

**Environmental issues and sustainable development through
documentaries on the National Geographic Channel Abu Dhabi
- Analytical Study of "the Earth on the edge of the abyss" documentary-**

Enjeux environnementaux et développement durable à travers des
documentaires sur la chaîne National Geographic Abu Dhabi
- Etude analytique du documentaire "La Terre au bord du gouffre"-

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Abstract:

This study aims to identify how Documentary Films address environmental issues, and their role in highlighting the components of environmental development and encouraging the intensification of efforts aimed at protecting the environment in the world, through the use of descriptive analytical approach and Content Analysis tool on the sample of the study represented in the documentary series "The Earth On the Edge Of the Abyss" broadcast on the National Geographic Channel Abu Dhabi.

The study reached a number of results, most notably that these documentaries are an important tool to highlight various environmental problems, and address them in an interesting and exciting way to attract the attention of the target audience, and therefore will be an important media production in revealing what the environment is suffering and presenting appropriate solutions.

Keywords: Environmental Media, documentary film, sustainable development, environmental issues.

Résumé

Cette étude vise à identifier comment les films documentaires abordent les problèmes environnementaux, et leur rôle dans la mise en évidence des composantes du développement environnemental et l'encouragement de l'intensification des efforts visant à protéger l'environnement dans le monde, on a appliqué de l'approche analytique descriptive et de l'outil d'analyse de contenu. L'échantillon de l'étude représenté dans la série documentaire « The Earth On the Edge Of the Abyss » diffusée sur la Chaîne Nationale Géographique Abu Dhabi.

L'étude a atteint un certain nombre de résultats, notamment que ces documentaires sont un outil important pour faire des diagnostics permettant de résoudre les problèmes environnementaux d'une manière intéressante et passionnante pour attirer l'attention du public cible, et sera donc une production médiatique importante dans révélant ce que l'environnement souffre et présente des arrangements appropriés.

Mots clés: Médias environnementaux, films documentaires, développement durable, problèmes environnementales.

• Introduction

Environmental Media is one of the most prominent tools to raise awareness about the importance of protecting the environment, and developing strategies to preserve it from the dangers of pollution and the problems that affect it, and human life in general, so many countries are making sure to employ Environmental Media through various media tools in order to promote and protect the environment in.

Here ,many Arab and international TV channels are working to build an environmental media strategy by diversifying programs, advertisements ,media campaigns, and even documentaries that have become an effective tool in drawing a realistic picture of the environment and what it has become due to human and natural factors, the documentary film has a great role in embodying reality and documenting events through testimonies and live evidence.

Due to the effective role of Environmental Media and the power of documentary film in embodying reality, several specialized satellite channels are producing such films that show the reality of the environment and its future in light of the dangers and problems that it suffers and is increasing, the aim of which is to draw the attention of concerned decision makers to these dangers, in order to take the necessary measures to protect the environment and ensure Sound for generations leaders in the framework of the so-called achievement of sustainable development.

There are many channels that produce and broadcast environmental documentaries, and try to convey a message to all countries of the world that the environment is in danger and needs protection from them ,including the National Geographic channel, owned by the American National Geographic organization, a channel specialized in broadcasting documentaries about nature, science and history, and now it is a channel present in most countries of the world and broadcast in several languages like National Geographic Abu Dhabi, which offers documentaries about nature and the environment ,including ‘ The Earth is on the edge of the abyss’ ,Which embodies the major problems suffered by the environment ,especially pollution, and the efforts exerted by specialized bodies and organizations to mitigate or eliminate them, as required by sustainable development programs and policies, and here we raise the following questions:

- How documentaries tackle environmental and sustainable development issues on National Geographic Channel?
- What environmental topics and issues are addressed by the documentary series in question?
- What goals does this documentary series seek to achieve within the dimensions of sustainable development?
- What sources do you rely on to provide information and facts about the environment?
- What are the treatment frameworks that the documentary series relies on to address environmental issues?
- What about the journalistic templates, that this documentary uses to address environmental issues?

The importance of the study lies in highlighting the role of documentary films in addressing issues that concern the environment and the ocean through specialized international satellite channels and in multiple languages, which confirms the importance of research on such topics that reveal the importance of Environmental Media and its role in achieving the dimensions of sustainable development .

