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Read between the lines: The Role of Multimodality in Communicating Strategy on Social Media

ABSTRACT

This study explores the role multimodality plays in communicating strategy on social media, through a strategy-as-practice perspective. We conducted qualitative netnography research by sampling a focused dataset of 1,000 strategically focused posts from 50 strategists, out of all 968 FTSE 100 company strategists who have a presence on LinkedIn. Our results conceptualise three roles multimodality affords: distributing understanding with multimodal choices, persuading with multimodal evidence and resonating with multimodal semiotics. This study contributes to the literature in three ways. First, we extend the literature on strategic communication by showing how strategists integrate multimodal resources - textual, visual, video and interactive - to construct strategic meaning, perform identity work, and cultivate influence. Second, we advance the study of genres in strategy communication by identifying social media as a distinct genre of strategic communication that redistributes control of the narrative and enables new forms of relational engagement. Third, we expand the methodological repertoire of critical discourse analysis by demonstrating how digital and multimodal strategy communication on social media can be systematically collected and analysed at scale.

Keywords: social media, strategy-as-practice, multimodality, critical discourse analysis.

INTRODUCTION

Strategic leaders increasingly turn to digital technologies - especially social media - to do strategy work in public (e.g., Baptista et al., 2017; Morton et al., 2022; Brielmaier et al., 2025). While prior research has largely framed this through sociomaterial practice (Kohtamäki et al., 2022), social media also reconfigures who speaks for strategy and how. Social media has democratised strategic communication, by complementing or perhaps bypassing traditional intermediaries such as more general corporate communications, executives now can address diverse internal and external audiences directly (Huang et al., 2018; Heavey et al., 2020). This visibility shifts strategists from behind-the-scenes to under-the-spotlight, positioning them not only as strategic decision-makers but also as front-stage communicators and advocates, making strategic communication a core part of the role. In short, social media redistributes communicative agency and opens new opportunities – and obligations – for how strategy is articulated, justified, and supported (Heavey et al., 2020; Morton et al., 2020).

Prior research has highlighted a range of opportunities that social media affords. For example, it can help build trust with investors and other stakeholders (Elliott et al., 2018) and enable competition for attention in order to secure resources and legitimacy (Castello et al., 2016). Within the strategy field, these insights remain scattered across perspectives (Heavey et al., 2020). Open strategy research represents one of the few coherent efforts to theorize this phenomenon, showing, for instance, how social media supports impression management (Gegenhuber & Dobusch, 2017), facilitates strategy formulation and ongoing implementation (Morton et al., 2020), strengthens commitment to strategic decisions (Baptista et al., 2017), and enhances decision quality through access to diverse informational inputs (Tavakoli et al., 2017).

However, despite these opportunities, social media has rarely been examined as a distinct phenomenon within the literature on strategic communication. Most research treats social media as a ‘new’ channel for strategy talk rather than a distinct genre (Wenzel & Koch, 2018) that transforms how such talk is produced, performed, and received. In doing so, existing studies risk overlooking how social media reconfigures the very communicative conditions of strategy - its immediacy, visibility, and interactivity - through which meaning, authority, and participation are negotiated.

Prior work on strategic communication has primarily focused on established forms or genres such as strategic plans (Vaara et al., 2010), PowerPoint presentations (Kaplan, 2011), or keynote speeches (Wenzel & Koch, 2018). These studies show how genre conventions discipline strategic talk and render it coherent, but they remain bound to physical or textual formats. Social media, by contrast, is not only digital but inherently multimodal in that it fuses text, image, video, hyperlink, and interaction into a single communicative act (Heavey et al., 2020). It collapses boundaries between the organisational and public, formal and informal, and social and strategic. In doing so, it transforms strategic communication from a controlled, episodic performance into a continuous, polyphonic stream of multimodal expression (Morton, 2023; Vaara & Rantakari, 2024).

We therefore conceptualise social media as a novel means of strategic communication defined by two features: its digital immediacy, and its capacity for comprehensive multimodality. Previous research on strategic communication has primarily examined discursive dimensions, such as textual agency of plans (Vaara et al., 2010), discursive categories (Cornelissen & Cholakova, 2019), and rhetorical negotiation (Erkama & Vaara, 2010). While nascent work on multimodality has offered important insights, it remains limited in two ways. First, it focuses on embodied or physical modes such as gestures (Wenzel & Koch, 2018) and staging in face-to-face settings

(Daymond et al., 2024). Second, where digital forms are considered (e.g., Baptista et al., 2017; Gegenhuber & Dobusch, 2017; Brielmaier et al., 2025), attention tends to narrow to a single modality, especially the visual modality (e.g., van den Broek & Gander, 2024). Social media, however, integrates all these modes simultaneously. It represents a communicative environment in which textual, visual, auditory, and interactive elements co-exist and mutually shape strategic meaning. This comprehensive multimodality remains unaccounted for in current research.

We take this as an opportunity to advance the strategy-as-practice agenda and focus on language and communication in particular (e.g., Vaara and Fritsch, 2022), by directing attention to the communicative work of strategists in digital contexts. Examining how strategists craft and perform strategy on social media enables a richer understanding of how strategic communication itself evolves with technology and as a multimodal endeavour. We ask the following research question: How do strategists use multimodality to communicate strategic issues on social media?

To explore this question, we identified 968 executives active on LinkedIn across the FTSE 100 companies and compiled a focused dataset of 1,000 strategically focused posts. Our analysis reveals that multimodality serves three central roles in strategists' posts: distributing understanding with multimodal choices, persuading with multimodal evidence and resonating with multimodal semiotics. In doing so, this study contributes to the literature in three ways. First, we extend the literature on strategic communication by showing how strategists integrate multimodal resources - textual, visual, video, and interactive - to construct strategic meaning, perform identity work, and cultivate influence. Second, we advance the study of forms or genres in strategy by identifying social media as a distinct genre of strategic communication that redistributes control of the narrative and enables new forms of relational engagement. Third, we expand the methodological

repertoire of critical discourse analysis by demonstrating how digital, multimodal strategy communication can be systematically collected and analysed at scale.

This paper proceeds as follows. We first review the existing literature on strategy communication and multimodality, focusing specifically on what we know about social media and its role in communicating strategy. After describing the methodology, we then present the findings of our study by elaborating on the three roles of multimodality. Based on our findings, we discuss how our work contributes to the existing literature and conclude with limitations and future research.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Strategy, Language, and Communication

Strategy scholars have increasingly foregrounded the constitutive role of language and communication in strategizing (e.g., Balogun et al., 2014; Mantere, 2013; Vaara & Langley, 2021; Vaara & Fritsch, 2022). This shift reflects the broader “language turn” (or “linguistic turn”) in organisation and management studies (Vaara, 2010; Cornelissen et al., 2015), which views language not as a mirror of strategic thought but as a medium through which strategy is enacted. Within the strategy-as-practice tradition, this perspective has deepened understanding of the social and organisational dimensions of strategy work, moving attention from plans and decisions to the communicative practices that make them possible (Jarzabkowski et al., 2022; Kohtamäki et al., 2022). This communicative view represents a transition from a reflective to a performative understanding of strategy (Vaara & Langley, 2021). Strategy practitioners have long recognised that words do not simply describe strategy but rather they ‘do’ strategy. Scholars, in particular,

acknowledge that language enacts, rather than merely represents, organisational realities (Vaara & Fritsch, 2022). Vaara and Fritsch (2022) argue that language should be viewed not only as a means of expressing cognition, emotion, or identity, but as a phenomenon that constitutes these very dimensions.

