A No-Win Blame Game

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A No-Win Blame Game

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Note. Shell advertisement that translates to ¨I am on the way CO2 free. You too? ¨ (Reclame Fossielvrij, 2021)

"Play your part. Let's all move to zero waste." (Nike, 2022)

"Take shorter showers. Save water. Save the planet." (Colgate, 2016)

"Save the environment one scoop at a time." (Ben & Jerry's, 2021)

"Think green before you hit print." (Breslin, 2019)

1 - INTRODUCTION

Whether it is in the news, email signatures, social media content, government websites, on the bottle of your shampoo, environmental organizations' campaigns or in marketing advertisements of international brands, we are exposed to a variety of eco-friendly messages daily. Climate change refers to long term changes in temperatures and weather patterns (United Nations, n.d.). As climate change awareness has grown, such eco-friendly messages appeal to individuals to change their habits and lifestyle in order to save the planet (Jensen, 2019). Representing one of the dominant trends in contemporary environmental communication, eco-friendly rhetorics have been remarkably inescapable (Jensen, 2019). While perceptions and attitudes towards climate change continuously shift, the use of eco-friendly rhetorics has been consistent and persistent for over three decades (Jensen, 2019).

This development within environmental communication could appear as a positive one; it was about time for climate change and its consequences to be widely communicated, since they represent the biggest threat to humanity today (IPCC, 2021). Yet, the structure in which climate change, along with its causes, consequences, and solutions are framed in such eco-friendly messages can be quite problematic (Jensen, 2019; Mallett, 2012; Hall, 2014; Pihkala, 2018). For example, in the face of the climate crisis, eco-friendly rhetoric leads individuals to believe they can take small eco-friendly actions in their daily lives to change the scientifically predicted course of global events. Further, even if they do not believe their such actions will make a difference, they may follow through with them regardless. Their actions may alleviate the implicit guilt that is deployed by the eco-friendly messages to make people perceive themselves as falling behind environmental societal expectations, necessitating eco-friendly acts to alleviate such guilt (Mallett, 2012). These themes will be further elaborated after the introduction, where I conceptualize eco-friendly rhetorics and introduce the intrinsically connected concept of environmental scapegoating.

It is important to state that literature on the relationship between emotions and climate change has found that so-called "eco-emotions" may significantly influence individuals' attitudes and behavior in response to climate change (Brosch, 2021). For this reason, studies into how framing of eco-friendly rhetorics elicits specific emotions can provide valuable insights into the ways in which corporations may utilize these techniques. This is relevant, since it may jeopardize political environmental action and change. Research on general environmental communication has identified a strong relation between different frames of

climate change issues and the emotional responses that such frames invoke (Carvalho et al., 2017; Hall, 2014; Moore & Yang, 2020; Mallett, 2012; Cunsolo & Ellis, 2018). Environmental frames thus can have an indirect effect on the attitudes and behaviors individuals have surrounding climate changes.

Jensen (2019) has specifically examined the power of eco-guilt and the strategic use of frames designed to evoke such emotion in previous contexts. As illustrated by Jensen (2019), eco-guilt can be felt individually or collectively, as well as it can be scapegoated onto a single person or entity for being particularly harmful to the environment. It is argued that communication that engages with emotions can reinforce hegemonic power structures, hence the importance of showing how emotion-eliciting rhetorical techniques, such as eco-friendly rhetorics combined with environmental scapegoating techniques, have been deployed by powerful actors such as oil companies and states (Jensen, 2019; González-Hidalgo & Zografos, 2020).

Considering that the fossil fuel industry is the main contributor to climate change, it is crucial to analyze the strategic frames the sector employs and the potential use of scapegoating mechanisms that shift the responsibility onto individual consumers through strategically framed eco-friendly messages. The primary actor analyzed in this thesis, Shell, is an example of a powerful economic actor that has been targeted by civil society for their corporate branding and advertising related to the environment and climate change. Yet, surprisingly, research on Shell's possible use of eco-friendly rethorics in their advertising and marketing strategy is sparse. Shell's environmental communication strategies have not been studied through an emotion-centric lens, as former studies have often overlooked how emotion-eliciting rhetorical techniques are strategically deployed. This is important as emotions could potentially impact individuals' behavior, resulting in a knowledge gap regarding fossil fuel corporations and their role in influencing people's emotions towards climate change.

To address this research gap, this thesis examines Shell's environmental communication, with a specific emphasis on eco-friendly rhetorics and environmental communication frames, to ascertain whether the company strategically employs emotional frames for scapegoating purposes. The central research question guiding this thesis is: "How do corporations provoke and perpetuate environmental guilt?" Given Shell's widely recognized contribution to climate change through its CO2 emissions, their case presents a critical opportunity to elucidate the employment of strategic public relations (PR) branding campaigns that utilize eco-friendly rhetorics, combined with environmental scapegoating techniques, to frame causes and solutions to climate change. This thesis does this by analyzing Shell's online

branding campaigns, particularly their audiovisual communications such as advertising and branding campaign videos.

Within the discourse found in Shell's branding videos, this thesis focuses on the topics of the environment, environmental harms, the future, and potential solutions. The findings reveal that Shell employed eco-friendly rhetorics implying collective guilt among consumers; however, the company placed greater emphasis on providing hopeful and empowering frames that offered solutions to subsequently alleviate this guilt. Nonetheless, the analysis also reveals the increasing presence of a distinct yet comparable rhetoric within Shell's communication: greenwashing. While beyond the immediate scope of this thesis, the findings suggest that greenwashing rhetorics, like eco-friendly rhetorics, perpetuate eco-guilt by invoking positive emotions and motivating consumers to atone by purchasing the products offered as "green" as well as by employing "hope and possibility" frames. Consequently, the results indicate an increased focus on greenwashing rhetorics and the promotion of eco-friendly products to relieve guilt, all the while subtly implying collective eco-guilt through environmental scapegoating and "doom and gloom" frames.

