

## The development of a new multimodal genre for corporate communication: The case of video CEO statements

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### ABSTRACT

**EN** The digitization of the world is continuously developing, with corporate genres migrating to the web. Annual Corporate Reports (ACR) now appear in digital formats ranging from static PDFs to interactive websites. This shift significantly impacts report narratives, which are often enhanced by corporate videos, as they represent a versatile communication tool. This is particularly relevant for students, who are naturally digitally literate and accustomed to visual and auditory content. Our study has two objectives. From a research perspective, we aim to identify key multimodal features of Video CEO Statements (VCS). From a pedagogical standpoint, we will demonstrate how these videos enhance students' multimodal literacy within corporate digital genres. This, in turn, could improve essential business communication skills, including leadership, audience engagement, and digital communication strategies, thus equipping students with competencies that are vital for today's corporate landscape.

**Key words:** ANNUAL REPORT, VIDEO CEO STATEMENTS (VCS), CORPORATE DISCOURSE, MULTIMODAL LITERACY, NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION

**ES** La digitalización en el mundo actual está en evolución constante, con la migración de géneros corporativos a la web. Las memorias anuales aparecen ahora en formatos digitales, desde PDF estáticos hasta sitios web interactivos. Este cambio afecta significativamente a la narrativa de dichas memorias, a menudo enriquecida con vídeos corporativos, una herramienta de comunicación versátil. Esto es especialmente relevante para los estudiantes, que por naturaleza están alfabetizados digitalmente y acostumbrados a contenidos visuales y auditivos. Nuestro estudio tiene dos objetivos. Desde el punto de vista de la investigación, pretendemos identificar las características multimodales clave de los videos que complementan las declaraciones escritas de los directores generales. Desde el punto de vista pedagógico, demostraremos cómo estos videos mejoran la alfabetización multimodal de los estudiantes dentro de los géneros digitales corporativos. Esto, a su vez, podría mejorar las habilidades esenciales de comunicación empresarial, incluido el liderazgo, la participación y compromiso de la audiencia y las estrategias de comunicación digital, dotando a los estudiantes de competencias vitales para el panorama empresarial actual.

**Palabras clave:** MEMORIA ANUAL, VIDEO-DECLARACIONES DE LOS DIRECTORES GENERALES, DISCURSO CORPORATIVO, ALFABETIZACIÓN MULTIMODAL, COMUNICACIÓN NO-VERBAL

**IT** La digitalizzazione del mondo è in continuo sviluppo con la migrazione dei generi aziendali sul web. Le Relazioni Annuali delle aziende appaiono ora in formato digitale, passando da PDF statici a siti web interattivi. Questo cambiamento ha un impatto significativo sullo stile narrativo delle relazioni stesse, spesso arricchite da video, strumenti versatili di comunicazione. Questo è particolarmente importante per gli studenti, che sono naturalmente alfabetizzati al digitale e abituati a contenuti audio e video. Il nostro studio ha due obiettivi. Dal punto di vista della ricerca, ci proponiamo di identificare le principali caratteristiche multimodali dei comunicati video di amministratori delegati. Da un punto di vista pedagogico, dimostreremo come questi video migliorino l'alfabetizzazione multimodale degli studenti all'interno dei generi digitali aziendali. Questo, a sua volta, può migliorare le competenze di base della comunicazione aziendale, tra cui le capacità di leadership, il coinvolgimento del pubblico e le strategie di comunicazione digitale, dotando gli studenti di competenze vitali per il panorama aziendale odierno.

**Parole chiave:** RELAZIONE ANNUALE, VIDEO DICHIARAZIONI DI AD, DISCURSO AZIENDALE, ALFABETIZZAZIONE MULTIMODALE, COMUNICAZIONE NON VERBALE

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## 1. Introduction

The Annual Report (AR) is a genre which has been widely studied over the past few decades (El-Haj et al., 2020; Michelon et al., 2022; Sai et al., 2019), offering a detailed overview of a firm's financial performance, operations, and strategic initiatives over the course of a financial year (Lord, 2002). It is a means of communication between a company and its shareholders, stakeholders, investors, and the general public (Abdullah et al., 2017). It is written at the end of a financial year and then made available to the public, and comprises quantitative information, narratives, photographs, tables, and graphs, becoming a legitimate and trustworthy medium to communicate information about the firm's financial performance (Yuthas et al., 2002). An AR is "commonly divided into two sections, with the statutory required financial statements usually assigned either to a rear section, or to a separate volume" (Stanton et al., 2004, p. 57). This document, especially the executive statements or narrative sections of the AR (including the chairman's and the CEO statements), has two main purposes: to inform and to promote the company; the former is a legal (statutory) requirement for multinational companies in most countries (Rowbottom & Lymer, 2010), and the latter is the result of an intention to use the document to generally show the positive views of the company, sometimes understood as a marketing tool (Cadiz Dyball, 1998). However, this view can also be influenced by external factors (Palmer-Silveira & Ruiz-Garrido, 2014), although the company may try to minimize these issues and highlight the firm's achievements. Furthermore, previous research, such as Giordano et al. (2019), confirms the hybrid nature of the annual report genre, as it seeks to expand its target audience to both specialist and non-specialist readers. This genre and the documents it contains also go beyond mere economic results; for some time now, they have also been of great relevance when it comes to social issues, which can be of interest not only to regular stakeholders, but also to new ones, many of whom are non-specialist readers (Baier et al., 2020). Furthermore, this hybridity is also seen because the genre is the object of interest of many researchers from a wide variety of fields using different analytical approaches (exclusively linguistic or multimodal, among others) (Hynes, 2009).

