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A Critique of Environmental Rhetoric Used
During World Environment Day

By

William Calderon

Abstract

Fixing environmental problems is one of the fastest-growing priorities for young generations. College degrees such as chemistry and environmental engineering contain courses where students can learn how to tackle a variety of problems, from pollution to energy efficiency. Unfortunately, fixing large problems like global warming or plastics pollution will require the help of millions of people, not just those with technical skills. For this reason, environmental remediation is increasingly becoming not just a technical problem, but a communicative and rhetorical problem as well. Social media in particular is crucial in spreading awareness and garnering support for environmental movements. This paper analyzes the United Nations Environmental Programme's World Environment day and shows how social media for these movements can improve with a more realistic portrayal of current issues. People can be the heroes of the environment, but the responsibility to do so may lie in an acknowledgement of the fact that humans also created most of the problems.

Introduction

Rhetoric created to push environmental causes in social media is characterized by positive human relationships with nature, optimistic outlooks on every individual's ability to make a change, and the personifications of problems like pollution. While this approach does show some positive return, it does not formulate an audience that is responsible for its actions. In other words, environmental rhetoric does not push the fact that humans are not only the only hope for environmental improvement, but they are also the root cause of several major problems. This paper analyzes such a movement and shows that careful rhetorical choices are necessary when speaking about the environment on social media. It also presents critiques and ideas on how these messages can improve. While some environmental issues are technical in nature, this paper proposes that environmental problems now follow a trend toward a need for rhetorical solutions.

Environmental issues are one of the most prevalent rhetorical situations of the 21st century. Even though many of the solutions to problems like global warming and pollution require scientific innovation, I propose the main problem hindering success is a rhetorical one. Finding a person principally against holding the environment as a priority is rare. In addition, scientific consensus that climate change is human-induced is widespread (Lorenzoni). Unfortunately, significant strides toward stopping humanity's negative effects on the environment will require more than just scientific agreement. It will require public acceptance that leads to corresponding votes in favor of politicians and laws that protect Earth, often at the monetary or timely expense of people. Rhetorical analyses of how environmental advocates target the public and form their audience is critical in finding what truly motivates people to put the earth first.

I argue that a nuanced and effective approach to environmental advocacy utilizes two rhetorical theories: that of Edwin Black's construction of the Second Persona and a careful construction of the exigence. I support this strategy with an analysis of both of these theories. The specific challenge of environmental rhetoric is that the intended audience is both the cause and the solution of many environmental problems. Therefore, the dual-theory approach to analyzing the United Nations Environmental Programme's World Environment Day is a good fit because it focuses on forming both the audience and the problem simultaneously. To present the argument for this approach to environmental improvement, this paper begins with a description of the history and context around the United Nations World Environment Day. It then briefly reviews the two theories used in the third section to analyze World Environment Day. This paper concludes with a justification for this strategy by applying it to the Instagram of another environmentally-concerned entity, HDR Inc. from Omaha, Nebraska.

History and Context

World Environment Day (WED) is sponsored and led by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). Every year it decides on a new theme that is a current and pressing environmental issue and selects a country that struggles in that area to be the host for the year (What is World). The day was instituted at the UN Stockholm Conference in 1972 and is June 5th. The first WED was held in Spokane, Washington, USA in 1974 and has been an annual occurrence since (LearnEnglish). The 2018 theme was "Beat Plastic Pollution," and the host was India (What is World).

Since its founding, WED has spanned dozens of global environmental issues. In 1977 the key problem was depletion of the ozone layer, a relatively early global realization that many substances in industry were severely harming this part of the atmosphere. Ten years later, the

Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer passed, signifying an international agreement to cease production of and with several harmful chemicals. The 1986 WED shows the day's growing popularity with the participation of world leaders including the French President Francois Mitterrand and Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi. In 1989, Belgium hosted a WED dedicated to awareness of global climate change, and this issue has since been revisited several times for subsequent WEDs. In 2000, the UN Environmental Programme launched its website, taking advantage of the digital age's wide communication platform. 2015 marked the first viral online presence of WED. With Milan, Italy as the host, the theme "Seven Billion People. One Planet. Consume with Care" topped the trending lists of Twitter in over twenty countries, and over five hundred YouTube videos were uploaded about WED. The event has grown each year since this development and has led to many other important protocols and pledges concerning international conservation and reduction efforts (unenvironment).

