

# The history of managers as rhetors business essay

[Business](#)



## **Abstract**

An annual report is part of every established organization's documents. In every annual report, "Message from the Chairman" always appears at the beginning. This type of message is generally written by the chairman or CEO who provides management's summary of the company's overall performance for the year. It is a way of reaching out to stockholders and investors to ensure them of the company's stability and credibility. This research looks at communication of 'corporate news' in time of crisis and success. It focuses on analyzing the "message from the chairman" in annual reports (n= 12) written in English during the time of crisis and success of 2011-2012. Research methodology includes move analysis, analysis of rhetorical appeals (logos, ethos, pathos) and rhetorical trends (assertive, anti-intellectual, abstract). The findings reveal an interesting rhetorical structure, which represents some shared characteristics of corporate language used in times of crises and success. Keywords: discourse analysis, rhetorical analysis, business communication, corporate discourse, annual report, crisis, success

## **1. 1 INTRODUCTION**

The global spread of English can be regarded as one of the most significant linguistic phenomena in the world. Two main factors for the present-day world status of English have been British colonialism and American economic supremacy (Crystal 1997; Graddol 1997; Pennycook 1994; Phillipson 1992; Brumfit 1982) It is evident that the successive promotion of English by Britain and the United States through political influence, economic power and technological superiority together with the global forces searching for a

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single lingua franca or common language for cross-cultural communication have strengthened the status of English as an international language. Perhaps the third factor that encourages the use of English in the 21st Century is economic globalisation. Graddol (1997) describes a new order for the world economy in which English has become and will continue to be the major business lingua franca as it is used extensively by the world's 'Big Three' trading blocs, North America, the European Union and Japan, which dominate world trade. English has become the language of international business and this can be traced back to the colonial era when English was introduced to many colonial states not only for political purposes but also for business purposes. Kachru and Quirk (1981) point out that 'The outstanding factor in extending the use of English has undoubtedly been the political power and influence of the English-speaking nations and the superiority they attained in various fields of commerce'. The status of English as the dominant medium for commerce has been strengthened over time by the boom of world trade which has led to the establishment of a large number of international economic organisations such as the European Union (EU), the North American Free Trade Area (NAFTA), the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and the ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA). Nowadays, in the 'shrinking' world of advanced information technology, English also dominates as the means of modern communication; namely, the Internet, e-mail systems and various computer programming languages and information transfer protocols, which are of tremendous use in the local and international business worlds. Two frequently quoted statistics are that English is the medium for eighty per cent of the world's electronically stored information, and that three-quarters

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of the world's mail is written in English. (Crystal 1997; McCrum et al. 1986)  
The free trade and Information Technology Age have led to the so-called ' world without boundaries' where most nations are sharing one common language in their cross-cultural communication that is the English language.

### **Annual reports - a crucial corporate document**

Foreign trade and investment have led to the increasing number of multinational corporations, foreign companies and joint ventures. These organisations are economically beneficial because they create employment. It is common practice for the multinational corporations and foreign companies to recruit some employees overseas mainly from their own countries. These expatriates have encouraged the use of English in the workplace, and, as a result, have formed an English-speaking community. This social community has enhanced the spread of English both inside and outside the workplace. As for the business environment, nowadays the majority of white-collar jobs require a good command of English. It comes with no surprise how corporations in Pakistan and many across the world prepare annual reports English. The annual report is a crucial corporate document and the CEO's letter to shareholders is its most prominent and widely read part. Although frequently criticized as " five pages of financial information and 40 pages of fluff" (Wild, 1997), the production of annual reports is a major corporate endeavor (Poe, 1994). Within the report, the CEO's letter is widely seen as a promotional genre, designed to construct and convey a corporate image to stockholders, brokers, regulatory agencies, financial media, and the investing public (Anderson & Imperia, 1992, p. 114). Generally written as a signed personal letter, the document has enormous

rhetorical importance in building credibility and imparting confidence, convincing investors that the company is pursuing sound and effective strategies. So, while research suggests that investment decisions are mainly based on financial data (Epstein & Pava, 1993; Jacobson, 1988), the CEO's letter is widely read (Coutis, 1982) and its contents are an important means of validating quantitative measures (Chugh & Meador, 1984; Poe, 1994). Thus the letter is a highly rhetorical product that can have a major impact on a firm's competitive position (Kohut & Segars, 1992).

