Vietnam in the Climate Change Narratives: A Discursive News Values Analysis of English-Language News

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Abstract

Climate change demands not only scientific and political responses but also effective communication in the public sphere. The reportage of climate issues has therefore been under a lot of research, yet few studies have examined how climate change is communicated in Vietnam's English-language press. This study is an attempt to fill such a gap, applying Discursive News Values Analysis (DNVA) to a self-compiled corpus of 116 climate-related articles from a major English-language online newspaper in Vietnam – Sai Gon Giai Phong News (SGGP). The analysis identifies four prominent semantic domains: environmental effects, sustainable development, institutional cooperation, and regional specificity. The most frequently constructed values are Eliteness, Impact, and Timeliness, which renders Personalization, Consonance, and Unexpectedness notably infrequent. The qualitative analysis reveals that SGGP frequently frames Vietnam as a proactive and solution-driven actor. However, climate discourse is largely elite-driven, privileging institutional voices while side-lining the perspectives of ordinary citizens. Coverage is also highly localized, with emphasis on the Mekong Delta and Ho Chi Minh City. Equally notably, Impact is constructed through a dual narrative of both consequences and future-oriented strategies, portraying Vietnam as vulnerable yet resilient. These findings contribute to the growing literature on DNVA in Southeast Asia and point to the need for more inclusive, people-centred approaches to climate communication in Vietnamese media and beyond.

Keywords: climate change communication, Discursive News Values Analysis (DNVA), news discourse, news values, Vietnamese media

1. Introduction

In this article, we investigate how climate change is made newsworthy in Vietnam's English-language press, with a case study of a major English-language online newspaper in Vietnam – Sai Gon Giai Phong News (henceforth shortened as SGGP). Climate change, with its catastrophic effects on local, national, and global scales, has become a central topic in media and discourse studies. Across bodies of research that probed into climate change's media coverage, critical discourse analysis (CDA) has been of use in understanding how climate change is communicated (Nerlich et al., 2010). However, these studies mostly centred on media in the United States, the United Kingdom, or both. Academic databases also indicate that half of what we know about climate change comes from studies based in the United States (Badullovich et al., 2020). Thus, in response to Wang and Huan's (2024) call for more CDA studies on climate change in developing countries, this article focuses on Vietnam, which is also suffering from climate-related impacts, being "one of five developing countries that are most affected by climate change" (Pham & Nash, 2017, p. 100).

In conducting this research, we opt for Discursive News Values Analysis (DNVA), a methodological framework developed by Bednarek and Caple (2012, 2014, 2017), for the following reasons. First, it goes a step further than content and framing analysis, which scholars have thus far adopted when studying climate change communication (e.g., Dang, 2025; Freeman, 2017), by investigating how events are linguistically made to matter to claim public relevance. Second, it provides a systematic framework for identifying and interpreting news values such as Eliteness, Impact, Timeliness, Personalization, and Proximity, thereby revealing what is foregrounded and what is backgrounded in climate discourse. The key issue is not about which events are chosen to become news, but about how those events are presented and shaped to be seen as news (Bednarek & Caple, 2017).

This study draws on a self-built corpus of climate-related articles published in SGGP between 2020 and 2025. The analysis of this corpus is to identify the most salient semantic domains and news values constructed through language and to

interpret what these patterns reveal about Vietnamese climate communication. In doing so, this article addresses current geographical and epistemological gaps in climate discourse research and contributes to expanding DNVA into Southeast Asian countries. The central research question is: How is climate change constructed as a newsworthy issue in English-language media in Vietnam?

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Conceptualizing News Values

News values have long been serving as checklists of criteria used in the journalistic practices to determine what is worth reporting (Harcup & O'Neill, 2001). These are much more popular among studies in journalism and media, rather than in linguistics. In fact, however, they are multidimensional, which can be seen from social, material, cognitive, and discursive perspectives (Bednarek & Caple, 2017). On the discursive front, researchers, most notably Bednarek and Caple (2017), have been inspired by their predecessors to extend the approach of studying news values into what they call DNVA. They posit that news values should be "the 'newsworthy' aspects of actors, happenings and issues as existing in and constructed through discourse" (Bednarek & Caple, 2014, p. 3). The notion of news values being merely properties inherent in events is, accordingly, challenged (Baissa et al., 2024), and thus stretching the focal point to the role of language and other semiotics (e.g., visuals) in the framing of news stories.

Although the crucial role of news values in shaping news discourse has been recognized quite early by linguists such as Bell (1991) and van Dijk (1988), there has not been any comprehensive toolkit to conduct systematic analysis of how newsworthiness is constructed by means of discourse until the introduction of Bednarek and Caple's DNVA. This study, therefore, adopts their discursive view of news values, which emphasizes how semiotic choices, including language, in news texts actively construct newsworthiness rather than merely reflect objective reality. Moreover, it is worth noting that the construction of news values may differ depending on which topic is being discoursed, so the analysis presented in this study is confined to climate change in order to ensure consistency in applying the DNVA framework.

2.2 An Overview of Discursive News Values Analysis

DNVA is in essence an analytical framework which functions in the exploration of how newsworthiness is constructed through language and other semiotic modes, rather than being simply reflective of objective events. As such, it adopts a constructionist stance with a moderate position, as Bednarek and Caple (2014) emphasized. While acknowledging that the media discursively constructs newsworthiness, they do not deny material reality of the events. That is, the framework accepts the existence of objective events, but argues that these events are endowed with significance through semiotic treatment in the media. Importantly, DNVA does not assume intentionality on the part of the journalist. When expressions such as "device X constructs the news value of Y" are used, they refer to the potential for meaning-making inherent in the text, not necessarily the deliberate intentions of the author (Bednarek & Caple, 2017).