Across the literature, strategy is shown to be communicatively constructed through a range of discursive practices. For example, Mantere and Whittington (2021) demonstrate how strategists construct their identity by talking about and reflecting upon their past experiences. Further, Cornelissen and Cholakova (2019) reveal how strategic categories are discursively created, while Bencherki and colleagues (2021) shed light on how communicative practices construct selected strategic issues to become ‘matters of concern’. Similarly, Logemann and colleagues (2019) highlight the communicative skillset required for strategists to shape stakeholder interpretations and influence collective sensemaking. Together, these studies illustrate that language and communication do not merely accompany strategizing, but rather actively construct organisational reality. Specifically, they position strategists and their identity, and shape which issues gain strategic attention (Vaara & Langley, 2021).

However, despite this communicative turn, research has paid limited attention to how strategy communication evolves as the strategist’s role becomes more public, digital, and multimodal (Heavey et al., 2020; Morton et al., 2020; Whittington & Yakis-Douglas, 2020; Vaara & Langley, 2021). Much of the existing work still presumes stable organisational boundaries and formal, text-based communicative contexts. However, strategists today engage multiple audiences – employees, investors, customers, the public – through dynamic, digital, and visually rich channels (Baptista et al., 2017; Knight et al., 2018; Knight & Wenzel, 2025). This evolution invites renewed attention to the material and multimodal dimensions of strategy communication, such as how

words interact with images, videos, and digital artefacts to produce strategic meaning. In this sense, the contemporary strategist operates not only as a linguistic actor but as a multimodal communicator. Understanding this shift requires moving beyond language as text to consider language as a composite of visual, sound, video, and interactive resources, a transition that mirrors the shift from talking strategy to staging strategy in (digital) public arenas (Heavey et al., 2020). It is at this intersection of language, technology, and performance that social media emerges as a new communicative genre of strategy.

Multimodality in Strategy Communication

While strategy research has made major advances in understanding the discursive constitution of strategizing, most studies remain rooted in language as text or talk (Vaara & Langley, 2021; Jarzabkowski et al., 2022; Kohtamäki et al., 2022). However, strategizing is also a profoundly multimodal process – one accomplished through the interplay of images, sounds, gestures, spatial arrangements, and digital artefacts that together shape how strategy is seen, felt, and interpreted (Jovanovic & Van Leeuwen, 2018; Knight & Wenzel, 2025). From a practice perspective, Knight and Wenzel (2025) define multimodality as “situated constellations of parts of practices through which actors accomplish strategy as a social activity” (Knight & Wenzel, 2025, p.3). This definition highlights that meaning in strategy work emerges not from discourse alone but from the dynamic interrelations among the various “modes” involved in its multimodal accomplishment.

Early strategy-as-practice studies drew attention to how particular artefacts - such as PowerPoint slides (Kaplan, 2011) or meeting spaces (Jarzabkowski & Seidl, 2008) - mediate strategy talk. More recently, research has begun to explore multimodality as an analytic lens in its own right, showing how actors draw on visual, embodied, and material cues to perform authority,

emotion, and legitimacy (Vaara & Whittle, 2022; Knight & Wenzel, 2025). These insights echo the wider “post-truth” turn in organisation studies, which emphasises that the form of communication - how something is presented - matters as much as its content (Knight & Tsoukas, 2019). Strategic meaning, in other words, is not only told but staged through multimodal performances that combine text, tone, and texture.

This multimodal turn is becoming increasingly consequential as digital technologies expand the communicative repertoire of strategists and strategy work (Knight & Wenzel, 2025). Earlier technological shifts – email, presentation software, data visualisation – reshaped the aesthetics and rhythm of strategy communication (Kaplan, 2011; Knight et al., 2018; Vaara & Fritsch, 2022). The COVID-19 pandemic further accelerated this transformation, making virtual and hybrid interactions the norm (Knight & Wenzel, 2025). Digital channels such as Microsoft Teams, Zoom, or LinkedIn now constitute primary arenas for strategy work, where strategists communicate in various ways across dispersed audiences and through multimodal formats blending text, image, and video (Feitosa & Salas, 2021; Heavey et al., 2020). These hybrid environments amplify both the possibilities and pressures of strategic communication: visibility increases, yet control over message and meaning becomes diffuse, and multimodality offers a valuable lens through which to explore such emerging strategy spaces.

Despite growing recognition of these dynamics, research on multimodality in strategy remains conceptually fragmented (Dameron et al., 2015). Knight and Wenzel (2025) identify three main approaches: representation, materials and bodies modes “collapse” to the predominant discursive modes; cocreation, modes recursively shaping each other; and intertwinement. Our research is situated within this third intertwinement view of multimodality, which seeks to capture the complex yet transient nature of multimodal configurations, where meaning arises from the

dynamic integration of communicative modes (Knight & Wenzel, 2025). In this paper, we extend this line of inquiry to social media as an emergent, fully multimodal genre of strategic communication. Social media posts blend linguistic, visual, and interactive resources in real time, allowing strategists to shape narratives, signal identity, and engage audiences directly (Heavey et al., 2020; Morton et al., 2022). Unlike traditional document-based or staged genres, social media operates through open, recursive exchanges that blur distinctions between text and image, author and audience, and internal and external communication. Examining this multimodal integration enables a deeper understanding of how strategy is communicated and contested in (digital) public spaces.

METHODOLOGY

Case Selection

Social media produces a substantial volume of qualitative data, offering researchers an abundance of material to download, interpret, and analyse. However, qualitative studies that systematically leverage this richness remain relatively scarce (McKenna et al., 2017). This creates a significant opportunity as digital platforms now provide access to groups that have traditionally been difficult for researchers to study at scale, including top management teams of leading national and multi-national firms – a category widely recognised as professional elites (e.g., Maramwidze-Merrison, 2016; Ma & Seidl, 2018), LinkedIn is particularly valuable in this respect. It is the platform most commonly used by strategists (e.g., Brielmaier et al., 2025) and unlike corporate press releases or organisational accounts, personal LinkedIn profiles remain attached to individuals across roles and firms over time. This persistence signals ownership and discursive control, even

if communication teams support content creation, strategists ultimately curate, approve, and endorse posts made in their name. Given the reputational implications of public communication for senior leaders, we treat these posts as expressions of strategists' authorship, agency, and control over their public identity. Across our dataset, strategists engaged with a wide range of strategy-related topics

For example, this included the communication of financial results and linking them to strategic objectives; the introduction of new strategies or corporate purpose; and major transformation initiatives in areas such as digitalisation and sustainability. Posts also covered competitive positioning, mergers and acquisitions, organisational restructuring, and strategic partnerships. Strategists frequently commented on external challenges too, such as the pandemic, geopolitics, and cost-of-living crises, and some used the platform to advocate for, or respond to, policy changes and reform.

