



## FRAMING ANALYSIS OF MEDIA COVERAGE ON PLASTIC WASTE REDUCTION IN MEDAN CITY ON KOMPAS.COM

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### ABSTRACT

*This study aims to analyze how media framing by Kompas.com in reporting plastic waste reduction in Medan City and its impact on public perception. Using a qualitative approach through content analysis and Pan and Kosicki's framing theory, this study identifies the syntactic, script, thematic, and rhetorical structures of the news studied. The results show that Kompas.com emphasizes more on regulatory and technical aspects, but does not touch on the emotional and personal aspects of society. A survey of 21 respondents showed that the majority were neutral towards the influence of news reporting, indicating that the effectiveness of framing in shaping public awareness and participation is not yet optimal. This study concludes that a more humanistic, contextual, and local narrative-based media approach is needed to increase public involvement in environmental issues.*

**Keywords:** media framing, public perception, plastic waste, Kompas.com, environmental issues

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The environmental issues caused by plastic waste have become a global concern, attracting serious attention from various stakeholders. Plastic is a material that is difficult to decompose naturally, and its massive use in daily life has made it a major source of environmental pollution. In Indonesia, this phenomenon is becoming increasingly complex, particularly in large cities such as Medan, which serves as the economic and social center of North Sumatra. According to data from the Environmental Agency of Medan City (DLH Medan, 2023), plastic waste production in the city exceeds 200 tons per day, with a recycling rate that remains significantly low. This condition indicates a waste management crisis that could threaten environmental sustainability and public health.

Amidst this crisis, mass media plays an important role as an information agent that shapes public opinion and awareness. One of the national online media outlets that regularly reports on environmental issues is Kompas.com. This media platform has wide reach and is considered credible in delivering public information. However, the way media frames an issue significantly influences how the audience understands, responds to, and engages with that issue. Framing in this context refers to how the media selects, highlights, and organizes information to construct a particular social reality (Goffman, 1974).

Previous studies have shown that media framing can influence public perception either positively or negatively, depending on the perspective and style of news delivery (Nugroho & Syarifuddin, 2021; Fitriyanti, 2020). Kompas.com, for instance, is known for frequently presenting policy solutions and technical approaches in its reporting. However, it remains unclear to what extent such approaches impact public awareness and participation, especially at the local level such as in Medan City. Local context is crucial, as community behavior, regional policies, and environmental conditions collectively determine the success of plastic waste reduction efforts.

Given this background, the present study aims to analyze how Kompas.com frames the issue of plastic waste reduction in Medan City and how such framing influences public perception. This research employs a qualitative approach with content analysis methods based on the framing theory by Pan and Kosicki. The study also involves the distribution of questionnaires to the public to assess the extent to which media coverage affects their awareness and participation in environmental issues.

## **2. RESEARCH METHOD**

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach with a case study method to analyze the framing of Kompas.com news coverage regarding plastic waste reduction in Medan City and its impact on public perception. The object of the study consists of Kompas.com articles published in the environmental section that are relevant to the issue of plastic waste in Medan.

Data were collected during March 2025 through two primary techniques: Content analysis of news articles using Pan and Kosicki's framing theory, focusing on syntactic, script, thematic, and rhetorical structures; A public perception survey involving 21 respondents, aged 17–25 years, residing in Medan. The survey used a Likert scale to measure the influence of media coverage on their awareness and attitudes.

The data were analyzed qualitatively and descriptively to reveal patterns of media framing and trends in public perception related to the environmental issues reported.

### 3. RESULT AND ANALYSIS

This study aims to analyze how Kompas.com frames the issue of plastic waste reduction in Medan City and how this framing influences public perception. Through qualitative content analysis of several articles published in the Lestari section of Kompas.com, it was found that the media consistently employs an approach that emphasizes regulatory and technocratic dimensions. The news coverage primarily focuses on government policies, producer responsibilities, and statistical data provided by official institutions. This approach is evident in articles highlighting producer accountability in managing plastic waste in accordance with regulations set by the Ministry of Environment and Forestry.

Framing is a concept in communication studies that explains how the media constructs social reality by emphasizing certain aspects of an event or issue. This concept was first introduced by Erving Goffman (1974) in his work *Frame Analysis*, which posits that individuals and groups use "frames" to interpret events in social life. Pan and Kosicki (1993) further developed framing theory by proposing an analytical model comprising four main structures within news texts:

1. The syntactic structure pertains to how the media constructs sentences, selects headlines, and arranges leads to determine the focus of the information.
2. The script structure involves the narrative flow or chronology of events in news reports, whether presented causally or descriptively.
3. The thematic structure illustrates how the media organizes and groups facts to convey a particular issue.
4. The rhetorical structure relates to the use of language, quotations, and visual elements such as photos and graphics to reinforce the conveyed message.

