

# Eco-Cinema: A Study On Marine Sustainability With Reference To Seaspiracy (A Documentary)

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## **Abstract:**

*Eco-cinema explores the idea of visualization of ecology; ensuring that a film carries an emphatic environmental message. The 21<sup>st</sup> century beholds the global phenomenon of global boiling, a crucial culmination of the long-term global warming process. All members of an ecosphere should value every organism. However, certain eco-cinemas are anthropocentric rather than being eco-centric or bio-centric. Eco-cinema fractionates into various types including transnational movies, documentary movies, animated movies, cli-fi movies etc. These movies analyse the setting and landscape in films, ecological analysis and human representations of the environment, the regional or the transnational trauma with regard to the environmental disasters. Sustainable development refers to the development of a society or an environment, managing with the available resources, without compromising the resources for the future generations. The recent movies have started portraying the exploitation of the biospheres in different landscapes like terrestrial life, marine life etc. Seaspiracy is one such documentary film portraying the exploitation of marine life. The present paper analyses how marine sustainability is visualised in the documentary Seaspiracy.*

**Keywords:** Eco-cinema, Sustainability, Seaspiracy, Marine sustainability

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## INTRODUCTION

Coined in 2004, the term eco-cinema explores the idea of visualization of ecology; ensuring that a film carries an emphatic environmental message. Maricondi emphasizes that these movies “offer us needed perspectives on the relations between the human and nonhuman” (3). The 21<sup>st</sup> century beholds the global phenomenon of global boiling, a crucial culmination of the long-term global warming process. As Maricondi says, an eco-cinema should do environmental justice. All members of an ecosphere should value every organism. However, certain eco-cinemas are anthropocentric rather than being eco-centric or bio-centric. Eco-cinema fractionates into various types including transnational movies, documentary movies, animated movies, cli-fi movies etc. These movies analyse the setting and landscape in films, ecological analysis and human representations of the environment, the regional or the transnational trauma with regard to the environmental disasters. Climate change is accelerated by the destruction of the biodiversity of earth, showing that both biodiversity and climate change are intertwined. Encroaching wild habitats, plastic pollution, releasing of toxic chemicals, nutrient pollution, noise pollution, mining, increasing garbage patches, entanglement of marine organisms etc. account to the destruction of biodiversity, by human beings. Every citizen has the social responsibility for sustainable development of the environment. Sustainable development refers to the development of a society or an environment, managing with the available resources, without compromising the resources for the future generations. Economic sustainability, Social sustainability and Environmental sustainability are the prime aspects. However, environmental sustainability has recently turned out to be a great challenge, reinforcing the message that the available resources should neither be depleted nor be overconsumed, so as to support the life of the upcoming generations. Environmental sustainability centres on the protection and the preservation of natural resources, ecosystems and existing biodiversity. The present paper focuses on marine sustainability, as screened in a documentary, by name Seaspiracy. Marine sustainability is the conservation and management of marine ecosystems and resources to ensure a long-term availability, productivity and resilience. It involves the appropriate use of the marine resources by human beings, without exploiting the marine ecosystem. The Anthropocene era has set an alarm to the human beings on the grounds of building sustainable development goals, so as to alert the upcoming generations through macro and micro movies in the eco-cinema genre. The recent movies have started portraying the exploitation of the biospheres in different landscapes like terrestrial life, marine life etc. Seaspiracy is one