UN Environment is now a huge presence on social media, with over 1,600 Instagram posts, 26,000 tweets, and hundreds of thousands of followers on both accounts (unenvironment). The accounts include retweets, original posts, and content from their other social media platforms covering wide ranges of environmental topics. Scrolls through both accounts yield colorful pictures of animals, plants, people, and some infrastructure that characterize the rhetoric that this paper analyzes in a later section. Hashtags and captions push slogans such as #BeatPlasticPollution and #ClimateAction that are invigorating but general. The WED posts for 2018's initiative on plastic pollution are no different, and this reveals a concern for repetitiveness and a homogenous rhetorical approach. With such a wide audience, these accounts must strive to be on the forefront of effective environmental rhetorical advocacy, and this paper proposes such an innovation.

Theory and Literature

Rhetorical artifacts, if effective, are carefully crafted to reach their recipients. Edwin Black pioneered the concept of different personae involved in a rhetorical situation. In his “The Second Persona” he asserts that not only is the implied author of a discourse important, but also “what equally well solicits our attention is that there is a second persona also implied by a discourse, and that persona is its implied auditor,” (Black, 111). In other words, the audience and its often-constructed persona is just as worthy of study as the rhetor and their image. Black then goes on to assert that certain verbal cues in a discourse not only imply the position of the rhetor, but also create grounds for influence over the auditor (Black, 113). His argument for this approach goes beyond analysis of the audience. His argument is centered on the idea that the audience is *constructed* by rhetoric. Rhetors are not people speaking to a void; they purposefully net a desired audience through carefully chosen messaging that will resound with that audience. This concept constructing a second persona is significant. Personifying a problem in a way that appeals to a specific audience is an effective way to “enlist our moral interest” (Black, 110). This is a crucial goal of environmental rhetoric. Humans have a moral obligation to protect the only Earth known. For this reason, Mother Earth is often personified. An analysis from the perspective that the rhetor is the Earth itself may be the most effective way in enlisting the moral sympathy of the public to do something.

Phillip Wander advanced the personae theory fourteen years later to include a Third Persona. He states that while a rhetorical artifact can create a Second Persona through affirmation and persuasion, the discourse can also “imply other characteristics, roles, actions, or ways of seeing things to be avoided,” (Wander, 209). This was an important development in the theory of personae because Wander highlights the power of exclusionary language. Making an

auditor feel “other” is just as valid a tactic as making them feel included. Unfortunately, environmental issues are so widespread that essentially the entire human population is included in the audience of environmental rhetoric. This makes for a complicated rhetorical goal that must carefully appeal to all different kinds of people and populations. An analysis that determines whether the rhetoric of an environmental movement inadvertently excludes potential help can also help refine these messages. These first three personae are the building blocks that rhetorical scholars have built upon since, logically beginning with the Fourth Persona.

This Fourth Persona is a sub-audience within a larger audience. When rhetorical discourse needs to resonate with a large group of people to some degree, but to a subset of that group to a higher degree, the Fourth Persona manifests. According to Thomas Pollock, it “assumes an identity that already exists, not attempting to create a new identity,” (Pollock, 6). This persona is, in other words, an identity of the rhetor that is hidden from most of the audience, allowing the silent informed of the population and the rhetor to “blend within a dominant group without detection,” (Pollock, 6). Pollock goes on to show that this allows for a more comprehensive analysis of symbols in rhetorical discourse. His example is the Washington National Cathedral. While the separation of church and state is the dominant logical ideology in America, this Cathedral combines symbols of the American government and Christianity fluidly. A Fourth Persona is created to avoid backlash from strong proponents of the separation of church and state while still making them coexist with the Cathedral’s true religious leanings. The second example Pollock uses is the Robert E. Lee Memorial Window. The window uses an older, less-known confederate flag in its imaging and is interlaid with religious symbolism. While the symbols veil and underplay the memorial’s relation to the slavery ideologically associated with the Civil War, the connection is still there. It creates a Fourth Persona that avoids piquing the

anger of the majority ideology that slavery was the reason for the Civil War while still inherently being a tribute to the Confederate Army's leader (Pollock, 10).