Like other essential corporate documents, ARs have been subject to digitization. The digitization of the world is not only a fact but is also in continuous evolution, as many genres are migrating to the Web (Hafner, 2018). Indeed, the digital transformation of the world, which accelerated due to the COVID-19 pandemic has changed the way many businesses work nowadays (Dal Mas et al., 2020; Vaska et al., 2020), with many becoming "smart factories" (Lasi et al., 2014). This is something that companies have also suffered: like a natural breaching experiment, digitization has disrupted organizational and societal processes (Faraj et al., 2021). Many firms, for example, have noticed that they need to change the way they have traditionally communicated with their potential stakeholders (Aula & Mantere, 2008), seeking ways to improve this communicative need. Some time ago, Garzone (2007) noted that corporate genres have been migrating to the Web, and this has progressed in different ways so that now they are accustomed to presenting a corporate image worldwide (Tang et al., 2015). In the case of Annual Corporate Reports (ACR), as Giglioni (2020) adds, these have usually been transferred to the digital environment in a static .pdf (downloadable) format, like the traditional hard copy, sometimes called an interactive report because they integrate hyperlinks to other sections or even sites outside the document itself. However, ACRs can also be found in a richer online format, similar to a website. These digital ACRs "may have an impact on the disclosure of corporate narratives. This is exemplified by the online, abridged version of the narrative sections, where companies purposely select what information to present to their readers" (Giglioni, 2020, pp. 31-32). We can therefore agree that the presentation and delivery of ACRs are shifting "towards a more visual-based communicative approach" (Giglioni, 2020, p. 32). Some companies are also adding a video to the message of the executives, reinforcing the idea of the hybridization of the genre as it becomes more digitized and multimodal in form. In Giglioni's work (2020), an exceptional presence of video narratives is mentioned, opening up the possibility of adding corporate videos to the narrative sections of ACRs, which to our knowledge has not been studied.

## 2. Video CEO statements (VCS)

As mentioned above, using the digital world to improve communication with stakeholders is a fact of life today (Bilinski, 2024). Well aware of the power of video as a communication tool, companies are using different platforms to disseminate contents (Sharma, 2022). According to Ditlevsen and Kastberg (2020, p. 195), corporate videos refer to "all audiovisual instantiations of corporate communication efforts". This broad definition can include different topics (e.g., video newsletters or CEO speeches), addressed to different target audiences (e.g., external stakeholders or employees) and different roles (e.g., human resources department to

provide orientation or training to employees). Thus, corporate videos have become “a potent, multifaceted and multipurpose corporate communication medium”, supporting “the discursive construction of corporate identity” (Ditlevsen & Kastberg, 2020, p. 196), and they are even used to repair the image of firms when necessary (Jaworska, 2023).

CEOs (Chief Executive Officers) have a leading position within multinational companies and can be considered the main asset of the company’s corporate identity; they make executive decisions for the organization, and their reputation has a clear influence on the market behavior of the company, and even on its share value (Gaines-Ross, 2000). They determine the corporate social responsibility of firms, and their rhetoric is fundamental not only for reporting facts, but also for influencing future corporate strategic choices (Beldad & von Rosenstiel, 2024; Hung, 2011; Marais, 2012). Drawing on previous literature (Aritz et al., 2017; Fairhurst, 2007; Nielsen, 2009), a discursive focus is needed to analyze how leadership is achieved interactionally in organizational settings. Discourse should be both a representation of reality and a way of engaging the audience to understand all the benefits that the firm can offer: corporate narrative researchers highlight the need to focus not on what is disclosed, but on how a particular issue is disclosed (Hossain, 2017). CEOs nowadays try to offer an aura of positivity turning to mass media to convey their messages, offering a clear image of control, which is especially important in harsh times. In their public disclosure of favorable (and unfavorable) data, CEOs consider many factors: corporate ethics, integrity and, more importantly, discursive models (Amernic & Craig, 2013; Ruiz-Garrido & Palmer-Silveira, 2023).

In this sense, corporate videos show the potential to promote and exploit multimodal and multimedia channels (Crawford Camiciottoli, 2022) and, as Valeiras-Jurado et al. (2018) have already said, the need to persuade stakeholders through diverse oral professional discourses is reinforced by different semiotic modes, including words, gestures, and intonation. Apart from informative messages (often linked to events) and promotional recordings, CEOs also use videos to accompany and complete traditional letters to shareholders, offering financial communication to viewers in a plain and engaging way, trying to enhance an attractive image among potential stakeholders. However, “when taking technology a step further, the use of video for oral financial communication is instead still rather underdeveloped” (Crawford Camiciottoli, 2022, p. 78). It is also understudied (Costa-Sánchez, 2017; Ditlevsen & Kastberg, 2020). CEOs are already aware of the importance of appropriate communication, and in response to the call of Helfat and Peteraf (2015), it has become a must to study verbal and non-verbal communication, as they are relevant components of managerial cognitive skills (Banker et al., 2024; Choudhury et al., 2019). To do so, a multimodal approach to the development of Video CEO Statements (VCSs) is necessary.

