Reworking Visibility

How Activist Organisations Leverage and Rework Corporate Visibility to Construct Critical Campaigns Across Multimedia Platforms

By Melina Verwold

Aalborg University (AAU)

Submitted to the Department of English

Master's Thesis

Supervisor: Paul B. McIlvenny

Student

Melina Verwold

09 March 2026

Abstract

As everyday life has become increasingly digitalised and society now predominantly resides online, corporations likewise operate in a digital environment characterised by unprecedented digital visibility, in which their brands and practices circulate rapidly across platforms and publics. Yet, while this newfound heightened visibility provides them with strategic advantages, it also renders them more vulnerable, as the highly interactive and participative nature of the modern digital sphere leaves them unable to exert unilateral control over their narratives and perceptions surrounding them. Activist organisations exploit this newfound vulnerability, leveraging and reworking this heightened corporate visibility to challenge hegemonic frames and invite reinterpretations of corporate branding. Drawing on theories of Self-Presentation, Framing, and Narrative, along with using a combination of Critical- and Multimodal Discourse Analysis, this thesis investigates how activist organisations leverage and rework corporate visibility to construct critical campaigns across multimedia platforms. Based on this investigation, the findings reveal how the digital sphere functions as a battleground for interpretive dominance, in which activist utilise corporations' own visibility against them by creating parodies that highlight critical contradictions within the brand and prompt the public to interpret and engage with corporations more critically, whilst also using highly visible corporations as strategic proxies to draw attention to other problematic, yet less visible, actors and institutions. These results further suggest that visibility in the modern digital era has become increasingly democratised and performative, requiring both corporations and activists to remain more vigilant than ever before, as visibility both operates as a site of power and undoing.

Table of Contents

Introduction

With the growing reach of digital information and the digitalisation of everyday life, the once one-directional structure of communication in traditional mass media has been supplanted by a highly interactive digital culture in which the public actively engages with, participates in, and circulates information across diverse globalised multimedia platforms and networks, which now play a fundamental role in shaping their understanding of the world. However, while this shift has played a pivotal role in transforming how information is communicated and how meaning is created, it has likewise fundamentally reshaped the communicative environment in which the larger and more powerful bodies of society, such as corporations, operate.

As public life has shifted to predominantly reside online, corporations have quickly followed suit, integrating the same websites, social media, and other digital multimedia channels into their core communication strategies. Yet, while corporations had already long enjoyed high levels of visibility and power that privileged them with access to public discourse through gatekeeping, promotional dominance, and agenda-setting, their shift into the digital sphere only served to amplify their already large-scale visibility and influence. Thus, within the modern digital sphere, corporations now operate in an environment characterised by unprecedented digital visibility in which their branding and representational practices circulate rapidly across multimedia platforms and are subject to constant interaction amongst users globally, providing vast opportunities for identity construction, brand awareness, market influence, and presenting themselves as culturally relevant and socially engaged actors.

Yet, while this heightened digital presence provides corporations with an array of strategic benefits, it does not come without risk, as the affordance of digital platforms that allow corporations to strategically manage and disseminate their brand globally simultaneously renders their communication more transparent, searchable, and accessible. As such, corporate visibility functions as a double-edged sword, as the same affordances that enable them to promote

their brands, practices, and narratives also render them more susceptible to scrutiny and critique.

It is within this context of heightened visibility that activist actors have come to play a particularly prominent role. Mirroring corporations, activist organisations have likewise followed the public's digital migration and have, since the 2010's, continued to expand in scope and influence (Parker, 2025), utilising the same multimedia tools as corporations to make their criticism and causes accessible to broader audiences, enabling public mobilisation, and effect change on a scale that was previously unimaginable. As such, activists and corporate actors now increasingly operate within the same communicative and visibility sphere, yet while corporations seek to cultivate favourable brand perceptions amongst the public, activists instead seek to utilise their heightened visibility along with their newfound ease of access to it, to construct counter-narratives that seek to question and challenge corporate legitimacy and practices, expose perceived injustices, and mobilise the public to demand accountability. As such, the digital sphere increasingly functions as an interpretive battleground where corporate and activist actors each seek to shape public perception and influence societal discourse.

Yet, despite the rise of this phenomenon of corporate and activist actors inhabiting the same sphere of visibility, in which both compete for interpretive dominance, prior scholarship within the field of English studies and Discourse Analysis have predominantly treated corporate visibility and digital activism as separate phenomena, thus resulting in little to no research being conducting regarding how activist organisations deliberately draw on corporate visibility as a communicative resource for constructing their critique. As such, this thesis seeks to address this gap by asking: How do activist organisations strategically leverage and rework corporate visibility to construct critical campaigns that challenge corporate communication and legitimacy across digital multimedia platforms? To answer this question this thesis draws on theories of Self-Presentation, Narrative, and Framing, along with methods of Critical- and Multimodal

Discourse Analysis, to examine how activist actors construct and circulate multimodal critique across digital platforms by strategically reworking preexisting corporate visibility, branding, and self-presentation within the modern digital sphere, whilst also illuminating how the logics of visibility has transformed within the highly interactive digital environment.

Theoretical Foundation

As established in the introduction, concurrently with the rise of the modern digital sphere, corporations now operate at unprecedented levels of visibility, in which their brands and practices are subject to rapid circulation across various multimedia platforms, as well as continuous public interpretation and interaction. Yet, while these newfound levels of heightened visibility provide corporations with various beneficial opportunities for identity construction, brand awareness, market influence, and presenting themselves as culturally relevant actors, it has likewise made them more vulnerable by making them more accessible targets for activists organisations with whom they share the same sphere of digital visibility, and who are able to leverage the same digital affordances to challenge dominant corporate narratives.

However, to investigate how activist organisations leverage and rework corporate visibility in their construction of multimodal and cross-platform campaigns, it is first necessary to establish a theoretical foundation for this analysis, which will serve as the backdrop for examining the semiotic, discursive, and affective mechanisms through which activist organisations strategically engage with, counter, and rework corporate visibility within the digital sphere. Thus, central to this analysis are the theoretical frameworks of Self-Presentation theory, which allows for an examination of how activists expose and destabilise corporate performance in digital public space, along with Framing and Narrative theory, which reveal the strategic recontextualisations and counter-narratives that undermine or challenge them. The following sections thus serve to outline the theories selected to guide the analysis and demonstrate how these frameworks support the investigative aim of this thesis.

The New Field of Visibility

To understand the conflicts between corporate and activist actors within the modern digital sphere, one must first understand the changing nature of organisational visibility and the forms of public exposure that define modern media environments. In his work, John B. Thompson argues that, in late modernity, key figures and larger institutions, such as corporations, rely on heightened visibility to cultivate legitimacy, trust, and symbolic power. Yet, while this level of visibility offers certain benefits, it also creates vulnerabilities, as "*given the nature of the Internet, it is much more difficult to control the flow of symbolic content within it, and hence much more difficult for those in power to ensure that the images made available to individuals are those they would wish to see circulated.*" (Thompson, 2005, p. 38). Compared to the fields of visibility found within traditional media, such as print, radio and TV, which enables visibility to be detached from physical co-presence and remains predominantly one-directional, centralised and easier for powerful actors to manage, the development of digital communication media has brought into being a new field of visibility which Thompson defines as 'mediated visibility', marked by decentralised circulation, immediacy, and diminished control over how images and narratives travel (Thompson, 2005, p. 39). Thus, when corporations adopt a public-facing brand and narrative, both intended and unintended aspects of their behaviour become available for public interpretation and judgment.

For activist actors, this new field of visibility offers fertile ground for critique, as the promotional rhetoric corporations use to create their corporate identities and legitimise themselves can be utilised to expose inconsistencies or contradictions between corporate narrative and conduct, or moral failings in upholding the pillars upon which the brand is built, thus making corporate visibility a structural vulnerability.

In understanding this new field of visibility and the struggle between corporations and activists that takes place within it, it is furthermore valuable to draw upon Foucault's framework of discourse, as he frames discourse not simply as language or communication, but rather as a system of knowledge that organises social reality, defines what counts as legitimate or true, and position subjects and objects within hierarchies of meaning (Foucault, 1972). From this perspective, corporate communication can thus be understood as discursive practices that produce dominant knowledge, or 'globalising discourse' (Foucault, 1980, p. 83), which sets the standard for what counts as true or legitimate, and thereby works to maintain an idealised brand that shapes the interpretive frameworks available to the public. However, Foucault emphasises that dominant discourses always coexist with 'subjugated knowledges', being the marginalised, disqualified or "low-status" forms of knowledge that operate outside the bounds of the dominant discourse (Foucault, 1980, p. 82; Fage-Butler, 2020, p. 89). Activist interventions, which typically operate within this domain, thus function as 'counter-discourses' that recover and mobilise these subjugated knowledges to destabilise, recontextualise and challenge the authority and legitimacy of dominant corporate narratives, whilst simultaneously disrupting the symbolic power that visibility is intended to secure (Polletta, 2006, p. 3; Foucault, 1980, p. 83).

Taken together, these frameworks highlight how visibility in the modern digital sphere functions as an asset and a vulnerability, as while the same field of visibility provides communicative spaces for corporations to construct dominant narratives, shape interpretive frameworks and establish legitimacy, it also provides openings for activists to utilise those same corporate communicative outputs to contest, recontextualise, or expose the contradictions within these curated brands. As such, within this contested space, discursive power is negotiated not only through what is made visible but through the continuous reframing of what visibility means. For this thesis it thus provides an understanding of how visibility can function as

both a resource for organisational branding and a battleground on which competing discourses seek to define the boundaries of legitimacy, truth, and moral authority in the digital sphere.

Corporate Visibility, Self-presentation and Stigma

Building on the notion that this newfound corporate visibility in the modern digital sphere operates both as a resource of power and a potential vulnerability, this section seeks to further clarify how this dynamic shapes the investigation of corporate visibility, specifically what it entails, and how activists are able to leverage and rework it. In this thesis, corporate visibility refers to a corporation's branding, practices, and reputation, which together shape how it becomes knowable, noticeable, and interpretable to the public. As such, visibility is not merely about being seen, but about being seen in specific ways, in which corporations utilise strategically curated narratives, visual branding, and communication practices to highlight particular aspects of themselves.

This, however, also means that when internal brand contradictions or less favourable aspects of the brand that are excluded from its curated visibility emerge, the corporation becomes vulnerable to scrutiny, as these contradictions disrupt the brand's curated coherence, threatening not only the brand itself but also its desired public perception. Thus, when examining the tensions between curated corporate visibility and the activist disruptions thereof, this thesis draws upon the theoretical frameworks of Self-Presentation and Stigma, as these provide crucial insights into understanding the construction and management of corporate visibility, along with how activist organisations can strategically rework such visibility to construct campaigns that expose and exploit corporate vulnerabilities.

Theoretical foundations of Self-presentation and Stigma

In *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1956), Goffman argues that social interactions can be viewed through a dramaturgical lens, in which actors perform specific roles before an audience to control the impressions others form of them and thereby achieve a desired perception. However, like actual theatrical actors, one cannot maintain this performance indefinitely; it persists only during interactions and ceases when actors withdraw. Based on this, Goffman distinguishes between 'front-stage'(Goffman, 1956, p. 66), the actor's public performance to create a desirable image and conform to social expectations, and 'back-stage'(Goffman, 1956, p. 69), the private space where the actor discards the performance and expresses aspects that may not align with social expectations. The construction of identity is thus closely tied to the front-stage, which serves as a representation that standardises how the performer appears to others and anchors performances in shared social expectations. As such, corporate visibility practices can therefore be read as dramaturgical performances, in which corporations strategically adjust their branding to create a particular perception of themselves and to stabilise a recognisable corporate identity, thereby securing legitimacy and trust among consumers and publics.

This type of corporate visibility and engagement then takes on a 'promissory character' (Goffman, 1956, p. 2), as their behaviour and expressive cues invite the audience to treat the corporation as if it possesses the virtues it projects (Goffman, 1956, p. 10),. However, this faith ultimately becomes a promissory debt, as creating certain expectations makes them the standard by which the corporation is held accountable. Thus, to sustain this desired perception, the corporation must not only live up to and align its practices with those ideals, but also manage any disruptions that could threaten its performance, an act that Goffman refers to as 'impression management' (Goffman, 1956, pp. 49, 132).

Goffman's concept of back-stage can then be used to examine instances in which the corporate front is threatened by the exposure of previously private and obscured corporate practices or conduct. Whereas the front-stage encompasses the curated performances of corporate virtue, such as transparency, responsibility and ethical commitments, the back-stage can be understood as the organisational space where less the favourable and unfiltered realities are contained, such as actions, arrangements, or omissions, that if revealed, would clash with the image projected to the public and call into question the identity that the corporation seeks to present through its visibility practices.

Here, Goffman's theory of stigma and spoiled identity further becomes a particularly valuable framework for examining how activists leverage and rework corporate visibility to construct criticism. When referring to 'stigma', Goffman defines it as the attributes that are deeply discrediting (Goffman, 1986b, p. 3), whether it be one's own, or those gained from associating with other stigmatised actors, also known as 'courtesy stigma' (Goffman, 1986b, pp. 27-30), which threaten to spoil one's identity once known by the audience. These attributes serve as catalysts for public contestation, as activists can utilise these to challenge and destabilise the corporation's self-projected identity, reinterpreting the image of virtue or responsibility as deceptive impression management, and revealing the earlier promissory character as unfulfilled. Possessing such discredited attributes can thus result in the corporation being a target for activist interventions, which amplify these negative aspects to challenge corporate branding, resulting in the public judging or withdrawing from their cooperative stance, as they cease to accept the front face at value, or begin to actively contest the performance the corporation seeks to sustain.

Therefore, although Goffman's frameworks were initially developed to analyse micro-level interactions, his theory still proves crucial for this thesis's investigative aim, as his con-

cepts can effectively be scaled to organisational actors, as corporations, like individuals, similarly partake in curated performances before audiences to manage impressions and face identity threats when their performance becomes disrupted. By applying this theoretical lens, it allows for an in-depth analysis of how activist organisations not only leverage corporate performance but also corporate stigma to disrupt corporate visibility and legitimacy, thus reworking performance logics and turning the corporation's own tools of visibility into vessels of contestation and accountability.

From Face-to-Face to Face-to-Facebook

While Goffman's theory proves useful for examining corporate visibility through self-performance and how activists utilise this performance and its internal contradictions, including hidden aspects of the corporation, to create a stigmatised narrative that supports activist criticism, his theory does have certain limitations. Apart from his work focusing on the individual, another glaring limitation of his theory is his exclusive emphasis on traditional face-to-face social interactions, thus leaving no systematic engagement with how self-presentation and interaction unfold in digital environments. Therefore, as society has become increasingly digitalised and the social landscape has shifted from face-to-face interactions to technology-driven networked communication, a re-evaluation and expansion of Goffman's classical theoretical frameworks is necessary.

Therefore, when investigating how activist organisations leverage and rework corporate visibility, Henry Jenkins' contributions are particularly relevant. In his work (2006), he proposes his concept of 'convergence'(Jenkins, 2006, pp. 1-3), which not only offers a perspective on how technology has become an essential part of everyday life, but also how it functions a cultural process where media content flows across various platforms, and where users now actively participate in producing, circulating and negotiating meaning (Jenkins, 2006, pp. 2-3).

His framework thus challenges the traditional separations between media producers and consumers, emphasising that media convergence has created a new environment in which neither producers nor consumers occupy passive, separate roles, instead becoming active "*participants who interact with each other according to a new set of rules that none of us fully understands*" (Jenkins, 2006, p. 3), highlighting how both groups are now shaping discourse and constructing meaning within a shared digital sphere. Based on this, Jenkins thus introduces the concept of 'participatory culture' (Jenkins, 2006, p. 3), which is crucial in understanding how corporate visibility and branding are amplified and contested in digital spaces, as, although corporations may still exert more power than individuals (Jenkins, 2006, p. 3), information is now created and shared through collaboration and participation, rather than solely being shaped and controlled by the powerful.

Although this perspective does not directly build upon the works of Goffman, it can be argued to extend his framework into the modern digital age, as the notions of convergence and participatory culture serve to complicate the relationship between the performer, audience, and stage by showcasing how audiences have evolved from mere passive observers into active co-creators of content and meaning. In the context of this thesis, it thus highlights how corporate visibility operates within highly interactive digital spaces where publics, such as activists, can now collaboratively interpret and challenge it, meaning that corporate visibility is no longer solely controlled by the corporation but is instead co-constructed, with activists leveraging this participatory logic to share, reinterpret, and amplify critical messages that reframe corporate conduct and reputation.

Building on this notion that identity, in this context, corporate visibility, is no longer solely controlled by the performer but is shaped by the increasing participatory culture within the digital sphere, other self-presentation scholars have likewise expanded on the complications of performing and managing one's self within and across digital platforms. One such scholar

is Laura Robinson (2007), who draws directly upon the theoretical foundations of Goffman to propose her concept of 'cyber-selfing' (Robinson, 2007), in which she argues that while concepts such as front-stage and back-stage remain relevant, the rise of digital media has collapsed the traditional restraints of time and space, thus resulting in the coherence of performances becoming fractured, as actors now simultaneously perform multiple selves, or fronts, across a range of platforms rather than a single audience during a distinct performance interval.

This further complements the theoretical developments of Alice E. Marwick and Danah Boyd (2011; 2014), who propose their concept of 'context collapse' (Marwick & Boyd, 2011, p. 122), which further underscores the difficulty of these fractured performances by arguing how it likewise complicates the separation between the front-stage and back-stage as the performer no longer has complete control over whom they perform for and when. Digital platforms bring together audiences from diverse social and professional domains, thereby collapsing prior contextual separations and increasing the observability of corporate communications. However, within these overlaps, it not only becomes increasingly complex to maintain coherence across platforms due to continuous and fragmented performances, but also to maintain a desired level of privacy, as frequent changes to privacy settings make it easy for information to slip through the cracks (Marwick & Boyd, 2014, p. 1062). This ongoing tension between privacy and public exposure further highlights the vulnerabilities of highly visible digital performances, as by participating in these digital environments, corporations must not only partake in continuous and fragmented performance and the impression management thereof, but likewise remain more vigilant than ever to ensure that the private aspects of their practices do not inadvertently become public.