These posts drew heavily on multimodal resources. For instance, financial updates commonly included hyperlinks to reports alongside images or posters highlighting key performance figures. In some cases, embedded videos such as earnings interviews where CEO were also included. Further, site visit posts typically featured photographs taken on location, showcasing workplace interiors and cityscapes and group images with local colleagues and/or clients. Such multimodal combinations created layered strategic messages that blended factual, visual, and relational cues. Selecting FTSE 100 strategists on LinkedIn therefore provides a theoretically and empirically robust setting in which to examine how contemporary leaders mobilise the multimodal affordances of social media to communicate strategy at scale.

Data Collection

The data collection took place between June 2023 and October 2023 and followed a systematic, multi-stage process designed to identify senior strategists within the FTSE 100 and compile a comprehensive corpus of their social media communication. Our first step was to obtain the most recent FTSE 100 index from the London Stock Exchange, after which we accessed each company's official website to identify members of the top management team. Most firms maintain leadership pages labelled 'Our Leadership', 'Executive Team', or similar, which provide information on executives (strategists). Where ambiguity remained – for example, in firms with nested leadership structures or additional operational committees - we consulted annual reports to confirm executive status.

This process yielded a full set of 100 companies and over 1000 executives. Of these, data from 96 of 100 FTSE companies were ultimately available, as four firms did not have identifiable LinkedIn profiles for their executive teams. For the remaining companies, we visited the earliest posts from strategists, many of which dated to over 10 years ago. We used a social media scraping tool to retrieve the publicly available LinkedIn posts of all identified strategists. A key challenge in social media research is distinguishing between nominal and meaningful presence. Many executives maintain dormant or minimally used LinkedIn accounts that offer little insight into communicative practice. To address this, we adopted a two-step screening process. First, we identified 968 executives with an active LinkedIn profile (i.e., an existing account with at least some activity). Second, we assessed whether each strategist demonstrated substantive engagement with the platform. We defined an "active" strategist as one who, 1. had posted at least 20 times across their LinkedIn history, and/or 2. displayed a clear strategic or organisational focus even

with fewer posts (for example, regular updates on strategy rollouts, transformation programmes, or stakeholder engagement).

This approach ensured that inclusion was based not on visibility alone, but on the communicative relevance of the account for studying strategic discourse. Applying these criteria yielded 438 strategists whose posts constituted a meaningful substrate for analysis. For each of these individuals, we collected their full posting history, including the earliest available posts - some of which extended back a decade or more. This longitudinal depth provided a richer sense of communicative evolution and allowed us to capture multimodal practices across different strategic cycles, organisational roles, and external events.

Overall, this process produced a large and diverse dataset of senior-level strategic communication, offering a rare empirical window into how top managers publicly construct narratives, convey strategic priorities, and mobilise multimodal resources on LinkedIn. In line with our research focus, this dataset formed the basis for subsequent sampling and analysis.

Data Analysis

Our analysis began with consideration of the unique nature of social media data. As LinkedIn data is publicly accessible and inherently attributable, full anonymisation is neither feasible nor desirable. Altering the textual content would risk compromising precisely the discursive and stylistic features that enable us to analyse how strategists communicate. We therefore followed standard practice in digital discourse studies by removing strategist names, other names, and URL links, while retaining verbatim post content for analytic integrity. To analyse the rich combination of textual and multimodal elements within these posts, we adopted the Gioia-informed inductive approach (e.g., Gioia et al., 2013), combined with principles from critical discourse analysis (e.g.,

Fairclough, 2013). This blended approach allowed us to remain close to the communicative detail of the data while generating higher-order themes that demonstrate the role of multimodality in strategic communication on social media. Our analysis proceeded in three stages. In stage 1, given the volume of material produced by senior leaders on LinkedIn, the first analytic task was to delimit the dataset to posts substantively concerned with strategy. Many strategists posted primarily about prior roles in other companies, personal milestones, or generic corporate messaging, resulting in limited relevance to our research focus and question. Others shared only reposted organisational content without commentary, providing little insight into their communicative practices.

We therefore manually filtered the dataset to identify the strategists within each company who demonstrated consistent and substantial engagement with strategy-related communication. This resulted in a final sample of 50 strategists (Table 1). For each selected strategist, we then identified strategy-centred posts. We began by capturing posts containing explicit strategic terminology (e.g., “strategy”, “strategic”, vision, plan, value, ambition). Recognising that many strategic posts do not use such labels, we also conducted a full reading of each strategist’s corpus to select posts that conveyed strategy, including strategic direction, justification, or positioning. The filtering involved interpretive judgement. However, such judgement is integral to qualitative research aimed at identifying the posts most capable of speaking to our research question.

 Insert Table 1 here

In stage 2, the curated posts were then analysed, starting at the textual level following Fairclough’s (2013) conception of discourse as both linguistic and social practice. We began by identifying the strategic topics and issues being addressed in each post, situating ambiguous cases

through contextual exploration (e.g., checking corporate reports, major announcements, or industry events). We then coded the posts for discursive practices focusing on how strategists constructed meaning. This included lexical and stylistic choices (e.g., ‘wee hours’, ‘trolls’, ‘duped’), recurrent phrase patterns (e.g., ‘thank(e.g. team).....for.....(e.g. certain achievement)’, ‘looking forward to’), emotional tone (e.g., humour, cynicism, optimism, frustration), communicative intent (e.g., signalling leadership tone, calling for policy change), and narrative composition (e.g., problem-solution structures, future-oriented framing). This stage provided granular insight into the repertoire of discursive resources strategists mobilised in their public social media communication.

In stage 3, building on the textual analysis, we examined the multimodal composition of posts by analysing how semiotic modes – images, emojis, videos, hyperlinks, documents, audio, and interaction metrics – were combined with discourse to construct meaning. Reflecting the vast scale of our social media data and the polysemic nature of multimodality, our goal was not exhaustive transcription of every, for example, visual or audio element, but the systematic documentation of the salient multimodal features, their functions, and their implications for communication. We then integrated the textual and multimodal codes through pattern matching to identify not only stylistic variations but also organising logics of multimodal strategic communication. Through this iterative process, three dominant roles of multimodality emerged. These roles are presented in Figure 1 and developed in detail in the findings section.