Accordingly ,the study seeks to find out the topics and issues addressed by the documentary series under study, and to reveal the goals that it seeks to achieve within the framework of the dimensions of Sustainable Development, which is the requirement that the United Nations and international organizations interested in the environment seek to devote, and the study also aims to know the methods and methods of.

The study relies on the descriptive-analytical approach, in order to describe the phenomenon and draw a general picture of the studied problem, and this approach allows us to collect, analyze and interpret data in order to achieve the stated goals, and in this study, we will analyze the film " The Earth is on the edge of the abyss ,"Broadcast by National Geographic Channel Abu Dhabi.

In order to collect the necessary data, the study used a Content Analysis tool, which is the most suitable in such studies, since it helps to extract data on the form and content and analyze them according to the approach used.

As for the research sample, it was determined from the total number of documentaries broadcast by National Geographic Channel Abu Dhabi, selected The documentary" The Earth is on the edge of the abyss- "The second season that aired on within a year ,2018 As it fits into the subject of the study in that it highlights the problems of the environment and how to protect it under the dimensions of sustainable development.

2. Definition of concepts

2.1 Environmental Media

The term environmental media appeared as a result of social, economic and political pressures on the environment, its components and elements, the need of societies for environmental news and the impact of disasters and climate changes, and has become a tool that clarifies environmental concepts by briefing the public with the appropriate information material¹.

Environmental Media is the process of creating and disseminating scientific facts related to the environment through the media to create a degree of environmental awareness to achieve sustainable development.²

Therefore ,Environmental Media is the media that provides information and knowledge about the environment to the target audience, and seeks through it to consolidate positive behaviors towards the environment and raise awareness of the need to preserve it from the risks and problems caused primarily by humans .

2.2 Sustainable development

1- Mohiuddin Ismail Mohamed, Environmental Media, Al -Wafa Legal Library, Alexandria, Egypt, 2014, p35.

2 - Sanaa Muhammad al -Jabour, Environmental Media, Osama Publishing House, Amman, Jordan, 2011, p. 19.

Sustainable development is defined as "Real development with the ability to continue and communicate from the perspective of the use of Natural Resources, which can occur through a strategy that takes the ecological balance as a control axis, and aims to raise the livelihood of individuals through political, economic ,social and cultural systems that maintain the integrity of the environmental framework"³ .

Therefore ,sustainable development can be considered as those efforts made to protect and Sustain Natural Resources, ensuring the preservation of the environment and ensuring good living conditions for individuals.

2.3 The documentary

Recognized by the International Federation of documentary cinematography, the documentary is " All methods of recording on a film of any manifestation of truth, and it is shown by means of direct photography, or reconstructed honestly and when necessary, and consists of three elements, namely the story and real facts without authorship, real people and a real place"⁴ .

Documentary film is a method of embodying and redrawing reality using film techniques and film directing methods.

2.4 The Documentary "The Earth is on the edge of the abyss"

It is a documentary series consisting of seven episodes, each episode includes a specific topic about the environment and its protection, and the duration of each episode lasts(49 minute) broadcasted on National Geographic Abu Dhabi channel, within a year 2018 Addresses a range of urgent issues related to climate change problems that threaten the Earth in detail, and provide some realistic solutions ,across some countries of the world, and this series also deals with a set of stories related to individuals and communities that faced difficult choices that will affect the lives of millions of people in the future .

3. Characteristics and functions of the documentary

Making a documentary and showing it to the world is a social action, it can be reviewed as an event, custom or practice, and it can be perceived as just entertainment⁵ .

3.1 Characteristics of the documentary

3 - Shafiqah Mahri, Media The electronic environment via Facebook and its role in achieving sustainable development, Journal of Social Sciences, V 23,2016, p205.

4 - Muhammad Jassim Filhi, Preparation of documentary programs, al manahij edition, Amman, Jordan, 2015, P 81.

5 - Anne Lill Rajala: Documentry film, truth and beyond, degree thesis film , television, 2017, p53 .