Taozhi Jiang[1] (2025) further expands upon these insights by examining how social media reshape Goffman's dramaturgical frameworks through constant visibility, archival permanence, and algorithmic mediations. In their work, they argue that, unlike the settings of traditional social interactions, in which physical barriers allowed performers to separate the front-stage domain of public interaction, and the back-stage domain of authentic reprieve, social media has blurred these boundaries, as even private or obscured information risks being screenshotted, shared, or algorithmically promoted to strangers (Jiang, 2025, p. 95). As such, when the unfiltered reality of the back-stage emerges and clashes with the front-stage performance, corporations risk 'persona collapse' (Jiang, 2025, p. 95), as even a single screenshot can transform corporate back-stage obscurity into a front-stage scandal that threatens to publicly undo their curated image.

However, this is not the only newfound challenge that corporations face. Echoing Robinson, Jiang highlights the complications that arise from these endless performances enabled by time-unbound media, introducing a temporal persistence that turns self-presentations into continuous and asynchronous spectacles that are accessible indefinitely (Jiang, 2025, p. 95). Thus, where Goffman envisioned temporal rhythms by stepping onto the stage and then retreating, digital platforms enforces endless visibility through posts, stories and streams, which drawing upon the work of Mayer-Schönberger (2009), Jiang terms the 'persistence of memory' (Jiang, 2025, p. 95), as the performers' "*repertoire [..] is never full under their control*" (Jiang, 2025, p. 96) and current acts remain bound to past ones. For activists, this temporal persistence is crucial, as historical traces can be reworked into campaign fuel that serves to gradually de-

[1] Due to the self-assigned gender of the author being indeterminable, this thesis will, in alignment with thesis policies, refer to the author by "they/them"

stroy public trust over time, further demonstrating how, in the modern digital sphere, no performance ever truly comes to an end, but instead lingers as material for reframing corporate branding and practices, which threatens to destabilise curated corporate visibility.

Overall, these modern extensions of Goffman's theoretical frameworks provide crucial insights into how corporate visibility is no longer solely controlled by the corporation itself, but now operates within a highly participatory, contested, and continuously observable environment, where activist actors exploit this dynamic to construct counter-narratives that transform corporate visibility into sites of reputational vulnerability. As such, by drawing on the concepts of front-stage, back-stage, impression, stigma, along with the developments thereof, these theories provide a robust framework for examining how visibility, participatory audiences, and platform-specific affordances enable activists to challenge and redefine corporate visibility in the digital sphere.

Framing

Studies across literature, communication, culture, and media have long recognised framing as a key process for understanding how meaning is structured and perception is shaped, with various scholars examining how framing constructs the interpretive structures through which individuals make sense of and respond to events. As such, framing theory thus provides an approach for analysing how social actors organise meaning and are guided towards particular interpretations of events, highlighting that events do not carry inherent meanings but are instead rendered intelligible through shared interpretive frameworks. In the context of this thesis, the theoretical frameworks of framing offer a guide to examine how activist organisations intervene in public discourse surrounding corporations by framing what is at stake, who bears responsibility, and what kind of response appears legitimate or necessary in such events.

The Foundational Contributions of Goffman

Framing's theoretical origins are often attributed to Goffman, whose work *Frame Analysis* (1986) is widely regarded as one of the earliest systematic examinations of how social actors rely on, what he refers to as, a shared 'schemata of interpretation' that "*allows its user to locate, perceive, identity, and label a seemingly infinite number of concrete occurrences defined in its terms*" (Goffman, 1986a, p. 21). As such, frames can thus be understood as the socially shared structures, such as norms, rules, and expectations, that guide individuals in constructing their perception of reality, as they provide a shared lens through which meaning is constructed.

Goffman argues that at its core, frame analysis is ultimately concerned with the question of "*What is going on here?*" (Goffman, 1986a, p. 8), and to address this, actors rely on interpretive frameworks to determine which roles and behaviours are appropriate, which outcomes and issues are meaningful, and how the situation should be evaluated, thereby organising their experiences in a coherent and meaningful way. He refers to the most basic interpretive structures as 'primary frameworks', being the fundamental frames through which events are first made intelligible (Goffman, 1986a, p. 21). Within these, he further distinguishes between 'natural frameworks', which organise understanding of events independent of human intervention and 'social frameworks', which interpret events as the result of human agency, motives, and norms (Goffman, 1986a, p. 22). Both frame types typically operate implicitly, and thus shape perception without requiring conscious effort, thereby not only making them powerful as they prestructure what is noticed, ignored, or connected before conscious resonance even begins, but also because they function as common sense that is less likely to be questioned. However, while this background operation makes them powerful, it also leaves them open to contestation and transformation.

One way a frame can be transformed is through ‘keying’ (Goffman, 1986a, pp. 43-44), the process by which an already framed activity is reinterpreted through a different lens, such as shifting an event from being seen as corporate responsibility to reputational damage. On the other hand, frames can also be transformed through ‘fabrication’ (Goffman, 1986a, p. 83), the deliberate transformation of a primary frame where one actor creates a misleading or staged reality to induce specific interpretations, such as, for example, a corporation promoting itself as sustainable and eco-friendly, while knowingly partaking in practices that contradict these claims. Both these concepts are highly relevant to this thesis, as they enable an examination of how activist organisations rework corporate visibility within their campaign constructions and use these to expose perceived fabrications, furthermore altering how audiences understand and engage with corporate branding and conduct.

Thus, despite Goffman’s theory initially focusing on micro-level face-to-face interactions, his work remains relevant, as it establishes the core insight that meaning is constructed through frames rather than inherent events. Yet, although his work provides the foundation of how frames structure social reality and meaning, it has its limitations, as he does not account for how control and power shape framing or for how frames change in larger-scale digital communication. Later scholars have acknowledged these limitations, yet largely continue to build on his claim that frames organise experience and can be strategically manipulated, as will be expanded upon in the following section. As such, Goffman’s theory thus serves as a conceptual starting point for understanding frames as the interpretive boundaries that ultimately guide perceptions of “what is going on?”, in which reframing becomes a core mechanism through which activists frame events, assign responsibility, and make moral evaluations.

From Goffman to Media and Political Framing

To address the limitations of Goffman's foundational framework, numerous scholars have worked to extend his insights into mediated communication, with Robert Entman among the key theorists. In his 1993 seminal article, Entman addresses the fractured nature of framing theory, including the limits of Goffman's micro-sociological approach, and argues that, although framing is used across disciplines, there is no unified theory explaining how frames operate within texts or shape audience interpretations (Entman, 1993, p. 51). Based on this, he then proposes a more precise definition of framing: "*to frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation*" (Entman, 1993, p. 52).

Entman's theoretical structure is thus crucial when examining activist communication, as it demonstrates how a text not only describes an event but also guides the audience towards a specific perception of the issue, assigns responsibility, determines how those involved should be judged, and what responses are necessary or appropriate. Furthermore, it is especially valuable for analysing activist criticism of corporations, as these typically utilise all four functions to 1) define corporate conduct as problematic, 2) attribute responsibility to certain corporate decisions or failures, 3) morally evaluate these actions as unethical or irresponsible, and 4) recommend courses of action such as interventions, divestment, or boycotts.

Another crucial aspect of Entman's work is his emphasis on how frames exert influence through what they omit and what they foreground. He argues that frames are defined not only by what they include, but equally by what they omit, as "*the omissions of potential problem definitions, explanations, evaluations, and recommendations may be as critical as the inclusions in guiding the audience*" (Entman, 1993, p. 54), which activists strategically can utilise

to exclude corporate justifications entirely, such as corporate claims of "regulatory compliance", thereby creating interpretive frames that amplify their critique and prevent corporate attempts at countering activist reframings from gaining traction. 'Salience', on the other hand, elevates selected information, making it more noticeable, meaningful and memorable to the audience, which, similarly to omissions, carries importance regarding how the public "*understand and remember a problem, as well as how they evaluate and choose to act upon it.*" (Entman, 1993, p. 54). This dual function reveals framing's profound power implications, as "*Framing [...] plays a major role in the exertion of political power, and the frame in a news text is really the imprint of power – it registers the identity of actors or interests that competed to dominate the text.*" (Entman, 1993, p. 54), thus highlighting how frames become battlegrounds for interpretive dominance, where activists challenge corporate control over "what is going on".

Building on this recognition of framing as a battle for interpretive dominance, Todd Gitlin further examines how dominant institutions and activist movements wage these struggles within the public sphere. In his 2003 work, Gitlin examines how mainstream media covered social movements during periods of heightened protest activity in the 1960s, showcasing how journalists did not simply mirror events, but actively organised their coverage through recurring news frames based on established routines and interpretive schemas, which highlighted certain aspects and features of a movement, whilst systematically marginalising others. (Gitlin, 2003, p. 29, 49-51).

Gitlin argues that this process of framing is not simply a journalistic preference but rather a manifestation of 'hegemony', which he defines as an active process where dominant institutions organise consent across everyday social life and make it appear as "common sense" (Gitlin, 2003, pp. 10 - 11). This perspective reinforces framing as a site of ideological struggle, where mass media not only aligns with but also helps reproduce the "common sense" of those

in power. In the context of this thesis, corporations assume the role of these dominant institutions, as they leverage their high levels of digital visibility across multimedia platforms to construct and disseminate their dominant narratives that then become hegemonic frames, which, in turn, are collaboratively constructed by their consumers who accept them as "common sense" through brand loyalty and everyday engagement.

Activist actors thus try to disrupt this dynamic by utilising the same sphere of visibility to expose and contest these dominant discourses. However, Gitlin argues that attempts to confront this hegemony entail risks, as while mass media allowed organisations to spread awareness beyond community meetings as well as send "*a message directly to the powers that be*" (Gitlin, 2003, p. 244), the press would moderate these critiques to fit within the acceptable news frames, defusing movement ideas into an oversimplified, distorted and debased form (Gitlin, 2003, pp. 242-243). Furthermore, entering the spotlight also posed another dilemma, as movements risked "*exposing their vulnerabilities*" (Gitlin, 2003, p. 244), as every aspect, intended or not, would be available to public scrutiny, with the "*spotlight turn[ing] out to be a magnifying glass*" (Gitlin, 2003, p. 246) that amplified flaws beyond their control.

Gitlin's perspective thus offers a valuable framework for examining struggles of interpretive dominance within the digital sphere of visibility and the risks that may follow. However, when applied to this thesis, Gitlin's perspective is subverted by inverting the focus, thus shifting it from how mass media frame activists to how activists frame corporations, along with how they seek to reframe public understanding of them. This subversion does not reject Gitlin's theory but seeks to expand it under modern conditions where the struggle over framing centres on corporate visibility as much as on social movements' visibility.

Building on insights into how selection, omission, and hegemonic frames in mass media shape the multimedia terrain that corporations and activists must now navigate, David Snow and Robert Benford focus on how activist movements strategically construct and utilise frames

not only to challenge corporate power but also to mobilise support. In their seminal works, including Snow et al. (1986) and Snow and Benford (1988), they argue that activist movements do not simply react to issues, or 'grievances' (Snow et al., 1986, p. 465), but instead use framing as an active and strategic process to make sense of issues, propose remedies, and inspire action. As such, central to their theory is what they define as the 'Core Framing Tasks', which construct the substantive content, shape understanding of the grievances at hand, and then inspire collective action against them (Snow & Benford, 1988, p. 199).

When proposing their Core Framing Tasks, Snow and Benford distinguish between three interrelated processes: 1) 'Diagnostic framing', which identifies a situation as problematic and attributes responsibility or blame, 2) 'prognostic framing', which builds on the diagnoses by proposing solutions, strategies, and tactics to rectify the identified issue, and 3) 'Motivational framing' which supplies the driving force for the call to action. (Snow & Benford 1988, pp. 200-204). Together, these form an integrated sequence in which fulfilling each task is essential for mobilising collective engagement, as an incomplete or disjointed framing fails to resonate, thus leaving grievances unaddressed or action unmotivated, with Snow and Benford arguing that "*the more the three tasks are robust or richly developed and interconnected, the more successful the mobilization effort*" (Snow & Benford, 1988, p. 199).

For this thesis, which examines how corporate visibility is not merely a communicative condition but a resource that activists appropriate to expose contradictions and mobilise public action, this framework is highly relevant, as it provides the analytical tools for investigating what activists do with corporate visibility. Thus, by examining how each core framing task is articulated, distributed, and interconnected within specific campaigns, this approach enables an in-depth examination of how activists actors not only render corporate grievances visible but also how they problematise corporate actors or corporate conduct, propose remedies for

holding corporations accountable and drive change, and which appeals are leveraged to translate mediated visibility into political leverage.

Ultimately, by drawing on the foundations of framing and its developments, it shows that framing is not merely a neutral descriptive tool but an arena of ideological struggle. By understanding how reality is experienced through frames, and how these are subjected to different kinds of transformations to alter perceived meaning, along with how the power-laden nature of framing, which shows how dominant institutions seek to control interpretive horizons and how activist actors recognise and counter these through strategic diagnosis and calls to action, framing theory becomes an indispensable framework for examining how activist organisations strategically contest corporate hegemony through multimodal counter- and re-framing. As such, framing theory offers a highly relevant framework for examining how activists construct their multimedia and cross-platform criticism that seeks to reframe and contest corporate hegemonic frames, thereby turning corporate visibility into an ongoing site of struggle in the modern digital sphere.

Narrative

Similar to framing, narratives have long been recognised as a fundamental part through which humans make sense of experiences, construct identities, and negotiate meaning in the social sphere. However, despite their shared focus on how meaning is constructed, the two theoretical fields still differ from one another, as while framing focuses on understanding how meaning is created through the selective structuring of interpretation, narrative instead draws attention to how meaning is constructed through temporally and morally ordered sequences of events that position actors and invite evaluation. As such, narratives do not simply recount events, but rather structure them into coherent plots that communicate why actions matter and to whom.

In this thesis, when examining the digitalised, multimodal terrain of visibility in which corporations and activists operate, narratives serve as powerful rhetorical and ideological tools that naturalise certain worldviews whilst contesting others. As such, employing narrative theory allows for an in-depth analysis of how activists construct narratives that disrupt and recontextualise corporate visibility, thereby transforming corporate branding into an arena of critique over responsibility, legitimacy, and truth.

From Corporate Myth to Activist Re-Narration

To understand the importance of narrative and the contestation thereof, it is necessary to begin at the ideological level, where dominant stories naturalise power relations as common sense. Roland Barthes (1972) explores this dynamic, conceptualising myth as "a *type of speech*" that carries bourgeois ideologies (Barthes, 1972, p. 107), using semiotic analysis to show how everyday cultural artefacts and communication naturalise social values, whilst diverting attention from the underlying social and political conflicts. This notion aligns with that of hegemonic frames, as Barthes argues that myths do not lie or reveal truth, but instead twist it into something that feels natural, by transforming deliberate human choices (history) into timeless facts, or "common sense" (nature), making cultural values appear as natural rather than having been constructed or motivated by power. (Barthes, 1972, pp. 128 - 130). In this thesis, corporate brands and dominant narratives could thus be considered as corporate myths, as they exemplify the myth-making process by presenting their practices, values, and identities as natural and inevitable rather than strategic constructions shaped by commercial and ideological interests.

This perceived naturalness of myths further renders them resilient to destabilisation, as they operate as 'second-order semiological system[s]' (Barthes, 1972, p. 113) that makes ideology appear as pre-given facts of nature and thus creates an almost impenetrable shield where

critique risks dismissal or co-optation, as the resistance becomes absorbed into the myth and reframed as affirmation (Barthes, 1972, p. 134). Yet, while attempts to destabilise myths remain profoundly challenging, Barthes argues that it is not impossible, proposing 'artificial myth' which functions as a deliberate and self-conscious counteroffensive that operates within the myth's own terrain (Barthes, 1972, p. 134). Rather than direct confrontation, artificial myths mimic the structure of the original myth, whilst also signalling their own artifice, which Barthes describes as robbing the robber (Barthes, 1972, p. 134), exposing the ideological artifice beneath the facade. This mimicry thus transforms resistance into a second-order mythological act, as activists can produce parodic signs that imitate corporate rhetoric and imagery so obviously that their artificiality becomes unmistakable. This results in the myth's 'demystification' (Barthes, 1972, p. 11), as when the public experiences the deception through the imitation itself, they gain a critical perspective without needing logical arguments, making myths lose their shield of naturalness, as the parody reveals its hollow ideological shell and reintroduces prior suppressed questions of power and motivation, which the original myth sought to obscure.

This ideological contestation sets the stage for understanding how narrative is received and evaluated, as explored by Walter R. Fisher in his theory of 'The Narrative Paradigm' (1987). Fisher argues that humans are fundamentally storytelling beings, or 'homo narrens' (Fisher, 1987, p. xi), who assess communication in terms of 'narrative rationality' (Fisher, 1987, p. 20), which fundamentally rests upon two interdependent key criteria: 'narrative coherence' (Fisher, 1987, p. 88) and 'narrative fidelity' (Fisher, 1987, p. 5). The first criterion assesses a story's internal consistency across its 1) 'argumentative or structural coherence', which ensures that events progress believable without contradictions, 2) its 'material coherence', involving comparing stories to check if it is internally consistent and verifying that key facts are not omitted, ignored, or overlooked, and 3) its 'characterological coherence', which

assesses the character's reliability as narrators and actors, based on consistency their decisions and actions (Fisher, 1987, p. 47).

The second criterion focuses on whether the story resonates with the listeners' lived experience, values, and sense of truth, which Fisher asses through what he defines as "*the logic of good reasons*" (Fisher, 1987, p. 108), an informal value-laden system comprising the following five critical components: 1) 'Fact', identifying implicit and explicit values embedded in a message, 2) 'Relevance', testing whether those values suit the specific context, flagging omissions, distortions, or misrepresentations, 3) 'Consequence', examining the potential impacts of embracing these values for the self, relationships and society, 4) 'Consistency', checking if the values match one's own experience and an imaged ideal audience, and 5) 'Transcendence', determining whether the values embody the ultimate ideals for human conduct (Fisher, 1987, pp. 108-109). Together, these questions probe the message's embedded values to test narrative truthfulness and determine if the story offers compelling warrants for belief, attitude, or action.