What led to DNVA was a systematically developed typology of news values, which Bednarek and Caple (2017) derived from a synthesis of established scholarship in journalism, media, and linguistics research. They have weighed up value labels that were most frequently cited in the literature and chosen ones that were "transparent and least ambiguous" (p. 55). The innovation of DNVA here is not about redefining news values, but more about the emphasis of their discursive manifestation – how the values are realized linguistically and visually in published news. From this standpoint, news values act as semiotic constructs, which are created through linguistic resources such as word choices, evaluative language, and grammatical structures, as well as visuals such as photographs, colours, and layout. However, since the scope of this article is confined to linguistic resources, we focus specifically on the linguistic realization of news values in climate change reporting. Table 1 below summarizes the key news values in DNVA along with examples of their common linguistic resources.

Table 1. News values in DNVA (Bednarek & Caple, 2017, p. 55–79)

News value	Definition	Linguistic resources
Consonance	The event is discursively constructed as (stereo)typical (limited here to news actors, social groups, organizations, or countries/ nations)	References to stereotypical attributes or preconceptions; assessments of expectedness/typicality (*typical*, *famed for*); similarity with past (*yet another*, *once again*); explicit references to general knowledge/traditions, and so on (*well-known*)
Eliteness	The event is discursively constructed as of high status or fame (including but not limited to the people, countries, or institutions involved)	Various status markers, including role labels (*Professor Roger Stone*, *experts*); status-indicating adjectives (*the prestigious Man Booker prize, top diplomats*); recognized names (*Hillary Clinton*); descriptions of achievement/fame (*were selling millions of records a year*); use by news actors/sources of specialized/ technical terminology, high-status accent or sociolect (esp. in broadcast news)
Impact	The event is discursively constructed as having significant effects or consequences (not necessarily limited to impact on the target audience)	Assessments of significance (*momentous*, *historic*, *crucial*); representation of actual or non-actual significant/relevant consequences, including abstract, material or mental effects (*note that will stun the world*, *Australia could be left with no policy*, *leaving scenes of destruction*)
Negativity/ Positivity	The event is discursively constructed as negative or positive, for example, as a disaster, conflict, controversy, criminal act or a scientific breakthrough or heroic act	References to negative/positive emotion and attitude (*distraught*, *condemn*, *joy*, *celebrate*); negative/positive evaluative language (*terrible*, *brilliant*); negative/positive lexis (*conflict*, *damage*, *death*, *success*, *win*, *help*); descriptions of negative (e.g. *norm-breaking*) or positive behaviour (*unveiled a cabinet with an equal number of men and women*)
Personalization	The event is discursively constructed as having a personal or 'human' face (involving non-elite actors, including eyewitnesses)	References to 'ordinary' people, their emotions, experiences (*Charissa Benjamin and her Serbian husband*, *'It was pretty bloody scary'*, *But one of his victims sobbed*, *Deborah said afterwards: 'My sentence has only just begun'*); use by news actors/sources of 'everyday' spoken language, accent, sociolect (esp. in broadcast news)
Proximity	The event is discursively constructed as geographically or culturally near (in relation to the publication location/target audience)	Explicit references to place or nationality near the target community (*Australia*, *Canberra woman*); references to the nation/community via deictics, generic place references, adjectives (*here*, *the nation's capital*, *home-grown*); inclusive first-person plural pronouns (*our nation's leaders*); use by news actors/sources of (*geographical*) accent/dialect (esp. in broadcast news); cultural references (*haka*, *prom*)
Superlativeness	The event is discursively constructed as being of high intensity or large scope/scale	Intensifiers (*severe*, *dramatically*); quantifiers (*thousands*, *huge*); intensified lexis (*panic*, *smash*); metaphor and simile (*a tsunami of crime*, *like a World War II battle*); comparison (*the largest drug ring in Detroit history*); repetition (*building after building flattened*); lexis of growth (*a growing list of*, *scaling up efforts*); only/just/alone/already + time/distance or related lexis (*only hours after*)
Timeliness	The event is discursively constructed as timely in relation to the publication date: as new, recent, ongoing, about to happen, or otherwise relevant to the immediate situation/time (current or seasonal)	Temporal references (*today*, *yesterday's*, *within days*, *now*); present and present perfect (*it is testing our emergency resources*); implicit time references through lexis (*continues*, *ongoing*, *have begun to*); reference to current trends, seasonality, change/ newness (*its 'word of the year' for 2015*, *keep their homes well heated this winter*, *change from GLBT to LGTB*, *after fresh revelations*, *for the first time*, *a new role as*)
Unexpectedness	The event is discursively constructed as unexpected, for example, as unusual, strange, rare	Evaluations of unexpectedness (*different*, *astonishing*, *strange*), references to surprise/expectations (*shock at North Cottesloe quiz night*, *people just really can't believe it*); comparisons that indicate unusuality (*the first time since 1958*); references to unusual happenings (*British man survives 15-storey plummet*)

DNVA has served as the analytical framework in an increasing body of scholarly work, with a primary focus on English-language media (e.g., Bednarek, 2016; Molek-Kozakowska, 2017; Dahl & Fløttum, 2017), and in a few non-English contexts such as Chinese (Huan, 2016), Italian (Fruttaldo & Venuti, 2017), and Iranian (Makki, 2019). The approach has however yet to be widely applied in Southeast Asian media, which presents both a research gap and an opportunity for

further development. This study is thus a response to such a gap by applying DNVA to news discourse in Vietnam on climate change.

3. Climate Change in Media Discourse: A Review of Related Studies

The meaning people ascribe to climate change is intricately linked to how the phenomenon is linguistically portrayed, and whether that portrayal resonates with audiences' prior knowledge, beliefs, and values (Fløttum, 2016). In this sense, language lies within the centrality of climate change reporting. In the linguistic domain, climate change coverage in the media has been of wide examination, with a range of corpus-based analytical methods being used. Albeit different in geographical scope and methods, the results of these studies point to the same "complex, primarily pessimistic, picture" (Kapuge, 2025, p. 5).

