

Hollywood's messages about nature and the environment

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A study published recently in *Environmental Communication* has revealed the dual and conflicting messages in commercial films for young audiences about pivotal environmental problems and their potential resolution.

The article observes an increasingly intimate relationship between children, consumer culture and commercial media in the U.S. It focuses in particular on how the environment is represented in popular animated Hollywood films, including *The Lorax*, *Wall-E* and *Ice Age 2*.

The author, Dr. Ellen Elizabeth Moore, lecturer in Communication at the University of Washington, claims that a large majority of Americans worry about the quality of the environment to the point where they prioritize [environmental health](#) over economic growth. This means an increasing number of studios have incorporated environmental themes into many of their recent productions.

However, Moore's in-depth analysis of three films concludes that they all appear to adopt radical environmentalism, but that their "environmental" [messages](#) are entrenched within a capitalist framework, reinforcing a mainstream, consumerist mind-set. She explains that Hollywood hails "their young audiences solely as consumers and not citizens, leaving little room for the construction of other potential subjectivities or identities" and "does a serious disservice to young audiences by undercutting any meaningful messages about sustainable change and deflecting attention away from personal responsibility and towards increased consumption."

Despite focusing on a small number of films, the article addresses the conflicting messages between consumerism and environmental concerns in Hollywood cinema. Moore states that "the relationship between the environment and the US culture industry remains an understudied area in critical media studies. Through the lens of political economy, my article highlights how the concentrated, profit-driven US media system distorts messages about [environmental issues](#) like pollution, deforestation, and the loss of biodiversity. The increasingly dire information available about global environmental issues highlights the importance of work like this to illuminate industry practices and the information given to media audiences."

More information: "Green Screen or Smokescreen? Hollywood's Messages about Nature and the Environment." [DOI: 10.1080/17524032.2015.1014391](#)

Provided by Taylor & Francis

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