### 3. Multimodal communication in business discourse

Multimodal Discourse Analysis focuses on a set of modes that help speakers convey a message to their audience. These semiotic modes are used in a communicative act to enhance the communication process (Norris, 2004; O’Halloran, 2011). Firms aim at harnessing semiotic resources in innovative ways to produce discourses that serve their strategic goals (Machin, 2013; Jaworska, 2023). Following Valeiras-Jurado and Bernad-Mechó (2022), we identify three different types of modes: embodied, which are modes controlled by the speaker’s verbal and non-verbal language; disembodied, which are external elements that can affect the audience; and filmic, which define those semiotic resources that go through a production and editing process. While embodied and disembodied modes are present in all oral communication processes, the use of filmic modes can greatly enhance the ability to convey a message in a video recording as well as emphasize certain engagement resources, and this is something that VCS authors know well.

Those modes must be seen as a holistic communicative process with a single common goal: to convey a message. This is called a multimodal ensemble, implying the combination of different modes in only one communicative act (Bernad-Mechó, 2021; Valeiras-Jurado & Bernad-Mechó, 2022). Modal coherence plays an important role in the process, that is, the consistent use of modes without contradicting each other.

Particularly when it comes to embodied and disembodied modes, non-verbal communication plays a key role in business, complementing (and in many cases reinforcing) the ability to carry out commercial interactions. Non-verbal communication is just as important as verbal communication, as they both work together in the communication process; the former can even replace the latter in some specific cases, often being easier to interpret (Ibrahim et al., 2022). Although attention is often focused on what is said, the associated non-verbal signals can be crucial to the effectiveness of communication. As Blahova (2015, p. 14) points out “[m]ost of the time, this process is unconscious, so it requires a bit of effort to pay closer attention

to non-verbal cues we send or receive". Non-verbal communication, which includes examples of embodied modes, such as gestures, facial expressions, posture, tone of voice and eye contact, among others, but also disembodied modes, such as the speaker's outfit or the setting, reinforce the content of the spoken message (Ruiz-Garrido & Palmer-Silveira, 2023). In a business environment, this consistency between verbal and non-verbal communication can create trust and credibility (Ciuffani, 2017). For example, leaders who communicate a strategic vision using a firm tone of voice and open body language strengthen trust in their message.

Non-verbal signals are important features when expressing attitudes and emotions that are not always explicit in verbal discourse (Liu et al, 2024; Wisankosol, 2018). In a business environment, this can affect the dynamics of working relationships, both between colleagues and between superiors and subordinates (Larson & Kleiner, 2004). A manager who communicates empathy and understanding through gestures, tone of voice or the right keywords can foster a more collaborative and motivating work environment (Jia et al., 2017). This indicates the importance of analyzing how interpersonal relationships play a role in organizational life and how, in turn, non-verbal communication contributes significantly to building these relationships. Eye contact, open posture and affirmative gestures, for example, often convey respect and attention (Sauter, 2017) facilitating the creation of trust between employees, customers and business partners. Similarly, non-verbal behavior that reflects disinterest or hostility can undermine these relationships creating friction. Assuming this, non-verbal communication can help to manage (and even resolve) conflicts and misunderstandings.

Some business activities can greatly benefit from the use of non-verbal communication. In business negotiations, non-verbal communication can provide insight into the other party's thoughts and intentions, and a close observation of some gestures and movements can help a businessperson to understand his/her likelihood of closing a deal, providing cues about the level of agreement or disagreement, sincerity, or interest (Pugu et al., 2024; Teodorescu, 2013). Similarly, controlling those gestures and body movements can help any CEO to express their message appropriately. This is particularly relevant in the context of pre-recorded and edited video messages (filmic modes), which are often created to share information with prospective stakeholders. In the present study, we focus on videos that accompany the CEO statements included in annual reports presented on the Internet. Despite their relatively recent appearance, the use of video CEO statements (VCSs) has increased in recent years, especially after the 2020 pandemic, and allows firms to share information with prospective shareholders. These documents, for research purposes, can be understood as a new genre or, at least, as a new genre variation, and have become the focus of our current research. We have observed these are used by CEOs in order to give information about the financial performance of the company (unsurprisingly the most prominent aim of most annual reports), but also to talk about the firm's strategy, to analyze the industry's trends, to thank the employees for their work and to introduce information about sustainability. Additionally, these corporate videos, when compared to traditional annual reports, help firms to reach a wider audience, enhancing company branding and gaining trust and credibility.

#### 4. Aim of the study

Our study has two main objectives:

- Identifying the main features of video CEO statements accompanying the message in online annual reports.
- Showing ways to exploit video CEO statements to develop students' multimodal literacy to improve students' business communication skills.