Together, coherence and fidelity examine whether or not a story "*hangs together*" (Fisher, 1987, p. 47) and rings true to lived experience and values, forming the dual pillars of narrative rationality that encourage the public to maintain a rational and critical mindset by actively testing stories, rather than just passively accepting them at face value. Fisher's framework thus becomes especially important when examining how activist corporations construct their campaigns, as it enables an examination of how activists utilise coherence and fidelity to expose contradictions between corporate branding and conduct, whilst also using the corporate failings of narrative rationality to gain campaign traction by "hanging together" logically and morally.

However, while Fisher provides a crucial framework for understanding and examining narrative evaluation, it assumes stable and coherent narratives, which rarely exist in the fragmented storytelling of multimodal digital platforms. As such, David M. Boje addresses this gap by arguing that modern narratives are "*nonlinear, almost living storytelling that is fragmented, polyphonic (many voiced) and collectively produced*" (Boje, 2001, para. 1 of "Introduction"), which traditional theory struggles to capture. He thus proposes his theory of 'antenarrative' (Boje, 2001; Boje et al., 2016), which examines the fragmented, non-linear, incoherent, collective, unplotted and pre-narrative speculation that precedes coherent emplotment, like a speculative bet on future narrative coherence (Boje, 2001, para. 2 of "Introduction").

Thus, to analyse the non-linear and fragmented antenarrative that exists within the digital sphere, Boje proposes the five B's of antenarrative, which serves to emphasises the unfinished, contested nature of organisational storytelling in contexts of power and resistance, comprising 1) 'Before' (pre-coherence), 2) 'Beneath' (hidden forces), 3) 'Between' (interplay), 4) 'Bets' (future probabilities), and 5) 'Becoming' (transformative care/uncare) (Boje et al., 2016, pp. 57-58), which precede and disrupt dominant narratives. In the context of corporate and activist narratives, these antenarrative practices are utilised to contest hegemony through the micro-scale narrative interventions by using 'before', the pre-narrative fragments, such as leaked internal information, to reveal what lies 'beneath', being the suppressed or obscured practices that hides below official branding, such as environmentally damaging practices that lurks under a corporation's sustainability rhetoric, and 'between' to highlight the tensions between corporate hegemony and the emerging fragments of resistance. 'Bets' then uses these emerging fragmented stories to speculate on possible futures and outcomes, wagering on how the alternative activist readings of corporate branding and conduct might come to take hold,

while ‘becoming’ looks into the open-ended ongoing transformation of organisations storytelling as the activist interventions nudge corporate practices towards either continued uncare, or shifts it to more accountable forms of care (Boje et al., 2016).

Boje’s theory thus serves as a valuable framework in investigating how activists utilise corporate visibility to construct their campaigns across multimedia platforms, by providing the necessary analytical structure to examine the fragmented storytelling processes, in which activist do not simply post static counter-narratives, but instead launch dynamic, ongoing storytelling interventions that exploit the pre-existing corporate cracks and hidden flaws to speculate on future shifts and drive change.

All in all, these theories provide a crucial, layered framework for examining how campaigns constructed by activist actors function as an ongoing process of narrative contestation, as by understanding how corporate communication naturalises ideological narratives, how activist counter-narratives seek to destabilise these dominant narratives, and how the public evaluates these competing stories, it highlights how and why activist narratives gain traction and are able to mobilise action. Furthermore, situating these processes within the fragmented, polyphonic arena of organisational storytelling in the digitalised sphere enables a better understanding of how activist narratives intervene in and reshape the evolving story world of corporations. Thus, these theoretical insights enable an in-depth analysis of how activist campaigns actively re-narrate, restructure, and test corporate dominant narratives across multimedia platforms.

Methodology

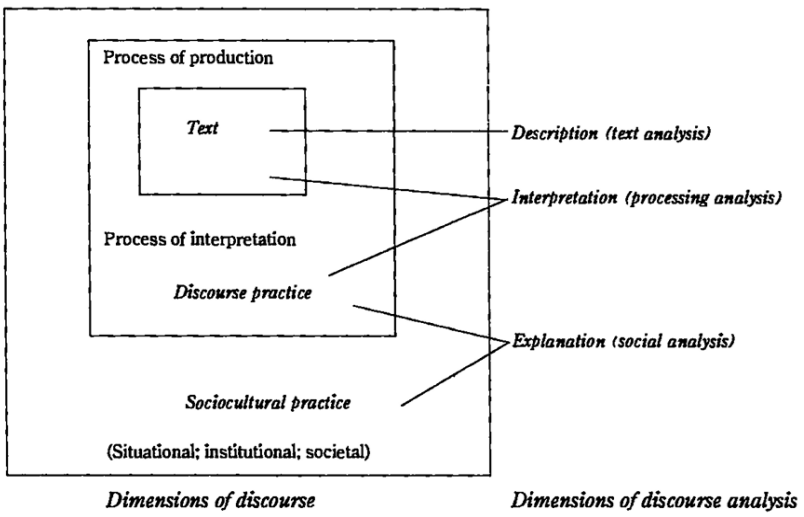
As established throughout the thesis, the aim of the analysis is to investigate how activist organisations leverage and rework the heightened visibility of prominent corporations within the modern digital sphere to construct and circulate critical campaigns that not only challenge and reframe corporate visibility but also legitimise their critique and mobilise action. To this end, the analysis will examine the digital materials produced by activist organisations, including campaign websites and related social media accounts and content such as posts and videos. Given the multimodal nature of these materials, the primary analytical approaches employed in this thesis are Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA).

These methodologies were selected because CDA argues that discourse is not neutral, rather serving as a form of social practice that reflects and shapes power relations and ideologies, a perspective which is highly relevant to examining how activists utilise and construct discourse to challenge corporate narratives, expose brand contradictions, and influence public opinion. MDA extends this approach by addressing the visual aspects of communication, thus providing the tools for examining the multimodal nature of activist communication and how visual modes construct meaning, evoke emotional responses, and mobilise action. The following sections thus serve to outline the specific approaches and analytical tools that will be used in the analysis, whilst also illuminating how the combined use of the selected methodologies reveals new insights into the dynamics of digital activists' communication and their construction of critique.

Critical Discourse Analysis

As stated above, CDA was selected as a primary methodological framework for this thesis, as it is based on the understanding that discourse is not merely a form of social practice, but also a constitutive one, which not only reflects existing power relations and ideologies, but actively constructs and produces them (Fairclough, 1992, pp. 63-64; 1995, p. 131). Accordingly, CDA is thus concerned with how discourse legitimises institutional power, marginalises oppositional voices, and presents existing social hierarchies as natural (van Dijk, 1993, p. 250). This perspective is especially relevant to understanding how activist communication is constructed and circulated, as it offers a framework for examining how discourse is utilised as a strategic tool to challenge, subvert, or reframe the authority and legitimacy of dominant corporate narratives in an increasingly digitalised communicative sphere.

When examining the aim of this thesis, the analysis will primarily draw upon the work of Norman Fairclough, who created an approach based on a "*three-dimensional conception of discourse, and correspondingly a three-dimensional method of discourse analysis*" (Fairclough, 1995, p. 97) as illustrated below.



(Fairclough 1995, p. 98)

Within this approach, Fairclough argues that a text is analysed in three phases:

1) Textual analysis, which serves as the descriptive core of the model and operates at the micro-level, focusing on the structural and formal properties of the text, such as how activists employ specific lexical and grammatical choices to express evaluation and assert credibility, or how they, through the use of metaphors, construct moral positioning whilst simultaneously distributing agency, responsibility, and stance within discourse.

2) Discursive practice analysis, which examines how texts are produced, distributed, and consumed rather than solely focusing on the text itself, which Fairclough describes as the "*interpretation of the relationship between the [...] discursive process and the text*" (Fairclough, 1995, p. 97), thereby emphasising the wider sociocultural practices, and how the immediate context affects how the text is created, received, and interpreted (Fairclough, 1995, p. 100). This phase thus bridges the micro-level textual features to macro-level social practices, thereby situating discourses within broader ideological contexts, and is used to examine how activist discourse recontextualises and appropriates existing corporate discourse, such as brand slogans, values and commitments, to expose contradictions, contest dominant narratives, or undermine corporate legitimacy.

3) Social and ideological analysis, which operates at the macro-level, and examines how discourse both shapes and is shaped by wider sociocultural and ideological structures (Fairclough, 1995, p. 97), along with how it reflects, reproduces, and contests existing power relations, norms, and ideological practices, and actively shapes social reality and collective understanding. This level of analysis thus examines how activist discourse challenges the dominant discourses of corporations by questioning corporate responsibility and legitimacy, as well as influencing public perceptions about accountability, ethics, and morals within the corporate sphere. (Fairclough, 1995)

Applying Fairclough's layered approach thus allows for an in-depth and examination of how activist discourse operates across different levels in its engagement with and reworking of corporate communication and narratives. By using his approach to examine the linguistic construction of activist messages, the process through which these messages are produced, circulated, and interpreted, and the broader ideological contexts in which they gain meaning, it is possible to analyse how activist organisations use corporate visibility as a communicative resource to destabilise dominant brand narratives and construct a public re-evaluation of corporate legitimacy in the digital sphere.

In addition to Fairclough's Dimensions of Discourse, this thesis further draws upon the approach of another influential figure within CDA, being Teun A. van Dijk and his 'socio-cognitive approach' (van Dijk, 1993). Van Dijk argues that although CDA goes beyond the formal structure of texts and links discourse to social structures and power relations, it does not consider how readers or participants understand, interpret, or represent discourse in their minds; 'the socio-cognitive dimension (van Dijk, 1993, p. 257; 2016, p. 27). In response, van Dijk's approach extends CDA by adding an analytical layer that emphasises how the production and interpretation of discourse are fundamentally based on 'models', being the "*mental representations of experiences, events or situations, as well as the opinions we have about them*" (van Dijk, 1993, p. 258). He argues that discourse, social structures, and individual action do not interact directly, but are mediated through what he broadly terms 'social cognition' (van Dijk, 2008), the shared knowledge, beliefs, values, attitudes, and ideologies within the minds of social group members that provide the background against which discourse becomes meaningful and recognisable. These mental representations aid the public in organising their interpretation of social events, actors, and relationships, thus serving as 'context models' (van Dijk, 2008, p. x), which include participants' perceptions, their roles, applicable norms, communicative goals, and the distribution of power in the interaction (van Dijk, 2008, pp. 16-20),

and further serve to bridge micro-level textual choices and macro-level sociocultural structures, thereby shaping how discourse is produced and interpreted by audiences.

As such, van Dijk's approach provides valuable insights into how activist discourse relies on and seeks to reshape the public's existing context models of corporate branding, conduct, and practices. By drawing on the existing perceptions of corporate responsibility, power, and injustice, activist discourse can encourage the public to reinterpret these issues through the alternative ideological frames presented in their campaigns, thereby recontextualising dominant corporate narratives, and invite new evaluations of corporate legitimacy and responsibility within the specific events their criticism seeks to address.

Ultimately, by applying the perspectives and approaches found within the field of CDA, it enables an in-depth examination of how activist discourse operates not only as a strategic tool, but as a meaningful form of communication that utilises language as a way to contest hegemonic corporate narratives, influence public understanding of corporate legitimacy and responsibility, and mobilise support. As such, CDA serves as a valuable approach in investigating the broader social and ideological implications of activist communication within the modern digital sphere, further highlighting how corporate visibility can be transformed into a site of critique and contestation.

Multimedia Discourse Analysis

Whereas CDA examines how discourses shape ideology and power relations, MDA extends its examination by further including all semiotic modes of communication, such as language, image, colour, typography, sound, and spatial organisation. Rooted in social semiotics, MDA argues that communication is rarely realised solely through language, and that meaning instead emerges through the coordination and interaction of multiple interrelated 'modes', being the

socially and culturally recognised sets of resources for meaning making that come together to communicative messages and values (Kress, 2010, p. 79; Jewitt, 2014, p. 2). As such, MDA is highly relevant to the thesis's investigation, as it allows an examination of how activists strategically combine linguistic and visual modes to contest corporate rhetoric, attract public attention, and guide viewers' interpretation within specific ideological frameworks.

For the analysis, this thesis will predominantly draw upon the work of influential MDA figures, Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen, whose *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design* (2021) establishes a foundational "grammar" for analysing visual communication. Within their work, they argue that "*Just as grammars of language describe how words combine in clauses, sentences and texts, so our 'grammar of the visual' describes how depicted elements – people, places and things – combine in visual 'statements' of greater or lesser complexity and extension*." (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2021, p. 1), meaning that images are conceptualised as structured and meaningful texts that can be systematically analysed. To do so, Kress and van Leeuwen conceptualise three broader resources of meaning, which, in themselves, provide an array of tools for analysing how visual information is organised to convey social, moral, or ideological messages. Based on their work, these resources of meaning can be categorised as follows:

1) Representational, which examines how participants (*actors*, *goals*, *reactors*, and *phenomena*) are connected by the narrative- (*actions*, *reactions*, and *vectors*), and conceptual processes (*classification*, *analytical,* and *symbolic representations*), and how these communicate the social relationships and ideological positions depicted. These tools can be used to examine how activists not only visually construct corporations in their critique, but also those who are affected by corporate wrongdoing, thus creating complex visual narratives of responsibility, harm, and moral evaluation that guide viewer interpretation and reinforce the organisation's ideological critique.

2) Interactive, concerning the viewer-image relationship created through visual signals (*gaze*, *social distance*, *perspective*, and *modality*), in which the latter, modality, plays a vital role in examining how activist utilise various markers (*colour saturation*, *differentiation*, *modulation*, *contextualization*, *detail*, *depth*, *illumination*, and *brightness*) and levels (*high/real* vs *low/artificial*) to position the viewer through perceived truthfulness or credibility, thereby constructing interpersonal meaning and encouraging viewer involvement and mobilisation.

3) Compositional, which examine how elements are organised to create meaning and guide the viewer's interpretation, including 'information value' (how elements are positioned relative to *top/bottom* or *left/right*), 'salience' (what draws attention through *size*, *colour*, or *contrast*), and 'framing' (how elements are connected or separated). These resources are essential in examining how activists construct persuasive and impactful multimodal arguments, as they enable the strategic construction of visually coherent and ideologically charged content meant to capture attention and shape interpretive pathways, reinforce their narrative, and highlight moral priorities, thus helping in determining what elements the viewer notices and how these relate to one another (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2021)

Kress and van Leeuwen's resources of meaning thus offer a comprehensive framework for analysing how activist organisations construct coherent and persuasive visual narratives across multimedia campaigns, as these resources highlight how activists not only depict corporate actors and those affected by corporate actions and wrongdoings, but also strategically position the viewer, guide their emotional and moral engagement, and shape the interpretive pathways through which complex issues are understood. As such, when it comes to examining how these multimedia narratives unfold across various platforms, Kress and van Leeuwen's "resource toolbox" provides a crucial analytical foundation for an in-depth analysis of how activist campaigns construct meaning across modalities and platforms, along with how the core ideological narrative remains coherent as it shifts between formats and publics.

However, while the tools presented within Kress and van Leeuwen's work remain essential for analysing the visual organisation of meaning, they were primarily developed in relation to static-print-based media, and therefore do not fully account for the dynamic, interactive, and fragmented conditions of the modern digital sphere. Numerous scholars have addressed this limitation and thus expanded upon their approaches, with the works of J. L. Lemke (2002) being particularly relevant to this thesis's investigative aim.

Lemke argues that digital communication fundamentally differs from the print medium, as while the latter is predominantly structured to let the reader follow a limited, predetermined reading order, hypertexts extends multimodality into what he defines as 'hypermodality' (Lemke, 2002, p. 300) by adding interactive and networked connections between modes, creating non-linear, multisequential pathways that let users traverse networks of interconnected units. This shift changes how meaning is organised and read, as meaning in the digital sphere is increasingly constructed across long "traversals", as users create their own pathways through linked multimodal materials (Lemke, 2002, pp. 300-301). These traversals further operate across multiple scales, as short links connect two units of content, establishing immediate intertextual relations, whereas long sequences of linked units allow users to build a more profound, cumulative understanding of complex issues that are not apparent on any single page (Lemke, 2002, pp. 306-307). Drawing on Halliday and Hasan's (2013) concept of 'cohesion chains', which are recurring sequences of related items across units (Halliday & Hasan, 2013, p. 15), these hyperlinks guide the user as they connect information along their path and function as meaning-making devices that link multimodal resources for deep, user-driven interpretations.

This expanded framework provides crucial insights into how activists organisations manage to construct coherent and persuasive multimedia narratives even as they are disseminated across various platforms, as, for example, a campaign website may guide users through

linked pages detailing the campaign and its critique of a corporation, while also using hyperlinks to direct users to the organisation's social media platforms, where the same ideological narrative continues through images, videos, and posts. Drawing on hypermodality thus enables analysis of how meaning is created not only within individual visual or discursive artefacts, but also across the entire campaign's digital ecosystem, thereby providing a better understanding of how activist messages and narratives circulate, interconnect, and accumulate meaning across multimedia platforms.

Overall, MDA provides the necessary tools to examine how activists strategically combine various semiotic modes to create persuasive and ideologically resonant narratives that not only position and guide viewer interpretations but also manage to communicate complex issues across dynamic, interactive, and cross-platform digital environments. By further combining it with CDA, these approaches allow for an in-depth analysis of how activist organisations utilise discursive and multimodal strategies to contest corporate hegemony, construct moral authority, and reframe public perceptions of corporations within the digital sphere. As such, by integrating CDA's focus on language, ideology, and power with MDA's attention to visual and multimodal meaning-making, the analysis aims to reveal how activist organisations are able to utilise discourse and design to create powerful tools of resistance and how these aid their cause in the struggle of interpretive dominance within the modern digital sphere.

Data Selection and Presentation

To investigate how activist organisations leverage and rework corporate visibility to construct their critique across multimedia platforms in the modern digital sphere, one essential step, if not the most crucial, is to select data most suitable for the thesis's investigative aim. Following the establishment of the theoretical foundation and methodological approaches that this thesis

seeks to draw upon to answer the investigative aim, this section thus seeks to illuminate the core criteria that ultimately guided the data selection process, and present the data that, based on this, emerged as best suited for the analytical objectives of this thesis.

