; World Bank, 2009) through provision and spreading of vital information. Theoretically, the ability of media to provide and spread vital information to improve the society is reinforced by the diffusion of innovation framework. The theory explains how individuals accept innovations including new ideas, new products and new services.

As already stated, providing information is a critical role of the media. The power of information especially in today's increasingly competitive world cannot be gainsaid and the media constitutes a very potent information multiplier through their ability to mold national and international discourses and opinions. Media provides diverse pieces of information on various social, economic and political issues to shape a society. It is increasingly recognized that media information and discourses on issues including rule of law, checks and balances, human rights and abuses of power are essential for triggering progress in every society (Nikoi & Avle, 2022). Additionally, media spread information and provide education on health issues and safety precautions to promote healthy living. Media channels such as radio, television, internet and newspapers have been vital in spreading information and promoting awareness on climate change and environment protection (Kapur, 2011). *SDG Accountability Handbook*, 2019) as espoused in the diffusion of innovation theory.

Empirically, media industry has become a vital force in the attainment of the SDGs in countries like Japan. It is reported that the Japanese media environment has been instrumental in publishing many in-depth stories and reports on various SDG-related issues. In one of such reports from a local town endeavoring to develop a circular economy through forest management efforts, it was observed that 6.5 million tons of food and 1 billion items of clothing are wasted every year (World Economic Forum, 2020). Despite the increasing role of the media in SDGs, there are concerns about the effectiveness of the media in providing and covering information on the goals. A report by the Brookings Institution, a think-tank based in Washington D.C. showed that media coverage of SDG issues in the US and in Europe tends to increase in years with UN conferences and events. However, media coverage of SDG issues often decreases these two places in

years without UN conferences and events (Brookings Institution, 2018). The situation in many developing countries is not largely different from what pertains in the US and Europe (Kapur, 2011).

A study in Bangladesh by Bhattacharya et al. (2020) on the role of media in the SDG delivery found that not enough interactions go on between the media and non-state actors around the SDGs. The situation in Bangladesh hinders media coverage and reports on SDG-related issues. It also hampers public awareness of the goals (Bhattacharya et al., 2020). The issue of low awareness of the SDGs has been reinforced in previous studies. This suggests that media information on the SDGs has not been adequate to help promote awareness on the goals (Krishna et al., 2022). Being aware of the situation in the continent, Chatterjee (2020) entreats African countries to vigorously use media to push SDG discourses to promote the realization of the goals and to improve lives of citizens.

From the social cognitive theory, media coverage of issues related to the SDGs can influence support and commitment of citizens towards the goals. The theory states that learning occurs through observation of behavior and the outcomes of the behavior being observed. Thus, as media continues to cover and report news items and stories on the SDGs and the nature of support given to the goals by key stakeholders, other people tend to be influenced by such news items and information and subsequently support the goals (Davis, 2006).

Ghana has a very vibrant media environment. The country has seen a rising pluralized media sector in recent times (Nikoi & Avle, 2022). The media industry has become a predominant mechanism through which Ghanaians participate in democratic governance. Most Ghanaians obtain their news via radio and television (Afrobarometer, 2018). Given the rise in the media environment in the country, one would expect a translation of information provision and education on SDG related issues as an inevitable consequence. However, it appears this has not been the case leading to low public awareness of the goals among Ghanaians (Government of Ghana, 2019; Odoom et al., 2023).

Methodology

Research Design

The study is quantitative in nature, with descriptive survey as the design. The design helped the

researchers to obtain data and present the views of respondents (Adedigba et al., 2023).

Population and Sampling

The study's population was Ghanaians who were 18 years or above. Convenience sampling was the main sampling method used. In view of the COVID-19 safety protocols at the time of this study, it was difficult to apply the rules of probability sampling in selecting respondents. Convenience sampling enables researchers to collect data from participants based on their accessibility, availability and willingness to provide data to complete the study (Hassan, 2022; Stratton, 2021). In all, 431 Ghanaians were sampled from across the country for the study.

Data Collection Tools

A questionnaire used in this study had four sections. Section A focused on demographic features whilst Section B considered the main sources of information of respondents. Section C collected data on the extent to which the Ghanaian media frequently provide information on issues related to the SDGs to the public while Section D looked at the extent to which Ghanaian media frequently provided information on issues related to the SDGs.

