

**Ensuring the protection of
political adversaries in unstable
regions**



GA4

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Introduction

Over the last 50 years, as the world has moved from a mindset of relative disregard for its environment, to an active push to preserve our planet. Over the last 30 years more regulations have been put in place to prevent corporations from polluting vital sources of life such as rivers and key bodies of water. Governments have cut down on the reliance on fossil fuels within the makeup of a nation's energy supply, and most importantly consumers have become more aware of the impact of their decision and among the global populous more people are making active changes in their lives to help combat climate change.

However, with this comes the concept of greenwashing. This is a new phenomenon and a damaging one at that, from both a physical and ethical perspective. Greenwashing clouds the reality in which consumers are buying into, and intentionally skews the reality regarding the damage which certain actions have on the environment. Not enough is being done to combat this issue, for several reasons. Regardless, if it were to continue its effects would be disastrous in the human races bid for reducing its impact on the world.

This research report will review the history of greenwashing, where it stems from, examples of it, why it is damaging, and how key policy implementation would help combat the issue.

Definition of Key Terms

Greenwashing

Greenwashing is a term used to describe a false, misleading or untrue action or set of claims made by an organization about the positive impact that a company, product, or service has on the environment.

Environmentalism

Environmentalism is the general concern among a populous in regard to the environment thus, inspiring action to combat the damage done to the environment.

Legislation

Legislation is the official laws which are put in place to enact the intention of the government. They offer a legally binding, written account of the law.

Consumers

Consumers are a people who consume products or media. In the context of this research report they are used as a term to describe the populous of people who would be consuming a piece of media or product. Especially if that product is a necessity. E.g., Petrol.

Policy Implementation

Is the mechanism through which a policy is put into action. It describes the stage in which the notions and ideas put forward by governing bodies are put into place and physically actioned.

Energy Mix

Energy mix is the makeup of a country, company, or consumer's energy supply. It describes where the energy that is used comes from. It is relevant as it gives an insight into where most of the energy comes from. This is particularly important when looking at countries and very large corporations. Particularly those corporations who are suppliers and manufacturers.

Carbon Tokens

Carbon tokens are tokens which are used by companies to 'offset' carbon emissions. They are essentially tokens which you can buy that act as a promise that a certain amount of carbon has been removed from the atmosphere by way of planting trees or some other method.

General Overview

Firstly, we must define greenwashing and its characteristics. Greenwashing is a term used to describe a false, misleading or untrue action or set of claims made by an organization about the positive impact that a company, product or service has on the environment. We must also recognize the characteristics of greenwashing before we can identify applicable policies which would resolve

the matter. The United Nations lists multiple examples of common instances involving green washing. They are the following, verbatim...

- Claiming to be on track to reduce a company’s polluting emissions to net zero when no credible plan is actually in place.
- Being purposely vague or non-specific about a company’s operations or materials used.
- Applying intentionally misleading labels such as “green” or “eco-friendly,” which do not have standard definitions and can be easily misinterpreted.
- Implying that a minor improvement has a major impact or promoting a product that meets the minimum regulatory requirements as if it is significantly better than the standard.
- Emphasizing a single environmental attribute while ignoring other impacts.
- Claiming to avoid illegal or non-standard practices that are irrelevant to a product.
- Communicating the sustainability attributes of a product in isolation of brand activities (and vice versa) – e.g. a garment made from recycled materials that is produced in a high-emitting factory that pollutes the air and nearby waterways. (United Nations. (n.d.). *Greenwashing – the deceptive tactics behind environmental claims*)

Greenwashing comes in many forms; these are just some of the examples which are commonplace and give an idea for what an instance of greenwashing might look like.

History of Greenwashing

Per Enviral, the term ‘greenwashing’ was coined in 1986 by Jay Westerveld, an American Environmentalist. Since then the term has been widely used in academia and mass media. It’s debated when concern for the environment first began to arise. However, many point to Rachel Carson’s book ‘silent spring’ which was published in June 1962. It’s acclaimed by many to be the impetus of the modern environmentalist movement that we know today.