When selecting the data for the analysis, three core criteria guided the selection process, with each being carefully thought out to ensure that the data align with the outlined theoretical and methodological approaches, and thus allow for an in-depth examination of how activist organisations utilise corporate visibility to construct their multimedia campaigns. As such, guiding the data selection process, the three criteria are as follows: 1) The corporate targets of the activists' campaigns must have a prominent and sustained online presence across platforms, which results in them having a well-established brand that is familiar to the general public, 2) the targeted corporations must have been the subject of activist critique within the specific timeframe of the modern digital sphere, namely the 2010's - 2020's, and 3) the activists campaigns must have unfolded across multiple digital platforms, as well as be well documented with their materials being accessible and retrievable through public platforms archives and media coverage. Ultimately, these criteria ensure that the data chosen for the analysis aligns with the investigative aim of this thesis, whilst also ensuring that the analysis encompasses a varied set of multimodal artefacts that allow for a comprehensive examination of the strategies activist organisations employ when it comes to leveraging and reworking corporate visibility in constructing their critiques across diverse digital channels within the ever-evolving modern digital sphere.

It is then based on these criteria that the cases ultimately selected for the analysis comprise the 2014 Greenpeace campaigns against LEGO and the 2024 Mask Off Maersk campaign against Maersk. Accordingly, the following sections will offer more detailed profiles of said corporations, as well as brief overviews of their digital visibility, the specific activist campaigns targeting them, and the multimodal data selected for examination.

Greenpeace & LEGO

The LEGO Group, or *LEGO*, is a Danish-based global toy manufacturer that was founded in Billund, Denmark, in 1932 by Ole Kirk Christiansen, which then entered the global market with its iconic plastic bricks in the 1950s. Since then, LEGO has become one of the world's largest and most well-known toy manufacturers, whose globally recognised and beloved brand, anchored in creative thinking, fun, inclusivity, and sustainability (LEGO, n.d.) has provided the corporation with a high degree of cultural iconicity and visibility comprised of its vast following across major platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and X, totalling over 25 million followers as of early 2024 (Barnett, n.d.).

Yet, despite its inherently positive branding, the corporation found itself at the heart of the 2014 *Greenpeace* campaign, in which the environmentally focused NGO launched a multimedia campaign against LEGO as part of their broader *Save the Arctic* initiative. In this campaign, Greenpeace criticised the toy manufacturer for its PR collaborations with the oil company *Shell,* arguing that this partnership not only contributed to Shell's greenwashing efforts amidst its plans to drill for oil in the Arctic, but also betrayed the values and commitments upon which the LEGO brand is built. The campaign was adapted and posted across several multimedia platforms, yet was particularly emphasised on Facebook, where they had created and shared a variety of posts and videos, and YouTube, in which the organisation made a viral video, depicting Shell's oil extraction operations in the Arctic through the use of LEGO's products. These posts quickly garnered widespread global attention, with the Facebook posts receiving thousands of shares and likes, and the YouTube video reaching 5.8 million views (O'Reilly, 2014), prompting discussion of LEGO's corporate responsibilities and its commitment to the brand.

Mask Off Maersk & Maersk

A.P. Møller - Mærsk, more commonly referred to just as *Mærsk* (Maersk in English), is a Danish business conglomerate whose operations primarily focus on logistics and import/export services, known worldwide for its distinctive shipping vessels and iconic seven-pointed blue starred logo. The company was founded in 1904 in Svendborg, Denmark, by Captain Peter Mærsk Møller and his son Arnold Peter Møller as a local steamship company, and has since then grown to become the world's second-largest shipping and logistics corporation, as of 2025 (Freightender, 2025), which is further evidenced by its millions of followers across various major social platforms (Evans, 2017; Chambers, 2019). This vast following has provided the corporation with a high degree of visibility, comprised of a high degree of corporate visibility through its interactions and following on business-related platforms such as LinkedIn, and a, while still high degree of visibility in the broader field of visibility within the digital sphere, moderate or comparatively lower public visibility as evidenced by is lower rate of engagement and following on other social platforms such as Instagram, X and YouTube. Its transformation from a regional Danish shipping company into a global logistics giant is further mirrored in the corporation's branding, as Maersk positions itself as a responsible and innovative logistics leader with an emphasis on five distinct core values, being constant care, humbleness, uprightness, its employees and its name (Maersk, n.d.b), along with its commitments on sustainability, human rights and business ethics (Maersk, n.d.c; Maersk, n.d.a), which constitutes its brand and dominant narrative.

However, despite Maersk's efforts to ground its brand in respectable and principled values, the corporation recently found itself at the centre of a large-scale, highly politicised global conflict, as it in early 2025 was exposed for shipping military cargo to Israel amid the

ongoing military and political Israeli-Palestinian conflict that had been going on since October 2023. Furthermore, the leaked bills of lading, which led to this exposé, also revealed that Maersk had reportedly made multiple of such shipments as early as November 4th 2023 (Kjær, 2025), just a few weeks after the initial escalation of the conflict began. This revelation led to widespread public outrage, which was only fuelled by the pre-existing global criticism surrounding the conflict.

It was then, amid this backlash, that the Palestinian Youth Movement (PYM), a transnational, independent, grassroots organisation advocating for Palestinian liberation, launched a targeted, multimedia sub-campaign within its broader initiative, *Cut Ties with Genocide*, named *Mask Off Maersk* (MOM), focusing exclusively on Maersk's role in sustaining the Israeli military efforts in the genocide against the Palestinian people. Although the campaign was initially spread through various platforms under the same name as the organisation, it then became predominantly anchored on a dedicated website, MaskOffMaersk.com, which is further supported by an Instagram account under the same name, which has accumulated over 15 thousand followers as of February 2025. These platforms serve as the organisation's centralised digital hubs for disseminating the campaign's cause and multimodal content, which are all aimed at creating and sustaining public awareness of Maersk's actions and how these clash greatly with the corporation's brand values and commitments, as well as turning their criticism into public pressure to disrupt and ultimately halt the corporation's logistical support of the Israeli military's genocide against the Palestinian people.

Analysis

Building on the theoretical and methodological foundations established in the preceding sections, the thesis proceeds to the analysis section, which, by using the insights of the prior sections, examines how Greenpeace and MOM strategically engage with, leverage and rework the corporate visibility of LEGO and Maersk, utilising multimodal storytelling, discursive strategies and rhetorical reframings to expose the tensions between corporate polished branding and the controversial practices that remain concealed or omitted from official narratives.

As such, this section turns to the focused dataset (Appendix A), which comprises various activist-produced campaign materials such as social media posts, online videos, official campaign websites and social media accounts, to investigate how activist organisations strategically construct and disseminate their cause and reworkings of corporate visibility as well as influence public mobilisation. In doing so, this thesis seeks to highlight how visibility no longer simply functions as a communicative condition of the powerful but rather operates as a dynamic field of struggle in which competing narratives battle to gain interpretive dominance over legitimacy, accountability and morals within the modern digital sphere.

Unbuilding LEGO: A Campaign Against Oil-Washed Play

In 2014, Greenpeace launched a multimedia, multi-platform campaign against LEGO, in which the NGO opposed the corporation's commercial partnership with Shell. Although adapted for multiple platforms, the campaign was particularly prominent on Facebook and YouTube, where Greenpeace created and shared various multimedia content, all of which centred on urging LEGO to cut ties with the environmentally destructive company. As such, going forward

the analysis will focus on a selection of Facebook posts from Greenpeace's official page (Figure A1), followed by an in-depth analysis of the NGO's viral YouTube video (Figure A3), which echoes the message found on the campaign's Facebook page, urging LEGO to end its collaboration with Shell, not only for the sake of the children and the future of the planet, but also the preserve the brand's integrity which is built on values of sustainability and securing a better world for the generations to come.

When examining the Facebook post history ranging from July 1st to October 17th, 2014, the dataset (Figure A1) reveals that several of the static posts share a similar format, with each consisting of a short caption accompanied by an image of the Arctic landscape, which further features either LEGO figures or Arctic animals, as well as being overlaid with a banner designed to resemble a LEGO brick, rendered in Greenpeace's iconic green hue. Furthermore, the right side of the banner prominently displays Greenpeace's logo, while the left side shows a merged and modified logo of Shell and LEGO, with Shell's iconic red-and-yellow seashell partially constructed from LEGO bricks, and LEGO's logo placed underneath, both dripping with black oil. This merged design is among the post's most striking elements, not only because the highly saturated colours contrast sharply with the muted Arctic background, but also because the fusion of the two logos introduces a subtle form of visual disruption. This combination serves not only as a strategic way of capturing the viewer's attention but also serves as a powerful symbol that underscores the campaign's broader ideological messages. Typically, these logos would appear separately, due to each representing different kinds of corporate values and domains, which is why the sudden merger of the two might surprise the viewer whilst also further prompting them to reflect on the implications of such a design, both in terms of the campaign's intent as well as the partnership between the two corporations.

However, the visually disruptive combination of the logos is not the only way in which the campaign captures the viewer's attention. Another striking element is the bold green text

embedded directly within each image, rendered in the same vibrant hue as the header, which, similarly, makes it stand out sharply against the otherwise muted, grey-toned Arctic scenery, just as the combined logos do. The use of this bright and contrasting colour guides the viewer's gaze towards the text, which serves as one of the most prominent communicative elements in the composition and functions as a visual strategy to attract attention to the phrase starting with "*LEGO,*".

By repeatedly drawing on specific linguistic and visual elements across these posts whilst also foregrounding LEGO, Greenpeace anchors them within a unified communicative strategy, thereby creating a sense of seriality. Within this serial construction, Greenpeace weaves the overall narrative by assuming the role of narrative authority, which allows it to reframe LEGO's visibility by presenting it not as a playful, imaginative, and ethically aware company, but rather as the campaign's subject of concern, which is at a moral crossroads between its brand and the implications of its corporate partnership. By doing so, Greenpeace not only manages to effectively recontextualise LEGO's brand within a new ideological frame, as, within this narrative, LEGO's hegemonic framing as a beacon of creativity, child welfare, and sustainability is reframed as a symbol of corporate complicity, but also creates a counter-narrative which disrupts LEGO's dominant cultural positioning. As such, this reframing of LEGO's functions as a strategic communicative move on Greenpeace's end, as by creating a counter-narrative in which they take control, they are able to shift LEGO's visibility from being the curated and desirable front-stage the corporation wants the public to perceive, and relocate it within their own narrative contestation, which allows them to present the brand's obscured back-stage practices that the campaign wants to public to be aware of.

However, it is how Greenpeace reframes LEGO that is arguably the most compelling aspect of its multimodal strategy. While corporate controversies are often framed through discourses of moral or legal wrongdoing, in which corporations are criticised for unethical or

illegal actions, the campaign departs from this approach. Rather than villainising LEGO for being complicit in Shell's destruction of the Arctic, the campaign constructs a narrative that frames LEGO more as a misguided actor caught in a manipulative relationship with Shell, who uses LEGO's innocent front-stage to cover up its own unethical back-stage, as evidenced through repeated discursive patterns across the posts, such as "*LEGO, the Arctic needs you*", "*LEGO, don't turn to the dark side*" and "*LEGO, how will you rebuild what Shell destroys?*" which function as imperatives cloaked in appeals, directly addressing LEGO and asking it to consider the consequences of partnering with Shell, not only regarding the destruction of the Arctic but also the destruction of LEGO's own brand.

This framing is further reinforced in the campaign's specific selection of lexical choices in its posts, as phrases such as "*LEGO, the Arctic needs you*" carry strong presuppositions, as by stating that the Arctic "*needs*" LEGO's help, it assumes that the Arctic is already in danger and that LEGO has the power to intervene, with it decision further carrying significant ethical weight. Similarly, the phrase "*LEGO, don't turn to the dark side*" employs intertextuality by drawing on a widely recognisable pop-cultural reference from the *Star Wars* franchise, thereby not only utilising the cultural weight of the *Star Wars* franchise's binary opposition between "good" and "evil" but also tapping into a shared cultural narrative that simplifies the complexity of the situation, turning a complex ethical debate into accessible moral terms. Thus, by utilising phrases such as "*the dark side*", Greenpeace frames LEGO's partnership with Shell as a moral failing, which not only encourages viewers to interpret the issue through their context models relating to the familiar cultural lens of the struggle between "good" and "evil", but also serves to reduce the campaign's risk of appearing ambiguous, thereby making it easier for viewers to take a stance and align with the campaign's call to action.

However, apart from its intertextual function, the phrase "*LEGO, don't turn to the dark side*" also engages in dialogism, as it conveys a direct plea to LEGO and thus creates a pseudo-

conversation between the corporation and the campaign. It is within the creation of this dialogic structure that Greenpeace adopts the role of a concerned party and ethical advisor, who, while expressing grave concern about LEGO's partnership, also seeks to hold the corporation accountable for its role in Shell's environmentally destructive practices. By doing so, the campaign further invites the viewer to become an active participant in this ethical debate, as its direct address echoes the broader moral discourse and its consequences, not only regarding the Arctic but also LEGO's established brand. Yet, by framing the phrase as a plea rather than an accusation, the campaign suggests that LEGO still has agency and a choice in this matter, thereby reinforcing its framing of LEGO not as a villain, but as a potentially redeemable actor who still has time to do the right thing. This framing is further reinforced by the NGO's interactions with viewers in the comment sections of these Facebook posts (Figure A2), where a user questions whether LEGO should not be further scrutinised due to its products being made of plastic, to which Greenpeace responds by defending LEGO by highlighting the corporation's existing sustainability goals and environmental initiatives. By doing so, Greenpeace not only shields LEGO from total moral condemnation but also effectively redirects the viewer's focus back to the more urgent issue of LEGO's partnership with Shell.

Yet, while the discursive elements play a crucial role in presenting the narrative Greenpeace seeks to advance, their intentions are not solely expressed through discourse-reliant claims. While the texts serve to guide the viewers' interpretation of the issue raised in the campaign by anchoring the visual content within a specific ideological perspective, thereby prompting them to read the visuals not merely as playful LEGO scenery but as metaphors for environmental crises and corporate irresponsibility, it is ultimately the visual elements and their construction that predominantly carry the campaign's narrative and ideological framing.

When looking across the data set (Figure A1), one of the most noticeable visual strategies is the placement of the participants within the compositional layout of the posts, with one

of the most prominent elements, apart from the aforementioned embedded text, banner and logos, being the LEGO figures and the Arctic animals, who are consistently placed in the foreground. By strategically placing these within a close social distance to the viewer within the image's frame, Greenpeace not only draws attention to who and what is involved in the issue at hand but also creates a sense of intimacy, which further invites the viewer to emotionally engage with the participants as figures deserving of empathy. The distressed facial expressions of the LEGO figures and the vulnerable positions of the Arctic animals further position them as emotionally accessible figures, reinforcing this strategic emotional engagement by encouraging viewers to listen and care about the message that these participants are trying to convey. Thus, by enabling viewers to relate to the participants on an emotional level, the campaign not only makes it easier for them to take a stance on the issue without requiring extensive background knowledge, but also turns a complex political and environmental issue into relatable concerns.

This emotional engagement is further intensified through the visual contrast between the participants and the threat they face. One notable aspect of the various posts is that while the LEGO figures, banners, oil rigs, and other extractive infrastructure are constructed in the visual language of LEGO, the Arctic animals, along with the landscape, are rendered using realistic, photoshopped imagery. By creating this stark visual construct, the campaign highlights that while Shell remains distanced and abstracted through its association with LEGO's playful brand, the consequences of the company's actions are very real. Therefore, despite the campaign's whimsical aesthetic in which the threat appears as toy-like, the victims of this situation still suffer grave real-life consequences, reinforcing Greenpeace's ideological message that, despite Shell hiding behind LEGO's innocent, child-friendly brand, the corporation's environmental impact is serious and devastating.

The visuals thus extend the campaign's ideological positioning, with LEGO serving as the medium for public engagement, while Shell remains the concealed antagonist operating in the shadows. However, through its visual composition, Greenpeace effectively pulls Shell's obscured, environmentally destructive actions into the limelight, as evident in its posts such as the one featuring LEGO figures representing Marvel and DC heroes and villains, with the villains appearing physically alongside and symbolically aligned with Shell's destruction of the Arctic.

(From Figure A1)

By aligning Shell with well-known antagonists such as the Joker, Mr. Freeze, and Doctor Doom, who in their own universes are associated with chaos, coldness, and destruction, Greenpeace once again reinforces its narrative portrayal of Shell as not merely an oil company, but an antagonistic force that not only threatens the destruction of the Arctic but also corrupts the LEGO brand.

Interestingly, the overall selection of characters Greenpeace uses throughout the campaign is not incidental, as although they might seem randomly chosen at first glance, these

choices serve as a deliberate part of Greenpeace's visual strategy to ensure attention and engagement. When looking across the Facebook posts, the characters within them span across not only various franchises but also decades, with the Obi-Wan Kenobi figure originating from a *Star Wars* LEGO set from 2002, the Harry Potter figure stemming from the 2010 *Lego Harry Potter: Years 1–4* console game, and the superhero and villain LEGO figures being from various LEGO sets from the 2010s. By using this broad selection of widely recognisable and beloved characters, it allows the campaign to tap into the viewer's sense of nostalgia, whilst also leveraging the cultural associations of these iconic characters to reinforce a clear moral dichotomy.

This dual function of emotional connection and moral structuring is arguably an essential part of Greenpeace's multimodal strategy. As each post contains hyperlinks to a petition site, it is reasonable to assume the campaign's target audience consists of legal adults who have the capacity to sign their names in support of the cause, further aligning with Greenpeace's choice to anchor its campaign on Facebook, whose dominant demographics consist of adults (Tweedie, 2014). Therefore, by utilising these popular and beloved pop-culture figures with specific culturally associated attributes, the visuals not only tap into the viewers' personal and cultural memories but also strengthen their emotional investment, as these figures do not merely function as depictions of plastic toys but rather serve as symbolic stand-ins for familiar moral archetypes. Thus, by utilising these figures to visually associate heroic LEGO figures with Greenpeace and the campaign's cause, and villainous ones with Shell, the campaign reinforces its construction of "good" vs "evil", not only strengthening the sense of injustice surrounding Arctic destruction, but also making it easier for the viewer to take a stance and mobilise into action.

This call to action is further intensified by the construction of gaze within the images. In several of the posts, characters, such as the Harry Potter figure, are positioned with their

gaze being directed directly at the viewer, creating demand images which confront the viewer and demand something of them by further placing some level of ethical responsibility upon them.