 Insert Figure 1 here

FINDINGS

Our analysis revealed three roles of multimodalities on social media: 1. distributing understanding with multimodal choices, 2. persuading with multimodal evidence, and 3. resonating with multimodal artefacts. These roles reflect not discrete categories of content but configurations in which discursive and multimodal elements work together to shape how strategy is communicated, justified, and felt. Because multimodality operates through the interplay of text, image, video, emoji, hyperlink, and interaction, its effects cannot be meaningfully captured by analysing isolated fragments. We therefore adopt an approach centred on single, deeply analysed exemplar posts for each role. Each exemplar is supplemented with contextual information about the strategist, organisational situation, and communicative conditions. This enabled us to examine the posts holistically, attending to how semiotic modes are layered, how they reinforce or contrast with textual choices, and how they together perform strategic meaning. By prioritising posts that deploy a broad range of multimodal features, we ensure that each example speaks to both the empirical breadth and the analytic depth of social media as a means or genre of strategic communication. In what follows, we unpack each of the three roles in turn, illustrating how strategists mobilise multimodality to expand access to strategy, strengthen claims, and cultivate resonance.

Distributing Understanding with Multimodal Choices

A central role across the data was the use of multimodality to distribute understanding of strategy to stakeholders, allowing them to engage with strategic content at different levels of depth. As social media enables strategy communication with audiences who have uneven familiarity,

strategists face the communicative tension of needing to remain legible without oversimplifying. Multimodality provides a solution where it allows strategists to construct layered messages in which stakeholders can select the mode – such as textual, visual, symbolic, or audio - through which they can engage with strategy. Our findings showed three multimodal mechanisms through which these choices were enabled: symbolic condensation, exploratory expansion, and echoing reverberation. Each mechanism structures how much cognitive effort an audience must expend and how much interpretive depth they can access.

First, symbolic condensation captures how multimodal cues compress complex strategic content into legible representations. This allows stakeholders to grasp the broad direction of strategy without processing the full discourse. For example, when the CEO of Frasers Group announced future flagship stores, he posted: *“Our expansion plans not only demonstrate the confidence we have in our strategy, but they also show our continued belief in the future of the highstreet. We're not slowing down 🚀”*

This format - uniform short text, a rendered image of a future store, and the rocket emoji – reduces a multifaceted strategic initiative into coherent, symbolically charged shorthand. The rendered image of store materialises an abstract intention (“future of the highstreet”), while the rocket emoji signals momentum and growth. These multimodal cues perform the communicative work of summarising the strategic message. The audience can engage at the surface level – via visual and symbolic cues – and still extract the intended strategic meaning. Again, in this mechanism, multimodality functions as a compression device, reducing the cognitive load required to understand strategic direction while reinforcing specific affective orientations (e.g., optimism, momentum, confidence).

Next, exploratory expansion involves using multimodalities to extend strategic discourse, offering a deeper explanation without overwhelming the main post. This mechanism enables strategists to maintain textual brevity while making additional detail available to stakeholders who seek it. A typical example comes from a strategist at 3i infrastructure, who wrote:

“Our strategy of identifying resilient companies, positioned to benefit from structural megatrends, provides a solid foundation from which to deliver value growth in real terms across the economic cycle.” S.M. and B.S., Managing Partners and Co-Heads of European Infrastructure, comment on 3i Infrastructure's half-year results which were announced today. Watch the full video below. #3iNResults”

The text provides a concise strategic claim, but the attached professionally produced video performs the elaboration, where executives present performance highlights, explain recent acquisitions, and convey strategic rationale. The strategist positions themselves as a curator rather than an originator of this depth, signalling that interpretive detail is available but optional. This exploratory expansion uses multimodality to delegate communicative depth, as it allows strategists to maintain accessibility while enabling stakeholders with greater interest or expertise to pursue deeper layers of meaning.

The third mechanism, echoing reverberation, involved strategists repeating the same strategic message across modalities rather than expanding it. This is not communicative redundancy, but a form of performative reinforcement to reiterate the core narrative in a slightly different expressive form, stabilising strategic meaning across audiences. One example is a strategist in the aviation sector posting on sustainability:

“With BA Better World we're on our most important journey yet - to a better, more sustainable future and one which will ensure the long-term success of our business. We're clear that we have a responsibility to reduce our impact on the planet and have a detailed plan to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050, including investing in more fuel-efficient aircraft, improving our operational efficiency and investing in the development of sustainable aviation fuel and zero emissions aircraft.....”

This post was paired with the company's original message, extended by the quoted commentary by the strategist, and a 59-second corporate video. The posts of this strategist conveyed a corporate rather than personal voice, largely reiterating the company's official messaging, and were often accompanied by images, as well as occasional articles and videos. All modalities communicated the same core narrative. For content that is abstract and jargon-heavy, this repetition across modalities reduces cognitive strain in that stakeholders can choose the modality through which the message is most accessible.

A similar pattern appeared in a series of posts by the CEO of GSK on a demerger. One post contained a polished, company-produced 1:48 corporate montage video, and another post was followed by a hyperlink explicitly directed to "investors and media only". Both posts repeated the same strategic message but segmented audiences according to informational needs and preferred modes of engagement. Ultimately, echoing reverberation demonstrates how strategists use multimodality to stabilise and amplify strategic claims. Repetition across modes increases the message's durability and inclusiveness.

Across these mechanisms, multimodality served primarily to structure how stakeholders encounter strategy, rather than to substantively extend its content. Symbolic condensation compressed meaning, exploratory expansion allowed deeper investigation, and echoing reverberation reinforced strategic messages across modalities. These multimodal configurations collectively empowered stakeholders to engage at self-determined levels of depth, reducing cognitive barriers while still supporting richer interpretation for those who sought it. In doing so, strategists used multimodality to manage the communicative demands of public-facing strategy work - balancing accessibility, coherence, and inclusivity in a mixed-audience environment.

Persuading with Multimodal Evidence

A second role was the use of multimodal evidence to persuade. Whereas the previous section showed how multimodality distributes choice to audiences, here multimodality served to allow strategists to shape that engagement, by presenting strategic claims as credible, evidence-backed, and expert-led. On social media, strategists are not only narrating strategic direction but also actively substantiating it. Multimodality becomes the medium through which they curate proof, stage credibility, and signal expertise. Three multimodal mechanisms underpinned this persuasive work: authoritative validation, narrative amplification, and expert identity construction. Together, these mechanisms show how strategists mobilise semiotic resources to rationalise strategic claims and position themselves as knowledgeable, competent, and credible.

The first mechanism is authoritative validation, which involves strategists using multimodalities – images, reports, screenshots, charts, institutional symbols – to anchor strategic claims in external or organisational authority. This evidence does not introduce new arguments so much as frame the strategy as already validated. A salient example comes from BP's CEO, who announced an open event dedicated to discussing and answering questions about the company's new strategy:

Six weeks ago we launched a new strategy for bp... As we have listened over the past few weeks we have identified 5 key questions that we believe are important in terms of earning your support and giving you confidence in bp and in our plans. They include if a 40% reduction in oil and gas is the right thing to do. How we will transition our cashflow from hydrocarbons to low carbon over the next decade... And a simpler question – why bp, what is our competitive advantage? Trust and confidence comes from transparency – so I've spent today answering those questions as part of an open event to explain our strategy in more detail. But for those of you who couldn't join, you can read the answers to the 5 questions on our website: <https://on.bp.com/3c8HgJz> And over the next couple of days you can hear more from our leadership team: <https://on.bp.com/3bWNnjI> As ever, we're still listening. We welcome your thoughts and questions – and will continue to engage. #bpNetZero

The post combines quantified targets, self-posed strategic dilemmas, hyperlinks to detailed answers, and links to forthcoming leadership videos. This multimodal layering performs

transparency as it signals accountability through numbers, responsiveness through Q&A, and organisational endorsement through corporate websites and leadership voices. The evidence positions the strategist's message not as personal interpretation but as validated, thereby strengthening the authority of the strategic claim. In this sense, authoritative validation uses multimodality to stage the strategy as already tested, evaluated, and defensible, being both right in principle and 'proven' in practice.