Validity and Reliability

Experts in sustainability and SDGs provided useful views to ensure face validity of the questionnaire. The Cronbach's alpha of 0.968 indicated that there was a high internal consistency in the instrument (George & Mallery, 2003).

Data Collection Procedure

The questionnaire was administered based on two approaches. In the first approach, the researchers

sent the questionnaire to selected Ghanaians in the format of Google Form. The Google Form was sent to as many Ghanaians as possible across the country through various social media platforms such as WhatsApp and telegram for citizens who received it and were interested in the issues to respond to them. Thus, only Ghanaians who showed interest, had consented to and were willing to participate in the study filled the questionnaire. The researchers encouraged members to forward and send the Google Form to other social media groups and platforms they were familiar with for Ghanaians across the across who were interested and were willing to participate in the study.

Statistical Treatment of Data

Data was treated through descriptive statistics in terms of mean scores and standard deviation so as to establish the frequency and adequacy level of media information on the SDGs in Ghana.

Ethical Considerations

The researchers explained the research aim to the respondents who were assured of confidentiality and anonymity of the information they would provide. Those who did not consent to provide data were not given the questionnaire to fill.

Results and Discussion

Demographics of Respondents

Table 1 shows that 61.9% of the respondents were Christians whilst 34.8% were Moslems. This means that the majority (61.9%) of respondents were Christians. This revelation is not surprising because Ghanaians are mostly Christians.

Table 1: Demographic data of respondents

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Religious Affiliation		
Christianity	267	61.9
Islam	150	34.8
African Traditional Religion	8	1.9
Others	6	1.4
Total	431	100.0
Age (years)		
Below 25 years	86	19.9
25-29	55	12.8
30-34	131	30.4
35-39	67	15.5
40-44	30	7.0
Above 44	62	14.4
Total	431	100.0

On age distribution, the study found that 19.9% of the respondents were below 25 years, 12.8% of them were between 25 and 29 years, whilst 14.4% were above 44 years. The majority (65.7%) of the respondents were between 25 and 44 years. This suggests that Ghanaians who participated in the study were youthful.

Research Question 1: What are the main sources of information of Ghanaians?

The first research question sought to ascertain the main sources of information among respondents. It is seen in Table 2 that 44.1% of the respondents mentioned social media as their main source of information, 25.3% of them listed television as their main source of information whereas only 1.6% mentioned newspapers as their main source of information. This means that social media is the

commonest source of information among the respondents, followed by television and radio. Given the youthful nature of the study population (Table 1), the revelation that social media is the commonest source of information is not startling. Also, the findings on sources of information among respondents generally imply that in providing SDG-related information to the public Ghanaian media should pay much attention to social media, television and radio stations. The results on sources of information generally align with literature (Afrobarometer Ghana, 2018; Akinlolu et al., 2017) which found that radio and television are among the commonest sources of information among Ghanaians. However, the revelation on social media contradicts previous research (Odoom et al., 2023) which observed that social media is a low source of information among Ghanaians.

Table 2: Main sources of information of respondents

Source	Frequency	Percentage
Radio	69	16.0
Television	109	25.3
Social media	190	44.1
Newspapers	7	1.6
Online	47	10.9
Others	9	2.1
Total	431	100

Research Question 2: To what extent do Ghanaian media provide information on issues related to the SDGs to the public?

The research question focused on perception of respondents on the extent to which Ghanaian media provides information on issues about the SDGs. In addressing this issue, means were calculated based on a four Likert scale where 3.50-4.00 represents very frequent, 2.50-3.49 represents moderately frequent, 1.50-2.49 represents lowly frequent and 1.00-1.49 represents not Frequent (table 3, p. 90).

Table 3 depicts that information on Goal 1 (Ending poverty in all its forms) [M=3.68, SD=1.06] was very frequent. Again, media information on Goal 4 (Ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all) (M=3.31) was moderately frequent. The value of the findings on Goal 4 (Quality education) has been confirmed in previous studies (Jumani, 2010; UNESCO, 2020). Frequent information on Goal 4 is essential because a plural media plays a crucial role in educating the public. Educational information and materials the media sector provides supplement

classroom education and promote distance learning (UNESCO, 2020). Again, the result on SDG 4 is vital because literature (UNDP, 2022) has shown that there is sluggish progress made in attaining quality education in Africa.