However, it has characteristics that have made it different from the rest of television and film production, John Grierson define that The documentary film has three characteristics, which must be available in order for the film to become a real recording, namely:

- The documentary film relies on navigation, observation, and selection from life itself, as it does not rely on the subjects of the author and actress in an artificial environment, as the feature film does, but rather depicts live scenes and real facts.
- The characters and scenery of the documentary film are chosen from live reality, it does not rely on professional actors, nor on artificial scenery inside the studio.
- The material of the documentary film is chosen from nature without authorship, so its subjects are more accurate and realistic than the author's and actress's material.⁶

3.2 Functions of the documentary

The documentary is a film that highlights a narrative narrated in a public voice, an analytical discussion rather than a story with characters ,shots of experts ' faces supported by some encounters with people on the street, along with a set of photos illustrating the narrator's point of view, perhaps some educational cartoons, and lavish music.⁷

The makers of the documentary realized that it is a way to convey noble social and political issues, building it using non-fiction tools in order to serve the truth, despite the criticism directed at this genre of films between objectivity and truth .⁸

From this point of view, the documentary performs a set of functions, namely:

- Contribute to solving the problems facing the society .
- Registration and documentation of important events.
- Informing the public about achievements.
- Strengthening values that serve development.
- Education of taste and sense of beauty.⁹

4. Dimensions and principles of sustainable development

4.1 Dimensions of sustainable development

Sustainable development has three basic dimensions related to the economic, social and environmental aspect.

-The economic dimension :Sustainability means the continuation and maximization of economic well-being for the longest possible period of time, by providing the best ingredients such as food, housing, clothing, etc.¹⁰.

6 - Narges Shanina: The Contents of the Algerian National Identity in the Documentary Film - Algeria from Above as a Model - Master's thesis specializing in media and society, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, El-Arabi El-Tebsi University, Tebessa, 2017, p59.

7 - Patricia Overhaidi: The documentary-a very short introduction-translated by Shaima Taha Al-Raidi, Hindawi Foundation for Education and Culture, Cairo, Egypt, 2013, p17.

8 - John Arthur Little : The power and potential of performativity documentary film , thesis of master of fine arts in Science and Natural History Filmmaking, Montana state university, Bozeman, Montana, 2007, p60.

9 - Narges Shanina, opcit ,p69.

10 - Nasser Murad, Sustainable Development and Its Challenges in Algeria, Communication Journal, V. 26, June 2010, p135.

The environment is inextricably linked with economic development, as environmental degradation pushes people in increasing numbers into poverty, which in turn leads to environmental degradation.

-The environmental dimension :The environment is one of the basic and necessary conditions for the existence of human activity and the preservation of the natural environment, and transfer it intact to future generations, and indicates that the ecological dimension is shown by: ¹¹

- Preserving the atmosphere by reducing pollution caused by Transport and industry and raising the base of energy use, as well as relying on renewable energies such as solar energy and wind power.
- Protection of natural resources necessary for food production while expanding production to meet the needs of the population.
- Reducing the Shelters of biological species and this is by preserving the richness of the Earth in biodiversity for generations.
- To prevent the deterioration of the Earth's protective ozone layer by gradually getting rid of chemical resources that threaten ozone and this is done in cooperation between countries to address global environmental risks.

-The social dimension :The social dimension of sustainable development emphasizes that the human being constitutes the essence of development and its ultimate goal by paying attention to social justice, combating poverty, providing social services to all those in need, as well as ensuring democracy through the participation of peoples in decision-making.

4.2 Principles of sustainable development

This is with regard to the dimensions of sustainable development, as for the principles on which it is based in achieving its strategy, which aims to mention in the following points: ¹²

- **The precautionary principle :**By this we mean the Precautionary Principle, according to which states take the necessary measures to correct environmental degradation and prevent harm, and this principle is characterized by the advantage of foresight and foresight, and is fully or partially directed towards the future.
- **The principle of participation :**Sustainable development is a charter that recognizes the participation of all relevant parties in making collective decisions through dialogue , especially in the field of planning, policy development and implementation, as sustainable

11 - Shahrzad Zogheib and Lamia Omani, Environment and Sustainable Development, Journal of Economic Sciences, Management and Commercial Sciences, V. 6, 2011, p250.

12 - Abdul Ghani Hassouna Legal protection of the environment within the framework of sustainable development, PhD thesis in law, majoring in business law, Mohamed Kheidar University, Biskra, 2013, p 24-25.

development begins at the local level ,and this means that it is development from below, its effective achievement requires the provision of an appropriate form of decentralization.

Also there are two basic principles of sustainable development, namely:¹³

- **Justice within and between generations** :By equity and equality of opportunity for the current generation and for future generations as well.
- **Environmental safety** :By working to protect biodiversity and preserve the basic environmental processes and systems that support life .

