

# Role of Digital Media in Achieving Sustainable Development in the Arab World

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## Abstract

Digital media is an important means of effecting change and development within societies in general and considers the strong link between the various interactions that can arise between members of these societies. Media is a concept with multiple meanings and goals, as it deals with studying, downloading and describing the treatment of various social, political, economic, and environmental, health and other phenomena that govern the process of steady development that the world is witnessing in various fields. Digital media in particular - in the modern era - plays important and influential roles in the lives of individuals and societies, as it is entrusted with the responsibility to shed light on the various initiatives and plans that are proposed related to cognitive and behavioral awareness processes that in turn lead to the development of society in general. This study sheds light on digital media technology's role in achieving sustainable development in the Arab world. Nowadays, digital media has become a vital element, which helps governments and organizations direct their messages to their audiences and create the desired social development and change. Moreover, the study clarifies that many Arab countries still suffer from poverty, illiteracy, backwardness, and environmental issues despite the massive progress of the sustainable development movement in the Arab world right after (RIO)'s declaration. Besides, the study defines the limitations that mostly hinder sustainable development programs. The study also determines the most critical requirements for achieving sustainable development in the Arab world within the digital media framework.

**Keywords:** Digital Media, Sustainable Development, Arab World.

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## INTRODUCTION

The media has always been functioning to serve human communities. Until recently, countries had a monopoly over media to serve their goals and interests. However, governments nowadays have less control on media outlets. The broadcasting channels and their owners and the broadcast messages have grown in line with technology development, which paved the way for new media outlets to emerge. This can be attributed to the emergence of the Internet in different windows, which allow simple people and independent individuals to create personal media platforms, communicate their messages, share their worries, and initiate their events. Hence, we notice that digital media has surpassed the old media in terms of the tools and signs used and a better and faster method to convey the news immediately. i.e., digital media can convey live news, information, entertainment, norms,

opinions, and scenes. The digital media can also create ideas, norms, and public opinions and develop trends and change some ever-prevailing behavioral patterns.

Since the beginning of 2016, digital media has become the most prevalent method among peoples to exchange information and interact easily via it, at high speed and low cost. Digital media includes the radio, the television, the Internet with its multiple channels, visual and audio recordings. It even includes a cinema and books. Moreover, digital media activates human interactions on the economic, social, scientific, and political levels and promotes important issues to societies and awareness towards sustainable development.

The earth suffers a set of problems related to the human depletion of energy and resources, which

deems sustainable development an essential and urgent need for global communities, especially for the developing countries. Therefore, this study attempts to shed light on Digital Media's role in activating and stimulating sustainable development and achieving social well-being in the Arab world.

### The Problem and Questions of the Study

The problem of the study can be summed in the following question: What is the role of Digital Media in the sustainable development issues in the Arab world?

This problem is based on the principle of stressing the importance of associating digital media with sustainable development; especially after media and communication have become the primary generators of the main activity in world's countries. Therefore, the study attempts to answer the following secondary questions:

- What is Digital Media?
- What are the types of Digital Media?
- What is Sustainable Development? What are its goals?
- What are the most vital theories that construct the role of digital media in sustainable development?
- What are the main dimensions of sustainable development and the terms and conditions of achieving it in the Arab world?
- What is the nature of the relationship between digital media and sustainable development? What is the role of media planning to achieve this relationship?
- What are the main requirements to make the media development plans work?

### The significance of the Study

The significance of this study stems from:

- Outlining the digital media's influence on the citizens' behaviors via media campaigns, which contribute to spreading well-mannered behaviors, alert audiences to abandon harmful behaviors, adapt and encourage beneficial and positive behaviors.
- Outlining Digital Media's role in supporting the Arab governmental programs in pushing the development forward and achieving sustainable development in the Arab world.
- Creating environmental awareness and spreading the wise utilization of human and natural resources and protecting them under sustainable development.

### The Objective of the Study

This study aims at introducing the role of Digital Media outlets in sustainable development in the Arab world.

### The Study Methodology

This study uses the descriptive methodology that based on collecting and arranging information, which leads to results that activate and stimulate the sustainable development plans through digital media and apply the ethics of sustainable development, which are useful in answering the study questions.