The study further observed that frequency level of media information on Goal 2 (Ending hunger, achieving food security, improving nutrition and promoting sustainable agriculture) [M=2.78, SD=1.014, Goal 3 (Ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all at all ages) [M=2.65, SD=1.12], and Goal 5 (Achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls) [M=2.62, SD=1.13] was moderate. Generally, the results on SDGs 2, 3, 4 and 5 agree with the role the media played in places such as South Africa. In South Africa, the media played a critical role in highlighting systemic discrimination faced by female employee (which contravenes Goal 5) at the African Union Commission (AUC). This revelation by the print and online media led to the modification of the anti-harassment policies and procedures of the Commission (Whithead, 2022).

Table 3: Views on the extent to which Ghanaian media provide frequent information on the SDGs

Goal	Mean	SD
1. Ending poverty in all its forms	3.68	1.06
2a. Ending hunger	2.75	1.13
2b. Achieving food security	2.76	1.14
2c. Improving nutrition	2.80	1.15
2d. Promoting sustainable agriculture	2.81	1.16
Sub-total	2.78	1.14
3a. Ensuring healthy lives	2.79	1.15
3b. Promoting well-being for all at all ages	2.51	1.10
Sub-total	2.65	1.12
4a. Ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education	3.87	1.13
4b. Promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all	2.75	1.15
Sub-total	3.31	1.14
5a. Achieving gender equality	2.75	1.10
5b. Empowering all women and girls	2.50	1.17
Sub-total	2.62	1.13
6a. Ensuring available and sustainable management of water	1.82	1.12
6b. Ensuring sustainable management of sanitation	1.85	1.12
Sub-total	1.83	1.12
7a. Access to affordable energy for all	1.28	0.74
7b. Access to reliable energy for all	1.27	0.69
7c. Access to sustainable energy for all	1.30	0.75
7d. Access to modern energy for all	1.29	0.74
Sub-total	1.28	0.73
8a. Promoting sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth for all	1.38	0.83
8b. Promoting sustained, inclusive and sustainable full employment for all	1.54	0.95
8c. Promoting sustained, inclusive and sustainable productive decent work for all	1.46	0.90
Sub-total	1.46	0.89
9a. Building resilient infrastructure	1.38	0.83
9b. Promoting inclusive and sustainable industrialization	1.41	0.88
9c. Fostering innovation	1.49	0.94
Sub-total	1.42	0.88
10. Reducing inequality within and among countries	1.47	0.91
11a. Making cities and human settlements inclusive and safe	1.39	0.84
11b. Making cities and human settlements resilient and sustainable	1.49	0.96
Sub-total	1.44	0.90
Table 3 Continued:		
12a. Ensuring sustainable consumption patterns	1.61	1.02
12b. Ensuring sustainable production patterns	1.77	1.06
Sub-total	1.69	1.04
13. Taking urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts	2.87	1.08
14a. Conserving and sustainably using the oceans.	2.71	1.15
14b. Conserving and sustainably using the seas and marine resources for sustainable development.	2.67	1.16
Sub-total	2.69	1.15
15a. Protecting, restoring and promoting sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems	2.67	1.16
15b. Sustainably managing forests	2.67	1.16
15c. Sustainably combating desertification, halting and reversing land degradation	2.67	1.16
15d. Sustainably halting biodiversity loss.	2.67	1.16
Sub-total	2.67	1.16
16a. Promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development	1.67	1.02
16b. Providing access to justice for all	1.29	0.73
16c. Building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.	2.38	1.21
Sub-total	1.78	0.99
17a. Strengthening the means of implementation of SDGs	1.32	0.77
17b. Revitalizing the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development	1.24	0.67
Sub-total	1.28	0.72
Weighted mean	2.08	1.00

The generally frequent nature of media information in respect of Goals 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 only becomes possible when media organizations continue to set and influence public agenda which validates the practical relevance of the agenda-setting theory (McCombs & Valenzuela, 2007). Besides, the results on the frequency of information on Goals 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 reinforce the value of the diffusion of innovation theory. This is simply because the findings on these SDGs suggest that the Ghanaian media continues to demonstrate that it is a critical force in spreading relevant information on the goals. Setting media agenda and spreading relevant information on Goals 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 are a vital part of the efforts to promote good governance, transparency and functioning of markets. This constitutes the media's political economy function (World Bank, 2009). Furthermore, the more frequent the media provides information on Goals 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5, the more people are likely to accept, support and commit to the attainment of the goals as envisaged by the social cognitive theory (Davis, 2006).