## **Significance**

This paper focuses on the use of some critical features of text-level rhetoric to determine how CEO's project themselves into their texts in order to present an effective corporate picture. This qualitative study seeks to examine how rhetoric is used to create a positive corporate image. It would help suggest that those interested in business writing need to become more aware of how corporations use rhetoric to accomplish persuasive goals. Moreover, rhetoric is a deliberate means of participating in organizational interactions for all members. The Paper will seek to exemplify the use of rhetorical theories and concepts in the study of management and administration. This paper will help to demonstrate that the possibility is high for fruitful cross-pollination between rhetoric and management science and when the best of both epistemologies is employed, interdisciplinary scholarship reaches its full potential.

## **1. 2 LITERATURE REVIEW**

Management and administration scholars frequently express a concern that organizations use rhetoric to control stakeholders (Barley & Kunda, 1992; <https://assignbuster.com/the-history-of-managers-as-rhetors-business-essay/>

David & Strang 2006; Oakes, Townley, & Cooper, 1998). Rhetoric is treated as a means of manipulation. This concern is not always explicitly stated, in studies that focus on manager's strategic language, rhetoric is simply conceptualized as a powerful tool. This charge of rhetoric as manipulation has a long history ever since Plato (1987) and other classical philosophers, rhetoric has been preoccupied by a disciplinary apprehension. Plato, who was one of the first philosophers to use the concept, he frequently used it against his preferred philosophical practice, dialectic, which is a form of communication directed toward knowledge and insight. He insisted that only dialectic could arrive at absolute truth. In contrast, rhetoric could produce only conviction without knowledge. Plato uses Socrates as his mouthpiece to claim analogically that rhetoric is to justice as cosmetics is to gymnastics or pastry baking is to medicine. Pretended arts such as rhetoric he states create only the appearance of beauty and knowledge. Plato's argument (1987) soon moves into a discussion of false manipulation. His accusation, which has resonated in rhetorical studies, is that the artful use of language poses the threat of deception. It can manipulate an audience (or members of an organization). According to Plato, an orator who can produce conviction and pleasure without substantial knowledge and experience is dangerous. Socrates stated, " When an orator is more persuasive than a doctor, a non-knower will be more persuasive than a knower among non-knowers" (Plato, 1987, p. 18). The ancient charge against rhetoric is that its powerful potential conceals its own shortcoming. Some users of language are knowledgeable and wise; some are not. Some users of language are morally sound; some are not. The thrust of Platonic skepticism is that persuasion, by definition, renders onto its user immense power and control. Management <https://assignbuster.com/the-history-of-managers-as-rhetors-business-essay/>

scholars who characterize rhetoric as being supplemental to concept building preserve the Platonic assumption that it is either deceptive or superfluous. Not only do they imply that unambiguous communication exists, but they suggest that it is possible to achieve it by stripping away the rhetoric (David & Strang 2006; Oakes, Townley, & Cooper, 1998). This argument commonly arises in discussions of manager-stakeholder communication; that is, there is an underlying fantasy of creating pure dialogue, a moment in which the risk of miscommunication is eliminated (Goldberg & Markóczy, 2000). There are a few exceptions to the manipulation view of rhetoric in management research. For instance Lawrence and Suddaby (2006) treat rhetoric as the persuasive dimension of language in discourse analysis. Sillince (1999) argues that rhetoric has frequently been used in managerial research to represent something unreal or manipulative and that it deserves to be used in the classical sense, as a formal resource. According to Sillince (1999) human communication cannot avoid being rhetorical. Terms such as ideology, discourse, and rhetoric appear interchangeable at times. As Clifford (1988) defines the term, discourse is the overall communication scheme. There is some consistency among these terms: Ideology represents values; discourse serves as the overarching term for communication; and rhetoric is the tool for persuading others to take up ideas and practices (Clifford, 1988). Rhetoric itself has a multitude of definitions, from the pre-Socratics into modern times. Modern theorists do not dismiss rhetoric as a sham art, as Plato did. For the most part, they do not subscribe to the mere rhetoric view (Ehninger, 1968; Phillips & Brown, 1993; Heracleous and Barrett, 2001). Everyone uses language persuasively as a means of "inducing cooperation in beings that by nature respond to symbols" (Ehninger, 1968). In other

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words, it is not just that rhetoric can be good or bad; it is that rhetoric permeates human interaction as long as language is used deliberately.