### Digital Media

New media aspects were developed to include interactivity, rapid publishing, and multiple media. Also, news and media publishing were transferred to the public, leaving no space for official authorities to control the media solely. The new media mainly depends on the Internet, paving the way to transfer the old media outlets into digitalized ones, which primarily depend on technological methods-especially social media- to produce the intended media communications. Therefore, social media has become a phenomenon with the advent of technology and rapid rise in the reach across the world. (Mishra, 2017).

The technological method, which is used to convey information, has become available everywhere. The digital media may convey positive and negative norms, which are sometimes difficult to control, and may influence individuals and communities via Satellite channels and different social media outlets. Furthermore, the spread and variety of media broadcasting outlets and the easy access and low price have made it easier to reach larger masses via Satellite channels and the Internet. Remarkable development efforts have been exerted through the previous two outlets, especially the Satellite channels, such as the Al-Majd Channel, which adopted the development path and boosted moderation and mediation thinking. (Al-Ghufaily, 2012).

### Digital Media Definition

Linguistically speaking, media refers to the news. Media also refers to reporting and informing an entity with news and information. However, Digital Media can be defined as "the media that relies on a computer machine to produce, distribute, and store information. The digital media explosion on the Internet due to the rise of prosumer electronics, Wi-Fi availability, ubiquitous devices, software and applications contributed to the growth and development of the digital media ecosystem on the Internet. (Reyna, Hanham, and Meier, (2018). Digital media now includes text, audio, video, and graphics that is transmitted over the internet, for viewing on the internet. Dan (2012). Although there is no consensus on defining digital media, new media, or alternative media, this term has emerged right after the Internet, which has been part of the technology revolution. Alternative media is a term that signifies a range of media forms and practices, from radical critical media to independent media, and from grassroots autonomous

media to community, citizen and participatory media. (Jeppeson, 2016).

Interestingly, the Information Age results from two eminent and well-known phenomena during this age: The information explosion phenomenon and the communication phenomenon. Hence, the new media includes personal and mass communication and transcends their disadvantages. The new media is even a result of mixing the new communication and broadcasting technology with the computer and its networks, along with the emergence of the simultaneous sending and publishing of texts, images, videos, and audio recording (Al-Sayed, 2017).

Other terms, which reflect the characteristics and types of Digital Media, are the common name "Digital Media," which consists of digital TV, digital radio, and digital social media. Second, the "Interactive Media", a media feature characterized by allowing interactivity with the receiver and not only communicating the news. Also, Interactive media defines Internet users as interactors. Third, the "Online/CyberMedia", the network media. Fourth, the "Info Media" or information media, which the Operational Media refers to as "Hypermedia" and "Hyperlink". Lastly, the "Multimedia", is the field concerned with the computer controlled integration of text, graphics, drawings, still and moving images (Video), animation, audio, and any other media where every type of information can be signified, stored, communicated and handled digitally (Pavithra *et al.* 2018).

Digital Media can be divided into the following sections: (Abd Al-Hamid, 2009)

- a. Digital media based on the Internet and its applications: This type is entirely new, giving its distinguishing characteristics and features. This type grows fast and generates countless applications.
- b. Digital media is based on mobile phones: This type grows fast and generates new applications on different mobilized tools, such as mobile phones and personal digital assistants... etc.
- c. Old media type, such as radio and TV: new features were added to this type, for instance, interactivity, digital feature, and demand response.
- d. Digital media based on the computer platform: This type can be exchanged through networks or different storing means, such as the DVD and other means. This type includes visual presentations, video games, electronic books, etc.

### Digital Media Characteristics

Many characteristics feature digital Media. Below are the most important ones: (Abd Al-Hamid).

### 1. Interactivity

This is the most common characteristic in Digital Media, which sought to end the linear communication, or one-way communication-from the sender to the receiver- in media outlets and classical communications. The term interactivity is derived from interaction, which in a general sense refers to a dynamic sequence of actions between individual or group entities that modify their subsequent actions in response to their interaction partners (Turner, 1988). Therefore, interactivity allows two-way communication, where the two sides exchange roles in the interaction, and each side can influence and freedom of direct expression. Thereby, the receiver becomes an influencing and active participant in establishing different communication options, and whose decisions are made within the range of acceptance, continuation, stopping, or declining. Moreover, the receiver's participation is not limited to the final output of the communication process.

