

Good News & Bad

The Media, Corporate Social Responsibility and Sustainable Development



SustainAbility



United Nations
Environment
Programme



Ketchum

Contents

Executive Summary	
Forewords	01
1.0 Introduction	02
2.0 World Regions	08
European Union	08
United States	10
Latin America	12
Asia	14
3.0 Big Issues	16
Globalization	18
Ozone Depletion	18
Climate Change	19
Environmental Health	20
Endocrine Disruptors	20
Genetically Modified Foods	21
Business	22
Corporate Social Responsibility	22
Socially Responsible Investment	23
The Activists	24
4.0 The Media Moguls	26
5.0 Gordian Sections	30
Audiences	30
Technology	32
Services	34
Accountability	36
6.0 Breakdown or Breakthrough?	38
SustainAbility Publications	
Publication Details	
Acknowledgements	
Engaging Stakeholders Sponsors	

Interviewees

Katherine Ainger , Editor, <i>New Internationalist</i> , UK
Frank Allen , Founder, Institute for Journalism and Natural Resources, USA
Adlai Amor , Media Relations Director, World Resources Institute, USA
Nicki Amos , Head of Business Ethics, The Body Shop International, UK
Irwin Arieff , Journalist, Reuters, UK
Robert Bisset , Press Officer for Europe, UNEP, France
Frances Cairncross , Management Editor, <i>The Economist</i> , UK
Joe Champ PhD, Center for Environmental Journalism, Colorado University, USA
Rachel Coen , Information Co-ordinator, FAIR, USA
Meghan Connolly , Director, <i>CSR Wire</i> , USA
Leslie Cormier , Communications Director, DuPont, USA
Roger Cowe , Freelance Journalist, <i>Financial Times</i> , <i>The Guardian</i> , UK
Chris de Cardy , Executive Director, Environmental Media Services, USA
Jamie Donald , Assignment Editor, BBC News, UK
Peter Eisler , Journalist, <i>USA Today</i> , USA
Pete Engardio , Journalist, <i>Business Week</i> , US
Bill Eyres , Head of Communications, The Body Shop International, UK
David Fenton , Founder and Director, Fenton Communications, USA
Svenja Geissmar , Senior Vice-President and General Counsel, MTV Networks, UK
Ross Gelbspan , Freelance Journalist, <i>The Boston Globe</i> and others, USA
Paul Gilding , Chair, Ecos Corporation, Australia
Peter C. Goldmark, Jr. , Chairman and CEO, <i>The International Herald Tribune</i> , France
Gabriel Griffa , Editor and Publisher, <i>Apertura</i> , Argentina
Nick Hart-Williams , Director, Whole Earth, and previously Channel 4, UK
Thaddeus Herrick , Journalist, <i>The Wall Street Journal</i> , USA
Tony Juniper , Director Designate, Friends of the Earth, UK
Peter Knight , Environmental Context and Freelance Journalist, UK
Stefan Larsson , Group Environmental Manager, Esab, Sweden
Kalle Lasn , Founder and Editor, Adbusters Media Foundation, USA
Andy Law , Founder and Head, St Luke's, UK
Tomoo Machiba , Freelance Journalist, Japan

Michael Maiello , Journalist, <i>Forbes</i> , USA
Drew Marcus , Media Analyst, Deutsche Bank, USA
Alan Metrick , Communications Director, NRDC, USA
George Monbiot , Columnist, <i>The Guardian</i> , UK
John Nielsen , Environmental Correspondent, NPR, USA
Blair Palese , Head of Communications, Ecos Corporation, Australia
Wendy Redal , Director, Center for Environ- mental Journalism, Colorado Uni., USA
Simon Retallack , Special Features Editor, <i>The Ecologist</i> , UK
Nick Robins , Head of SRI Research, Henderson Global Investors, UK
Chris Rose , Campaigner, Families Against Bush, and previously Greenpeace, UK
Niki Rosinski , Researcher, Sustainable Asset Management, Switzerland
Nick Rowcliffe , Editor, <i>ENDS Daily</i> , UK
Linda Ruckel , Communications Department, Bristol-Myers Squibb, USA
Richard Sambrook , Director of News, BBC, UK
Danny Schechter , Executive Editor, MediaChannel, USA
Terry Slavin , Correspondent, <i>The Observer</i> , UK
Joe Smith , Co-Director, Cambridge Media and Environment Programme, UK
Shamilla Sohoni , Staff Writer, <i>The Economist</i> , USA
Mike Tidwell , Freelance Journalist, <i>The Washington Post</i> , USA
Lloyd Timberlake , Director of Earthscan, Avina Foundation, USA and Switzerland
Paul Tolme , Journalist, Associated Press, USA
Solitaire Townsend , Director, Futerra, UK
Andrew Tyndall , Editor, <i>Tyndall Report</i> , USA
Mark Wade , Sustainable Development Group, Shell International, UK
Tom Whitehouse , Risk Analyst and Former Journalist, UK
Robert Worcester , Chairman, MORI, UK
Martin Wright , Editor in Chief, <i>Green Futures</i> , UK

In *Good News & Bad* we investigate:

- The roles of the media in building the CSR and SD agendas for business;
- The ways in which media people perceive, prioritize and cover these issues; and
- Governance, accountability and transparency challenges for the media industry itself.

Given the subtitle of this report, it is important to note that though the CSR and SD agendas are linked in *Good News & Bad*, they are not identical. While CSR champions often view SD as a subset of their agenda, and vice versa, progress with sustainable development requires the involvement of all sectors of society, not just business – and much longer timescales. So SD, not CSR, is the ‘Big Story’ that the media too often are missing (page 34).

Indeed, in some sectors the SD agenda is so complex – and so recalcitrant – that it is reminiscent of the ‘ Gordian Knot’: Alexander the Great, it is said, was once presented with a knot so intricate that no-one had been able to untangle it. So he sliced through it with his sword. *Good News & Bad* takes four slices through the media world: **Audiences** (page 30), **Technology** (32), **Services** (34) and **Accountability** (36).

So are media companies aware of the challenges they face in relation to this agenda? And are they responding both with the appropriate levels of energy and – Alexander’s lesson – radicalism? The answers are yes, to a degree, and not yet.

Project and Methodology

This is the fourth sector report prepared by SustainAbility as part of its *Engaging Stakeholders* program for the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). The program has been financially supported both by the companies listed on the back cover and by the United Nations Foundation.

During the project, we interviewed over 50 people actively involved in this field, in different media and different countries. The main interviewees are listed on the inside front cover. They span mainstream and niche media,^A research, campaigning and business.

In addition, we researched books, reports and websites covering the media sector and associated issues. The Ketchum analysis covered the media listed in each regional profile (pages 08–15). The aim has been to produce a briefing that can be read and digested fairly quickly. But we plan to continue working in this area and to share and test the findings. There is also now a dedicated domain on our website (www.sustainability.com/media).

The Third Wave

Good News & Bad didn’t emerge from a vacuum. Over many years, SustainAbility has tracked two (and now three) great waves – and two downwaves – of public concern and political action in relation to the emerging triple bottom line (TBL) agendas. They are mapped in Figure 03. Note: these waves are not primarily waves of media coverage, as is suggested by the fact that the second downwave began before the huge spike of coverage triggered by the 1992 Earth Summit. Interestingly, the serious political response to the waves tends to come in the downwaves.

Throughout the period 1961–2001, news programs have tended to focus on pollution incidents and ecological disasters, rather than on the underlying trends and their causes. As campaigner Chris Rose puts it, ‘This is equivalent to covering economics by only reporting bank robberies.’

Some media have been pulling in process reporters alongside those solely concerned with events, but it is still far from clear that the right balance is being struck. Our conclusions and recommendations are outlined below.

The media represent one of the most powerful – yet least trusted and least accountable institutions – in the world.

The sector could become the most powerful institution on earth, yet accountability mechanisms are generally weak. Few media companies, for example, produce CSR or SD reports. But the media sector will come under growing scrutiny as its influence grows. Expect the spotlight to pick up other parts of the media ecosystem, too, including advertising agencies, PR firms and lobbyists.

That said, the media have a critical role to play in the transition towards sustainability. Media understanding – and sustained intelligent coverage – of the CSR and SD agendas is a necessary precondition for real progress.

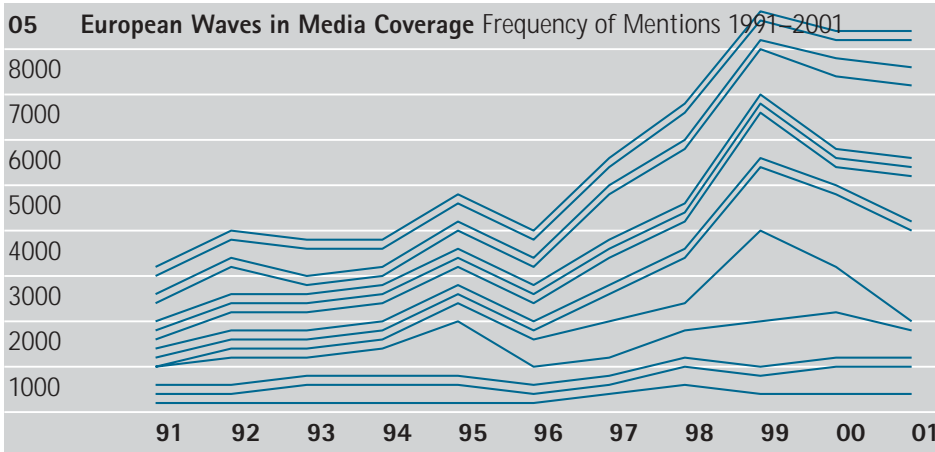
Globalization remains key, both as an editorial topic and as a profound challenge for the industry. The big media story of the late 1990s was globalization – or, more accurately, anti-globalization. The anti-globalization movement is on its back foot after the September 11 attacks, but the issues are real and urgent. They demand action, both in terms of coverage and corporate accountability mechanisms.

Executive Summary

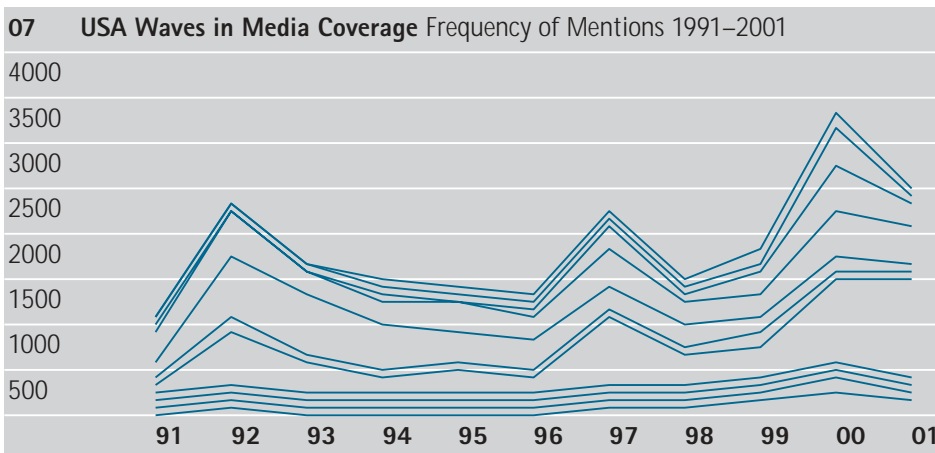
The media sector – broadly defined – could become the dominant industry of the 21st century. No other industry will so powerfully influence how people and politicians think about corporate social responsibility (CSR) and sustainable development (SD) priorities.

^A In terms of niche media, a listing of CSR and SD newsletters, magazines and websites can be found at www.sustainability.com/resources

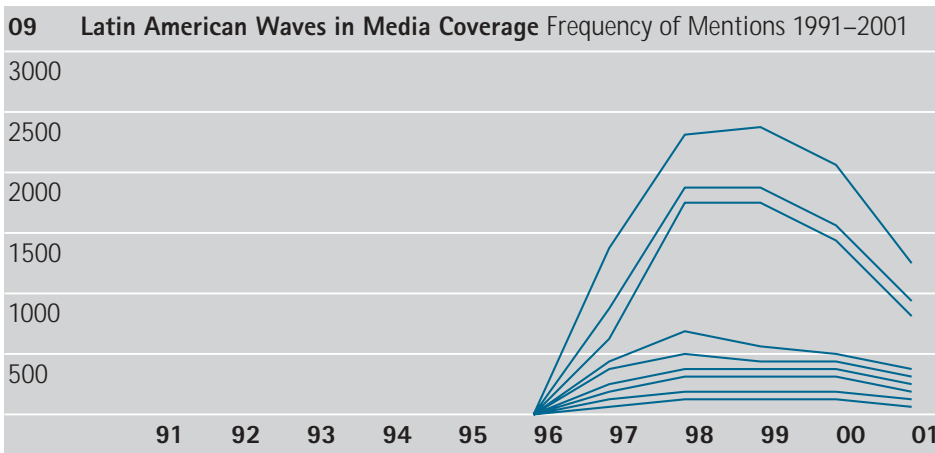
^B For SustainAbility’s analysis of the link between sustainable development and the Internet, see our online report at www.VirtualSustainability.com



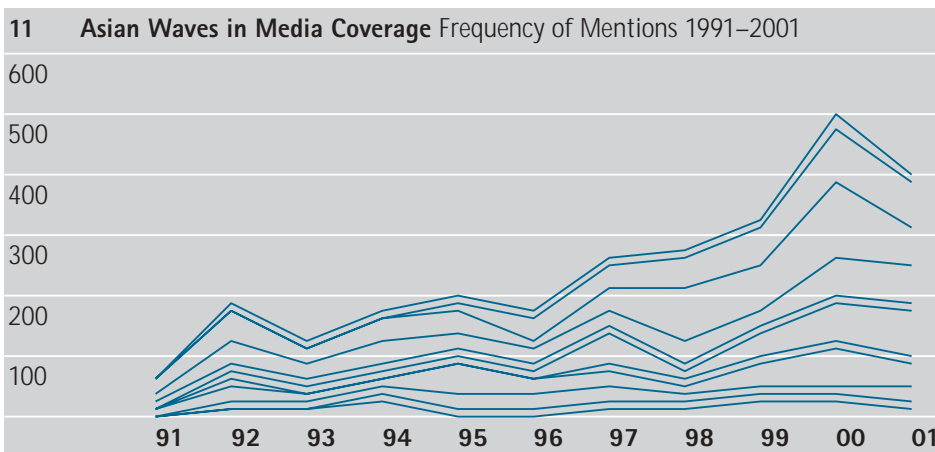
© Ketchum/SustainAbility 2002



© Ketchum/SustainAbility 2002



© Ketchum/SustainAbility 2002



© Ketchum/SustainAbility 2002

The 'globalization' wave will continue to develop. The 2002 UN World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) will help keep the agenda on the boil. After the inevitable third downwave, expect fourth and fifth waves. Very likely — as the TBL agenda is mainstreamed — these waves may come with a quickening tempo and less dramatic fluctuations in public interest.

Meanwhile, the media are abysmal at covering critical — but slow burn — issues. Many interviewees argue that the media are missing the biggest story of our times, that of the progressive undermining of global ecosystems — with profound social and economic consequences. The assumption is that if the issues are real, we will have time to adapt. But the sudden discovery of the Antarctic ozone hole shows how even global problems can take us by surprise.

The brightest spot at present is the business media sector. This is picking up on CSR and SD issues with increasing regularity and professionalism. In the process, the language is changing, with terms like 'the triple bottom line' gaining greater currency (see Figure 01, page 03).

The new media have huge catalytic potential. The impact of new technology is easy to exaggerate, but the internet has huge potential. As one interviewee argued, 'New media, new networks will mean *new agency* — new power to affect events.' The commercial — and political — implications are profound, both for the media and for business in general.⁸

But the future could take us in at least three directions. Things would be very different in each of the three scenarios outlined on pages 38–44: 'Breakdown', 'Mainstream' or 'Breakthrough'.

'This is equivalent to covering economics by only reporting bank robberies.'

Governance

Contrary to current evidence, the media should model the very highest standards of corporate governance. Specifically, media companies should:

- 1 Establish — at board level — whether the balance between public interest and commercial imperatives is being strategically reviewed, properly managed and publicly disclosed; and
- 2 Review their goals, targets and performance against leading governance codes (including the UN Global Compact, the Global Sullivan Principles and SA 8000) and socially responsible investment (SRI) criteria.

Accountability

Given the enormous influence the media have on public opinion, public interest and, ultimately, public behavior, it is important that media owners and directors meet the highest levels of accountability. In practice, this means that they should:

- 3 Consider compliance with laws, regulations and industry codes as the absolute minimum for good governance — and commit to ‘beyond compliance’ standards wherever possible;
- 4 Adopt and publicize ethical codes of conduct, and clear statements of their corporate values and principles; and
- 5 Engage regularly with key stakeholders, ensuring that inclusive policies and processes are adopted right across the business.

Transparency

For an industry whose greatest public service is to uncover malpractice and corruption at all levels of society, and to hold governments and business to account, media companies owe it to all their stakeholders and to society to be exceptionally transparent. In particular, they should:

- 6 Provide leadership in terms of triple bottom line accounting, auditing and reporting;
- 7 Disclose all proprietorial cross-ownerships and influence;
- 8 Declare editorial policy — both general and issue specific — and political allegiances;
- 9 Be open in relation to all sources of funds that could influence editorial and programming content — including their biggest advertisers, sponsors and production subsidies; and
- 10 Regularly report direct and indirect lobbying activities, both undertaken and accepted.

Trust

It is a basic principle of the *Engaging Stakeholders* program that sustainable development will be achieved fastest, most efficiently and most effectively where there are high levels of social capital, particularly trust. The media industry’s current low trust ratings sit uncomfortably alongside its growing power and influence.

For non-media businesses wishing to engage the media, we suggest 10 Do’s and 5 Don’ts of media relations (page 44). In our judgement, restoring trust in the media requires alignment with the principles of governance, accountability and transparency outlined above. More specifically, the media will need to emphasize:

- **Honesty**
Sticking to the spirit, not just the letter, of laws and codes of conduct, and rooting out all forms of corruption;
- **Respect**
For example respecting rather than exploiting human weakness and diversity;
- **Consistency**
Ensuring that good corporate citizenship principles are honored throughout the value chain.

One way forward would be to highlight the urgency of the CSR and SD agendas via a new media prize and scholarship initiative appropriate to the 21st century. Just as Joseph Pulitzer’s principles helped shape the best nineteenth and twentieth century journalism, so we now need principles, prizes and scholarships designed to spur the media toward new horizons.

We must find and encourage those who will help us understand and address the key problems that will face us in the 21st century, among them population growth, poverty, disease, mega-urbanization, globalization, terrorism, global warming, the loss of biodiversity, and the increasingly urgent competition for water as water-tables fall and rivers are diverted for agricultural, industrial and domestic uses.

The effort and the cost will be huge, but as ex-President Bill Clinton put it in his 2001 Dimpleby Lecture, ‘It’s a lot cheaper than going to war.’ This is an area where there really will be no choice in a world headed toward 9–10 billion human inhabitants, but you wouldn’t guess it today from what you read in the newspapers, hear on the radio and see on TV.

Recommendations

Whether in the media world or elsewhere, responsibility should be proportionate to power and influence. Given the challenges and weaknesses uncovered in this report, ten recommendations are offered in relation to media governance, accountability, transparency and trust.

‘The media [is] one of the most powerful — yet least trusted and least accountable — institutions in the world.’

SustainAbility Foreword

The media have played a central role in defining and communicating the emerging corporate social responsibility (CSR) and sustainable development (SD) agendas. But, at the same time, the very nature of the media beast often means that major issues are ignored for extended periods of time. So, for example, media coverage of stratospheric ozone depletion fell away sharply after 1992 — even as the size of the Antarctic ozone hole continued to grow (page 18).

During the project, we have spoken to media owners, editors and journalists around the globe, some of whom have played important roles in relation to the triple bottom line agenda — and some of whom are outspoken critics of the CSR and SD agendas. We have also interviewed campaigners and business people who routinely interact with the media.

The recent death of David Astor reminded us of the central role of editors. Astor, for 27 years the fiercely independent editor of *The Observer*, was a forceful champion of quality journalism, freedom of information and democracy. He saw his role as that of a chef, mixing media dishes, but also of a talent-spotter and even college dean. All three roles are relevant here, particularly the third, since most media people still have much to learn in relation to CSR and SD.

UNEP, as ever, has been a supportive partner, and Ketchum has carried out the media scanning work. As the three scenarios outlined on pages 38–43 began to evolve, we knew that this would be an area of ongoing interest and activity for SustainAbility.

John Elkington

Chair

Francesca Müller

Media Project Manager,
SustainAbility, London and New York

UNEP Foreword

A clear, two-pronged message emerges from *Good News & Bad*. First, if they are to remain credible as one of the dominant industries in the 21st century, media companies must increasingly look at their own corporate social responsibilities. And, second, at a time when our world feels more vulnerable than ever, media reporting of environmental and socio-economic issues is at a critical watershed.

In the run-up to the Rio Earth Summit in 1992, there was a momentum — both among politicians and activists alike — to tackle the world's environmental and social ills. The media joined in. But, as UNEP Executive Director Klaus Töpfer has asked, 'As we approach the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, will the media continue to cover some of the most pressing issues of our time with the same enthusiasm?'

In UNEP, we believe that the stakes for sustainable development are higher today than ever before. In particular, there is an urgent need for greater political momentum and to raise public expectations and action on the issues surrounding the Johannesburg Summit. The media have a fundamental role to play. Their support in a new alliance against the dual challenge of global poverty and the protection of our global environment will be crucial.

I hope this new report from SustainAbility, produced in conjunction with UNEP, will raise debate and, importantly, motivate media companies to question their own corporate social responsibilities.

Jacqueline Aloisi de Larderel

Assistant Executive Director,
United Nations Environment Programme,
Paris

Ketchum Foreword

Too often, companies discount the crucial role of the media in helping to communicate their key messages to their key stakeholders. Indeed, many companies approach the media with deep suspicion and hostility, regarding media relations as little more than a crisis management tool: a perilous approach.

One of the defining characteristics of 'CSR leaders' is that they see media relations and corporate communications as a strategic management practice. They cultivate relations with media — and not just with big-name media, but also with local media relevant to their business operations. They also tend to see the media community as not just a conduit to audiences, but as an audience in its own right.

In our view, strategic communications will be a critical asset for any organization — be it from the public arena, the private sector, or civil society — in the years to come. We believe communications can play an important role in dispelling confusion, resolving conflict and bringing parties together for the improvement of our world.

Ketchum recently launched a CSR specialty area, which formalizes a decades-long tradition as a public relations agency that believes in responsible commercial success. In early 2001, Ketchum became one of the first professional-services firms to join the UN's Global Compact initiative. We are delighted to have taken part in this important survey. We hope the findings prove valuable for companies and organizations that wish to be in the vanguard of CSR and SD.

Gavin Power

Senior Vice-President,
Corporate Social Responsibility,
Ketchum, New York



Jacqueline
Aloisi de
Larderel



John
Elkington



Francesca
Müller



Geoff
Lye



Patricia
Reid

'We see the media continuing to become more powerful!'



Nembe Creek, Nigeria © Betty Press / Panos Pictures

Journalism, they say, is the first draft of history.¹ But the people who create these first drafts are also part of a sector — the media, broadly defined — that could well become the dominant industry of the 21st century. 'We see the media continuing to become more powerful,' says Drew Marcus, Deutsche Bank's media sector analyst.

As a result, no other industry will so powerfully influence how people and politicians think about (and act on) corporate social responsibility (CSR) and sustainable development (SD) priorities.

This is the context in which politics generally — and the pursuit of SD in particular — will evolve. And there are real reasons for concern that such agendas will be adversely affected by the spread of the 'soundbite culture'.² In *Good News & Bad*, our fourth sector report for the United Nations Environment Programme, we investigate:

- The roles of the media in building the triple bottom line agenda for business;
- The ways in which media people perceive, prioritize and cover these agendas; and
- Governance, accountability and transparency options for the media industry itself.

But before we begin, let's acknowledge that a world without reasonably independent media would be less democratic, less efficient and, in all probability, less sustainable right across the triple bottom line of economic, social and environmental equity, justice and value added (page 05).

The triple bottom line approach has moved sharply up the list of terms used by the CSR and SD communities in recent years, as illustrated in Figure 01. This shows the results of a recent Environics survey of SD experts around the world, with eco-efficiency, the triple bottom line and corporate social responsibility heading the list.³

What the Environics data do not show, however, is that public, government and corporate interest in such issues and concepts moves in waves. As Figure 03 indicates, recent decades have seen great waves and downwaves in public concern and political action, each creating new political, regulatory and market conditions for business. The media help create the conditions in which these waves and downwaves emerge, and then dramatize the ups and downs of the resulting roller-coaster rides.