Narrative amplification extends this persuasive work by intensifying the salience of strategic claims across multiple modalities. For example, formats such as podcasts and videos also enabled strategists greater control over how strategic messages were delivered. Unlike text-based posts, which compress nuance, audio-visual modalities enabled them to modulate tone, pacing, emphasis, and narrative structure. This control allowed strategists to highlight core messages within otherwise complex or diffuse content, making strategic issues more engaging and relatable. In this sense, multimodality operated as narrative amplification as it shaped the delivery of information in ways that increased its accessibility and rhetorical impact. An illustrative example comes from a strategist at Reckitt, who wrote:

It was a pleasure chatting with A.W. on the Campaign US Chemistry podcast. [Click here to listen to our conversation about the importance of aligning sustainability ambitions and business goals, and how Reckitt goes about creating value for brands and through brands in that journey.](#)

This 46-word post acted primarily as a signpost, delegating the substantive work of persuasion to the attached 27:50-minute podcast. In the audio format, the strategist adopted a conversational tone, moving fluidly between strategic principles and relatable illustrations, including the "Skipping the Rinse" campaign. Rhetorical questions such as "Do you know how much water you use when you wash dishes by hand?" and statements like "authenticity is the key" framed sustainability as both commercially logical and practically meaningful. Here, the persuasive work

emerges from the shift in modality rather than the content alone. For instance, the podcast format enabled a style of strategic explanation - personal, illustrative, textured - that would be difficult to achieve through text. This exemplifies how multimodal artefacts amplify the narrative force of strategic claims by offering richer expressive forms through which strategists can construct credibility, relatability, and strategic coherence.

Beyond amplifying narratives, multimodality also served as a mechanism for expert identity construction. Strategists used interviews, journal articles, videos, and curated scientific or technical materials not simply to inform audiences but to establish authority. These multimodal formats enabled strategists to position themselves as knowledgeable interpreters and executor of complex issues, aligning their personal expertise with the strategic direction of their organisation.

A compelling example comes from a pharmaceutical executive who authored a 267-word post summarising a highly technical Nature article. This form of sharing reflected the industry, where scientific expertise is intertwined with strategic leadership. The original article concerned immunotherapy resistance, a topic intelligible primarily to scientific researchers and medical professionals. However, the executive provided a structured, rigorous synthesis:

“A paper that recently caught my attention is by Park JS et al in Nature which had an interesting angle looking at immunotherapy resistance. Studies have shown that In this paper..... The authors then saw that The authors demonstrated that blockade of PD-L2-RGMb interactions, through antibody mediated blockade of the pathway or conditional deletion of RGMb in T cells, combined with an anti-PD-1 or anti-PD-L1 antibody, could overcome microbiome-dependent resistance to PD-1 inhibitors. The authors concluded that if confirmed in humans, the blockade of this pathway presents a potential new therapeutic strategy for those patients who do not respond to PD-1 cancer therapy. Research is ever growing into the influence and effects our gut biome has, and it is certainly exciting to imagine how one day this may help enhance response to certain therapies in cancer patients. What do you think about the link described by the authors here?”

By reproducing the conventions of this scientific/academic literature, the strategist aligned fluency in the scientific foundations of the firm’s strategy. The post not only demonstrated comprehension but framed her as a mediator between scientific discovery and organisational

decision-making. Further, her invitations for discussion, such as “What do you think...?” further positioned her as a thought leader cultivating an informed professional community rather than broadcasting unidirectionally. This pattern was reinforced across her posts. In another example, she began, “In continuing my goal to share more papers this year...”, making explicit her ongoing commitment to disseminating scientific knowledge. Such multimodal choices projected an identity that exceeded managerial competence: she appeared simultaneously as strategist, scientist, and educator. In a domain where scientific advancement directly shapes competitive advantage, these displays of expertise served as powerful enactments of strategic credibility.

Across the dataset, similar practices of strategists were evident. Strategists routinely leveraged multimodality - financial reports, survey data, press releases, or research publications – not only to illustrate strategic information but to reinforce and validate it. These modalities anchored strategic claims in objective evidence, retrospectively linking outcomes with strategic intent. Similarly, authored articles and interview clips, allowed strategists to embed their own voice into broader narratives, reinforcing their position as credible interpreters and executors of organisational direction. Taken together, these mechanisms demonstrate that multimodality was not used simply to present information or encourage engagement. It functioned as a deliberate persuasive infrastructure. Through authoritative validation, narrative amplification, and expert identity construction, strategists used multimodal artefacts to cultivate trust, assert competence, and strengthen the rational and epistemic foundations of the strategic narrative. Multimodality therefore enabled strategists to perform the dual work of explaining strategy and demonstrating why they were qualified to speak on its behalf.

Resonating with Multimodal Semiotics

The third role is the use of multimodal semiotics to resonate. Compared to previous mechanisms, multimodality deployment here is qualitatively different, as they are often emotionally charged, value-laden, and influence-infused. Strategists use their personal social media accounts not only to represent their organisations but also to present themselves as individuals with emotions, values, and personal agendas. Such authenticity and subjectivity are actively woven into the construction and reinforcement of their strategic messaging, further enhancing its resonance and persuasive power. Multimodal practices are especially salient when strategists want to convey a sense of playfulness, informality, and approachability, to soften the formality of strategic discourse, allowing them to build relatability and connection with their audiences. This is achieved through three mechanisms: emotion catalysation, value enactment and influence mobilisation. Each mechanism illustrates how multimodal semiotics enabled strategists to move beyond institutional representation, constructing themselves as distinctive, emotionally resonant, and socially engaged figures.

Firstly, emotion catalysation illuminates how strategists use multimodal semiotics, such as uplifting music or spontaneous visual cues like laughter, to transmit emotional states in a manner that is both more accessible and more infectious than textual description. This enables a more immediate, embodied, and convincing display of affect, creating a visceral connection with the audience, surpassing what can be conveyed by discourse alone. One illustration is a post about a continuous open strategy initiative at M&S:

“I always say... who is better placed to suggest improvements to our business than the 65,000 colleagues who live and breathe it every day??

That’s what this scheme is all about. Giving every colleague - no matter where they work or the role they do - the chance to have their voice heard and drive change.

A big thank you to all our colleagues who have suggested an idea so far 🥰 10,000 is a brilliant milestone, but now I want to get to 20,000!!”