Through these four structures, media framing can be systematically analyzed to reveal hidden meanings and the direction of opinion shaped within the news coverage. A deeper analysis of the four framing structures introduced by Pan and Kosicki reveals how media discourse is systematically constructed to shape public perception. These structures are not merely technical components of journalistic writing but function as ideological tools that subtly influence how audiences interpret and internalize issues.

First, the syntactic structure operates as a mechanism of attention control. By positioning specific information at the forefront—through headlines, leads, or sentence composition—the media establishes a cognitive hierarchy of importance. This structure facilitates an internal agenda-setting process, where what is highlighted first tends to be perceived as more significant. Thus, the syntactic choices made by the media actively frame the issue, guiding how it will be read and prioritized by the audience.

Second, the script structure reflects how narratives are organized, whether through causal logic or chronological order. This narrative sequencing is far from neutral; it imposes coherence on fragmented events and can influence how responsibility, sympathy, or blame is assigned. By constructing a storyline, the media presents not just facts but a constructed version of reality, often with emotional or moral undertones. The use of a narrative arc subtly encourages audiences to interpret events through a particular lens, akin to storytelling in fiction.

Third, the thematic structure plays a critical role in contextualization. It determines how facts are grouped and what larger framework they are attached to—whether political, cultural, economic, or moral. This grouping creates patterns of meaning that may reinforce certain ideologies. For example, presenting crime stories in conjunction with socioeconomic backgrounds may shape public perception about the root causes of criminal behavior. Thematic framing thus constructs a cognitive schema through which events are not only understood but morally judged.

Fourth, the rhetorical structure enhances the persuasive power of the media message. The selective use of quotes, stylistic language, and visual elements such as photographs or infographics intensifies emotional engagement and reinforces particular interpretations. Far from being decorative, rhetorical elements function as symbolic anchors that fix meaning in the reader's mind. They evoke emotional responses that can deepen identification with a frame or generate opposition to alternative viewpoints.

Taken together, these four structures work in synergy to form a comprehensive framework that defines not only what to think about, but how to think about it. Through this lens, framing is not a passive reflection of reality but an active process of meaning-making. A critical examination of these structures reveals the ideological undercurrents of media messages and highlights the media's role in shaping, legitimizing, or challenging dominant social narratives.

Kompas.com tends to provide minimal coverage of human-interest aspects. Narratives that evoke emotional responses, such as real-life stories of affected communities or active local waste management initiatives, are rarely featured. As a result, the environmental issues presented appear distant from the public's daily lives. This contributes to low levels of public participation, as readers do not feel emotionally connected to the problem.

Agenda-setting theory posits that the media not only conveys information but also determines which issues are perceived as important by the public. McCombs and Shaw (1972) explained that the more frequently an issue is reported, the more likely it is to be considered significant by the audience. This implies that the media holds power in shaping the public agenda.

In the context of environmental management, media that consistently report on plastic waste issues can encourage both the public and policymakers to pay greater

attention to the matter. However, if coverage focuses solely on technical aspects and neglects the social and behavioral dimensions of the community, the resulting agenda becomes incomplete, leading to limited public participation.

Public perception is defined as the collective view of society toward an issue or phenomenon, shaped by experience, information, and social interpretation. In the context of mass communication, public perception is greatly influenced by the way media delivers information (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). The media can influence public perception through the emphasis on certain issues, the selection of sources, the use of data, and the presentation of visuals. For example, news coverage that focuses on disasters caused by plastic waste can heighten public concern, whereas narratives highlighting solutions and collective actions can foster hope and participation.

In environmental issues, public perception plays a crucial role in driving collective action. If the public perceives plastic waste reduction as a shared responsibility, they are more likely to be motivated to actively engage in environmentally friendly practices. When compared to other media outlets such as Detik.com or Tribunnews.com, Kompas.com adopts a more systematic and policy-based approach, but lacks emotional appeal and compelling storytelling. Other media tend to use dramatic, conflict-oriented reporting styles, though they sometimes neglect the context of long-term solutions. Kompas.com presents a formal and neutral side of journalism, yet falls short in exploring the root causes of the problem, such as consumerist culture or low environmental literacy.

This paragraph underscores the vital role of public perception in catalyzing collective environmental action. In the context of sustainability, perception is not merely a reflection of information but a powerful determinant of behavior. When the public internalizes environmental issues—such as plastic waste reduction—as a shared moral and civic responsibility, there is a greater likelihood of behavioral change and engagement in eco-friendly initiatives. Thus, the framing of environmental messages significantly influences whether the audience perceives the issue as urgent, actionable, or distant and abstract.

The comparison between media platforms reveals how different framing strategies affect public understanding and emotional involvement. Kompas.com is described as taking a more systematic and policy-oriented approach, which may lend credibility and factual rigor to its coverage. However, its lack of emotional resonance and narrative depth potentially limits its capacity to mobilize public sentiment and empathy—two key elements in stimulating mass behavioral change. Conversely, media outlets like Detik.com or Tribunnews.com adopt dramatic and conflict-driven framing, which, while effective in capturing attention, often sacrifices analytical depth and long-term perspectives. This sensationalist style may raise awareness quickly but risks distorting the issue or oversimplifying complex environmental dynamics.