### 2. Diversity

The progress in digital innovations of multiple communication and media outlets and the increase in their ability to store information and the media content availability created diversity in digital media outlets. This offered the receiver more options to apply these outlets to serve his/her needs and motives. Hence, the Internet represents this diversity through search engines, which provide newspapers, international TV and radio channels, social media, and e-mails, as well as the freedom to choose any of the previous-mentioned outlets at a suitable time and place based on the circumstances and the needs of the user.

### 3. Integration

The Internet represents the communication umbrella, which combines multiple communication systems and digital tools-different in content, shape, or function- under one system within an integrated framework, which provides the user with many options. Integration is the present of a small world theory and scattering distribution principle. Hu and Lin, (2013). As a result, during exposure to informative material, the user may choose to store, print, a record that information on DVDs, or forward it to other users via e-mail since the digital system and its innovations offer methods for exposure and availability as well as storing tools in an integrated style while exposed to the Internet and its multiple websites.

### 4. Surpassing Cultural Borders

Hundreds of thousands of regional and international networks meet on the Internet. Moreover, the increase of these networks each year makes it hard to make future expectations on its numbers and progress. In addition, it is hard to estimate the potential number of future users of the Internet because it is ever increasing in an unprecedented manner due to

communication availability and the low cost, which led to surpassing cultural borders.

### Types of digital media (Al-Sayed, 2017)

Digital media can be limited to five types, as follows:

- 1- Digital TV
- 2- Digital radio
- 3- Electronic newspapers
- 4- News websites
- 5- Media of social media websites

### Digital Media Means

Digital Media tools is a clearly focussed introduction to the major software tools used for creating digital graphics, multimedia and Web pages (Champman& Champman,2007). Thus, it is not about being able to create content online anymore; it is about effective communication to engage the audience in the digital space (Reyna *et al.*, 2018). There are multiple digital media, including social media websites, such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, linked in, and other websites, representing the hub of digital media. Marshal McLuhan, the media theories developer, called this type “the global village” as a description of social media, which emerged in the first 90s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, decades before the protests against globalization. Digital media are multiple and ever-evolving on the Internet. Below are the most important ones:

Social Media: it is the most common and widespread means through which users can communicate on the social, political, cultural, and media level and share news, images, and videos. Social media have allowed people of different cultures to reach out and share every thing they know. Thus, social media has given us various platforms that enable us to be more vocal on important topics (Thirwall, 2019). Such media includes Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. In addition, although it was developed recently in 2003, Facebook is globally the first and most prominent website, for, during the past ten decades, users of Facebook have been massively increasing. Interestingly, these media have gained colossal publicity and have influenced peoples to the extent that some countries had to ban them, such as Syria, Tunes, and Pakistan. Nevertheless, Facebook's publicity has overgrown to make it globally the second-place after Google, amounting to 1.6 Billion users amongst youth who use it the most. Then, Twitter follows Facebook. As the statistics show, in 2017, Facebook scored first place in the Arab World, of 147 million users, and then Twitter scored second place (<http://akhbar-alkhaleej.com/news/article/1082021>).

- Blogs: users can write and express their thoughts, opinions, or personal issues.
- Websites: Some websites are informative, others are commercial and economical to present and sell goods, while other websites are religious or

- E-mail: such as Yahoo and Hotmail, through which users can send communications, messages, or reply to the same. E-mails are easy to use and are not expensive.
- Chat websites: users can make calls (also live video calls) and instant conversations, such as Skype and Viber. These websites are easy to use and not expensive.

### Sustainable Development

#### Development Definition

It is a hybrid term for a myriad of strategies adopted for socioeconomic and environment transformation from current states to desired ones (Abuiyada, 2018).

In Arabic glossaries, the word “development” refers to the growth and increase in a thing. Therefore, the thing grows, as in growth, which means it increases and becomes bigger (the Brief Glossary, 1990). However, the idiomatic meaning of the same is the processes that unify the governments’ and citizens’ efforts to enhance the economic, social, cultural, and environmental circumstances in local communities; in order to help and contribute to their progress as much as possible (Human Resources Report, USA Program, 2006).

The development definition outlines two main issues: creating better life opportunities for the next generation, studying social potentials, and applying them for the common interest. According to the Arabic Development Report, development aims to expand human blessings to achieve the highest human goals, i.e., freedom, justice, human dignity, and well-being (Ameen, 2008).