The quotation is the strategist's remark on the shared post from the corporate account; the original post prominently featured a 1:29-minute upbeat video segment with dynamic music and references to the open strategy live sessions. Multimodalities including Uplifting music, celebratory language, applause emoji, emphatic punctuation (e.g., "?!"), and affirmative language (such as "brilliant") together created a multimodal constellation that heightened the affective resonance and effectively catalysed a sense of positivity and enthusiasm, which uphold the strategist's commitment and pride towards the initiative. Furthermore, there was one comment from an employee that her idea was adopted by the open strategy initiative and led to breast cancer awareness posters in all M&S fitting rooms nationwide. Accompanied by a photograph of her standing in front of a said poster, the CEO replied:

"Just one of the many brilliant YES ideas so far.. which i know is making a big difference! 🍌"

The comment and the reply, combined with the video, emphasising leadership accessibility and team participation, generated a sense of collective pride. Such engagement not only highlighted individual contributions but also embodied organisational values of inclusion and empowerment. The layering of multimodal semiotics facilitated the expression and amplification of positive emotions, positioning employee contributions as central to strategic change. Together, this post illustrated how multimodality catalysed emotion by offering multiple channels for appreciation, pride, and collective ambition. The resulting interplay of multimodal forms helped cultivate an environment where appreciation was not only shown but felt, thus inspiring further idea generation and deepening commitment to organisational strategies, and reinforcing the alignment between everyday operations and broader organisational values.

Secondly, value enactment not only utilises multimodal semiotics to enact formal and institutional level values such as diversity and inclusiveness, but strategists also mobilise multimodal semeiotics to promote less formal, practice-grounded, human values that operate at

the micro-level of organisational culture and leadership communication, such as sincerity, approachability, and the importance of work–life balance. Another excerpt is:

“Madrid is one of the emerging tech hubs in Europe. I was fortunate enough to be there last week for an intensive brainstorm with our product and technology teams. Great energy in the room as the team was buzzing with creativity about how we can reimagine language learning at Pearson. Our focus was on identifying and prioritising the blockbuster ideas that will shape our future, building action plans that will allow us to move faster, reach more learners and deliver the great experience our learners deserve.

All of this work will help us help even more people build confidence through their learning and be themselves in another language.

Spanish is one of the languages I picked up in my youth. It helped me a great deal to work across LatAM and to meet some great friends, so it was fantastic to get out and about with local colleagues in the local language. As you know, with any language, you never stop learning! Thank you Madrid team for your warm hospitality and your drive in transforming our business and hasta pronto!

#languages #learning #creativity #technology #pearson”

This post enacted the approachability of the strategist with two casual group selfies, where the strategist and colleagues are sharing coffee at a local plaza, featuring relaxed body language such as arms on shoulders, leaning against each other, thumbs up, and laughter. In contrast to the conventionally staged and glamorous conference visuals strategists typically share, these more intimate multimodal cues extend beyond signalling professional collaboration to enact values of collegiality, approachability, and authentic personal connection, softening the authoritative image of strategists, suggesting that strategic work is not solely transactional but also grounded in trust and positive interpersonal relationships. Similarly:

“Today I postponed a few work meetings that I do need to have, because I had a more important engagement: helping out on my daughter’s field trip to Windsor Castle! The staff told us that we were going to miss King Charles by a few hours, but it was special nonetheless. Getting to see my kiddo with her classmates and take in all their joy is priceless.

And of course, my colleagues didn’t grumble that I was complicating schedules. They cheered the fact that I was going. Just one example of the supportive, flexible approach we take whenever we can in hashtag#TeamComms.

I can’t wait to be back in Windsor next month for our Global Communications Conference! While the castle will be closed during our visit, we’ve got some other fun stuff up our sleeves... hashtag#lifeatbaesystems”

The post cleverly connects a personal trip with an upcoming company event held at the same location with two images - one depicting the strategist with her daughter and another showing the castle - to construct a narrative that collapses the boundary between private and professional life. This performative linkage not only humanises the strategist as a mother but also enacts and reinforces company values such as work–life balance and a supportive culture, thereby enacting human-centred values from the leadership level.

Lastly, influence mobilisation is the mechanism through which multimodal semiotics serve to shape reputation, intervene in policy debates, inform public opinion, challenge competitors, or respond to reputational threats. Multimodality facilitated these efforts by amplifying emotional resonance, increasing message salience, and enabling dynamic audience engagement. Through this mechanism, strategists become strategic influencers, where they endeavour to convert accumulated social capital into tangible action. For instance:

On Saturday morning we had almost 70% of our electricity being produced from renewable sources-around 16.5GW. This morning, those same sources are producing around 10% of that electricity, with almost 70% being produced from gas. This highlights the issues facing us. When the wind doesn't blow and the sun doesn't shine, we have a problem. That problem won't be solved by building more wind generation. It will only be solved by having clean, readily dispatchable, non-weather dependent electricity sources.....such as hydrogen fired generation (which produces no carbon emissions). This is why we should also think about hydrogen for heating homes-we must produce it to make sure we have enough electricity, so why not use the amazing gas infrastructure we already have in the UK? Let's hope those trolls who are anti-hydrogen stop their self-serving opposition and start looking at what's right for customers rather than what's right for them. At Centrica, the only things we're against are climate change and unaffordable solutions. We are for more electrification.....we are for hydrogen for power generation.....we are for heat pumps.....we are for hydrogen boilers.....PS-we do need more wind and solar generation as well as more nuclear generation.....it's just that we need something else as well. And Centrica doesn't own any gas distribution infrastructure.....that's not why we are pro-hydrogen. We think about what's best for the customer rather than what's best for us.

The post is accompanied by a screenshot taken by a strategist from his phone that shows the percentage of different energy resources used in the UK in real time. The screenshot transcended mere evidence provision to the claims that more reliable energy resources are needed; it played an

active role in the performative construction of the strategist's identity as relatable, down-to-earth and genuine. This informal, "behind-the-scenes" modality framed the post as a spontaneous sharing of personal insights, effectively bridging the gap between the strategist and everyday audiences. When combined with discourse that humorously labelled competitors as "self-serving trolls," the strategist further distanced himself from corporate elitism, cultivated an "one of us" authenticity persona, and fostered a sense of camaraderie. Through these multimodal practices, both the individual and organisational identities were positioned as pragmatic, non-pretentious, and customer-focused, in sharp contrast to perceived rivals.