#### 5. Methodology

The first part of the next section will develop the analysis of a selected multi-sectorial dataset of 10 VCSs available on the Internet. All the selected companies are multinational corporations, offering a diverse range of products and services. We are interested in examining the structure of this type of video to identify common features may identify a general structure similar to that observed in written corporate statements (Palmer-Silveira & Ruiz-Garrido, 2014). We will then examine the content of these videos to ascertain whether they can be used to create a taxonomy based on their function. Then, from a multimodal standpoint, we will study how the use of this new digital genre can engage the audience (the shareholders) in a dynamic way (through the use of prosody, the type of images and shots selected, or the length of the sentences uttered). Finally, we will apply our findings to show the potential of this new digital genre and its features for the English for Business Communication classroom. The dataset selected for this study is the following:

Table 1  
*List and features of companies analyzed*

Companies	Year	Sector	Country	Duration	On Website	Speaker
Securitas Group	2020	Security Service	Sweden	2:43	no	Male
Telenor Group	2018	Telecommunications	Norway	3:22	yes	Male
Boels Rental	2020	Equipment rental company	Netherlands	2:56	yes	Male
Barco	2020	Technology	Belgium	4:43	yes	Male
Fresenius Medical Care	2021	Health Care Services	Germany	5:49	yes	Male
Commonwealth Bank of Australia	2021	Finances	Australia	4:08	no	Female
VISA	2022	Finances	USA	6:53	yes	Male
Hugo Boss	2020	Fashion	Germany	2:20	yes	Male
Koppers	2020	Chemical	USA	5:30	yes	Male
Georg Fischer (GF)	2020	Manufacturing	Switzerland	3:48	no	Male

In this part of the study, we will pay attention to the following features which help to define this new approach to corporate communication:

- a. Taxonomy: differences between lecturing and interviewing styles
- b. Structure: different sections that tend to appear in these recordings
- c. Common topics analyzed
- d. Visual aids
- e. Engagement resources

The data was collected from different searches conducted on the Internet (Google and Youtube), through the combination of several words (i.e., *Annual reports, Video, CEO letter, CEO messages, CEO statements, CEO video, Chairman statement, Message to shareholders*), sometimes using snowball sampling. Although those digital videos seem to be an excellent pedagogical material (Girón-García & Fortanet-Gómez, 2023), they also seem to be "... an understudied corporate communication tool." (Costa-Sánchez, 2017, p. 139). In selecting the videos, we tried to prioritize their availability online (webpages and official media platforms), to choose items of a similar length and year of publication, representing a diverse selection of economic sectors, and VCSs which contained similar contents to the written statements of the companies examined. All in all, we came up with around 20 VCS from which we selected the ones shown in Table 1 to start our research. Those in the table are representative of the larger pool of videos gathered. All were viewed and comparisons were made between them. Afterwards, we also checked the content components of the recordings using Atlas.ti software (ATLAS.ti Scientific Software Development GmbH, 2023), to confirm our observations. For the visual aids and engagement resources we complemented our watching with GRAPE-MARS software (Ruiz-Madrid et al., 2023).

## 6. Results and discussion

### 6.1. Taxonomy

Regarding the taxonomy of these video CEO statements, we can observe that in the selected dataset there is a predominance of a lecturing style, where we often see a talking head (the CEO) looking directly at the camera. The speaker tends to stand while speaking, and they tend to use only one shot, often edited in post-production from two different camera positions. Visually speaking, these tend to be simple videos, and the skill of the final editor makes all the difference.

A second option, also found in our dataset, is an interview style, based on a series of questions asked verbally or written on screen. It attempts to offer a more documentary approach to the genre. In one of the recordings the interviewer is asking a question, but more often, these videos are presented to suggest that someone behind the camera is interviewing the speaker, and the CEO is responding directly to that person, who is not seen in the final recording. In a way, this presents an active approach of the CEO when talking to the camera, although we can see exceptions to this rule.

### 6.2. Structure

As for the structure observed in these texts, it should be noted that there is not a clear-cut structure and that it is rather up to the people who create these videos to decide on the general structure of the final cut. In some cases, videos simply summarize the most interesting facts and figures from the printed CEO statements; in others, they choose to change the original order of the different pieces of information presented in the written version. In any case, our dataset has allowed us to see that there are some common general sections that are repeated from the written CEO statements that appear in these videos. To sum up, there are four (genre-based) moves that seem to be paramount regarding the general structure of these video statements.

First, all the videos in our dataset focus on the current situation of the company, analyzing the firm's performance over the past year in great detail. This is an aspect that is also a fundamental part of the structure of the written version, becoming in some ways the most important element of these texts. CEOs are clearly aware that it should appear in this visual approach to their customers/investors.

A second element that appears in all the recordings analyzed, and which forms an integral part of the overall structure of the video CEO statement, is a detailed analysis of the financial and economic issues that underpin the company's position in today's market. CEOs always address the relevance of various economic fluctuations in their company's overall performance and try to explain them in an optimistic manner for the listener.

While this positive approach to financial and economic issues can also be seen in the written version of these statements, in these video recordings there is usually a third element to consider, which is a forecast of future activities and efforts, underlining the perpetually dynamic character of the business. CEOs take great care to present an engaging attitude throughout their videos, but this is especially a must when presenting what the company intends to achieve. From a present-oriented perspective, these videos often highlight a bright future for the company, and this has become an integral part of the overall structure of the CEO video statements analyzed.

Finally, as a fourth key element, CEOs comment on various social issues to convey a positive image of the company. They pay attention to the welfare of the planet, the proper use of resources for charities, or the satisfaction of their employees and their families, among many other strategies that are used to better position the company in the eyes of the public and give it an edge over its competitors.