Freeman (2017) conducted an examination of climate change coverage in ASEAN's English-language news, wherein a coding scheme was used to examine sources, frames, and attributions of blame in the coverage. Notable findings were that government officials were the most cited in the stories, articles reported more "judgements" about climate change, rather than "solutions", and "man" is to blame more often than "nature" for such an environmental event. In Vietnam, Dang (2025) examined climate change communication in local online newspapers. She also employed content analysis and framing and found out that there is a human-centred framing of climate change, one that emphasizes institutional solutions while distancing individual responsibility. Six dominant frames were identified, where political and systemic roles were of the focus. Her study in all highlights the social, rather than international, distance in climate discourse. On the other side of the globe, Gillings and Dayrell (2023) investigated UK press discourse on climate change from 2003 to 2019 with the application of the new technique of Usage Fluctuation Analysis. They identified stable use of military metaphors such as fight, combat, and tackle, all of which frame climate change as a war-like threat. Also notably, they identified three key phases in the UK media discourse, with a shift from advocacy to scepticism to public engagement. The study by Kapuge (2025) employed corpus-based CDA to look into the representation of people in BBC and Al Jazeera in climate change news from 2021 to 2023. Through transitivity analysis, it revealed that both of the outlets depict people as vulnerable and powerless in different ways, which potentially shape public perceptions of agency in climate actions.

While these studies draw on framing and CDA to examine thematic representations and participant roles, other recent work has shifted attention toward how news values themselves are discursively constructed. Dahl and Fløttum (2017) studied verbal-visual interplay in climate change news from The Guardian and Daily Mail during IPCC AR5 coverage. They found common news values of Negativity, Impact, Eliteness, Superlativeness, with mostly harmonious verbal-visual alignment, but occasional dissonance, particularly in Daily Mail's contrasting use of language and images. Huan (2024) employed DNVA to compare how a newspaper in China and one in Australia differ in climate change discourse construction, particularly by the semiotic mode of language. An interesting revelation was that the former globalizes and politicizes climate change, framing it as a China-US conflict, whereas the latter localizes it, portraying domestic political disputes. Also, citizens' voices are underrepresented in both outlets. Also using DNVA as the framework, Cheng and Liu (2024) analysed climate change coverage in five Chinese media outlets from 1993 to 2022. In the study, Eliteness was found to be a dominant news value throughout. Besides, similar to the study of Gillings and Dayrell (2023), they also identified three distinct phases in climate change discourse. However, while the phases of the former study reflect shifts in public engagement, from advocacy to scepticism to public involvement, phases in Chen and Liu's (2024) reflect a different trajectory shaped by national policy shifts. Their analysis of keywords and photographs revealed a movement from framing climate change as a foreign issue, to a domestic governance concern, and finally as a diplomatic strategy highlighting China's leadership in global climate governance.

The body of research into climate change discourse has seen substantial growth of late, and further contributions are still needed to address important gaps. In the present study, we seek to contribute to this expanding field by focusing on several underexplored areas. First in particular, much of the existing scholarship, as reviewed above, focuses on media in Western countries (e.g., the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia), with relatively few exploring Southeast Asian contexts. Second, insofar as the literature suggests, not many studies have applied DNVA to climate change coverage in developing countries, and none have targeted Vietnam specifically. Third, previous studies primarily examined media discourse produced by first-language writers.

This study is an attempt to bridge these gaps. In doing so, we hereby provide a preliminary DNVA-based analysis of how climate change is constructed as newsworthy in Vietnam's English-language news written by L2 journalists. Our study endeavours, in a broader sense, to expand the geographical, linguistic, and methodological scope of climate change discourse research. In a more particular sense, the aims are to investigate the types of news values foregrounded in climate change reporting in Vietnamese media in order to understand how these values contribute to the depiction of climate change as a matter of public concern.

4. Methods

4.1 Research Design

The present study employs a corpus-based qualitative research design, following the analytical framework of DNVA. We rely on corpus linguistic methods to answer the research question of how climate change is presented as a newsworthy issue in Vietnam's English-language media. Corpus linguistics, as Bednarek and Caple (2017) put it, is "an empirical approach to the analysis of linguistic data" that allows researchers to uncover patterns of meaning through both quantitative and qualitative analysis of large, digitized collections of text. Therefore, to support the analysis, we include quantitative data from corpus tools, which help us systematically identify and count patterns in the language used.

The study is situated in zone 2 within the "zones of analysis" model (Bednarek & Caple, 2017, p. 30), for it focuses on text only and without images, which corresponds to intrasemiotic analysis (within-mode), and it analyses a collection of texts, rather than a single one, which corresponds to intertextual analysis (between-text).

4.2 The Corpus

The corpus of the present study (henceforth referred to as ccCorpus) was self-compiled from SGGP, a Vietnamese mainstream newspaper, part of the Party Committee of the Communist Party of Vietnam in Ho Chi Minh City. Why we chose this particular outlet is twofold. First, as a state-owned organ, SGGP provides official, institutionally sanctioned reportage, which offers a legitimate reference point for examining how climate issues are presented. Second, its English edition maintains continuous, accessible online archives, allowing us to construct the corpus without translation bias.

For this preliminary study, we delimit the corpus to 2020–2025 to keep the dataset recent, tractable, and fully accessible in SGGP's English archives, thus yielding a sufficient but manageable sample for a pilot DNVA. The initial step of corpus compilation was a manual keyword search, using the term "climate change" with a time span from 2020 to 2025. After collecting the first pool of articles, we gave them a brief reading to eliminate duplicates and articles containing low volumes of climate change coverage. This in turn resulted in a final corpus of 116 articles that engage meaningfully with climate change as a central topic. The ccCorpus was saved in plain text format to make sure it is compatible with corpus linguistic tools and facilitate both quantitative annotation and qualitative analysis in the subsequent research stages.

