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DISCOURSES OF GREENWASHING AND CLIMATE DELAY IN *DON'T LOOK UP* (2021) AND *GLASS ONION: A KNIVES OUT MYSTERY* (2022): A COMPARATIVE CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

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Abstract

This study compares how manipulative environmental rhetoric is constructed in Don't Look Up (2021) and Glass Onion: A Knives Out Mystery (2022). It distinguishes greenwashing, understood as communication that creates overly positive beliefs about environmental performance, from adjacent discourses of climate delay and media trivialisation. Using a qualitative comparative case study, the analysis integrates van Dijk's sociocognitive Critical Discourse Analysis, Fairclough's three-dimensional model, Lyon and Montgomery's greenwashing framework, and visual semiotics. The reporting corpus comprises six focal sequences selected from the two films and examined through dialogue, scene context, visual design, and relations of power. Don't Look Up primarily depicts institutional climate-delay discourse through bureaucratic temporisation and entertainment framing; its BASH extraction narrative moves into greenwashing when a profit-driven, high-risk intervention is branded as responsible technological rescue. Glass Onion presents clearer corporate greenwashing through selective disclosure, unsupported clean-energy claims, symbolic sustainability, and the suppression of known safety risks. The comparison shows that environmental manipulation operates through different but connected institutional and corporate arrangements. The study contributes an operational distinction between greenwashing and climate delay in film discourse and demonstrates how lexical choices, visual prestige, and control over public communication can reduce accountability. The findings support critical environmental media literacy while recognising that the analysis is interpretive and limited to a small purposive corpus

Keywords: Greenwashing, Climate Delay, Critical Discourse Analysis

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INTRODUCTION

Environmental communication has become central to public demands for corporate and governmental accountability. Within this field, greenwashing refers to communication that encourages an unjustifiably positive assessment of an organisation's environmental performance, practices, or products (Delmas & Burbano, 2011; Lyon & Montgomery, 2015). It therefore involves

a discrepancy between environmental representation and material performance rather than merely the use of positive environmental vocabulary.

Greenwashing can occur at the level of an organisation, product, claim, or visual execution. Selective disclosure, vague or misleading claims, symbolic actions, and environmental imagery can conceal negative information or create an appearance of responsibility without substantive change (de Freitas Netto et al., 2020). Recent scholarship further emphasises dynamic forms of greenwashing in which narratives about innovation and a sustainable future legitimise present decisions despite uncertain or contradictory evidence (Montgomery et al., 2024).

Not every discourse that weakens environmental action should, however, be classified as greenwashing. Climate-delay discourse accepts or appears to accept the existence of a crisis but justifies inadequate action, redirects responsibility, or promotes non-transformative solutions (Lamb et al., 2020). Media trivialisation, depoliticisation, denial, and strategic framing may support greenwashing, but they remain analytically distinct unless they also misrepresent environmental performance or responsibility. This distinction is essential for interpreting the two films examined here.

Popular film provides a productive site for examining these processes because it condenses political, corporate, scientific, and media discourse into accessible narratives. Media representations do not simply transmit environmental information; they shape how problems, responsibilities, risks, and possible responses become publicly intelligible (Hansen, 2018). *Don't Look Up* represents a planetary emergency through political calculation, media entertainment, and a corporate technological intervention, whereas *Glass Onion: A Knives Out Mystery* centres on a billionaire's promotion of an allegedly clean energy technology whose risks are withheld.

Existing work has examined environmental representation in Hollywood film (Moore, 2017) and the communicative significance of *Don't Look Up*. Doyle (2022) interprets the film as a climate-communication allegory that criticises political inaction and late-capitalist values, while Little (2022) identifies both the critical potential and audience-related risks of satire. Gruber (2023) further shows how the film juxtaposes generations, activism, media discourse, and technological optimism. Greenwashing research, meanwhile, has developed detailed classifications of corporate environmental claims, symbolic management, and future-oriented narratives (de Freitas Netto et al., 2020; Montgomery et al., 2024).