Furthermore, information on Goal 13 (Taking urgent action to combat climate change) [M=2.87, SD=1.08], and Goal 14 (Conserving and sustainably using the oceans, the seas and marine resources for sustainable development) [M=2.69, SD=1.15] was moderately provided by the Ghanaian media which generally agree with Shanahan's (2011) observation. According to Shanahan (2011), frequent media coverage of climate change is very critical since it helps to inform vulnerable communities of potential impacts and the measures to ensure adaptation. However, Table 3 depicts that frequency of media information on other goals including Goal 7 (Affordable and clean energy) (M=1.28), Goal 8 (Decent work and economic growth) (M=1.46) and Goal 9 (Industry, innovation and infrastructure) (M=1.42) was low. This implies that issues about Goals 7, 8 and 9 have not been critical on the agenda set by the Ghanaian media for public discourse. Relevance of findings on Goal 7, Goal 8 and Goal 9 finds validation in the expressions of Chatterjee (2020) who argued that African nations risk failing to achieve the SDGs in vital sectors such as energy, employment and infrastructure due to slow pace of change.

Besides, frequency of media information on Goal 10 (Reduced inequality) and Goal 11 (Sustainable cities and communities) was found to be low. The results

of Goals 10 and 11 suggest that issues related to these goals have not been made critical on the agenda of the Ghanaian media. The findings on Goals 10 and 11 depart from the idea of Chatterjee (2020) who contended that media is to push the SDG discourse by paying much attention to what is reported and how it is reported.

The overall mean score of 2.08 suggests that the frequency at which Ghanaian media provide information on SDG related issues is low. The situation in Ghana is similar to what exists in other places including Bangladesh, where media does not often provide information on SDGs related issues (Bhattacharya et al., 2020).

Research Question 3: To what extent do Ghanaian media adequately provide information on the SDGs to the public?

The final research question sought to establish the extent to which Ghanaian media adequately provide information on the SDGs to the public. The researchers used mean scores and standard deviations for analysis. In particular, mean scores were calculated based on a four Likert scale where 3.50-4.00 represents very adequate, 2.50-3.49 represents moderately adequate, 1.50-2.49 represents lowly adequate and 1.00-1.49 represents not adequate.

Table 4 (p. 92) reveals that Goal 1 (Ending poverty) was moderately adequate (M=2.92; SD=1.09). Similarly, Goal 2 (Zero hunger, food security, improved nutrition and sustainable agriculture) (M=2.78), Goal 3 (Good health and well-being) (M=2.65), Goal 4 (Quality education and lifelong learning) (M=2.62) and the final research question sought to establish the extent to which Ghanaian media adequately provide information on the SDGs to the public. Here, the researchers found out from the respondents whether they felt media information on the SDGs was detailed and rich enough to generate public awareness. The researchers used mean scores and standard deviations for analysis. In particular, mean scores were calculated based on a four Likert scale where 3.50-4.00 represents very adequate, 2.50-3.49 represents moderately adequate, 1.50-2.49 represents lowly adequate and 1.00-1.49 represents not adequate.