such documentary film portraying the exploitation of marine life. This Netflix-distributed documentary produced by Kip Anderson, for the production company A. U. M. Films and filmed by Disrupt Studios, the maker of the film *Ali Tabrizi* is both the narrator and protagonist. He serves both as the discoverer and listener, thus adding momentum to the documentary. The documentary released in 2021, by the UK-based film maker Ali Tabrizi, celebrates the oceans and simultaneously uncovers the challenges of sustainability in fishing. The film's settings are transnational. The dolphin drive centres in South Japan, the scenario of the Thai and Chinese fish markets, the salmon farms in Scotland, and the coastal scenes of West Africa. The marine life comprises of a complex of living organisms in the environment of a sea or an ocean. The oceans and the seas across the world differ in their shapes, textures and compositions. The marine organisms are not distributed evenly throughout the oceans. These variations in the characteristics of the marine environment create different habitats. The human population is very small when compared to the marine biome. Around 99.5% of the planetary habitats are made up of oceans. Though oceans seem to be free from human interference, human beings account to be the major reason for destruction of marine biome. The documentary *Seaspiracy* highlights the theme of overfishing. The documentary showcases how the Global appetite for sea food has caused an acute exploitation of the Marine ecosystem. The advancement in science and technology has improvised sophisticated means of fishing which this documentary proclaims on screen, that around 2.7 trillion fish are caught per year. The large fishnets trap voluminous amounts of fish which results in the catch of a huge number of fish or other marine mammals, besides the targeted fish. This unintentional capture of fish or other marine species is called bycatch. The documentary accentuates the massive catch of dolphins. A rough estimate, based on the documentary, states that over 3,00,000 whales and dolphins are killed every year, as bycatch. Some species of the sea turtles are on the verge of extinction, owing to the bycatch caused by commercial fishing. Sharks, too, fall a prey to this bycatch. The documentary rings an alarming statistical data stating that nearly 11,000 to 30,000 sharks are killed every day, thus accounting for the death of around 50 million sharks per year, half of which are killed as bycatch. It also concludes that 80 to 90% of the population of certain species of sharks have vanished over the decades. This results in the disturbed equilibrium of the predators of the sea. The documentary also emphasises that around 40% of the marine life, caught as bycatch, is thrown back overboard. The public relies on Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) for the indication that the Marine consumables have been packed in a responsible manner with a sustainable outcome. Moreover, the documentary promulgates that in reality the corporate sustainability schemes are hard to be enforced. The commercial fishing practices have crossed limits where the marine biome gets exploited to an extent. The consequence of such commercial fishing is violation of sustainability goals. This undermined sustainability goal leads to an argument of responsible sourcing of the marine resources. The second consequence of this commercial fishing is the pollution caused, thus unbalancing the equilibrium of the marine biome. Loads of plastic are dumped into the sea, thus accounting for the garbage patches found in the seas. The documentary articulates that the garbage patch comprises of fishing nets which can be wrapped as a line around the world, at least 500 times. These abandoned fishing nets and discarded fishing gears form the majority constituents of these patches and are called ghost nets. The marine life, with all fish and mammals, finds it challenging to escape these garbage patches. Moreover, the documentary claims that some dolphin safe strategies of certain companies account for the bycatch during overfishing. The 90-minute documentary film questions the sustainability of seafood. The consumers find the situation tough when it comes to choice of sustainable food products. The shocking documentary also states an alarming information that people on watch or either threatened or bribed during the process of commercial fishing. A special focus is laid on the shrimp and the prawn industries in Thailand. An interview of a former fisherman reveals the harassment he had experienced earlier, during imprisonment. Henceforth, the director reiterates that commercial fishing affects not only fish and other marine life, but also human life. The film, thus exploring the issues of plastic pollution, ghost nets, overfishing, slavery, undermined sustainability, criticises several marine conservation organisations. Amidst all accuses of so many misrepresentations and cinematic elements apart, the documentary screens a heart-wrenching scenario of the equilibrium-losing marine life. This documentary, sounding eco-friendly comes out with the following suggestions to promote marine sustainability. The documentary wants the global population to be vegans, thus abstaining from fish and

other sea food, to create an awareness on the alarming destruction foreseeing the marine ecosystem and the compassionate approach that every socially responsible citizen of the globe should have. Though the first recommendation is far away from a practical solution, the movie has served as a perfect reminder to maintain the equilibrium of the marine life and the environmental responsibility of every citizen across the globe, irrespective of the borders of nations.

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