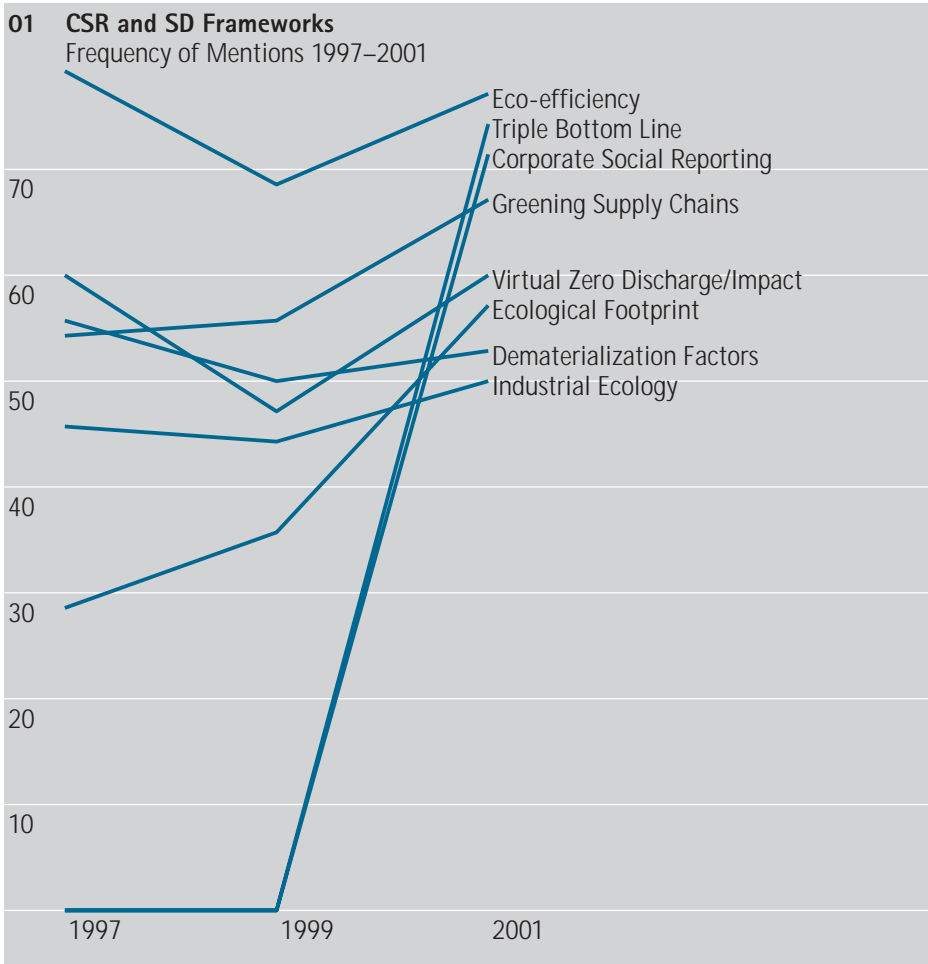
Much media coverage of key business trends in relation to triple bottom line performance is shallow. 'It's like a beauty contest to see who's the best provider of information,' says Stefan Larsson, group environment manager at Swedish engineering company Esab. 'The media focus on the aesthetics of company reporting, rather than on the underlying performance. Mainstream media are dismal at telling these stories. Only the business and financial pages are beginning to understand how to do this properly.'

Introduction

Why we are focusing on the media; how the research was done; and the waves and downwaves that will provide the context for whatever happens next.



Cumbria, UK © Martin Wyness / Still Pictures



© Environics International 2001

So why do the media so often miss big picture stories until it is too late? The answer seems to have at least two parts:

— **First, it's human nature.** Evolution has equipped us to respond to big, noisy, immediate threats, and to ignore problems that may present even greater risks — but which build more slowly, often decade-on-decade.

— **Second, commercial self-interest.** Media companies must keep audiences and advertisers happy, which is where human nature comes in again. Many journalists we interviewed want better coverage of triple bottom line issues and trends, but their marketing people argue that readers, listeners or viewers are switched off by it.

Mirror, mirror

Media companies, in short, are both carriers and barriers when it comes to the CSR and SD agendas. So what happens if you hold up a mirror to the media? For some people, the picture is ugly, with a range of new 'coercive' technologies and professions used to manipulate the public.⁴ In the international survey reported here, the SustainAbility and Ketchum teams took a close look at media CSR and SD coverage over the period 1991–2001. Some key findings are discussed in our 'Big Issues' section (pages 16–25).

The issues covered included biodiversity, child labor, climate change, corporate social responsibility, endocrine disruptors, genetically modified foods, globalization, green politics, the growth of megacities, ozone depletion, recycling, renewable resources, socially responsible investing, sustainable forestry, and urban air quality. We also tracked media mentions of a range of NGOs, including Amnesty International, Corporate Watch, Global Exchange, Greenpeace, Human Rights Watch, Oxfam, Sierra Club, Transparency International and WWF.

During the next decade, the media's handling of the triple bottom line agenda will help determine whether these new priorities move into the political, economic and cultural mainstream. If they do, the likely result will be that future waves and downwaves will come faster, but the oscillations may well moderate somewhat.

If they do not, with the triple bottom line agenda given a relatively low priority, the wave gradients are likely to be more extreme and less predictable, making any progress towards the goals of sustainable development increasingly difficult, protracted and costly.

'Media companies are both carriers and barriers when it comes to the CSR and SD agendas.'

¹ Anthony Collings, *Words of Fire: Independent Journalists Who Challenge Dictators, Druglords, and Other Enemies of a Free Press*, New York University Press, 2001.

² David Slayden and Rita Kirk Whillock (eds), *Soundbite Culture: The Death of Discourse in a Wired World*, Sage Publications, 1999.

³ Note: The terms corporate social responsibility and triple bottom line were first included in the 2001 survey.

⁴ See, for example, Douglas Rushkoff, *Coercion: The Persuasion Professionals and Why We Listen to What 'They' Say*, Little, Brown & Company, 1999, or James Fallows, *Breaking the News: How the Media Undermine American Democracy*, Vintage Books, 1997.

Clearly, there is both good news and bad when it comes to the media. The experience of countries in the ex-communist world has underscored the vital role that accurate, timely and honest media coverage plays in limiting economic, social and environmental abuses. At the same time, even those who work in the media sector accept that its very nature often means that fast, dramatic issues drown out slow, difficult-to-portray issues. So, in the interests of balance, we began by asking three questions.

1 Which lens to use?

First, we considered which lens — or lenses — would be most helpful in surveying the world of media? Anyone who tries to get a grip on media quickly finds huge difficulty in bringing this world into focus. Once again, we found ourselves dealing with a 'Gordian Knot' challenge,⁵ as with our previous sector report — on automobility.⁶ To cut through the complexity, we have taken four slices through the world of media:

— Audiences

What impact are audience trends having on media coverage of CSR and SD issues?

— Technology

How are technology trends in the sector affecting the quantity, quality and reach of such coverage?

— Services

What patterns do we see — and do media people predict — in the adaptation of existing products and services, and in the launch of new offerings?

— Accountability

Given the undeniable role of the media in holding other parts of society to account, how can we hold media companies to account for their triple bottom line performance, both today and tomorrow?

The results of our research on these issues can be found below, as follows: audiences (pages 30–31), technology (32–33), services (34–35) and accountability (36–37).

2 Snapshot or time-lapse?

Second, we asked whether we should take a snapshot of the media at the beginning of the 21st century — or opt for a longer time-scale? Because of our interest in the waves shown in Figure 03, we adopted a time-lapse approach, with a series of snapshots taken over the period 1991–2001.

3 Wide-angle or zoom?

And, third, we asked whether we should opt for a wide-angle approach (relying on media scans over the whole decade) or for an approach in which we would zoom in on particular issues and developments (for example by interviewing key media people). In the event, we decided to do both.

The task was further complicated by the rapid evolution of the media. Not so long ago, the media were considered to be a three-legged beast: print, radio and TV.⁷ Now there is also the internet — and things have got rather more complicated. Print, radio and TV companies now compete with internet portal operators like Yahoo! in terms of organizing and selling information and knowledge.⁸ So while magazines develop websites and even portals, portals may also develop magazines, as in the case of *Yahoo! — Internet Life*.

We have covered all four dimensions (print, radio, TV, internet) in our research. During the interviews and other research, we also tried to achieve a reasonable spread across the various roles in media: owners (see, for example, pages 26–29); publishers and producers; editors; news journalists; feature writers; and advertisers.

Our interviewees are listed on the inside front cover. In total we talked to over 50 individuals, among them people from the world of editing, reporting, advertising, business, research and campaigning. Most people spoke on the record, but a significant number of the mainstream media interviewees asked for their comments to be off the record to ensure that they could be sufficiently candid.

It is inevitable that our interviews were skewed towards those interested in CSR and SD. But we also tried to include a number of skeptics, to ensure a measure of realism. Last but not least, we interviewed people in the corporate world who aim to engage the media on these issues.

In terms of geographical coverage, we scanned CSR and SD coverage through the decade in Asia, Europe, South America and the United States. But the clustering of international media in world cities like New York and London, where many of our interviews took place, inevitably skewed the results towards Anglo Saxon trends and perspectives. This is a failing we recognize and plan to address in future work.

Both in the interviews and content analysis, we identified a series of boom and bust cycles in media coverage of many of the key issues. We zero in on some of these cycles in our 'Big Issues' section (pages 16–25).

As the work proceeded, we were more than ever persuaded that the media sector's stance on the triple bottom line agenda will be critical. The way in which coverage 'spiked' in 1992, before, during and after the UN Earth Summit, suggests that we will see something similar happening around the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in September 2002. But it is what happens afterwards that will really count.

'Mainstream media
are dismal at telling
these stories.'



Pakistan © Piers Benetar / Panos Pictures

02 Centers of Excellence

Cambridge Programme for Media and the Environment

UK
www-cies.geog.cam.ac.uk
Founded in 1996, this is co-run by the BBC and Cambridge University. Offers a series of in-depth seminars designed to broaden and deepen media thinking about global environmental and SD issues — and to improve academic understanding of the setting for (and constraints upon) media reporting.

Fair Accuracy in Reporting

USA
www.fair.org
Founded in 1986, this media watchdog offers well-documented criticism of media bias and censorship. FAIR works to invigorate the US First Amendment by advocating greater diversity in the press — and by scrutinizing media practices that marginalize public interest, and minority and dissenting views.

International Federation of Environmental Journalists

France
www.ifej.org
Founded in 1993, IFEJ is an umbrella organization representing national environmental journalists' associations and individual environmental journalists living in more than 100 countries. It works to improve the accuracy, quality and general standards of reporting. It also supports journalists threatened by censorship or repression.

MediaChannel

USA
www.mediachannel.org
Founded in 1995, MediaChannel is a nonprofit, public interest website dedicated to global media issues. It is concerned with the political, social and cultural impacts of the media, large and small. It encourages diverse perspectives and aims to inspire debate, collaboration and citizen engagement and action.

Panos

UK
www.oneworld.org/panos
Founded in 1986, Panos works with media and other information actors to enable developing countries to shape and communicate their own development agendas through informed public debate. It particularly focuses on amplifying the voices of the poor and marginalized. Content is largely generated by people in developing countries.

Pew Center for the People and the Press

USA
www.people-press.org
Founded in 1990, this is an independent opinion research group that studies attitudes toward the press, politics and public policy issues. The Center's main purpose is to serve as a forum for ideas on the media and public policy.

Society of Environmental Journalists

USA
www.sej.org
Founded in 1990, this is a membership of working journalists dedicated to improvements in environmental reporting. SEJ programs are designed to build a stronger, better-educated, and better-connected network of professional journalists and editors who cover relevant issues.

Transparency International

Germany and UK
www.transparency.org
Founded in 1993, an NGO dedicated to increasing government accountability and curbing both international and national corruption. With chapters in over 75 countries around the world, its aim is to mobilise a global coalition — embracing the state, civil society and the private sector — to build and strengthen systems that combat corruption.

Definitions

Media

The main means of mass communication (esp. newspapers and broadcasting).ⁱ Can also end up embracing advertising, media relations and some aspects of marketing.

Corporate social responsibility

'CSR [implies] continuing commitment by business to behave ethically and contribute to economic development while improving the quality of life of the workforce and their families, as well as of the local community and society at large.'ⁱⁱ

Sustainable development

Development is sustainable when it 'meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.'ⁱⁱⁱ

Triple bottom line

The basis of integrated measurement and management systems focusing on economic, social and environmental value added — or destroyed. Sometimes distilled to 'People, Planet, Profit.'^{iv} For some triple bottom line criteria for the media sector, see panel on page 40.

ⁱ *The Oxford English Reference Dictionary*, 1995/96, adapted.

ⁱⁱ World Business Council on Sustainable Development, Stakeholder Dialogue on CSR, Netherlands, 1998.

ⁱⁱⁱ World Commission on Environment and Development, *Our Common Future*, Oxford University Press, 1987.

^{iv} The terms 'triple bottom line' and 'People, Planet, Profit' were both coined by SustainAbility. In the Netherlands, the subsequent 'Triple P' is now seen to be central to CSR — see *Corporate Social Responsibility: A Dutch Approach*, Social and Economic Council, 2001.

⁵ See Gordian Knot note on page 07.

⁶ *Driving Sustainability*, SustainAbility for UNEP, 2001.

⁷ Annie Gurton, *Press Here: Managing the Media for Free Publicity*, Prentice Hall, 1999/2001.

⁸ Timothy Koogle, CEO, Yahoo! Inc, 'Organizing Knowledge Throughout the World', in *Wisdom of the CEO*, edited by G. William Dauphinais, Grady Means and Colin Price, John Wiley & Sons, 2000.

Third Wave

In 1995, SustainAbility carried out a mapping exercise to make sense of the evolution of the environmental, CSR and SD agendas. We plotted two mounting pressure waves, followed by two great downwaves, which tracked the profile of these agendas over time, across the OECD region.⁹ At the time, we also made two predictions:

- First, that the second downwave would run longer than many then expected (we forecast that it would last 7–8 years, compared with the year or two that most NGOs expected, but still shorter than the 13–14 years of the first downwave).
- And, second, that when the third wave began, at the back end of the 1990s, it would differ substantially from the previous two waves. This time, the wave would focus on sustainability issues, would be increasingly part of mainstream politics and, as a result, would initially be less visible than the previous two waves.

For this report, we thought it time to revisit this mapping exercise. Let's run through the waves and downwaves that have shaped public opinion and media interest to date.¹⁰

First Wave

The 'Limits' wave built steadily from the early 1960s, with milestones including Rachel Carson's book *Silent Spring* and the formation of Amnesty and the World Wildlife Fund (WWF). From the mid-1960s, the work of Marshall McLuhan helped put the world of media itself under the spotlight.¹¹

The wave really took off at the end of the decade, peaking from 1969 to 1973. The period saw high impact reports like *Limits to Growth* and the first UN environment conference, held in Stockholm in 1972 (with UNEP founded shortly thereafter). The media story was largely one of looming crises. Then in 1973–74 the first Arab oil shock both underscored the natural resource arguments advanced by 'limits to growth' environmentalists and triggered a major recession, bringing the first wave's peak period to an end.

First Downwave

The first great downwave ran from 1974 through to 1987. Through the mid-1970s, a wave of environmental legislation swept across the OECD region. Industry went into compliance mode. But there were strong pockets of resistance — and many failures.

Acid rain had a major impact on EU politics in the early 1980s. The media story spotlighted accidents and disasters, with the Bhopal disaster in India in 1984, the Chernobyl and Rhine disasters in 1986, and the ozone hole surfacing as a major issue from the mid-1980s.

This was a period of conservative politics, with energetic attempts to roll back the environmental legislation that had recently been adopted. 1987 marked a major turning point, with the publication of *Our Common Future* by the Brundtland Commission introducing the term 'sustainable development' into the political mainstream.

Second Wave

The 'Green' wave really began to roll in 1988, with issues like ozone depletion and rainforest destruction fuelling a new movement: green consumerism.¹² The peak of the second wave ran from 1988 to 1991. The media story this time was more diverse, embracing accidents (like the *Exxon Valdez* oil spill in 1989), pollution legacies (particularly in the former USSR), and the partial 'greening' of both politics and consumer markets.

Second Downwave

The second great downwave began in 1991, sparked by the Gulf War (which gave CNN such a boost) and recession, and lasted through much of the decade. The UN Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro delayed the impending downwave, triggering coverage spikes on issues like climate change and biodiversity, but against a falling trend in media interest.

That said, the overall level of coverage remained significantly higher than in the previous downwave period. 1995, in particular, saw a major spike in coverage, with Shell in the media spotlight because of the Brent Spar and Nigerian controversies. Europe was also rocked by such issues as 'mad cow' disease and genetically modified (GM) foods. A major new factor: the internet.

Third Wave

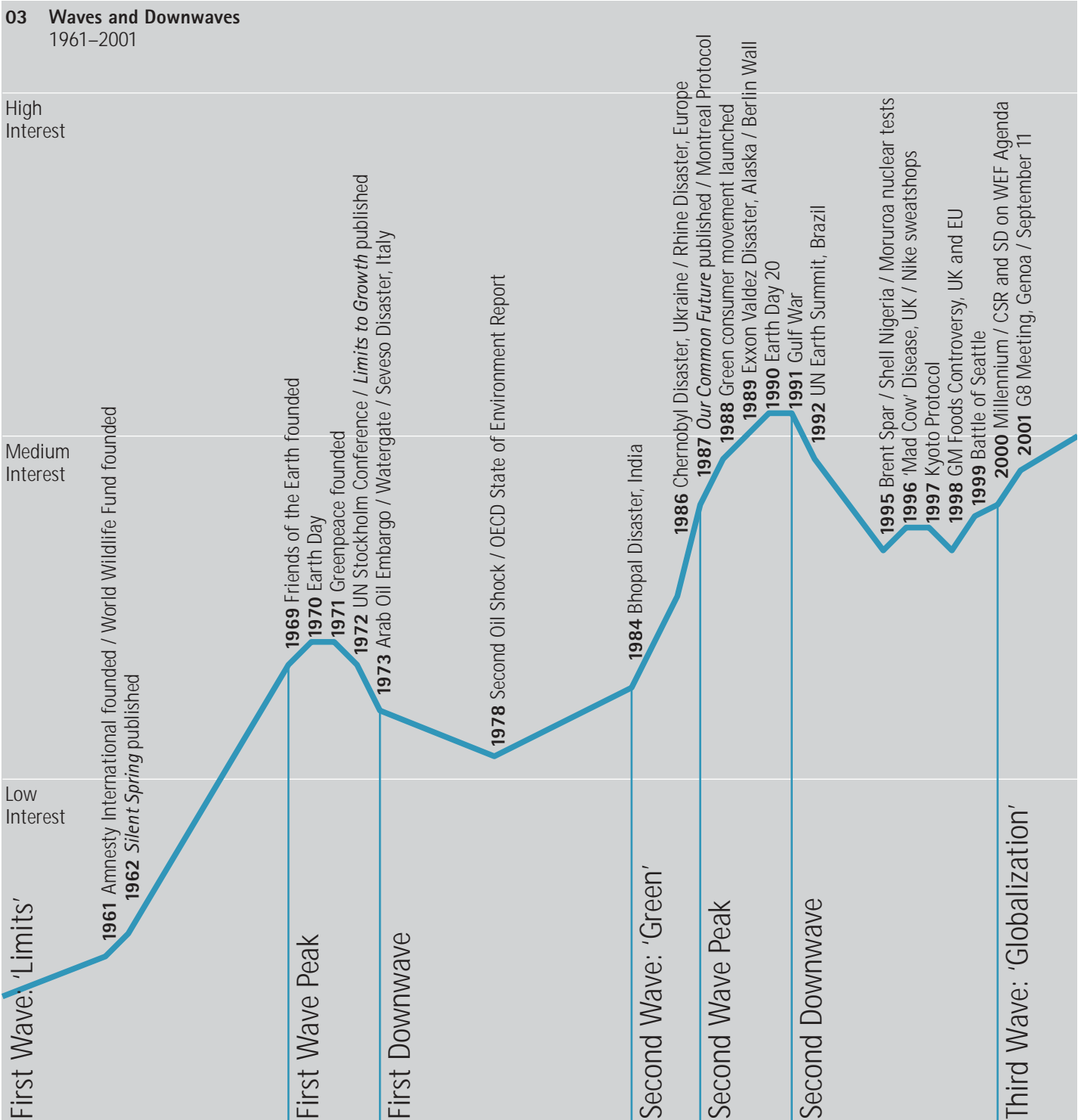
The start of the 'Globalization' wave can be tracked back to the 'Battle of Seattle' in 1999, when a broad range of environmental, labor and social activists challenged the World Trade Organization (WTO). The triple bottom line agenda evolved rapidly, but the big media story was the anti-globalization (or at least anti-corporate-globalization) movement. Millennial celebrations in the West and increasingly high profile protests against the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank, G8, World Economic Forum (WEF) and other institutions pushed the global governance agenda up the political priority list.

The events of September 11, 2001, marked a major discontinuity, accelerating the oncoming recession, already heralded by the collapse of the dot-com bubble. This period also saw the internet coming into its own as a critical tool for information and communication.¹³ At the time, though, it was unclear whether the result would be an end to the 'third wave' — or a new boost to its momentum. Some media, like *Newsweek*, saw major problems ahead for the anti-globalization movement.¹⁴ Others felt that September 11 only added new imperative to its goods.

Forecast

SustainAbility's forecast as 2002 dawned was that the 'Globalization' wave would continue to develop for 12–18 months, with the 2002 UN World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) helping to keep the agenda on the boil. Now, however, much of the action will have to happen inside those agencies promoting and regulating the process of globalization — and in the companies likely to benefit.

Further afield, we expect fourth and fifth waves, very likely — as the triple bottom line agenda is absorbed into the mainstream — on even shorter time-frequencies and possibly with less dramatic fluctuations in interest. One central focus of these waves will be demographic pressures, both within the OECD region and between the 'have' and 'have not' parts of the world. Issues of intra- and inter-generational equity will surface with real political power, in such areas as public health care, pensions provision, immigration and development. The complexity of these issues could make them a stretch for the media, but late in 2001 *The Economist* showed how they might be covered with a stunning 22-page survey by management guru Peter Drucker.¹⁵



© SustainAbility 2002

⁹ The three waves analysis was later reported in *Cannibals With Forks: The Triple Bottom Line of 21st Century Business*, John Elkington, Capstone, Oxford, 1997 and New Society, 1998.

¹⁰ The waves reflect public concern, media coverage and political action, but are far from scientific. They have, however, been tested with – and confirmed by – experts for over eight years.

¹¹ See, for example, Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, first published 1964, MIT Press, 1994/2001.

¹² A movement SustainAbility helped catalyze with the international bestseller, *The Green Consumer Guide*, 1988.

¹³ *Special Report: The Net as a Global Lifeline*, Yahoo!, November 2001. See also SustainAbility's *Virtual Sustainability: Using the internet to implement the triple bottom line*, 2001. Online report at www.virtualsustainability.com

¹⁴ Malcolm Beith, New power for the President, *Newsweek*, December 17, 2001.

¹⁵ Peter Drucker, 'The next society: A survey of the near future', *The Economist*, November 3, 2001.

EU interest in the triple bottom line agenda — both in the public mind and in the media — has been sustained at higher levels than in the US, Latin America and Asia.¹⁷ That said, while countries like Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden show fairly high levels of concern, others (among them Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain) are still well down the curve.

Sustainable development was already on the agenda in 1990, partly because the World Commission on Environment and Development, which introduced the concept into mainstream politics, was chaired by a European Prime Minister, Norway's Gro Harlem Brundtland. But it got a further big boost with the 1992 Earth Summit.

Peaks and troughs

Terms like corporate social responsibility and triple bottom line began to appear in European media from the mid-1990s, particularly following the 1995 Brent Spar and Nigerian controversies centered on Shell. Among the issues that drove the debate was child labor, with coverage ranging from practices in Brazil to those in UK cities. The issue was linked both to industries (from chocolate to carpets) and brands (e.g. Nike).

Issues

Levels of media coverage suggests that such issues as ozone depletion, climate change and GM foods received more attention and concern in Europe than in other world regions (see Figure 04, page 09). Meanwhile, some issues that ignited in the US, at least for a while, failed to fully ignite in the EU, including concerns about endocrine modulators (page 20).

The meaning of the term globalization mutated through the 1990s, with coverage approaching a plateau in 1998 and 1999, when the WTO Ministerial Conference was held — and disrupted — in Seattle. From this point, coverage of the issue spikes dramatically and the term anti-globalization appears more frequently.

Of established issues, recycling started the decade well in terms of coverage, but then fell away. Biodiversity coverage peaked in 1992, then fell away through the middle of the decade before picking up again — often linked to the issue of genetic research. Sustainable forestry coverage was generally low, except in Germany towards the end of the decade. By contrast, renewable resources and energy enjoyed a fairly high profile, peaking in 2001.

NGOs

One group of NGOs (Amnesty, Greenpeace, Oxfam, WWF) managed to stay on the agenda throughout the decade, with some major jumps — as in the case of Greenpeace in 1995. A second group (Human Rights Watch, Sierra Club, Transparency International) tended to surface only when 'their' particular issues became newsworthy.

Corporate reporting

Media coverage of corporate environmental sustainability took off from 1990, with the publication of Norsk Hydro's first report in 1990, covered in mainstream papers like *The Financial Times*. Later the focus expanded to the results of benchmarking surveys carried out by organizations like SustainAbility and KPMG, with specialist magazines like *Tomorrow* covering the latest reports. A peak in coverage came with the 1998 publication of the first Shell Report, *Profits & Principles*.