## **Managers as Rhetors**

A rhetor's task encompasses all dimensions of the rhetorical standard: invention, arrangement, style, memory, and delivery (Hamilton, 1998).

Classifying a person in a management position as a rhetor draws attention to the ways in which he faces many of the same challenges as does the classical orator. It emphasizes one's ability and need to master language in context (Gardner & Avolio, 1998). The manager-as-rhetor notion is a way of understanding how persuasion is part of an organizational leader's role. Any leader political, spiritual, entrepreneurial uses language to communicate ideas and direct followers. Just as an effective public speaker uses rhetorical tactics, a manager must construct a persuasive message that reflects the organization's need and goals (Abrahamson, 1997). In doing so, he or she assesses and draws on an array of available tropes, argument, and imageries researchers recall that Aristotle (1991) defines rhetoric as the ability to discern, in any given situation, the available means of persuasion (Emrich et al., 2001; Gardner & Avolio, 1998; Pinder & Bourgeois, 1982). Green (2004) illustrates Rhetoric has been underutilized in organizational studies, and, thus, may contribute to this field of inquiry. A rhetorical perspective suggests that managers play an active role in the diffusion process, because what managers say and how they say it matter a great deal. (p. 654) According to Green (2004), part of the manager's rhetorical task is to propagate new ideas throughout an organization. A manager's communicative practices determine how, for example, organizational change



and innovation reverberate. Managers deliberately legitimate and delegitimate organizational practices via their linguistic choices (Suddaby & Greenwood, 2005). The application of rhetorical theory focuses on the power of the communicator. Green (2004) claims, " A rhetorical theory of diffusion highlights the causal potency of language in shaping organizational life and behavior. Moreover, rhetorical theory portrays the manager as rhetor and suggests that his or her most influential tool is language" (p. 665). As Green and others suggest, rhetorical strategies are integral to organizational management. Specifically, the classical notions of ethos, pathos, and logos are the most fundamental concepts in rhetorical theory (Aristotle, 1991). According to Aristotle, Socrates, and many later theorists, these are functions of the rhetor's personal credibility, one's capacity for activating the audience's emotions, and one's use of logical appeals. Green (2004) draws on this familiar triad from the rhetorical tradition and concludes his analysis by noting that " a managerial practice for which the diffusion process follows a rhetorical sequence that starts with pathos, moves to logos, and ends with ethos will have a rapid rate of initial adoption, a broad diffusion, and a slow abandonment" (p. 661). Rhetorical studies characterize managers as rhetors. It entails the realization that managers, when faced with organizational challenges such as innovation or a new production site, negotiate much of the same conditions as does the classical orator. Managers use tropes and figures, arguments and persuasive appeals, in a strategic manner to achieve goals. By analyzing managers as rhetors, management researchers discover new dimensions of organizational leadership. One of these dimensions centers on a manager-rhetor's reliance on rational and narrative forms of communication.

## **Findings from previous research**

In the past, annual reports were perceived as inadequate sources of information. (Courtis 1986, Hill & Knowlton 1984) Nowadays companies tend to take such perception into serious consideration, as Lester (2007) whose study is on the new language of corporate financial reporting, expresses that global requirements for information relevancy and accuracy are now the focal points of numerous efforts by professional organizations, regulatory agencies, and academic research. According to Yuthas et al. (2002) whose research focuses on US annual reports, ' The reporting practices mandated by the Securities and Exchange Commission for all publicly traded corporations are intended to render the annual reports a legitimate and trustworthy medium through which management communicates information related to the financial performance of the firm'. Hildebrandt and Snyder (1981), which indicates that regardless of the financial status of the company, the word choices in the executive letter to the shareholders are predominantly positive. Thomas (1997) examines linguistic structures in a series of the manager's messages to shareholders in one US company's from its prosperity to its financial deterioration during 1984-1988. Using a systemic approach, her transitivity analysis reveals that as the company's profits are decreasing, passive voice is increasingly used, and, under thematic structure, there is an increase in the use non human agents, reflecting a change in the management's attitude. Thomas (1997) concludes that as the news becomes more negative, linguistic structures suggest a factual, ' objective' situation caused by circumstances not attributable to any persons who might otherwise be thought responsible'. According to Tsang (2001), these studies reveal that when reporting