These bodies of scholarship are rarely brought together in a comparative analysis of cinematic discourse. Previous discussions of *Don't Look Up* tend to address climate inaction, science communication, or satire, while *Glass Onion* is less frequently analysed through a systematic greenwashing framework. The specific gap addressed here is therefore not simply the absence of a comparison between two films, but the lack of an operational account of how institutional climate delay differs from, overlaps with, and can become corporate greenwashing within satirical narratives.

Accordingly, this study has two objectives: (1) to identify the linguistic, visual, and discursive strategies through which environmental responsibility is delayed, trivialised, or falsely represented in *Don't Look Up* and *Glass Onion: A Knives Out Mystery*; and (2) to compare how these strategies operate across institutional-political and individual-corporate configurations of power.

The study asks: (1) Which textual and visual features construct climate delay or greenwashing in each film? (2) How do discourse production, ideological framing, and social power explain similarities and differences between the films? These questions replace an undifferentiated use of the term greenwashing with a category-based comparison grounded in explicit evidence.

The principal contribution is an integrated analytical framework that links greenwashing categories and climate-delay discourse to van Dijk's textual, cognitive, and social levels, Fairclough's textual, discursive, and social practices, and visual semiotics. This framework shows

how satirical film can expose both the rhetoric that postpones action and the environmental branding that legitimises risky technological solutions.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative comparative case-study design to examine manipulative environmental rhetoric in two satirical films: *Don't Look Up* (McKay, 2021b) and *Glass Onion: A Knives Out Mystery* (Johnson, 2022b). A case-study design is appropriate because each film is treated as a bounded discourse environment and the comparison focuses on how similar communicative problems are constructed within different political and corporate contexts (Yin, 2018).

The primary data consist of the English-language film versions available through Netflix, supported by the publicly released English screenplays (Johnson, 2022a; McKay, 2021a). Dialogue was checked against the screenplays, while visual observations were made from the films. Screenplay page and scene references provide stable textual identifiers; approximate timestamps are also reported, although minor variation may occur across platform versions, credits, and playback settings.

Scenes were included when they met all of the following criteria: (1) an explicit environmental, energy, scientific-risk, or crisis-management issue was present; (2) a political, media, or corporate actor attempted to define the issue for others; (3) the sequence contained a discernible rhetorical or visual strategy; and (4) the sequence contributed directly to the cross-film comparison. Plot-only scenes, repeated examples, and humour without environmental relevance were excluded.

The final reporting corpus comprises six focal sequences, three from each film, and six central dialogue excerpts accompanied by their visual and narrative contexts. The selected sequences are the White House response, the entertainment-media sequence, and the BASH extraction plan in *Don't Look Up*; and the Klear presentation, the private safety-risk discussion, and the final exposure of Klear's consequences in *Glass Onion*.

The unit of analysis is a bounded utterance or short exchange together with the immediately relevant visual context. This combined unit avoids treating dialogue as detached from speaker position, scene design, editing, gesture, audience, and institutional setting. The evidence matrix below records the sequence, excerpt or visual cue, primary code, and theoretical interpretation.

Conceptually, greenwashing is operationalised as discourse that misrepresents or selectively represents environmental performance, safety, responsibility, or benefit (Lyon & Maxwell, 2011; Lyon & Montgomery, 2015). Climate delay is operationalised as discourse that accepts the crisis while legitimising postponement, inadequate action, or a non-transformative response (Lamb et al., 2020). Media trivialisation refers to the conversion of urgent scientific information into entertainment-oriented discourse that weakens perceived seriousness.

Four primary analytical categories were used:

1. Claim greenwashing: unsupported, exaggerated, vague, or selectively positive environmental assertions that conceal contradictory evidence.
2. Symbolic or executional greenwashing: environmental credibility produced through branding, prestige, settings, imagery, or visible gestures rather than demonstrated performance.
3. Climate delay and deflection: euphemism, temporisation, responsibility shifting, political calculation, or technological solutionism that postpones proportionate action.
4. Media trivialisation: humour, informality, spectacle, personalisation, or entertainment framing that reduces the epistemic authority and urgency of scientific communication.