Notable EU corporate reporters have included ABB (Sweden/Switzerland), Anglian Water (UK), BAA (UK), BASF (Germany), BMW Group (Germany), BP Amoco (UK), BT (UK), Cable & Wireless (UK), Camelot (UK), The Co-operative Bank (UK), ESAB (Sweden), Fortum (Finland), Henkel Group (Germany), ING Group (Netherlands), Novo Nordisk (Denmark), Royal Dutch / Shell (Netherlands/UK), Statoil (Norway), STMicroelectronics (France/Switzerland), Stora Enso (Finland/Sweden), Unilever (Netherlands/UK) and Volkswagen (Germany).

To date, the EU has more media sector corporate CSR and SD reporters than other world regions. Media sector reporters include Axel Springer Verlag (Germany), Bertelsmann (also Germany; particularly Mohn Media unit), EMI Group (UK) and Vivendi Universal (France).

'The meaning of the term globalization mutated through the 1990s'

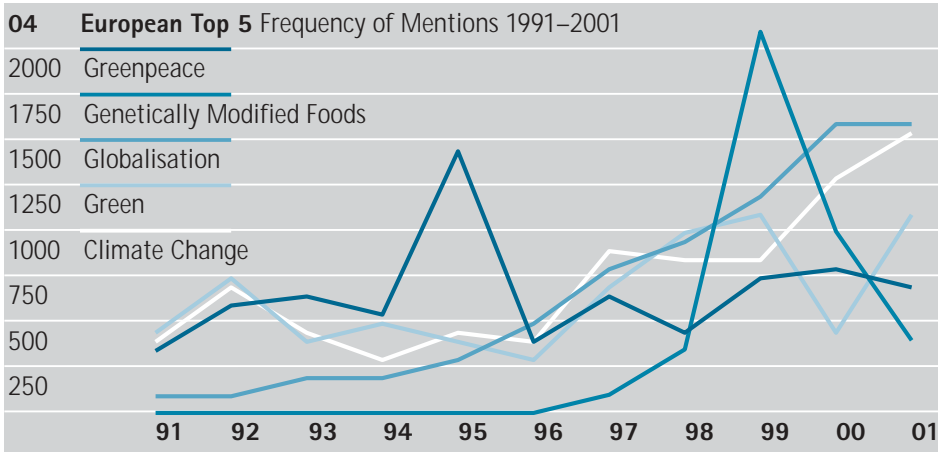
European Union

From biodiversity to GM foods, the EU has been an issues incubator since Rio. But the media in northern EU countries are way ahead of their southern counterparts.

¹⁷ The media scanned were *Der Spiegel*, *The Daily Mail*, *The Daily Telegraph*, *Financial Times*, *The Guardian*, *Le Monde*, and *The Times*. Further details at www.sustainability.com/media

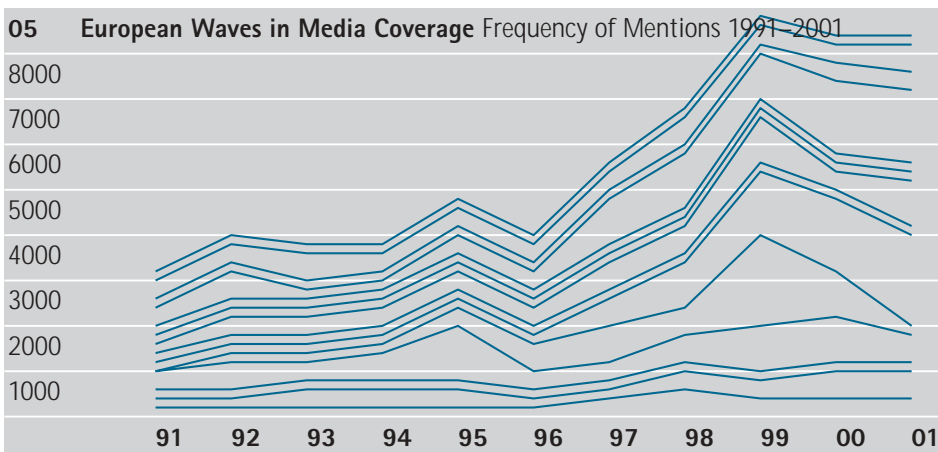


Bavaria, Germany © Dermot Tatlow / Panos Pictures



© Ketchum/SustainAbility 2002

Figures: The Story
A series of figures appear through *Good News & Bad*, as on the left. These have been developed by Ketchum. They show the frequency with which given search terms appeared in the media scanned in each world region. Given the pressure on space, some of the figures show the patterns of development, with the details on what each line represents shown on our website (www.sustainability.com).



© Ketchum/SustainAbility 2002

One striking aspect of US media coverage has been its 'CSR blind-spot'.¹⁸ Despite clear evidence that growing numbers of US corporations have been embracing CSR, US media have largely ignored the trend. There was a spike in US coverage in 1996, however, at the time of the White House Conference on Corporate Citizenship. And there has been another change: in the mid-1990s, CSR was seen as little more than hot air, whereas today's coverage increasingly highlights emerging best practice.

Peaks and troughs

Figure 06 shows three distinct peaks: in 1992, 1997 and 2000. SD took off slightly later in the US than in the EU, receiving a considerable boost from Rio: in 1991, the media scanned carried six stories on SD, whereas in 1992 the figure jumped ten-fold to 62. There have been fairly high levels of SD coverage across the decade, although on a generally declining trend since 1995.

Some publications have clearly 'got' the triple bottom line message, including *The International Herald Tribune* (which, perhaps significantly, is targeted internationally).¹⁹ But there have also been many articles critical of the SD agenda, and not just in publications perceived to be right-leaning, like *Forbes* (which equated SD with 'cultural imperialism') or *The Wall Street Journal* (which described SD as 'a dubious environmental concept'). Recently, though, anti-globalization protests have revived interest in issues like child labor, climate change and biodiversity.

Issues

The US now has a pretty powerful media corps covering the CSR and SD beats. After the coverage spike created by the Earth Summit, however, most of these issues fell out of the spotlight of mainstream journalism. Vice-President Al Gore may have been interested, but President Clinton wasn't, at least while in office — and President Bush has been even less engaged (and, in his case, prepared to say so).

Coverage of globalization has seen the biggest shift over the Rio+10 period (page 17). In the early 1990s, this was an emerging business trend, with the focus on new markets, cross-border deals and mega-mergers. By the mid-1990s, concerns were growing about American imperialism, with critics questioning whether globalization brought real net benefits for poorer countries. Since 1999, there has been a surge in coverage of the anti-globalization movement, with September 11 forcing even some of globalization's loudest champions to wonder whether it can succeed without a major overhaul.

Recycling sustained high levels of coverage through the decade, whereas issues like endocrine disruption, sustainable forestry and GM foods often struggled to win attention. By contrast, socially responsible investing (SRI) is now an increasingly accepted part of the business landscape, with media coverage spiking when new funds are launched.

Perhaps the most interesting shift has been in the treatment of climate change. Early skepticism gradually softened as new evidence appeared. Stories have been switching to potential solutions: *USA Today* ran a cover story on 'Six Ways to Combat Global Warming'; *Time Magazine* spotlighted climate-friendly technology and business publications like *Fortune* are running features with titles like 'The Coming Hydrogen Economy'.

NGOs

Most NGOs are seen as forceful agents of change and as early whistle-blowers. After the 'Rio Spike', however, many were accused of being unduly alarmist. Recent coverage has been more balanced, with media interest in the role of NGOs in relation to the private sector and international economy.

Corporate reporting

Coverage of voluntary reporting has been low, although the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) has won increasing attention in recent years. Notable corporate reporters in the US include Baxter, Bristol-Myers Squibb, The Dow Chemical Company, Ford Motor Company, General Motors, IBM, Interface, Procter & Gamble and Sunoco. But media coverage has often been more critical than in the EU — as illustrated in the early media response to Ford's first sustainability report. After a week or so, however, the coverage flipped to a much more positive tone.

The US is behind the curve in terms of corporate triple bottom line reporting in the media sector. On the media front, for example Viacom is a conspicuous laggard (page 29).

United States

The US is home to the world's biggest and most influential media groups. It — and many of them — have been SD skeptics since Rio.

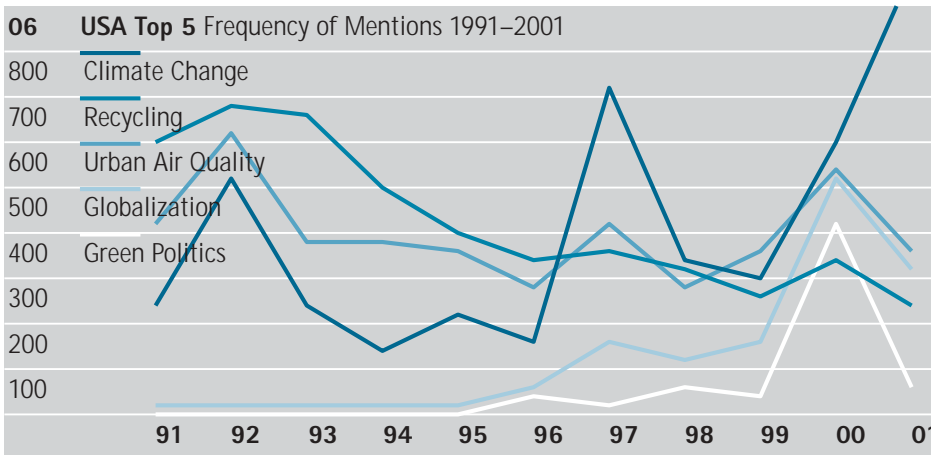
¹⁸ In the US, we surveyed CNN and the following print media: *Business Week*, *Forbes*, *Foreign Affairs*, *Fortune*, *Harper's*, *Harvard Business Review*, *The International Herald Tribune*, *Nature*, *The New York Times*, *Science*, *Time Magazine*, *USA Today* and *The Wall Street Journal*. Further details are available at www.sustainability.com/media.

¹⁹ One indicator of the IHT's interest, the World Business Council for Sustainable Development sponsored *International Herald Tribune* supplements published in 2001.

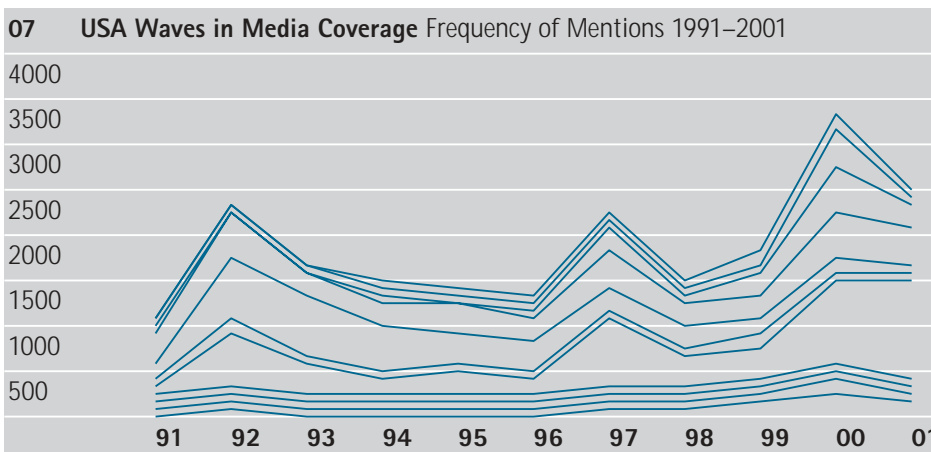


'CSR was seen as little more than hot air'

www.CNN.com



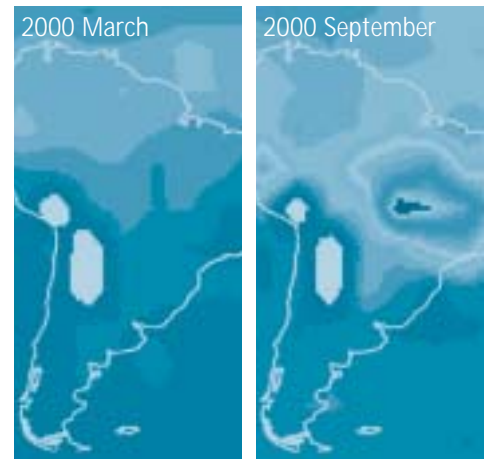
© Ketchum/SustainAbility 2002



© Ketchum/SustainAbility 2002



Amazon River © Mark Edwards / Still Pictures



Carbon monoxide from biomass burning

The region is not without its ecological and social problems, but there have been some extraordinary gaps in terms of the issues covered.²⁰ For example, there was no coverage at all of sustainable forestry issues in the media scanned. The nature and scale of reporting of CSR and SD issues varies considerably across the region, but new specialty areas like environmental reporting and sustainable development are evolving in some countries. Globalization, however, has been the 800-pound gorilla as far as media issues are concerned.

Peaks and troughs

The data here started later, in 1996. They show a huge leap through the period 1997-2000. Latin America, it is clear, has seen cycles of coverage very much as the other regions have done. Although outside the survey period, 1992 was a watershed for the region, with the Earth Summit held in Rio de Janeiro that year. But, although the nature and scale of coverage varies widely across Latin America, it has generally been at much lower levels than in the European Union or US.

Issues

In the wake of the Earth Summit, there has been a mixture of positive and negative coverage. On the positive side, corporations such as American Express, Coca-Cola, PepsiCo, Procter & Gamble, Texaco, Visa and Warner Lambert have been praised for their CSR programs. On the negative side, pollution, toxic waste discharges and similar issues have been covered in such publications as *Cambio, El Norte, El Pais, La Jornada, Mercurio, Proceso, Quehacer Político, Universal y Reforma* and *Uno más Uno*, and the radio station *Inford*.

The Movimiento Zapatista and the South Mexican Guerilla Movement spurred coverage of a range of CSR-related issues, with corporations such as Novartis, Roche and Upjohn the subject of a good deal of criticism in the media.

Since the 'Battle of Seattle' in 1999, there has also been a rise in 'globalphobia'. Indeed, ex-President Zedillo of Mexico coined two words at a recent World Economic Forum Davos session: 'globalphiliacs' and 'globalphobics', to describe those for and against globalization. At least in Mexico, the media have used such terms frequently.

But the arrival of President Fox in office coincided with a falling off in CSR coverage in Mexico, despite the fact that he has been criticized for his corporate agenda (he previously worked for Coca-Cola).

NGOs

Coverage of NGOs built rapidly through the period 1995-1999. The groups most often covered in the media scanned were Amnesty, Greenpeace and Human Rights Watch, all three showing a peak of coverage in the late 1990s.

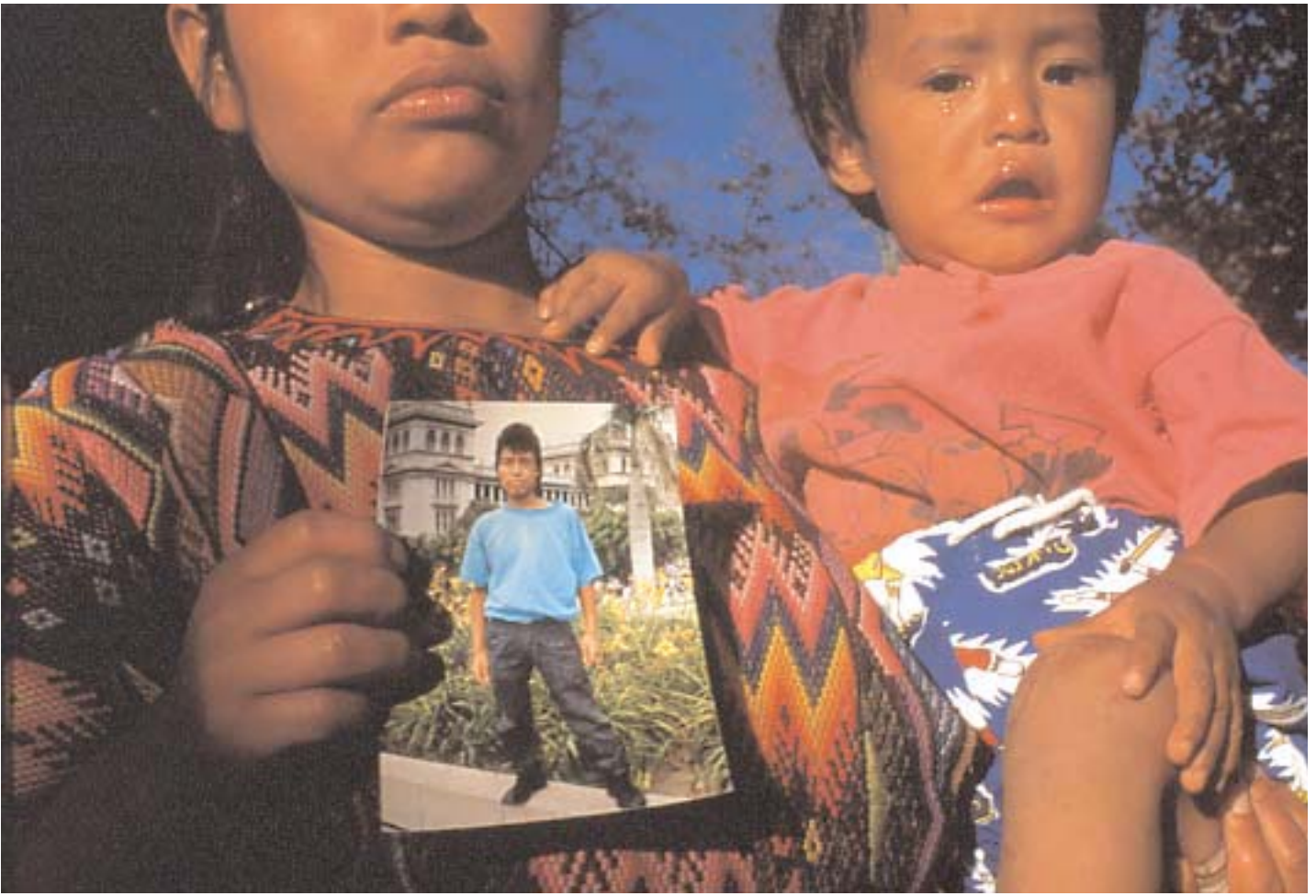
Corporate reporting

Corporate environmental and sustainability reporters are still a rare breed in the region, with the rare exceptions including Aracruz Cellulose (Brazil), Bahia Sul Cellulose Brazil, Codelco (Chine), Companhia Vale do Rio Doce Brazil, Ecopetrol (Colombia), Electrobras (Brazil), GrupoNuevo (Costa Rica), PDVSA Venezuela, Pecom Energia (Argentina) and Petrobras Distribuidora (Brazil). To date, Latin America is not even on the map when it comes to media sector corporate triple bottom line reporting.

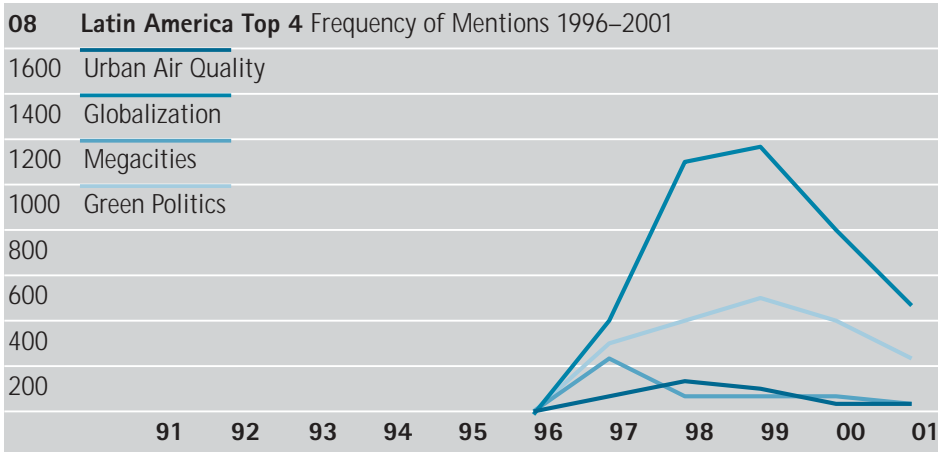
Latin America

CSR and SD are poorly covered. But political issues around the rising influence of US corporations south of the border are closely monitored.

²⁰ In Latin America, we scanned media which covered the region as a whole: *Gazeta Mercantil Latino Americana* (1996-2001) and *Servicio Universal de Noticias* (from February 1997). We also looked at separate media in Argentina and Mexico: *Ambito Financiero* (Argentina, 1997-1999), *El Cronista* (Argentina, from May 1998), *Expansión* (Mexico, 1996-1998) and *La Voz del Interior* (Argentina, June 1998-June 1999). Further details at www.sustainability.com/media.

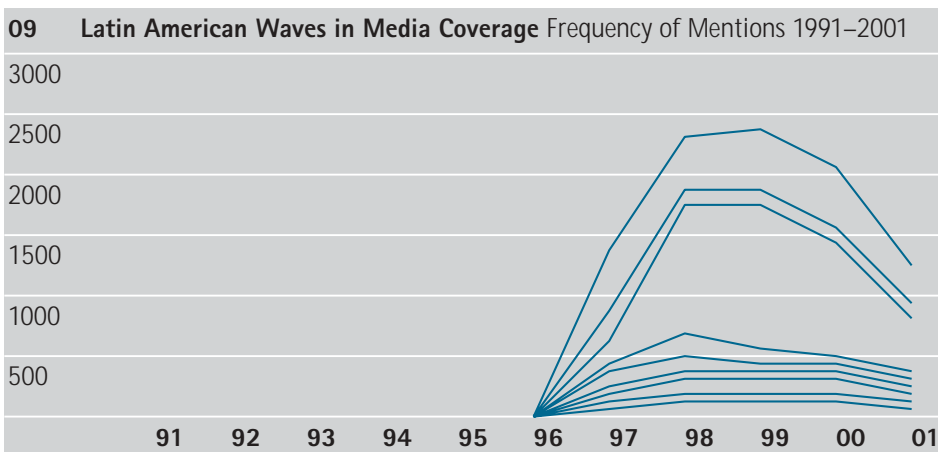


Family looking for missing father, Sacatapequez, Guatemala © Nigel Dickinson / Still Pictures



'There has been a rise of globalphobia.'

© Ketchum/SustainAbility 2002



© Ketchum/SustainAbility 2002

'There is increasing discussion and, unfortunately, often much lip service paid to the issue of sustainability and, in particular, to sustainable development,' argued one recent opinion piece in *The South China Morning Post*.²¹ The pattern of SD coverage in the Asian media has followed other world regions, albeit at a lower level.²² In some years the media we scanned published not a single article on the selected issues. That said, coverage of such issues as climate change, child labor and social investing has risen recently.

Peaks and troughs

Asian media showed the standard 'Rio spike' in 1992, with a surge in coverage. For the most part, the articles were neutral in tone. Coverage then gradually built as global sustainability issues heated up elsewhere — and globalization became an increasingly significant business and political issue. 1999 and 2000 saw another spike, as the anti-globalization movement got into its stride. Through these ups and downs, there has been a fairly steady increase in coverage of a number of the issues selected.

Issues

Globalization has gradually won increased coverage, with especially high rates in the past three years. There was a sense that many of the issues were being raised elsewhere, with Asian business and political leaders then having to respond. So, for example, the concepts of corporate citizenship and CSR showed extremely low coverage in the Asian media, reinforcing the notion that CSR is not yet widely embraced as a management concept.

However, there has been growing coverage in Hong Kong and some other south-east Asian countries of the way in which both local and multinational corporations are contributing to social inequality, for example by cutting staff even when making substantial profits.

Asia

Our Asian scan was limited. But the 'Rio Effect' was also marked here, with coverage of CSR and SD issues generally reflecting concern about global market implications, rather than home-grown concerns.

Recycling received heavy coverage through the decade, although much of the coverage focused on the US (e.g. recycling initiatives or, later, the dumping of US waste in China). More recently, the focus has switched to Asian recycling. Strikingly, there has been very little coverage of sustainable forestry, with only three articles identified across the entire study period. Child labor attracted much more coverage, particularly from 1996, largely because media coverage elsewhere focused on alleged exploitation of Asian workers by US multinationals and their contractors.

Climate change was covered around 1992, but coverage quickly turned negative, or at least critical. This view has mellowed in recent years, however. There has been much coverage of US failures to support the Kyoto Protocol and other Rio commitments. The GM foods issue erupted in 1999, with coverage carrying through into 2001. The focus of articles included: a protest outside a Nestlé dairy foods factory; a Philippines experiment to create GM 'golden rice'; and a Hong Kong proposal to require labelling for GM goods.

NGOs

Large, international NGOs (e.g. Amnesty, Greenpeace, Human Rights Watch, Oxfam) have tended to win the lion's share of coverage in the media reviewed, reflecting the growing interest in human rights, child labor and some aspects of the environment. Groups such as Corporate Watch, Global Exchange and Transparency International seem to be less well known. This may change when they target Asian companies. Generally, NGOs are seen as credible, with most stories rated 'positive.' Moving into 2000, there are signs of emerging environmental movements in India and China. In the latter, for example, Beijing-based Global Village has been increasingly active in recent years — and the pressures will almost certainly intensify as China prepares for the 2008 Olympics.