### 6.3. Common topics

In the context of the verbal mode, we also examined the type of topics addressed by the videos that make up our dataset. Considering that the video CEO statements were collected in recent years, the first common topic observed is ways for companies to overcome the problems faced since 2020 (mainly the COVID-19 crisis and the war in Ukraine), always indicating the difficulties suffered, and the solutions adopted by the companies. Another common theme is a summary of the reliability of the measures taken to overcome these external problems and their impact on the companies' balance sheets, always confirming positive results. In this attempt to present a positive image, another common topic is an explanation of the specific improvements made by the companies, mainly in terms of turnover, the launch of new products/services or the opening up of new markets.

Some other recurring topics were also noted, such as the presentation of new challenges and strategies for the future of the company, as well as some rules and recommendations to link the company's present with future decisions to be taken. In addition, and reinforcing aspects observed in the written version of the CEO statements, these videos emphasize the concept of corporate values and fundamental operational objectives. Other topics such as sustainability and the reinforcement of environmental issues, which are mandatory for companies in many countries, are also included in this video format. In addition, a relatively new concept also observed in our dataset is the introduction of information related to the process of digitization.

#### 6.4. Visual aids

Different visual aids (disembodied or filmic modes) are used to convey information in these VCSs. There are two basic ways of doing this: using two cameras to record the same message from two positions in order to provide more editing options (Figure 1), or using only one camera to record the same message twice, at different distances from the speaker, in order to combine the shots later in the editing suite (Figure 2). In both cases, the editing table becomes a relevant addition to the topic, as these closer and different shots try to add rhythm to the recording and increase the engagement of the overall recording. In our view, this attempt to create a more flexible and engaging rhythm is basic to understand the firms' attempts to work with this new video format.

In some cases, the camera becomes the focus of attention, and we can see it functioning to highlight the company's interest in revealing the truth (Figure 3); the aim seems to make the audience aware of the importance of the medium used, trying to present a more active image/perspective than traditional CEO statements by clearly showing that the recording process requires a further effort, something that the editors of the video make clear through the use of these specific shots. This is probably done to add an image of interaction with the audience, possible stakeholders who can then feel closer to the message being shared by the firm's CEO. Similarly, transparency and trust-building are additional values that this kind of shots can convey.

As suggested by these recordings, a multifaceted approach involving varied modes is employed to offer a novel perspective on traditional CEO statements. The positioning of the speaker, the placement of the camera to emphasize specific traits (hands, eyes, full body), the selection of angles, and other visual choices are instrumental in enhancing the information value of the final video.

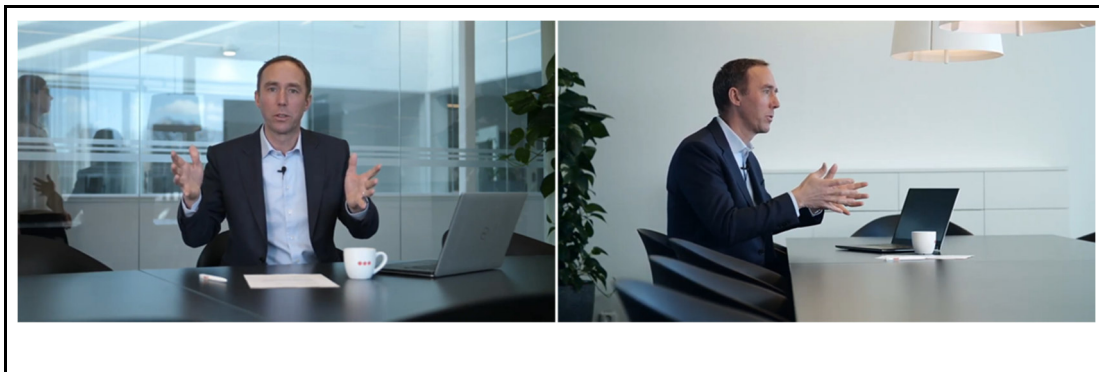


Figure 1. Two camera shots



Figure 2. Two distances

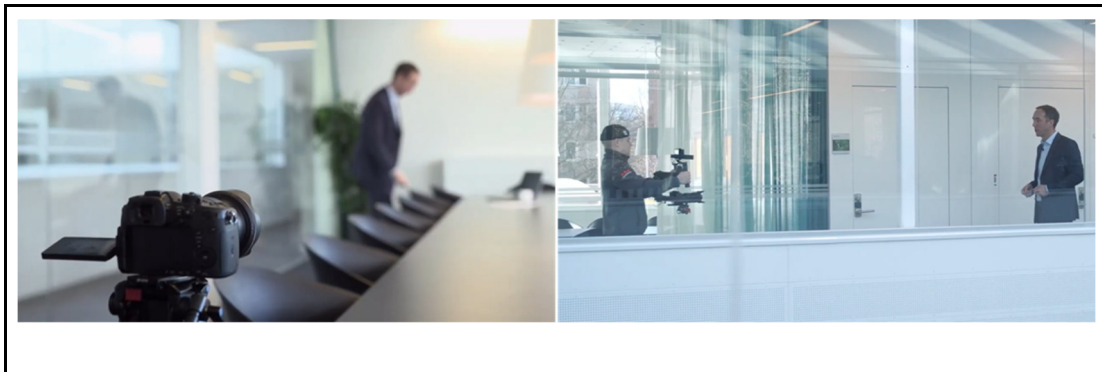


Figure 3. Camera as the object of attention

We have also seen the use of a chroma key background (Figure 4), the use of full-screen graphs in motion (Figure 5) and the use of full-screen moving image displays (Figure 6), different resources used to increase the communicative process of the videos and offer a more dynamic and attractive image of both the CEO and the company. All of these visual aids are deliberately used in the videos to improve the company's image and become a way of promoting the company to viewers. Once again, the significance of post-production editing serves to augment the engaging capabilities for Chief Executive Officers to communicate information, rendering it more enticing for prospective stakeholders to analyze the array of assets introduced to the audience through these videos.

