

# CHARISMA AND RHETORIC: COMMUNICATIVE TECHNIQUES OF INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS LEADERS

Deanne N. Den Hartog\*  
Robert M. Verburg  
*Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam*

Although powerful rhetoric is often associated with charismatic leadership, little explanation is available of why leader rhetoric is related to charisma. One of the first studies to explicitly address this topic focused on speech content (Shamir, Arthur & House, 1994). Other elements contributing to the strong motivational and emotive effects of charismatic rhetoric are construction of the message, style and delivery. CEOs play an important part in creating and dispersing organizational values and visions to organization members and the external environment. Their speeches within and outside the company are important to motivate others and gain support for their vision. The CEOs in this study are from companies seeking different degrees and types of international involvement. Their corporate visions reflect different international business mentalities. This study explores how these charismatic CEOs rhetorically construct message content in their speeches, focusing on how their attitude towards internationalization and international business strategy is reflected. First, international strategy and attitudes towards internationalization as well as vision, charisma and rhetoric are discussed. Discourse analysis is described and examples of rhetorical devices are given from the analyzed speeches of the CEO's. Finally, part of a more extensive analysis of examples from speeches showing the rhetorical construction of messages reflecting their international strategy and management mentality are presented.

“Managing the global enterprise” and “modern business management” are becoming more and more synonymous. The growing importance of world business creates a strong demand for managers who are sophisticated in international management and skilled at working with people from other countries (Adler, 1991). The increasingly global business

---

\* Direct all correspondence to: Deanne Den Hartog, dept. of work and organizational psychology, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, van der Boechorststraat 1, 1081 BT Amsterdam, The Netherlands, e-mail: DN.den.Hartog@psy.vu.nl; Tel: +31-20-4448700; Fax: +31-20-4448702

world “demands an unwavering commitment to change and a clear sense of direction. Visionary leadership is the mechanism for such change, providing the ideals to shape strategy and the energy to make it happen” (Whittington, 1993; p. 60).

The media increasingly expose the public to the views, oratory and persuasive language of both political and business leaders. Bryman (1992, p. 58) states: “In the West there is often a tendency to associate charisma with powerful oratory”. Although leaders can be seen as charismatic without being spellbinding orators, the ability to capture an audience through striking oratory plays an important part in the social formation of charisma (Bryman, 1992). Before charisma became a popular topic in writings on organizational leadership, the concept of charisma was found mainly in sociological and political science literature (Shamir, 1995). Exceptional key figures in large social systems, such as kings, presidents and other top-level political leaders as well as leaders of religious and social movements were described as being endowed with charisma (e.g. Weber, 1947; Shils, 1965; Burns, 1978; Willner, 1984). When charisma was introduced in organizational literature, several writers argued that charisma was mainly found in the top-echelon of the organization and irrelevant to lower level leadership (e.g. Etzioni, 1961; Katz & Kahn, 1978). Others (e.g. House, 1977; Bass, 1985; Conger & Kanungo, 1987; Shamir, House & Arthur, 1993) assume that charisma is common at all levels of the organization. Shamir (1995) holds that the influence of vision and rhetorical skills on the attribution of charisma is particularly strong when the social distance between leader and followers is large. One reason for this is that in a situation of large social distance information about the leader’s personal behavior is likely to be scarce and followers are likely to depend more on verbal cues.

CEOs play an important part in crafting and dispersing organizational values and visions to both organization members and the external environment. In their visible informational and interpersonal roles, as “spokesman” and “figurehead” (Mintzberg, 1989), CEOs shape corporate image and identity. In today’s global firms CEOs are faced with the difficult task to present the organization’s superordinate goals to a diverse multicultural workforce (Adler, 1991).

In this paper the rhetoric of three visionary international business leaders is explored. First, international business orientations, globalizing strategy and different management mentalities are described. Next, an overview of the relevant theory on rhetoric, vision and charisma and the method of discourse analysis are presented. Examples of rhetorical devices are given from the analyzed speeches of three charismatic CEOs of international corporations. For each CEO, part of a more extensive analysis of their speeches is presented, focusing on the international management mentality that their messages convey as well as how this message content is rhetorically constructed.

## **INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS STRATEGY AND MANAGEMENT MENTALITY**

According to Adler (1991) the two fundamental differences between global and domestic organizations are geographic dispersion and multiculturalism. However, as Yip (1995) notes nowadays the question is not so much whether companies are in a global industry and have global strategies, rather it is a matter of degree; the question of how global the

متن کامل مقاله

دریافت فوری ←

**ISI**Articles

مرجع مقالات تخصصی ایران

- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه تمام متن مقالات انگلیسی
- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه ترجمه شده مقالات
- ✓ پذیرش سفارش ترجمه تخصصی
- ✓ امکان جستجو در آرشیو جامعی از صدها موضوع و هزاران مقاله
- ✓ امکان دانلود رایگان ۲ صفحه اول هر مقاله
- ✓ امکان پرداخت اینترنتی با کلیه کارت های عضو شتاب
- ✓ دانلود فوری مقاله پس از پرداخت آنلاین
- ✓ پشتیبانی کامل خرید با بهره مندی از سیستم هوشمند رهگیری سفارشات