Central Jakarta © Chris Stowers / Panos

Corporate reporting

Asian companies have been grudging reporters, at best. Strikingly, there was no coverage at all of this theme over the 11 years. But as the reporting trend built in export markets in the EU and North America, a handful of Asian companies began to publish environmental reports. A significant proportion focused on performance against the ISO14001 environmental management standard, rather than embracing wider SD goals.

Notable corporate reporters have included BSES (India), Excel Industries (India), Golden Hope Plantations (Malaysia), Matsushita Electronics Group (Japan), Petronas (Malaysia), The Siam Cement Public Company (Thailand), Sony (Japan), Taiwan Cement Corporation (Taiwan), TEPCO (Japan), Toyota (Japan) and TSMC (Taiwan).

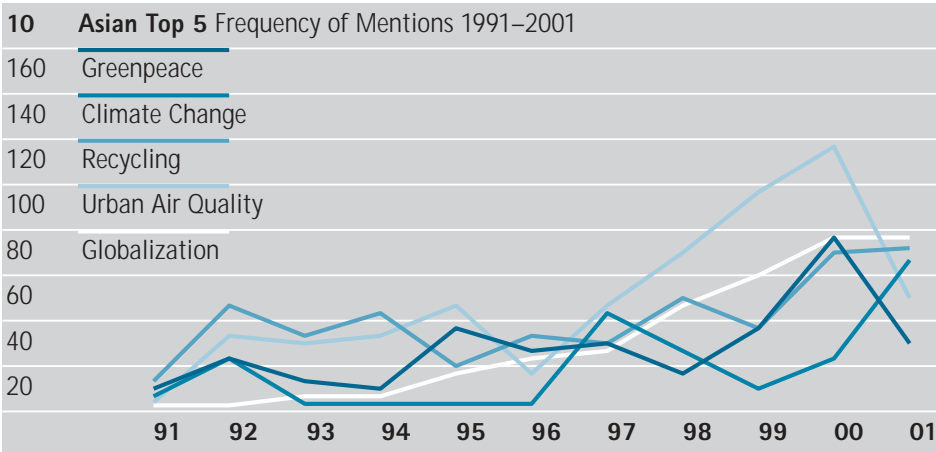
Asia is also lagging when it comes to media sector corporate triple bottom line reporting. Sony, which is still more of a manufacturing company than it is a media company, is one strong reporter. Widen the search to Australia, however, and News Corp comes into the frame as a conspicuous laggard (page 29).

²¹ In Asia, we scanned *The Asia Wall Street Journal* and, from 1992, *The South China Morning Post*. Further details available at www.sustainability.com/media.

²² Note, however, that the analysis is based on just two publications.

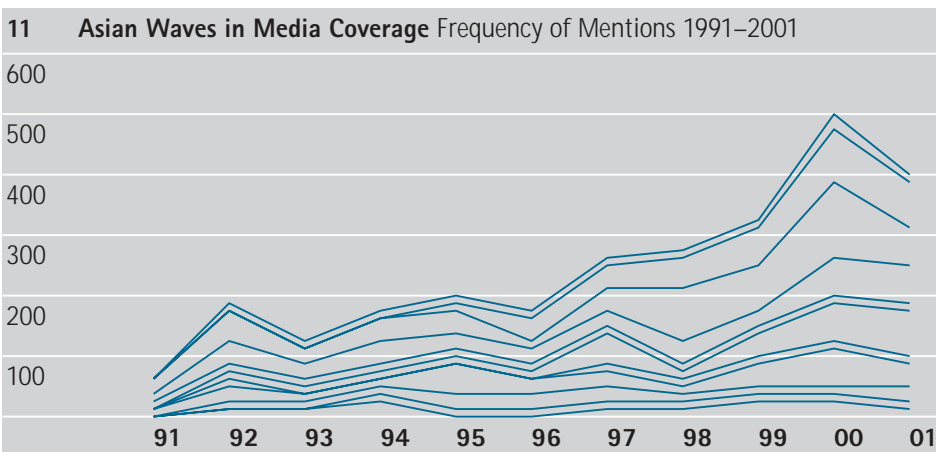


Gujarat, India © Harmut Schwartzbach / Still Pictures



© Ketchum/SustainAbility 2002

'There is much lip service paid to sustainability.'



© Ketchum/SustainAbility 2002



Haiti © Mark French / Panos Pictures

Big Issues

The big media story of recent years was globalization: more precisely anti-globalization. Seattle, Washington, London, Prague, Genoa, Gothenburg: the list of high-profile protests — and often pitched battles — grew steadily, with media interest growing as the casualties and fatalities mounted.

EU coverage of globalization built strongly through the decade 1991-2001 (Figure 12), as did Asian coverage, albeit from a lower base. Latin American coverage peaked in 1998-1999, while US coverage also fell back after 2000. But then, late in 2001 the impacts and implications of globalization were back with a vengeance, following the September 11 attacks. The impact on the globalization debate was already evident at the WTO session in Dohar late in 2001, where the less-developed countries found they had a significantly bigger voice.

For better or worse, as *Fortune* put it, 'After Sept. 11, one thing has become painfully clear. We all live in one world.'²³ The key question, as Nobel Prize winner Professor Joseph E. Stiglitz put it, is whether globalization can mean more than the fight against evil; whether, in fact, it can also mean a fight for good.²⁴

Once chief economist at the World Bank and Chair of the Council of Economic Advisors under President Clinton, Stiglitz is clear on the challenge. 'Just as there is an alliance against terrorism,' he says, 'There needs to be an alliance against global poverty and an alliance for a global environment.'

'After September 11,
one thing has become
painfully clear. We all
live in one world.'

But it is a sad commentary on the dynamics of our CNN World that it needs a 'Twin Towers' disaster to get these issues onto the agenda. Indeed, as we will see, media coverage of some of these issues has been erratic at best. Globalization makes such problems worse. Indeed, Naomi Klein notes that some editors and journalists have had to treat entire countries as 'tiptoe zones' as media barons tried to globalize their holdings.²⁵

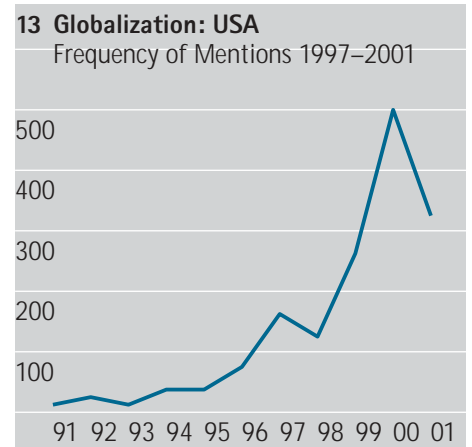
The commercial risks to media groups were underscored by what happened when Disney insisted on releasing Martin Scorsese's film *Kundun*, about Tibet's Dalai Lama. Beijing banned all Disney films, for two years. Expect more such controversies.

In this section, we look at two environmental issues that have helped shape the globalization agenda (ozone depletion on page 18 and climate change on page 19), two issues that have helped link the environmental and health agendas (endocrine disruptors on page 20 and GM foods on page 21), and two indicators of the growing business interest in the social agendas (corporate social responsibility on page 22 and socially responsible investment on page 23).

Because Europe has emerged as something of an incubator for CSR and SD issues in the last decade, we focus each time on EU media coverage in the main diagram, then compare coverage in other regions. Then, on page 24, we focus on three of the NGOs that have helped drive these powerful agendas: Global Exchange, Greenpeace and Transparency International.



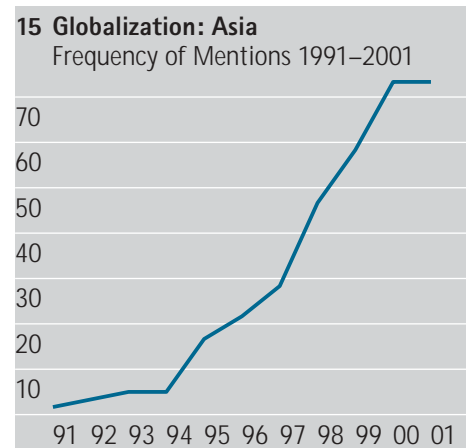
© Ketchum/SustainAbility 2002



© Ketchum/SustainAbility 2002



© Ketchum/SustainAbility 2002



© Ketchum/SustainAbility 2002



Genoa, Italy © Julio Etchart / Still Pictures

²³ David Kirkpatrick, 'One World', *Fortune*, November 26, 2001.

²⁴ Joseph E. Stiglitz, 'You have to walk the talk', *Fortune*, November 26, 2001.

²⁵ Naomi Klein, *No Logo*, Flamingo, 2000.

Ozone Depletion

Few TV images have had as great an impact on public opinion as the Antarctic ozone hole. Its discovery in 1985 triggered a series of campaigns to control ozone-depleting substances, particularly chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs). These chemicals had been widely used in refrigerators, air-conditioning equipment, fire-fighting systems, and in a wide range of other applications, including the manufacture of some drugs and the foaming of plastics such as polyurethane.

The ozone hole — and particularly the link with skin cancer — woke many people up to the existence of a number of global environmental risks. It also had the great advantage — at least as far as the media were concerned — that it was huge and growing. By 2000, the hole covered 11 million square miles, three times the size of the United States.²⁶ By then, however, the news was reasonably hopeful: the hole in the ozone layer, we were told, would start to shrink in ten years, and heal completely within 50.²⁷

There were several peaks in media coverage of ozone depletion. The first was when scientists Rowland and Molina warned that there was a risk in the early 1970s, a second when the Antarctic ozone hole was discovered in 1985 and the anti-CFC campaigns built up a head of steam through the late 1980s, another when the 1987 Montreal Protocol was developed to shift the world economy away from CFCs and other ozone-depleting substances, and then again — five years on from the Montreal agreement — when progress was reviewed at the Earth Summit agenda in 1992.

'Anyone relying on the mainstream media would assume that the ozone hole story was now a matter for the history books.'

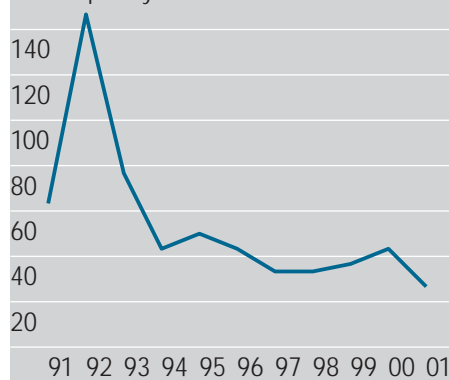


© NASA

Since 1992, however, the level of media interest and coverage has fallen away. Nor did we hear that much about the gargantuan task of shifting the world economy away from ozone depleting substances. The extraordinary rate of progress is shown by the fact that the EU cut its use of CFCs from 300,000 tonnes in 1986 to just 4,300 in 1998, while Japan cut its usage from 118,000 tonnes to zero. Even the roaring black economy in illegal CFCs, which meets the needs of those still using obsolete equipment, failed to get much coverage.

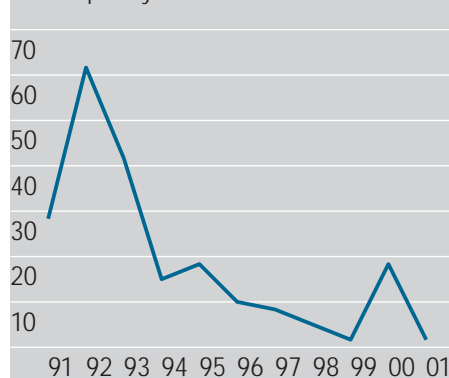
The EU results show a strong spike of coverage in 1992, as do the US results, albeit at a slightly lower level. The Latin American and Asian results (not shown) reveal much lower levels of coverage throughout the period. So even though the problem has not gone away, anyone relying on the mainstream media would assume that the ozone hole story was now a matter for the history books.

16 Ozone Depletion: Europe
Frequency of Mentions 1991–2001



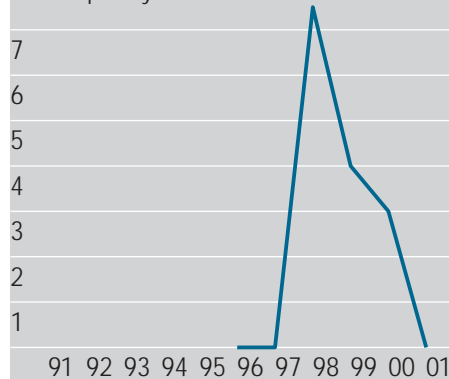
© Ketchum/SustainAbility 2002

17 Ozone Depletion: USA
Frequency of Mentions 1991–2001



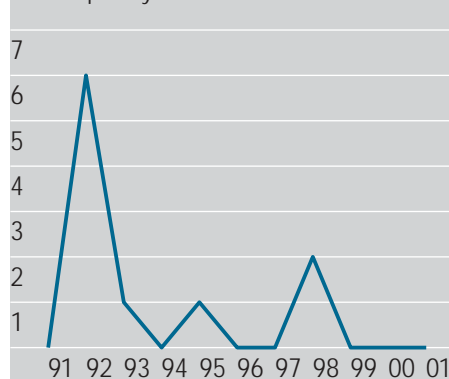
© Ketchum/SustainAbility 2002

18 Ozone Depletion: Latin America
Frequency of Mentions 1996–2001



© Ketchum/SustainAbility 2002

19 Ozone Depletion: Asia
Frequency of Mentions 1991–2001



© Ketchum/SustainAbility 2002

Globalization Issues

Two big atmospheric agendas forced unparalleled global co-operation during the last decade: stratospheric ozone depletion and global climate change.

Climate Change

As media interest in ozone depletion fell through the 1990s, interest in climate change grew, particularly between 1999 and 2001. But the media had a problem: if the science of ozone depletion was complex, that related to climate change was even more so. Worse, there were even greater disagreements between scientists on whether or not this was a real issue — and, if so, what the implications might be.

One result was that editors and journalists who wanted one had a perfect alibi for ignoring the whole subject. As the decade progressed, however, the issues became harder to ignore. Skeptical media, including *Forbes* and *The Economist*, gradually began to devote more (positive) attention to the issues. When hurricanes and other environmental disasters and stresses were increasingly linked to climate change, the pressure on the media to report grew steadily.

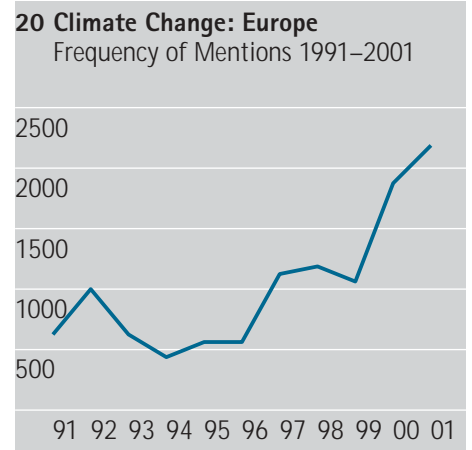
The impetus was further boosted by a series of major conferences, including events in Rio de Janeiro, Kyoto, The Hague, Berlin and Marrakech. Business editors became more interested when companies like BP, Shell and Ford resigned from the Global Climate Coalition (GCC), an aggressive lobbying group dedicated to undermining attempts to tackle climate change.

The agenda got another — unintended — boost when George W Bush took over as US President. His refusal to allow the US to sign the Kyoto Protocol meant that it was the only major nation left outside the agreement. And the heat was turned up with a major campaign designed to embarrass ExxonMobil into ending its attempts to undermine the climate change agenda.

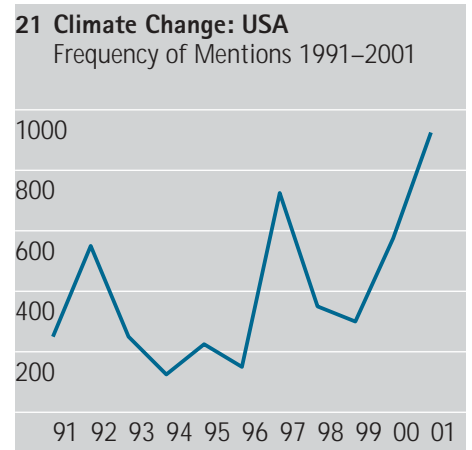
As the squabbles continued, the worrying facts continued to accumulate. When the Industrial Revolution began over 200 years ago, the concentration of carbon dioxide (CO₂) in the atmosphere was some 280 parts per million (ppm). By 1959, detailed measurements using modern equipment showed that the level had reached 316ppm, a 13% rise over two centuries. By 1998, it had reached 367ppm — a jump of 17% in just 39 years.

In parallel, global average temperatures have risen, from 13.99°C in 1969-1971 to 14.43°C in 1996-1998, a gain of 0.44 degrees. If CO₂ levels double during the 21st century, forecasters had warned that temperatures could rise by at least 1°C, and by perhaps as much as 4°C. Then, early in 2001, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) said that the warming could be nearly 6°C by 2100.²⁸ The Panel also confirmed that human activity is a key contributory factor.

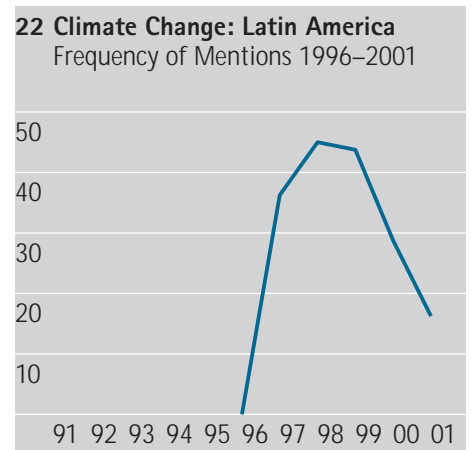
But the sustained urgency of the climate change agenda has not been reflected in the media. The trends in EU, US and Asian coverage show peaks in 1992, 1997 and around the millennium, whereas the Latin American coverage builds from 1997 to 1998, then falls away. On this basis, we can probably expect another peak through 2002 in the build-up to the World Summit on Sustainable Development.



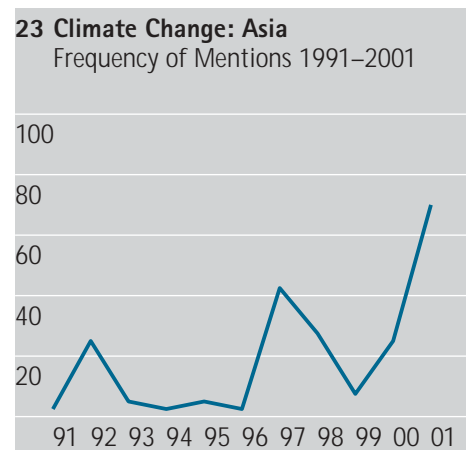
© Ketchum/SustainAbility 2002



© Ketchum/SustainAbility 2002



© Ketchum/SustainAbility 2002



© Ketchum/SustainAbility 2002



© NASA

'The heat was turned up with a major campaign designed to embarrass ExxonMobil.'

²⁶ Tim Radford, 'Hole in Antarctic ozone now three times size of US', *The Guardian*, September 9, 2000.

²⁷ Vanessa Houlder, 'Hole in ozone layer may close up within 50 years', *Financial Times*, December 4, 2000.

²⁸ Vanessa Houlder, 'Urgent warning on climate change', *Financial Times*, January 22, 2001.

Endocrine Disruptors

Every so often, a book sparks a revolution. Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* did it in the early 1960s — then, to a lesser degree, Theo Colborn and her colleagues did it again in 1996 with their book *Our Stolen Future*. This put endocrine modulators or disruptors (what the media soon dubbed 'gender benders') on the agenda, at least for a few years.

So what was the fuss about? The endocrine system, we learned, is a complex network of glands and hormones regulating many of the body's functions, including growth, development and maturation, as well as the way our organs operate. The endocrine glands — including the pituitary, thyroid, adrenal, thymus, pancreas, ovaries, and testes — release hormones into the bloodstream that help to control many critical life functions.

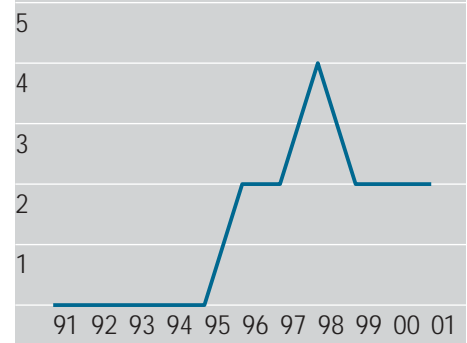
An endocrine disruptor is a synthetic chemical that when absorbed into the body either mimics or blocks hormones and disrupts the body's normal functions. Chemicals known to act as human endocrine disruptors include diethylstilbesterol (the drug DES), dioxin, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), dichloro diphenyl trichloroethane (DDT), and some other pesticides. Many chemicals, particularly pesticides and plasticizers, are suspected endocrine disruptors.

There is growing evidence that such substances are causing ecological and human health problems. Many plant and animal species are showing signs of ill health due to exposure to such chemicals. For example, fish in the Great Lakes, which are contaminated with PCBs and other industrial chemicals, show numerous reproductive problems, as well as abnormal swelling of the thyroid glands. Fish-eating birds in the Great Lakes area, such as eagles, terns, and gulls, have shown similar problems.

Because of the potentially serious consequences of human exposures, the US Congress spotlighted endocrine disruption in the Food Quality Protection Act and amended the Safe Drinking Water Act in 1996. The former mandated that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) should develop an endocrine disruptor screening program, whereas the latter authorized EPA to screen endocrine disruptors found in drinking water sources.

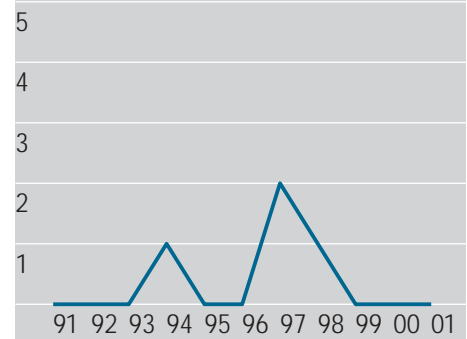
The coverage data suggest that this was very much a rich world issue. Media interest spiked in the period 1996–1998, but tended to drop off the radar screen fairly rapidly. US coverage was relatively low, but showed peaks in 1994 and again in 1997–1998, whereas EU coverage began in 1996 and then ran on at relatively low levels. Asia showed a single spike of coverage in 1997, while our Latin American search registered a complete blank.²⁹

24 Endocrine Disruptors: Europe
Frequency of Mentions 1991–2001



© Ketchum/SustainAbility 2002

25 Endocrine Disruptors: USA
Frequency of Mentions 1991–2001



© Ketchum/SustainAbility 2002



© Geoff Olson

Environmental Health Issues

Two issues which have bridged the ecological, biodiversity and human health agendas have focused on endocrine disruptors and — later — genetically modified foods.

'This was very much a rich world issue.'

GM Foods

Biotechnology has been on something of a roller-coaster for decades, spawning booms and crashes both in stock market valuations and media coverage. The media reaction to biotechnology — particularly to genetic engineering — has been very different in different world regions. The EU media, for example, have been much more skeptical than those in the US. And the biggest surge of concern in the EU came during 1999, as indicated in Figure 26.

Early introductions of GM foods were handled fairly intelligently by UK retail chains and supermarkets. Safeway and Sainsbury's both introduced GM tomato purée products, with clear labeling, extensive consumer information, a choice of GM and non-GM products, and cheaper prices for the GM products (which, because they contained less water, were cheaper to transport). But this careful work was blown out of the water by NGO campaigns directed at another company, the US chemicals-to-life-sciences giant Monsanto.

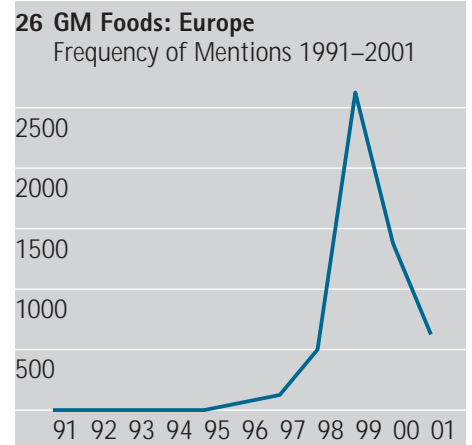
Monsanto had positioned GM foods as a major contribution to sustainable agriculture, with genetically engineered crop plants enabling farmers to use much lower volumes of toxic agrochemicals like insecticides. But concerns about the potential impact of novel genes on ecosystems and, more damagingly still, about the potential human health impacts led to a media storm, particularly in the UK. This is where the role of the tabloid press in raising public concern about what were soon dubbed 'Frankenfoods' was at its most striking.