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corporate performance to shareholders and other stakeholders, companies tend to attribute good performance to causes internal to themselves, and to attribute poor performance to factors external to themselves. Using computer analysis of stylistic features in their comparison of annual reports of profitable and unprofitable companies, Subramanian et al. (1993) find out that profits affected the corporate textual style. They report that the annual reports of better-performing companies are more readable and forceful than those of financially lower performing companies, and suggest that management may manipulate the readability of annual reports based on the company's financial success or failure. Balata and Breton's (2005) recent research involves a content analysis of the president's letter in an attempt to investigate the relationship between the financial data and level of optimism expressed in the narrative section. Their results from the content analysis using computer software, following Breton and Taffler (2001), reveal a moderate level of divergence especially when related to the profitability theme. This can lead to further research examining the annual report as a strategic tool to influence investors and as a public relations document. In view of the stockholders, Hermann (2007) examines the use of an online discussion board to investigate participants' sensemaking related to their financial holdings. He points out that through Weick's (1979, 1995) model of sensemaking especially his conception of the double interact (the act-response-adjustment interactions between communicative partners), discussion board participants make sense of and organize equivocal financial messages. Though not directly relevant to the language of the annual report, Hermann (2007) provides a comprehensive overview in this area. He describes some interesting features as follows " Because stockholders are <https://assignbuster.com/the-history-of-managers-as-rhetors-business-essay/>

precariously positioned with the corporations they own, researchers are extending their examinations of corporate impression management into the communicative areas of economic, financial, and investment research"). Ober, Zhao, Davis and Alexander (1999) found that company communication in annual reports to stockholders contains an objective, forward-looking tone. Leuthesser and Kohli (1997) examined annual reports, determining that readers of corporate mission statements granted goodwill toward companies. Kohut and Segars (1992) examine the communication strategy represented in the president's letter in annual reports of the top- and bottom-performing companies of the Fortune 500, and point out that performance could be predicted from themes, time orientation, and technical characteristics. Prasad and Mir (2002) conduct a critical hermeneutic analysis of CEO's letters to shareholders in US petroleum industry during the 1970s and 1980s, with a focus on the industry's unstable relationship with the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). They explain that hermeneutics could be viewed as the study of textual interpretation through an act of unveiling the surface meaning of the text to its symbol or symbolic meaning, which requires an analysis of the socio-historical contexts in which the text is imbedded. Their research reveals that the CEO's letters are much more than regular conduits for imparting operational and financial information about corporations because the role of the CEOs is enhanced. ' CEOs are actors rather than mere information processors or reactors. They do not merely observe what OPEC is doing and report their findings to shareholders. They also play a role in the process of determining a broader attitudinal shift toward OPEC in the US. They are part of a community of practice, which institutionally generated knowledge about OPEC through a series of

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communicative acts.' (Prasad and Mir 2002) Another study which also examines the strategies used in the executive letter is Crombie and Samujh (1999). They analyse a single executive letter in an annual report of a small New Zealand-based company. This letter tends to focus on problems, which are relatively minor ones. Crombie and Samujh (1999) claim that the problems tend to serve three functions: to distract attention from more serious issues, to undermine the credibility of potential challenges, and to provide a context in which the writer can present himself and the other company directors positively as problem solvers. Other strategies in annual reports can also include non-textual materials. David (2001) analyses the design features of the narrative sections of the annual reports (General Electric, Microsoft, and Coca-Cola) by focusing on rhetorical strategies of visual and textual design (images and themes) created by designers and reveals that they can induce positive cultural myths. She concludes that designs of annual reports are often effective in achieving purposes of reflecting the company's image and values.