Examples of Greenwashing

There are numerous examples of greenwashing by various major companies and conglomerates over the last 40 years. These incidents range in scale, some only committing minor infringements, consisting of unfulfilled slogans and empty words. Yet some acts that have been committed border on fraud and span the course of almost 10 years.

The Volkswagen Emissions Scandal

In September of 2015, Volkswagen were accused by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) of fitting their cars with devices which were called 'defeat devices' according to the BBC. These devices were fitted to Volkswagen cars which had diesel engines. The software could detect when emissions testing was being done on the car or engine and would alter its performance. This would improve the figures that the car was putting out and made the cars appear to emit fewer emissions than they actually were. The reason for this was due to the major ad campaign which Volkswagen had launched. This ad campaign was pushing diesel cars across the US. With one of the key selling points being the cars miraculously low emissions. These were of course false and had been altered by the software put in by Volkswagen. The fall out was major and led to the current CEO at the time Martin Winterkorn resigning from his post. The fallout also served as a catalyst for the downfall of the production and development of diesel cars, which were once hailed as a solution to the climate crisis.

Ultimately this scandal shows not only the failures in legislation regarding the prevention of such instances occurring, it also documents the lengths that companies will go in order to mask the wrong doings of their companies regarding their actions surrounding the adequate prevention of climate change.

BP Beyond Petroleum

In 2002, in a speech given at Stanford University, BP's former chief executive said "we need to reinvent the energy business" per Forbes. Subsequently BP launched the 'beyond petroleum' rebrand. The rebrand claimed many actions towards the betterment of the environment. One of the key pledges, which was ultimately the crux of the whole rebrand, was the move away from fossil fuels as a primary form of energy. BP pledged major investment into 'alternative energy'. While the wind and solar divisions of BP exist under the 'alternative energy' banner. The key investment potential lay with natural gas. While natural gas is branded as alternative energy, its environmental harm during sourcing cannot be disputed. The process of 'fracking' to extract natural gas can be detrimental to local environment. Yet despite that gas is one of the key components of the energy grid, and in 2002 when this occurred, the production of gas was set to expand. Thus, BP was able to harness that expansion under the guise of 'reinventing the energy business' and majorly invested in the extraction of natural gas.

This wasn't the only issue that BP faced during this rebrand. In 2006 and 2010 respectively BP suffered catastrophic spills. In 2006 a BP oil line, which was located in Alaska, burst. This caused one of the biggest oil spills in the history of Alaska. It occurred in Prudhoe bay and, in 2007, BP

pleaded guilty after knowing about the corrosion which had occurred on multiple pipes within the region.

Then in 2010 the Deepwater horizon oil spill occurred. This was a travesty and was the largest marine oil spill in history. This wasn't just an oil spill, the resulting incident led to an explosion on the support rig. The event led directly to the death of 11 workers and another 17 were injured. The oil residue from the spill formed what was called slick. Which was a layer of oil on the surface of the water. The slick had an area of 150,000 km. The spill proved to be a PR nightmare for BP. Given the string of infringements which BP had incurred, it proved difficult to see the sentiment in the company's campaigns. This proved a major challenge for the company to overcome.

Regulation & Enforcement

Regulations surrounding greenwashing can be difficult to implement effectively. Given that the burden of proof for characterizing greenwashing can be difficult to identify. For instance, to what extent should statements be taken as word. If for example a company CEO said in an interview that they wanted to change the makeup of their energy profile, should that be taken at the same weight as a published company statement. Thus, the subjectivity surrounding regulation regarding greenwashing makes it difficult to categorize. As a result, different countries have various regulations regarding greenwashing.

The UK for instance, under the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA), has published a green claims code. This code gives a set of stipulations which businesses can use to ensure they are compliant with the governments existing legislation in regard to making environmental claims. In conjunction with the publication of the guide in 2021, the CMA also performed audits on a variety of websites to assess the validity of environmental claims. According to Gowling WLG the CMA found that 4 out of 10 environmental claims could be misleading to consumers.