4.3 Data Analysis

The initial overview of the semantic focus of ccCorpus was achieved through AntConc 4.3.1 (Anthony, 2024), in which a keyword list (stoplist excluded) and word cloud were generated to visualize dominant lexical items and potential thematic patterns, which helped guide subsequent interpretation. Specifically, we compared ccCorpus against the American English reference corpora available in AntConc 4.3.1, which was selected due to ccCorpus being composed of American English texts. Such comparison allowed us to identify top 20 words that were not only frequent in ccCorpus but also statistically distinctive, based on keyness values. These keywords help show the main topics and focus areas in news reporting (Baker et al., 2013) and in the context of this study, they highlight which ideas are most salient in how climate change is reported. They are also "pointers" (Bednarek & Caple, 2014, p. 145), which signal the potential construction of specific news values. To complement this keyword analysis, a word cloud visualization (Figure 1) was also generated to illustrate these keywords' relative prominence in a more intuitive format. Then, we used AntConc's collocation function to examine the most frequent co-occurring words of the 20 high-keyness items. This step was instrumental in that we better understand how the keywords were used in context and what topics they were commonly linked to, which also gave us a clearer picture of the main themes in ccCorpus and how these themes might relate to the way news values are presented.

Next up, we proceeded to the manual annotation of news values, using the UAM Corpus Tool 6.2j (O'Donnell, 2008). This phase was guided by the DNVA framework in order to identify how the newsworthiness of climate change is discursively constructed through language. Each of the ten news values outlined in Table 1 was coded one at a time across the entire ccCorpus. Such a value-by-value coding approach allowed us to yield a more focused and consistent analysis, thus ensuring that no potential linguistic realization of news value was overlooked. Since news values can be constructed by a wide range of lexical and grammatical resources and often function in multifunctional ways (Bednarek & Caple, 2017), we engaged in close qualitative reading of ccCorpus and paid special attention to co-text, context, time of publication, and target audience, rather than applying the framework as a fixed checklist. This approach then enabled us to determine which news values were most dominant and how they contributed to the discursive framing of climate change as a matter of public concern in the Vietnamese context.

Inter-coder reliability was not used in this study, the reason being DNVA coding is inherently interpretive, and agreement would not reduce the subjectivity of meaning interpretation, as noted by Bednarek (2015, p. 6). Instead, we prioritized analytical transparency and methodological consistency.

5. Findings and Discussion

5.1 Key Semantic Domains

With the assistance of AntConc 4.3.1 the top 20 keywords were identified and then generated as the word cloud in ccCorpus, based on both frequency and keyness values, relative to the American English reference corpus (see Table 2 and Figure 1).

The keywords presented in Table 2 are the most statistically distinctive and topically relevant lexical items in the climate change reporting of SGGP. The first number within the brackets denotes raw frequency and the second, after the slash, indicates keyness value. For instance, the keyword *climate* appears 595 times in ccCorpus and has a keyness score of 3344.573.

Table 2. Climate change keywords

Top 20 keywords in ccCorpus			
climate (595/3344.573)	energy (156/498.723)	natural (134/471.461)	HCMC (125/772.283)
Vietnam (508/2819.94)	sustainable (144/716.078)	resources (133/504.869)	cooperation (124/623.483)
change (506/2128.223)	carbon (143/805.312)	environment (133/489.943)	project (122/374.687)
development (304/1110.597)	international (137/388.03)	percent (131/246.779)	green (117/360.438)
city (215/553.369)	water (136/267.406)	emissions (130/675.806)	Mekong (116/716.658)

In Figure 1, the larger the word appears, the more frequently it occurs in ccCorpus. Thus, high-frequency terms such as *climate*, *change*, *Vietnam*, and *development* appear most prominently.
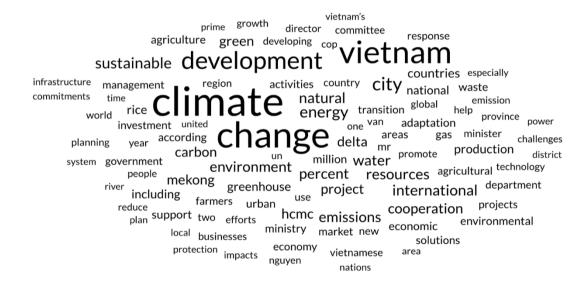

Figure 1. Word cloud generated from ccCorpus

Based on Table 2, Figure 1, and collocation analysis, we identified four dominant semantic domains within ccCorpus, with each corresponding to particular constructions of news values in the climate discourse. The key semantic domains are as follow:

Environmental Processes and Climate Effects – The first domain comprises language descriptive of the natural environment and the various ecological consequences related to climate change. Related to environmental processes are keywords such as *climate*, *change*, *natural*, *environment*, *emissions*, *water*, and *carbon*, which frequently appear alongside collocates such as *adaptation*, *response*, *impacts*, *protection*, *greenhouse*, *intrusion*, and *footprint*. Such a lexical field not only highlights a relatively direct effect of climate change on ecosystems and natural resources but also emphasizes the responses to the environmental degradation. These often construct news values of Impact, often stressing the negative implications of climate phenomena, as well as Timeliness, by referencing current and anticipated environmental conditions.

Sustainability and Technological Development – The second domain are the themes of sustainable growth, clean energy, and technological innovation, particularly in response to climate change. *Energy*, *green*, *sustainable*, *development*, *carbon*, *project*, and *percent* are the keywords often collocated with words such as *transition*, *renewable*, *efficiency*, *market*, *goals*,

aims, and *consumption*, all of which point to narratives focused on economic transformation, low-carbon technologies, and long-term environmental planning. Here, the language being used often contributes to constructing news values such as Positivity with highlights of progress and solutions likely to bear fruits.

National and Local Context – Language within the third semantic domain involves climate change reporting within specific geographic and political settings. *Vietnam*, *HCMC*, and *Mekong* are the keywords pointing to locations like, often co-occurring with references to *commitments*, *ambassador*, *delta*, and *development*. These collocations emphasize Vietnam's role in dealing with climate change, particularly in high frequency in the Mekong Delta region and Ho Chi Minh City, with a few mentions of Hanoi City. Such geographic specificity supports the news value of Proximity, making climate change a tangible and immediate concern for Vietnamese readers. It also contributes to Eliteness, as official commitments and localized projects are foregrounded.