The study proceeds as follows. In the second section, I outline the main concepts that will be utilized. Next, I conduct the theoretical framework which outlines the relevant research and findings on emotions evoked by climate change and framing, as well as my research approach and hypothesis. The fourth section is focused on methodology which lays out the research design through which the question will be answered. In the fifth section, the context surrounding Shell and climate change is discussed to help understand and connect Shell's discourse to its reality. Next, I conduct the analysis of Shell branding campaigns in the sixth section. Finally, I discuss the findings, this study's conclusion along with avenues for future research.

2 - CONCEPTS

Eco-friendly rhetorics.

Eco-friendly rhetorics are defined as pleas based around making changes to one's life choices to minimize one's impact on the planet's health (Jensen, 2019). They are employed in environmental communication, usually in advertising or branding campaigns (Baum, 2012). They fall under the terms 'green advertising' or 'environmental marketing', which define a

corporation's efforts to link its products, services or brand identity to environmental values and images in a positive light (Baum, 2012; Cox, 2010). According to Jensen (2019), eco-friendly rhetorics are employed in order to capitalize on public interest in environmental problems, using it to promote and sell products and services (p. 71).

These eco-friendly messages specify changes in consumption as the ultimate act that individuals can adopt to positively influence and repair environmental damage (Jensen, 2019, p. 72). Typically, eco-friendly rhetorics are presented in short messages, such as the examples included in the cover page. However, eco-friendly rhetorics can also be found in longer discourses, such as those employed in elaborate branding campaigns.

An important element in eco-friendly rhetorics is their imperative mood, which transfers feelings of urgency, importance and necessity (Maniates, 2001). Moreover, the trivial and daily repetition of eco-friendly rhetorics nowadays contributes to their capacity to convince individuals (Jensen, 2019, p. 70). The reinforcement and widespread use of eco-friendly rhetorics can also be attributed to the fact that they are profitable; they are able to channel environmental concern back into the market in the shape of eco-friendly products and services (Jensen, 2019).

Environmental Scapegoating.

Scapegoating, in general, refers to the blaming of a single individual or a group for the mistakes or harms made by others. More specifically, scapegoating techniques address collective problems by allocating guilt onto an individual or a group, alienating them, and thereby exonerating the responsible actors or causes (Schmitt, 2019, p.154). Within environmental communication, it refers to a powerful process in which "a public of environmentally minded individuals focuses attention and vitriol on a single person for being particularly harmful to the environment [...] even if that individual's actions have little to no large scale impact" (Schmitt, 2019, p.153). Jensen (2019) defines environmental scapegoating along the same lines in the context of the "Crying Indian" public service announcement in 1971: "the 'iniquities' of creating environmentally toxic and wasteful materials in search of profit are transferred to the consumer, who is framed as responsible for the product's eventual impact" (p. 89).

Moreover, Jensen (2019) argues that environmental scapegoating strategies are subtly applied through eco-friendly rhetorics. For instance, through an ambiguous use of "we", eco-friendly rhetorics elicit a sense of community, while also implying that individuals'

participation in systematic environmental damage is a deliberate, reasoned and voluntary act (Jensen, 2019, p. 72). Environmental scapegoating thus allows for both the instrumentalization of collective eco-guilt and the vindication of corporate accountability (Jensen, 2019, p.72). Environmental scapegoating relies on the transfer of eco-emotions, especially feelings of eco-guilt. These rhetorical mechanisms, together with eco-friendly rhetorics, implicitly activate collective-guilt and perpetuate it by offering individual consumers eco-friendly services or products to atone (Jensen, 2019; Schmitt, 2019).

In the following chapter I outline the relevant theories to discuss the interactions between climate change, eco-emotions and different framing and rhetorical techniques.

3 - THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

First, I briefly review literature around the emotions evoked by climate change. Next, this paper emphasizes research which shows the ability of environmental communication to elicit the same emotions. Following, previous research regarding the differing frames and rhetorical strategies within environmental communication will be discussed. Finally, I outline my hypotheses on the basis of the presented theories.

Climate change is a topic that sparks strong emotional responses. According to scholars, a broad range of emotions can be associated with climate change, such as ecological grief (eco-grief), ecological anxiety (eco-anxiety), eco-guilt, hope, fear, anger and empathy. Only recently have scholars begun to study the emotional impact of climate change (Hall, 2014; Pihkala, 2018; Gónzalez-Hidalgo & Zografos, 2020). Cunsolo and Ellis (2018) describe eco-grief as, "the grief felt in relation to experienced or anticipated ecological losses, including the loss of species, ecosystems and meaningful landscapes due to acute or chronic environmental change" (p. 275). They show that eco-grief is a natural response and impacts the mental health of individuals and groups who hold close relationships to the environment. Yet, the authors argue that eco-grief will be felt by a growing number of people as climate change advances.