The frameworks were integrated rather than applied as separate parallel theories. Lyon and Montgomery's categories and the climate-delay typology supplied the substantive codes; van Dijk and Fairclough explained how those codes functioned across language, cognition, discourse

production, and social power; and visual semiotics identified how settings, objects, composition, and symbolic associations reinforced or disrupted the verbal message.

At van Dijk's textual level, the analysis examined lexical choices, modality, euphemism, evaluative language, presupposition, and omission (van Dijk, 1993, 2015). At the cognitive level, it considered the preferred mental models of crisis, innovation, competence, and responsibility. At the social level, it examined unequal access to public discourse and the capacity of political, media, and corporate elites to define legitimate knowledge (van Dijk, 1998, 2008).

Fairclough's model connected textual features to discursive practice and social practice (Fairclough, 1995). Discursive-practice analysis addressed who produced and circulated the message, which audiences were positioned to accept it, and how scientific statements were reformulated as political, promotional, or entertainment content. Social-practice analysis interpreted these choices in relation to institutional authority, corporate power, commercial media logic, and technological solutionism.

Visual analysis focused on representational and compositional meaning, including setting, salience, framing, objects, architecture, technological display, and the relation between characters and prestige symbols (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). Visual claims were coded only when a specific element could be linked to the environmental message, such as BASH's polished technical animation or the association of Klear with the Glass Onion complex and the Mona Lisa.

The analysis proceeded in five stages. First, both films were viewed in full and the screenplays were read to identify potentially relevant sequences. Second, open coding was used to record recurring rhetorical and visual patterns without forcing them into predetermined categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Third, the initial codes were mapped onto the four operational categories defined above.

Fourth, each selected unit was analysed at the textual, cognitive, discursive-practice, social-practice, and visual levels. Fifth, a cross-case matrix was constructed to compare actors, strategies, communicative purposes, concealed information, and consequences. The analysis also sought negative or boundary cases, especially scenes in *Don't Look Up* that represent climate delay but do not meet the stricter definition of greenwashing.

Coding decisions are reported in the comparative evidence matrix and were reviewed for internal consistency across the six focal sequences. Dialogue was checked against the published screenplays, and interpretations were compared across textual, visual, discursive, and social levels. No independent second coder or formal inter-coder reliability test was used; accordingly, the study does not claim inter-coder reliability, and interpretive subjectivity is acknowledged as a methodological limitation.

Triangulation in this study is source- and theory-based rather than statistical. Dialogue, visual context, screenplay sequence, and relevant scholarship were compared for each focal scene. This procedure does not eliminate interpretive judgement, but it makes the basis of each claim traceable through the stated inclusion criteria, coding stages, and evidence matrix.

No human participants or personal data were involved. Short dialogue excerpts are reproduced solely for critical analysis, and the visual discussion describes specific cinematic elements without reproducing film stills. Table 1 presents the evidence used for the principal comparative claims.

Table 1. Comparative Evidence and Analytical Matrix

Film and focal sequence	Evidence and visual context	Primary coding and CDA/visual interpretation
***Don't Look Up*: White House response (approx. 00:22-00:25; screenplay pp. 28-29)**	"Sit tight and assess"; the scientists present an immediate risk while the President prioritises electoral timing and message control.	Climate delay: bureaucratic euphemism and temporisation. The wording constructs waiting as competence; institutional authority displaces the scientific model of urgency.
***Don't Look Up*: entertainment-media sequence (approx. 00:35-00:42; screenplay pp. 35-45)**	"Keep it simple! And no math!"; bright studio aesthetics, humour, personal banter, and host control convert scientific warning into entertainment.	Media trivialisation: genre conventions weaken epistemic authority and normalise reduced urgency. This is adjacent to, but not automatically, greenwashing.