Table 4: The Extent to which Ghanaian media provide information on the SDGs

Goal	Mean	SD
1. Ending poverty in all its forms	2.92	1.09
2a. Ending hunger	2.69	1.14
2b. Achieving food security	2.71	1.15
2c. Improving nutrition	2.74	1.17
2d. Promoting sustainable agriculture	2.75	1.17
Sub-total	2.78	1.14
3a. Ensuring healthy lives	2.74	1.16
3b. Promoting well-being for all at all ages	2.51	1.10
Sub-total	2.65	1.12
4a. Ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education	2.57	1.13
4b. Promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all	1.95	1.15
Sub-total	2.62	1.14
5a. Achieving gender equality	2.68	1.13
5b. Empowering all women and girls	2.50	1.17
Sub-total	2.62	1.13
6a. Ensuring available and sustainable management of water	1.82	1.12
6b. Ensuring sustainable management of sanitation	1.85	1.12
Sub-total	1.83	1.12
7a. Access to affordable energy for all	1.28	0.74
7b. Access to reliable energy for all	1.27	0.69
7c. Access to sustainable energy for all	1.30	0.75
7d. Access to modern energy for all	1.29	0.74
Sub-total	1.28	0.73
8a. Promoting sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth for all	1.38	0.83
8b. Promoting sustained, inclusive and sustainable full employment for all	1.54	0.95
8c. Promoting sustained, inclusive and sustainable productive decent work for all	1.46	0.90
Sub-total	1.46	0.89
9a. Building resilient infrastructure	1.38	0.83
9b. Promoting inclusive and sustainable industrialization	1.41	0.88
9c. Fostering innovation	1.49	0.94
Sub-total	1.42	0.88
10. Reducing inequality within and among countries	1.47	0.91
11a. Making cities and human settlements inclusive and safe	1.39	0.84
11b. Making cities and human settlements resilient and sustainable	1.49	0.96
Sub-total	1.44	0.90
12a. Ensuring sustainable consumption patterns	1.61	1.02
12b. Ensuring sustainable production patterns	1.77	1.06
Sub-total	1.69	1.04
13. Taking urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts	2.81	1.11
14a. Conserving and sustainably using the oceans.	2.71	1.15
14b. Conserving and sustainably using the seas and marine resources for sustainable development.	2.67	1.16
Sub-total	2.69	1.5
15a. Protecting, restoring and promoting sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems	2.67	1.16
15b. Sustainably managing forests	2.67	1.16
15c. Sustainably combating desertification, halting and reversing land degradation	2.67	1.16
15d. Sustainably halting biodiversity loss.	2.67	1.16
Sub-total	2.67	1.16
16a. Promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development	1.67	1.02
16b. Providing access to justice for all	1.29	0.73
16c. Building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.	2.38	1.21
Sub-total	1.78	0.99
17a. Strengthening the means of implementation of SDGs	1.32	0.77
17b. Revitalizing the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development	1.24	0.67
Sub-total	1.28	0.72
Weighted Mean	2.20	1.03

Table 4 reveals that Goal 1 (Ending poverty) was moderately adequate (M=2.92; SD=1.09). Similarly, Goal 2 (Zero hunger, food security, improved nutrition and sustainable agriculture) (M=2.78),

Goal 3 (Good health and well-being) (M=2.65), Goal 4 (Quality education and lifelong learning) (M=2.62) and Goal 5 (Gender equality and women empowerment) (M=2.62) were found to be moderately adequate. The result on Goal 1 (Ending poverty) agrees with similar views expressed by scholars (Callamard, 2006; Guseva et al., cited in Media Development Investment Fund, 2022) on the role of media in poverty reduction. Callamard (2006), for instance, asserted that a healthy media environment promotes inclusive public discourse on issues of concern to the poor. It also provides the poor access to relevant information that enables them make informed choices. On their part, Guseva et al. (2008) media should play a vital role in poverty reduction. The results on Goals 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 indicate that the Ghanaian media landscape has moderately helped in shaping public awareness of the SDGs in line with the social cognitive theory (Davis, 2006) which sees environment as a vital tool for predicting and influencing behaviors based on the social cognitive theory.

Moreover, information the Ghanaian media provided on Goal 13 [Climate change] (M=2.81) and Goal 14 [Life below water] (M=2.69) was moderately adequate. The findings on SDGs 13 and 14 are extremely important because environmental issues have huge implications for the development of African nations since environmental problems continue to undermine the well-being of millions of Africans (Min, 2021).

On the contrary, information provided on Goal 8 [Decent work and economic growth] (M=1.46) and Goal 9 [Industry, innovation and infrastructure] (M=1.42) was lowly adequate. These results fall short of the expectations of Nguyen et al. (2021) media sector needs to provide information on issues of national importance to the public because increased media information is closely associated with economic growth.

Similarly, the adequacy level of media information on Goal 12 [Responsible consumption and production] (M=1.69), and Goal 16 [Peace, justice and strong institutions] (M=1.78) was low. Information on Goal 11 [Sustainable cities and communities] (M=1.44) and Goal 17 [Partnerships for the goals] (M=1.28) was inadequate.

The overall mean score of 2.20 depicts that the adequacy level of media information on SDG related issues in Ghana is very low. The revelation on Goal 16 constitutes a challenge to the practical relevance

of Omwoyo's (2022) position that media should play a key role in facilitating peace and justice. Literature (Akinlolu et al., 2017; Odoom et al., 2023) has established that providing adequate information on the SDGs is key not only to increasing public awareness about the goals but also for ultimately achieving the goals.