Another emotional response to climate change is discussed by Clayton (2020), who studies eco-anxiety in relation to uncertainties about the future following environmental damages. She claims it is important to realize that pathologizing emotional responses to climate change by focusing on individual emotional experiences can potentially direct attention away from the societal causes of these emotional reactions (Clayton, 2020, p. 3). Furthermore, Clayton (2020) finds that the uncertain quality of climate change is the most daunting aspect

for many people and agrees with other scholars who consider climate change as an existential threat, leading to eco-anxiety (p. 2).

For the purposes of this study, hope is defined as an emotion that is evoked when an appraisal is made that "there is a possibility this problem could change for the better" (Ojala, 2022). According to Pikhala (2018), hope arises within individuals as a crucial component in addressing the eco-anxiety felt by individuals. Moreover, the complementary nature of tragedy and hope is emphasized, with tragedy highlighting the seriousness of the crisis and hope focusing on the potential for positive change (Pihkala, 2018).

Finally, the emotion of eco-guilt is defined as the feeling of guilt instigated by harm being done to the environment (Mallett, 2012). Moreover, Jensen (2019) also finds that guilt can be utilized as a mechanism to dissuade collective action. In addition, Moore & Yang (2020) find that guilt arises when individuals can link the responsibility of environmental harm to humans.

Importantly, scholars have found that emotions regarding climate change can be indirectly activated through environmental communication (Carvalho et al., 2017; Clayton, 2020; Pihkala, 2018; Hall, 2014; Gustafson et al., 2020). Likewise, González-Hidalgo and Zografos (2020) consider emotions as a key element in shaping power dynamics in environmental conflicts; they argue hegemonic power can be either reproduced or subverted by emotionally-driven discursive forces. For this reason, research on climate change framing is essential to understand the conditions influencing or compromising political engagement. Moreover, I present an overview of research that further analyzes how the eco-emotional framing techniques in environmental communication are potentially utilized to encourage people to feel and behave in ways that benefit the structures of power. They consequently shape environmental discourse and I thus contend there are important political implications of eco-emotional framing techniques.

Scholars have largely focused on describing the affect individuals experience when presented with climate change related information as well as on the variation of emotions brought about by different framing techniques and how these eco-emotions help create or dissipate conditions for political engagement that is needed. By highlighting certain elements and disregarding others, frames deliver a compact interpretive storyline of a problem, why it is important, who or what may be accountable for it and what actions are necessary to address it (Hall, 2014, p. 26). As a result, depending on the frame, a specific thought pattern is triggered.

With this in mind, a growing body of research in environmental communication aims to understand the most effective ways to frame climate change in order to elicit helpful

behavioral changes and increased concern among individuals. Academics have divided the dominant narratives around climate change between two grand frames: "gloom and doom" and "hope and possibility". The former frame, "gloom and doom" portrays climate change as a catastrophic event, through a negative and pessimistic lens that conveys two separate worries; first, the perceived gloom regarding the necessary actions and sacrifices to save the planet; second, the magnitude of climate change compared to what individuals can do against it. In Hall's (2014) words, "the problem is monumental, the hour late, and the resources few– consequently, we're all doomed, because there's little most of us can do to solve the problem" (p. 28). Gloom and doom frames evoke fear, powerlessness and overwhelm individuals, and hence, these eco-emotions can hinder political action, or worse, backfire with resistance and withdrawal (Hall, 2014, p. 29). Pihkala (2018) considers "gloom and doom" a frame that can cause eco-paralysis too, where individuals desire to act but feel paralyzed.

In contrast, the latter approach, referred to as the "hope and possibility" frame, seeks to empower individuals by emphasizing human agency and strengths. Hope and possibility frames usually use images and narratives of a green and happy future thanks to the powerful sustainable decisions "we" take. Moser (2007) suggests that positive motivations and communication methods that offer a vision of a desirable future can encourage active engagement with climate change. Proponents of this approach claim that it is desirable to transmit feelings of joy, power and pride, as opposed to fear, guilt and regret, in order to create the optimism that can ultimately solve problems (Hall, 2014, p. 30). However, this optimistic framing may oversimplify the complexity of the issue by focusing on individual actions and technological solutions, rather than addressing systemic change through collective political action.

Different studies have compared the effects of the contrasting frames on individuals. Morris et al., (2020) propose a model to test the effectiveness of "doom and gloom" appeals compared to "hope and possibility" appeals. They maintain that pessimistic appeals can heighten risk perception and eco-emotional arousal, which can potentially influence behavioral responses to climate change. Likewise, Sarrina Li and Huang's (2020) research supports the efficacy of fear-induced communication, suggesting that individuals must perceive fear appeals as highly threatening and receive recommended alternative actions to process and adopt a solution. Conversely, O'Neill and Nicholson-Cole (2009) challenge the effectiveness of "gloom and doom" appeals, emphasizing their limited long-term impact. The scholars propose that non-threatening imagery and icons, linked to individuals' everyday emotions and concerns, elicit greater engagement and behavioral change. Moreover, on a middle ground, Pihkala

(2018) proposes framing climate change as "tragic hope," by acknowledging both the inevitable existential crises and challenges to values and beliefs it presents as well as a "grounded" feeling of hope connected to the potential for positive change and a new relationship with nature (p. 555). Effective environmental communication, according to Hall (2014), should explore conflicting values, encourage self-reflection, and emphasize the need for sacrifice for the collective good.