Appealing to a wide group of people with differing views is not a new goal, but Morris defined a Fourth Persona in 2002 (Pollock, 6). Rhetoric that veils the rhetor's true leanings enough to draw a wider audience than the audience that knows better is arguably more important in modern times, however. Because ideas and opinions can be shared almost immediately now, ideologies are formed and collect followings more quickly than ever before. Finding common ground in a sea of information often requires the effective creation of a Fourth Persona.

Analyzing the UN's National Environment Day, or any environmental movement, with the most current literature on personae in mind is important. Creating environmental change often requires a reconciliation between loss of profits and efficiency and effectively green policies. If the rhetorical discourse used to push a new initiative or piece of legislation is too clearly detrimental to a powerful corporation's profit-making interests, the company likely will not back the idea. On the other hand, if the requirements of an agreement are too lax, it will draw criticism from environmental activists for not enacting meaningful change. An example of such an initiative is the Paris Climate Accord. President Trump showed clear aversion to the agreement by withdrawing the US from the agreement completely. It was clear that "process and politics alone may not be able legally to constrain a state that made the political decision to pursue a carbon-emission intensive economic policy," (Sourgens, 911). This statement from Frederic Sourgens' article shows two rhetorically significant truths regarding climate change. Firstly, it makes clear that it is a global problem, and that the enactors of change are therefore often entire countries. Secondly, it shows that while "process and politics" are the methods by which these problems are explored and hopefully solved, without a way to legally enforce

climate laws, positive change will continually face stigma. The personae theory is a useful way to observe how the rhetorical message is put forth regarding environmental initiatives.

Another important tangential theory that will complete an analysis of an environmental campaign is the construction of the exigence. Bitzer defined exigence as “an imperfection marked by urgency” and “a defect, an obstacle, something waiting to be done, a thing which is other than it should be,” (Miller, 111). Miller goes on in his “Rhetorical Exigence” to make a compelling argument that “the *ultimate* or *perceived* nature of the exigence depends upon the constraints *of the perceiver*,” (Miller, 112). This is an important argument to account for when analyzing an environmental topic. The exigence of the UN World Environment Day is straightforward in theory. The problems are ultimately that human activities are killing other species and using up natural resources at unsustainable rates. The current literature supports that “perhaps the most powerful creator of exigences...is the media,” (Powell, 31). This is significant in terms of environmental issues because media attention is the most effective way to spread important information about a topic as complicated as climate change. The fact that environmental issues always *are* so multi-faceted is where the literature falls short.

Application and Analysis

This rhetorical analysis will attempt to add to the conversation regarding the personae and construction of the exigence by examining how the United Nations and the media work together to construct the nature of the exigence each year for the UN World Environment Day. The environment has lots of issues, so one of the first ways the UN decided to divide this huge issue is to have a specific theme and host country each year. In 2018, the theme was reducing plastics that pollute the ocean. Unfortunately, this is still a huge problem with several contributors and potential sub-exigencies. Plastics are a cheap way to package and ship

materials. They are also malleable and can therefore conform to irregular shapes with cheap and fast-working molds. They are widespread in industry and the market, so finding a specific area in which to reduce their use requires collaboration between lawmakers and manufacturers at all levels of production. At the same time, the problem in and of itself has a cause: the same people that must make a change to fix it. Often, the Second Persona is a group outside the offending party. Rhetors work to foster an us-vs.-them mentality to create a sense of identity in the audience, as personae are characterized not by age or attitude, but by ideology (Black, 112). In the case of plastics pollution, however, the ideology that Earth is valuable and must be preserved is all but undebated. What is difficult about the exigence is not accepting the problem, or even seeing the urgency. It is a problem of humility and greed that requires the Second Persona to look inwardly to make changes that may only provide long-term results.