Importantly, Kompas.com's neutral and formal tone aligns with professional journalistic standards, but the criticism lies in its inability to address the structural and cultural roots of the plastic waste problem—such as consumerism, throwaway culture, or low environmental literacy. Without interrogating these underlying drivers, the coverage may appear surface-level and fail to challenge the systemic patterns that sustain environmental degradation. In essence, the effectiveness of media in advancing environmental discourse hinges on its ability to balance rational policy reporting with emotionally engaging narratives, while also providing a critical lens on cultural and societal factors. A well-framed environmental story should not only inform but inspire action, evoke responsibility, and promote structural awareness among the public.

Furthermore, analysis based on Pan and Kosicki's framing theory reveals that the syntactic and thematic structures in Kompas.com's coverage are well-constructed. The articles are written clearly, objectively, and based on official sources. However, significant weaknesses are found in the rhetorical and script structures. The lack of visual elements such as photos, infographics, or illustrations depicting the real impact of plastic waste weakens the emotional resonance of the message. Additionally, personal narratives that could build empathy among readers are largely absent, rendering the environmental messages informative but not transformative.

This study also involved distributing questionnaires to 21 young respondents in Medan City. The survey results show that most respondents indicated a "Neutral" stance regarding their understanding of the news content and their motivation to engage in environmental issues after reading Kompas.com articles. This suggests that the media's messages have not fully reached the affective dimension necessary to inspire changes in public attitudes or behavior.

Overall, the findings indicate that Kompas.com has played a role in framing the issue of plastic waste reduction as a national strategic issue. However, the framing used is not yet strong enough to encourage active public engagement. The lack of emotional appeal, minimal inclusion of local context, and weak visual support make the coverage feel elitist and disconnected from the everyday reality of Medan's residents. Therefore, a more inclusive and engaging reporting strategy is needed. As a national media outlet, Kompas.com should balance policy-oriented approaches with grounded local narratives. Stories of local communities, inspiring figures, and simple, actionable solutions should be featured more prominently so that the media can optimally function as a facilitator of social change in environmental issues.

The findings suggest that Kompas.com has contributed to framing plastic waste reduction as a matter of national strategic importance, which is a commendable step toward elevating environmental discourse in the public sphere. However, despite this positioning, the framing lacks the depth and connectivity necessary to foster widespread public engagement, particularly at the grassroots level. The

coverage is described as technocratic and top-down, focusing primarily on institutional or policy-level narratives while neglecting the emotional, visual, and cultural dimensions that resonate with ordinary citizens.

This disconnect is particularly evident in the context of Medan, where environmental challenges are deeply entwined with daily practices, economic constraints, and cultural habits. The absence of local context and community voices in Kompas.com's reporting contributes to a sense of elitism and detachment, which undermines the accessibility and relatability of the issue. When environmental journalism fails to reflect the lived experiences of its readers, it risks alienating the very public it seeks to mobilize.

The analysis points to a need for a more inclusive, bottom-up approach to storytelling, one that humanizes the plastic waste issue through narratives of local actors, community initiatives, and everyday solutions. Highlighting inspiring individuals, small-scale efforts, and culturally relevant practices can bridge the gap between national policy and local reality, making the issue both tangible and actionable. As a leading national media outlet, Kompas.com has a strategic responsibility not only to inform but to engage and empower. By integrating policy analysis with emotionally compelling and locally grounded narratives, the media can better perform its role as a catalyst for civic participation and social transformation in environmental matters. This shift would position the platform not merely as a conveyor of facts, but as a facilitator of meaningful change through persuasive and context-sensitive journalism.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis of how Kompas.com frames the issue of plastic waste reduction in Medan City, it can be concluded that the media has made a tangible effort to elevate the issue as a strategic concern involving environmental and social aspects. Kompas.com's reporting focuses on the role of governmental authorities, the implementation of public policies, and technical alternatives to reduce the use of single-use plastics. From the thematic and rhetorical structures, the media presents the issue in an informative and relatively objective manner.

However, the framing strategy employed has not been entirely effective in mobilizing collective public action. This is reflected in the predominance of respondents who selected "Neutral" in terms of their understanding of the news content, awareness, and participation. The low level of public engagement is suspected to stem from the limited use of persuasive visual elements, the absence of personal stories relatable to readers' daily lives, and the weak emotional approach in message delivery. In addition, Kompas.com's tendency to present the issue broadly on a national scale has resulted in an insufficient exploration of the local context in Medan City. Yet, environmental challenges are closely linked to

local socio-cultural conditions, making it essential for the media to present narratives that resonate with the community's local reality

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