***Don't Look Up*: BASH extraction plan (approx. 01:16-01:24; screenplay pp. 95-98)**	"Almost 140 trillion dollars' worth of assets"; polished animation, expert endorsement, and economic promises accompany an untested extraction mission.	Claim greenwashing plus non-transformative solutionism: benefits are foregrounded while ownership, uncertainty, and catastrophic risk are minimised.
***Glass Onion*: Klear presentation (approx. 00:48-00:53; screenplay pp. 47-48)**	"Radically efficient, zero carbon emissions"; the crystal is displayed beside the Mona Lisa within a futuristic, elite architectural setting.	Claim and symbolic greenwashing: positive lexical clustering and prestige mise-en-scène create environmental credibility despite incomplete testing.
***Glass Onion*: private safety discussion (approx. 01:31-01:36; screenplay pp. 91-92)**	"Turn everyone's house into the Hindenburg"; insiders privately acknowledge leakage and safety risks after publicly supporting Klear.	Selective disclosure and networked complicity: the public/private discourse split exposes concealed knowledge and unequal power over the environmental narrative.
***Glass Onion*: final exposure (approx. 02:08-02:14; screenplay pp. 131-134)**	"Fuel of the future just barbecued the world's most famous painting"; the Glass Onion burns and the Mona Lisa is destroyed.	Counter-discourse: the material consequence reverses the future-oriented brand narrative; collapsing prestige symbols become evidence of risk and failed accountability.

Note. Timestamps are approximate and refer to the English-language Netflix releases; screenplay page references provide stable sequence identifiers.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The analysis identifies two related but non-equivalent forms of manipulative environmental rhetoric. *Don't Look Up* is dominated by institutional climate delay and media trivialisation, although the BASH plan introduces claim-based greenwashing. *Glass Onion* presents more direct corporate greenwashing through selective disclosure, symbolic sustainability, and known-risk suppression. Table 1 provides the evidentiary basis for these claims.

This conceptual distinction prevents every instance of political inaction or poor communication from being labelled greenwashing. A sequence is classified as greenwashing only when environmental performance, benefit, safety, or responsibility is positively misrepresented. Where the discourse primarily postpones action or reduces urgency without making such a representation, it is classified as climate delay or trivialisation.

1. Institutional Climate Delay and Political Deflection in *Don't Look Up*

The White House sequence constructs the comet as an issue to be managed politically rather than as a scientific emergency. President Orlean's instruction to "sit tight and assess" converts an immediate existential risk into an apparently routine administrative process. The verb phrase signals prudence on the surface, but its pragmatic effect is postponement.

"At this exact moment ... I say we sit tight and assess."

At the textual level, the euphemistic formulation suppresses agency, deadline, and consequence. At the cognitive level, it invites a mental model in which waiting is reasonable and the crisis remains controllable. At the social level, the President's institutional position allows this preferred interpretation to override the scientists' risk assessment.

The surrounding concern with electoral timing and public reaction further indicates a discourse of delay. The crisis is acknowledged rather than denied, but action is subordinated to political cost. This pattern aligns with Lamb et al.'s (2020) account of delay discourse, which legitimises inadequate action while appearing realistic or responsible.

This sequence should not be treated as greenwashing in the strict sense because it does not yet construct a false environmental achievement. It is better understood as bureaucratic temporisation and strategic deflection. The distinction matters because climate obstruction can operate without an explicit claim of environmental responsibility.

The later BASH intervention bridges climate delay and greenwashing. After a viable deflection mission is halted, the comet is reframed as an economic asset and a risky extraction plan is presented through scientific experts, polished animation, and promises of global benefit. The statement that the comet contains "almost 140 trillion dollars' worth of assets" shifts the evaluative frame from planetary safety to profitable opportunity.