5. Discussion of the results

Table 1. The environmental topics and issues addressed by the documentary

| Topics | Redundancy | The ratio(%) |
|-----------------------------|------------|--------------|
| Climate change | 13 | 30,95 |
| Renewable energies | 08 | 19,07 |
| Biological Diversity | 07 | 16,66 |
| Forestry & logging | 05 | 11,90 |
| Drought and desertification | 03 | 7,14 |
| Environmental pollution | 06 | 14,28 |
| Total | 42 | 100 |

Through this table, we can see that the most topics addressed by the documentary series are the topic of climate change by 30,95 % followed by the topic of renewable energies by 19,07 % The interest of this documentary series in the topic of climate change is due to its consideration as a global environmental issue and has many negative repercussions on the level of Health and human life in general, which made the focus on it by organizations and governments to find solutions and alternatives to protect the environment from degradation and provide everything that the individual needs in the future within the framework of the Sustainable Development Strategy, and Considering that humans have a direct role in environmental degradation and even climate change, it was necessary to raise awareness and sensitize to the seriousness of this, but other topics were addressed less and the documentary series focused on renewable energies ,biodiversity and environmental pollution ‘This has long been covered by the media of various kinds and the relevant organizations contributed to this, and here we find that the documentary series" The Earth is on the edge of the abyss "She addressed prominent topics from the environmental point of view, which are the main axes on which the Sustainable Development Strategy is based, especially climate change, which poses great dangers to human life in the future.

Table 2 .The goals of addressing environmental issues in the documentary

| Objective | Redundancy | The ratio(%) |
|---|------------|--------------|
| Spreading environmental awareness | 08 | 23,52 |
| Awareness of the risk of environmental problems | 10 | 29,43 |
| Intensifying efforts to protect the environment | 09 | 26,47 |

13 - Amal Fakiri, Environmental Culture And its implications for sustainable development in contemporary society, Annals of the University of Algiers 1, N 30, p159.

| | | |
|---|----|-------|
| Developing a strategy for sustainable environmental development | 07 | 20,58 |
| Total | 34 | 100 |

Through this table, we find that the goals pursued by this documentary series are diverse and close in proportions, the most prominent of which is awareness of the threat of environmental problems, which appeared in proportion to ,%29,43 In order to highlight its danger to humanity in general, and urge to find solutions and intensify the necessary efforts to protect the environment, which is the second goal that appeared by 26,47 %Then comes the goal of spreading environmental awareness by 23,52 % In order to raise awareness among future generations of the need to preserve the environment and reduce human interference in its further degradation, the goal of developing a sustainable development strategy came at a lower percentage, namely 20,58 %This is because this goal comes after achieving the previous goals and highlighting all the solutions and mechanisms required to achieve this ,and from it we find that the documentary series focused in its objectives on mentioning and explaining the dangers faced by the environment across the world, which could constitute a difficult life for humanity in the future.

Table 3. The sources of information on environmental issues in the documentary

| Sources | Redundancy | The ratio(%) |
|-------------------------------|------------|--------------|
| Officials and decision makers | 13 | 25,49 |
| Experts and researchers | 19 | 37,25 |
| Environmental associations | 12 | 23,54 |
| individuals | 07 | 13,72 |
| Total | 51 | 100 |

Through this table, we find that the documentary series focused on addressing environmental issues on a variety of sources, but relied more on experts and researchers in the field of environment by 37,25 %As they are the closest to clarifying and explaining these dangers in terms of causes and consequences, which is also shown by the previous table that the first goal of this series is to sensitize to the danger of these issues, followed by the source related to officials by25,49 %Environmental activists and associations by 23,54 %This is in order to highlight the efforts made by governments and civil society organizations in order to protect the environment and reduce the risks it suffers from, as well as to recall statistics and information that benefit the public in general in its daily life, in order to raise awareness of the need to pay attention to the environment in which it lives, and13,72 %Here we find that the documentary series focuses on the efforts of governments and organizations in this field, in order to document and remind them and ensure their communication with future generations ,which is the purpose of producing such documentary films that preserve a lot of information and highlight the reality with its reality.