Institutional and Cooperative Action – The fourth key semantic domain gives a strong emphasis on institutional, governmental, and international cooperation aspects of climate discourse. The keywords covering this domain, including *cooperation*, *international*, *resources*, *ministry*, and *department*, often co-occur with *bilateral*, *agency*, *partners*, *treaties*, and *fields*. Such collocational patterns illustrate a discourse focused on multilateral partnerships and policy-driven initiatives. The framing here therefore constructs news values such as Eliteness, by emphasizing the involvement of high-status actors and organizations. It also ties into Impact, as institutional actions are shown to have significant effects on climate mitigation and adaptation.

The domains identified above, when compared with the three overarching dimensions – scientific, ecological, and societal – as proposed by Hase et al. (2021), gravitates towards the societal dimension. To be specific, the third and the fourth domains fall into this dimension, with the former – *National and Local Context* – foregrounding how local communities and national actors are engaged with climate issues, and the latter – *Institutional and Cooperative Action* – reflecting political and diplomatic responses, which are integral to society's collective approach to climate change. The ecological dimension is also visible through references to environmental effects in the first domain – *Environmental Processes and Climate Effects* – such as emissions and water resources. The scientific dimension also appears in line with the second domain – *Sustainability and Technological Development*, with technical terms such as carbon, project, or percent typically embedded in broader discussions of policy or development. The pattern suggests that SGGP's coverage leans toward public engagement by highlighting the societal implications of climate change. This echoes the claims that such an approach strengthens reader involvement and communicative effectiveness (Painter et al., 2018).

Taken together, these domains not only reflect the thematic preoccupations of SGGP's climate reporting but also support the discursive construction of news values such as Eliteness, Impact, Timeliness, and Positivity. This thematic clustering also guided our subsequent manual coding of news values, by way of highlighting which areas of content were most foregrounded in climate-related coverage.

5.2 The Construction of Climate Change as a Newsworthy Issue

After the identification of key semantic domains within ccCorpus, we proceed to examine how climate change is constructed as a newsworthy issue. Within the process, our manual annotation, based on DNVA, of discursively constructed news values in UAM Corpus Tool yields the frequency and relative proportion ranking presented in Table 3 as follows.

Table 3. News values found in ccCorpus

News Values	N	%
Eliteness	965	22.7
Impact	961	22.6
Timeliness	807	19
Proximity	470	11
Positivity	467	11
Superlativeness	241	5.7
Negativity	228	5.4
Personalization	81	1.9
Unexpectedness	17	0.4
Consonance	13	0.3
Total	4250	100

As shown in Table 3, Eliteness (22.7%) and Impact (22.6%) reign supreme, dominating the news values in ccCorpus, followed closely by Timeliness (19%). This is indicative of a framing strategy that emphasizes authority, consequence, and recency in Vietnam's English-language climate reporting. The findings broadly align with Cheng and Liu's (2024) in Chinese media, where Eliteness consistently dominates over nearly three decades, which reinforces the role of expert sources and official actors in constructing legitimacy around climate discourse. Meanwhile, when compared with Dahl and Fløttum's (2017) study of UK newspapers, a striking difference emerges. Although both studies share high frequencies of Eliteness and Impact, the ccCorpus shows a notably lower presence of Negativity (5.4%) and Superlativeness (5.7%), both of which were prominent in the UK context. This suggests that the Vietnamese media adopts a more restrained and less dramatized narrative in reporting climate change. In addition, values such as Personalization (1.9%) and Unexpectedness (0.4%) are marginal in ccCorpus, reflecting a minimal focus on the ordinary people or surprising elements.

To complement these quantitative findings, we conducted close qualitative readings of selected texts. The following subsections explore how news values such as Eliteness, Impact, and Timeliness are enacted through recurring framings in Vietnam's climate change reporting.

5.2.1 Vietnam as a Proactive Actor amidst Climate Change

Vietnam, as the analysis of ccCorpus shows, is often portrayed as a country proactive and responsible in the fight against climate change. Beyond reporting on Vietnam's vulnerability, SGGP often highlights its efforts, policies, and commitments. These appear both at the local and national levels, and in cooperation with international partners. This way of reporting depicts Vietnam as a nation that takes climate change very seriously and is working hard towards making a difference, building upon news values such as Impact, Positivity, and Timeliness. Notably, Freeman (2017) observed that ASEAN English-language news tends to assign blame more often than provide solutions, which contrasts our study of SGGP as we found the reporting to be largely solution-oriented, with minimal emphasis on blame.

A clear example is found in an article that says:

"As Vietnam is considered one of the countries most severely affected by climate change, especially by sea level rise [impact], its active participation in the core group to develop the resolution helps highlight Vietnam's active policies and efforts on climate change response [positivity], including its commitment to reduce net emissions to zero by 2050 [timeliness]."

This extract shows that even though Vietnam is strongly affected by climate change, it is not passive. Instead, it takes part in important decisions and commits to real goals, specifically reaching net zero emissions by 2050. The inclusion of words such as "active participation" and "commitment" suggest that Vietnam is leading and not just following, which constructs the news value of Positivity. At the city level, Ho Chi Minh City is also described as taking actions:

"Recognizing the importance of climate change adaptation for sustainable economic development [impact], Ho Chi Minh City has been implementing many important policies in this field [timeliness, positivity]."

This example shows how local governments are part of the bigger plan. The city's actions are not just short-term but are linked to long-term development. Of which, "important policies" and "sustainable economic development" help create a positive and forward-looking picture. The use of present perfect continuous reflected in "has been implementing" further solidifies the timeliness in executing climate change adaptation. National plans are also mentioned in another article:

"Under the document, Vietnam will proactively cope with climate change by 2050 [timeliness, positivity], and fulfill specific goals in service of the country's sustainable development."