Notably, the comment section was unusually active for a top manager, with 82 comments and seven direct replies from the strategist, including a lengthy 189-word response. This kind of engagement is not limited to one post; the strategist demonstrates a highly interactive and assertive communication style, frequently responds directly to both positive comments and negative comments, such as criticism and scepticism, and at times, he even provokes further debate. Some example replies from the strategist are:

*"I suspect your mind may be made up about hydrogen which is a shame, but it is your right.
N.H. oh dear. We don't own the UK's gas infrastructure...haven't done so for more than 20 years...maybe the utter nonsense and I'll informed comments are coming from a different direction 😂😂 Your comment about there being nothing honest about this post is very sad. It is an entirely honest post. It's always very interesting that people feel the need to attack hydrogen-the chair of the climate change committee said it is obvious we will need lots of hydrogen to reach next zero.....hopefully you don't question his motives."*

In this reply, the strategist adopts a subtly passive-aggressive tone typical of British politeness, further enhanced by the strategic use of the crying-laughing emoji. This pattern of multimodal engagement transformed the comment section into an ongoing, dialogic space, enabling the strategist to continually reinforce his position and shape audience perceptions through both linguistic and multimodal resources. Furthermore, the engagement not only strengthened his

rhetorical stance but also modelled an emotionally nuanced, approachable leadership identity, illustrating the potential of multimodal interaction in shaping public perception and discourse.

Influence mobilisation not only manifested within the comment section's ongoing debate but also in broader stakeholder reactions. As a case in point, following the strategist's announcement of a humanitarian donation, one commenter highlighted how such acts, amplified through visible communication, cultivated admiration and brand loyalty, irrespective of direct employment or customer status:

"You don't have to work for a company or be one of their customers to be proud of the consistent approach Centrica applies across a broad spectrum of aspects that matter. I have been an expat for almost 20 years, when I return to the UK, Centrica will be my supplier of choice, I won't be doing price comparisons, I will be supporting companies that care, demonstrate kindness and value their employees..."

This example underscores the powerful ripple effect of how multimodal engagement and public demonstration of organisational values transform into tangible reputational capital, fostering loyalty even among individuals outside the company's direct stakeholder network.

Intriguingly, instances where multimodality was absent often spoke volumes in themselves, marking moments of gravity, formality, or intentional distancing from affective engagement:

"I do not agree – at all – with the remarks made at last week's FT Moral Money Summit. They are inconsistent with HSBC's strategy and do not reflect the views of the senior leadership of HSBC or HSBC Asset Management. Our ambition is to be the leading bank supporting the global economy in the transition to net zero. I hope my colleagues, customers and others will all know, from our work and my public comments, that HSBC is absolutely committed to a net zero future. Given our global reach and capabilities we have an obligation to lead. I want HSBC to be a leader in supporting our clients, the finance sector and others through the massive transformation that's needed to build a better future. We have a lot of work to do, and I am determined that our team won't be distracted by last week's comments."

In response to reputational damage from a senior manager's controversial climate remarks, the strategist used his own LinkedIn account to publicly dissociate both personal and company identity from the statements. This move leveraged personal credibility to reinforce HSBC's commitment to climate leadership and signalled accountability at multiple levels. The post's reliance on clear,

values-driven text - without multimodal elements - underscored the seriousness of the situation, foregrounding institutional authority and transparency while rebuilding trust and alignment between leader and organisation. The absence of multimodal features in the post became meaningful in its own right.

While the same types of modalities - such as emojis or images - appeared across all mechanisms, their deployment serves distinct communicative purposes here. For instance, emojis as symbolic condensation are figurative and thematic (e.g., the globe to signal sustainability, or the rocket to suggest growth). Nevertheless, emojis can also be employed in an emotionally charged and value-laden way - such as hearts for appreciation, laughing-crying faces for humour, or pride flags for inclusive values - infusing their communication with affective depth and personal resonance. Similarly, images strategists use are not limited to polished, company-prepared content; many were also spontaneous smartphone photos, casual selfies, or screenshots taken directly from the strategist's phone. In some cases, even handwritten letters were shared, further intensifying the sense of personal voice from the strategists. By mastering the skilful utilisation of multimodal semiotics as emotion catalysation, value enactment and influence mobilisation, strategists not merely illustrate discourse content but materially shape how strategy was communicated and experienced emotionally. Together, these mechanisms enabled strategists to move beyond institutional representation, constructing themselves as distinctive, emotionally resonant, and socially engaged figures, enhance the resonance of the strategic content. In addition, multimodality affords strategists to build a constant online presence, cultivate trust and influence, and eventually mobilise the influence to gain support for prioritised strategic issues.

DISCUSSION

Multimodality is a topic of growing importance to communicative perspective strategy research (Knight & Wenzel, 2025). Existing research has examined the staged genre of strategy communication (Wenzel & Koch, 2018), and the role of visuals in strategy presentation (van den Broek et al., 2024). Through an inductive study of the social media genre of strategic communication, we complement this line of inquiry and develop a better understanding of the role of multimodality and its intertwinement with strategic discourse.

The Role of Multimodality in the Construction of Strategic Updates

Our study responds to mounting calls to devote more attention to the role of multimodality in strategy and management studies (e.g., Knight & Wenzel, 2025; Höllerer et al., 2019). Specifically, our findings show how strategists use multimodality to construct meaning, identity and power. For example, the rocket emoji serves as a symbolic condensation of continuous growth, or the strategist from a pharmaceutical company cultivating power by sharing a hyperlink to a scientific journal article accompanied by a summary discourse, thereby mobilising multimodality to construct and assert expert authority. This implies that the absence of such multimodal elements, by only reading the text of social media posts, may not have equally influential effects. In this vein, our study shows that multimodalities are not just the representation of the strategy discourse, but confirms the intertwinement definition, that the impact of discursive modes and multimodal modes cannot be discretely delimited; it is through their joint performance that strategy is accomplished as a social activity (Knight & Wenzel, 2025). By demonstrating how multimodality and discourse are inseparable and jointly construct strategic meaning, this study

highlights the need to consider both as co-constitutive elements of strategic communication. Therefore, our study contributes to the strategy-as-practice research agenda beyond focusing mainly on discourse, further connecting the discourse and sociomateriality streams (Kohtamäki et al., 2022).

Furthermore, whereas previous studies on multimodality in strategy have predominantly focused on eliciting cognitive responses by highlighting rational relationships through tools such as tables, strategy diagrams, or bodily movement, our study demonstrates that multimodality shapes strategic communication by functioning as an emotion catalysation and a vehicle for value enactment. Since multimodality can foster empathetic understanding and leverage emotionality for strategic outcomes (Daymond et al., 2024), it can consequently embody emotion and values, in addition to cognitive dimensions (Gylfe et al., 2016), enabling strategy to resonate affectively as well as intellectually. As such, our study shows that strategists articulate strategy with the dual aim of fostering emotional resonance and logical agreement. This is evidenced in our case when the strategists incorporated video clips featuring smiling, engaged participants from live open strategy sessions, alongside factual highlights “10,000 responses received”, further energised the discourse with applauding emoji and repeated exclamation marks, all serving to amplify excitement, convey appreciation and inclusiveness, evoke positive emotions, and encourage participant engagement. As such, the multimodality allows strategists to construct emotionally and value-infused narratives within which strategic objectives can be effectively situated.