The dearth in literature regarding rhetoric for audiences that essentially need to save themselves is the hole this analysis will attempt to fill. The methods the United Nations and India, the 2018 World Environment Day host, use to create a sense of urgency in an audience that is also the cause of the initial exigence present a rhetorically complex situation. This construction of the exigence also relates to how the Fourth Persona is implicated. The goal of instigating change in civilians' daily lives involves veiling the fact that those same civilians are the problem enough to create real interest in change. If the United Nations simply condemned corporations for utilizing plastics for profit, collecting support from consumers worldwide would be difficult. Instead, the message is a call for cooperation between consumers and producers that attempts to mask the reality that those same parties are the problem. A thorough analyzation of how the audience, or Second Persona, is portrayed depending on who the First Persona is when the exigence is self-reflective is important. The environmental problems of the future will require

mass collective action in the present, and creating enough urgency to fix them is one of the most important rhetorical challenges of the current generation.

World Environment Day (WED) is an annual United Nations initiative that pushes environmental advocacy and activism around the world. The scope and reach of the UN and WED make this rhetorical situation an apt source of study on how Second Personae and exigencies are defined for widespread issues. Environmental issues are largely humanity's fault, but humans are also the only beings in the universe that can do anything to remedy them. It takes a far-reaching cooperative like the United Nations to communicate with and mobilize enough people to make one day in the year have a significant positive impact on nature. Through largely Internet-based artifacts, the UN pushes WED around the world encouraging people to mobilize with local cleanups and advocacy campaigns to uphold the moral interest of the public and instigate real solutions.

The WED campaigns utilize several rhetorical platforms to spread awareness of the day. The UNEP official site for the campaign is the base of information about the current year's theme. The website is user-friendly and full of pictures and simple slogans. Links to the UNEP social media websites are always one click away, and the website urges visitors to share hashtags and slogans as a catchy and easy way to raise participation in education and volunteer activities relating to the theme. The rhetoric used on the website is also persuasive, with phrases like "Answer the call" and "discover the many ways that you can help" (What is World). The website also serves as a hub through which participants can organize relevant initiatives. For 2018, the

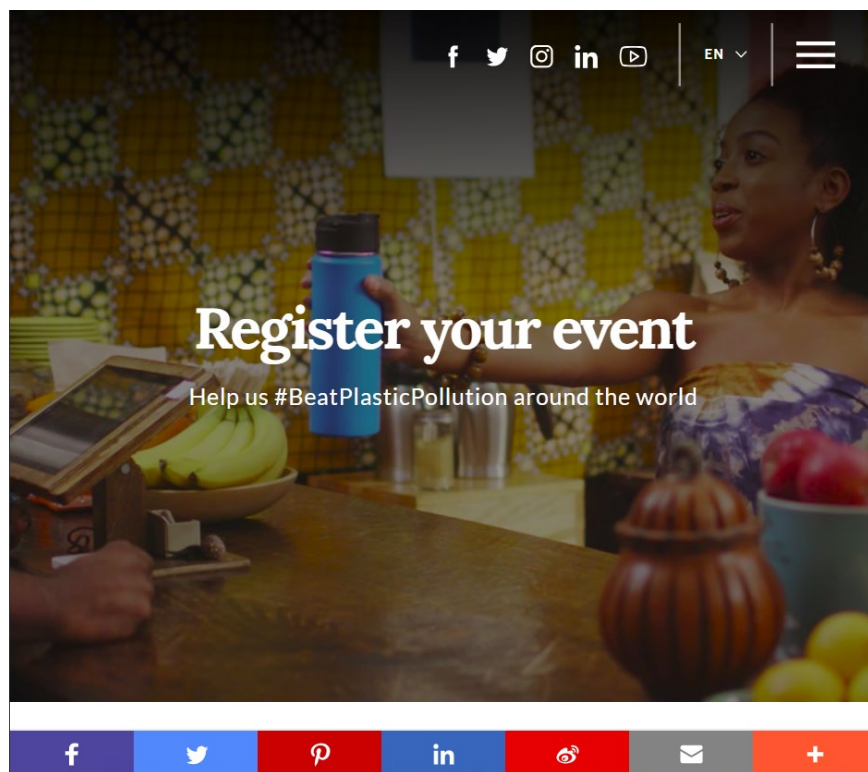


Figure 1: Screenshot of the event registration page on the UNEP website
<http://worldenvironmentday.global/en/register-event>

UN urged people “to get out and organize cleanups in their communities.” The website also reveals an app that organizers can download to connect to other participants and add a pin on a virtual map showing the initiatives happening around the globe. (What is World)

These strategies help create a sense of community amongst volunteers, as well as a shared sense of humanity that is integral to solving a scientific, rhetorical, and global problem like pollution.