Hall (2014) criticizes the dominant narratives surrounding climate change, suggesting the need for an approach combining both the "hope and possibility" and "gloom and doom" frames while emphasizing the crucial role of framing techniques in shaping people's perceptions and responses for climate change. Despite scientific evidence calling for urgent action, Hall (2014) highlights the lack of popular and collective support for considering climate change a priority. Moser (2007) suggests that individuals' numbed response to climate change may in fact be due to concerns about other prominent risks, such as terrorism or unemployment, which overtakes their attention to engage with climate change messages. While this may be true, Pihkala (2018) argues that this apparent apathy may be misleading, as individuals may actually experience profound emotions of eco-anxiety.

In addition to the two mainstream frames of "gloom and doom" and "hope and possibility", eco-friendly rhetorics have been predominant in contemporary environmental communication. With his research on eco-friendly rhetorics, Jensen (2019) offers a third explanation for the lack of collective action against climate change. He finds that eco-friendly rhetorics and environmental scapegoating techniques have been utilized to transfer eco-guilt onto individuals for their consumption of products that are harmful to the environment, while diverting responsibility and accountability away from systemic issues and corporate interests. According to Jensen (2019), environmental scapegoating relies on provoking and alleviating collective guilt through eco-friendly rhetorics. Jensen (2019) highlights the environmental "double-bind", a paradox in which a directive is impeded or contradicted by its context (p. 79). In the same fashion, the "hypocrite's trap" is discussed as a rhetorical construction that reinforces the power of eco-friendly rhetorics in transferring eco-guilt; critics of environmentally harmful industries are accused of participating in and benefiting from the system they critique, and thus their voice and opinions are undermined (Jensen, 2019, p. 73). Neoliberal thinking and rhetoric pervade society to such an extent that even environmental activists fall into the trap of accusing other activists of hypocrisy (Jensen, 2019).

Research on corporations' use of eco-friendly rhetorics has focused on the fossil fuel company, Beyond Petroleum, and on what Doyle (2011) refers to as "the carbon footprint sham". In her analysis, Doyle (2011) studies how the term "carbon footprint" was popularized by British Petroleum (BP) as part of a PR campaign to shift climate change responsibility from corporations to individuals, and argues that this approach is misleading as it places the burden on consumers and devalues the environmental movement to marketing strategies (ch. 8). Doyle's findings coincide with Jensen's (2019) and Maniates' (2001) claims in that "a privatization and individualization of responsibility for environmental problems shifts blame from State elites and powerful producer groups to more amorphous culprits like "human nature" or "all of us" (Maniates, 2001, p. 43).

It is important to note why the framing that eco-friendly messages convey can be problematic, as briefly mentioned in the introduction. At first glance, it could be argued they promote greater concern for the environment, hope and empowerment by encouraging individuals to make eco-friendly changes in their day to day choices. However, on a more profound level this type of environmental communication can be counterproductive for different reasons.

Firstly, the adjustments in individual habits these messages encourage to combat climate change, such as taking shorter showers, planting a tree or buying a fuel-efficient car, individualize responsibility and demarcate our "environmental imagination," which is "our collective ability to imagine and pursue a variety of productive responses (from individual action to community organization to whole-scale institutional change) to the environmental problems before us" (Maniates, 2001, p.34). Maniates (2001) claims that the individualization of responsibility for environmental problems diminishes the nature and the exercise of political power (p. 33).

Secondly, eco-friendly rhetorics prescribe adjusting individual consumption as the solution to environmental catastrophe; such recommendations are concerning since they entail market-based and neoliberal reasoning, arguably the main drivers of the ecologically destructive economic system we live in (Fraser, 2021; Brown, 2015). In Mann and Wainwright's (2018) words, "Social and technical responses that reduce or slow the effects of climate change may of course push these [planetary] limits out into the future to some degree, but they cannot be eliminated. Responses that do not address the principal capitalist cause of climate change (that is, energy use to fuel the global capitalist economy) are in the end doomed to failure" (ch. 5).

Lastly, given the complex and interconnected nature of climate change, uncoordinated and deliberate individual choices prove inadequate to address the global environmental threats. This last point can be further illustrated as an environmental double-bind rhetoric, in which the "right" strategies against climate change seem to make no positive impact. As Jensen (2019) puts it, "a self-negating loop is formed: it's crucial that you act–the act doesn't make an impact" (p.79).

The relevant concepts for this analysis are eco-friendly rhetorics, environmental scapegoating, eco-guilt, 'gloom and doom' and 'hope and possibility' frames. Jensen's (2019) theory on eco-friendly scapegoating will be used and further extended to show how those emotion eliciting rhetorical techniques have been deployed by Shell. Moreover, Hall's (2014) configuration of 'gloom and doom' and 'hope and possibility' frames will be used and integrated for my analysis. By merging these two frameworks, I construct a comprehensive theoretical foundation to study how corporations evoke and perpetuate eco-guilt. On the basis of this research, I hypothesize:

Hypothesis 1: Shell evokes and perpetuates feelings of eco-guilt through eco-friendly rhetorics and environmental scapegoating

Hypothesis 2: Shell evokes and perpetuates feelings of eco-guilt by strategically alternating between environmental frames of gloom and doom and hope and possibility

5 - METHODOLOGY

In order to answer my research question, I analyze Shell's advertising campaigns as a single case study. This allows me to expand the existing theory of eco-guilt and scapegoating to a new context. I consider Shell, a powerful fossil fuel company that has a relatively huge and negative impact on the environment, as a crucial case to assess whether and how the specific eco-friendly rhetorical techniques identified in Jensen's (2019) theory are deployed by fossil fuel corporations. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a qualitative research method which exposes the connections between language, power, and ideology (Halperin & Heath, 2017).