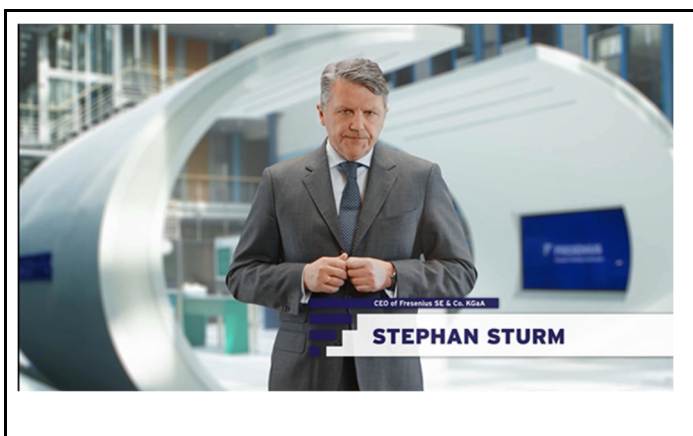


Figure 4. Chroma key background

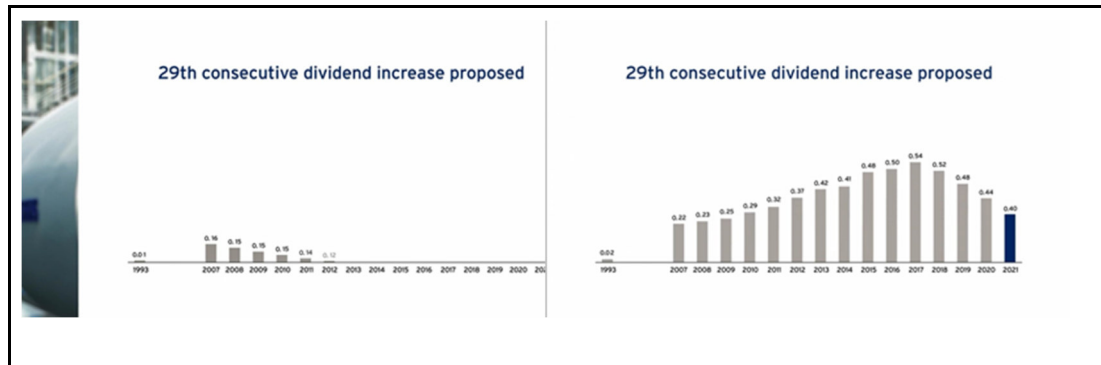


Figure 5. Graphs in motion - full screen

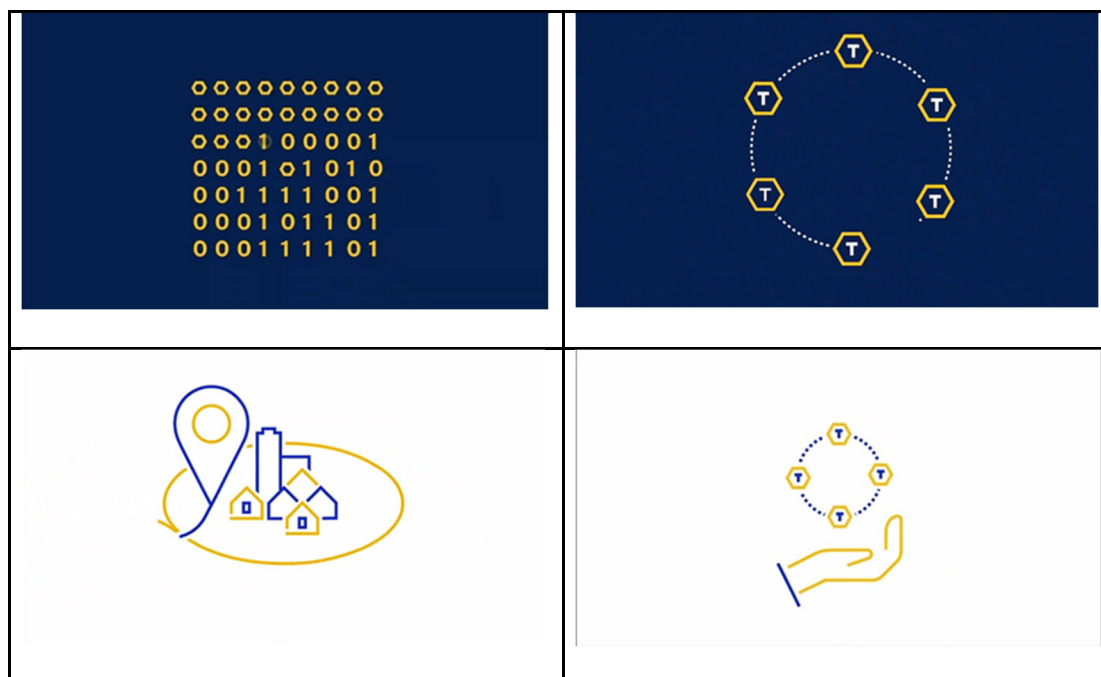


Figure 6. Full-screen moving image (imagine movement clockwise)