Because plastics pollution is such a widespread issue, it makes for a logical theme for a global event like WED. With such an initiative comes the challenge of reaching enough people to make the movement effective. The most important rhetorical artifact behind WED is therefore its social media presence. As shown in Figure 1, the links to the UNEP’s various social media profiles are always easily accessible, sometimes linked in two places. The slogan for the 2018 initiative is also displayed in the Figure in hashtag form. The short phrases like “Beat Plastic Pollution” and #WorldEnvironmentDay are common strategies to link together social media posts about the event. Searching these hashtags on Twitter, for example, immediately connects

the searcher to the UNEP Twitter profile, related hashtags, and thousands of tweets from public Twitter accounts around the world that contain the phrases (News About #BeatPlasticPollution).

While these phrases are simple and easy to spread and understand, the nature of the exigence makes forming an audience difficult. Environmental issues are widespread, and this lends itself well to rhetorical solutions via the Internet, but with the Internet inevitably comes



Figure 2: Graphic posted on UNEP Twitter page
<https://twitter.com/UNEnvironment/status/1060159521539141633>

anonymity. Upon some scrutiny, the rhetorical scholar finds most of the calls to action related to WED to be general and impersonal. Figure 2 shows a graphic tweeted out by the UNEP Twitter profile centered around another slogan related to the 2018 theme: “If you can’t reuse it, refuse it” (UN Environment). Before the slogan comes the call to the audience: “What can you do?” This clearly is directed at the reader, but making a message specific to one person when a problem is so large is risky. Most of the graphics on UNEP’s Twitter are like this. For example, another graphic is a simple chart with barely-visible axes and a bright red line increasing exponentially. The caption is “The total energy from solar panels installed around the world has soared in the last few years” (UN Environment). While the

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message is centralized and clear, it may not do enough to invoke the moral, personified connection that Black shows is necessary in an effective development of a Second Persona.

When everyone is part of the Second Persona, an assumption that all readers can relate to the message comes forth. The central slogans of Figure 2 are orbited by icons representing cups, food packaging, and recycling, which are all related to excess plastics usage. Unfortunately, reducing plastics pollution is a far more complicated problem because plastics are widely used for a reason. They are cheap and versatile. To address the issue of how popular plastic goods are, the UN recruited a specific country to join the First Persona as a major purveyor of the 2018 message. Six Asian countries combine to produce 60% of the world's plastic pollution that reaches the oceans (Photo of Sea Turtle), so the UN appointed India, one of the most populous and fastest-growing countries in the world, to spearhead Asian and global efforts to slow this trend.

Instagram is the other social media platform that effectively spreads hashtags and slogans, providing another good example of the rhetorical strategies employed to market WED. The image-based platform does use hashtags and captions, but the true impact of UNEP's posts here come from pictures. While the various pictures of wildlife and nature interspersed with pictures of humanity's negative impact on them hold lots of appeals to pathos, the way these posts form the exigence of WED is also worthy of scrutiny. A scan of UNEP's profile yields images