More so, the situation in Ghana especially with respect to low information on Goals 11, 12, 16 and 17 means that there is more for the media to do in promoting the SDGs. In particular, the result on SDG 16 (Peace, justice and strong institutions) deviates from the critical role the media plays in places such as Montenegro, where the media particularly the national station TV Vijesti covered a video which showed footages state officials taking bribes to ease the building permit process. This led to the resignation of the sector minister (Whithead, 2022).

According to Bodt (2009), providing adequate information on the SDGs is critical to the achievement of the goals, the author further charges the media to act as a driver of change and the pillar of a healthy information environment to assist the world tackle the various challenges of our times and achieve a society which is sustainable. The findings on Goals 11, 12, 16 and 17 further converge with observations by Krishna et al. (2022) that information on SDGs is inadequate which contributes to low public awareness of the goals. The same falls short of the position of Media Development Investment Fund (2022) which suggests that media has a significant role to play in driving change towards the SDGs. The observations on Goals 7, 8, 9, 10, 10, 11, 12, 16 and 17 constitute a challenge to the practical relevance of the diffusion of innovation theory. The theory enjoins all stakeholders including the media to adequately provide information on new ideas such as the SDGs at all levels to promote public awareness and positive behavior change for national development.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Ghanaians who participated in this study mostly rely on social media platforms, radio and television as source of information, with newspapers seen as the least relied upon source of information. Again, though Ghanaian media provide very frequent information on Goal 1, the frequency level of media information on the overall SDGs was low. In particular, respondents are not enthused about the level of frequency of media information on Goal 7,

Goal 8, Goal 9, Goal 10, and Goal 11. Even though Ghanaian media provide information on SDG related issues, the information is generally not very adequate to cause behaviour and attitudinal changes. The adequacy level of media information on the SDGs is generally low. For example, media information on Goals 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 is generally not adequate to engender support and commitment from the citizenry.

It is recommended that Ghanaian media should pay much attention to the use of the new media especially social media platforms when covering and reporting issues related to the SDGs. Owners of media organizations should train their employees on effective ways of exploiting social media platforms in disseminating SDG-related information since social media serves as a potent tool in providing media information and education. In addition, media organizations in the country should consider the use of radio and television as critical sources of providing information on the SDGs to the public. To aid effective use of these sources of information, the media should incorporate local languages and other indigenous communication techniques into their information-dissemination strategies related to the SDGs. Moreover, media organizations including community radio stations should re-examine their daily and weekly programs to ensure that equal attention is given to all the SDGs. Further, to be able to effectively cover and report adequate information on the SDGs requires funding. Thus, the media should team up with corporate bodies to find innovative and reliable ways of funding media programs on SDG related issues. This will help media organizations to devote adequate time to cover, report and discuss SDG-related issues. It is recommended that the government, through the SDG Implementation Coordinating Committee and the SDG Technical Committee, should collaborate with the various District, Municipal and Metropolitan Assemblies and media organizations to come up with more effective measures to ensure that SDG-related information and messages provided to public are very frequent and largely adequate to enhance public understanding of the goals.

References

Addis Ababa Action Agenda. (2015). Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 13–16 July 2015. Available at:

<http://www.un.org/esa/ffd/ffd3/press-release/countries-reach-historic-agreement.html>.

Adedigba, O., Soretire, O. O. & Ajayi, O. A. (2023). Teachers' Perception of the Role of Indigenous Languages for Culture Preservation and Improved Teaching and Learning in Kwara Atate, Nigeria. *East African Journal of Education and Social Sciences*, 4(2), 1-9. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.46606/eajess2023v04i02.0270>.

Afrobarometer Ghana. (2018). AD250: Ghanaians rely on radio and TV, but support for media freedom drops sharply. Accessed on 12/10/2020 from: <https://afrobarometer.org/publications/ad250/ghanaians-rely-radio-and-tv-support-media-freedom-drops-sharply>.

Akinlolu, O. Babarinde, G. M., Damilola, B. & Asekun-Olarinmoye, E. (2017). Awareness and Knowledge of the Sustainable Development Goals in a University Community in Southwestern Nigeria. *Ethiopian Journal of Health Sciences*, 27(6):669. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.4314/ejhs.v27i6.1.2>.