#### Sustainable Development Definition

The overall goal of sustainable development (SD) is the long-term stability of the economy and environment; this is only achievable through the integration and acknowledgement of economic, environmental, and social concerns throughout the decision making process (Emas, 2015). Environmental issues were given much attention, along with the human right to live in a clean and balanced environment, in a way that does not lead to the depletion, deterioration, or shortage of the natural resources; water, soil, biomass, as well as save them for the next generation. (Fa’eq, 2007). The sustainable development is an integrated and holistic approach that calls for the participation of individuals, groups, organizations, public and governments at individual, local, regional, national and global levels, social media can be helpful to achieve the goals set by sustainable development (Balaswamy & Palvai, 2017).

Sustainable development seeks to eliminate poverty, ignorance, and backwardness and raise awareness towards human rights, women and children's rights, democracy, social development, and the tendency for natural resources continuation. In addition, it seeks to increase the individuals' living standard; raise their incomes through work opportunities; enhance their education, health, and accommodation; pay special attention to assessing the environmental, social, and economic effect of the development projects; guarantee a fair distribution of resources in the same country and among other countries; guarantee a fair distribution of production and protect it. Lastly, it seeks to close the gap between advanced and developing countries, protect the environment, and achieve social justice in order for the environmental objectives to complement one another (Tawfeeq, 2016). (Nusair, 2002).

Arabic activities on the environment began upon the Arabic Declaration on Development and Environment, issued by the First Ministry Conference, held in Tunes in 1986 upon the Arabic Statement on environment development and future aspects, issued in Cairo, September 1991.

### **Sustainable Development evolution**

In 1986, the "Declaration of the Right to Development" has made development a fundamental right for individuals and not just a luxury. The declaration also covers the economic, social, cultural, and political comprehensive development, to increase the individuals' luxury based on their actual participation therein. As a result, development has been included in the human rights system, and both advanced and developing countries approved it. Historically speaking, and upon the "Fall of Berlin Wall" after the Cold War, the human rights concept evolved to include humans' right to development. Then, in Vienna's conference in 1993, the work program was issued to connect human rights, development, and democracy. Hence, development has become a human right and a complementary and integral part of other rights. (Fa'eq, 2007).

### **Digital Media Role in Achieving Sustainable Development**

The UNESCO Declaration on Mass Media highlights the importance of the role of development in the development process. According to article 3, "Media contributes to eliminating ignorance and misunderstanding between peoples, to ensure the respect of the rights and dignity of all nations, all peoples and all individuals without distinction of race, sex, language, religion or nationality, and to draw attention to the great evils which afflict humanity, such as poverty, and malnutrition". In September 1979, the Havana declaration strengthened the national information media to serve the economic, social, and

cultural development in the developing countries. (Al-Deek, 1993).

Besides, the Second Round Table conference for the heads of Asian newspapers, which was convened under the UNESCO sponsorship, recommends, "Development projects do not prosper unless peoples participate in them by the help of media, i.e., ever-flowing journalism and suitable radio and TV programs". Hence, there is no doubt in the role of media in development plans, which requires efforts to succeed: first, a material effort that the country shall strive to provide, such as technical and material conditions. Second, moral effort, such as raising the media awareness towards the importance of development plans and spreading them. (Barqouq and Ramadan, 2015).

### **Development Media Characteristics**

Development media is characterized by some important features, such as (Barqouq and Ramadan, 2015, Al-Dubaisi and Al- Tahat, 2013):

- It is a programmed and planned media that is connected to Development plans and supports their success.
- It is a media activity that seeks to achieve objectives and goals inspired by its primary community needs and vital interests.
- It is a comprehensive media, or complete objectives, which address the public opinion and persuade the public of the importance of social change as required by the development.
- It is a media of multiple parameters; economic, social, educational, financial, and administrative.

### **Development Media Functions**

The media performs many functions to serve sustainable development, such as (Barqouq and Ramadan, 2015, Al-Dubaisi and Al-that).