Although the US media — and US consumers — have been less concerned about GM foods, it is far from certain that GM foods will win broad consumer acceptance across Europe and some of the more sensitive parts of Asia, like Japan. In the EU, by late 2001 no new GM crops had been approved for three years.³⁰

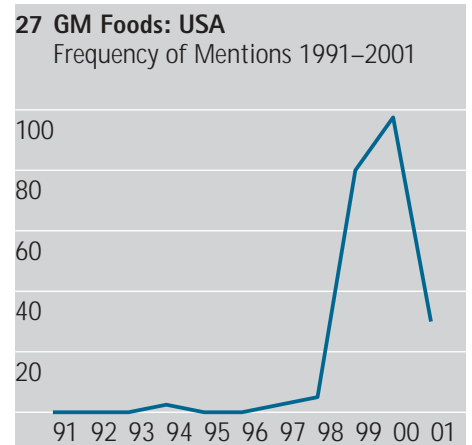
In work for the EU biotechnology industry, SustainAbility has suggested three possible scenarios. The first (*nuclear*) scenario hints at a world where GM technology starts well, but then hits insuperable barriers. The second (*antibiotic*) scenario points to a world where the early promise of GM products is delivered, but worrying side effects begin to undermine their utility. And the third (*microchip*) scenario suggests a world where GM products become so successful that they become indispensable, ubiquitous and, to all intents and purposes, invisible.

The media will play a crucial role in determining how consumers respond to these new technologies, although it is clear that interest has fallen away since the peak period. The US concerns ran at much lower levels, and trailed the EU controversies — peaking in 2000. Meanwhile, Latin America and Asia saw echo effects. In Latin America, the echo partly reflected local concerns about the implications of US and EU fears for Latin American food suppliers, while in Asia one focus of interest was on the EU-style concerns about GM foods that surfaced in Japan.

These issues have not gone away, however. They link too strongly to human health, to ethical concerns (e.g. human cloning, genetic privacy, even germ warfare weapons like anthrax) and to wider worries about globalizing capitalism to fall off the radar screen for long.



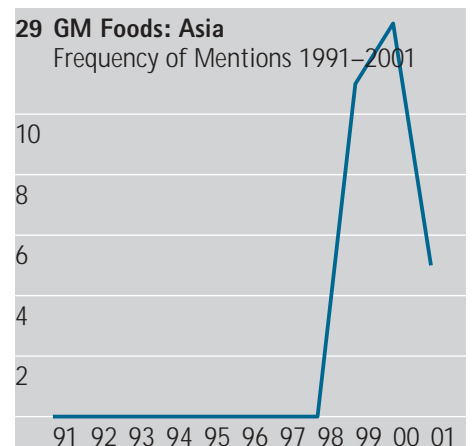
© Ketchum/SustainAbility 2002



© Ketchum/SustainAbility 2002



© Ketchum/SustainAbility 2002



© Ketchum/SustainAbility 2002

²⁹ A note of caution: there are so many descriptors for these substances that some of the results might have been different had we used different search terms.

³⁰ Michael Mann, Biotech groups despair at EU attitudes, *Financial Times*, November 10, 2001.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

The shareholder value revolution that swept the capitalist world in the 1990s inevitably triggered a reaction. The corporate social responsibility (CSR) movement has noted that many companies stressing shareholder returns have tended to downplay CSR priorities in relation to communities, employees, human rights and environmental issues, among others.

CSR advocates see themselves as redressing the balance. To buttress their case, they point out that: of the world's 100 largest economies, 50 are now corporations; the world's largest corporations employ only 0.05% of the world's population, but control 25% of the world's economic output; and recent EU research has shown that 58% of the general public believe that industry and commerce do not pay enough attention to their social responsibilities.³¹

A host of new organizations has evolved to develop and promote the new agenda. In addition to NGOs like Amnesty, Greenpeace and Transparency, there have also been growing numbers of business-led organizations, among them Business for Social Responsibility (BSR), Business in the Community (BitC), CSR Europe and the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD).

The media focus has either been on the thinking and initiatives of a handful of socially responsible entrepreneurs, among them Anita Roddick of The Body Shop International and Ben Cohen and Jerry Greenfield of Ben & Jerry's, or on the mishaps that have befallen a succession of major companies in this area.

Examples that spring to mind include Norsk Hydro (environmental contamination), Shell (marine ecology, human rights), Astra USA and Mitsubishi Motors (sexual harassment), Texaco (racial discrimination), Monsanto (GM foods), Nike (child labor) and ExxonMobil (climate change).

As the range of issues grew through the 1990s, we saw a new trend — with some of the companies listed above leading the charge into the brave new world of corporate environmental and sustainability reporting.³² The early media response was positive, but over time there was a decline in interest — unless a reporting company exposed something really controversial or an independent agency ranked and rated the latest reports. An example of the first trend was the media reaction to Shell's reporting of corruption issues and action, while examples of the second have included media coverage of international report benchmarking studies by the likes of the Institut für Ökologische Wirtschaftsforschung, KPMG and SustainAbility.

EU coverage was pretty intensive throughout the 1990s, with a steady underlying upward trend. In the US, by contrast, our search showed much lower levels of coverage of CSR or of its synonyms. The exception was a spike in 1996, linked to growing concern there about child labor issues and to the White House Conference on Corporate Citizenship (Figure 31). Latin America showed little interest while Asia, running at low levels of interest overall, showed an upward spike towards the end of the decade.

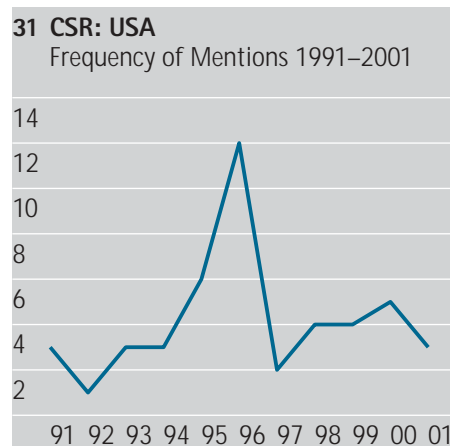
As far as the media companies themselves are concerned, there was a degree of skepticism. 'The conglomerates hold power — and will continue to do so as they benefit from consolidation,' predicts one media analyst. 'They all donate to charity — you know, give the minimum required amount. But they are not charities themselves. So CSR is not their primary concern.'

The Business End of SD

Editors and journalists still struggle to grasp the business implications of the triple bottom line agenda. But the SRI movement is helping to break the story on the financial pages.



© Ketchum/SustainAbility 2002



© Ketchum/SustainAbility 2002



© Ketchum/SustainAbility 2002



© Ketchum/SustainAbility 2002

Socially Responsible Investment (SRI)

Socially responsible investment is nothing new — some parts of the religious and NGO communities have been practicing it for decades.³³ What is new, however, is who is doing it and the scale on which it is being done. Fair or not, the entry of the Dow Jones Indexes group into the field with its joint venture with Sustainable Asset Management — the Dow Jones Sustainability Group — was seen as evidence that the SRI sector was maturing rapidly.

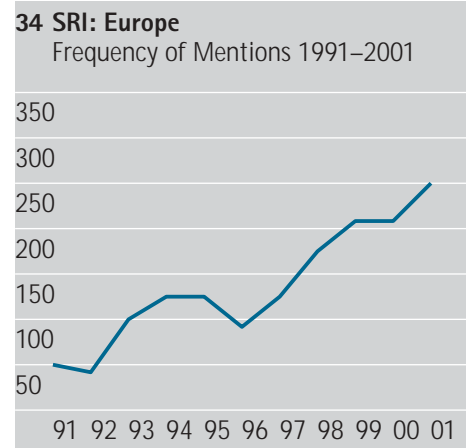
The sector, according to some estimates, is now worth over \$2 trillion in the US and over £25 billion in the UK. And the impacts of this activity are being felt well beyond the direct influence of these money flows. Screening methodologies that have been developed by SRI analysts are increasingly used by some mainstream analysts and even by leading corporations when undertaking due diligence audits ahead of mergers and acquisitions.

By the beginning of the 21st century, the US was the biggest SRI market. But other countries were also energetically moving into the area. According to ethical investment experts EIRIS, for example, there were more than 40 SRI funds in the UK, around 20 funds in Sweden, and at least 30 in the rest of Europe — including at least seven in Spain. Other countries have also been developing SRI sectors, among them Australia, Canada, Japan and South Africa.

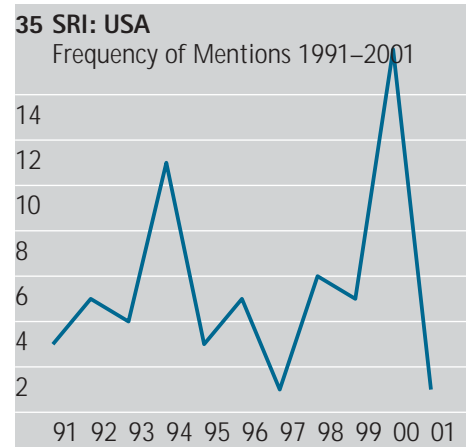
Mainstream players are now diving in, as illustrated by the FTSE4Good Index. In the process, the number of issues being researched has also been growing explosively. Originally covering just five or six issues — particularly relating to alcohol, gambling and armaments — the SRI agenda has expanded to embrace over 300 criteria.

Among the screening criteria being applied, the most common rules out tobacco, while a second tier focuses on traditional concerns and the environment, and a third tier covers such issues as human rights, labor relations, birth control and abortion, and animal welfare. In parallel, the more proactive funds are looking for top performers across the triple bottom line. And some are turning their attention to the media sector itself. For a selection of emerging criteria, see the panel on page 40.

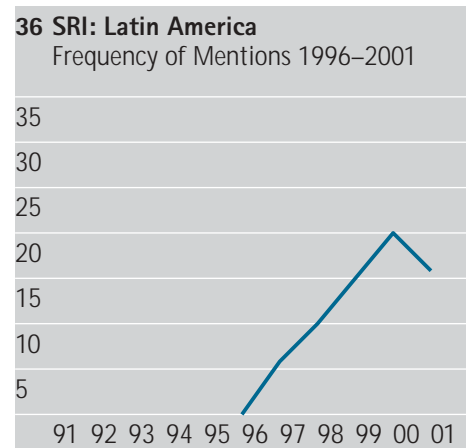
In terms of regional media coverage of SRI trends, the decade showed a strong upward trend in EU coverage, although certain countries — particularly the UK — tended to lead the charge. US levels of coverage tended to be lower, perhaps because the trend there started earlier. Latin American coverage showed growing interest. Asia has really woken up to the trend in the last couple of years, although the growth in number of Asian funds — and the activities of ASrIA, a leading SRI organization focusing on Asia (www.asria.org) — leads regional experts to predict a spike in interest over the next couple of years.



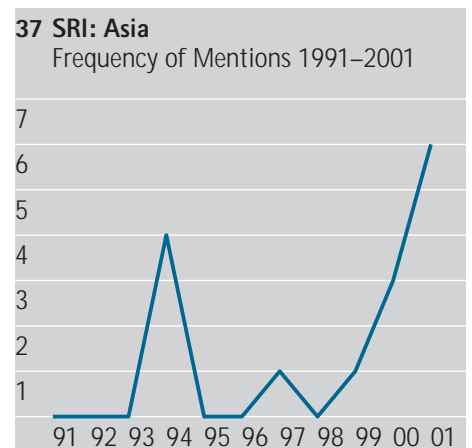
© Ketchum/SustainAbility 2002



© Ketchum/SustainAbility 2002



© Ketchum/SustainAbility 2002



© Ketchum/SustainAbility 2002



© Axel Springer Verlag

³¹ The Business Network for Corporate Social Responsibility, CSR Europe, Brussels, 2000.

³² For more information see *The Global Reporters*, SustainAbility for UNEP, 2000.

³³ SustainAbility for the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales, *A Responsible Investment? An Overview of the SRI Community*, 2000.

In a survey of over 1,300 American, Australian and European thought leaders PR firm Edelman found that low confidence in government gave NGOs a 'halo effect'.³⁴ Some 75% of those interviewed thought NGO influence had grown significantly in the past decade.

NGOs depend on the oxygen of publicity. They often skip the elite media, going straight for the popular press, TV and, increasingly, the web. Between 1996 and 2000, media coverage of the major NGOs nearly quadrupled. It's worth noting, however, that the ultimate targets are usually governments, which alone have the ultimate power to regulate and enforce.

Let's zoom in on the world of campaigning, but which NGOs to select? A group like WWF registered a steady background number of mentions, but often operates behind the scenes. So consider three prominent NGOs: Global Exchange, Greenpeace and Transparency International.

Global Exchange

Founded in 1988, early in the peak period of the second wave of environmental pressure, Global Exchange (www.globalexchange.org) is based in San Francisco. The group aims to boost US public understanding of human rights issues. In our survey, the group's strongest media showing was in the US, where coverage in the media we studied peaked in 2000.

One way Global Exchange tries to counter the worldviews of the main media groups is by offering 'Reality Tours'. Participants get the chance to 'meet with community leaders, visit environmentally sustainable agriculture projects, and learn about the international stories that never make it into the headlines.'

Greenpeace International

The only NGO with its own navy, Greenpeace (www.greenpeace.org) was founded in 1971, at the peak of the first wave of public concern (page 05). Based in Amsterdam, Greenpeace International co-ordinates national groups around the world.

The really interesting thing about the EU media coverage of Greenpeace is the spike in 1995 (Figure 38). The spike coincided with the group's success in spotlighting the proposed dumping of the Brent Spar oil installation in the Atlantic. Although Exxon was also involved, Greenpeace went for Shell — forcing a mid-course correction, with the Brent Spar towed back to shore for recycling.

Greenpeace has consistently demonstrated a highly sophisticated approach to the media. 'We saw it as a media war,' explained Robert Hunter, who chronicled the group's early evolution. 'We had studied Marshall McLuhan.'³⁵ He described the film packages that resulted as 'mind bombs, sailing across the electronic seas into the minds of the masses.'

Chris Rose, who led the charge against Shell as campaigns director of Greenpeace UK, has argued that the group has helped create a 'new politics' based not on the production and distribution of wealth 'but on the production and distribution of public attention.'

Transparency International

Sustainable development is impossible where corruption prevails. Headquartered in the UK and Germany, Transparency International (www.transparency.org) was founded in 1993. It has national chapters in nearly 80 countries. The group broke new ground with its *Global Corruption Report 2001*.³⁶

TI founder and chairman Dr Peter Eigen stresses the key role of the media in fighting corruption. 'This has only been possible as the media have shattered the taboo that tends to surround corruption,' he has said. 'Before a problem can be tackled it is essential that there is public recognition that it does indeed pose a problem and that society can no longer afford to ignore it.'

In fact, he argues, 'In many countries — most notably in Latin America — journalists have been at the forefront of our campaigns and have been the most fervent supporters of our cause. They have had to endure the fatal results of corruption, they have been the ones to often risk their lives in their efforts to uncover and expose the corrupt dealings of those in power. It is Latin America which — according to the international media-rights NGO Reporters sans Frontières — is the region in the world with the highest rate of killings of investigative journalists. And at the same time it is Latin America where the cradle of many of our National Chapters has stood in the offices of courageous editors or publishers.'³⁷

The Activists

Both in the EU and US, media coverage tends to portray NGOs as forceful agents of change.

³⁴ Richard Edelman, *The Relationship Among NGOs, Government, Media and Corporate Sector*, Harvard Club of New York, January 12, 2001.

³⁵ Robert Hunter, *The Greenpeace Chronicle*, Picador, 1980. For McLuhan background, see reference 11.

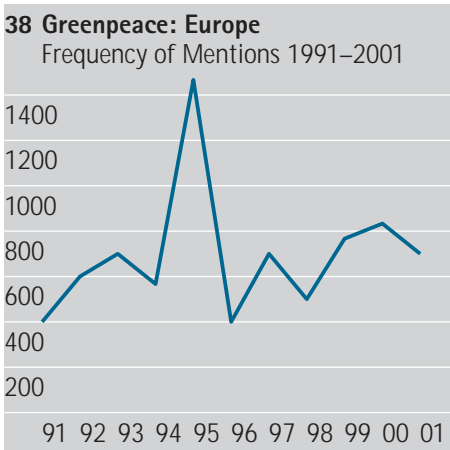
³⁶ Transparency International, *Global Corruption Report*, 2001.

³⁷ Dr Peter Eigen, 'The media and the fight against corruption', speech to CELAP Conference, San Juan, Puerto Rico, July 8, 1999.



Water cannon dramatizes Greenpeace's second attempt to board the Brent Spar © Greenpeace / Sims

'NGOs depend on the oxygen of publicity'



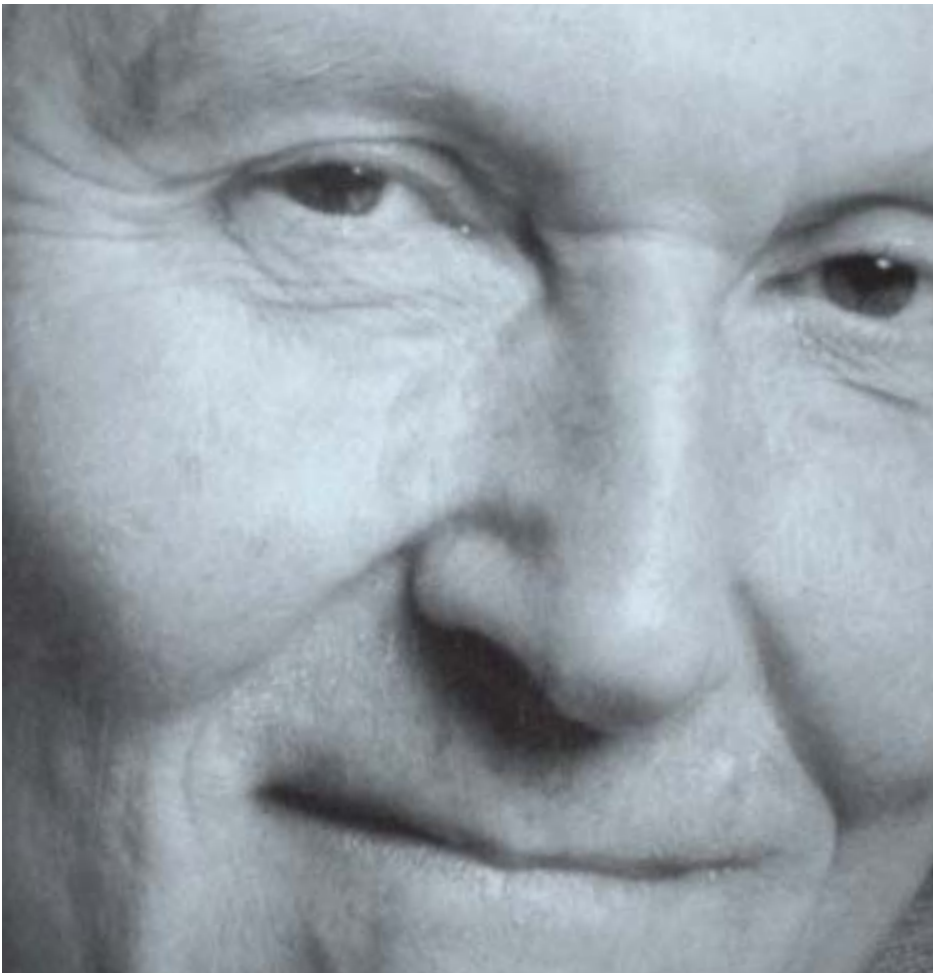
© Ketchum/SustainAbility 2002



© Ketchum/SustainAbility 2002



© Ketchum/SustainAbility 2002



Sumner Redstone, Chairman and CEO, Viacom

'About six players
now own virtually
everything.'

Media Moguls

Who owns the major media? Does it really matter in terms of the CSR and SD agendas? And who holds media groups themselves to account?

Media corporations are often difficult to 'read.' Some have high profile owners or CEOs, which (whether or not we like them) helps the outside world get a grip, but many do not. That said, it's somewhat easier these days to find out who the owners of the major groups are, at least in the US. Go to www.promo.org, for example, and you find fascinating 'ownership maps' covering such US media giants as AOL Time Warner, General Electric, News Corporation, Viacom and The Walt Disney Company.³⁸

But look around the world and you will find huge gaps in such maps. These need filling. Viewed in the right light, meanwhile, Promo's ownership maps serve as charts of potential media influence and power.

To date, not surprisingly, the spotlight has tended to focus on a few mega-moguls. In 2001, for example, the *Vanity Fair* rankings of the world's Top 50 media giants again named AOL chairman Steve Case as the most powerful man of the so-called 'New Establishment.'³⁹ Microsoft's Bill Gates came second, Viacom's Sumner Redstone third and Rupert Murdoch of News Corp fourth.

In terms of new blood, the highest profile new entrant was Jean-Pierre Messier, chairman of newly created Vivendi Universal, at number 7. The highest placed woman appeared at number 30: Marjorie Scardino, CEO of Pearson, which among other things owns *The Financial Times*.

'About six players now own virtually everything, all aspects of the media experience,' says Deutsche Bank media sector analyst Drew Marcus. 'AOL Time Warner, Newscorp, Disney, Viacom, Vivendi, Bertelsmann — and Sony, which also brings in the equipment angle.' Few of them have yet switched on to the wider accountability and reporting agendas (Figure 41).

Does ownership matter?

Yes — particularly if it is concentrated. As Robert Pitofsky, chair of the US Federal Trade Commission put it, 'If someone monopolizes the cosmetics field, they're going to take money out of consumers' pockets, but the implications for democratic values are zero. On the other hand, if they monopolize books, you're talking about implications that go way beyond what the wholesale price of books may be.'⁴⁰

Some of the most powerful works of western drama underscore the point. Recall Orson Welles' 1941 film *Citizen Kane*. One reason the film struck a chord was that it drew startling, daring parallels between Kane and real-world media magnate William Randolph Hearst, with Kane's *Inquirer* echoing Hearst's *Examiner*. So great was Hearst's notoriety that he was even alleged to have started the Spanish-American War of 1898 to boost sales of his newspapers.

Whatever the truth, and while we may be fascinated by such people, most people have little reason to trust media moguls. In fact, the twentieth century gave us many reasons to mistrust media. At the time of *Citizen Kane*'s launch, for example, Nazi Germany's propagandameister Joseph Goebbels was showing the world what can happen when mass communication media come under inhumane, 'Big Brother' control.

As early as 1933, Goebbels — noting that Napoleon once described the press 'as the seventh great power' — dubbed radio the 'eighth great power.'⁴¹ And just as Goebbels scrambled to monopolize this new power, so post-war media barons (albeit for different reasons) would later scramble to harness the potential power, commercial and political, of new media like TV and the internet.

The impact of such power clearly depends on who uses it — and how. If a Goebbels scapegoats the Jews, or a Hearst the Spanish, the social and human rights implications can be appalling. More recent examples of the abuse of media have come from Rwanda and Bosnia. At a much lower level of criminality, the corrupt activities of media barons like Robert Maxwell have also helped to undermine public confidence in the media in particular countries.

If, on the other hand, a Joseph Pulitzer (eventually) takes a more principled line or a Ted Turner switches some of the resources of a CNN to covering environmental or sustainability themes, the implications can be very different. CNN was unusual in featuring a significant amount of environmental programming through the 1990s. In 2000, after Turner gave \$1 billion to the United Nations, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan called him a 'world citizen extraordinaire,' which was nicer than some things Turner had been called in his turbulent career.

All the President's Media

Given the political and emotional power of the media, issues of scale are critical. Some media groups may opt to stay small, but for most the drive to scale is irresistible. Listen to Sumner Redstone of Viacom: 'The crossover benefits among Viacom divisions are almost endless,' he says, and continues:

'We can take the number-one children's brand in the television world, Nickelodeon, and bring our viewers to the Paramount movie studio, supported and promoted by every other division in our company. We can show those movies on thousands of screens around the world, including our own. We can turn our books into movies, our movies into television shows, and we can sell, air and syndicate those television shows on our stations as well as others.'

What if Rupert Murdoch owned the BBC?

The BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation) was often mentioned in our media and other interviews as one of the international media organizations committed to the environmental and SD agendas. So we asked Richard Sambrook, BBC Director of News, where this commitment comes from.

'The BBC takes issues of sustainable development seriously in terms of news and current affairs coverage for several reasons,' he replied. 'It is a cross-party political issue with long term resonance and importance. It is of significant interest to large parts of our audience. It is in keeping with the serious news agenda which the BBC as a public service broadcaster tries to preserve. And it is a way of thinking about the world and many other areas of specialist interest (business, economics, health, education, international affairs) which provides illuminating angles for our programme teams to develop.'

To ensure BBC people understood the SD agenda, Sambrook notes, the Corporation 'started a series of seminars for senior program makers where a number of experts in areas of sustainability would meet off site for two days to explore how news could and should better reflect this agenda. I believe over time this has made a difference.'

So we asked the obvious next question. Would the BBC be so interested if it were to find itself under the ownership of, say, Rupert Murdoch? 'I have no idea,' Sambrook mused, 'but I suspect a commercial news organisation would not make that kind of investment into the editorial awareness of its staff without a clear measurable benefit in return.'

³⁸ Founded in 1996, the Project on Media Ownership (PROMO) is a non-profit project dedicated to uncovering who owns what in the culture industries, and to trying to get a handle on the impacts — economic, civic, social, aesthetic and political — of increasingly concentrated ownership.

³⁹ <http://media.guardian.co.uk/broadcast/story/0,7493,546881,00.html>

⁴⁰ *The International Herald Tribune*, November 30, 2000.

⁴¹ Joseph Goebbels, 'The Radio as the Eighth Great Power', August 18, 1933, see www.calvin.edu/academic/cas/gpa/goeb56.htm.