(From Figure A1)

Combined with a serious expression, a mix of concern and sadness, and gestures, such as Harry Potter pointing a broken wand toward the viewer, the images convey a plea, emphasising the urgency of the situation and the need for action to save the Arctic. This multimodal message is further reinforced through the embedded text within the image, stating "*LEGO, magic won't be enough to rebuild the Arctic*", which highlights the insufficiency of fantasy solutions when it comes to solving a real-world crisis and thus passes the torch of moral responsibility back to LEGO. As such, the broken wand serves as a symbolic gesture of helplessness, as not even one of the most powerful wizards can undo the damage Shell is inflicting upon the Arctic; only real-world action can.

On the other hand, some images, such as the one featuring a figure of Obi-Wan Kenobi, rely on a different gaze strategy. In this image, the character does not look at the viewer, but instead has his gaze directed downward towards the frozen lightsaber in his hand, which he observes with a visibly furious expression. In this case, we are dealing with an offer image that, instead of demanding something from the viewer, invites them to observe the information presented through the visual elements. Here, the viewer sees that even the most powerful figures, such as Obi-Wan Kenobi, are rendered helpless as the looming oil rig continues to drill in the background, once again reinforcing the severity of the situation. Unlike demand images, this type of composition conveys a sense of loss and powerlessness, further prompting the viewer to reflect on the broader implications of Shell's environmentally destructive actions, which not even the most powerful and heroic characters can stand against.

Yet, despite altering the visual strategy between demand and offer images, the ultimate goal remains the same, which is not only to publicly expose the unfulfillment of LEGO's promissory character and make the viewers react to this deception through mobilising response, but also to make LEGO take accountability for breaking its promised virtues through its complicity in Shell's environmentally destructive actions. This exposé is further developed in Greenpeace's YouTube video, *"LEGO: Everything is NOT Awesome*," (Figure A3) which draws on similar multimodal elements found in the Facebook posts to further expose the beneath, being LEGO's environmentally damaging practices lurking under its sustainability rhetoric, and highlight tensions of the between, being LEGO's hegemony and the emerging contestation of its internal brand contradictions, to construct a story that bets on the potential future consequences of LEGO's complicity in Shell's destruction of the Arctic.

The video opens to a peaceful, idyllic LEGO Arctic, showcasing scenes of Arctic wildlife and LEGO townies living side by side in harmony, with huskies and polar bears undisturbed in the wild, while the LEGO figures engage in various winter activities in their little town, all

bathed in soft light. These dreamlike visuals are further enhanced by a gentle piano cover of the "Everything is Awesome" song from *The LEGO Movie* (2014), which adds to the joyful, innocent atmosphere. However, at 00:13:52, the visual narrative begins to shift as Shell silently enters the frame, passively appearing in the background through blurry visuals of Shell workers arriving in the Arctic with their oil trucks and drilling equipment. This shift becomes even more pronounced at 00:18:00, as Shell makes its first direct entrance into the frame, with the camera quickly pans past an ample, dark, and blurry oil rig occupying the foreground, while the drill team slowly makes its way into the town in the background. Here we see how Shell shifts from being a passive background presence to becoming an active participant in the visual narrative, as the drill team's advancement into the Arctic marks the onset of the material process of environmental destruction. This gradual shift further serves as a crucial visual strategy in advancing the video's narrative, as the initial peaceful and joyful Arctic scenes slowly give way to uncertainty, with the viewer becoming increasingly aware of Shell's looming presence in the background.

This sense of uncertainty only continues to grow as the previously backgrounded drilling team moves to the foreground, showcasing smiling Shell oil truck drivers, Arctic explorers, and scientists who begin drilling directly in the town square. The fact that the figures are shown wearing these happy expressions only further contributes to the uneasiness of the scene, as it frames the figures not as reluctant participants but as active, and even gleeful, actors in the destruction of the Arctic. The combination of the upbeat expressions with the destructive nature of their actions creates a strong sense of emotional dissonance, which only becomes further reinforced as it is also precisely in this moment that the vocals start, proclaiming the iconic line from the movie, "*Everything is awesome*,", which while expressing the same optimism as they did in the film, is paired with striking visuals of environmental intrusion and disruption. Thus, by creating such a jarring contrast between what is shown and what is heard, the prior sense of

uncertainty shifts to eeriness, as the iconic lines, which normally are used to express joy and optimism, now feel hollow and eerily detached from the visual elements.

This emotional tension is further emphasised at 00:31:44, which showcases a particularly salient moment as the "camera" lingers on a LEGO businessman standing confidently on an oil rig, smirking as he watches the drilling commence. This moment is especially crucial not only because of the visual elements, but also because these visuals are accompanied by the only lyrical change in the entire song: the shift from "*When we're living our dream*" to "*When you're living on a dream*". This shift in pronoun usage overlaps meaningfully with the visuals, as the lexical choices change from "*we*" and "*our*", which typically suggest inclusivity and something that is shared within a community, to "*you*", thus resulting in ideological distancing.

The visual "*you*" is represented through the businessman, who serves as a symbolic stand-in for the corporate power that thrives on this "dream," while others suffer the consequences. This is highlighted through the metaphor of "*living **on** a dream*", which suggests the dream is detached from reality and unsustainable, as it is merely living on borrowed time, further highlighting the future consequences of Arctic destruction. The businessman's actions, such as his smug disregard for safety regulations, symbolised by his smoking next to a "no-smoking" sign, further become a powerful metaphor for how corporations overlook consequences and are willing to overstep rules, ethics, and, in this case, environmental responsibilities in favour of profit. However, when it comes to the discursive "*you*", it targets an external subject, which, in this case, could be either Shell, which profits from the environmental destruction of the Arctic, or LEGO, which is complicit in these actions through its inaction.

As the frame then shifts away from the businessman, black oil begins to emerge from the ground, spilling into the LEGO water, with ocean life sinking lifelessly into the dark waters, before spreading into the blurry background, which becomes clearer as the oil spillage rapidly picks up speed. Within seconds, viewers helplessly watch as the Arctic landscape becomes

submerged in oil, with distressed Arctic wildlife, horrified townies, and iconic characters disappearing into the liquid void. These figures are strongly passivated, serving not as active actors but as affected participants who become victims of Shell's corporate actions and, through their emotional response, contribute to the emotional degradation as the visuals have progressed from innocent and joyful to grotesque. This emotional devastation is then further emphasised by the continued repetition of "*Everything is awesome*", playing in the background as these horrifying acts take place, demonstrating how, by retaining most of the original lyrics, Greenpeace effectively weaponises the phrase and recontextualises a beloved cultural artefact by turning it into a powerful tool for ideological critique. Thus, what was once an anthem celebrating joy and community becomes an accusation of corporate negligence and greenwashing.

This all culminates at 01:17:08, as the last piece of the Arctic landscape, a white LEGO brick, slowly becomes submerged in the oil until it completely disappears from view, and the screen turns dark, leaving the viewer to sit in the face of visual emptiness. This final sequence operates not only as a literal ending to the narrative and the campaign's message, but also as a powerful visual metaphor for the reputational risk Greenpeace argues LEGO faces. The symbolic drowning of the LEGO brick in oil thus serves as the campaign's suggestion of LEGO's becoming, by looking into the open-ended, ongoing transformation of LEGO's storytelling, if the corporation were to retain its partnership with Shell. Greenpeace thus not only tells, but also shows LEGO that, by continuing its commercial partnership, the corporation will inevitably risk facing persona collapse, as Shell's conduct will serve as an extension of LEGO's, becoming part of the corporation's public performance, yet greatly clash with said performance. Greenpeace's campaign thus disrupts LEGO's curated front-stage image by exposing this inconsistency, further exerting pressure on LEGO's inherent positive visibility by turning its partnership into a stigmatised attribute that threatens to discredit LEGO in the public's eyes.

As the camera then slowly rises above the oil, 01:29:06, the only thing that remains visible above it is a singular LEGO flag with Shell's logo on it, while the last lyrics "*Everything is awesome, when you're living on a dream*" slowly fade out with the music, and the text "*Shell is polluting our kids' imagination*" appears next to the flag, serving as a sharp culmination of the campaign's multimodal critique. This message ultimately serves a dual function, as it, on one hand, reinforces the campaign's consistent narrative portrayal of Shell as a villain who is not only responsible for the destruction of the Arctic, but also for the symbolic corruption of something as sacred as childhood innocence and creativity, while also operating as a direct call-out to LEGO, whose brand is deeply rooted in values of child welfare, sustainability, and building a better future for children. Thus, by stating that Shell is "*polluting our kids' imagination*", Greenpeace ultimately highlights the incompatibility between the oil corporation's destructive practices and LEGO's aspirational branding, whilst also pointing out that if LEGO were to continue this partnership, the corporation would not only undermine its own missions but also betray the very audiences it claims to care about. The video then pans away from the flag as the music comes to an end, leaving both visually and audibly nothing behind but one last textual message in the emptiness: "*Tell LEGO to end its partnership with Shell*".

Ultimately, Greenpeace's campaign demonstrates how activists can utilise multimodal cross-platform communication to create powerful artificial myths that rework corporate visibility by leveraging the corporation's already meaningful signs, such as its brand, visual language, and its products, and giving them an additional ideological meaning. Thus, while a LEGO figure normally serves as a sign of childhood, creativity, and innocence, Greenpeace's strategic use of these corporate mascots transforms them into signs of threatened nature, corporate irresponsibility, and endangered childhood futures. This strategic reworking highlights

how corporate visibility also functions as a vulnerability, enabling activists to directly challenge corporations by leveraging their already circulating, well-recognised cultural symbols that exist within the public spaces of the digital sphere.

Yet, although the campaign targets LEGO, Greenpeace does not seek total public condemnation of the corporation. Instead, while the NGO aims to hold LEGO accountable for its possible complicity, or at least its inaction regarding Arctic destruction, it is Shell that ultimately bears the brunt of the campaign. As demonstrated in the analysis, Greenpeace works to position Shell as the main antagonist, framing it not only as a villain whose actions destroy the Arctic but also as a problematic actor that exploits the positive images of its partners to hide its destructive practices, while also profiting from their partnership. As such, while mainly focusing on LEGO, Greenpeace also draws attention to Shell, whose public corporate visibility is relatively low compared to LEGO's, thereby making the public more aware of the issues associated with Shell alone. By doing so, Greenpeace frames Shell as a stigmatised actor, by deeply discrediting its actions in the viewer's eyes, and whose stigma risks being transmitted to LEGO, posing a reputational threat that could discredit LEGO in the public's eyes.

Therefore, Greenpeace's framing of LEGO as an actor who still has time to do the right thing not only provides the corporation with a strategic out but also puts it under immense public pressure, as by publicly demonstrating how LEGO is still able to make the right choice by severing its partnership with Shell, viewers expect LEGO do so, as they expect the corporation to live up its promissory character on which its very visibility is built. Thus, while Greenpeace appears to extend an olive branch to the corporation, the NGO also creates a multimodal trap that forces LEGO to either comply with its demands or risk getting labelled as a hypocrite who is not only unable to, but also does not care, about fulfilling its promissory character, thereby destabilising the corporation's visibility as all the carefully placed bricks that make up its corporate visibility all come tumbling down.

Unmasking Maersk: A Campaign Exposing Militarised Logistics

In 2024, the Palestinian Youth Movement (PYM) launched its strategic sub-campaign, *Mask Off Maersk* (MOM), as part of its broader initiative *Cut Ties with Genocide,* in which they criticised the corporation for its ongoing logistical support to the Israeli military amid the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Although the campaign was initially distributed through the organisation's main digital channels, it ultimately became anchored on a dedicated website bearing the same name as the campaign, as well as a curated Instagram account which served to extend the website's message. Going forward, the analysis will focus on the front page of the MOM website (Figure A4), along with selected posts from the campaign's Instagram account (Figure A5), which all collectively urge viewers to take action against Maersk's unethical practices, which hide behind a curated mask of corporate responsibility and ethical logistics.

Upon examining the website's opening segment, one of its immediate and most striking features is a large illustration of one of Maersk's iconic shipping containers, which further has highly saturated blood splattered across its surface, thus contrasting sharply against the website's otherwise predominantly monochrome background. This foregrounded salience of this large and shockingly gruesome welcome not only serves as a strategic way to immediately grab the viewer's attention upon entering the website, but also visually asserts the campaign's core ideological stance from the get-go: Maersk's corporate visibility is marked by blood.

(From Figure A4)

This strategic direction of attention, which also marks the introduction of the campaign's narrative and message, is further supported by the website's limited colour palette. Apart from the illustration, the page predominantly consists of white text on a black background, which only emphasises the striking contrast between the brutal title image and the website's pitch-black background, thus strategically guiding the viewer's attention through visual minimalism, where the absence of colour variation makes any deviation highly noticeable. As such, the combination of this heightened contrast and the compositional emphasis thus renders the image hypervisible, whilst also encouraging the viewer to engage with it and figure out what the campaign is trying to communicate through it.

However, beyond the intense colour saturation and stark contrast serving as a strategic way for the campaign to capture the viewer's attention, the design of this visual disruption further carries deep semiotic implications. In design, colours typically function as more than just mere aesthetic elements, as they are also known to operate as powerful semiotic signs which each carry specific cultural connotations and symbolic meanings. As such, they also carry specific expectations for when and how they are used. Thus, by specifically presenting a

white Maersk container, viewers may draw on their context models regarding colour and therefore expect Maersk's visibility to align with the colours' familiar cultural associations, such as cleanliness and honesty. Yet, this expectation is then immediately disrupted by the visceral splattering of highly saturated blood across the container's surface, which bleeds across Maersk's logo and thus violates its clean aesthetic. This serves as a crucial visual strategy of MOM's reframing of Maersk, as not only does the use of such vivid red against a predominantly monochrome frame draw the viewer's attention and prompt them to reflect on what this visual disruption tells them about Maersk and its corporate practices, but it also takes an already meaningful sign, being the iconic container, and infuses it with dystopian connotations. Thus, while the iconic shipping unit normally serves as an extension of Maersk's visibility, symbolising responsibility, ethical leadership, and uprightness, the campaign appropriates and subverts it, transforming it into a powerful visual metaphor for the blood on the corporation's "hands", which directly links its logistical practices with the outcome of supporting military violence.

This critical reading of Maersk and its actions is further emphasised by the image's composition, in which gaze, or rather its lack thereof, serves a strategic role in MOM's positioning of the viewer in relation to the corporation and its role in the issue at hand. Rather than presenting Maersk through a human participant, such as a CEO, spokesperson, or employee, the corporation is represented solely through the blood-stained shipping container. By substituting a human participant for a corporate object, the campaign actively prevents any form of mutual engagement between the subject and the viewer, thereby effectively denying them the opportunity to humanise or emotionally engage with the corporation. As such, the titlepage illustration thus functions as an offer image that solely positions the viewer as an observer to

the information that is being presented to them, ensuring that they maintain an emotional distance from Maersk, whilst also prompting them to evaluate the subject that is presented to them, rather than empathising with it.

MOM's choice to further place the container at a long social distance within the viewer's field of view further reinforces this depersonalisation. As previously established, the container is not only the first but also the sole image the viewer encounters upon entering the website, given the illustration's size, which occupies most of the digital frame. Yet, despite containers being physically quite large in a real-world setting, the viewer can see it in its entirety, indicating they are positioned far enough away from the object to do so. As such, the subject is presented as a distant and impersonal element within the frame, thereby reinforcing the campaign's strategic positioning of the viewer as it prevents them from viewing the corporation with a sense of familiarity or empathy, and instead encourages them to interpret it through a lens of emotional detachment and judgement.

Thus, by strategically choosing to solely represent Maersk through object-based imagery, MOM not only manages to ensure the removal of any relational involvement that might cloud the viewer's judgement, but also effectively shatters Maersk's front-stage image of corporate neutrality upon which its visibility is built. As such, the overall composition of the image echoes the campaign's broader ideological stance and its framing of Maersk within it: Maersk is a corporation that needs to be held accountable and morally judged for its actions.

Yet while the website's visual and compositional strategies play a significant role in establishing the campaign's ideological stance, they do so primarily through implication and affect. Rather than making specific, direct claims, PYM utilises the website's images and visual layout to influence how the viewer understands and emotionally relates to the message it conveys, with its metaphors guiding the viewer towards adopting a particular perspective. How-

ever, while the visual modes serve to position the viewer ideologically through the use of metaphors, the discursive elements on the website instead adopt a far more explicit and direct communicative strategy not only regarding the viewer's position in this campaign, but also their framing of Maersk and its role in the ongoing conflict.

Upon scrolling past the initial front-page image, the viewer encounters a markedly different section of the website, which, apart from a video that, despite providing the viewer with further information on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and Maersk's role in fuelling this conflict through its logistical support, will not be included in the present analysis, is predominantly comprised of text. In comparison to the immersive visual impact of the website's opening image, this section initially appears less engaging and even dull, as most of the discursive elements are presented in a stark monochrome palette comprised of white text against a black background. Yet, despite the initial perception of visual minimalism, some textual features stand out sharply against the rest, most notably the statements, "*We call for a People's Arms Embargo NOW!*" and "*Maersk Cut Ties with Genocide!*", which are both highlighted by a highly saturated and vivid red outline.

This intense contrast between the outlined text and the otherwise monochrome background serves as a way to strategically infuse these phrases with a sense of heightened awareness and moral weight, as they visually outweigh the other discursive elements present on the page, further ensuring that the viewers encounter the campaign's core mission and message, "*Maersk Cut Ties With Genocide!*", before engaging with any of the surrounding content. However, apart from these imperative statements functioning as discursive assertions, they also function as a means of anchoring the viewer's initial perception of the initial front-page image. By stating that Maersk needs to "*Cut Ties With Genocide!*" the campaign directly informs the viewers of Maersk's involvement within the issue and thus narrows down the image's ambiguity, thereby ensuring that the viewer interprets the blood splatter on the container not as a

generic symbol of violence but specifically as a representation of Maersk's complicity in the genocide against the Palestinian people. As such, these highlighted statements not only reinforce the emotional tone set by the website's visuals but also further guide the viewers towards a particular ideological reading thereof.