#### **1- Informative and interpretive function**

By judging direct news, highlighting the facts and showing the surveys conducted on them, providing precise news and commenting on them based on the interpreter writer's views and not just copying it from the source, some media professors consider news interpretation and analysis as an independent media job, which the audience expects. Moreover, media tends to separate news from commentary and analysis even though media behaviors show interpretations for the authors or representatives within the news context they present. Therefore, the journalist's job must not be limited to the routine news coverage, for the journalist must analyze and interpret. i.e., to interpret the news, he/she reports. As a result, journalists may use this function widely to introduce the risks surrounding development in developing countries, such as Arab communities, and raise the audience's awareness in saving the environment for the next generations. Thus,

## 2- The convincing function

The convincing function has a significant and active role in influencing the audience. However, convincing people of an idea or an issue expressing the public opinion and gathering an audience for sustainable development issues are considered a step-forward towards progress. Accordingly, this function follows the interpretation function and even enhances the news interpretation in media, since the media, of all kinds and its tendencies, seeks to succeed in persuading people through its influential role. To achieve that, the media uses direct and indirect convincing methods. However, the difference between the two methods is spotted in the content of effective campaigns. In totalitarian communities (imperial, communist, development); media seeks to activate its role as a useful tool of the government policies, programs, and development organizations.

## 3- The social media and economic interactivity function

Digital media plays a vital part in the political systems and current interactions by spreading their information and informing the peoples thereof. Media plays its role within an open and wide space in the globalization framework. This digital revolution also provides opportunities for exposure to the media material directed to individual social segments and achieving a specific function. However, digital media provides new features, whereby the media organizations can make dialogues with citizens and organizations associated with sustainable development. Add to that the interaction that is carried out during the media event. Overall, this is the age of media globalization.

The role digital media undertakes to develop communities is called "Social Engineering in Mass Media", the importance of which can be spotted in highlighting all development issues, including the economic, social, political, and environmental ones. These issues require exertion of all efforts to fulfill them and make a real advancement in achieving sustainable development and spreading the thoughts and manners, which hinder the development process (Dagher, 2012).

Nobody can ignore the critical part the media plays with other community partners to fulfill the desired change and sustainable development. To achieve that, the media must set goals, develop plans and assess them, participate in dialogues, interact and persuade the target groups, and influence governments and civil community organizations -in the sustainable development field- to adopt development plans and policies. Therefore, several practicing and qualified journalists are needed to educate people about the development issues, positively interact with critical issues, and support the logo "media is a social responsibility", and not only a commercial one. Hence,

while achieving real development issues, the journalist shall present and introduce his/her ideas using well-studied techniques based on evidence and facts to persuade people and obtain their impression and acceptance. The journalist shall also express people's concerns, understand and realize the events surrounding them, reveal the destructive thoughts, which tend to root backwardness, fight them, emphasize the youth's role and issues, and strengthen friendliness, brotherhood, tolerance, and national coherence among different community groups (Barqouq and Ramadan, 2017).

## Theories interpreting the media role in sustainable development

Over a long time, media theories and literature have included concepts relating to media's importance in supporting and sponsoring the development efforts and spreading awareness among people. However, many concepts and theories did not go hand in hand with globalization, which led to a crisis of doubts, manipulation, and confusion. This is because countries could not control their communities with the flow of information, openness to the world, trespassing national borders, and the influence of western societies and the media, its powers and means, and the development concept and requirements. Such theories include (Dagher, 2012, Al-Harbi, 2016):

### 1- The role of media in sustainable development through the development theory on media

This theory applies to developing countries and reflects the role of media in them, in which media should play a social, political, and economic role in society. According to (Mcquail, 1983), there is a thin line between the media's role in developing countries and its role in communism. Nevertheless, in communism, the media is cautious about spreading news that might backfire on society's political and economic stability. Moreover, the liberals criticized the communism theory since they consider the development media a controlling and manipulative tool to news, which the advanced countries produce. Thus, this news is seen as commercials that disregard the developing countries. In return, the media obtains news from liberal media for entertainment purposes.