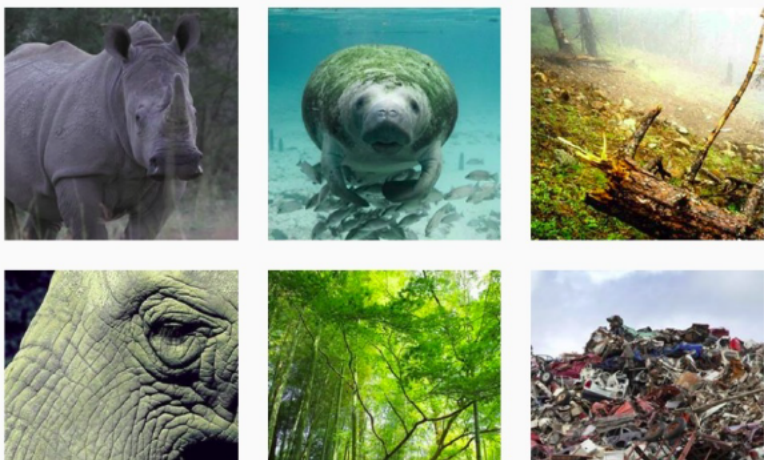


Figure 3: Snapshot of UNEP Instagram profile

of animals and their natural habitats. Between these are pictures showing snapshots of what negative impacts humans can have on these creatures (unenvironment Instagram). Figure 3 is a sample of the pictures posted in the profile. The rhetorical significance of UNEP's Instagram profile is the fact that hardly any of the pictures are of humans. Those that are of humans show them being physically active (Photo of Austrian Cyclist) or integrating in nature (Photo of Hikers). The pictures of pollution or deforestation are just that: pictures of *only* the effects humans have wrought on the scene without actual humans in the photo.

I pose that disconnects between people and the effects they have on the environment is one rhetorical strategy that UNEP and its partners employ to create engagement with WED. As stated in the literature review, creating the Second Persona for environmental advocacy on this scale can be difficult because not only is humanity the ultimate source of the problem, but it is also the only entity that can provide a solution. The Instagram profile of UNEP depicts humans as partners and citizens of nature, while defining deforestation and pollution as entities in and of themselves that are the enemy. The major hashtag for WED 2018 was #BeatPlasticPollution, which also clearly makes pollution itself the enemy. It is easier for people to blame plastic straws and discard them than it is for people to blame themselves and see any change as a major shift in how they view the world or live their lives.

Finally, WED relies every year on media coverage and secondary referral to gain notoriety. To encourage the spread of its message beyond its own website and social media platforms, UNEP launched a Tag Game. This venture encouraged participants to replace one disposable item they use frequently with the reusable equivalent, then to "tag" peers on their personal social media pages and encourage them to do the same (UN Environment director). UN Environment released a promotional video for the global Tag Game on its YouTube channel, but

the purpose of the video was not for it to reach millions of people. The purpose was for the Tag Game to do so, and the video was merely a launching point from which the game would start. According to the caption on the video, over 90 Million people saw the tag game online and on large screens in New York City and London. The YouTube video has less than two thousand views. UN Environment's reliance on partners that exist within communities that are willing to back its initiatives is crucial in projecting the message of WED. From local media sites publishing articles about the movement in India (TNN) to celebrities "tagging" each other to appeal to their influence, (*World Environment Day*) WED is a global event that needs and finds partners.

Framing the issue of plastics pollution in a way that garners widespread action requires a highly coordinated and powerful central entity like the United Nations. Defining the Second Persona is difficult when the audience called to solve the problem is also the cause of the problem. UNEP's largely social-media based advocacy anchored by its home website takes on this rhetorical challenge by presenting a theme each year that is the embodiment of the problem. Humans are then depicted as partners and fellow citizens of the globe, regardless of where they live, that can make a real difference against the evil that is pollution. Another way the UN effectively frames the problem is by uplifting the host country. The website has a page dedicated to India, describing its history, culture, environment, and commitments for WED 2018 (India: a Land). Even though the beaches of India have high microplastic content (Jayasiri), and the country is therefore a huge contributor to the problem addressed by WED 2018, India is framed in its best light on the UNEP website so that others can more easily support and follow its efforts to change.

The nature of the exigence for WED 2018 heavily affects how UNEP portrays the Second Persona. Garnering worldwide support for a single day is a huge undertaking that already presents rhetorical challenges due to sheer scale of the message. When combined with the fact that those meant to correct the problem are also the cause of the problem, careful framing of the issue becomes necessary to gain support. UNEP does so through positive media coverage of participating countries, images of people integrating into nature, and refraining from taking photos of humans currently in the act of harming the environment. These strategies combine to present plastics pollution as a reality that can be changed by people through something as simple as liking or sharing a tweet or hashtag. While widescale cleanups are a real result of WED 2018, the notoriety of the day in the eyes of more passive Twitter and Instagram users comes from this careful framing. Assuming slogans and pictures remain easy to share and spread, WED will continue to reach the ears and eyes of activists who are willing to devote the necessary time and energy to fix the problem at hand.

