

Module 4 – Strategic Storytelling for Change

Module Description:

Module 4 teaches students how to use storytelling to make sustainability meaningful and memorable, especially by connecting abstract goals (like the SDGs) to everyday life in Vietnam. Students analyze Vietnamese brand and media examples to understand what makes a sustainability narrative feel authentic, human-centered, and persuasive. They then practice shaping stories that create emotional engagement while still pointing to real-world outcomes.

This module is the capstone application of the course: it turns the earlier analytical tools (stakeholders, materiality, CSR credibility, digital strategy) into compelling communication outputs. It helps students translate evidence and SDG alignment into narratives that audiences can actually understand and act on, while keeping a clear focus on authenticity and measurable change.

Learning objectives:

- Use storytelling techniques to make sustainability concepts relatable.
- Craft narratives that connect global SDGs to local contexts in Vietnam.
- Evaluate how stories drive both emotional engagement and measurable change.

Module 4 Pre-class activities

Purpose: To help students explore how narratives can link sustainability issues with local realities and global goals.

Pre-class Activity 1: Reading support

Wang, H., Coren, E. (2024). Storytelling as a Catalyst for Climate Change Communication and Empowerment. In: Coren, E., Wang, H. (eds) *Storytelling to Accelerate Climate Solutions*. Springer.
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-54790-4_1

Dang, T. K. P., & Pham, Q. H. (2025). Climate change communication in Vietnam’s online news media: Framing, scope, and implications for public engagement. *Sustainability*, 17(4), 1354. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su17041354>

Pre-class Activity 2: Case review task

Students identify three examples of sustainability storytelling, such as:

- Pizza 4P’s “Journey to Zero Waste” initiative in Cambodia
- Marou Chocolate’s “Bean-to-Bar with Farmers” campaign
- Heineken Vietnam’s circular economy ad series.

Students answer:

- Who are the main characters, and what challenge are they overcoming?
- Is the story authentic, or does it feel staged?
- Which SDGs does the narrative advance, even if implicitly?

Module 4 In-class activities

Mapping Workshop

Goal: Identify the core storytelling arc in a sustainability case.

- **Activity:** Students analyze a case and map:
 - Who are the protagonists?
 - What conflict do they face related to sustainability?
 - How does the company/initiative help resolve it?
- **Output:** A narrative storyboard highlighting emotional beats from audience viewpoint

Story Rewrite Challenge

Goal: Make corporate sustainability stories more human-centered.

- **Activity:** Students rewrite a weak or overly corporate story.
- **Open debrief:** Which stories are the most compelling, and why?

SDG Story Pitch

Goal: Practice linking local issues to SDGs through narrative.

- **Activity:** In groups, students pitch a 2-minute verbal story that links a local issue (air pollution, traffic, waste) to one SDG.
- **Requirements:** Must clearly identify audience, message, and emotional hook.
- **Feedback:** Peers vote on the most engaging pitch.

Module 4 Post-class reflection

Task: Students create a 1-minute video or podcast teaser telling a real sustainability story from their own community or campus.

- Must include:
 - A clear human subject.
 - A defined sustainability challenge.
 - A link to at least one SDG.