Here the discourse meets the greenwashing criterion: a commercially beneficial intervention is promoted as responsible rescue while uncertainty, ownership, mission failure, and catastrophic

risk are selectively minimised. The political institution and the corporation jointly produce the message, showing that institutional and corporate manipulation are not mutually exclusive.

2. Media Trivialisation and Entertainment Framing in *Don't Look Up*

The entertainment-media sequence transforms scientific warning into a performance governed by simplicity, humour, attractiveness, and audience comfort. The instruction to "keep it simple" and use "no math" is not inherently illegitimate science communication; however, within the sequence it becomes part of a broader demand that catastrophe be made pleasant and non-disruptive.

"You're just telling a story! Keep it simple! And no math!"

The lexical imperative removes technical complexity and positions scientific expertise as a communication problem rather than a knowledge resource. Informal banter, reaction shots, bright studio aesthetics, and the hosts' management of emotional tone recontextualise the comet from evidence-based risk into consumable entertainment.

In Fairclough's terms, the discursive practice of commercial television reshapes the scientific message according to programme conventions and audience-retention logic. The scientists gain temporary access to mass communication, but they do not control the genre, pace, framing, or acceptable emotional register of the encounter.

This finding supports Doyle's (2022) interpretation of the film as a critique of political and societal responses to scientific evidence and Little's (2022) argument that satire can expose communication failures while also creating audience-related risks. Gruber (2023) similarly notes the film's oscillation between media spectacle, denial, activism, and personal consequence.

An alternative reading is that simplification may improve public accessibility. The problem depicted by the film is therefore not simplification itself, but simplification combined with levity, false balance, personalisation, and avoidance of the risk's consequences. For this reason, the sequence is classified as media trivialisation rather than greenwashing unless it is connected to a false claim of adequate environmental response.

The sequence demonstrates how media power can weaken urgency without directly falsifying the existence of the crisis. Its main ideological effect is normalisation: the extraordinary threat is absorbed into familiar entertainment routines, making delay appear socially tolerable.

3. Corporate Claim Greenwashing and Selective Disclosure in *Glass Onion*

Miles Bron's presentation of Klear is the clearest instance of claim greenwashing in the corpus. He describes the solid hydrogen fuel through a cluster of unequivocally positive attributes and immediately links the product to a nationwide home-energy launch.

"Radically efficient, zero carbon emissions, derived from abundant sea water."

The lexical pattern compresses efficiency, environmental benefit, abundance, and technological novelty into a single promotional sequence. High-certainty modality and the absence of qualifications encourage the audience to infer that the product is safe, validated, scalable, and environmentally superior, even though the dialogue establishes that these propositions have not been demonstrated.

The crucial contradiction is supplied immediately by Lionel, who states that Klear requires at least two more years of testing. The public claim therefore excludes material safety information known within the organisation. This discrepancy is consistent with selective disclosure and misleading environmental communication (Lyon & Maxwell, 2011; Lyon & Montgomery, 2015).

The private pool discussion intensifies the contrast between public promotion and concealed knowledge. Claire's question about whether household hydrogen would "turn everyone's house into the Hindenburg" reveals that influential insiders understand the risk while continuing to support the launch.

At van Dijk's cognitive level, Miles's discourse promotes technological optimism and the myth of the visionary innovator. At the social level, his wealth, ownership, and control over professional networks allow him to convert personal confidence into institutional consent. The

complicity of political and scientific associates also shows that the greenwashing message is sustained by a network rather than by one speaker alone.

Unlike the White House delay sequence, Klear's promotion directly constructs an environmentally beneficial performance that is contradicted by withheld evidence. It therefore satisfies the study's strict definition of greenwashing.

4. Symbolic Sustainability and Visual Branding in *Glass Onion*

Klear's verbal claims are reinforced by symbolic and executional greenwashing. Miles presents the crystal inside an architecturally spectacular private complex, surrounded by advanced technology, curated art, and elite guests. The setting makes prestige, wealth, innovation, and environmental authority appear mutually confirming.