Alam, A., & Ali Shah, S. (2013). The role of press freedom in economic development: A global perspective. *Journal of Media Economics*; Pal, S., Dutta, N., & Roy, S. (2011). Media freedom, socio-political stability and economic growth.

Arthur, P. (2010). Democratic consolidation in Ghana: The role and contribution of the media, civil society and state institutions. *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics*, 48(2), 203–226.

Bhattacharya, D., Khan, T. I. & Sabbih, M. A. (2020). Role of Media in Delivering the SDGs: A Mapping Exercise on Bangladesh. Accessed on 10/09/2022 from: <https://www.cominit.com/media-development/content/role-media-delivering-sdgs-mapping-exercise-bangladesh>.

Bodt, T. (2009). Role of the Media in Achieving a Sustainable Society. Centre for Bhutan Studies.

Broeckert, J. (2003). "How the Military Uses the Media Today," *The Rake*, April 2003. <http://www.rakemag.com/printable.asp?catID=46&itemID=2136&pg=all>.

Brookings Institution. (2018). Who is talking about the UN Sustainable Development Goals? Accessed on 10/09/2022 from: <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/future-development/2018/06/14/who-is-talking-about-the-un-sustainable-development-goals/>

- Callamard, A. (2006). "Development, poverty and freedom of expression". UNESCO Conference on Freedom of the Media and Development.
- Chatterjee, S. (2020). How the media can amplify sustainable development in Africa. Available at: <https://www.un.org/africarenewal/web-features/how-media-can-amplify-sustainable-development-africa>.
- Davis, A. (2006). Media effects and the question of the rational audience: lessons from the financial markets. *Media, Culture & Society*, 28(4), 603-625. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443706065035>.
- George, D. & Mallery, P. (2003). *SPSS for windows step by step: A simple guide and reference* (4th ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Government of Ghana. (2019). *Voluntary National Review Report on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. June 2019.
- Guseva, M., Nakaa, M., Novel, A., Pekkala, K., Souberou, B. & Stouli, K. (2008). *Press freedom and development*. Paris: United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization.
- Hansen, A. (2007). *Introduction: The Mass Media and Environmental Issues*. London: Leicester University Press.
- Hassan, M. (2022). Convenience sampling-Method, Types and Examples. Accessed on 12/08/23 at: <http://researchmethod.net/convenience-sampling/>
- Hornick, R. C. (1998). *Development Communication*. New York: Longman.
- Jacobs, S. & Schillemans, T. (2016). Media and public accountability: typology and exploration. *Policy & Politics*, 44(1), 23-40.
- Jumani, N. B. (2010). *Role of radio for rural education in Pakistan*. Doctor of Philosophy Unpublished Dissertation, Allama Iqbal Open University.
- Kapur, N. (2011). *Role of Mass Media in Promotion of Environmental Awareness along with Skill Development among the Rural People in Allahabad District, India* Bangkok: ICCEBS.
- Kpienbaareh, D., Kansanga, M. M., Konkor, I. & Luginaah, I. (2021). The Rise of the Fourth Estate: The Media, Environmental Policy, and the Fight against Illegal Mining in Ghana. *Environmental Communication*, 15:1, 69-84. DOI: [10.1080/17524032.2020.1799050](https://doi.org/10.1080/17524032.2020.1799050).
- Krishna, S. H., Ilankumaran, G, Balakrishnan, C., Aute, K. & Patil, S. R. (2022). Knowledge, Perception, and Awareness about Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Among Students of Indian Public University. *Journal of Positive School Psychology*, 6(5), 2501-2511.
- Kumi, E. (2019). Advancing the Sustainable Development Goals: An Analysis of the Potential Role of Philanthropy in Ghana. *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 54(7): 1084–1104.
- McCombs, M. (1977). Agenda setting function of mass media. *Public Relations Review*, 3(4), 89–95. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0363-8111\(77\)80008-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0363-8111(77)80008-8).
- McCombs, M. & Reynolds, A. (2002). News influence on our pictures of the world. In J. Bryant, D. Zillmann, J. Bryant, & M. B. Oliver (Eds.), *Media effects* (pp. 11–28). Routledge.
- McCombs, M. & Valenzuela, S. (2007). Agenda-setting theory. *Cuadernos de Información*, 20, pp.4450.
- Media Development Investment Fund. (2022). *The role of the media: Driving change the SDGs*. Available at: <https://www.mdif.org/media-and-agenda-2030/>.
- Min, Y. (2021). How COVID-19 has impacted the SDGs in Africa. 2021 SDGs report finds some remarkable progress, but the pandemic has hit hard. Available at: <https://www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/august-2021/how-covid-19-has-impacted-sdgs-africa>.
- News Ghana Report. (2019). Media tasked to focus more on promoting SDGs. *News Ghana Report*, 25/01/2019.
- Nikoi, K. N. & Avle, S. (2022). In Between Hogging and Passing the Mic; Or, the Unintended Consequences of Networked Radio in Ghana. *Bandung*, 9(1-2), 22-48.
- Norris, P. (2006). The role of the free press in promoting democratization, good governance, and human development. *Midwest Political Science Association annual meeting*, 20-22nd April, Chicago Palmer.
- Nowak-Teter, E. (2018). Agenda-setting theory and the new media. Available at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/322602862>.