While the UK has regulations, which target greenwashing specifically. Many countries don't have any policies which target greenwashing. Singapore for example has extensive laws regarding consumer protection and misrepresentation, but since there aren't any laws regarding greenwashing, it's often up to the consumer to decipher the message behind a company's environmental statements. This is a problem as this is the case in many nations it violates consumer trust and doesn't do anything in the way of genuinely contributing to preventing climate change.

Regulation and enforcement is crucial, firstly regulation must be implemented in the first place. As of now there is no global initiative to prevent greenwashing, thus every country can use their own version and definition of what constitutes greenwashing. Many countries simply have it protected under their current consumer protection laws. However, this is inefficient. A global body would support countries in facilitating the discussion surrounding greenwashing, this would enable nations to make the necessary changes and implement the necessary policies. Thus, efficiently combatting greenwashing.

In a similar vein enforcement is just as important as a factor in preventing greenwashing. If adequate enforcement is not put in place, then the legislation is ultimately futile. Thus, adequate enforcement must be put in place to ensure that the legislation is effective. This may be done through means such as fines to nations to incentivize crackdowns on companies who violate greenwashing laws. This would be beneficial as it would enable to nations to make adequate steps in ensuring that greenwashing is stopped adequately and efficiently.

Timeline of Key Events

Date	Event
30 th of June 1962	'Silent Spring' is published.
September 1986	The term 'greenwashing' is first used.
December 2002	BP Exec speech sparks 'beyond petroleum'
2 nd March 2006	Prudhoe Bay oil spill
22 nd April 2010	Deepwater Horizon oil incident

Major Parties Involved

BP (British Petroleum/Beyond Petroleum)

BP is one of the key parties involved regarding instances of green washing. Their instances of said greenwashing represent not only the impact that the failure of effective policy implementation can be but also an example as to the scale that you are working with when it comes to instances of greenwashing in corporations. The two examples that were given above indicate the atrocities that can occur. While obviously not a direct result of greenwashing, examples such as the Deepwater Horizon incident can show the negligence that such corporations can have, with that same negligence carrying over to the use of greenwashing.

Volkswagen

Volkswagen are responsible for bypassing emission tests on their cars. This is again an example of corporations abusing their power. While never officially confirmed there were allegedly reports bypassing tests through the use of software and other measures as early as 1998. This further exemplifies that greenwashing isn't just an empty claim and highlights that greenwashing can be extremely damaging. Not just to the environment but to public health.

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

The environmental protection agency is the United States regulating government body who is responsible for the protection of the environment. Their responsibilities consist of advising the American government on measures which can be taken to aid in protecting the environment. They also stay current and up to date on all the current measures and circumstances which are occurring globally and stay advised on how to deal with them.

Competition and Markets Authority (CMA)

The Competition and Markets Authority, is a branch of the UK government who consult on all matters regarding the market. They specifically serve a role in protecting the consumer. This is achieved by enforcing legislation under consumer protection and ensuring that companies comply with measures such as GDPR. They also ensure that markets remain stable and work with other governments to ensure that markets globally remain stable. The CMA is one of the only regulatory bodies to release legislation which specifically targets greenwashing.

United Kingdom

The United Kingdom is at the forefront of enacting against greenwashing, they are one of the only nations to target greenwashing specifically. Per Reuters, by May 2024 the United Kingdom will release a new law which will specifically target financial firms who are using greenwashing. With a crackdown on things such as carbon tokens and other methods which may disguise the reality of a firm's climate contribution.

Brazil

Brazil is a part of a collection of nations who are not taken to preventing greenwashing and have been allegedly doing it themselves. In company with Saudi Arabia and Australia, these nations allegedly tried to cloud the water in an upcoming UN report on global warming. Moreover, Brazil