The Mona Lisa is particularly salient. Its association with cultural permanence supports Miles's desire to be remembered as a historic innovator, while the glass-protection mechanism and the Glass Onion structure visually suggest mastery, transparency, and control. These symbols do not demonstrate Klear's environmental performance, but they lend credibility to the claim.

The finale reverses this symbolic order when Helen states that Miles's "fuel of the future" has "barbecued the world's most famous painting." The burning complex and damaged Mona Lisa transform the prestige objects that supported the brand into visible evidence of concealed risk.

This reversal functions as counter-discourse. The phrase "fuel of the future" repeats the temporal promise underlying Klear's promotion, but the immediate material consequence invalidates that promise. The scene therefore exposes what Montgomery et al. (2024) describe as the importance of future-oriented narratives in contemporary greenwashing.

From a visual-semiotic perspective, fire, shattered glass, and the collapse of the carefully controlled interior destroy the association between technological sophistication and responsible innovation. The film's mise-en-scène does not merely decorate the dialogue; it first produces and then dismantles the environmental brand.

The finding extends greenwashing analysis beyond misleading words. Corporate credibility is constructed multimodally through architecture, art, elite access, product display, and the social performance of genius. The environmental claim becomes persuasive because it is embedded in a complete prestige narrative.

5. Comparative Analysis: Institutional Delay and Corporate Greenwashing

Both films show powerful actors controlling the terms through which environmental risk becomes publicly meaningful. Strategic lexical choices reduce uncertainty for the speaker while transferring uncertainty to the public: political leaders describe waiting as assessment, media actors describe catastrophe as content, and corporate actors describe an untested technology as clean progress.

The principal difference lies in the immediate communicative purpose. In *Don't Look Up*, political and media discourse initially protects electoral stability, institutional reputation, and entertainment routines by postponing or trivialising action. In *Glass Onion*, environmental rhetoric directly protects a corporate launch, the identity of an innovator, and the loyalty of dependent associates.

The institutional-versus-corporate distinction is therefore useful but not absolute. BASH demonstrates that corporate solutionism can enter state decision-making, while Klear depends on political and scientific endorsement. The films depict interconnected systems in which institutions, media, experts, and billionaires distribute responsibility and reinforce one another's preferred narratives.

The comparison also identifies a progression from delay to greenwashing. Delay creates the political and communicative space in which a risky, profitable solution can later be represented as the only realistic response. Greenwashing then supplies the positive environmental identity that delay alone cannot provide.

Across both cases, the most effective manipulation is not outright denial. It is selective acknowledgement: the crisis or technology is recognised, but inconvenient information is displaced by procedure, optimism, spectacle, or prestige. This helps explain why manipulative environmental rhetoric can appear moderate, innovative, and responsible.

The evidence matrix demonstrates that the same textual feature can perform different functions depending on context. Positive future vocabulary in Klear's launch produces claim greenwashing; procedural vocabulary in the White House produces delay; and accessible storytelling in the studio becomes trivialisation when genre conventions suppress consequence and scientific authority.

The theoretical contribution is therefore a relational model: greenwashing, climate delay, and media trivialisation are distinct categories that can occur sequentially or in combination. CDA clarifies who can circulate these meanings, visual semiotics explains how credibility is staged, and the greenwashing and delay frameworks identify what kind of environmental misrepresentation is taking place.

6. Discussion: Power, Ideology, and Satire

The findings reinforce Lamb et al.'s (2020) argument that contemporary obstruction often works through delay rather than explicit denial. The White House's call for assessment and the preference for a commercially attractive technical intervention both accept the danger while weakening proportionate action. The BASH case further resembles the delay discourse of non-transformative solutionism because the proposed response preserves existing political and corporate power.

The analysis also develops existing interpretations of *Don't Look Up*. Doyle (2022) emphasises its critique of late-capitalist political inaction, and Little (2022) identifies satire's capacity to reveal absurdity while potentially limiting persuasion among audiences who do not share its assumptions. The present study adds that the film differentiates several obstruction mechanisms: political temporisation, commercial-media trivialisation, and corporate rescue branding.