Social Media as a Genre of Strategic Communication

Our article extends the strategy-as-practice literature that has begun to devote more attention to genres of strategic communication. These few studies have mainly focused on exploring the

discursive practices through which physical genres of strategic communication come into being, such as document-based genres like PowerPoints and corporate magazines (e.g., Kaplan, 2011; De Keyser, 2025). Even fewer studies have examined multimodal communication in physical genres, such as the staged genre of keynote speech, as well as in the context of meetings, workshops, and everyday office environments (e.g., Wenzel & Koch, 2018; Daymond et al., 2024). In our study, we conceptualise social media posts as an important but underexplored digital genre of strategic communication.

Yet, our study goes further and shows that a deeper understanding of social media as a genre of strategic communication is not possible by focusing solely on discourse. More specifically, our study shows that discursive practices and multimodal elements are mutually constitutive and performative in shaping the social media genre of strategic communication. Thus, our study demonstrates how the interplay of discourse and multimodality is consequential for the formation of strategic update posts and thus, establishes social media as a digital genre of strategic communication. Therefore, our study heeds calls to explore how genres of strategic communication, in general (Balogun et al., 2014), and digital genres of strategic communication, in particular (Morton et al., 2022; Heavey et al., 2020), are constructed. In doing so, our study extends prior research on physical genres of strategic communication by exploring and conceptualising the interplay of discourse and multimodality in constructing social media as a digital genre of strategic communication.

Our conceptualisation of the genre of social media also expands our understanding of the powerful effects of discursive and multimodal practices. In fact, our study provides insights into how the multimodality afforded by social media plays the role of symbolic condensation, exploratory expansion and echoing reverberation to the discourse, thereby affording audiences the

agency to determine the depth of engagement they prefer - a choice that effectively distributes understanding to the audience. Furthermore, as social media affords strategists to directly communicate with stakeholders and exert control over tone and timing (Heavey et al., 2020), our findings show that they leverage multimodality for narrative amplification - modulating emphasis in video content, determining the level of detail in podcasts, incorporating practical examples, posing rhetorical questions, and adopting a friendly, approachable manner. In this way, social media empowers strategists by granting them unprecedented control over their communication, enabling them to actively construct narratives at will. Furthermore, the multimodality afforded by social media empowers strategists to cultivate relationships, build identity, and leverage influence - whether by calling for policy change or persuading clients - thereby enacting power through the performative construction of strategic communication.

CONCLUSION

This paper unveiled the role of multimodality in the social media genre of strategic communication. Based on the analysis of strategy-focused posts from fifty strategists, this paper illuminated three roles of multimodality: distributing understanding with multimodal choices, persuading with multimodal evidence, and resonating with multimodal semiotics.

Our conceptualisation of social media as a distinct genre of strategic communication opens several avenues for future research. For example, to what extent does the social media genre diverge from more traditional genres of strategic communication (e.g. Wenzel & Koch, 2018; Daymond et al., 2024), and what are the implications of these differences? Furthermore, how does engagement in the social media genre of strategic communication impact firm performance?

Additionally, what contextual, or industry-specific factors influence the adoption or development of particular communicative styles within this genre? Addressing these questions will deepen our understanding of the evolving landscape of strategic communication in the digital age.

Our work has certain limitations and boundary conditions. To begin with, the data collected was from the UK, which raises an intriguing avenue for future research: how are strategists in other demographic areas communicating their strategies on social media? Next, we had to establish boundaries regarding what would be included in the current paper and what would be reserved for future research, mainly due to the constraints of space. Specifically, while this study has identified and explored the three roles of multimodality and the likes counts strategists received, it cannot pinpoint the relationship between the likes received and the multimodality utilised because the likes count also has other determining factors. We believe a more quantitative approach to studying the styles and the likes received would represent a valuable direction for further research. Furthermore, while our study is focused on the social media genre, multimodality is not solely present on social media. For example, further research can explore the difference between the multimodalities utilised online and offline. Or how do they differ?

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TABLES AND FIGURES

TABLE 1

Overview of Social Media Data Sample

Company name	Strategist Job Title	Time Range	Post Counts	Like Counts
3I Group Plc	COO	2 years	115	0-54
BAT	Chief strategic & Growth Officer	6 years	137	4 - 6906
BT	CEO, BT international	8 years	219	0-1528
Entain	CEO	6 years	268	0-922
Frasers	CEO	4 years	135	36-3949
IAG	Chairman & CEO at British Airways	2 years	39	84-2642
IHG	CEO	4 years	102	25-742
Intertek	CEO	1 year	67	47- 635
Pearson	President, English Language Learning	1 year	120	2- 440
RELX	CEO of RX	3 years	203	9-572
Legal & General	CEO, Institutional Retirement	7 years	649	0-1126
Abrdn	Global CEO, Investments	9 years	166	1-519
Aviva	CEO at Aviva Investors	7 years	165	3-432
Barclays	CEO, Barclays UK	9 years	139	0-8953
Croda	President, Personal Care	3 years	600	0-186
Astra Zeneca	Executive Vice President, Oncology R&D	7 years	136	0-1923
National Grid	President, National Grid Ventures	3 years	76	5-528
NatWest	CEO	3 years	133	77-5599
Pheonix	Group CEO	2 years	133	0-1328
Reckitt	Executive Vice President	5 years	116	13-1222
Rentokil Initial	Managing Director, Pacific	10 years	96	1-851
Auto Trader	Commercial Director	6 years	433	0-2857
BAE Systems	GCO (communication)	6 years	311	0-2991
BP Plc	CEO	3 years	302	128-18745
Centrica Plc	CEO	8 years	353	0-2951
HSBC	CEO	3 years	103	142-16432
IMI	COO	5 years	55	1-474
GSK	CEO	2 years	58	58-5246
Lloyds	Group CEO	3 years	98	76-3886

M&S	CEO	10 years	206	10-5554
Prudential	Regional CEO	8 years	289	7-1301
Anglo American	Group General Counsel	7 years	104	0-480
Land Securities	CEO, Landsec	1 year	57	5-655
Rio Tinto	CEO	6 years	76	45-2164
Rolls Royce	General Counsel	1 year	21	12-668
Sage	CEO	9 years	413	0-44961
Schroders	CEO Americas	7 years	103	0-1472
Scottish Mortgage Investment Trust	Director, Investment Specialist - US Equities and Scottish Mortgage	8 years	394	0-1328
Severn Trent	Group HR and Communications Director	8 years	224	0-1690
Shell	Director of Downstream, Renewables & Energy Solutions	5 years	108	5-3710
Smith+Nephew	President Global ENT	8 years	34	0-582
Smiths Group	CEO	6 years	188	7-1250
Spirax-Sarco	Group Managing Director - Steam Specialties	8 years	69	0-6962
SSE	CEO	6 years	104	0-1273
St. James's Place	CEO	3 years	78	14-1076
Standard Chartered	CEO	4 years	278	33-6121
Unilever	CEO	8 years	193	5-13599
Unite Students	CEO	2 years	63	7-713
Vodafone	CTO	6 years	144	13-3149
WPP	Global Lead, WPP Ogilvy	2 years	42	25-1256

FIGURE 1**Data Structure**