Given the research question- How do corporations provoke and perpetuate eco-guilt? - CDA is the method that allows me to explore underlying rhetorics and power structures that may be present in the firm's branding campaigns regarding environmental issues. Moreover,

including and associating the context in which Shell exists and has been developed in the past decades is important, since it influences the meanings and intentions of the firm's campaigns' discourse. On the whole, CDA can help this thesis uncover how corporations, such as Shell, use language and images in their branding campaigns to frame their activities and potentially shift eco-guilt for environmental issues onto consumers. A quantitative method would be unable to grasp the importance of the context, the rhetorical techniques and literary devices used and hence, the CDA is preferred.

Considering that "contemporary branding is premised upon this immaterial relation between product and consumer, in which consumers appropriate the perceived qualities, meanings, values, experiences and ambiences invoked by the brand, as a means of producing aspects of the self, identity and community," CDA will be used to analyze Shell's branding campaign videos (Doyle, 2011, p. 6). The analysis will focus on the language, visual elements, and overall narratives presented in these videos. Special attention will be given to identifying instances of scapegoating rhetorics, eco-friendly rhetorics and the two dominant frames being utilized. The aim is to understand how these elements work together to provoke feelings of eco-guilt among viewers.

I use a sample of two different advertisement campaigns from Shell's Youtube channel. The advertising campaigns selected were primarily addressed to the European audience, yet they were also shared on their social media accounts which have a global reach. Globally addressed campaigns are increasingly the norm for multinational corporations' branding and advertisement campaigns, and for the purpose of this thesis, they are practically feasible since they are in spoken English and available in different online platforms.

Through CDA, this thesis aims to study the techniques used by Shell in their advertising campaigns. The findings will contribute to a greater understanding of the role of corporate communication in environmental discourse and consumers' feelings of eco-guilt. On a context level, the findings can further explain the reproduction of "neoliberal precepts of individual responsibility and market-based reasoning" (Jensen, 2019, p. 71).

First, I identify the general environmental communication frame through which climate change related content is communicated: either the 'gloom and doom' frame or the 'hope and possibility' frame. This can be recognized visually by depictions that trigger either fear, anxiety, guilt or hope, empowerment, joy, and safety. Discursive elements can also hint at the environmental communication frame in use, based on Hall (2014). Moreover, borrowing from Jensen's (2019) theoretical framework, I look for the different ways in which environmental guilt is activated and/or perpetuated in the campaign samples selected. Special attention is

given to the environmental scapegoating techniques postulated by Jensen (2019). These include, yet are not limited to, qualifications that imply voluntary choice to contribute to environmental harms (e.g. "if" you drive a car) and thus "establish complicity in systematic environmental destruction" (Jensen, 2019, p. 94). Another technique that indicates scapegoating from corporate advertisement is the expansion of the "we," by which consumers are rhetorically diffused and united to corporate actors. Furthermore, offers and encouragement to alleviate eco-guilt through eco-friendly actions or market-based solutions are considered as extensions of scapegoating techniques.

In this case study, I argue Shell's branding campaigns employ rhetorical techniques of environmental scapegoating to trigger a sense of collective eco-guilt and to then individuate it by directing this emotion back into the market.

Next, I provide information on Shell's historical relationship with climate change to provide an overall understanding of the contemporary context which is utilized during the application of the CDA.

6 - CONTEXT

According to Timperley (2020), seventy percent of the world's greenhouse gas emissions since 2000 can be directly attributed to just one hundred fossil fuel companies. When it comes to Shell, Shell's planned emissions from 2018 to 2030 are estimated to account for 1.6% of the global 1.5 degree Celsius budget (ClientEarth, n.d.). Hence, it is of interest to understand the way Shell uses advertising in the face of increasing awareness of climate change. In the next paragraphs, I elaborate on past archives that show the company's historical relationship with climate communication.

In the 1980s, Shell made an internal assessment confirming the connection between Shell's work and harmful greenhouse gas emissions. They learned that CO2 could double by early 2030 which could cause a rise in sea levels. Interestingly, the aforementioned report was labeled as 'confidential' by Shell and was only revealed to the public in 2018 along with other internal documents by a news organization (Hope, 2018a). The dismissal of this report shows that despite this early warning, Shell evaded any responsibility and rather claimed that the burden of change was laid with consumers and governments, not with the fossil fuel industry (Franta, 2018). Additionally, they continued to invest heavily in fossil fuel extractions and were unwilling to take notable steps towards addressing climate change.

During the 1990s, Shell's position evolved into navigating a middle ground between accepting the scientific consensus at times while also lobbying for climate skepticism. In 1991, Shell warned of "extreme weather, floods, famines" caused by global warming induced by burning fossil fuels (Gordon, 2017). Moreover, Shell acknowledged that human activities are contributing to climate change, while being skeptical about some catastrophic predictions. Their position developed to project the eventual competitiveness of renewable energy sources. Two major incidents occurred in 1995 which prompted a recalibration in Shell's marketing and branding strategies.

First, it was their alleged involvement in the death of Ken Saro-Wiwa and other activists in 1995. The company's oil extraction turned Ogoniland into one of the most polluted places in the world and was responsible for harming the local community (Walton, 2021). This triggered non-violent protests and it was alleged that Shell conspired with the military government by providing the army with vehicles and ammunition and to "bring about killings and tortures of Ogoni protesters" (Pilkington, 2009). This resulted in a lawsuit which was resolved through an out of court settlement by Shell in 2009 by paying 15.5 million $ to the victims and their families (Walton, 2021).