Another interesting thing to note is that the first of the two statements uses inclusive language by using "*we*". On the one hand, the use of "*we*" can be read as the campaign's initiators, PYM, referring to themselves to state their intentions. However, on the other hand, the function of this "*we*" can also be argued to extend beyond simply drawing attention to the organisation behind this message, as the "*we*" also includes the viewer, who is reading this statement. As such, by choosing to use an inclusive pronoun, the campaign strategically removes the distance between itself and the viewer, positioning them not as mere passive recipients of the information the campaign presents them with, but rather as implied participants in this cause. The viewer is therefore not asked to join the cause, but is instead assumed to be part of it, advancing the campaign's motivational framing through a sense of collective agency.

Furthermore, as seen scattered throughout this section, there are multiple short phrases that have all been framed within rectangular boxes, outlined in white and filled with the same saturated red as seen in the simulated blood on the front page, thus immediately breaking from the surrounding monochrome elements. By examining the discursive contents of these highlighted boxes, it further becomes apparent that these are not meant to offer the viewer information in the same way as the visual elements on the website, but that these instead use imperative language to directly address the viewer, issuing demands such as "*TAKE ACTION NOW*", "*ENDORSE*", "*SEND A LETTER*" and "*SIGN THE PETITION*". These highlighted boxes, therefore, serve not only as a visual interruption to maintain the viewer's attention, but also as a continued, urgent discursive call to action, which piques viewers' interest in what exactly is being demanded of them and why it is so urgent.

Having been addressed directly, the viewer is then encouraged to seek clarification on why the campaign is calling them to action and what, precisely, they are being called to action against. It is then that this curiosity draws their eye to the website's headers, which not only appear right above the highlighted boxes but are also visually prioritised through slightly larger, emboldened text. Yet, apart from the slight enlargement of the headers directing the viewer's attention to the most central information on the website, these headers also play a crucial role in the campaign's discursive strategy by explicitly informing the viewer of what the campaign is fighting against and why: Maersk, which serves as an active perpetrator in the ongoing conflict.

> The Palestinian Youth Movement's campaign to Cut Ties with Genocide is a fight against Maersk, one of the world's largest shipping and logistics companies that directly ships military cargo that facilitate Israel's genocide against the Palestinian people.

By using words and phrases such as "*genocide*", "*military*", and "*fight against*", the statement constructs a straightforward narrative that positions Maersk as a complicit actor that "*directly ships military cargo that facilitates Israel's genocide*". This latter part of the statement further plays a crucial role in the campaign's reframing of Maersk's corporate visibility, as it not only draws attention to the corporation's physical role in shipping cargo but also directly connects these shipments to an essential component of warfare, being the military supply chain. Furthermore, by incorporating the description of Maersk as "*one of the world's largest shipping and logistics companies*", the campaign actively reminds viewers that Maersk is not merely some minor corporation whose contributions have had equally minor effects on the ongoing conflict, but instead one of the largest shipping and logistics giants in the global trade networks, whose

involvement can lead to devastating results for the survival of the Palestinian people. Thus, by strategically reminding the viewer of the corporation's immense global reach and power, which further constitutes part of its visibility, the campaign not only places a significant burden of responsibility upon Maersk's shoulders but also raises the viewer's expectations of its corporate moral accountability.

This reframing of Maersk only becomes more intensified as the viewer scrolls through the page, as a following header states:

> Maersk is one of the most profitable companies on earth, with money soaked in the blood of over 40,000 Palestinian martyrs. It is involved in all aspects of the supply chain of death - bringing military cargo to arms companies for assembly and shipping cargo to Israel from the US.

In this header, the campaign expands on the initial reframing of Maersk's visibility, drawing attention not only to its status as one of the largest corporations in the global trade network but also to its status as "*one of the most profitable companies on earth*". By doing so, the campaign connects the corporation's scale and profitability to its moral accountability, as "profit" becomes discursively tied to violence and death, which is made further explicit through the metaphor, "*money soaked in the blood of over 40,000 Palestinian martyrs*". The header thus serves as another crucial part of MOM's reframing of Maersk's visibility, as it draws attention to the profit Maersk derives from shipping military cargo into an active conflict zone, thereby shifting the corporation from being part of the military supply chain to being part of the "*supply chain of death*". Through this reframing, the campaign thus effectively strips away any perceived neutrality associated with its corporate visibility and reframes its core business model as fundamentally violent.

Yet, while these headers play a crucial role in reframing Maersk's visibility, they are equally significant regarding how the campaign's initiators, PYM, establish the role of the Palestinian people and, by extension, themselves within this narrative and the broader conflict. By looking up the organisation, it is described as made up of "*young Palestinians in Palestine and in exile worldwide*" (GGJ Alliance, n.d.), establishing a close tie between the initiators and the conflict, yet still not revealing much about their role in the MOM campaign. However, one particular lexical choice, which might go unnoticed at first, serves as a crucial aspect of PYM's framing of themselves: the word "*martyrs*". Unlike more neutral lexical choices such as "deaths" or "casualties", the term "martyr" is deeply ideologically loaded, as it carries connotations not only of victimhood but also sacrifice, as is noted in the word's official definition: "*a person who suffers very much or is killed because of their religious or political beliefs, and is often admired because of it*" (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.). As such, the deceased are positioned as individuals who have died for a cause, in this case, the liberation and survival of the Palestinian people. By using this lexical choice, the campaign thus establishes a moral binary within its narrative construction, in which PYM and the Palestinian people, who are represented by their martyrs, occupy the role of the righteous and oppressed, fighting against Maersk, which serves as the antagonist aligned with capitalist greed, militarism, and injustice.

Ultimately, these strategically highlighted discursive elements, whether it be through colour or size, function to provide the viewers with the campaign's core ideological information and action-oriented content, even if they do not engage with the longer surrounding paragraphs. As such, while the website's larger bodies of text expand on the conflict and the campaign's stance within it, they are, overall, rendered supplementary rather than essential, as the campaign conveys all the necessary information and directives for action through the viewer's engage-

ment with the highlighted textual elements alone. This further enables PYM to provoke immediate alignment with their cause and mobilise viewers into action without relying on extensive reasoning, which ultimately serves as a crucial part of tackling the time-sensitive issue at hand.

As the viewer then continues to traverse through the website, they once again encounter a purely visual segment featuring a moving image of a Maersk ship sailing steadily across the ocean. Yet, despite the image mirroring the previous object-focused approach as seen in the opening segment, the visual elements surrounding the ship mark a notable shift from the front-page illustration, with one of its most noticeable aspects being the image's rendering through a grainy green filter and the frames' rounded black borders. Upon closer examination, it quickly becomes clear how the combination of these visual modes constructs a field of view one would typically associate with looking through a pair of goggles.

(From Figure A4)

However, due to the additional elements in the image's composition, such as white crosshairs, directional markers, and numerical overlays, the campaign does not merely construct a view associated with just any type of goggles. Instead, the strategic combination of these visual ele-

ments functions to replicate the distinctive perspective of a specific, well-known piece of military equipment: night-vision goggles. As such, the image's visual movement creates the illusion that the vessel is being followed in real time, thereby shifting the image from a mere illustration of a sailing ship into a moving target under the campaign's focused surveillance. This image thus serves as a crucial aspect of the campaign's ongoing reframing of Maersk's visibility, as it combines one of Maersk's ships with widely recognisable military visuals, thereby anchoring MOM's discursive reframing of Maersk as a militarised actor.

This reframing is further reinforced through the image's interactive dimension. By applying the visual logic of night-vision goggles, the campaign further advances its accusatory narrative, as, based on the fact that night-vision goggles are designed to monitor activities that would otherwise remain hidden, MOM actively shows the viewer, who is positioned as the operator sitting behind the goggles, that Maersk's actions were not only concealed from the public but deliberately done so. This accusation is further supported by the previously mentioned leaked bills of lading, which exposed Maersk's shipments of military cargo in the first place, as, due to the reports being leaked rather than officially released, it is implied that this information was never meant to become public knowledge. As such, by strategically incorporating the highly recognisable visual elements of the night-vision goggles, the campaign frames Maersk as a morally compromised actor, whose deliberate concealment of its actions not only suggests an awareness of breaking its promissory character, but also a continued act of uncare despite the potential risk of persona collapse.

This illustration, along with the reframing of Maersk that PYM communicates through it, prepares the ground for the campaign's culminating assertion, which, utilising the prior saturated red highlights to draw the viewer's attention, appears directly beneath the image: "*The mask is off. The people must demonstrate what the true cost is of supporting genocide.*". It is especially the first part of this statement, "*The mask is off*", that serves as a pivotal moment in

the website's ideological path, as it not only demonstrates how the campaign has now fully exposed the corporation's back-stage, but also the irreversible nature of this exposé.

Throughout the website, PYM has strategically been chipping away at Maersk's curated visibility, built on corporate responsibility and ethical logistics, utilising every image, statement, and imperative on the website as a means of targeting the contradictions between Maersk's public performance, and its concealed back-stage actions, thereby gradually stripping away the corporation's curated front to expose the violent reality that lurks behind it. Therefore, as this mask is removed, PYM metaphorically drags the corporation out of the darkness and into the limelight, showing the public how Maersk does not fulfil its promissory character. This exposé not only threatens to destabilise Maersk's visibility, as it demonstrates how its public perception is built on deception, but also puts the corporation under immense pressure, as the viewers no longer serve as mere observers of its performance, but as witnesses who now seek to hold the corporation accountable for its lies, as showcased by the latter part of the statement, "*The people must demonstrate what the true cost is of supporting genocide.*", which moves beyond exposure and into the domain of consequence: Maersk must not only face the consequences of its involvement in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but also of deceiving the very audience who plays a significant part in contributing to its visibility.

The campaign then goes on to list its demands, which are as follows:

> 1. Stop transporting military cargo complicit in the genocide of the Palestinian people.
> 2. Terminate all contracts that support war and genocide, including Maersk's contract with the US Department of Defense and the Israeli Ministry of Defense

This final section of the website thus serves as the campaign's ideological climax, where all the visual and discursive strategies culminate into a direct, urgent call to action. Having reached the bottom of the website, the viewers have been carefully guided through a narrative, which first diagnoses Maersk as a problematic actor, as evident through the campaign's continuous visual and discursive reframing of Maersk from an ethical logistics provider to an unethical actor complicit in militarised violence, and then suggests a prognosis based on this diagnosis consisting of the viewer, along with the collective agency in which they have been integrated, carrying out the campaign's demands as a means of " *demonstrat[ing] what the true cost is of supporting genocide"*. Thus, having been emotionally activated and morally positioned, the campaign then motivates the viewers into mobilisation by presenting the website's final imperative, "*TAKE ACTION NOW*", which mirrors the first imperative encountered on the website, yet now has all prior ambiguity removed, as the campaign has now equipped the viewer with the necessary information and means to join MOM's fight against militarised logistics that attempts to hide behind a mask of ethical neutrality.

However, despite having reached the end of the campaign's website, the viewer has not yet reached the end of the campaign's narrative. Beneath the site's final imperative, located in the website's footer, the viewer encounters a set of textual elements, including the campaign's logo, its direct contact point, and, most importantly, a collection of hyperlinks that extends the campaign's digital presence to affiliated platforms, including its Instagram account, *maskoff_maersk*. This account is particularly important, as it plays a crucial role in the campaign's cross-platform strategy for disseminating its cause, further utilising aesthetic coherence and thematic continuity as a means of keeping the viewer embedded within the campaign's overarching narrative even as they traverse through different hypertexts and platforms.

However, while the Instagram account continues to build on and disseminate the campaign's overall narrative and cause, it does adjust its communicative strategy thereof. When comparing the Instagram account to the website, it quickly becomes apparent that, unlike the website's balanced interplay between its visual and discursive elements and sections, the Instagram account relies on visual modes as its main form of meaning-making. Yet, this shift is not accidental, but rather demonstrates the campaign's deliberate adaptation to the platform's affordances, which is designed to support fast-paced and image-driven browsing that allows its users to quickly engage with the content (Zulli, 2018). Furthermore, by shifting its communicative strategy, the Instagram account reinforces the website's strategy of guiding viewers to the most significant information through visual prioritisation, which not only allows viewers to easily digest it but also provokes immediate alignment and mobilises them into action without relying on extensive reasoning or knowledge of the issue at hand. However, despite echoing most of the visual strategies of the website, the account further introduces new stylistic and symbolic components across its array of content that expand on the website's initial framing, most notably being the expansion of its thematic colour palette and the introduction of human participants into its imagery, to further optimise its engagement on the fast-paced platform.

To examine how these elements contribute to the continued construction of the campaign's narrative and its reframing of Maersk, the following analysis will thus focus on how the Instagram account constructs its predominantly visual narrative. However, while the vast array of content on the account all plays an important role in this construction, the analysis will predominantly focus on one of the platform's unique features that is particularly well-suited for guiding viewers through this visual narrative: its "pinned post function". Upon entering the campaign's Instagram account, it is quickly apparent that, among the array of content on the page, the campaign has chosen to visually prioritise three specific posts by pinning them above

the rest. By doing so, one could thus argue that the pinned posts function similarly to the website's headers, as they, through visual prioritisation, likewise serve to guide viewers' attention to the campaign's most crucial information. As such, these pinned posts will thus serve as the primary material for the preceding analysis.

(Figure A5)

Following the posts' established sequence, left to right, the first pinned post features a striking illustration of a Maersk ship transporting a container, which is rendered semi-transparent through a blue X-ray aesthetic to reveal an F-35 military fighter jet hidden within. This composition initially echoes the visual metaphor of the website's night-vision imagery, yet takes it a step further, as while the website positions viewers as being able to see part of the corporation's concealed back-stage operations, the X-ray allows them to see directly through Maersk's performance and witness the dangers that hide behind what otherwise would appear as mere logistical conduct. Mirroring the opening segment of the website, using the bloody Maersk container to serve as a representation of Maersk, the post thus continues to build upon the campaign's reframing of the corporation as a militarised actor, in which the addition of the X-ray vision serves as a visual act of ideological unveiling, showing how branding of efficiency

and ethical responsibility hides unethical conduct beneath. Additionally, the container, which the website already infuses with dystopian connotations of violence, is further assigned connotations of secrecy and weaponry, thus transforming the illustration from a simple sign of seamless trade into a Trojan horse for arms.

However, in this case, the container is not the only meaningful sign that becomes subverted within the campaign's narrative construction. As mentioned previously, Instagram extends the website's visual strategy by expanding its thematic colour palette, in this case, with the colour blue, which not only serves a similar function to the website's use of red, due to its equal visual weight guiding viewers' attention to the most essential information, but it also plays a strategic role in the campaign's reframing and anchoring of Maersk's visibility. Yet, upon closer examination, it becomes clear that the blue colour used within the illustration is not just any random shade of blue, but rather the distinctive and trademarked *Maersk Blue*, which has been a core element of Maersk's visibility for decades, as it represents not only the "*brand and legacy but also trust*" (Dreyer-Andersen, 2025). Thus, by utilising this highly recognisable colour across the account's content, showcasing militarised complicity and violations of human rights, the campaign effectively reworks and weaponises a core element of the corporation's visibility and strategically leverages it against itself. Normally, Maersk's blue colour functions as a first-order sign laden with corporate myths of neutrality, efficiency and ethical responsibility, yet by incorporating it in its content, the campaign elevates it to a second-order myth by, similarly to the container, infusing it with dystopian connotations of violence, secrecy, and unethical behaviour. This serves as a crucial part of MOM's overall strategic reframing of Maersk's visibility, as by assigning its already meaningful iconic blue hue an additional meaning, the campaign ensures that viewers not only see the colour blue, but also the deception of Maersk's front-stage performance and the unfulfillment of its promissory character.

Furthermore, by incorporating this part of Maersk's visibility in a critical and accusatory context, such as the first pinned post, the campaign ensures that, in every post where it appears, the colour functions as a semiotic anchor that reinforces the critique of the corporation's presence in the ongoing conflict. Thus, even if PYM were to leave out the corporation's name or logo within the construction of its content, the use of the corporation's iconic hue serves as a strategic visual cue that effectively prevents the corporation from distancing itself from the issue or hiding behind its hegemonic frames of neutrality, as it becomes constantly reconnected to the issue and the campaign's critique. As such, the Instagram account not only utilises Maersk's colour to capture viewer attention, but also reinforces the campaign's ideological pressure by transforming a corporate asset into a recurring symbol of violence and complicity.

The choice to showcase a fully assembled F-35 jet within the container further reinforces this reframing. Apart from the striking illustration and the campaign's strategic use of the corporation's iconic colour, another interesting aspect is the notable divergence between what the viewer is shown and what they are told, as while the illustration shows the jet in full, the caption states that the corporation is "*set to deliver more F-35* ***parts*** *to Israel*". However, while this disconnect between the visual and discursive elements might initially be assumed by viewers to be an accidental misstep that occurred during the post's construction, it is actually a deliberate choice on the campaign's part. By constructing an exaggerated visual presentation of the fully assembled fighter jet rather than just the shipping boxes or parts, the campaign removes any ambiguity that the statement may carry, such as removing the risk of confusing the viewer as to why the delivery of these specific parts constitutes an issue, thereby not only ensuring that the viewer understand the posts context but also visually anchoring the grave consequences these shipments can lead to.

Continuing to follow the visual sequence and moving on to the second pinned post, the viewer then encounters a markedly different genre of post. Unlike the first pinned image, which relies heavily on affect through the construction of visual metaphors, the second post instead presents the viewer with a textual statement regarding MOM's partnership with the *Palestinian BDS National Committee* (BNC). In this statement, MOM informs the viewer that, by entering into a partnership with BNC, the campaign has placed Maersk on BNC's official BDS (*Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions*) list, thereby continuing its narrative condemnation of the corporation and its actions. Yet, while the statement "*logistics giant responsible for transporting military cargo to fuel US-enabled Israel genocide in Gaza*" reinforces this narrative, further echoing the website's highlighting of the corporation's scale and influence to remove ambiguity regarding the severity of its actions, whilst also discursively denying the corporation to claim passive complicity, the most important function of this post is its inclusion of an external source: The BNC.

By drawing attention to the fact that Maersk has not only been publicly denounced by the MOM campaign and, by extension, its initiators, but also by another major political movement, the campaign manages to discursively legitimise itself within the broader activist network, as this announcement lends MOM an added sense of credibility by showcasing how the campaign's critique is not an isolated one. Furthermore, by referencing another globally recognised activist movement, the campaign elevates its critique of the corporation, as the partnership demonstrates that the campaign's accusations against Maersk are not mere fringe claims but an internationally recognised truth. As such, by referencing the BNC and its official BDS list, the campaign not only manages to legitimise itself but also communicates to the viewer that they are not only engaging with a small and isolated initiative, but rather stepping into a shared political space in which there are many who share the same goal. By doing so, the campaign further reinforces the notion of collective agency by demonstrating its alignment with a

global movement united by a common cause, whilst also marking the increasing destabilisation of Maersk's visibility, as the audience witnessing its faltering performance continues to grow.