For greenwashing scholarship, *Glass Onion* illustrates both claim-level and executional forms identified by de Freitas Netto et al. (2020). The Klear claim is selectively positive, while the island, art, and innovation aesthetics create symbolic legitimacy. The film also anticipates the future-oriented greenwashing described by Montgomery et al. (2024), in which promises of transformation substitute for evidence of present safety and performance.

Van Dijk's framework explains why these messages are more than isolated word choices. Elite actors possess unequal access to public communication and can promote mental models that equate political caution with competence or technological ambition with environmental responsibility. Fairclough's model complements this account by showing how scientific statements are transformed as they move through governmental, promotional, and entertainment genres.

The institutional-corporate comparison should nevertheless be treated as a heuristic rather than a fixed binary. *Don't Look Up* contains corporate media and technology power, while *Glass Onion* depends on political and scientific complicity. Alternative readings may also classify some scenes as denial, propaganda, public-relations deception, or technological solutionism rather than greenwashing. The operational definitions make these boundary decisions visible rather than eliminating interpretive disagreement.

Satire is similarly ambivalent. Exaggeration makes the mechanics of manipulation legible and encourages audiences to recognise elite irresponsibility, but it can simplify institutional complexity and invite viewers to position only others as foolish. Consequently, textual analysis cannot establish how different audiences interpret, resist, or accept the films' environmental messages.

The practical implication for environmental communication is that evaluators should ask three separate questions: Is action being postponed or displaced? Is environmental performance

being represented more positively than the available evidence permits? Which verbal and visual resources make the representation credible? This distinction can improve media-literacy teaching and the assessment of political, corporate, and technological claims.

The study has several limitations. Its purposive corpus is small, the analysis is interpretive, and fictional satire cannot be treated as direct evidence of real organisational practice. Approximate timestamps may vary across release versions, and the absence of audience data prevents conclusions about persuasive effects. Visual analysis is also limited to selected focal sequences rather than the complete cinematography of both films.

Future research could test the framework across a larger corpus of films, advertisements, political speeches, and digital campaigns. Audience-response studies could examine whether viewers distinguish climate delay from greenwashing and whether satire improves recognition of selective disclosure, symbolic sustainability, and technological solutionism.

Overall, the films depict environmental manipulation as a struggle over definition, timing, and credibility. Their satire reveals how dominant actors can acknowledge a crisis, claim responsibility, and still organise discourse in ways that preserve authority and avoid accountability.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that *Don't Look Up* and *Glass Onion: A Knives Out Mystery* critique related but analytically distinct forms of environmental manipulation. *Don't Look Up* primarily represents institutional climate delay and media trivialisation through bureaucratic temporisation, commercial framing, and technological solutionism; its BASH narrative becomes greenwashing when a high-risk commercial plan is branded as responsible planetary rescue. *Glass Onion* depicts clearer corporate greenwashing through selective disclosure, unsupported clean-energy claims, symbolic sustainability, and the concealment of known safety concerns.

The principal contribution is an operational comparison that links greenwashing and climate-delay categories to textual, cognitive, discursive, social, and visual analysis. It shows that manipulation rarely depends on simple denial. Instead, political procedure, entertainment conventions, future-oriented vocabulary, expert endorsement, and prestige imagery create preferred interpretations of responsibility and risk. For environmental communication and media literacy, the findings support separate evaluation of delayed action, misleading performance claims, and the multimodal resources that make those claims credible.

The conclusions remain limited by the small purposive corpus, interpretive coding, selected visual sequences, and absence of audience-response data. The institutional-corporate distinction is a comparative heuristic rather than an exhaustive division because both films depict networks of political, media, scientific, and commercial power. Future studies should apply the framework to broader media corpora and investigate how audiences recognise, negotiate, or reject greenwashing and climate-delay discourse.

AI Declaration

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