This extract clearly shows Vietnam's plan to face climate change in the future. The use of "proactively cope", combined with the temporal marker "will", means that the country is not waiting for problems to get worse, it wants to act early. It also links climate actions to national development goals. Vietnam is also shown as working with other countries, as evidenced in one example:

"The diplomat said that cooperation in climate change adaptation is an important content throughout the strategic cooperation between the two countries [impact], which is vital for Vietnam in the process of overcoming the challenges of nature in the coming decades."

This quote highlights the importance of working with other nations. With "strategic cooperation" and "vital" being used, it shows that international support is important for Vietnam's future. It also shows Vietnam as part of a global effort, not acting alone. Even though many articles show Vietnam in a positive light, some also point out ongoing risks. For example:

"Slow adaptation to climate change in the Mekong Delta results in serious consequences [impact, negativity] as the meteorological agency forecast that the 2024 dry season will last until the end of May, and people in the region will suffer more losses [timeliness, negativity]."

The extract acts as a warning that people will be hurt if action is too slow. Constructing Negativity, "serious consequences" and "suffer more losses" create a strong emotional effect. The reference to the 2024 dry season also makes the issue feel urgent and real.

On the whole, the use of linguistic resources in the articles in ccCorpus show Vietnam as a country that takes real steps to deal with climate change, being an engaged and solution-oriented actor. It is not just a victim but also a leader, making plans, joining global talks, and helping its people. We suggest one, non-exclusive explanation for why the "proactive, solution-driven Vietnam" frame dominates in SGGP. Such a frame plausibly reflects editorial alignment with SGGP's institutional role as the organ of the Ho Chi Minh City Party Committee, consistent with broader state communication goals that emphasize unity, optimism, and policy implementation (Vietnam News, 2024) – yielding strong Eliteness, Timeliness, and Positivity. This naturally privileges initiative- and outcome-oriented language over conflict or lay contestation.

5.2.2 The Voiced Elite and the Unvoiced Commoner

Climate change reporting in SGGP is found to be elite-driven since the voices of government officials, experts, and institutional representatives are of greater emphasis. The elite voices, of those whose titles are typically Chairman, Director, or Deputy Director, are frequently quoted when it comes to outlining challenges, proposing solutions, or framing national and local climate agendas. In stark contrast, the ordinary people such as farmers, residents, or community members faced with the direct effects of climate change, despite being referred to, are virtually completely absent from direct quotation. Such a gravitation towards the higher-ups creates a top-down and one-sided perspective, where climate narratives are constructed through authoritative discourse, which accordingly constructs the news values of Eliteness but leaves little space for Personalization, leading to the underrepresentation of the voices of the public. This pattern is somewhat reflected in Dang's (2025) study, where she found that climate reporting often centers on institutional solutions and sidelines individual responsibility, which distances the general public from the climate discourse. This also echoes with Huan's (2024) research, as there is underrepresentation of citizens' voices in two news outlets examined.

One example is a quote from a local leader:

"According to Chairman of the People's Committee of Can Tho City Tran Viet Truong [eliteness, proximity], the city identified that responding to climate change is one of the important tasks for socio-economic development [impact, consonance]."

This report features a high-ranking official, who links climate response to socio-economic development, which reflects leadership perspectives rather than community voices. Such a link also builds Impact and aligns with shared expectations (Consonance). Another example with the business sector's high-ranking official emphasizing urgency and solutions:

"According to Mr. Nguyen Tin Huy, Director of the Business Office for Sustainable Development (under the Vietnam Confederation of Trade and Industry - VCCI), currently [timeliness], climate change is the most urgent and serious issue [superlativeness, impact, negativity]. Therefore, solutions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions need to be implemented much more [impact]."

Apparently, reporting institutional authority's call is used to stress how serious the problem is. The use of terms such as "urgent" and "serious issue" creates the news value of Impact. This citation reflects how institutional voices contribute to shaping climate change as a critical, action-demanding topic but again in the absence of input from those living with the day-to-day consequences of climate change. Among myriad official voices stands a very rare occasion when a commoner is directly quoted:

"However, the amount of water was not enough and the rice leaves began to burn [impact, negativity]. Mr. Thach My moaned that 'man proposes, God disposes.' [personalization] Because the price of rice rose and farmers harvested the winter-spring crop of 2023–2024, peasant Thach My and many local farmers took advantage of sowing seeds for the third crop of rice to earn more income."

This quote shows an example of the economic difficulty local people were facing, caused by environmental consequences of climate change. The expression "man proposes, God disposes" demonstrates how fragile life is for those living with the direct effects of climatic and market shifts. The quote also allows readers to somewhat connect on a personal level with the challenges of climate change, which constructs Personalization – a news value otherwise largely absent in ccCorpus. However, this reference to an ordinary person is still overshadowed by the predominance of elite voices.

Overall, ccCorpus reveals a climate story that is dominated by officials. The resulting lack of diverse perspectives may unintentionally narrow the emotional connection readers make with the issue, which in turn limits its newsworthiness to wider audiences who may not see themselves reflected in the narrative.

5.2.3 Localizing Climate Change

Another pattern discovered in the climate change reporting of SGGP is the localization of the crisis. Articles do not only report the issue in a general sense but instead direct the focus of climate change consequences towards particular regions in Vietnam, predominantly the Mekong Delta and Ho Chi Minh City, with a few mentions of Hanoi. Within the Mekong Delta, they also point to more specific provinces, districts, and communes. For example:

"A survey conducted by VCCI in 2023 found that 72.4 percent of businesses in the Mekong Delta [proximity] are negatively impacted by natural disasters and climate change [impact, negativity], the highest rate among regions nationwide [superlativeness]."