Our dataset has also helped us to identify two visual resources that have been implemented in the editing of the final version of the VCS. Firstly, the editors have the possibility to divide the screen into two halves, one with the speaker on the left and the other with a graph that subsequently appears on the right (Figure 7). Another possibility, also observed in the videos analyzed, is the use of a small image that appears in the top right-hand corner of the screen while the speaker introduces a concept (Figure 8), a system that is commonly depicted in newscasting. Additionally, in a third and much simpler possibility, we can see that video editors often interrupt the image of the speaker by introducing a regular slide on the screen for a few seconds (Figure 9).



Figure 7. Speaker and graph combination

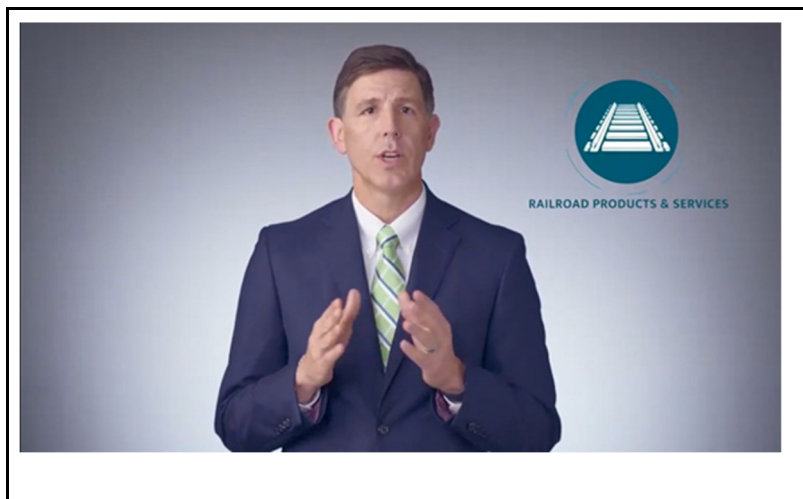


Figure 8. Top-right image and speaker combined

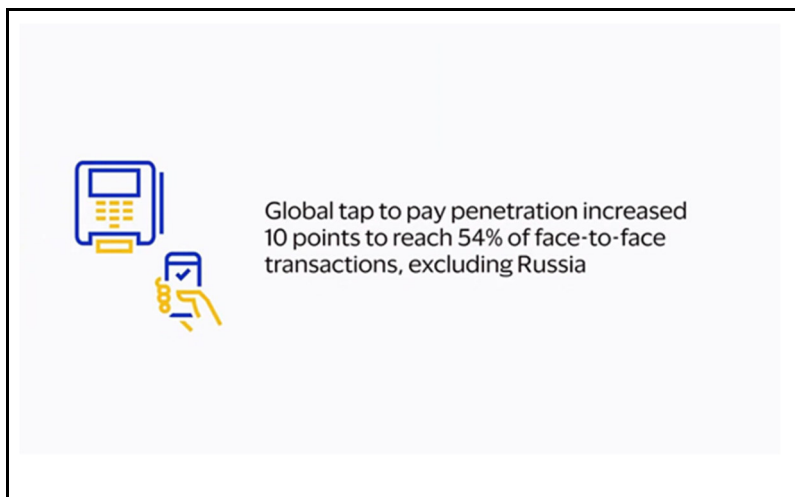


Figure 9. Regular slide

### **6.5. Engagement resources**

It is imperative to emphasize that the videos discussed above are characterized by a multimodal structure and should be analyzed in their entirety as a cohesive unit. The objective of this study is to deconstruct these multimodal units to identify the modes and resources employed to enhance the effectiveness of the message conveyed. It is crucial to acknowledge that the primary objective of this study is to develop a comprehensive, overarching analysis of the videos, rather than undertaking a meticulous, detailed examination.

The fact that a video format is used to introduce the information of a typical CEO statement allows the speakers to use basic expressions to engage their potential audience (verbal mode). The use of greetings such as “Hello, shareholders” or “Hello, shareholders, customers, partners and employees around the world” implies an initial attempt to get closer to the audience and engage them in the message. The use of a final “thank you” in all videos is also important from an engagement perspective. In addition, the frequent use of the inclusive “we”, implying that the members of the company are a team, is another means of strengthening the connection between the speaker and the audience.

Some of the more commonly used strategies (embodied mode) to engage the viewer are constant eye contact with the audience (seen when greeting or thanking, above), and continuous hand movements to emphasize the different concepts explained on screen (see Figures 7 and 8, for an illustration of both features). Speakers often smile at the camera when talking to the audience or when talking to other people who appear in the video statement. Smiling implies positivity, and in some cases, the videos show moving images of people smiling or looking at landscapes where natural beauty is used to reinforce the positive image mentioned above as well as the ideas expressed at those moments.

The constant use of moving images also increases the attractiveness of the message, and video producers know this (as part of the filmic modes), as they focus on the different brands of the company in the moving images, on the different new products or technical innovations introduced by the company, or even on the active role of the company as such, through the use of some images of directors with shovels or of the company’s workers. These videos are therefore used to offer a more attractive and engaging image of the company, an active and committed institution which one should reward with trust and investments.