Table 4. The frameworks of addressing environmental issues in the documentary

| Processing frameworks | Redundancy | The ratio(%) |
|---|------------|--------------|
| Explain the causes of the environmental problem | 09 | 20,95 |
| Providing solutions | 10 | 23,25 |
| Clarify the dangers | 16 | 37,20 |
| Forecasting and giving preventive advice. | 08 | 18,60 |

| | | |
|-------|----|-----|
| Total | 43 | 100 |
|-------|----|-----|

It is clear from this table that the documentary series employs in its presentation of environmental issues to clarify the dangers caused by environmental problems and what they suffer in various regions of the world, in proportion to 37,20 % Followed by the method of providing solutions to ensure environmental protection by 23,25 % Then the method of explanation of the reasons that led to the emergence of environmental problems and their ratio is 20,95 % And the lowest percentage is due to the method of providing tips and solutions, and here we find that this documentary series focuses heavily on the dangers caused by environmental problems, and this is also evidenced by the title " The Earth is on the edge of the abyss " In addition to providing appropriate and effective solutions, because the current situation requires it, while explaining the reasons has many channels and has been addressed on many occasions.

Table 5. The journalistic templates used to address environmental issues in the documentary

| Journalistic template | Redundancy | The ratio(%) |
|-----------------------|------------|--------------|
| The news | 07 | 16,27 |
| Report | 10 | 23,25 |
| Reportage | 05 | 11,65 |
| The interview | 21 | 48,83 |
| Total | 43 | 100 |

We can see from this table that the documentary series used various templates to address environmental issues, but most of them were corresponding with a percentage of about 50 % Followed by the report by 23,25 % And then the news of 16,27 % And finally the reportage by 11,65 % The documentary series relied on the interview because it is the closest to obtaining information, and as it relied on a source represented by experts and researchers, and therefore it is the most suitable template for this, as well as the series relied on reports broadcast by various media, in order to document its information and strengthen its position on these environmental problems, but the reportage The main one is to highlight the real reality away from the description, which is the essence of the reportage.

Here we find that the documentary used many journalistic templates, so as not to leave boredom among the audience on the one hand, and it enables them to follow it in an interesting way, away from numbers and statistics only, and the interview is the basis here because the documentary primarily looks at sensitizing the danger caused by environmental degradation in general, and climate change in particular.

Table 6. The persuasive methods used in the documentary

| The persuasive tools | Redundancy | The ratio(%) |
|------------------------|------------|--------------|
| Statistics and figures | 14 | 36,84 |
| Evidence and proof | 09 | 23,68 |
| Intimidation | 10 | 26,33 |
| Encouragement | 05 | 13,15 |
| Total | 38 | 100 |

From this table it can be seen that the most used persuasive methods in this documentary series are the statistics that appeared in the proportion of 36,84 % Followed by the scare tactic by 26,33 % And the lowest percentage was for the cheerleading style that appeared by 13,15 % Here we find that this documentary series employed statistics and evidence as mental methods to convince the masses of the seriousness of environmental problems and their negative repercussions

on human life ,present and future, which achieves its goals of addressing these topics ,besides, on the other hand, we find the use of emotional methods ,foremost of which is the intimidation method, by reminding and intimidating the public and decision makers of the seriousness of changes in the environment And here we find that there is a near balance between the use of mental and emotional methods in order to achieve the desired goals and reach and influence the target audience, especially in the aspect of environmental awareness.

6. Conclusion

Through the foregoing, we can say that documentary films are an important tool to shed light on environmental issues and the problems that suffer from them in an interesting way that embodies the real reality away from fakes, and it is also a media production that contributes greatly to spreading environmental awareness and educating generations to love nature, and protecting it for future generations, and it is In this context, the study reached the following results :

- Documentaries are an important tool for addressing environmental issues and have a role in highlighting risks and encouraging the efforts of those in charge and activating them in reality.
- The documentary series in question tries to convey a realistic picture of the state of the environment and document it in order to preserve it for future generations.
- This documentary series focuses on the topic of climate change and renewable energies, which are of interest to governments and environmental organizations.
- The documentary series aims to raise awareness of the dangers of environmental problems and call for intensifying efforts to protect them.
- This series relies on experts and researchers in the field of ecology to explain and clarify all aspects related to the topic.
- The corresponding series is used as a journalistic template in presenting various information, which enhances its credibility.
- The series employs multiple persuasive methods, including mental and emotional, to establish the desired goals among the target audience.
- The series uses the method of presenting and explaining the dangers of environmental problems, offering appropriate solutions.

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