⁴² Sumner Redstone with Peter Knobler, *A Passion to Win*, Simon & Schuster, 2001.

⁴³ James Blitz, 'A shaky start for Berlusconi', *Financial Times*, October 2, 2001.

⁴⁴ *Bestriding the World: Global Media Giants*, <http://mediachannel.org/ownership/granville/shtml>

⁴⁵ Neil Chenoweth, *Virtual Murdoch: Reality Wars on the Information Highway*, Secker & Warburg, 2001.

⁴⁶ Sumner Redstone with Peter Knobler, op. cit.

⁴⁷ One of the most dramatic examples of this trend was the few-holds-barred battle between William Randolph Hearst and Joseph Pulitzer.

⁴⁸ oekom research AG, *Media: A Corporate Responsibility Survey of 25 Companies from the Industry*, September 2001.

Ratings run from highest, A to lowest, D.

⁴⁹ Sustainability for UNEP, *The Global Reporters*, 2001.

We can publish the music on the sound tracks and advertise and merchandise it all over the globe. We can cross-sell across the MTV Network, CBS, Infinity; we can cross-promote, as MTV did for Survivor on CBS; we can be the best place for advertisers since we have the best platforms in outdoor advertising, radio, cable and television.⁴² Well, take that for the sales pitch that it undoubtedly was, but recognize, too, that as scale builds, so too does economic and political influence. And that introduces potential conflicts of interest.

Following the violent response of the country's paramilitary carabinieri to the anti-G8 protests in Genoa, Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi promised that there would be 'no cover-up of the truth.' Few believed him. Again, whatever the facts, the scale of Berlusconi's potential conflicts of interest was extraordinary: he owned Italy's three main private television stations and its largest publishing house.⁴³

On the other hand, ownership in the right hands can work wonders. If any one owner towered above other media owners in terms of corporate citizenship and wider values it was the late Katharine Graham of *The Washington Post*.

During the Pentagon Papers and Watergate scandals, she stood up to the Nixon Presidency and broke one of the major political stories of the century. But, despite such occasional upsides, the political implications of media ownership are critical and deserve serious attention. Some may feel that the lampooning of UK Prime Minister Tony Blair as a 'stooge' of News Corporation Chairman and CEO Rupert Murdoch (see below, right) was unduly harsh, but others counter-argue that the political clout of media moguls is as great as it ever was — and should be dramatized.

Who holds moguls to account?

In a CNN discussion on the future of media, days before the AOL Time Warner merger, the merged company's CEO predicted that the media would become so powerful that companies could be more powerful than governments.⁴⁴ His solution? He argued that 'We're going to need to have corporations redefined as instruments of public service.' Well, fine, but who will make this happen? The media world is not short of high-energy, hard-charging entrepreneurs and executives, many more than willing to throw their political weight around. Their style infects their companies. 'News Corporation has one of the most aggressive corporate cultures in the world,' Neil Chenoweth explains.⁴⁵

Transparency may be one side effect of some of the things Murdoch does, but he is not the most noted modern champion of corporate transparency (see Figure 41). Think of his publishing company dropping a sensitive book on China to ease News Corp's path into the world's most populous market.

Interestingly, an occasional media baron owns up to at least some imperfections. 'All of us at Viacom are not saints — far from it,' says Sumner Redstone, 'But I am surrounded by people who believe that they have an obligation beyond the bottom line, who know where the bottom line ends and social responsibility begins.'⁴⁶ He notes that his various media have covered such issues as drug abuse, racism and slavery.

Many journalists we interviewed noted that market pressures too often spur a 'race to the bottom,' driving owners, editors and journalists to probe the lower limits of acceptable practice.⁴⁷ Often, the process feeds the 'infotainment' frenzy that sedates audiences when they should be alert and concerned. 'Media industry concentration leads to the dumbing down of news, playing to the lowest common denominator,' as media researcher Leyla Alyanak puts it.



Rupert Murdoch, Chairman and CEO, News Corporation



© www.CartoonStock.com

41 Media groups CSR and SD status			
<p>AOL Time Warner USA www.aoltime warner.com</p>	<p>Middle of the road No TBL report. On website, AOL Time Warner Foundation and Corporate Citizenship page contains a brief social responsibility statement. Time Warner given C- rating for overall corporate responsibility in 2001 oekom research AG survey.⁴⁸</p>	<p>Axel Springer Verlag DE www.asv.de</p>	<p>Leader Comprehensive sustainability information available on website, linked from homepage. Also produces environmental report. Ranked equal 31st among Top 50 reporters in 2000 <i>Global Reporters</i> benchmark survey.⁴⁹ Scored B- by oekom research AG.</p>
<p>BBC UK www.bbc.co.uk</p>	<p>Middle of the road Worth watching. Corporation's <i>Environment Matters Report</i> 2001 available on website, although not easy to find. This is first environment report. BBC accepts that site contains more anecdotes than data, but promises that future reports will contain more data and targets.</p>	<p>Bertelsmann Germany www.bertels mann.com</p>	<p>Leader An emerging leader, although many SD-related programs cover only a proportion of the sprawling group's employees. Produces a social report. No CSR or SD issues discussed on website. Scored B- by oekom research AG. Bertelsmann's printing arm, Mohn Media, produces environmental reports — and came equal 20th in <i>Global Reporters</i> survey.</p>
<p>EMI Group UK www.emigroup.com</p>	<p>Leader Current leader, albeit with much work to do. See <i>Environment and Community Report</i> 2001. Website covers environmental information, with a pledge to extend coverage to the wider SD issues. Scored top overall by oekom research AG with B rating.</p>	<p>News Corporation Australia www.newscorp.com</p>	<p>Laggard No TBL report. Rated D by oekom research AG.</p>
<p>Pearson UK www.pearson.com</p>	<p>Middle of the road Environmental information can be found in 2001 annual report. Pearson's environmental policy, environmental review and ethics statement easily accessible on its own website. Rated C- by oekom research AG.</p>	<p>Sony Japan www.world.sony.com</p>	<p>Leader Publishes annual environmental report. Data on Sony's environmental vision, activities, and stakeholder relations can also be found on website.</p>
<p>Viacom USA www.viacom.com</p>	<p>Laggard No TBL report. Despite claims in owner Sumner Redstone's autobiography, no CSR or SD issues discussed on website. Refused to take part in oekom research AG survey.</p>	<p>Vivendi Universal France www.vivendi.com</p>	<p>Middle of the road But definitely engaged. Created in 2000 by merger of Vivendi, Seagram and Canal+. Publishes regular environmental report. Website offers link to environmental report on home page. Overall, rated C+ by oekom research AG.</p>

The 'demand side' question posed at the foot of the page is hard to answer. The media provide access to information and experience — everything from stock market reports to escape into alternative realities. Even significant growth in demand for triple bottom line information could be drowned out by even greater growth in demand for infotainment. Looking back over the past decade, several trends stand out:⁵⁰

- Audiences continue to show an appetite for media once seen as threatened, including newspapers and radio — which sometimes offer better coverage of CSR and SD issues.
- In parallel, however, electronic media continue to colonize our lives, with a growing range of media appearing in young people's rooms. The impact is at least as likely to be one of cocooning young people from reality as it is to open their eyes to CSR and SD issues.
- There is a dilution of the sense of community created when everyone watches the same programs at the same time. Whereas TV once acted as a form of 'social cement', the use of VCRs, video cameras, digital TV and DVD systems has allowed viewers to 'time-shift', organizing their own entertainment.

One effect of these trends is that TV viewers, in particular, are often turned into spectators of — rather than participants in — the great events and issues of the day.⁵¹ Against that backdrop, our question is: **To what extent are audiences demanding better triple bottom line coverage?**

Audiences

Audience numbers and tastes are a crucial concern for any media company. So does the public really want more TBL coverage?

The answer is that while there may be positive trends, they are not nearly as positive as campaigners might hope. While audience factors are key drivers of media output, their influence on the coverage of the CSR and SD agendas is uneven, complex and surprisingly ill-researched. And the evidence suggests that audiences often know that trends like climate change are building, yet are unwilling to act (page 41).

Guessing game

Editors say that an important part of the job — perhaps the most important part — is understanding audience wants. Frances Cairncross, management editor of *The Economist*, says, 'As an editor, you're very often guessing what the reader wants. I try to think of myself as a reader.' But few editors would deny that the media play a key role in shaping public opinion — and in framing the terms of public debate.

Fine, but what is the balance between editors and audiences — can we ultimately determine who is chicken, who egg? As MTV Networks senior vice president Svenja Geissmar puts it, 'Are we leading the consumer or is the consumer leading us? The answer is, it's a mix. The real question is what's the percentage?'

Most media theorists — McLuhan and Chomsky among them — have argued that the media shape us rather than the other way around. Because the media filter our experience of the world, we are told, it is meaningless to speak of audience tastes and desires other than as products of the media industry itself.

More practically, if we recognize that audience and media both influence each other, we can begin to think about managing both dimensions. From the media side, according to Frank Allen, co-founder of the US Institute for Journalism and Natural Resources and former environment editor of *The Wall Street Journal*, 'We need to change the media diet.

It's a weak excuse to place the blame on audience tastes. If we give people a different choice, their tastes will change. The choice of diet is with the editors.'

'Spinach journalism'

Even if the media acknowledge their role in shaping audience opinion and tastes, however, they still face a dilemma. They may be able to 'choose the diet,' as Frank Allen puts it, but they won't get far if the audience doesn't like what's on the plate. So it's back to the audience. You can't force-feed readers, listeners or viewers with 'good for you' messages, with spoonfuls of 'ought' and 'should': 'Spinach journalism,' as some call it, doesn't work. Readers stop reading, listeners and viewers tune out.

This poses a particular challenge when it comes to the CSR and SD agendas. Not only do these terms confound many, but the messages they contain can often be difficult — or painful — to digest. Nick Rowcliffe of the *ENDS Daily* concludes, 'The mainstream press feels it can't present a story that would be unpalatable to its audience — in effect saying, "You're responsible too." (It's worth noting, though, that at least one of our mainstream media correspondents strongly disagreed with this point.)

Joe Champ of Colorado University, whose focus is media audiences and stories on the environment, agrees: 'The great difficulty lies in that people seem most upset at being told their very existence ruins the world. Our relationship with the earth is destructive. People don't want to hear it.'

So audience considerations can keep uncomfortable messages out of the news — an influence that probably operates more powerfully against SD than CSR issues. This makes intuitive sense, although some argue that the media under-estimate our readiness to consume news on SD-related items, if well presented.

⁵⁰ Mark Balnaves, James Donald and Stephanie Hemelryk Donald, *The Global Media Atlas*, British Film Institute, 2001.

⁵¹ See Axel Aubrun and Joseph Grady, *A Window on the Storm: How TV Global News Promotes a Cognitive 'Refuge Stance'*; and Daniel Amundson, Linda Lichter and Robert Lichter, *The Myopic Neighbor: Local and National Network Television Coverage of the World*, www.frameworksinstitute.org/products/global.shtml.

⁵² *Environment, the Public and the Media*, MORI Research Paper, April 1999.

⁵³ Gallup poll, April 2000.

⁵⁴ www.futerracom.org

Certainly, there is evidence that these agendas are of interest to ordinary people. In the UK, MORI research suggests that more than 90% of Britons consider air pollution, water pollution and waste disposal to be serious problems.⁵² Six in ten say they have selected an environmentally friendly product over another because of its environmental friendliness. And seven in ten say they believe that, 'Industry does not pay enough attention to its social responsibilities.'

In the US, meanwhile, Gallup polls show 83% of Americans agreeing with the goals of the environmental movement and 66% rating the environment as an important issue in relation to their voting intentions in the 2000 presidential election.⁵³ But, media people wonder, when will these percentages translate into profitable audiences?

The great divide

One explanation for the obvious gap between latent audience interest and media perception of that interest might be a basic difference of opinion on what an environmental, CSR or SD story is. Wendy Redal of Colorado University's Center for Environmental Journalism explains:

'Research suggests there may be a disconnect between what editors deem to be 'environment news' and what the general public deems it to be. In a recent compilation of local audience research, the environment ranked sixth in a list of top issues. It hasn't moved from that spot for the last six years. One reason for this discrepancy may be that the public has very different views about what constitutes an 'environment story'. In newsrooms, we still view coverage of the environment in traditional ways: the birds and bunnies pieces, the recycling stories, the 'jobs versus the environment' stand-offs. The stories that the public cares about today are health, consumer and investigative stories.

'Today's environment stories are about our quality of life: air and water quality, children's health and congestion — the points at which the environment touches daily lives.'

Certainly many journalists who cover CSR and SD sense a healthy and enthusiastic audience appetite for what they cover. Anecdotally we hear not that audiences are uncomfortable with these stories, but that they appreciate them. Peter Eisler of *USA Today* observes, 'We take globalization and its impacts very seriously. Our readers want to understand it.' He continues, 'I think *USA Today* readers are interested in environmental issues. I don't have any hard data but I do sense it. There is a human interest there — especially if it impacts people's health.'

A good story

The key challenge is to find a way to tell these stories in a manner that engages, makes the connections to the 'big picture' and touches people's lives. Mike Tidwell, a freelance journalist who writes on climate change for *The Washington Post*, explains, 'The key is to address specific interests with pieces that hit home and explain to them what climate change means for them.' Terry Slavin of *The Observer* adopts a 'stealth approach': first and foremost she writes a solid and engaging story — which just happens to have a CSR or an SD angle.

One newswire reporter we interviewed agreed. He jumps from issue to issue, trying to slip in an environmental angle. 'If you instil an interest in the outdoors,' he says, 'you can instil a love of nature, and that enables you to argue, for example, for better fishing practices.' This holds true for non-news media as well. Nick Hart-Williams, former commissioning editor for the UK's Channel 4, argues, 'The challenge for the media is to make these things interesting to the audience. *Erin Brokovich* is a great example of how these issues do make good stories. This was a Hollywood hit, audiences loved it.'

Repeat after me ...

sus-tain-a-ble-de-vel-op-ment.

That's the title of a consultation paper from Futerra, a new SD communication group. SD, say Solitaire Townsend, Ed Gillespie and Rebekah Gilbertson, 'has grown its own technical language, slang, heroes, anecdotes and history.'⁵⁴ Often that gets in the way of communication, whether with politicians, business leaders, the media or public. To ensure SD communication works, Futerra offers a set of guidelines, summarized below:

- 1 Make the links to the Big Picture
- 2 Build trust through factual and technical accuracy.
- 3 Be cool, be sexy.
- 4 Invite readers, listeners or viewers to join a successful global movement.
- 5 Tell powerful stories.
- 6 Project optimism, avoid guilt.
- 7 Press the 'glory button' to help people feel good taking small initial steps.
- 8 Use inclusive language, breaking stereotypes.
- 9 Spotlight heroes to emulate.
- 10 Link big ideas with everyday realities and interests.

This in turn has implications that loop back to news: CSR and SD do not by their nature alienate or bore audiences. It's possible to inform and engage without preaching or bashing the audience over the head. The material for good stories, for important stories — the stuff of great journalism and great entertainment even, is there. Far from being turned off or disinterested, the audience welcomes CSR and SD stories. But audiences don't relax demands for quality simply because the subject matter is worthy.



Tsatan Uul, Northern Outer Mongolia © Adrian Arbib / Still Pictures

'*Erin Brokovich* is a great example of how these issues do make good stories.'



© Clive Shirley / Panos Pictures

Of the four lenses — or Gordian ‘sections’ — adopted for this report, technology is the one that has received most attention. Much discussed developments have drastically changed the face of media in recent years. Key trends have included the:

- Rise of the internet
- Spread of cable and satellite services
- Transition to a multichannel world
- Boom in personal technology devices (e.g. mobile telephones, personal camcorders, PDAs)

Surveying these seismic shifts, we asked:

How are technology trends affecting triple bottom line coverage?

Technology

Some people love media content, others media technology. The second group has had much to be excited about, but where are new technologies taking us?

Ubiquity

The consensus is that the overall impact of new technology trends has been to expand the power of media. As Danny Schechter, founder and executive editor of MediaChannel.org, told us, ‘Media has a role in society it never had before, in part because of the power of technology.’ In the rich world, the media are now almost ubiquitous, permeating every aspect of our existence. Thanks largely to cable, satellite and the internet, the power and reach of the media have increased enormously.

News, like other forms of media, is available round-the-clock, on demand. It can originate from — and be received — almost anywhere in the world. Even three whales trapped in Arctic ice can hold audiences enthralled for nearly a week.⁵⁵ But while the power of the media sector as a whole has increased with new technology, the effects on audience tastes vary dramatically, depending on where you look. The battle between old media and new is only the most common way of interpreting this variance.

The news media in particular find themselves caught in the crosshairs of change. Technology has changed both how — and by whom — news is captured (e.g. faxes, camcorders) as well as how it is distributed (e.g. internet ‘push’ v. ‘pull’ services, video cassettes in Iran, image ‘squishers’). New types of service (e.g. free metro newspapers; CNN, CNNfn and CNNSi; Slate.com), and new types of journalist or, as some would say, faux-journalist (e.g. Matt Drudge, Ananova) are appearing.

In short, new competition is emerging from all directions. Many of these developments have implications for credibility: for example, the risks of text and image manipulation have increased.

Meanwhile, the simultaneity, multiplication of channels and ‘on-demand’ possibilities driven by cable, satellite and the internet have turned news into something of a commodity, while placing it in competition with other forms of media — in particular, entertainment.

What is news?

New technologies have done more than change how news is delivered and produced — they have thrown the very nature and values of news into question. But what does all this mean for CSR and SD? To the extent that the news is being called into question, coverage of these issues can also be probed and perhaps rethought. For the time being, however, a major realignment of mainstream news priorities has still to occur.

At a basic level, the quantity and reach of coverage has increased. And so too, on balance, has quality. Technology — the internet in particular — has given a powerful new platform to these agendas. Niche newsletters and sites convey a wealth of information that might otherwise fail to make it into the mainstream.⁵⁶ And list serves and search engines help people to find them.

Chris Rose, former Greenpeace campaigns director, notes that, ‘The ‘gatekeeper’ function of media has been greatly reduced by the internet! Increasingly, people have direct access to sources, rather than having to rely on mainstream media reporting. The mainstream media may neglect to cover an issue, but there are numerous alternative sources the public may now consult, and many organizations working to bring them messages they might not otherwise hear. The implications of this change are far-reaching. Rose continues, ‘New media, new networks will mean *new agency* — new power to affect events!’

⁵⁵ Tom Rose, *Freeing the Whales: How the Media Created the World's Greatest Non-Event*, Carol Publishing Group, 1989.

⁵⁶ See www.sustainability.com/resources.

⁵⁷ See Bill Kovach and Tom Rosentiel, *The Elements of Journalism: What Newspeople Should Know and the Public Should Expect*, Crown Publishers, 2001.

Some NGOs have been particularly adept at using new technologies to get their messages in to the media — and out to the public. Rose notes that 'Greenpeace learned how to use its website to ensure the accuracy of the messages it wanted to get across.'

Now business, too, is learning how to take advantage of some of this technology to transmit its messages, often taking its cues from NGOs and campaigning companies. The Body Shop, for example, told us about their new approach to reporting — underscoring the fact that they now publish a series of exclusive internet-based reports, tailored and targeted to reach each of their stakeholder groups directly.

News or noise?

The caveat with most new media, however, is that they accelerate the trend towards information overload. One result, according to former Xerox Park director John Seely Brown, is that, 'In a world when anyone can become a journalist or a commentator on the web, you move to two-way journalism. The journalist becomes a forum leader or mediator rather than simply a teacher or a lecturer.'⁵⁷

Simultaneously, new media often boost the focus on the here-and-now, encouraging us to live in what has been called 'wide time' rather than 'long time.' Neither of these trends is an obvious boon to the triple bottom line agenda. More information is of little help if it simply gets drowned out in a cacophony of more information about everything else. And CSR and SD by their nature demand more global, longer-term perspectives and treatments.

That said, technology can help capture new perspectives that help boost the CSR and SD agendas. Micro-cameras can capture images of human rights abuses that would once have gone unobserved, or at least unreported. Moreover, technology can sometimes collapse time and space to the benefit of CSR and SD. Time-lapse and satellite photography, for instance, can both offer long-term, big picture perspectives. And to the extent that technology can make distant cultures, environments or repercussions present to audiences, as they did with the 'Band Aid' and 'Live Aid' concerts of the 1980s, this can also aid the triple bottom line agenda.

Today, the internet allows the likes of Planet Ark and the Globalvision News Network to bring developing world news to large numbers it would not otherwise reach. By amplifying voices seldom heard, these services perform an important function in terms of claiming attention for key elements of the triple bottom line agenda.

But the impact of the new media technologies is still very unevenly spread. The 'CNN World' effect is much more powerful in OECD countries, for example, than in poorer regions. The fact is that the majority of the world's peoples remain largely untouched. Indeed, the sheer pace of new technology development and proliferation is helping to create a 'digital divide,' exaggerating the gaps between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots.' In considering the implications for the triple bottom line agenda, this trend can only become more pressing.



Phnom Penh, Cambodia © Jim Holmes / Panos Pictures

Anyone who compares coverage of CSR and SD issues today with the level of coverage a decade or two ago can only conclude that there has been enormous progress. But it often seems that for every two steps forward we take at least one back. On the 'supply side' of the equation, the media world is in a period of major change — and considerable uncertainty. Key trends in this shifting landscape include:

- A general proliferation of services of all sorts, competing for attention;
- New technologies and mutating business models; and
- Market fragmentation, accelerated by the growth of niche services.

Against this backdrop, we focus on the following question: **How do CSR and SD fit with the media's emerging service models?**

The evidence suggests that the triple bottom line agenda is still a struggle for most media people. Indeed, at a recent Aspen Institute conference on journalism, Peter C. Goldmark, Jr., Chairman and CEO of *The International Herald Tribune*, characterized the environment as one of the most important stories of our time — but one which the media is failing to address with the attention and in the depth it deserves.⁵⁸ He challenged his colleagues: 'The question will be asked: did [the media] see and get on the biggest stories of their day?' His answer, on the basis of their performance to date: 'No.'

So why is the media largely missing this sort of story? To answer that question, let's look at three main segments of news: mainstream, novel and niche.

Mainstream

The mainstream news exhibits a fairly standard set of characteristics, including:

- A tendency to focus on events rather than trends;
- A propensity to report negativity, conflict and drama;
- Discomfort with ambiguity and complexity; and
- Procrustean constraints on column inches and broadcast minutes.

In addition, mainstream news providers have been criticized for favoring infotainment over in-depth analysis and investigation. Frank Allen, founder of the Institute for Journalism and Natural Resources calls this, 'The rise of voyeurism as a substitute for journalism.' He argues, 'In my view, the hierarchy of news values is too often being turned upside down. Sensationalism and Celebrity are at the top, though they belong at the bottom. Immediacy and Proximity too often take priority over Significance, Relevance, Cause and Consequence.' Others describe the same trend as 'dumbing down.'

Ownership trends have a key impact here, affecting the structure and culture of the newsroom. Newsrooms are usually reactive, organized to respond to events. Frank Allen explains, 'Most editors grew up in the tradition of event coverage. They're used to stories with a definite beginning and end, which for the most part are straight-forward and predictable, like trials and legislation. Then there's also a pattern for breaking news, like fires and crashes. We have a set template for how to deal with these stories.'

But as owners push for higher profits, the problems associated with this blinkering effect increase. Paul Gilding, formerly head of Greenpeace International and now chair of Ecos, notes that the shearing of media budgets exacerbates this tendency, leaving fewer resources and staff for non-event, investigative reporting.

Meanwhile, editors and reporters alike favor certain types of stories or story angles. One newswire reporter told us, 'Maybe I'm just an old fashioned kind of journalist. Agreement is not news. Debate is news . . . we need drama.'

Finally, most newsrooms and editors are under increasing pressure to sell ad space and compete with entertainment in the media marketplace. Little wonder then that CSR and SD often get short shrift. They simply don't fit mainstream news preferences and patterns of coverage. They're generally about process rather than event — as Frank Allen tells us, 'these stories don't break, they ooze!'

Such stories often require more space than other topics — John Nielsen, NPR's environment correspondent reminds us that 'with environmental issues, you really need to educate your audience; with crime reporting, you don't need to teach your listeners what a robbery is.' And instead of clarity and certainty, CSR and SD offer complexity and ambiguity. Add to that a deficit of sex and celebrity and you've got a news blind-spot in the making.

No surprise, then, that triple bottom line coverage tends to be irregular. It follows waves of fickle interest with a corresponding sacrifice of coherence and consistency. These agendas also have not yet found a real 'home' — they tend to hop from page to page. The financial, science, lifestyle or management sections of a paper may all at different times host triple bottom line stories, with many newspapers having shown a gradual progression from the science and lifestyle pages to the management and, increasingly, financial pages. Mainstream media tend to take on specialists and hold them in ghettos or silos; they then either drop or mainstream them.

Services

Markets normally ensure that where there is demand there will be supply. So how are the media responding to demand for CSR and SD information?

⁵⁸ Peter C. Goldmark, Jr., *Old Values, New World: Harnessing the Legacy of Independent Journalism for the Future*, The Aspen Institute, 2001.