Moving on to the third and last pinned image, the viewer is once again met with a predominantly visual mode of communication, yet one that is markedly different not only from the first pinned image, but also the website, as while both of these rely on illustrative and object-based metaphors, as well as digitally rendered compositions, the viewer is presented with an actual photograph that contains a human participant. This participant, being an elderly Palestinian man, is depicted as standing in front of the remnants of what appears to be a destroyed building, observing the level of destruction around him. His face is partially turned downwards, and his eyes are averted from the camera, thus creating an offer image that, rather than directly engaging with the viewer, instead invites them to observe the scenery with the man, along with his role in this composition, and reflect on what it is that they are seeing. However, despite initially adopting a more reflective form of engagement, the image's compositional choices do not dilute the emotional gravity of the subject. Through closer examination, it becomes apparent that although the participant initially appears to be placed at a long social distance from the viewer, as evident by the entirety of his body being visible within the frame, he is still placed within a close enough social distance, as well as from an angle that allows the viewer a clear perception of his face, which is marked by sadness and defeat. Thus, while the other pinned posts engages the viewers by creating a sense of urgency and moral outrage, this composition instead invites a quieter, yet more intimate engagement, conveying the loss, powerlessness and vulnerability of the lived experience of the destruction surrounding the participant, further urging the viewer to reflect on the broader implications, as well as the human cost of militarised logistics.

This emotional framing is further reinforced by the backgrounded infrastructural destruction, which symbolically represents the devastation left behind by the military aggression.

Yet, these ruins do not simply serve as a setting within the frame, instead constructing a visual argument, which, paired with the images' incorporated discursive statement, "*NOW IS THE TIME FOR AN ARMS EMBARGO*," not only echoes the website's call for action but also anchors the campaign's ideological message of how the logistics of war have devastating consequences that result in civilian suffering and destruction. As such, the image serves to provide the viewer with visual proof of the narrative MOM pushed across its website and Instagram account: Maersk's operations are no longer grounded in its professed virtues of responsibility, care, and uprightness, but are actively implicated in violence, destruction, and ongoing organisational uncare. Thus, by restating "*NOW IS THE TIME FOR AN ARMS EMBARGO*," the campaign once again urges viewers to bear witness to the real-world devastation and human suffering Maersk's military complicity is causing, further telling them that waiting or remaining passive in this situation is no longer morally tenable.

Ultimately, by examining the three pinned posts together as a whole, the sequence in which they appear reveals how the campaign strategically constructs a visual narrative that, similarly to the website, guides the viewer from initial revelation to moral alignment, and, ultimately, mobilisation. By guiding the viewer from the initial exposure of the violence that Maersk attempts to conceal behind its logistical operations, through witnessing the power of collective action reinforced by international solidarity, to the human consequences of militarised logistics as well as the importance of acting against it, the Instagram not only manages to reinforce the campaign's narrative arc, but also intensifies it through its expanded visual elements. As such, the campaign ensures that when the viewer completes their traversals through the account, and most importantly, these three pinned posts, they are fully integrated within the campaign's mission and are ready to not only aid MOM in the unmasking, but also the overturning of Maersk's unethical operations within the ongoing conflict.

This demonstrates how the Instagram account serves a crucial role in the campaign's cross-platform strategy as it does not simply repeat the website's narrative, but actively intensifies it through its strategic construction of highly ideologically-laden visuals, which extends the website's reframing of Maersk by embedding its visibility, such as its iconic blue hue, shipping containers, and brand values, within visual contexts of violence, human suffering and urgency, which can then be quickly disseminated through the platforms affordances of easy sharing and viral, visual immediacy. Thus, the account not only disseminates and amplifies the campaign's narrative and cause beyond the website's contained structure, but also further transforms viewers into mobilised actors who, in a collective effort with the campaign, disrupt Maersk's hegemonic frames of ethical corporate responsibility on a scale.

Overall, the MOM campaign against Maersk and its involvement in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict demonstrates a powerful case for how activist organisations construct multimodal communication that reworks and leverages corporate visibility to challenge and reframe not only the brand itself, but also its public perception. By taking core elements of Maersk's visibility, such as its containers, ships, and signature colour, which normally exist within the corporation's hegemonic frames of global trustworthiness, ethical logistics, and corporate uprightness, and then situating them within frames of militarised violence, geopolitical complicity, and human suffering, the campaign manages to take the corporation's already meaningful signs and supplying them with an additional meaning based on these new contexts in which they have been placed. As such, while the white container featuring the corporation's iconic blue-starred logo normally serves as a sign of logistical efficiency, global trade, and consumer trust, MOM strategically subverts it, thereby ensuring that, when viewers encounter it, they instead see it as a sign of militarised logistics and corporate deception. This strategic reworking further highlights the vulnerability of corporate visibility in the digital sphere, as activists are

able to take signs that already circulate within it and leverage them against the corporation to amplify corporate failure.

Furthermore, while Maersk's reports of its logistical operations normally serve to demonstrate the corporation's global success and thus strengthen its corporate visibility, it, in this instance, instead becomes the corporation's biggest reputational threat, as it exposes the unfulfillment of its promissory character, which not only underpins its visibility but also the trust its consumers place in it. Therefore, MOM's reframing of Maersk not only destabilises the corporation's visibility as the campaign demonstrates how the corporation's before, the leaked bills of lading, exposes its beneath, its concealed shipments of military cargo to Israel, which reveal the tensions between Maersk's front-stage promises and back-stage operations, but also because the campaign's narrative bets on the corporations organisational storytelling becoming deeply marked by continued uncare. As such, the campaign not only constructs a narrative that condemns the corporation for its unethical actions and willingness to aid other problematic actors, such as the Israeli military, in a gruesome cause, but also because it deceives the public by not possessing the virtues that they put their faith in. This narrative construction of perceived deception further serves as a strategic tool for reorienting the public's perception of Maersk's credibility, which the campaign then utilises to mobilise its viewers to align with the campaign and take action. Thus, the MOM campaign ultimately goes beyond simply criticising Maersk and its actions as well as its attempts at hiding them from the public, as it further manages to reframe the very conditions under which its corporate visibility operates, demonstrating how visibility in the modern digital sphere can be shifted from a powerful strategic assert into a critical liability when contradictions between public promises and concealed actions come to the surface.

Key Findings

Now that both campaigns and their respective data have been examined, this section serves to provide an overview of the key findings. As such, this section summarises the main findings from the analysis, highlighting that despite each campaign and the analysis thereof focused on distinct corporations and causes, it is possible to pinpoint three key points at which the analyses diverge and converge. By highlighting these findings, this section further contributes to the examination and broader discussion of visibility in the modern digital sphere in the preceding section.

Starting off with the first key finding, being the main point of divergence in the analyses, is the difference in the campaigns' approaches to the respective corporations. In the case of Greenpeace, the organisation did not outright condemn LEGO as an inherently unethical or malicious actor; instead, it constructed a narrative framing LEGO more as a well-intentioned brand engaged in a morally questionable partnership, as evidenced by the campaign's defence of the corporation in its Facebook comment section. This suggests that given LEGO's inherently positive visibility and cultural associations, the NGO ultimately chose a more gentle approach, as an otherwise directly aggressive attack might have backfired, due to the corporation's vast following dismissing the campaign critique as activist overreach in favour of prioritising their loyalty to LEGO's predominantly cultural image. Thus, this restrained approach, in which Greenpeace provided an option that allowed the corporation to mostly preserve its reputation while also meeting the campaign's demands, demonstrates how activists must likewise remain aware of visibility's dual nature, as while it provides a powerful tool of resistance, one must still remain wary of alienating audiences whose attachments amplify the risk of dismissal.

In contrast, MOM's approach to Maersk adopts a more confrontational stance, as it frames Maersk as an active and complicit agent in the military supply chain, which enables

Israel's continued suppression, along with its genocide of the Palestinian people. However, similarly to how Greenpeace constructed its approach, the analysis suggests that PYM likewise took the corporation's visibility and cultural recognition into consideration in its construction of MOM. Yet, where LEGO's high levels of positive cultural and public visibility provide it a partial shield against criticism, Maersk's comparatively low public visibility and cultural recognition result in a predominantly neutral public association, in which this very opacity is further leveraged against it. As such, PYM can utilise a highly aggressive approach to contest and put pressure on the corporation, as the risk of public backlash or alienation is reasonably lower due to Maersk's low public visibility, which offers fewer defenders, further amplifying the campaign's accusatory stance whilst also making it easier for the campaign to mobilise viewers into action.

Yet, while the campaigns differ greatly in their approach, they do share two key points of convergence, the first of which, also serving as the second key finding, becomes evident in how both campaigns exploit the corporations' visibility by appropriating and subverting core aspects of the corporations that already circulate within the digital sphere. In the case of Greenpeace, the campaign's multimodal content relied heavily on reworking LEGO's already meaningful signs, such as its bricks, figures, and *The LEGO Movie* theme song, to construct a dystopian narrative about corporate complicity in the destruction of the Arctic. As such, by infusing these culturally significant signs with additional meanings, such as the aforementioned dystopian connotations of corporate uncare, endangered childhood futures, and threatened nature, and then holding them up against LEGO's commitments regarding sustainability, caring, and child-welfare, the campaign effectively intensifies its emotional dissonance by demonstrating how the corporation's commercial partnership with Shell fundamentally contradicts not only the values upon which its visibility is built but also the professed virtues its consumers place their faith in. As such, while LEGO's products, commitments, values, and cultural associations

serve as the very foundation upon which the corporation is built, it ultimately also becomes the very material through which Greenpeace constructs and mobilises its critique.

MOM similarly exploits Maersk's visibility by leveraging the corporation's highly recognisable features, such as its iconic shipping containers, ships, and trademarked signature colour, which constitute core aspects of Maersk's visibility by serving as vessels for its values tied to constant care, uprightness, and consumer trust, and then completely subverting not only their meanings but also the contexts in which they normally appear. Thus, while Maersk's shipping containers usually serve as signs of upholding the trust which their consumers put in them, MOM strategically infuses them with additional meanings of warfare, human suffering, and corporate deception, thereby ensuring that instead of serving as a symbol of public trust, it becomes a reminder of how this trust was broken as they became part of Maersk's militarised logistics.

However, the campaign then goes a step further by also incorporating the information contained in the leaked bills of lading that expose Maersk's shipments of military cargo, such as the F-35 fighter jet parts, to the Israeli military, which apart from serving a crucial role in reframing the corporation's visibility and logistical operations, also becomes utilised in reframing the nature of its low consumer-facing cultural prominence. As such, where the public would presumably not question, if even notice, the corporation's low cultural significance, the campaign constructs a narrative that frames this as a deliberate part of Maersk's strategy to profit from unethical logistical operations without facing public backlash. Thus, by leveraging not only the corporation's symbolic association but also its empirical data, MOM uses the very foundation that constitutes Maersk's visibility and operations to amplify the corporation's moral accountability and reputational risk, and to mobilise critique.

The second point of convergence, along with the third key finding, is that both campaigns employ a form of layered targeting, in which the main source of critique serves as a

strategic proxy to strike the implicit primary targets of the campaigns. In the case of Greenpeace, while the campaign actively targeted LEGO, the campaign's ultimate goal was to get the corporation to cut its commercial relationship with the oil company Shell, which the NGO has campaigned against for decades (Hacke, 2023). However, due to Shell's muted cultural footprint, a campaign directed at the oil company would take substantial time, as it would be increasingly difficult to mobilise viewers against an actor with whom they carry low cultural associations, if any at all. Furthermore, despite the oil company's low cultural recognition, it still holds a position of being one of the most powerful oil companies in the world (Sheposh, 2023), where directly attacking the oil company could risk a prolonged legal battle with Shell's extensive legal team, which could not only delay the campaign's momentum of halting Shell's Arctic oil drilling operations but also risk the NGO losing a substantial amount of both organisational and financial resources.

Thus, a highly culturally visible corporation such as LEGO, which, while not directly involved in Shell's operations, still supports the oil company through its commercial associative ties, becomes the ideal target for the Greenpeace campaign. As previously established, LEGO's corporate visibility holds high levels of cultural recognition and iconicity, which, apart from making the brand more emotionally resonant with the public, also increases its vulnerability to reputational threats. Therefore, by strategically using a gentle approach of targeting LEGO and highlighting how this partnership fundamentally contradicts its own values, raising the stakes of reputational damage, and then providing the corporation with a strategic out, Greenpeace not only manages to accelerate public mobilisation through leveraging LEGO's visibility and highly recognisable cultural associations, but also deals large-scale indirect damage to Shell, whilst minimising the risk of greater financial and reputational harm to LEGO.

MOM similarly utilises this indirect targeting strategy, as although the campaign is directed at Maersk and its operations amidst the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the campaign's overall goal is to halt the logistical support that facilitates the Israeli military's genocide, which PYM has protested against since 2006 (ADL, 2025). However, due to the Israeli military being a vast, complex entity comprising diverse individuals, institutions, and power structures, it ultimately becomes too risky to pinpoint as the campaign's entity of blame, as not only does militaries seldom hold high cultural associations, making it difficult to mobilise viewers into action, but also because it is shielded by structural diffusion, cultural legitimacy, and legal immunities under international law which pose a significant challenge for an independent grassroots campaign like MOM to take on. As such, by choosing Maersk and its transport of military cargo to the Israeli military, the campaign can pinpoint a more vulnerable and identifiable link within the chain of complicity.

Therefore, by aggressively targeting a highly visible corporation like Maersk, whose services serve as a crucial link in the Israeli military's procurement of the necessary means to continue its operations, MOM can not only exert pressure on the corporation by using its visibility to publicly expose how its concealed actions contradict its professed values, stripping it of its shield of operational invisibility and dragging it into a spotlight of public accountability of which it is ill-prepared to handle, but also the Israeli military as they lose their reliable means of securing the equipment used to facilitate the genocide against the Palestinian people. Thus, by targeting Maersk, the campaign creates a powerful impact on the broader system enabling violence without directly confronting actors who are too diffuse or too institutionally protected.

Ultimately, based on the analyses of the campaigns, the key findings can be summed up as: 1) each campaign relied on a distinctive approach in the targeting of their respective corporations based on the corporations' cultural visibility, 2) both campaigns highly exploited and subverted their respective corporations' visibility thus turning it into the very material on

which the campaigns were based, and 3) both campaigns strategically utilised a layered approach in which the highly visible corporations served as strategic proxies for striking lesser visible problematic entities.

Analytical Discussion

Building on the analysis of how the specific organisations leverage and rework corporate visibility to construct their campaigns, this section seeks to bridge and elaborate on the findings thereof by connecting them to the broader implications of the transformation of visibility within the modern digital sphere, thereby continuing the investigation of how activist organisations weaponise visibility to contest corporations and generate pressure in platform-mediated environments.

Firstly, the discussion will examine the aftermath of each campaign in detail (Appendix B), focusing in particular on the reputational consequences and enduring effects that the corporations experienced, or continue to experience, in the wake of activist interventions, and on the latent risks and potential future vulnerabilities these dynamics may generate. Secondly, the discussion will move beyond the campaigns into a broader discussion of how the analysis, together with the revelations emerging from the examination of the campaigns' aftermaths, further demonstrates how visibility has been fundamentally reshaped in modern digitalised spaces, thereby further illuminating how the dynamics of the highly interactive modern digital sphere have transformed the logics of visibility, shifting it from a strategic asset and passive backdrop for the powerful, into a contested arena where narrative dominance remains perpetually at stake.

Greenpeace Aftermath

Following nearly four months of campaigning against LEGO, during which Greenpeace linked Shell's destructive practices to LEGO's dominant narrative as a protector of children's future and a forerunner for sustainability, the organisation's efforts finally bore fruit in October 2014. Initially LEGO attempted to maintain a strategically neutral stance, as the then-CEO, Jørgen

Vig Knudstorp, publicly addressed the issue, by emphasising LEGO's creativity and stakeholder commitments, while also condemning Greenpeace's approach of involving LEGO in its dispute with Shell, as he believed it was an unfair and unnecessary tactic that could lead to "*misunderstandings*" and negative associations among LEGO stakeholders (Figure B1). Yet, despite the initial defensive neutrality the activist pressure prevailed, as the corporation decided not to renew its 50-year partnership in late 2014, a decision which Greenpeace campaigner Elena Polisano hailed as a victory not only for the campaign itself, but also for general activist pressure (Polisano, 2014), as it showcased how corporate visibility can be reworked to compel ethical alignment, even against initial resistance.

Yet, despite the campaign ending concurrently with the official severance between LEGO and Shell, Greenpeace's disruption of LEGO's visibility would persist well beyond the campaign's conclusion. Nearly a decade later, when LEGO launched its 2024 Formula 1 (F1) merchandise line, the public quickly noticed the presence of Shell's corporate imagery, thereby reopening the moral issues that Greenpeace had spoken out against in 2014. As various sets prominently featuring Shell's logo (Figure B2) began to reappear, so did public backlash as they began to question whether LEGO had ever truly abandoned the partnership, or had simply hidden it from public view, with comments not only expressing disappointment and concern, but also framing LEGO's actions as hypocritical and regressive (Figure B3). Furthermore, LEGO's lack of commentary or engagement with this issue only served to intensify the backlash, as this re-emergence was perceived as being deliberately concealed by the corporation. Here, Goffman's (1972) theory on courtesy stigma becomes especially relevant.