## **Gap identification**

Research into the annual report's narratives is scarce. There seems to be less attention given to the study that concentrates only on the identification and realisation of moves in Chairman's letters to shareholders, either in time of crisis or in time of prosperity. This research attempts to shed light on this area and focuses on the language use in time of economic crisis. The above review of previous research explores some interesting studies whose findings are useful for the present research.

## **Conclusion**

In sum, rhetoric is a strategy of the powerful, a form of control. The power of managers' words accounts for the increasing interest of organizational scholars in rhetoric. At the same time, rhetoric is used to designate linguistic indirectness and other symbolic processes. The literature demonstrates the use of rhetoric in the study of management and administration. James G. March and Karl Weick. March and Olsen (1998) assert that because environments are ever changing, they are essentially sites of interpretation. Weick's theory (1996) states that when organizational conditions are uncertain and equivocal, the response to those conditions must be likewise equivocal. Rhetoric, with its artful and changing qualities, is often the proper response to those environments. With the review of literature the paper outlines the basis of this research whose methodological approaches will be presented in the next section.

## **Research Design**

This paper focuses on one type of professional business texts, that is, corporate annual reports. It analyses the authority's language employed in communicating annual reports during the times of success and crises. The data include 12 executive letters, which are generally called 'message from the chairman' (MFTC). This research adopts a multidisciplinary approach to the analysis of chairman's message to shareholders. It will apply a functional approach to move-based analysis with linguistic realisations (following Halliday 1994, Swales 1990 and Bhatia 1993), the Aristotelian concept of persuasive rhetoric (Zhu 2001; Campbell 1998; Hyland 1998) will be used to

point out persuasive strategies, and rhetoric trends will be analyzed through content analysis of the corpus.

### **Research objective:**

The objectives of this research are To investigate the language of the annual report, which is a type of workplace discourse, or what Yuthas et al. (2002) calls ' the genre of corporate public discoure'. To examine, the micro-structure in terms of textual and linguistic features which may contribute to the making of positive meaning and/or the creation of positive corporate image for compines in terms of success and crises. To identify the rhetoric trends in the annual reports at the time of success and crises

### **Research Questions**

R1 Is there a rhetorical pattern or set of regularities underlying shared generic structure and/or communicative purpose(s) in the message from the chairman. R2 In what way can the three rhetorical appeals be identified in the messages from the chairman? R3 In what way rhetorical appeal be linguistically realised, and contribute to the making of positive meaning in the time of crises and success? R4 Identifying rhetorical trends that are carried out in corporate annual reports in the time of crises and success

### **Research paradigm**

This paper seeks to demonstrate that the possibility is high for fruitful cross-pollination between rhetoric and management science and when the best of both epistemologies is employed, interdisciplinary scholarship reaches its full potential. This research is based on the " Constructionist" paradigm.

Constructionist perspective, places an emphasis " on discourse as the

vehicle through which the self and the world are articulated, and on the way different discourses enable different versions of selves and reality to be built" (Tuominen, Talja, & Savolainen, 2002p. 273). An important assumption in this regard is that " the things we hold as facts are materially, rhetorically, and discursively crafted in institutionalized social practices" (p. 278). Potter and Wetherell's form of discourse analysis (Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Potter, 1996; and Wetherell, Taylor and Yates, 2001) is developed from the study of language use in a variety of disciplines. It builds on ethnomethodology, speech act theory, and semiology to explain how people use language to construct versions of the social world. Their perspective on discourse analysis recognizes that language allows for multiple versions of an event. This analysis is therefore concerned with the ways that individuals construct their versions to do things. In particular, this study shed light on the ways that Managers construct their accounts and structure them to appear factual (the epistemological orientation of discourse), and the ways that they use accounts to serve rhetorical functions (the action orientation of discourse).

## **Data Collection and classification**

The paper manages to build a small-sized corpus of 12 English messages from the chairman from 12 annual reports (2011-2012) of different companies in the world. 6 out of 12 companies are those which experienced success in 2011-2012 and 6 are selected that faced crises in this period.