Implications

This analysis of the United Nations Environmental Programme's World Environment Day raises important points related to environmental rhetoric. While scientific consensus regarding human involvement in climate change is widespread, acting on this science requires the cooperation of lawmakers, corporations, the media, the public, and others. Fixing and protecting the environment is therefore a rhetorical challenge. Many of the critiques on the messages on the UNEP's social media accounts apply to other environmental initiatives. Tackling a large problem requires rhetoric that reaches and applies to different kinds of people. Unfortunately, this comes with a risk of losing the moral interest of the audience since messages must be simple and impersonal to relate to the masses.

A rhetorical analysis of the 2018 WED revealed exactly these tradeoffs. Easy-to-read graphics and simple calls to action have garnered hundreds of thousands of followers for UN Environment. The expert graphic designs and simple messaging were an excellent way to grow the platform of WED, but in order to enact as much change as possible, a change is needed now that the event is an international success. With the evolution of both the nature of environmental problems into rhetorical ones and the nature of the global audience due to the Internet, the rhetorical strategies of UN Environment's messaging must also evolve. This is why a dual approach with the exigence and the Second Persona in mind may elevate this yearly event.

Environmental rhetoric reveals the shortcomings of exigence and personae theory when used individually. Bringing both theories together is an effective way to highlight the difficulty in requesting the help and advocacy of an audience that is also the root of the problem. Black's assertion that the moral interest of the audience is crucial applies directly to citizens of a dying planet. A balance between defining the exigence and capturing the audience is the crux of the rhetorical solution. I propose that this model be used for future rhetors. This may result in more unforgiving or bleak connections between humans and the environment. Graphics, captions, and slogans that simply state the problem and call people to action may not suffice. If the environment is to last for generations to come, The Second Persona constructed by environmental rhetoric must learn its moral responsibility for the exigencies at hand.

The problems presented in this paper apply to several different environmental advocates and practitioners. A call to work with the rhetorical side of environmental problems in mind could be helpful to engineers or chemists that may have a technical solution ready. The implications of this paper clarify new responsibilities that environmental advocates and contributors must accept. Such responsibilities are detailed in the following section. Engineers

and scientists that research and maintain the environment every day must not be content with a purely technical contribution. Environmental firms and organizations have resources and an audience. They must construct an audience that is willing to help and make changes beyond the scope of the rhetor's influence. If the goal of environmental rhetoric for a company is simply to show concern for the environment for marketing advantages, then that firm's platform and rhetorical resources are wasted.

Recommendations for Practitioners

To illustrate an example of an application of the dual-theory strategy outlined in this paper, I have analyzed the Instagram account of HDR Inc. This engineering firm is centered around the practical construction of buildings and infrastructure in the Omaha, Nebraska metro area. This makes it a good example for illustrating the applicability of the new rhetorical strategy since changes in messaging on the part of this company can immediately show changes in their work. Constructing a more informed audience will elevate the company's social media presence while more strongly realizing and spotlighting its responsibility to the environment.

HDR is a civil engineering firm in Omaha, Nebraska. Their Instagram page is current and shows off the projects the company has helped on around the city. Several of the critiques presented for the social media of WED apply to this account as well. For example, Figure 4 is a screencap of the account. This is a representative sampling of the pictures HDR Inc. has posted. They depict man-made buildings and infrastructure bathed in natural light and surrounded by plants and geographic features like mountains and streams. The bio for the account says "Specializing in engineering, architecture, environmental and construction services. Think

global, act local” (HDR Instagram). Clearly, HDR Inc. holds the environmental effects of its projects as a top priority.

A rhetorical view of the account in line with this paper emphasizes the bottom-right picture in Figure 4. The only photo shown with people in it hardly features any man-made structures. Clearly, this picture is meant to show that HDR Inc. builds things that let people integrate seamlessly with nature. While these photos full of natural light and greenery make for an appealing aesthetic, I argue that a more effective way for HDR to communicate its role in environmental improvement would include stories and photos of the negative effects civil engineering can have. Collapsed bridges, crumbling roads, abandoned playgrounds, and erosion