Also in 1995, Shell announced plans to decommission the Brent Spar oil storage platform in the North Sea by sinking it with explosives in the Atlantic Ocean (Rowell, 2015). However, this decision was protested by Greenpeace who argued that it would harm the marine ecosystem (Weyler, 2016). The public support for Greenpeace grew and Shell's public perception was negatively affected. An "unprecedented consumer boycott" led to a 20% fall in sales in Germany (Ethical Corporation NewsDesk, 2010). Hence, Shell was forced to reconsider its plans and explore alternative options for decommissioning.

Due to these PR disasters, Shell focused on rebranding their advertising strategy in order to alleviate the public pressure. In 1999, the goal of Shell's new PR campaigns was to "bury the findings, muddy the waters and turn climate change into a debate" to improve public perception (Hope, 2018b). Importantly, the strategy document highlights Shell's efforts to be viewed as a corporation which is "open to dialogue and embracing change" without making any tangible commitment to change (Hope, 2018b).

Since the 2000s, Shell has continued its investment in fossil fuel and has been involved in a number of controversies with their advertising. Despite allegations of human rights violations and corruption, Shell attempts to portray itself as a socially responsible actor. In some instances, environmental lobby groups complained and exposed the misleading ads. In

2007, the Advertising Standards Authority banned Shell's advertisement which claimed that they recycle the waste carbon dioxide to grow flowers (Tryhorn, 2007).

In order to improve its public image, Shell resigned from industry groups in 2015 which were campaigning against regulations aimed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. However, an investigation revealed that Shell was still part of multiple trade organizations which are engaged in lobbying against climate initiatives and the company did not disclose this in their public assessments (Carter et al., 2020). Hence, Shell makes a concerted effort to acknowledge climate change in public advertisements and communications as a threat while also lobbying for the uncertainty of climate change through its private communications (Waldman, 2018).

Despite Shell's counter efforts, civil society pressure continues to bounce back and demand accurate and scientifically based evidence regarding climate change. In 2017, Shell's advertisement campaign for natural gas as "the cleanest of all fossil fuels" was censured by the Dutch Advertising Code Authority (Neslen, 2017).

The presented incidents highlight the divide between Shell's public persona and private dealings surrounding climate change and prove the company's priorities on modifying marketing strategies rather than business models. Shell's branding and advertising campaigns throughout the 2000s can potentially reveal the strategies employed in their environmental communications. The next section will proceed to analyze and uncover what emotions are being elicited and perpetuated to shape public opinion on the brand, on climate change and on their role to achieve change.

7 - ANALYSIS

In this section, two Shell branding campaigns from the years 2008 and 2018, respectively, are analyzed based on the frames and eco-friendly scapegoating rhetorical techniques outlined earlier. This time period was selected as it accounted for the change in international climate governance developments and the increasing environmental civil society pressures from 2008 to 2018. Moreover, this period of time is also relevant due to the multiple controversies and questionable actions undertaken by Shell.

First, the branding campaign "Join the taxi ride to a sustainable energy future" by Shell will be analyzed. The four minute video was uploaded to Youtube by Shell on November 14 in 2008, and it was shared on social media, such as on the company's official Twitter account in early 2009 (Shell [@Shell], 2009).

In this video, Shell creates a metaphorical taxi ride where the driver and the passenger discuss the future of energy and the challenges humanity will face to achieve a sustainable future. The taxi driver sketches a hypothetical scenario in which humans are observed in nature and studied by aliens as they evolve and start creating tools. The video depicts a March of Progress, followed by individuals chopping trees, ending in a gray city full of smokestacks where the green elements of the picture, such as trees, disappear.

This particular part of the video provides several instances that evidence environmental scapegoating. Shell (2008) presents humanity and human evolution as the main driver of the energy and environmental crises. By using something as ontologically close to any individual, namely human evolution, Shell (2008) implicitly transfers blame and responsibility for their industry's role in the energy crises onto viewers of the video who identify with the inherited guilt of human evolution and industrialization processes. The use of "we" expands the blame for the energy crisis as shared between humans in general, such as in the following line: "But the smarter we got… we didn't seem quite so harmless" (Shell, 2008). Moreover, the suggestion that humans are not invited to the "intergalactic party" because they might leave the lights on or 'something along those lines', refers to the common eco-friendly imperatives, namely "turning the lights off when not in use". Viewers can further identify with these eco-friendly acts, and the video's assumption that humans may not follow through these imperatives thereby causing exclusion to the party further triggers feelings of guilt. Here, again, the "intergalactic party" represents an existential element which is the continuation of life on Earth. It is used by Shell (2008) to subtly tap into eco-emotions of fear, uncertainty and provoke eco-guilt together with the eco-friendly imperatives.

When the video then presents the causes of the energy challenge, such as overpopulation and the increasing standards of living, the taxi driver explains there are two likely scenarios: scramble or blueprint. As the scramble scenario is narrated, the passenger says "but surely governments will take the necessary…" and gets interrupted by the driver who says, "you'd think so wouldn't you?" and continues to spiral down, framing the possible future through a "gloom and doom" lens as the visuals in the video show lightning storms, individuals climbing trash piles and fighting surrounded by smokestacks (Shell, 2008). "They [government] might well prioritise the day-to-day, putting off the big decisions so we end up lurching from one crisis to another" (Shell, 2008). From this dialogue, it can be argued that the

blame for a catastrophic future is scapegoated onto governments' inaction. Furthermore, the use of "we" against "they" (for the government), attempts to create this sense of solidarity between the average person and Shell as a company, even though these are two largely distinct entities who contribute to the climate crisis to different extents. Additionally, this depiction makes it seem that Shell is a passive bystander to the climate change crisis who, together with individuals, is at the mercy of government decisions.