### 2- The role of media in sustainable development through the Diffusion of Innovations theory

Digital media helps achieve the goals of development plans in developing countries since its importance lies in being associated with the political, social, and economic systems and the national progress in such countries. Hence, the positive participation of production powers- through planned media and the media role in education and awareness, leads to such plans' success. This requires establishing national media policies to define the priorities and means needed to reach the desired goals since media paves the way

towards production. Therefore, the media role stems from the progress based on media, production, and ongoing interaction with it. Hence, the relationship between media and development is defined through thought and work. To his end, the Diffusion of Innovations theory depends on three stages (Dagher, 2012) as follows:

- Innovating, creating, or developing new ideas
- Spreading or delivering new thoughts to the audience
- The results or changes, which occur within the social system for adapting or rejecting new ideas.

### 3- The role of media in sustainable development through the Agenda-Setting Theory

Communication and media scholars believe that there is a relationship between the stressed-upon issues by media and the audience's perspective since these issues hugely contribute to setting the audience agendas. Thereby, the media educates and guides the audience on general issues and their importance through relevant media messages. Thus, it shapes people's social life through the news it delivers (Nusair, 2002). McCombs (2011), pointed "that the agenda-setting influence of the news media is not limited to this initial step of focusing public attention on a particular topic, the media also influence the next step in the communication process, our understanding and perspective on the topics in the news".

This function also helps the media form public opinion on issues through consensus since some decision-makers can establish a particular agenda and allow the media to adopt specific issues to present to the audience. Consequently, stressing such issues deems them a priority to the media and its agenda. Hence, they become mass priorities.

The media can achieve utmost effectiveness if it takes into consideration the following factors: (Nusair, 2002).

- The communicator's knowledge and experience of the environment he/she communicates with
- The communicator's ability to precisely define the goal, understand the audience, its interests, factors, and characteristics affect the communication process.
- Preparing proper messages and a suitable method to attract the audience.

### Limitations of sustainable development in the Arab World

Even though we entered the third millennium, the Arab world still suffers big problems in the development process, such as:

1- Poverty: where an individual income amounts to one dollar a day, making poverty a human tragedy since it is associated with many issues, such as

health, education, production rate ... etc. Moreover, statistics state that 40% of the poor in the developing countries consume 11% of the world's total production, which leads to a decline in the education levels and shortage of qualified staff who are the pillar of sustainable development. There are two types of poverty: rural and urban poverty. The first type is most common in third world countries in which employment of the poor mainly depends on agriculture. However, agriculture is always exposed to natural disasters, afflictions, dehydration, and Africa among the poorest continents. (Mahmoud, 2017).

Other reasons for poverty are a shortage of natural and financial resources, exposure to natural disasters and epidemics, and weak government and social organizations' mismanagement. Hence, according to the world annual bank report issued on 17<sup>th</sup> of October 2018, half the world is considered poor, and the poverty rate in the Arab countries amounts to 13.4%, especially in Yemen, Gaza, Egypt, Mauritania, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Libya, and Iraq, where 38.2% of the residents are poor (The World Bank annual report, 2018).

### 2- Population Density

During the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Arab countries scored the highest population growth rates, with fertility rates mounting to 6.5 during 1975-1980. This means that an Arab woman's birth rate during that period reached 6-7 births, which decreased to 3.6 during 2000-2005. Even though the fertility rate decreased during that time, it was still high compared to the international rates 2.1 then. During 2010-2015, it decreased to 1.9 and remained high when globally fertility declined to 1.1. In 2017, the Arab countries' residents became 359 million, while it was 172 million in 1980 and 331 million in 2007. This increase occurred despite the challenges this area witness, such as water shortage, agricultural lands diminishing, and desertification increase. Imagine the pressure this density will impose on the production powers and the threat to environmentally sustainable development. (Mahmoud, 2017).

### 3- Education decline and the spread of illiteracy

Statistics show that the number of illiterate in the Arab world reached 54 million in 2018 and 58 in 2014 ;two-thirds of this number were females based on the UNFPA report. In addition, in 2014, around 5.6 million Arab children of 6-11 years never attended schools (61.2% of them are females). (The reality of education in the Arab world (<https://barq-rs.com/2062-2/>)).

Due to wars and conflicts occurring in some Arab countries, education has seriously deteriorated. For example, a UNICEF report states that the Syrian war destroyed around 33% of schools, leaving around

2.8 million children out of school. Also, the number of homeless children in Syria reached around 5.5 million (UNICEF Report, 2014).