Table 1: lexical density of the MFTCs



## **Corpus**

### **No of texts**

### **Success**

### **texts**

### **Size of success texts (words)**

### **Crisis**

### **texts**

### **Size of crises texts**

### **(words)**

### **Total size of corpus**

### **(words)**

Message form the Chairman12 messages612, 11266, 03918151Table 1

demonstrates the lexical density of the MFTCs in the corpus, analysed with simple computer tools in Microsoft Word. The total size is 18151.

## **Data Analysis procedure**

The corpus is analysed by using text and discourse analysis in terms of a range of structural, textual, and pragmatic features and content analysis to analysis the rhetorical trends so as to answer the proposed research questions. NVIVO, a qualitative software tool, allowed the researcher to organize data. NVIVO queries made it possible to determine the frequency with which a word, phrase or influence occurred. The main analyses can be summarised as follows: A) Text and discourse analysis- Rhetorical / generic structures (moves)- Rhetorical appeals (logos, ethos, and pathos)B)

Qualitative content analysis- Rhetorical Trends (anti-intellectual, abstract, assertive)

## **Limitations of Research**

This is a corpus-based study which has a number of limitations. Firstly, the researcher had no control over the production of the annual report narratives, and the selection process of the annual reports was based on convenience sampling. Secondly, the sources of the selected corpus varies, so the data are not specific to any particular type of business, but represent a genre-specific analysis. Finally, the study could include researcher's biasness while analyzing the corpus. Moreover the sample of the research can also be termed as a limitation.

## **Analysis and discussion**

### **Rhetorical Move Pattern in MFTCs**

From the corpus, it is found that the MFTCs can be generally characterized by rhetorical moves. Developed along the similar line as Swales' (1990) and Bhatia's (1993) patterns of moves in academic and professional genres respectively, the paper carefully identifies the rhetorical moves in MFTCs in the corpus. The 12 proposed structures consist of 12 moves. The rhetorical moves presented in Table 2 and Table 3 are proposed to be used with MFTCs in time of crisis or success as it contains certain moves which are context-specific. The corpus of the study contains all the stated (table 2) moves although they do not appear in a fixed order. Flexibility of some moves such as Move 2, 3, 4, 5, 7 as they may relegate their positions due to being highly context specific (move 2, 3, 4, 5 refers to crises so they may relegate in

success similarly Move 6, 7, 8 may relegate in crisis as they refer to success). The patterning of moves can be outlined as units while unit is the frequency of occurrences of each Move. The identification of Moves is considered as a straightforward process once the rhetorical pattern has been established. There is no step in this pattern as the MFTCs do not vary much in terms of communicative purposes. The table 2 reveals Move pattern (%age) of MFTC's in crises and displays the Move units (frequency) in the pattern. Move 7 is missing as the analysis are based on the MFTC of the companies in crisis and the Move 7 is specific to success pattern. The corpus of 12 MFTCs is examined by this approach. Important statistics are presented in the table 2 and table 3. Table 2: Moves, rhetorical appeals and trends in MFTC of the company's in crisis

## **Parent Node**

### **Sub Nodes**

#### **No. of sources**

#### **Frequency of occurrences in corpus**

#### **Moves**

Move 1: Giving an overview of the economy and or the company<sup>633</sup>Move 2:

Admitting corporate negative effect(s) caused by the crisis<sup>69</sup>Move 3:

Redeeming corporate credentials to mitigate the said negative

effect(s)<sup>625</sup>Move 4: stating external factors responsible for the company's

crisis<sup>616</sup>Move 5: Stating internal factors responsible for the company's

crisis<sup>54</sup>Move 6: Admitting corporate positive effect(s) caused by the

success<sup>69</sup>Move 7: Stating external factors for company's success<sup>00</sup>Move 8:

Stating internal factors for company's success<sup>614</sup> Move 9: Giving information on the company's policies and measures<sup>616</sup> Move 10: Expressing thanks, gratitude and appreciation<sup>632</sup> Move 11: Signaling anticipation for continued support<sup>612</sup> Move 12: Visualizing positive prospects<sup>618</sup>

