



The Power of PR: How Induced Climate Denial is Becoming Big Business

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The functioning of the human brain is nothing short of an enigma. How each one of us responds to a particular situation is really hard to comprehend. Thanks to psychologists and human behaviour analysts, we at least have some basic guidelines to go about analysing human behaviour. Why each of us respond differently to the same information is perhaps best explained by Daniel Gilbert, Harvard Psychologist's "PAIN Theory". According to him, PAIN is an acronym for P – Personal, A –Abrupt, I – Immoral and N - happening Now. All these conditions must be met for people to accept information as urgent and act on it.

Unfortunately, Climate Science does not meet most of these parameters and hence the urgency of the matter is not embedded in the psyche of most humans. Climate crisis is always talked about as a future threat and therefore most humans by nature are not interested to act on it at the present. Despite there being overwhelming scientific evidence about the link between human induced greenhouse gas emissions and climate change, some people sadly either choose to be passive or non-believers. It is this human psychology, which many big polluters with the help of their lobbies and Public Relation (PR) antics, try to exploit. They use this to implant climate scepticism in people's minds.

It is really hard to manipulate public opinion when scientifically substantiated facts are against these deniers. But this does not stop the PR machinery funded by fossil fuel heavyweights from relentlessly trying to defy climate science. Let us get a brief insight into this pseudo-rational climate scepticism, how it is deliberately planted in the human psyche and how they actually benefit from this.

The "HOWS" of Denial.

Climate deniers have found many innovative ways to push their misconstrued theory of half truths. The most common one is 'science denial'. They try to plant the idea that the science of climate change is not settled. Deniers suggest that climate change is just a part of the natural cycle. According to them, the climate models are unreliable and too sensitive to carbon dioxide. Some even suggest that carbon dioxide is such a small part of the atmosphere that it cannot have a large heating effect. They even go to the extent of saying that it is good because plants need carbon dioxide to breathe. Their next approach is 'economic denial' wherein the deniers base their arguments on the idea that climate change is too expensive to fix. One other strategy adopted by these deniers is 'humanitarian denial'. They proclaim that climate change is good for people and suggest longer, warmer summers in the temperate zone will make farming more productive. Then there is 'political denial'. Here the deniers argue that they cannot take action because other countries are not taking action. Finally there is "crisis denial" where these deniers argue that calling climate change a crisis is an alarmist attitude. They say that climate change is not as bad as most scientists make it out to be and terming it a crisis is farfetched.



The “WHOS” of Denial.

The business of climate denial started gaining momentum with the signing of the Paris Agreement in 2015. In the three years following the Paris Agreement, the five largest publicly-traded oil and gas majors invested over \$1000 Million of shareholder funds on misleading climate-related branding and lobbying. These big polluters have spent decades pushing climate denial and junk science by spending more than \$200 Million every year. They hold the climate debate hostage and plant kernels of doubt in the minds of sceptics. A Green Peace study reveals that an affluent family, who own the second largest privately owned company in the United States have spent \$145,555,197 directly financing 90 groups that have attacked climate change science and policy solutions, from 1997-2018. They have allegedly funnelled these funds to climate-denial front groups that are working to delay policies and regulations aimed at stopping global warming. These PR machineries operate by casting doubts on climate science, confuse the general belief of the public and impede any sort of climate action that would address the global environmental crisis.

The “WHYS” of Denial.

Why these lobbies and PR machineries are spreading disinformation regarding climate change is very clear and straightforward. It is primarily for the vested interest of a few who are likely to make a huge profit by denying science and indirectly blocking any action on climate change so that they can go about with their business as usual, unhindered. In order to protect their profits, these industries have devised a plan to reposition global warming as a theory and not a fact. Unfortunately what they fail to understand is that the future of their own kith and kin and their future generations are at stake as well. They are going to be equally affected if not more because of the ill effects of climate change. Hence, calling these lobbies out, holding them liable and enforcing them to end practices which have been the root cause for the climate crisis would be one of the stepping stones towards mitigation. There is no denying the fact that climate change is threatening the way we live and the future of our planet. It is also accelerating at a rapid pace. Creating awareness, holding companies liable and demanding governments to take bold and ambitious climate action is the need of the hour.