It is no less different in Iraq, for the US invasion has destroyed it on organization level 2003. The invasion also sabotaged the infrastructure, killed Iraqi scholars, unsettled the political reality, spread sectarianism, produced a destructive sectarian speech that made education an arena in which sectarian war got a chance to grow among Iraqis. However, in Egypt, the illiteracy rate reached 29.2% in males and 38.1% in females 15 years old and more. Moreover, Egypt scored 139 of 140 globally in the basic education quality (education rates in light of the international competency report 2015-2016 (<http://drgawdat.edutech-portal.net/archives/14608>), and Mauritania was placed first in the number of illiterate people, which amounts to 48% of its residents (<http://www.aljazeera.net/programs/economyandpeople/2010>).

#### 4- Women low participation in the work market

Statistics show that Arab women contribution in the work market is 20%, which is very low compared to women in other countries, wherein South Asia it reaches 29%, 51% in Europe, 57% in America, 61% in East Asia, and 63% in Africa, moreover, over the past three decades, women annual participation in the work market increased to 0.14%. Hence, the Arab world needs 150 years to meet the current international rate (Aliwaa Newspaper, in numbers .... Arab Women in the Work Market (<http://aliwaa.com.lb>)).

#### 5- Climate Change

Observed and anticipated changes in the climate include higher temperatures, changes in rainfall patterns, changes in the frequency and distribution of weather events such as droughts, storms, floods and heat waves, sea level rise and consequent impacts on human and natural systems (Ried, 2016).

In 2010, the United Arab Emirates, in cooperation with the Stockholm Environment Center, tested the potential effect of the increase of CO<sub>2</sub> emission on climate. However, the report's results were shocking and generally had a bad effect on the economy, infrastructure, citizens' health, the environment system. Moreover, the sea level might rise to 6% by the end of this century, which threatens the coastal areas and leads to the 1.155 loss of such coasts by 2050 (note that the country's total area is 83.00 Km<sup>2</sup>).

#### 6- Desertification

The humane Arabic development report of 2009 shows that the biggest desert on earth lies in the Arabian Peninsula (89.6), followed by North Africa

(77.7%), then the Nile Valley and the Horn of Africa (44.5), and lastly the Orient (35.6%). Nevertheless, desertification nowadays is threatening around 2.89 million km<sup>2</sup> of Arab lands. It also moves back towards the orient, which faces a danger of desertification estimated at 48.6% of its lands, 28.6% in the Nile Valley and the Horn of Africa, 16.5% in North Africa, and 9% Arabian Peninsula. (Mahmoud, 2017).

#### 7- Water Shortage

Permanent rivers are the primary source of surface water in the Arab world, followed by the waterfalls and seasonal rivers. Arab countries suffer from water shortages since they are located in desert or semi-desert areas. Moreover, the shortage severity increases as water resources' depletion increases due to demographical and economic growth. Annually, around 300 billion m<sup>3</sup> of water resources is available in the Arab countries, while water surface is estimated by 277 billion m<sup>3</sup>, 43% of which stems from Arab countries and 57% comes from the outside. Water usage and sharing are associated with political and regional conflicts and worries. Therefore, the agreements made over the past years to manage this water was neither fair nor practical (Mahmoud, 2017).

Studies emphasize that the Arabic area entered the water shortage crisis. According to the Unified Arabic and Economic report in 2001, the available resources in the Arab world are estimated at 265 billion m<sup>3</sup>, i.e., around 1000 m<sup>3</sup> per person, while an individual's global ratio reaches 7000 per year. The report also states that in 2025, the individual's ratio will be lessened to 460 m<sup>3</sup> as the water demand increases, which is beyond severe poverty according to international classifications. However, this water's long-distance from the places of consumption makes the situation worse by raising its transfer and storage cost. Hence, economically, it is not useful for housing, agriculture, or industrial consumption (Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development, 2001).

#### Requirements for Sustainable Development in the Arab World

Sustainable development is based on achieving stability in all life aspects and saving the environment and natural resources for the next generations as follows: (Abu Zant and Ghanem, 2009, Tawfeeq, 2016).

1- Rising the economic level of society by enhancing the production level and increasing the national income to conform to the information and technical progress and the information and communication revolution. This could also be done by creating work opportunities, spreading education, applying knowledge, and achieving progress in environmental and social fields. Such fields are associated together since the procedures

are taken in any field affect the other ones and boost their goals.