In this report, the construction of Eliteness, Impact, Negativity, and Superlativeness is evident. The high percentage figure (72.4 percent), coupled with the superlative phrase "the highest rate", not only quantifies the seriousness of the issue but also positions the Mekong Delta as an epicenter of vulnerability. This way of local framing may simultaneously warn and mobilize regional stakeholders. However, albeit with a powerful number, the report draws authority from an elite source (VCCI), which may once again limit emotional connection and overlook lived experiences of ordinary people. Further evidence of this local impact is provided in a report about rice farmers in Soc Trang Province:

"According to statistics, of 6,000 hectares of rice in Long Phu District of Soc Trang Province [proximity] were sown without careful planning, about 3,000 hectares are lacking water and 1,000 hectares are seriously lacking water which are at risk of dying [timeliness, impact, negativity]."

Local effects of climatic mismanagement are once again quantified, further localized within a district of a province belonging to the Mekong Delta, constructing Proximity. With specific figures being presented, the climatic consequences become more statistically backed up; however, the issue is framed through impersonal "statistics" rather than through the voice of the affected farmers. This makes the topic of climate change more distant to the audiences. One more local example involves urban flooding in Ho Chi Minh City:

"Adding to this is a rise of precipitation each year owing to climate change, making urban flooding in HCMC worse and worse [impact, negativity, superlativeness, proximity]."

This report points to another specific region in Vietnam, where climate change engenders flooding. While constructing Impact and Negativity by pointing to direct, harmful effects on urban life, the use of "worse and worse" also adds Superlativeness, emphasizing escalating severity in the local context of Ho Chi Minh City.

In general, news reports in SGGP localize the issue of climate change by specifying how different parts of Vietnam are being affected in a measurable manner. This construction of Proximity, Impact, Negativity, and sometimes Superlativeness altogether may contribute to climate change being more newsworthy for domestic audiences. However, albeit with the localized data, the absence of direct quotes from everyday people still means that this demographic is still distanced from the issue.

5.2.4 Constructing Impact through Consequences and Positive Envisioning

Finally, the reporting of climate change in SGGP also constructs Impact through not only portrayals of damage and vulnerabilities but also through optimistic depictions of future-oriented planning. Such dual construction of consequences and envisioned solutions reinforces the salience of climate change as an urgent issue that needs addressing while also promoting hope and direction, often in alignment with Timeliness, Superlativeness, Negativity, and Positivity. This is unlike Kapuge's (2025) study, which found that BBC and Al Jazeera primarily portray people as passive and powerless in the face of climate change, thus potentially weakening public perceptions of agency. While, in ccCorpus, vulnerability is still highlighted, it is coupled with solution-oriented narratives that promote national direction and resilience. Many articles begin by laying out the destructive consequences of climate change. For example:

"Droughts, saltwater intrusion, and water scarcity have significant adverse effects on populations, especially those reliant on agriculture [impact, negativity, superlativeness]."

This example points to the broad and serious implications for vulnerable communities, in particular farmers. "Adverse effects" constructs Negativity and Impact, with "significant" adding Superlativeness. This portrays climate change as not at all an abstract problem but more of one that already interferes with people's lives and livelihoods. Another article warns of worsening environmental changes:

"Climate change has created severe impacts on several regions in Vietnam [timeliness, impact, negativity, superlativeness], including Ho Chi Minh City [proximity], which is predicted to witness more sea level rise, flooding due to heavy rain and high tide, salt water intrusion, and temperature rise [timeliness, impact, negativity, superlativeness]."

The phrase "severe impacts" alongside future-focused predictions invokes both Impact and Timeliness. The list of specific threats, evidently constructing Negativity, creates a cumulative effect of Superlativeness, which presents climate change

as an escalating and multifaceted danger, particularly in the context of Vietnam's largest urban area. However, such a pattern of negative framing is complemented by coverage of forward-looking strategies. Many reports, rather than solely depicting damage, also highlight national plans and hopes for transformation. One example presents an aspirational vision for 2050:

"Under the planning project, by 2050, Vietnam aims to achieve good environmental quality, ensure a healthy living environment for its people, effectively conserve biodiversity, and maintain ecological balance [timeliness, impact, positivity]."

The projection here is rather optimistic and constructs Positivity through "good environmental quality", "healthy living environment", and "ecological balance". Meanwhile, the future-oriented marker "by 2050" situates the content firmly within Timeliness, and the wide-reaching benefits construct Impact in a hopeful frame, and hence Positivity, rather than one of loss. Another strand of positive impact framing appears through the emphasis on international collaboration:

"President Thuong [eliteness] also noted his hope that the US side will continue to create more favourable conditions for the implementation of projects to support energy transition and optimise the renewable energy potential in Vietnam, contributing to ensuring long-term energy security [timeliness, impact, positivity]."

One article quotes President Thuong expressing hope that the US would continue supporting Vietnam's energy transition and renewable energy development. This quote constructs Impact, Timeliness, and Positivity simultaneously: the reference to "long-term energy security" signals far-reaching national benefit, while the presence of a high-ranking official strengthens Eliteness, adding weight to the report's message.

Overall, there exists a blend of damage-centered and solution-focused framings to build Impact. The former stresses what is at stake, while the latter emphasizes Vietnam's commitment and capacity to change course. They together construct a narrative of urgency tempered with vision, one that invites both attention and cautious optimism.

6. Conclusions and Implications

We have carried out an exploration of how climate change is discursively constructed as a newsworthy issue in Vietnam's English-language media, in particular through SGGP. The reporting patterns of climate change SGGP employed were examined using DNVA. In response to our research question as to how climate change is made to matter in Vietnamese news discourse, the findings reveal several key patterns and implications.

First, our corpus-driven investigation identified four dominant semantic domains in the climate discourse of SGGP: (1) environmental processes and climate effects, (2) sustainability and technological development, (3) national and local context, and (4) institutional and cooperative action. These four domains cover societal, ecological, and scientific dimensions of climate change, with a slight gravitation towards the societal dimension and construct news values of Impact, Eliteness, Timeliness, and Positivity.

Second, the most frequently constructed news values found were Eliteness (22.7%), Impact (22.6%), and Timeliness (19%), showing a strong emphasis on authority, consequence, and recency. In contrast, the values of Personalization, Unexpectedness, and Consonance being marginal highlights a lack of ordinary voices, surprising turns, and predictable or culturally familiar framing that typically resonates with public expectations.

