



Greenwashing Research Assistant

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Project Overview & Issue Confronting Site

CEOs make many claims about their environmental and social efforts, and companies release ESG (Environmental, Social and Governance) reports, but there is no reliable method to track the reliability of these sources. The research project that I am working on aims to use natural language processing to train an AI to analyze and categorize company statements based on their content, sentiment, outcome, and specificity.

Impact

My work in this research project is being used to help train an AI to analyze massive quantities of company statements. This will create a valuable tool for research into the trustworthiness of company ESG reports and statements.

Activities

- Read through Walmart earnings calls and identified quotes and keywords related to environmental and social statements. The goal of this was to figure out how much Walmart cares about creating positive social and environmental change.
- Categorized 1000 extracted paragraphs based on their content, sentiment, outcome, and specificity. This is being used to help train a neural network to make these determinations. (See Figure 2 for example)
- I am currently researching the history of Walmart and Target and how their environmental and social efforts changed as their CEOs changed. I am assessing how trustworthy each company is.

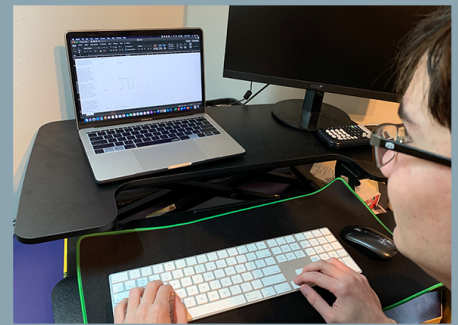


Figure 1: Categorizing paragraphs at my desk

1	text	ESG-mention	sentiment	Outcome	Specific	keywords/events span
200	Last summer, we announced a goal to achieve a 50% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 with the transition below-to-no carbon by 2050. Looking at our energy supply during the first quarter, 30% of electric generation was from carbon-free resources. So nuclear, hydro, wind and solar.	e	positive	x	x	greenhouse gas, emissions, carbon-free

Figure 2: Categorizing paragraph example

Future Work

- The AI is still in the process of being trained. After that, it will be utilized for research into company trustworthiness.
- I will continue researching companies' social and environmental intentions and provide additional support to the project, as needed.

Overall Thoughts

- Even though I know very little about natural language processing, an integral component of this project, I have still been able to contribute to it! This has shown me that I should be more willing to put myself in positions outside of my comfort zone.
- Companies are very good at framing their bad actions in positive-sounding ways. This is something that I did not pay enough attention to before working on this project.
- Earnings calls contain some hidden gems like Walmart's partnership with Kellogg's and Baby Shark to create "Berry Fin-tastic" cereal.

Site Information

- All work is conducted remotely
- Mission: To gauge company ESG trustworthiness
- Site Supervisor: Nathan Barrymore

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