## Rhetorical Appeals

Ethos<sup>435</sup> Logos<sup>628</sup> Pathos<sup>39</sup>

## Rhetorical Trends

Anti-intellectual<sup>36</sup> Abstract<sup>522</sup> Assertive<sup>630</sup> It is apparent from the table 4. 2 that the MFTC is concerned with the economic situation and reflects it through the extensive use of Move 1, Giving an overview of the economy and/or the company. Move 2, Admitting corporate negative effect(s) caused by the crisis, is found in all with a frequency of occurrences 9 times, showing that the crisis was so severe that management of each organization could not deny or remain indifferent. It is evident that the companies state external factors more responsible for crises (Move 4) than that of the internal factors (Move 5). The move Move 9, Giving information on the company's policies/ measures/strategies/actions (past, current, future), reflects that this information is important in time of crisis as the shareholders' confidence is essential for corporate survival. Move 10, Expressing thanks/ gratitude/ appreciation, one of the most important move that can help strengthen the business relationship. Move 3, Redeeming corporate credentials to mitigate the said negative effect(s), marks this context-specific discourse.

Interestingly. Move 12, Visualizing positive prospects, is also popular than expected. This could be one of the strategies to help build shareholders' confidence. Move 11, Signaling anticipation for continued support, with such <https://assignbuster.com/the-history-of-managers-as-rhetors-business-essay/>

number of occurrence, implies management is concerned about the prevailing condition and is positive about doing good in the future. Similarly table 3 reflects that analysis of MFTC in times of success which shows that companies state internal factors more responsible for success (Move 5) than that of the external factors (Move 4), moreover as the companies are climbing the ladder and the year is profitable for them, the table 3 signifies that this success chart relegates the failure patterns in the MFTC's.

## **Rhetorical Appeals in MFTC**

The Aristotelian concept of persuasive rhetoric has been used in research into persuasive business correspondence (Campbell 1998, Hyland 1998, Zhu 2001 & 2005, Chakorn 2006 & 2007a). In this concept, three rhetorical appeals (logos, ethos, and pathos) are identified as strategies for persuasion and/or argumentation. logos is the appeal to reason, ethos is the appeal to source credibility, and pathos is the appeal to the audience's affection or emotions. Zhu's (2001) findings reveal the use of all appeals in her corpus of Chinese invitation letters to trade fairs, as opposed to the English letters which mainly use logos and ethos. The findings from the comparative analysis of success and crises MFTC's (Chakorn 2006) are similar to Zhu's. Rhetorical appeals found in MFTC's for the companies in crises and as well as of success are mostly logos and ethos (Table 2 and Table 3). Moreover, pathos in the corpus (Table 2 and Table 3) also incorporates high-flown remarks that create a link between the company's success and the society's. A common trait found in the MFTCs for the companies in crises (Table 2) is the structural pattern of writing. The MFTC's shares similar structural components, starting from giving an overview of the economy

(logos), admitting corporate negative effects caused by the crisis (logos), then redeeming the corporate credentials (ethos), giving information on the company's policies/strategies/actions (logos & ethos), expressing thanks, signalling anticipation for continued support, and finally, visualizing positive prospects (pathos). These components are not strictly compulsory and do not necessarily appear in a fixed order although somehow most of them are often found consecutively in the above manner. Altogether they help create the positive tone of the message in order to maintain the reader's confidence in the company's performance. Table 3: Moves, rhetorical appeals and trends in MFTC of the company's in Success

## **Parent Node**

## **Sub Nodes**

## **No. of sources**

## **Frequency of occurrences in corpus**

## **Moves**

Move 1: Giving an overview of the economy and or the company650

Move 2: Admitting corporate negative effect(s) caused by the crisis00

Move 3: Redeeming corporate credentials to mitigate the said negative

effect(s)00

Move 4: stating external factors responsible for the company's

crisis00

Move 5: Stating internal factors responsible for the company's

crisis00

Move 6: Admitting corporate positive effect(s) caused by the

success613

Move 7: Stating external factors for company's success22

Move 8: Stating internal factors for company's success615

Move 9: Giving information on the company's policies and measures626

Move 10: Expressing thanks,

gratitude and appreciation620Move 11: Signaling anticipation for continued support619Move 12: Visualizing positive prospects621