Third, close qualitative analysis revealed four dominant framings that construct newsworthiness. (1) Vietnam as a proactive actor amidst climate change: The country is portrayed not only as vulnerable to climate threats but also as a committed and capable participant in climate mitigation and adaptation, reinforcing Timeliness, Impact, and Positivity; (2) The voiced elite and the unvoiced commoner: Climate stories are overwhelmingly told through institutional voices, notably officials, experts, and diplomats, while everyday people directly affected by climate change remain mostly unquoted. This creates a top-down narrative dominated by Eliteness but lacking Personalization; (3) Localizing climate change: Climate change is tied to specific regions, most notably the Mekong Delta and Ho Chi Minh City, invoking Proximity, Negativity, and Superlativeness to make the issue feel immediate and geographically relevant; and (4) Constructing impact through consequences and positive envisioning: Climate reporting oscillates between depicting damage and risk and promoting hopeful futures through long-term planning and international cooperation. This dual construction builds Impact through both Negativity and Positivity, often complemented by Timeliness and Superlativeness.

These findings carry several implications for climate change communication in Vietnamese media and beyond. First, climate change coverage in SGGP is heavily shaped by institutional voices, particularly those of elite officials and authoritative sources. This admittedly builds a sense of credibility and political legitimacy; however, it limits emotional accessibility for broader audiences. Ordinary voices and personal narratives are largely absent, meaning readers may struggle to relate to or emotionally engage with the issues presented. Without representation of grassroots perspectives, there is a risk that the public may not see themselves reflected in the discourse, reducing the effectiveness of the media in mobilizing civic engagement or behavioral change. As Huan (2016) also argues, news about ordinary people can attract

a larger readership and promote dominant social values. Reporting the lives of everyday individuals or the personal aspects of climate-related events, those that construct Personalization, may humanize abstract issues and increase audience approval and engagement. To foster broader engagement, climate communication in Vietnam and beyond could benefit from integrating human-centred storytelling and the lived experiences of those most affected. Future research could integrate audience reception studies and alternative media sources to capture underrepresented grassroots perspectives and provide a more inclusive picture of how climate discourse is received and negotiated among diverse social groups.

Despite this, the reporting manages to balance urgency with optimism. Not only are the current threats portrayed but also combined with hopeful visions of future planning and development. However, in doing so, the reports may sometimes gloss over the present hardships experienced by vulnerable populations, potentially downplaying the need for immediate interventions or support. Moreover, the news values of Positivity might not be as powerful as to attract online audiences (Wu & Pan, 2022). In this fast-paced digital environment, messages rooted solely in optimism and elite discourse may fail to resonate.

Localization is another strength in the reporting, with many articles offering concrete statistics, regional names, and situational context. These details help make climate change more tangible for Vietnamese readers and may enhance relevance through proximity. Still, this strategy is primarily factual; it rarely includes localized human stories. Incorporating local voices such as farmers, laborers, and small business owners alongside localized facts would further strengthen public connection to the issues and improve the inclusivity of coverage. Further, Dang (2025) also suggests that the media place greater emphasis on promoting sustainable lifestyle shifts and providing clear, practical suggestions for how individuals, especially younger generations, can reduce their carbon footprint in daily life. Such an approach helps to challenge the overemphasis on institutional responses and corporate strategies, which may create the false impression that climate change can be addressed without meaningful changes in personal behavior.

One further point to emphasize is that our finding on dominant eliteness echoes prior work that emphasizes institutional voices in climate discourse: Dang (2025) on Vietnam's 5 local online newspapers, Huan (2024) on China's People's Daily, and Cheng & Liu (2024) on Chinese outlets all foreground elite/institutional voices. Notably, all of these venues – including SGGP – are state-owned (with the exception that 1/5 outlets in Dang 2025 are not state-owned). This convergence suggests that high Eliteness and low Personalization may be a characteristic tendency of state-owned news outlets in climate coverage. We therefore cautiously hypothesize an ownership effect on news-value configurations (e.g., stronger Eliteness, weaker Personalization), which necessitates more empirical evidence. Future research can test this hypothesis through cross-ownership comparative studies that apply a shared DNVA framework to state-owned and non-state media, and through audience-reception research that examines how exposure to elite-dominated narratives affects public engagement, perceived self-efficacy, and behavioral change.

The present study contributes to the application of DNVA in Southeast Asia, in particular Vietnam and provides groundwork for further comparative research. It has also highlighted the importance of who speaks, how newsworthiness is created, and what is left out in forming national climate narratives by applying DNVA to the Vietnamese context. That said, there are some limitations to it. First, the analysis focused solely on linguistic resources, excluding visual and multimodal elements – such as photographs, layout, and captions – that may play a crucial role in constructing news values and influencing readers' perceptions. Future studies should incorporate multimodal DNVA to capture how textual and visual semiotics interact in creating meaning and appeal. Second, the study was confined to a single news outlet of SGGP – English Edition, which may limit the generalizability of the findings across the broader Vietnamese media landscape. Comparative studies across multiple Vietnamese news outlets would provide a more comprehensive understanding of how ownership structure and editorial policy shape climate discourse across contexts. Third, as the dataset comprises English-language news written by L2 journalists, the linguistic patterns observed may differ from those found in Vietnamese-language reporting or in international outlets. Future research could compare English- and Vietnamese-language climate reporting to examine how language choice mediate the expression of news values and climate narratives.

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Authors contributions

Both authors, Long Viet Le (MA) and Lien-Huong Vo, jointly conceptualized the study. Long Viet Le designed the research, compiled the corpus, conducted the Discursive News Values Analysis, interpreted the findings, and drafted the manuscript. Dr. Lien-Huong Vo contributed to refining the research design, supported data collection and corpus compilation, checked data coding, and critically revised the manuscript. Both authors read and approved the final version of the manuscript and agree to be accountable for all aspects of the work.

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