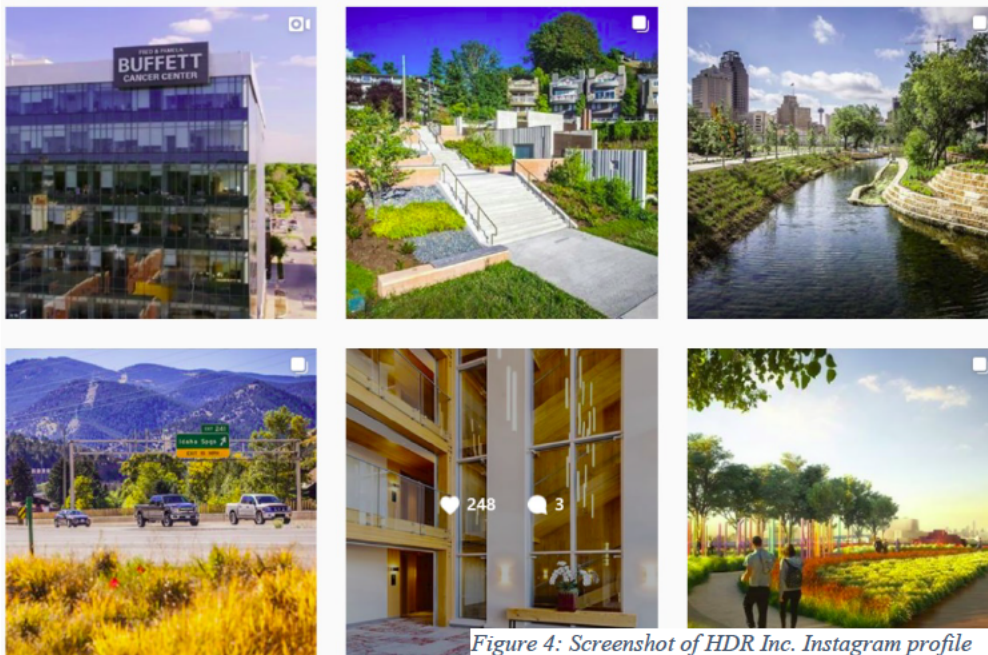


Figure 4: Screenshot of HDR Inc. Instagram profile

are common problems that too much construction can cause. Meeting these realities head-on and forming an audience that is not afraid to do the same may prove a more effective way to tackle pertinent environmental problems.

Civil engineering firms like HDR ultimately serve the public. They face similar challenges to the UNEP in that their target audience, whether it be in the pursuit of clients or awareness, is wide. Infrastructure is engrained into the environment by nature and serves as the interface between it and human civilizations. While it will always be necessary for people to change the environment to fit their needs, these firms must keep in mind that their pursuit of profit must be responsibly balanced with their ability to connect people with nature. Part of this balance must change to recognize the dearth of recognition that humans ultimately caused many of the environment's worst problems. With progress come costs, and creating movements, social media accounts, and projects that continue to underplay these costs is a mindset that will hurt the next generation.

Practitioners need to use a dual-theory approach in their rhetoric to diversify their messaging and more effectively instill responsibility to the environment in their audience and in their own company culture. Photos of people enjoying nature show that it is worth preserving, but photos of crumbling buildings or chemical leaks would show that we can and must do better as a society. Slogans and hashtags are easy to spread but do not have specific and personal calls to action. Firms like HDR that influence a specific place like Omaha should appeal to the community by showing care for important landmarks and parks in the area that may be in disrepair. Appealing to the responsibility of a community requires such personal and sometimes critical approaches. This creates an exigence that is urgent and a Second Persona that is invested in solving these real-world problems.

Conclusion

This paper reveals a need in environmental advocacy and rhetoric. While showing the intended audience of such messages that they can be the solution, most environmental rhetoric

on social media avoids the reality that humans are also the cause of many problems. Taking a dual approach to rhetoric on this topic is a viable new strategy. Constructing the rhetorical and technical problems in the environment while carefully building an invested audience will create a more robust and applicable message.

Social media is a fantastic way to spread messages quickly, but it is also easy for an audience to be passive listeners. The problems the environment faces now are very real and require more than just clicks or views. A change in how advocates spread this reality is needed, and using a hybrid rhetorical approach is a good option. Such strategies may well apply to other social issues as well that are characteristically polarizing and characteristically split across party lines. While simple and easy messages spread quickly, carefully crafted ones may lead to more real change in the future.

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