The second part of the video shifts the visual and rhetorical frames from a "gloom and doom" to a "hope and possibility" one. The blueprint scenario is described by the taxi driver as "[...] where we all work as a team. People all over the world start taking action. [...] We get the government to change laws" (Shell, 2008). Surprisingly, people are shown cooperating and protesting. Here, Shell (2008) emphasizes the need for everyone taking action as they all are to blame for climate change. Again, by displacing their own responsibility to repair, Shell (2008) uses scapegoating rhetorics to shift the eco-guilt onto the government. In addition, the "hope and possibility" framing of the blueprint scenario culminates with "[...] That way we can work in harmony with the planet and - here's the clever bit - continue to profit and grow" (Shell, 2008).

Finally, as the video ends, the taxi car becomes a spaceship and goes up to space. Then a voice gives credits to Shell by saying the following: "This little film was made by Shell. Believe it or not, Shell is not run by aliens" (Shell, 2008). This last line teases the proposition that Shell is an external actor in face of the energy crisis, like the aliens in the video, passively witnessing human evolution leading into climate change.

Next, the video "Offsetting CO2 emissions together with Shell" was published by Shell on January 16, 2018. This video is part of the firm's current branding campaign #Makethefuture, and was shared on Youtube and other social media accounts.

In this video, Shell (2018) discusses the increasing energy demand, as well as the pressure of the Paris Agreement to reduce CO2 emissions and climate change: "The global population is rising and living standards are increasing.[...] At the same time, climate change is happening". The use of the word "happening" portrays Shell as a passive bystander who is noticing the effects of climate change, rather than as an active contributor. Moreover, this framing of climate change as "unstoppable" and of natural occurrence is a scapegoating technique, since Shell (2018) does not explicitly connect climate change to fossil fuel industry

contribution, and therefore it absolves the firm of environmental wrongdoing, and transfers the blame onto population rise.

The video then posits that an energy transition is necessary, and nature is highlighted as an ultimate and available solution: "By 2030, nature through natural CO2 sequestration could provide up to one third of the climate solution through activities such as avoiding deforestation, growing new forests, and preserving wetlands. This solution is available to us today and only lacks the necessary investments" (Shell, 2018). Again, the omission of the role of decreasing fossil fuel emissions and fossil fuel projects obscures Shell's role and accountability in the climate crisis. Moreover, shifting the focus on nature as a solution and on the lack of funding for natural CO2 sequestration sets the stage for the product that Shell (2018) aims to promote in this campaign.

Another eco-guilt scapegoating technique was found in the video: "[...] people and organizations may want to take responsibility for their emissions produced from driving their vehicles [...]" (Shell, 2018). Here, the collective guilt of individuals that drive cars is activated, and they are expected to take responsibility for their environmental harms. Furthermore, viewers are invited to alleviate the activated eco-guilt, which is considered a complementary stage in environmental scapegoating rhetorics (Jensen, 2019). In the video, a balance scale between nature and a car is displayed, while the narrator says, "Carbon credits can be created and used to compensate for the emissions from the use of fossil fuel vehicles" (Shell, 2018). Voluntarily purchasing carbon credits, Shell's current climate strategy, is framed as an heroic act that consumers can do in order to counter the negative effects for the CO2 emissions of their cars. This assigns eco-guilt and responsibility to the everyday consumer who is presumed to voluntarily contribute to a fossil-fuel powered system.

(Shell, 2018)

During the second part of the video, the Casa Gal Corridor Project in Kenya is presented. Shell (2018) uses this case to show the effects that Shell's carbon credits had in this local community. First, the area is visually and rhetorically framed through a "gloom and doom" perspective: "Just 20 years ago, this area was on a fast track to becoming a barren wasteland. It was being cleared for charcoal and slash-and-burn agriculture by a desperate community that was suffering from extreme poverty and had little access to education" (Shell, 2018). The video shows members of the local community working under the sun, kids in school and then clips of savannah animals. Secondly, the picture shifts quickly to a "hope and possibility" frame, in which people are smiling and laughing, planting trees and petting elephants. It is of interest that the "hope and possibility" frame is deployed when it shows Shell in a positive light. Shell (2018) attributes these images to carbon credits, and states: "Now, economic incentives are created to protect the forest and over 50,000 trees have been planted to reforest degraded slopes. Doing this also has multiple benefits besides neutralizing CO_2 emission". The listed benefits include awarding scholarships to children, providing safe drinking water, supporting over 500 women's groups who sell handmade crafts, and "eco charcoal is produced without cutting down a single tree" (Shell, 2018).

This part of the video scapegoats in two ways; first, by evoking images of a third world impoverished community and endangered species, viewers are asked to identify with the causes of such depictions, such as colonial underdevelopment and destruction of wild habitats. Secondly, Shell portrays itself as a corporation that is taking action against the problem. The imagery of nature and wildlife through a "hope and possibility" frame suggest that Shell's efforts came to the rescue, positioning the firm at the apparent forefront of stopping climate change. This promise of reconciliation is transferred to their product, carbon credits, offered to consumers along these lines, "We want to make a difference. Please join us." (Shell, 2018). This implies that Shell is doing everything in their power to stop climate change and pushes eco-guilt onto the consumer, who is worthy of the blame and hence should support Shell in their endeavor. Lastly, further solutions are also focused on consumers' behavior and the role of Shell in correcting their environmental misdoings, such as giving consumers insight into their car's total emissions and showing them how to improve their driving behavior.