⁵⁹ Bronislaw Szerszynski, John Urry and Greg Myers, Chapter 8 in *The Daily Globe: Environmental Change, the Public and the Media*, edited by Joe Smith, 2000.

⁶⁰ See www.sustainability.com/resources.

This poses a further challenge to those who would like CSR and SD to become media 'beats' in their own right. As Roger Cowe, a former *Guardian* correspondent and now freelance journalist, puts it, 'There isn't anything called CSR journalism. I often joke that I am the pre-eminent journalist in my field — because I'm the only one!'

Novel

So will novel media bridge the gap? By novel media we mean those that arise from new business models. CNN, BBC Online and *USA Today* would all be examples of novel media. Fringe at first, successful new entrants often cross over to the mainstream. Such operations can have more latitude to reinvent themselves and their coverage. Several, including those mentioned above, are noted for giving more treatment to triple bottom line issues than some more established mainstream media.

The two most significant developments, as far as novel media go, have been the rise of global news and, more recently, the rise of business news. Traditionally, the news media have not been organized to deal with global issues and trends. The rise of CNN, BBC World and the like has given a forum to the more global CSR and SD agendas. Some even contend that the very imagery such services use — such as pictures of the Earth — helps build the global consciousness crucial to the adoption of the SD agenda.⁵⁹

But the really big industry story over the last few years has been the emergence of business news as the sector's single largest growth area. Within this context, CSR and SD stand a greater chance of receiving attention. And while interviewees including *Business Week's* Pete Engardio point out that much of the business media still doesn't 'get' the triple bottom line agenda, partly because it falls between two beats — namely, business and society — coverage has at least increased.

And, with story space to fill and growing interest in related areas like ethical or social investing, business news may eventually give both CSR and SD a mainstream media home.

Niche

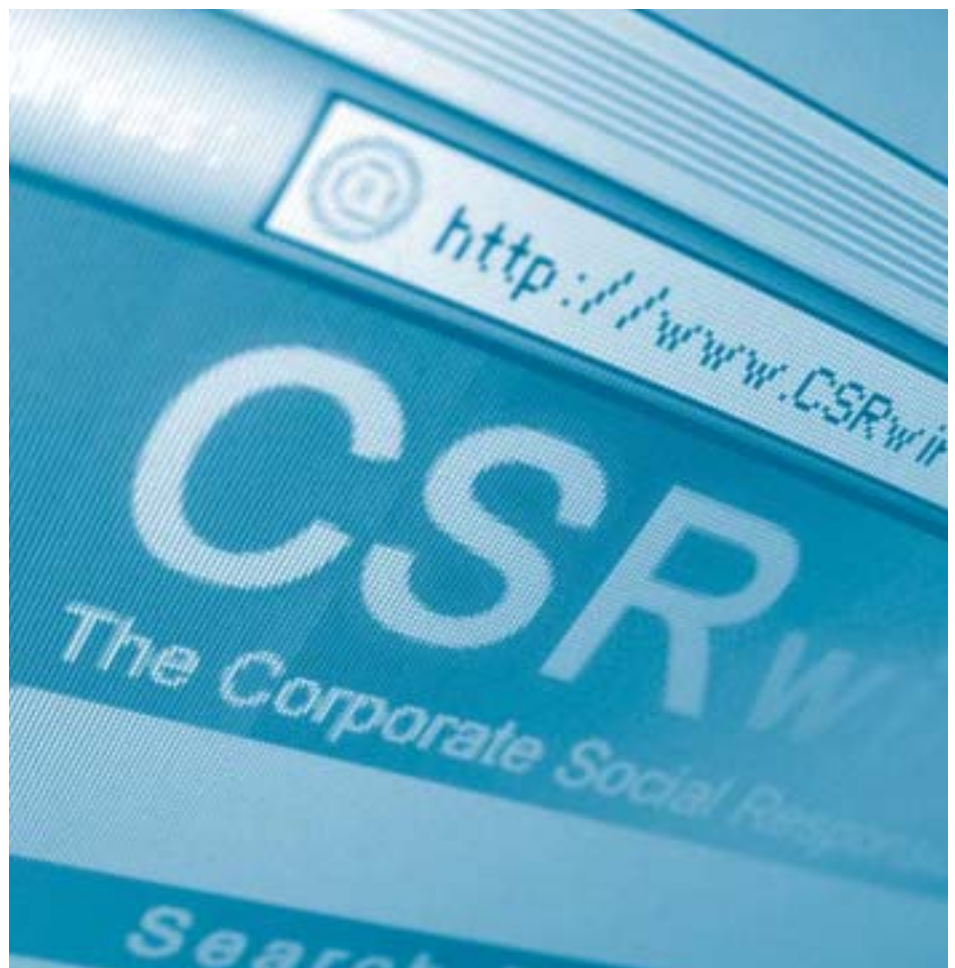
Then, finally, we have niche media services. These correspond to the second sector trend — fragmentation — cited above. The number of media channels and service offerings is multiplying. This is in part thanks to new technology and the internet (see Technology, pages 32–33). Triple bottom line-related offerings in particular stand out, for both their quantity and quality.⁶⁰

The very existence and proliferation of such services signals the failure of mainstream providers. As columnist George Monbiot told us, such niche offerings 'do the job that the mainstream press fails to do.' They track new trends and issues, consistently beating the drum on CSR and SD when mainstream media are distracted. The danger, of course, is that such services merely preach to the converted — and reach neither the opinion formers nor the masses.

But organizations like Environmental Data Services (ENDS) have been highly successful at developing new services, like the *ENDS Daily*, which help carry the agenda to new audiences. The hope here must be that such initiatives spark something of a pioneer-and-follower dynamic, with the fringe exerting increasing influence on the center. A fair number of mainstream journalists said they routinely use niche services as background and as sources of ideas for potential stories of their own. Indeed, the *ENDS Daily* counts significant numbers of mainstream press people in its subscriber base.

The extent to which the triple bottom line agenda is mainstreamed in the coming years will powerfully influence the extent to which our needs are serviced by mainstream, novel or niche media. Using the scenarios sketched out on pages 40–43, we might imagine niche services struggling to survive in the 'Breakdown' scenario, mainstream media adapting in the 'Mainstream' scenario, and an array of novel media helping to drive the 'Breakthrough' scenario.

'These stories don't
break. They ooze!'



A century ago, the historian Thomas Carlyle remarked on the growing power of the press and characterized the sector as an additional branch of government — a 'Fourth Estate.' The moniker stuck. The power of the press is now widely acknowledged, with much of that power and influence flowing from its unique watchdog status.

The media are expected to hold others to account. Think of Watergate in the US or, less successfully to date, the anti-corruption 'crusade' in Europe which has threatened to engulf politicians like Jacques Chirac and Dominique Strauss-Kahn in France, Helmut Kohl and Wolfgang Schauble in Germany, and Silvio Berlusconi in Italy.⁶¹

But there is an unsettling side to media power too. Yesterday's press barons and today's media moguls are simply the most visible wielders of formidable power that critics argue goes too often unchecked. Given that the media can have such a huge impact on politics and society, our question is: **To what extent are media companies accountable for their triple bottom line performance and impacts? Who, in short, watches the watchdogs?**

There is a growing literature on media power. So, for example, media businesses are often attacked for reproducing dominant power structures and representing the interests of their owners. Noam Chomsky's 'propaganda model' is perhaps the best known of these critiques, but he has many heirs, some more successful than others. So how can the media be held accountable? Theoretically at least, in a number of ways. Here are some options:

— **Wolf-pack**

At the Darwinian level, there is the law of the wolf-pack, with unduly powerful actors savaged by competitors. Someone like Silvio Berlusconi may end up controlling national media, but there will always be more critical international media to take into account.

— **Peer pressure**

A major factor in some industries, this can be weakened in the media sector by the reluctance of key players to turn the spotlight on others, for fear of having the light shone back at themselves. When the industry strays too far, however, journalists' own 'ethical gyroscope' can come into play to restore standards and balance.

— **Legislation**

Governments set up media, press and advertising standards agencies and councils, which set and police media standards. Too often, however, these prove toothless in practice.

— **Litigation**

When media overstep the normal bounds of decency, those whose interests are affected can resort to the courts, as in libel and slander actions. The trouble with lawsuits, however, is that their effect is *ex post facto*.

— **Media watchdogs**

Public interest groups and NGOs play a key role in monitoring the press (see 'Centers of Excellence' panel, page 05). Their impact has been substantially boosted by the internet.

— **Shareholders**

A growing number of ethical, social and environmental investment funds screen media companies for their triple bottom line commitments and performance (see page 40).

— **Consumers**

Readers, listeners and viewers can have significant influence on editorial style and coverage, either by criticizing current coverage or by switching to other media for news, analysis and entertainment.

Despite these mechanisms, however, the issue of media accountability remains.

In fact, one could argue that since Carlyle's time it has grown more pressing. Whereas in the past, barons would control a string of newspapers, today's moguls preside over empires of diversified holdings. They may own properties in radio, TV, the internet and press, controlling content as well as systems of distribution. In part this is because world trade rules have been opening up and laws against cross-media ownership are being rescinded.

Compounding the issues around increasing cross-media and cross-border ownership, it is increasingly typical for media holdings to be tangled up with holdings in very different lines of business. With such diversity of holdings come conflicts of interest, a growing taste for secrecy and other problems.

Accountability

The media perform a critical function in holding other parts of society to account. But who holds the media to account?

⁶¹ Jack Ewing, Carol Matlack, Andrea Zamert and Christina White, 'Is the corruption crusade over?' *Business Week*, November 26, 2001.



Sony Environmental Report 2001

As far as CSR and SD go, the challenge is even greater: they are rarely addressed by the above mechanisms, if at all. And media groups offer little information on their own triple bottom line commitments and performance, whether in the form of annual reports or other types of accounting. In truth, the media sector has not yet experienced the full force of the triple bottom line challenge.

Socially responsible investment (SRI) fund analysts told us that media's performance in this area is below average. One key reason has been that the media sector is seen to have less environmental impact than sectors covered in earlier SustainAbility reports, including the oil, life sciences and automobile sectors.

To date, there has been relatively little media sector CSR or SD reporting. Of the large conglomerates, only Vivendi and Bertelsmann so far report on social and environmental issues in a reasonably comprehensive fashion. Elsewhere, there are scattered sparks of activity. EMI, for example, has received attention as a company that has reported for a while (page 29).

But as one analyst told us, 'even EMI hasn't figured out if — and how — all this matters to their core business. Even EMI still needs to make a fundamental transition.'

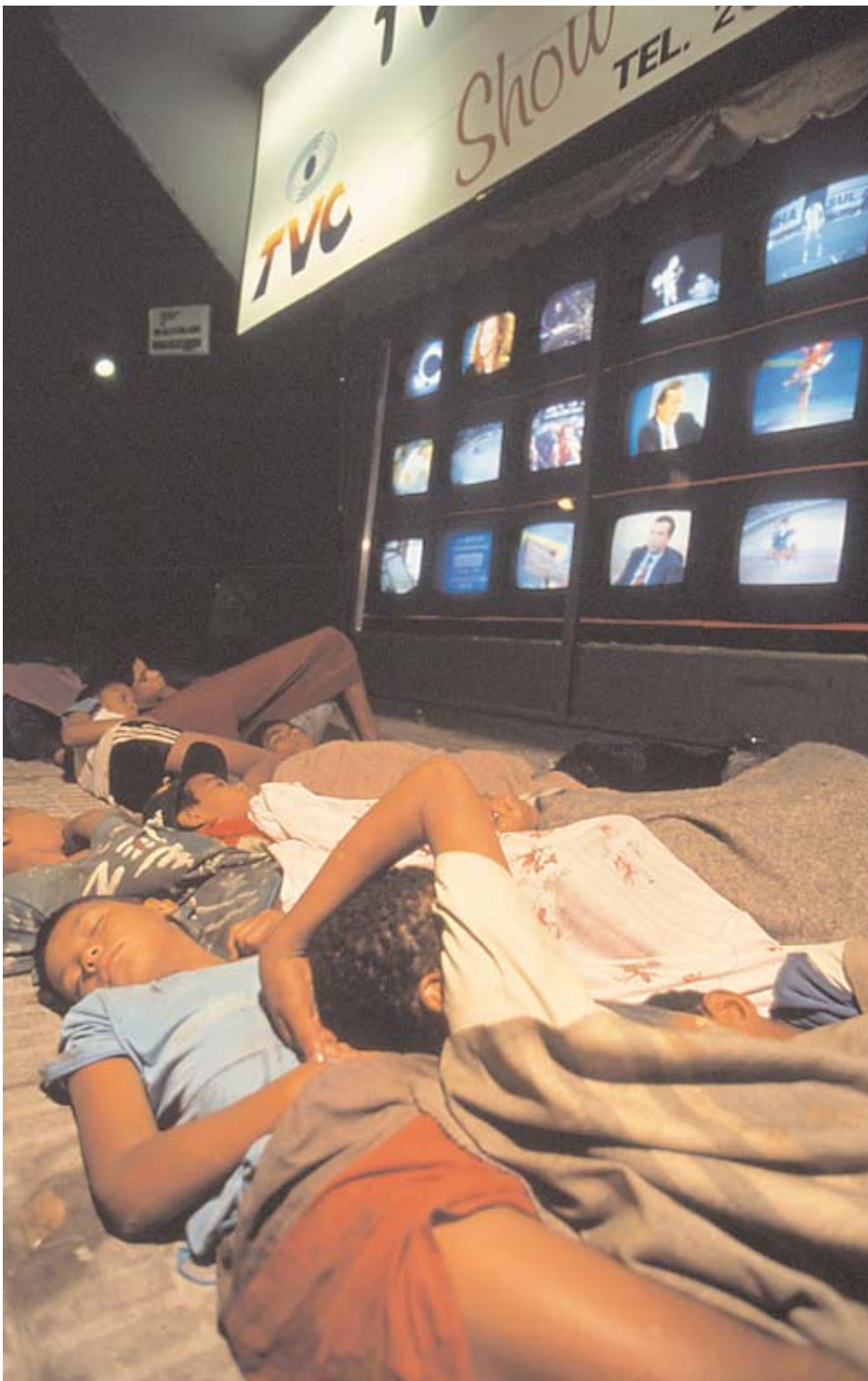
The bottom line is that most media companies are still naïve — and, as a result, vulnerable — when it comes to the triple bottom line. They still need to figure out how this agenda is relevant to their businesses and what to do about them. Until recently, most media groups mainly had to think about the accuracy of their reporting and direct or indirect involvement in such areas as pornography or gambling. Now, however, they are beginning to find themselves accountable in a broader sense.

The media sector has not been known for its own transparency. News organizations in particular, as Frank Allen (Founder, Institute for Journalism and Natural Resources) reminded us, 'don't like others to meddle in their business or tell them how to do their job. They keep the news huddle a mystery: Unfortunately, this may already be undermining the reputations of both the media and related professions.

Polls of the public and of journalists in the US and Europe show a serious decline in trust in journalism. In Pew Center research, journalists cited credibility as the single most important issue facing journalism today.

As Danny Schechter of MediaChannel emphasized, 'People don't trust the media. They don't understand how it works. This is a serious problem that the media itself has to address. They've got a global reputation that's deeply damaged! Indeed, several interviewees speculated that some media companies could themselves soon fall victim to the globalization-fuelled spotlight.

'People don't trust the media.'



Belo Horizonte, Brazil © John Maier / Still Pictures

Breakdown or Breakthrough?

The media sector could dominate the 21st century economy. The political implications will bring greater levels of scrutiny of owners, editors and journalists.

Returning once more to our consideration of the waves of public and media interest in CSR and SD (page 07), let's consider where things may be headed next. However long the current third wave may ultimately run, the third downwave cannot be long delayed. That said, each successive downwave tends to bottom out at higher levels of public support than its predecessor — and this is when the bulk of the serious political and regulatory work is often done. There is a ratchet effect, too, in terms of the media's understanding of the triple bottom line agenda.

Instead of predicting the future, as we did in the early 1990s, we now sketch out three broad trajectories into the future. One scenario ('Breakthrough') would put us firmly on the track towards sustainable development. The second ('Mainstream') would see CSR priorities (and some SD priorities) being met, to a degree. The third ('Breakdown') would see neither SD nor even CSR priorities being achieved for long. The scenarios are listed below, in order of perceived likelihood:

— Mainstream

Like many great social movements before them, the CSR and SD communities 'come in from the cold' early in the 21st century. The third ('Globalization') wave is followed by fourth and fifth waves, of reduced magnitude. In the process, these agendas are further politicized as they take on mainstream energies and colorations.

— Breakdown

Recessions, a mood of denial and other factors spur public resistance to change. Egged on by an increasingly effective contrarian movement, progress stalls.⁶² This is a world of victims, blame and scapegoating.

⁶² See, for example, Björn Lomberg, *The Skeptical Environmentalist*, Cambridge University Press, 2001.

⁶³ James Flynn, Paul Slovic and Howard Kunreuther, *Risk, Media and Stigma: Understanding Public Challenges to Modern Science and Technology*, Earthscan Publications, 2001.

The process of stigmatization that has deeply damaged such sectors as nuclear power and genetically modified foods spreads to other sectors.⁴³ The fourth and fifth waves occur, but despite further peaks of public concern and political pressure the underlying trajectory is downwards.

— **Breakthrough**

This scenario — which foresees the media playing a strong supportive role in the sustainability transition — is the most desirable, but probably the least likely. The key to this outcome is strong, visionary and effective political leadership, boosted by consistent business support. Given the inevitable uncertainties and costs, future waves and downwaves in this scenario might be of greater magnitude during the transition period.

Roads to Damascus

First, however, some context. On the positive side, at least when compared with the early 1990s, there is now a reasonably strong international corps of CSR and SD journalists. In the US alone, the World Resources Institute (WRI) told us they know of some 700 active environmental journalists, while the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) has a database of some 3,000 journalists interested to a degree. Together with NGOs, such editors and journalists have been responsible for catalyzing and sustaining the waves of coverage discussed in our 'Big Issues' section.

When a new agenda is seen as unfashionable or actively subversive, as the CSR and SD agendas have been in recent decades, it is inevitable that many early recruits 'join up' after 'conversion' experiences. John Nielsen, for example, told us that researching his first environmental story, on the plight of the Californian condor for *Sports Illustrated*, 'changed my life.' He then did a science fellowship at MIT, later joining NPR (National Public Radio) as an environmental correspondent.

Most media are less sympathetic than NPR, however. So many CSR and SD champions end up feeling, as Frank Allen of the Institute for Journalism and Natural Resources explains it, 'like a subversive in (their) own newsroom.' Sometimes, happily, subversion works.

We heard of one reporter who 'opened the eyes' of an editor by subjecting her to the 'old two notebooks technique.' He would go out on his beat and cover the assigned story, but would keep a second notebook in which he gathered material for a story with a stronger environmental spin. 'Gradually, [the editor] realized that these were good stories; it didn't matter what label they fell under.'

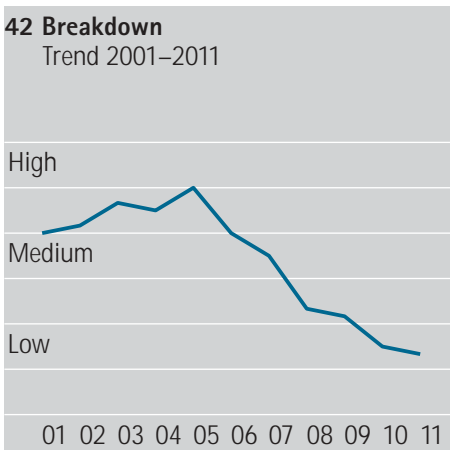
And there is no shortage of potential stories. Nick Rowcliffe of the *ENDS Daily* reports no difficulty in finding 6–7 major stories each day across the European Union. Peter Eisler, an investigative reporter for *USA Today*, says that he alone gets around six leads (of all sorts) a day from whistleblowers. (Most he can't use, however, since *USA Today's* editorial line is that stories must be of national interest.)

Editors are the media's gatekeepers — and take some convincing. Recently, for example, one freelancer told us that he did a major feature for a high-profile US daily on the implications of climate change for travel and tourism. 'I had to wrestle the editors to the ground,' he recalls, 'and spoon-feed them the science.'

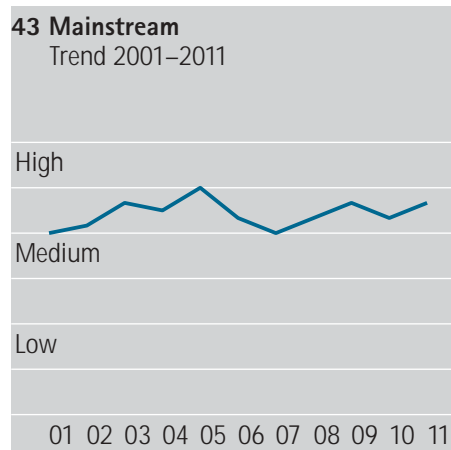
Nor is any success final. No sooner has a new issue entered the mainstream than it is in danger of falling out of fashion. 'At various points, these agendas have been decreed to be last year's thing,' says *Green Futures* editor Martin Wright. As a result, most journalists find this a tough sell. Often, too, a form of Catch-22 operates. 'Many editors,' observes campaigner Chris Rose, 'believe that if an issue hasn't been covered already by their media, it isn't an issue.'

But change is in the air, with publications like *Time*, *The Financial Times* and *The International Herald Tribune* now running triple bottom line stories and surveys. That said, remember that international publications often run different stories in different regions. Each regional edition may have its own editor, so the fact that the US edition carried a story on socially responsible investment does not mean that the Asian or Latin American editions carried the same story.

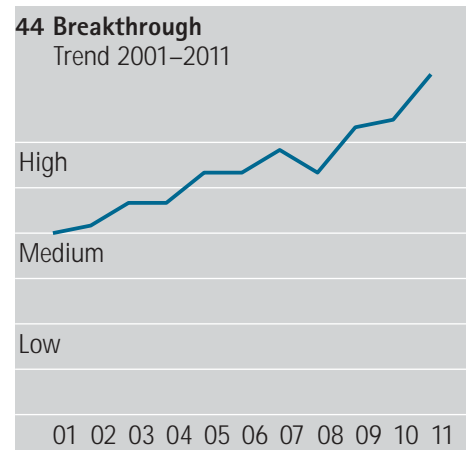
'I had to wrestle the editors to the ground and spoon-feed them the science.'



© SustainAbility 2002



© SustainAbility 2002



© SustainAbility 2002

SRI Criteria for the Media Sector

SRI funds are developing a range of triple bottom line criteria, together with performance indicators and metrics. These may be applied both to the operations of companies and to their supply chains. Many will also be applied to media companies.

Accountability On the generic accountability front, issues have included: the transparency of ownership structures; governance systems/procedures; director responsibilities; standards at home and abroad; stakeholder processes; risk and opportunity assessments; involvement in controversial businesses and with authoritarian regimes; political activities; public policy and lobbying positions; content of media owned; penalties for false or misleading reporting; corruption and fraud; court cases and fines; and key company contacts.

Ethical, Social and Cultural Among the issues that have been covered to date are: ethical principles, targets, management systems, supplier challenges, audits and reporting; standards at home and abroad; discrimination policies (e.g. age, gender, disability, racial); working hours; payment (including health insurance, payment during sick leave, and pension provision); employee participation; health and safety; training; redundancy policies; under-age labor; community involvement; and the content of media owned (including such issues as political bias, violence and pornography).

Environmental On the environmental front, issues covered to date include: environmental goals, policies, targets, management systems, supplier challenges, audits and reporting; standards at home and abroad; inputs (e.g. materials and energy); outputs (e.g. wastes and emissions); transport, packaging and recycling; liabilities, costs and investments; and the content of media owned.



Business waking up

One key problem is that the SD agenda, in particular, is seen as political. We asked a journalist from one of the world's top business magazines (speaking off the record) why, and he replied, 'To me politics is about how land, materials and goods are apportioned. You can't think about sustainability without thinking about that.'

He also explained why few mainstream journalists want to view news through a CSR or SD 'lens': 'Why would a journalist want to do that?,' he asked. 'If I were to put a CSR or SD champion on hold and pick up the phone to a Marxist or Roman Catholic, they would also be pushing their agenda and saying that in order to be a good Marxist or Catholic you would have to look at everything through their respective lenses.'

Given such sensitivities, it is surprising how far the triple bottom line agenda has penetrated some parts of the business media. One reason: a series of major controversies has spotlighted a growing range of issues. For example, Shell's mishaps in 1995 helped drive the environmental and human rights agendas, in addition to which there have been problems with major dams in countries like China, Malaysia and Turkey (impacting such companies as ABB, Balfour Beatty and Skanska), with GM foods (triggered by Monsanto, but embroiling many other businesses), and with sweatshops and child labor (where Nike has been the most obvious corporate casualty).

As the pressures on business have grown — in parallel with the impact of the anti-globalization movement on institutions like the IMF, World Bank and WTO — business media coverage of these issues has built steadily. Early coverage of triple bottom line issues in such media tended to be highly skeptical, and in the case of *Forbes* and the *Wall Street Journal* still is. But over time, particularly with the growth in the SRI sector (page 23), there has been a change in mood in the business media.