2- Self-independence, giving Arab countries greater production power, enabling them to apply their human and natural resources and use such resources to achieve comprehensive development.

3- Enhancing living conditions for all individuals in societies and demolishing poverty by following balanced production and consumption patterns, with less depletion of natural resources.

4- Using advanced technology in developing countries, heading towards manufacturing, copying the industrial countries' mistakes, and reducing environmental damage in industrial societies to stop gas emissions and resource depletion.

5- Activating women's role in society since women shape half the population on earth. Globally, sustainable development nowadays requires women to participate in the development process by providing the best conditions to build the children's mental, physical, and social abilities and to discipline misbehaviors. As a result, the UN raised a new international logo, "women are development partners".

6- Public participation in making decisions associated with establishing development strategies, utilizing resources, and forming development policies. Public participation contributes to presenting a better image of countries' needs and problems, which need development since citizens understand areas problem, resources, and potentials.

7- Wise judgment through which economic and social resources are carried out for development purposes. It is also transparent management, which controls human, natural, economic, and financial resources. This helps in imposing an ongoing and fair development within a political, environmental, and institutional framework that respects the law's human rights, democratic principles, and sovereignty.

### **Main requirements for fulfilling the development media**

The development media is based on a list of requirements, such as (Mahmoud, 2017, Al-harbi, 2016, Barqouq and Ramadan, 2015, Rabab'a and others, 2019):

1- Digital media must stem from an apparent philosophy translating the society's goals, serving the audience, and engaging it in the decision-making process. It also must focus on fulfilling the population needs, fair distribution of national income and natural resources, and guaranteeing the sovereignty and dominance of the national wealth, enhancing social progress, fighting all forms of exploitation and racism, and supporting the technological infrastructure in Arab countries.

2- The media should serve the audience and support ways that provide work opportunities, stop the brain drain, enhance self-sufficiency and production norms,

reduce consumption, and boost national norms and the sense of belonging.

3- The media should provide information relevant to the development and conditions to achieve and fulfill them. It also should explain the law, simplify procedures, activate dialogues, and provide people with the chance to express their ideas and opinions of the government projects, especially to criticize mistakes and the officials' dereliction.

4- The media should provide advanced media, trace technological developments, rely on new modern ways, and cover all individuals' events and development needs based on their geographical distribution.

5- The media should provide specialized media staff who can set development and media plans and programs.

### **CONCLUSION**

Sustainable development initially aims at developing Arab countries in all fields. This was not achieved due to education and knowledge absence, backwardness in Arab and poor societies in third-world countries. As a result, the industry emerged lacking growth, which increased the Arab people's struggle to develop policies to enhance education. Therefore, the concept "education for development" came out to enable Arab countries to raise their economy and productivity at rates that meet population growth, which requires the implementation of a new method relating to production and employment that focus on the industry sector. Nevertheless, sustainable development should also focus on the benefits and compensations that the economic development provides to enhance the health, educational and social services for societies and keep the environment safe, which is the central issue of the development process. Hence, the media undertakes an influential and unique role in achieving sustainable development in terms of explaining and interpreting innovative thoughts, to convince the audience of relevant messages and form a public opinion on sustainable development issues, especially in the last years, which witnessed a huge technological advancement on media and communication devices and ways. This could be achieved through the widespread use of the Internet and the diverse media content it provides worldwide.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Activate the digital media role in sustainable development in the economic, social, and cultural and environmental risks side, as well as the adoption of all media types (Radio, TV, Journalism, and social media) to the development issues, and establishing programs to educate the audience about such issues.
- Collaborate all efforts to diminish sustainable development limitations, such as poverty, unemployment, and the necessity to establish a unified economic entity in Arab countries to

include shared future goals and legislations, economic and developmental.

- Provide information about development rates and conditions, present them to the public, and allow them to express their opinions in projects implemented by their governments and achieve the principle of fair participation of all countries.
- Provide qualified media staff who can prepare development and media programs, provide a democratic atmosphere to make interactivity easier, and influence the public opinion.
- Set media plans to activate sustainable development and spread awareness about it in Arab communities.
- Increase the quality of education and educational institutions, develop approaches, which urge students to care for sustainable development culture, link education with the work market, encourage economic growth, and develop poor societies through education, health, and nutrition.

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