- Nguyen, J. Valadkhani, A. Nguyen, A. & Wake, A. (2021). "Press Freedom and the Global Economy: The Cost of Slipping Backwards" *Journalism Studies*.
- Odoom, D., Mensah, E. O., Dick-Sagoe, C., Lee, K. Y., Opoku, E. & Obeng-Baah, J. (2023). Examining the level of public awareness on the Sustainable Development Goals in Africa: An empirical evidence from Ghana. *Environment, Development & Sustainability*, 1-18.
- OECD. (2017). *GlobeScan. Awareness of SDGs versus MDGs: How Engaged Are Global Citizens?* OECD DevCom Annual Meeting. 2016. Accessed on 16 June 2017. Available at https://www.oecd.org/dev/pgd/Session4_BouhanaGlobeScan_OECDTalk_MDGsvsSDGs_2016.pdf.
- Omwoyo, D. (2022). Media critical in accelerating SDGs agenda. Available at: <https://nation.africa/kenya/blogs-opinion/blogs/media-critical-in-accelerating-sdgs-agenda-4039034>.
- Sciarini, P. & Tresch, A. (2019). The political agenda-setting power of the media: The Europeanization nexus. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 26(5), 734–751. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2018.1458890>.
- SDG Accountability Handbook. (2019). SDG Accountability Handbook. TAP Network.
- Shanahan, M. (2011). *Why the Media Matters in a Warming World: A Guide for Policy Makers in the Global South* New York: Peter Lang Publishing.
- Stiglitz, J. & Islam, R. (2002). *Third World development strategies: A free press is crucial in overcoming global poverty*. New York: The New York Times.
- Stratton, S. (2021). Population Research: Convenience Sampling Strategies. *Prehospital and Disaster Medicine*, 36(4), 373-374.
- UNDP. (2022). New Africa SDGs report shows slow progress, calls for greater action to meet targets. Available at: <https://www.undp.org/africa/press-releases/new-africa-sdgs-report-shows-slows-progress-calls-greater-action-meet-targets>.
- UNESCO. (2020). *Learning through radio and television in the time of COVID-19*. Paris: UNESCO.
- UNESCO. (2016). At UNESCO, President of the UN General Assembly calls for a "push in SDG awareness. UNESCOPRESS 18.11.2016. Retrieved August 18, 2022, from http://www.unesco.org/new/en/naturalsciences/ioc-oceans/single-view/oceans/news/at_unesco_president_of_the_un_general_assembly_calls_for_a/.
- Waisbord, S. (2001). *Family Tree of Theories, Methodologies and Strategies in Development Communication*. New York: Rockefeller Foundation.
- Whithead, P. (2022). *The Role of Media: Driving Change Towards the SDGs*. Available at: <https://www.mdif.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/MDIF-The-role-of-media-Driving-change-towards-the-SDGs.pdf>.
- World Bank. (2007). *To Give People Voice: Media and Broadcasting Development*. Washington, D.C.: World Bank.
- World Bank. (2009). *The Media and Development. What's the Story?* World Bank Working Paper No. 158. Washington DC.: The World Bank.
- World Economic Forum Report. (2020). *How the media can be a meaningful stakeholder in the quest to meet the SDGs*. Accessed on 10/09/2022 at: <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/01/sdgs-sustainable-development-news-media-coverage/>.