## **7. Concluding remarks**

The study of these new video genres is emerging in the world of corporate communication, with a clear purpose: to reach a wide range of possible stakeholders. Companies are trying to get closer to their audience, which is often made up of people interested in their products/services and also willing to invest in economically sound companies. It is the CEO of the company who tries to project this positive image through these videos, with the aim of becoming more familiar to the (current and prospective) stakeholders, knowing that companies today need to gain trust and credibility in society. As explained, this is a crucial way to construct the corporate image of multinationals.

To do this, CEOs appear to choose between the two techniques mentioned above: they can use a lecturing style, giving the audience hints about the current (and future) situation of the company, or they can use an interviewing style, answering some questions that the audience might ask the speaker. In both cases, the objective is to present a positive image of the company through a well-designed piece of information, thus achieving the communicative purpose previously established by the CEO.

Additionally, our study has also found that the content is quite similar to the written version of the CEO statement. The topics are those that have been expected in CEO statements in annual reports in the past, although they are often presented in a different order, giving greater relevance to social issues.

From a multimodal point of view, we have seen that there is a multimodal ensemble, as verbal features are combined with non-verbal ones, including embodied, disembodied, and filmic modes. Visual aids, as an example of filmic modes in our dataset, are paramount as part of the promotional genre that the video CEO statement has become, as well as building trust by showing evidence of what is said. Additionally, their use, accompanied by the embodied modes speakers employ or the disembodied ones, also increases engagement, an aspect that companies are keen to work on. The humanized discourse fulfilled by the CEO’s emotions and attitudes is an asset of multimodal discourse that the written statement can hardly achieve. Thus, every single verbal and non-verbal feature in combination has become essential to engage the audience and gain its trust.

## 8. Pedagogical implications

The analysis of how CEOs deliver this type of discourse can be used in the business communication classroom to enhance students' ability to analyze corporate communication from a different perspective and delve into the specific features of what can be defined as leadership communication. By analyzing the diverse features used by CEOs in their video-recorded messages, students can enhance their public speaking skills, focusing on those engagement characteristics that can better involve their audience. Indeed, the objective of these messages is to reinforce the corporate identity of the firm and, subsequently, enhance the image of corporate identity among potential stakeholders, who constitute the target audience of these messages. We should bear in mind that companies tend to prioritize creating a positive corporate image, and the use of these new resources can help our students to better focus on the real needs of these firms, thus increasing their chances of working with reputable international corporations one day.

Multimodal literacy, understood as the ability to understand, orchestrate and use multiple modes effectively to construct meaningful works (Girón-García & Bernad-Mechó, 2024), is a key skill that students must master nowadays. It is becoming increasingly challenging to identify courses that are exclusively focused on a single genre. Lecturers often use digitized materials and platforms for various reasons, including practicality, proximity, and motivation (Nash et al., 2024). Students must familiarize themselves with multimodal discourse, as they are already aware that texts and genres are no longer limited to a single mode (Huang & Xia, 2024). Learning about each mode (embodied, disembodied and filmic) and how they should create a modal orchestration and use it coherently is a current need. It is not only that they need to be aware of the use and purposes of each, but they also should learn how to implement them in their future jobs.

To keep up with the evolving trends in business communication, it is important to incorporate digital genres into the business communication curriculum (Hartle et al., 2023; Lim and Tan, 2018; Nervino, 2023). These materials are authentic, readily available on platforms such as YouTube, LinkedIn, and Instagram, and free of charge. They facilitate the students' active participation in the learning process (Fortanet-Gómez & Edo-Marzá, 2022; Girón-García & Fortanet-Gómez, 2023). Furthermore, these videos have been created with the objective of engaging the audience, prospective stakeholders. Consequently, different engagement strategies are often employed, regardless of the mode, always bearing in mind that we are dealing with digitized genres (Bernad-Mechó & Valeiras-Jurado, 2023; Bondi et al., 2015; Xia & Hafner, 2021).

## 9. Further research

This initial experience has allowed us to understand that this is an area that can benefit from further research. We believe it is necessary to expand the dataset, including a thorough analysis between different sectors, speakers of different nationalities, or even whether there are differences in the gender of the presenters. Our aim will be to look for more similarities (or dissimilarities) among CEOs. Based on this preliminary study, we need to do more quantitative studies on the quantifiable aspects and put more emphasis on the effect of the combination of the different modes involved in the presentations. It is this orchestration of modes that enhances companies' ability to engage and persuade stakeholders to pay closer attention and therefore merits a more thorough analysis.

We also want to study how companies create and release these videos over time, trying to observe how they can improve the way they present information about their companies in a simple and engaging way. This study, over time, may give us clues about how CEOs really present their message and what information they consider most interesting for potential stakeholders.

Finally, we would also like to select and analyze specific sections of these recordings from a multimodal perspective, looking at different features that may be of great interest to the audience (i.e. how good/bad news is delivered, how the use of future targets may interfere with present information, or how social issues are presented to the general audience). Further studies are needed to share and learn from teaching experiences about how multimodal literacy and multimodality can be integrated into business communication classes. Learners, because of their generation, may already know a great deal about digitized genres and how they work, from a user's perspective. What teachers must do is help them learn about the best ways of orchestrating different modes and making them coherent to best serve the purposes they have in mind.

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