8 - DISCUSSION

Analyzing Shell's branding video campaigns gave multiple insights into how corporations provoke and perpetuate eco-guilt. My initial hypotheses were the following:

Hypothesis 1: Shell evokes and perpetuates feelings of eco-guilt through eco-friendly rhetorics and environmental scapegoating.

Hypothesis 2: Shell evokes and perpetuates feelings of eco-guilt by strategically alternating between environmental frames of gloom and doom and hope and possibility.

In Shell (2008), environmental scapegoating was identified. In the video, viewers are presented with different processes leading to the climate crisis, notably industrialization. The video connects this development to consumers by presenting human evolution and population growth as the cause, and thereby distracting from Shell's role in contributing to environmental harms. As specified in the analysis, broadening the "we" was identified as a scapegoating technique and eco-friendly rhetorics were utilized in the advertising. Moreover, the key findings illustrate that Shell (2008) clearly relies on the strategic shifting of the environmental communication frames "gloom and doom" and "hope and possibility" when presenting their depictions of the future. In the video, "doom and gloom" is used as a frame in the scramble scenario (Shell, 2008). Gloom and doom framing in the scramble scenario is combined with the eco-friendly imperative of turning the lights off, since both lead to not being invited to 'the intergalactic party'. In contrast, the blueprints scenario makes use of the "hope and possibility" frame to represent a future in which "we" act together and "smarten ourselves up" (Shell, 2008). Another key finding is the clear binary between humans and aliens, and how Shell teasingly positioned itself as the purified 'intergalactic party' host.

In Shell (2018), environmental scapegoating, eco-friendly rhetorics and the use of both environmental communication frames were identified. The strategic use of "gloom and doom" along with "hope and possibility" frame was notable in the presentation of the Casa Gal Corridor Project in Kenya, where Shell's interference was backed up with the empowering frame, which assists in the invoking and perpetuation of collective guilt by inviting viewers to contribute and change the "gloom and doom" situation of the local community into a hopeful one by purchasing Shell's carbon credits. This finding is in line with my second hypothesis. Moreover, environmental scapegoating in Shell (2018) was characterized by shifting the blame onto vehicle owners and thus evoking feelings of eco-guilt among viewers. Furthermore,

Shell's suggestion to adjust individual driving behavior in order to avoid the effects of climate change allows the perpetuation of eco-guilt as this can alleviate the eco-guilt and create a cycle. This confirms my first hypothesis. Worth noting, the causes of climate change were not included in the video, however, individuals were still scapegoated for their car's CO_2 emissions. Additionally, the portrayal of carbon credits in the "hope and possibility" frame, when fact checked, indicates greenwashing rhetorics (Reclame Fossielvrij, 2021).

9 - CONCLUSION

From the literature review, it was clear that research on corporations' environmental communication were sparse and largely focused on the American context. Moreover, there was a lack of research on eco-friendly scapegoating rhetorics applied to more recent cases. For this reason, there was a need for studying the techniques used by fossil fuel corporations in their advertising around climate change through an environmental scapegoating framework (Jensen, 2019). Incorporating Hall's (2014) framework on environmental communication further strengthens this analysis by showing the different techniques utilized simultaneously. This is important as I extend the research by highlighting the use of various techniques by Shell in order to dissuade calls for greater corporate accountability. By becoming truisms, eco-friendly rhetorics "exert meaningful influence in environmental discourse", hence it is crucial to deconstruct these rhetorics used by Shell in order to prevent them from becoming truisms, with the hope of striving towards systemic change rather than individual behavior changes as the advertisements intend (Jensen, 2019).

The findings of my analysis exhibit how corporations, in this case Shell, evoke and perpetuate feelings of eco-guilt. By using environmental scapegoating techniques, employing eco-friendly rhetorics and systematically using environmental communication frames of "gloom and doom" and "hope and possibility," Shell transfers eco-guilt onto the public, perpetuates the feeling by providing ways to repent, and frames the bigger picture accordingly.

Limitations

While CDA provides an insightful method for analyzing discourse, it is also known to be subjective in nature and dependent on the interpretations of the researcher (Halperin & Heath,

2017, p. 338). Moreover, due to the scope of the research, it is not possible to test whether these advertisements were successful in eliciting the intended emotion and further, if they prompted a behavioral change within viewers. This is one of the points for future research in order to understand the success/failure of such advertisements in causing behavioral change that is beneficial to the corporation or the environment.

Recommendations for future research

The findings and limitations of this research offer multiple directions for future research. For instance, investigating the actual effect of eco-friendly rhetorics on individuals' beliefs and attitudes can give insight on their potential use as drivers of normative change, and how this could potentially shape the political arena. Moreover, exploring the evolution of environmental branding can help explain the apparent rise of greenwashing rhetorics based on hope and possibility framing together with eco-friendly rhetorics.

The interplay between Jensen (2019) and Hall (2014) frameworks can also be applied to analyze other corporate green advertising who are not necessarily in the fossil fuel industry, but in other environmentally harmful sectors, such as consumer goods or transportation.

Far from ascribing eco-friendly actions as worthless or useless, I suggest there is a need to focus such messages on the potential of collective action rather than individual action, and to pressure change for systemic change.

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