## **Rhetorical Appeals**

Ethos621logos620Pathos26

## **Rhetorical Trends**

Anti-intellectual29Abstract318Assertive626

## **Rhetorical trends in MFTC**

The results in table 2 & 3 demonstrates a clear distinction between crisis and success management rhetoric in three dimensions. The management rhetor can be defined by more than the patterns of his rhetoric, this fundamental clarification of who he is and what are the tools of his trade have not been offered. This section concludes that he can be identified by three hallmarks of his rhetorical method. The rhetoric of the rhetor manager is

- Anti-intellectual: it makes few references to cognitive and evaluative processes and states and avoids formal word choices for more colloquial ones;
- Abstract: it relies significantly on religious, poetic, and idealistic references;
- Assertive: it is activist; it adopts a "realist" preoccupation with the language of power and is very confident. The table 2 and 3 shows that an increased tendency to avoid references to cognitive and evaluative processes and states as well as to substitute formal word choices for more colloquial turns of phrase is becoming more dominant. Moreover The anti-intellectualism in modern Management rhetoric is curiously accompanied by a certain taste for abstraction. The paper reflects that the challenge of the today's market has motivated the companies to reach even more energetically for the abstract.

The trend toward greater abstraction is most obvious when we observe MFTC's of a company in crisis (table 2). The data also show that management's rhetoric of both successful and in crisis companies has become more confident and assertive.

### **Summary of the findings:-**

The overall findings respond to each research question R1 Is there a rhetorical pattern or set of regularities underlying shared generic structure and/or communicative purpose(s) in the message from the chairman. R2 In what way can the three rhetorical appeals be identified in the messages from the chairman? R3 In what way rhetorical appeal be linguistically realised, and contribute to the making of positive meaning in the time of crises and success? R4 Identifying rhetorical trends that are carried out in corporate annual reports in the time of crises and success The figure 1 & 2 below shows the dominant rhetoric appeal, trends and moves appeared in the MFTC's in the time of success and crises. Figure 1: Moves, rhetorical appeals and trends in MFTC of the company's in crisis C:

Users\JAVED\Desktop\Untitled2555. png The dominant rhetorical trends are show by the arrows, while the straight arrow showing more importance and the dotted arrow showing moderate importance of a trend. The trends are divided into here sections in form of tags, the first (top) section represents the abstract, the middle represent the anti intellectual and the third representing the assertive rhetoric trend. Figure 2: Moves, rhetorical appeals and trends in MFTC of the company's in crisis C:

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## **Conclusion**

This research has shed some light on the rhetoric of the message from the chairman (MFTC) 2011-2012. From the genre-based analysis of 12 MFTCs, a twelve -move rhetorical pattern has been discussed. Yuthas et al. (2002: 145) point out, ' President and/or Chief Executive Officers generally use annual reports to provide an overview and an interpretation of the firm's financial results. In addition, the letter is used as a forum through which to discuss problems and opportunities and to discuss plans for the future.' The moves identified in this research confirm this nature, and add some extra features as the MFTCs in the corpus representing the communication during a severe time of crisis and in success are analyzed. Following the Aristotelian concept of persuasive rhetoric, the research reports on the use of logos, ethos, and pathos, in various degrees. Jameson (2000, 2004a, 2004b) reveals that readers of business texts in professional context respond intellectually, emotionally, and visually to what they read. In the corpus, logos and ethos are used in the reporting of facts as well as claim-justification arguments, while pathos (expressed mostly through thanking move) concerns relationship- or solidarity-building as well as corporate image boosting (e. g. by showing ethical concerns or corporate social responsibility). And lastly the trends identified enlightens on the notion that how different rhetoric trends are used in MFTC's in the time of crisis and success.

## **Recommendations**

Jameson (2000) cites, " In fact, readers' reactions to annual reports and other business literature depend ' not only on their intellectual

understanding, but also on their emotional interaction with the narrator personae and visual symbolism' (p. 35)." This remark is also a recommendation for pursuing an analysis of visual images in annual reports as well. In sum, the findings reveal some kind of mapping of interwoven rhetorical appeals, trends and moves which leads to the understanding how authority's corporate public discourse creates its intended meaning. More research needs to be conducted along a similar line to establish a firm stance for this field of research., perhaps with a focus on industry-specific, crosscultural data and/or power-status relationship between the writer and the reader.

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