The Financial Times was cited by many as a leader, while a paper like *USA Today* was seen as maturing to the point where it has begun to compete head on with *The Wall Street Journal*. Don't expect a complete cave-in, however. Witness the continuing stream of contrarian articles in such media as the *The Economist* and even *The Financial Times* itself.

What's next?

On the basis of past trends, with peaks of media coverage driven by major conferences like the 1992 Earth Summit, 2002 (with planned events like the World Economic Forum's New York event and the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg) should see another spike in coverage of triple bottom line issues. Beyond 2002–3, however, the media could move in one of at least three directions, as explained below.

Mainstream

This is the most likely of the two hopeful scenarios. 'Never forget,' as Chris de Cardy of Environmental Media Services puts it, 'the mainstream press reports on the mainstream.'

So here is the mainstream scenario. Even though the third wave is soon followed by a downwave, triple bottom line issues are increasingly recognized as a vital, legitimate, marketable part of the news agenda. Some media create specialized 'beats', while others encourage mainstream news and feature reporters to develop ongoing series of stories.

In the context of growing evidence of climate change, major political events drive media coverage — and, in the process, help bring CSR and SD in from the cold. To use a different metaphor, triple bottom line 'viruses' infect the media world and then spread more widely.⁶⁴

'In many cases, the issue of the day is sustainability.'

The trend often starts in the print media and radio, but TV soon joins in, partly driven by competition from niche and novel services delivered via the internet.

New niche services evolve, like *CSR Wire*, which among other things monitors references to companies and CSR. 'We found that 90% of the mentions were negative,' says director Meghan Connolly. Over time, this form of Chinese water torture persuades growing number of high profile companies to 'come clean' — and to clean up their supply chains.

SRI funds apply increasingly tough CSR and SD criteria to the media sector, helping drive these priorities up the agenda (see panel on page 40). With limited ecological footprints to worry about, media groups are initially less interested in SD. But then business leaders carry the debate into the pages of publications like the *Harvard Business Review*,⁶⁵ *Forbes* and *The Wall Street Journal*, triggering stories in other media.

Media groups are increasingly persuaded to produce state-of-the-art triple bottom line reports. Coverage of these issues in Africa, Asia and Latin America begins a steady rise, although here too there are striking cycles in media interest.

Some experts even see poorer countries as potential issue incubators for the rich world media. 'There is a difference in the coverage in developing countries,' explains WRI media relations director Adlai Amor. 'Sustainable development is a day-to-day reality for people there, so there is greater coverage. In many cases, the issue of the day is sustainability.' Picking up and tracking media triple bottom line coverage in developing countries can be difficult, however, given the different ways in which the issues are framed and described.

And the dynamic works in the other direction, too. As demand grows, groups like Panos, TVE and Environmental Media Services help catalyze regional sources of credible triple bottom line information, on which local media then feed. Organizations like India's Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) have shown how this might be done.

Breakdown

The second most likely scenario foresees continuing waves of public concern and pressure, but on a declining trend. As Peter Goldmark of *The International Herald Tribune* warns, 'There is a new demographic, a generation not brought up with newspapers — which have been the keepers of the flame of independent journalism.' The media moguls continue to pursue 'eyeballs and money' above all other considerations.

In this scenario, the media continue to play the old games. 'The typical cycle is that they build you up — then they knock you down,' say Nicky Amos (head of business ethics) and Bill Eyres (head of communications) at The Body Shop International. Here is the breakdown scenario. Just as media coverage on the ozone hole has fallen away even as the hole expands, so the public learns to ignore the vital signs of continuing degradation. Joe Champ, who studied at the Center for Environmental Journalism, puts it this way:

'There is a notion that people don't know the environmental threats they face and that the answer is to improve the conduit — i.e. the methods we use to communicate to people — and thus the way we talk to audiences through the media. But it's more complex than that. People do actually know about this stuff. They know the polar ice cap is melting. But they are not prepared to adjust their behavior. They seem willing to live with the contradiction.'

Expect the Unexpected

Campaigners — like the media — rarely stand still. Witness what is happening in the oil sector, with ongoing campaigns on climate change, human rights and corruption. 'There are parallels with where ExxonMobil and TotalFinaElf are now and where we were in 1995,' says Mark Wade of Shell's SD team. 'Such companies are beginning to use terms which are new for them, like *stakeholder engagement*, *CSR* and *sustainable development*.'

The events of 1995, with the Brent Spar oil installation controversy rapidly followed by the uproar around human rights in Nigeria, caught Shell completely unawares. 'The media drove the process,' Wade recalls, 'and they were completely captivated by Greenpeace. Shell was caught completely off-guard. Like a dazed fencer, disorientated and overwhelmed, we parried one thrust, only to find the next from another unexpected direction.'

At the time, Shell's media resources were precariously slim. Today, the company's press office has expanded from two people to eight. More significantly, a new annual series of unusually candid 'Shell Reports' helped win over many critics. But Wade says a key step involved building bridges between Shell and NGOs like Amnesty, Greenpeace and Transparency.

One lesson: Expect the unexpected. While it may be possible to improve a company's reputation by tackling accountability, transparency and performance issues, the challenge never really goes away. Shell may now be the subject of positive case studies in the *Harvard Business Review*, and balanced coverage in media like *The Economist*, *Financial Times* and *Wall Street Journal*, but there are plenty of others 'prepared to regurgitate inaccurate or out-of-date information.' And new issues can always emerge.

⁶⁴ Douglas Rushkoff, *Media Virus: Hidden Agendas in Popular Culture*, Ballantine Books, 1994.

⁶⁵ DuPont's Leslie Cormier says that DuPont CEO Chad Holliday's HBR article on sustainable growth followed HBR editors' sight of a WBCSD study, *Seven Steps to Sustainability*, in which Holliday was involved.

'If I were to put a CSR or SD champion on hold and pick up the phone to a Marxist or Roman Catholic, they would also be pushing their agenda and saying that in order to be a good Marxist or Catholic you would have to look at everything through their respective lenses.'

As recessions bite and short-term issues distract editors and newsrooms, many triple bottom line-focused journalists are made redundant. 'Environmental journalists are chopped the quickest,' warns Robert Bisset, European press officer for UNEP. CSR journalists soon follow. They are replaced by contrarians, who write elegantly — and entertainingly — about the importance of self-interest, materialism, short-term time-scales and the 'moral bankruptcy' of those who would argue otherwise.

Against this deteriorating backdrop, journalists like Terry Slavin, who works for *The Observer*, continue to play a 'stealth' game. She has covered CSR and SD issues by focusing on business leaders, like the founders of companies like IKEA and Tetrapak. But, in this scenario, the editorial appetite for such stories falls off sharply.

In countries like Russia, there is growing stigmatization of CSR and SD campaigners and journalists. Tom Whitehouse, previously Moscow correspondent for *The Guardian*, recalls what happened to Aleksandr Nikitin: 'This Russian journalist and former navy officer exposed the decrepitude of the retired nuclear fleet — and was then thrown into prison as a spy, and persecuted for spotlighting the problem.' Think, too, of Zimbabwe, with proposed new laws giving the state powers to silence independent newspapers and journalists.⁶⁶

Some media people see this pessimistic scenario as only too likely. 'Sure, in 20 years' time journalists are going to be looking back and acknowledging that the press failed to address these issues in a responsible way,' said one leading newswire reporter, speaking off the record. 'Just as they still do about their naïveté during the McCarthy witch-hunt period.' He added: 'If climate change happens, then sure the media will cover it. But it probably won't happen until Florida sinks and New Jersey is under water.'

Breakthrough

Whatever we may hope, this is the least likely of the three scenarios. This is a world in which the global economy mutates towards much higher levels of sustainability.⁶⁷ But some interviewees saw reasons for hope in the very nature of the media sector's reactions to emergent trends. 'The media is like a herd,' said Mike Tidwell. 'Once they get an issue, they all run with it. This could work to our advantage.'

In the third, breakthrough scenario, the media sector itself comes under intense scrutiny. Some SRI analysts see this process as already under way. 'Once, the only issue for the sector was pornography,' says Nick Robins of Henderson Global Investors, 'but this is now changing dramatically.'

Across at Sustainable Asset Management (SAM), part of the Dow Jones Sustainability Group, they are also developing specific assessment criteria for the sector. 'SAM is particularly concerned with the media,' says researcher Niki Rosinski, 'because of its essential role as a facilitator and communicator for this agenda.'

But even the most intense SRI pressure may not be sufficient. What else might help? Thoughtful comments came from MediaChannel senior editor Aliza Dichter and executive editor Danny Schechter (a former producer of the popular news show 20/20, and co-founding CNN producer).

Before the first ('Limits') wave took hold, they note, things were different. 'People were concerned about individual issues: clean water, clean air, nukes, endangered species. Then a rubric of 'The Environment' took hold, and 'Environmentalism' emerged. There is as yet no 'Media-ism' movement, no general acknowledgement of the political and social issues surrounding media. This is what needs to happen next.'

Happily, new entrants bring new priorities, new passion. Young journalists emerge, connecting with new audiences. So, for example, *New Internationalist* 'Young Journalist' and editor Katharine Ainger proposed a special issue on media — which triggered a great deal of positive comment, and was even picked up in the *Australian Financial Review*.

Best of all, media consumers begin to get the message. 'These issues are central to what is going on,' stresses Peter Knight (who pioneered environmental coverage in *The Financial Times*), 'but they're not necessarily seen as such. So how do you make them relevant to people who live ordinary lives? Who like riding motorbikes, getting their hair done, buying lipstick, having sex?' The answer, he suggests, is to link the macro with the micro. 'Ordinary people notice if their child gets asthma, or their partner dies of cancer. The media depend on NGOs or politicians to make the necessary links.'

In this scenario, the links are made. Instead of closing their eyes and ears and 'living with the contradiction', ordinary people start to pay serious attention — and demand better service. Even channels like MTV get involved. 'MTV is about escapism,' says MTV Networks senior vice-president Svenja Geissmar. 'But,' she wonders, 'does this make sense for a company whose target demographics are interested in the discovery of new issues — and new causes? Isn't youth the most radical demographic?'

Some surveys suggest that Generation Y is strongly interested in triple bottom line issues, but the evidence suggests that neither MTV nor the rest of the media world are likely to lead the charge into the 'Breakthrough' world. If the fourth and fifth waves spotlight issues with sufficient public appeal, however, the media's instinct could well switch in to advantage. In this context, expect growing scrutiny of media ethics, and growing interest in the work of such organizations as the Committee of Concerned Journalists.⁶⁸

'Sure the media will cover [climate change] ... but it probably won't happen until Florida sinks and New Jersey is under water.'

⁶⁶ Jan Raath, 'Zimbabwe's new law to silence journalists', *The Times*, December 1, 2001.

⁶⁷ See *The Chrysalis Economy*, John Elkington, Capstone / John Wiley, 2001.

⁶⁸ See Bill Kovach and Tom Rosentiel, *The Elements of Journalism: What Newspeople Should Know and the Public Should Expect*, Crown Publishers, 2001.

⁶⁹ Denis Brian, *Pulitzer: A Life*, John Wiley, 2001

Among the issues we expect to drive future waves are demographic trends, including population growth in the poorer countries and the linked issues of aging and immigration in richer regions.

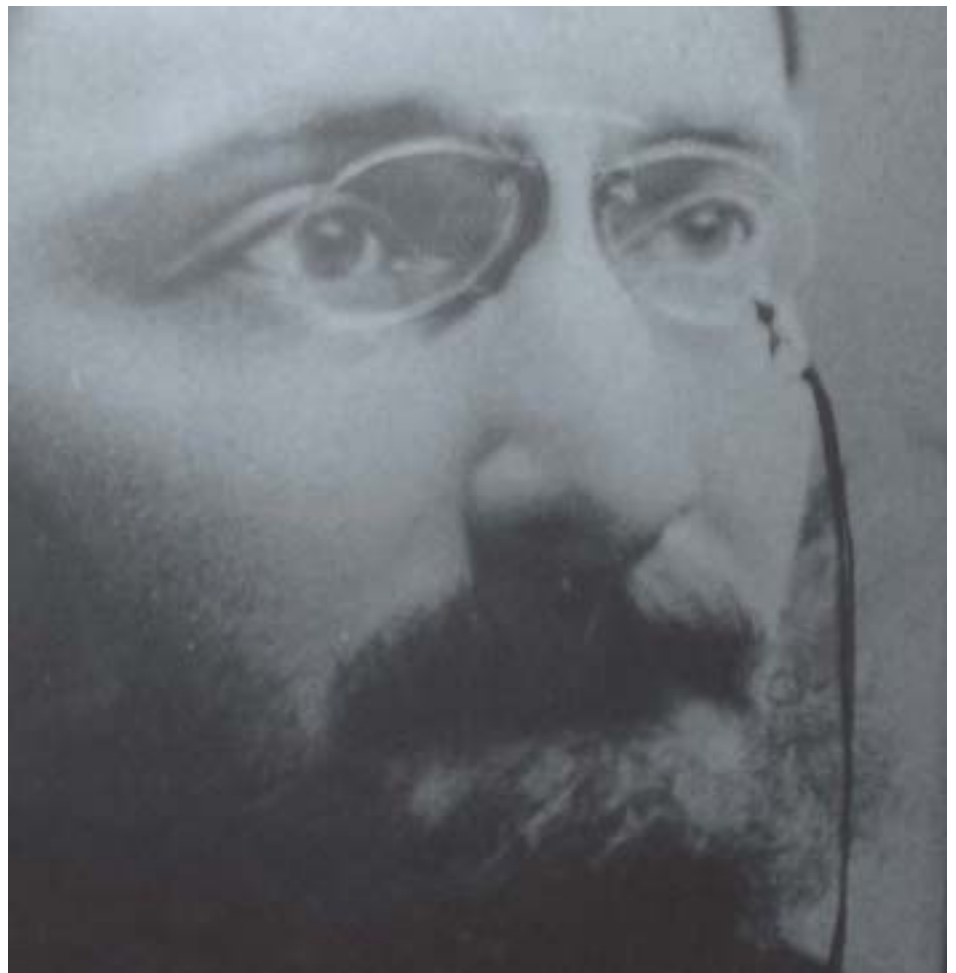
Paradoxically, the issues that may well end up putting sustainability four-square on the political agenda (and therefore on the media agenda) will be problems with the equitable provision of public health services and pensions. These emerging challenges could help ordinary citizens understand the urgent realities of intra- and inter-generational equity.

As the transition builds, the old squabbles will continue — and new ones explode. 'When I hear the words *sustainability* or *sustainable development*,' one news wire correspondent growled, 'I just hear a load of jargon and jingoism.' By contrast, over at the BBC News, assignments editor Jamie Donald says CSR and SD coverage 'is already mainstream. It's neither niche nor fringe as far as the BBC is concerned — and that won't change.'

Major change will not mute such disagreements. But, here is the \$64 trillion question: Will we have the will — and political wisdom — to respond efficiently, effectively and in time?

Figure 45, overleaf, offers a series of Do's and Don'ts for those trying to respond. Our recommendations for the media sector on how progress might best be made can be found on the inside back cover of the report.

Whichever way we go, David Fenton of Fenton Communications argues that the CSR and SD communities must work together on intensive, sustained media campaigns designed to simplify and punch through their key messages. At a time when mainstream media interest in complex issues is trending downward, he argues, 'It's time to cut the jargon and invest in short, lively, dramatic forms of presentation.' Given the background noise likely in 2002 and beyond, the need for such an approach can only grow.



Joseph Pulitzer

'Always fight for progress and reform.
Never tolerate injustice or corruption;
always fight demagogues of all parties —
never lack sympathy for the poor; always
remain devoted to the public welfare;
never be satisfied with merely printing the
news; always be drastically independent;
never be afraid to attack wrong.'
Joseph Pulitzer (1847-1911), media mogul⁶⁹

45 Do's and Don'ts

1 Do think strategically.

Media relations is often thought of as a crisis management tool. Wrong: it should be a strategic, ongoing process. Evolve an integrated strategy, linking your media, CSR/SD and marketing people. Bring them together regularly, with top management support and plenty of time, to break down internal silos.

6 Do change your footwear.

Put yourself in the media's shoes. Ensure you understand: (a) who covers your issues; (b) what stories and angles they are looking for; (c) what sort of deadlines they work to; and (d) whether they want soundbites or more in-depth analysis.

11 Don't be narcissistic.

It's dangerous to let the desire for media coverage drive your triple bottom line strategies.

2 Do be honest.

Give the good news — and the bad. Accept that some bad coverage may be necessary to build long-term credibility and trust.

7 Do remember Rosetta.

Two hundred years ago, the Rosetta Stone was found in Egypt, helping decode the hieroglyphs and language of ancient Egypt. Ensure you fully understand the differences between the CSR and SD languages, definitions and objectives.

12 Don't fire and forget.

Leading companies know it's a mistake to simply hand major issues to media relations or PR people and leave them to it. Get involved, stay involved. Keep a close eye on your PR, advertising and lobbying agencies.

3 Do be open and accessible.

As Shell explained, 'The key is to be available and responsive.' Put your best, least defensive, people into the front line. But always assume you are speaking on the record.

8 Do teach.

Help media people understand your company and its triple bottom line issues, targets and performance. Remember, as NRDC communications director Alan Metrick says, 'Reporters are not enemies, and they're not friends; they're overworked and underpaid — and they'll take help on generating stories.'

13 Don't play a single-note samba.

If you produce regular, candid environmental, social or sustainability report, great. But don't assume that even the most innovative reporting meets all stakeholder needs. View reporting as just one strand of your stakeholder engagement strategy.

4 Do KISS.

Keep it simple, seriously.

9 Do treasure jewels.

Heed campaigner Chris Rose's warning: 'Only 1 in 100 journalists can think strategically.' Consider these people jewels. Their time and attention is scarce, precious. Treasure them.

14 Don't overlook new media.

It's not just a matter of 'Company X Sucks' websites. New media mean new ways in which the outside world can track — and impact — corporate reputations and brands.

5 Do learn.

Work to understand what the media 'takes' are on key issues for your company, brands and markets. Find out what they are saying — 'contrarians' and skeptics included — about CSR and SD.

10 Do get into the flow.

Join leading CSR/SD-focused initiatives and alliances, helping your key people meet thought-leaders and agenda-shapers — and co-evolve the agenda.

15 Don't get stuck on costs, risks.

These agendas have long been associated with risks and costs. But this is changing. Creative businesses will cross-link emerging CSR and SD constituencies (and markets) in unexpected ways. New business models will disrupt the status quo.



The Non-Reporting Report 1998
Based on a survey of 50 international non-reporting companies, spotlighting key barriers to disclosure and learning from the experience of successful reporters, and suggesting ways forward.



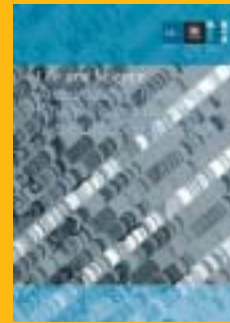
The Social Reporting Report 1999
An introduction to social reporting, linking growing demands for social accountability with the wider sustainable development debate.



The Internet Reporting Report 1999
Explores the world of internet disclosure and reporting. Which CERs are on the web? What have net reporters learned? How have users reacted? Where will the exploding net take us next?



The Oil Sector Report 1999
An 80-page report that examines how the oil industry is addressing the expanding environmental and social reporting agenda.



Life and Science 2000
Explores the new frontier of biotechnology and how companies are reporting on their performance in the management of 'life sciences'.



The Power to Change 2001
Explores the links between corporate governance, the triple bottom line and the leadership role of boards of directors in delivering sustainable value for markets and society.



The Global Reporters 2000
A ground-breaking benchmark survey of corporate sustainability reporting. Presents an in-depth analysis of 50 leading international sustainability reports, with a review of sectoral issues and hot topics.



Buried Treasure 2001
Maps the impact of corporate sustainable development performance in reporting on business success, and tries to uncover if, and how, it enhances business values.



Driving Sustainability 2001
Looks at the ways in which leading automotive companies are responding to the sustainable mobility agenda. Key issues: climate change; life cycle management; liveable cities; and impacts on emerging economies.



Virtual Sustainability 2001
Analyses the growing linkages between sustainable development and the internet. Topics range from web-based sustainability reporting to cyber-activism.



Cannibals with Forks 1997
The book in which John Elkington introduced the triple bottom line to the world. Paperback, Capstone/New Society, UK/US.



The Chrysalis Economy 2001
John Elkington's new book explores the interface between values and value creation. Hardback, Capstone/John Wiley, UK/US.

Engaging Stakeholders publications are available as printed reports or as electronic PDF files. Reports can be ordered in either format and electronic files can be downloaded from the **SustainAbility** website at www.sustainability.com

Publication Details

Good News & Bad
First Edition 2002
ISBN 1-903168-04-X

© SustainAbility, Ketchum and the United Nations Environment Programme 2002. All Rights Reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means: electronic, electrostatic, magnetic tape, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without permission in writing from the copyright holders. Designations employed and the presentation of material in this publication do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of UNEP concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its frontiers or boundaries. Moreover, the views expressed do not necessarily represent the decision or the stated policy of UNEP nor does citing of trade names or commercial processes constitute endorsement.

Printer

The Beacon Press
T +44 (0)1825 768611
www.beaconpress.co.uk
Beacon, who printed *Good News & Bad*, are registered under both the EMAS and ISO14001 schemes. Recent progress highlights include the following: vegetable-based inks are used; film and film processing chemicals have been eliminated; 'green' electricity is sourced from Ecotricity; 95% of all press cleaning solvents are now recycled; and waste recycling is now at 90%. The firm has just won its 21st environmental performance award.

Designer

Rupert Bassett
T +44 (0)7958 629 290

Acknowledgements

This is SustainAbility's second Gordian Knot report. Once again, our sincere thanks go to our sponsors, listed on the back cover fold-out, who are its godparents. Jacqueline Aloisi de Larderel of UNEP has played the role of fairy godmother — alongside her colleagues Robert Bisset and Laura Williamson, who helped wave the wand.

Good News & Bad owes a great deal to the hard work of the Ketchum team. We are indebted to Gavin Power and his colleagues, Richard Aldwinckle, Claire Baty, Nhu-Y Canh, Yasmin Crowther, Erika Gabrielsen, Jorge Gonzalez, Chris Liu, John Paluszek and Sarah Partrick.

At SustainAbility, we thank all our colleagues, both in London and New York. But we would particularly like to acknowledge the key roles played by Seb Beloe in developing the relationship with Ketchum, Sue Newell in shepherding, Tell Münzing and Peter Zollinger for ongoing inputs, Jan Scherer, and Frances Scott for keeping an watchful eye on the final stages of production.

We would also like to express our gratitude to all the interviewees listed on the inside front cover — and to those who took the time to review an advanced draft of the report. Special thanks for an assortment of inputs to Linda Descano of Citigroup; Leyla Alyanak and Aliza Dichter of MediaChannel; Helen Holdaway of the Environment Foundation; Chris Rose, Peter Sinton of *The San Francisco Chronicle*; and Frank Werner of oekom research AG.

The report's design, once again, is the work of Rupert Bassett. His influence has been an increasingly powerful leitmotif in our work. Thank you, Rupert. In terms of illustrations, we thank — among others — Panos Pictures and Still Pictures.

We have done our best to ensure that *Good News & Bad* is accurate. At this point it is standard practice to say that any remaining errors are our responsibility, but the fact that this report is also available electronically gives us the opportunity to make corrections. So please let us know if you spot something we didn't.

Engaging Stakeholders Program

The companies listed on the back cover participate in the 2001 *Engaging Stakeholders* program — our joint initiative with **UNEP** focused on tools for transparency, accountability and engagement. *Engaging Stakeholders* publications are available as printed reports or as electronic PDF files. Reports can be ordered in either format and electronic files can be downloaded from the **SustainAbility** website at www.sustainability.com

The Eye of Horus

The Media Program's logotype is a representation of the left eye of Eye of Horus. In Ancient Egypt, this symbolized universal fertility, prosperity, transformation, completeness and the keen eye of justice, from which no action — public or private — could escape. With the media now seen as extensions of the human senses, note that the all-seeing eye also represented the senses: sight, touch, hearing, taste, smell — and (in the case of the left eye) the sixth sense, intuition. Finally, with trust in the media now precariously low, recall that the left eye of Horus was destroyed, but then restored.





AstraZeneca



BASF



Bayer



The Body Shop



BP



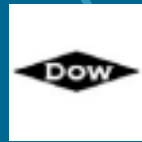
Bristol-Myers Squibb Company



Canon



CIS Insurance



The Dow Chemical Company



ESAB



General Motors



ITT Flygt



Nike



Novartis



Novo Group



Rohm and Haas



Skanska



South African Breweries



Statoil



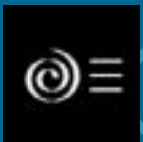
TXU Europe



UBS



Volkswagen Group



SustainAbility Ltd
11-13 Knightsbridge
London SW1X 7LY
United Kingdom
T +44 (0)20 7245 1116
F +44 (0)20 7245 1117
www.sustainability.com



United Nations Environment Programme – Technology, Industry and Economics Division
39–43 Quai André Citroën
75739 Paris Cedex 15 France
T +33 (0)1 4437 1450
F +33 (0)1 4437 1474
www.unepie.org



Ketchum
711 Third Avenue
New York, NY 10017
USA
T +1 646 935 3900
F +1 646 935 4499
www.ketchum.com