As established in the analysis, LEGO's longstanding partnership with Shell served as a stigmatised attribute, particularly through the act of courtesy stigma, which Greenpeace utilised to deeply discredit the corporation in the public's moral view and to advance the campaign's ideological critique. LEGO's decision to end this partnership thus allowed the corporation to

rid itself of this discrediting attribute and restore its prior brand identity, whilst also distancing itself from Shell's environmental controversies. However, the reappearance of Shell's logo on LEGO's products essentially reactivated this latent stigma, once again threatening to contaminate the brand, showcasing a persistence that aligns with W. Coombs' (2007) concept of 'crisis history', as he argues that an organisation's prior crises intensify reputational threats in subsequent situations by amplifying stakeholder attributions of responsibility (Coombs, 2007, p. 167). The decision to realign their brand with Shell's iconography, even if the collaboration itself is not directly between the two corporations, thus demonstrates the endurance of crisis history as well as Jiang's (2025) persistence of memory, especially within the context of contemporary digital cultural developments, in which digital traces of controversy thus persist eternally online, effectively embodying the principle that 'the internet never forgets'. This latter aspect can further serve as critical damage to the corporation's reputational management in the long term, as instances of prior courtesy stigma, which have been documented by the public as being part of the corporation's crisis history, now fuel negative relational reputation and can damage consumer trust, loyalty, and future forgiveness for wrongdoing.

The aftermath of the Greenpeace campaign thus further demonstrates how the logics of visibility have transformed in the modern digital sphere, as activists' interventions not only manage to disrupt corporate visibility through direct confrontations that take place at a certain period of time, but also through the digital sphere's notion of archival permanence that turns momentary interventions into long-lasting reputational pressure and risk. Thus, by framing Shell's controversially destructive practices as part of LEGO's brand, Greenpeace has created a chapter in LEGO's overall narrative that now persists eternally online and threatens to reactivate the corporation's prior stigma whenever any aspects of Shell manage to re-enter LEGO's front-stage performance. As such, by strategically reworking and weaponising corporate visibility, activist actors not only manage to create powerful tools for bringing about immediate

gains but also create long-term traps that effectively deny corporations narrative closure and sustain critique long beyond any single campaign.

MOM Aftermath

In the wake of the ongoing MOM campaign, consistent with its low public profile, Maersk initially refrained from engaging with it, thus mirroring LEGO's early reluctance to address criticism. However, compared to LEGO, whose prominent presence in the public eye prevented the corporation from remaining silent for long, Maersk's low public profile initially allowed it to avoid any engagement before public pressure finally mounted to the point where the corporation felt compelled to respond, thus resulting in a statement being released on its official website in March 2025 (Statement B4).

In this public statement responding to the activist and wider criticism, Maersk makes three core claims. First, the corporation asserts strict compliance with international laws and its own "*strict policy of not shipping weapons or ammunition to active conflict zones*" (Statement B4 ll. 3-4), whilst also clarifying that Maersk reserves the right to decide what cargo is deemed acceptable "*after careful consideration of the recommendations, laws and regulations*" (Statement B4, ll. 11-12), despite acknowledging that these decisions "*may not coincide with the wishes of everybody*" (Statement B4, ll. 12-13). By doing so, Maersk establishes a legal and technical legitimacy that dismisses the moral and ethical reframing of its actions in the activists' critique, whilst also creating a discursive shield that redirects this criticism toward regulatory compliance.

Secondly, Maersk situates its services within U.S.-approved security cooperations, emphasising that its transports "*civilian and military-related cargo to Israel*" (Statement B4, l.

20), but has not filed any transportation plans required for "*classified or sensitive cargo*" (Statement B4, l. 24), thereby ruling out the shipment of weapons or ammunition. Additionally, it stresses the complexity of the Middle Eastern conflict, which further fuels "*activism and tense polarized public debate*" on the topic (Statement B4, l. 31), highlighting how this results in increased difficulties within Maersk's international relations, especially since Maersk "*accommodates and embraces profound differences in values, opinions and perspectives*" (Statement B4, ll. 33-34) with its core values "*encompass[ing] mutual respect, attentiveness and open-mindedness*" (Statement B4, l. 35). This section is particularly important, as Maersk here tries to defuse the campaign's accusations by invoking the geopolitical complexity of the Middle East along with its corporate values of "*mutual respect*" and "*open-mindedness*", which strategically undermines MOM's moral binary by restaging Maersk as a neutral global operator navigating unavoidable international tensions, rather than a morally compromised actor.

Thirdly, Maersk condemns the campaign targeting the corporation, although refusing to name the specific campaign in question, describing it as being aggressive and misleading, as it is based on "*inaccurate allegations and [...] assumptions presented as documented facts*" (Statement B4, ll. 46-47) and draws upon twisting publicly available data to reinforce a false narrative. It then goes on to conclude the various points in the statement, such as describing their desires for peaceful dialogue and conflict resolution, whilst further reiterating that, despite what misinformation the activists are trying to spread, its business practices will not change as they already fall within "*internationally agreed responsible business practices*" (Statement B4, l. 58).

Overall, Maersk's discursive defence constructs an elaborate rhetorical shield that initially appears impenetrable to further critique, as it manages to weaponise Barthesian myths to make its deliberate political choices appear as natural business practices. Thus, "*Strict compli-*

ance with international standards" and "*careful consideration of regulations*" operate as second-order semiological systems that naturalise its logistical operations in an active conflict zone, and make F-35 components and weapons vanish into the neutral and vague category of "*military-related cargo*", thus erasing their lethal end-use and, along with it, any unethical conduct from Maersk's side. Furthermore, its condemnation of activist criticism while refusing to identify the source of said criticism serves as a deliberate visibility strategy as it prevents its statement from functioning as an unintended hypertext to MOM's campaign, whilst also attempting to isolate the critique within its own controlled digital front-stage, compelling audiences to encounter it through corporate channels that instead reinforce corporate hegemony.

However, this defence unravels spectacularly in the face of the MOM campaign. By utilising the leaked bills of lading, the campaign effectively shatters the myth of technical innocence, while the campaign's visuals of the iconic containers splattered in blood, hidden F-35 fighter jets, and Palestinians struggling amid Gaza's rubble render "*geopolitical complexity*" not just inadequate, but obscene. Furthermore, Maersk's deliberate vagueness when it comes to differentiating between weapons and non-lethal cargo only serves to expose the moral fiction of its defence, as not even its attempt to construct its legitimacy through compliance with "*internationally agreed responsible business practices*" can withstand the gruesome reality of shipments linked to civilian casualties. Thus, in its attempt to dismiss the MOM campaign and its critique as nothing more than "*misleading allegations*" without engaging with its evidentiary core, Maersk not only comes across as evasive but also performs the very organisational storytelling of continued uncare that the campaign is accusing them of in the first place, thereby capturing the corporation's indifference to such issues permanently online.

The aftermath of the MOM campaign thus demonstrates how visibility within the modern digital sphere has transformed into a contested condition, as the campaign not only disrupts Maersk's curated hegemonic frames of ethical neutrality and turns its "hidden in plain sight"

public presence into a moral magnet for public attention, but also strategically constructs a stigmatised attribute that threatens long-lasting damage to its visibility. By exposing Maersk's moral and ethical uncare through the combination of leaked documents, blood-splattered containers, and its subsequent willingness to deflect concerns regarding human rights through technical legalese, MOM assigns the corporation a heavily stigmatised attribute, which further might serve as the first stepping stone toward a crisis history (Coombs, 2007). As such, by planting these reputational seeds that threaten exponential future risk, MOM's reworking of Maersk's visibility, similarly to Greenpeace, functions as a long-term trap that denies the corporation any narrative closure, further ensuring that whenever the corporation attempts to restage its "responsible and ethical" performance in the face of similar subsequent controversies, it risks reigniting activist critique.

Beyond Campaigns: The New Logics of Visibility

Building on the analysis of the campaigns and their aftermaths, this section turns to a broader discussion of how these cases demonstrate the transformation of visibility, which, in addition to having become heavily democratised by the highly interactive digital environment, is further evident across two interrelated aspects of platform-mediated communication.

As has already been established throughout the thesis, as well as demonstrated in the analysis, the modern digital sphere has fundamentally altered the mechanisms of visibility by removing the previous barriers to public exposure, thus exemplifying Jenkins' (2006) notion of how users have shifted from passive observers into active co-creators of meaning, as whereas visibility was once something that was possessed and controlled by the powerful, the modern

digital sphere and the platforms that exist within it have made it technically accessible to activists, whistleblowers, and any ordinary citizen with internet access, thereby granting them the power to challenge dominant narratives without being restricted by institutional intermediaries.

However, despite this newfound ease of access to visibility, which not only enables, in this case, activist actors to rework corporate visibility as a means of constructing their critique, but also allows them to gain a high level of visibility through drawing attention to their cause and thereby fight corporations on a more equal footing, there is a catch: to achieve effective visibility at scale, one must now master the rapidly changing algorithm that privileges virality over deliberation. This leads to the second prominent transformation of visibility, as one could argue that the modern digital sphere operates as a visibility market, in which attention serves as the primary, yet scarce currency, thereby compelling both corporate and activist actors to optimise engagement in an attempt to secure likes, shares, and views, which serves as leverage in their struggle for interpretive dominance.

Within the rise of the digital sphere, which prioritises predominantly visual platforms, short-form content, and algorithmically driven feeds, users now consume media in fragmented and rapid ways, which has had a significant impact on their attention span, with research showing how it has decreased by 25% since the 2010s (Hayes, 2024), meaning that one must now craft immediately engaging, visually striking, and easily digestible content in order to capture users' attention amid constant and rapidly competing digital stimuli. As demonstrated in the analysis and examination of the aftermath of the campaigns, both Greenpeace and MOM effectively managed to collect and leverage this type of attention currency by constructing highly engaging multimodal content across various interactive platforms. In the case of Greenpeace, the campaign's highly emotional content, showcasing beloved LEGO characters and Arctic wildlife drowning in oil, resulted in the campaign garnering millions of views, shares and petition signatures, which were then leveraged to pressure LEGO to align with its self-stated

commitments and values, and thus cut ties with Shell. MOM similarly captured this attention currency through its striking visuals of bloodied shipping containers and highly militarised imagery, which, in further connection with the emotionally charged imagery of the devastation of the Palestinian people, sparked global outrage and thus garnered millions of likes, shares, and views, which in the end compelled the logistics giant to acknowledge the campaign and abandon its prior strategic silence.

Yet, this newfound dynamic introduces another conflict, as while activists might initially win the interpretive battle, the constant and rapidly changing algorithmic cycle, combined with the already decreased attention spans of the public who reside within the digital sphere, makes engagement highly fleeting, meaning that one is only provided with a brief window of opportunity to spread one's message before the algorithm moves on. This highlights the third transformation of visibility, as within modern times, the digital sphere has evolved into a promotional arena in which spectacle trumps dialogue and appeal is favoured over authenticity.

As established in the theory section, visibility does not simply relate to being seen, but to being seen in specific ways, such as corporations constructing carefully curated narratives, visual symbols, and communicative strategies to achieve a desired public perception. However, with the emergence of this digital attention economy, it is no longer sufficient to simply be appealing, as to secure prolonged user attention and engagement, one must now be the most appealing performer on this shared digital stage. Therefore, as corporate and activist actors now operate within the same sphere of visibility, it thus becomes a battle to see who can perform as the most appealing, emotionally resonant, and shareable. In the case of activist organisations, this means that, to gain a fighting chance against corporations and cut through the noise generated by the vast amount of content that is constantly being pushed by the rapidly changing algorithmic cycle, they must adapt to this terrain by producing content that is similarly appealing and effect-driven. As such, they start increasingly relying on creating spectacles, such as

critical accusations portraying Maersk's profit as soaked in the blood of Palestinians, or depicting LEGO figures drowning in oil, as these tactics are more likely to capture public interest, rather than approaches based solely on logistics reports or corporate terminology.

Yet, this is where the conflict arises, as while activist organisations traditionally position themselves in opposition to the inauthentic performances of corporate actors, in which they accuse them of managing impressions to conceal the contradictions between their front-stage promises and back-stage operations, their attempts to optimise engagement through aestheticised, affective, and spectacular communication likewise rely on appeal rather than authenticity. As such, in their pursuit of visibility, they risk reproducing the very appeal-driven performativity they accuse corporations of. This shift thus puts activists in the middle of a delicate balancing act, as they now must navigate constructing spectacles that expose injustice and mobilise action whilst also remaining more vigilant than ever to ensure that their authenticity does not risk becoming absorbed by the same logics of appeal that structure corporate visibility. Thus, as visibility has transformed in the modern digital sphere, the challenge is no longer just to be seen, but to avoid getting lost in an environment that rewards appeal over substance.

Overall, these transformations of visibility demonstrate how the logics that govern it have evolved with the rise of the highly interactive digital sphere, as what once functioned as a passive backdrop for the powerful now functions as an active and contested resource which corporate and activist actors alike attempt to weaponise in their pursuit of interpretive dominance within a sphere where success remains fragile amid rapidly changing algorithms and promotional saturation. As such, rather than functioning as a mere communicative condition, visibility now functions as a strategic objective that is produced and maintained through continuous and curated engagement with platform affordances and logics. Yet, while these affordances enable visibility, they are also the very same that add to its destabilisation, as rapid

algorithmic cycles, metric-driven competition and content overload constantly shift public attention. Visibility thus operates as both a form of power and a potential liability, as while it is central to gaining influence in the modern digital sphere, it is never entirely secure.

Conclusion

Finally, based on the analysis and discussion, a few points can be deduced and concluded in relation to the thesis's investigative aim regarding how activist organisations leverage and rework corporate visibility in their construction of digital multimedia campaigns, as well as broader insights into the transformation of visibility within the modern digital sphere. As demonstrated in the analysis of Greenpeace's campaign against LEGO and Mask Off Maersk's campaign against Maersk, activist organisations no longer simply confront corporations from the outside but now actively rework and weaponise the pre-existing elements of corporate visibility as a prime communicative resource in constructing their criticism. Thus, by drawing upon corporate visibility, such as logos, slogans, brand values, and publicly stated commitments, activists not only manage to provide these already familiar signs with additional meanings but also further ensure coherence within their established counter-narratives as they traverse across various digital multimedia platforms, as their reworks of corporate visibility become the very contested terrain upon which activist campaigns are built. As such, activist organisations leverage and rework corporate visibility by constructing multimodal narratives that expose contradictions between the corporate-curated front upon which public perception and brand loyalty are built, and the obscured corporate conduct and practices, thereby transforming corporate visibility from a strategic asset into a potential liability that guides public perception and mobilises pressure for corporate accountability. This reveals how visibility in the modern digital sphere has shifted into becoming a contested yet powerful resource which corporate and activist actors alike attempt to weaponise in their ongoing struggle for narrative dominance, moral authority, and legitimacy within a shared digital space.

As such, this thesis provides in-depth insights into how visibility has transformed with the rise of the modern digital sphere and the digitalisation of everyday life, along with how the practices of activist organisations have evolved concurrently, by adapting the same logics of

visibility and platform affordances that structure corporate visibility and dominant narratives, further revealing how activism does not merely exist externally to modern digital promotional culture but is increasingly entangled within it. However, while these insights arguably make up an analytical framework that provides grounds for further research into the logics of digital visibility and digital activism, as well as the evolving mechanisms through which critique is constructed and circulated in the modern digital sphere, one must also acknowledge the possible consequences that such knowledge production may entail.

Firstly, while this thesis demonstrates and further provides a deeper understanding of how visibility has transformed within the modern digital sphere, along with how the nature of the highly interactive digital culture allows those who reside within it, such as activist organisations, to actively engage with, leverage, and rework it in order to advance and circulate their critique, it is precisely this in-depth analysis and discussion of their tactics that might risk activists feeling like their strategies have become exposed. By conducting such research and presenting it to the public, this thesis risks turning activists' campaign tactics into documented patterns that not only become available for others to read but also to anticipate and, therefore, counter. As such, by turning their tactics into an object of analysis and revealing how certain patterns recur in their campaigns, others, such as corporations, might utilise these findings to strategically reverse-engineer these patterns to pre-empt activist critique by constructing counter-narratives in advance or designing their corporate visibility in ways that render them more resistant to subversion. This further becomes an issue, as making activists' actions easier to counter might lead corporations to interpret critique as reputational exposure that needs to be managed rather than a moral address. Typically, activists' campaigns do not simply seek to criticise corporations for the sake of public shaming, but rather to address them with the goal of getting them to acknowledge certain issues with their branding or practices, take responsi-

bility and then potentially align their practices with their self-stated values and public expectations. Therefore, if corporations were to view activists' critique simply as an issue that needs to be solved rather than a moral address, it would further risk the possibility of removing any potential constructive dialogue between the two parties.

Secondly, based on the specific cases selected for the analysis and the overall structure of the project, another possible consequence of this kind of knowledge production is that it may contribute to a greater scepticism towards corporate communication. By analysing and presenting how activist actors are able to rework corporate visibility and everything that said visibility entails, such as corporate self-presentation, branding, values, and practices, along with how they use this strategic reworking to create counter-narratives that expose corporate inconsistencies and wrong-doings, the thesis risks presenting corporate communication as being inherently deceptive or merely performative, further reinforcing an assumption of bad faith in corporate communication. This potentially poses a significant risk for corporations, as by inadvertently reinforcing a tendency for the public to assume bad faith in corporate communication, corporations may not only be met with a greater struggles of gaining or regaining legitimacy and trust even in situations where they attempt genuine change, but may also push corporations towards investing more in risk-management and crisis communication which, similar as the first consequence mentioned above, might further undermine the possibility of constructive dialogue with activists.

Overall, this thesis demonstrates that visibility within the modern digital sphere is no longer stable or neutral, but has instead become a contested condition that shapes the environment in which both corporations and activists now operate. Thus, for both parties, the pursuit of visibility has become unavoidable, as it now functions as the very medium through which legitimacy, accountability and critique are negotiated and circulated. Yet, in the case of corporations and activists alike, only time will tell whether or not this transformed and intensified

visibility of the modern digital era becomes what secures their position within it or tears them down by exposing their vulnerabilities, but what is clear is that visibility can no longer be understood as anything other than a potential site of power and undoing.

Bibliography

ADL. (2025). *Palestinian Youth Movement (PYM): Five Things to Know*. ADL. https://www.adl.org/resources/article/palestinian-youth-movement-pym-five-things-know

Barnett, D. (n.d.). *Mattel V LEGO: A Brand Analysis*. Influencer Intelligence. https://www.influencerintelligence.com/blog/T7R/mattel-v-lego-a-brand-analysis

Barthes, R. (1972). *Mythologies* (A. Lavers, Trans.). The Noonday Press.

Boje, D. (2001). *Narrative Methods for Organizational & Communication Research*. SAGE Publications, Ltd. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781849209496

Boje, D. M., et al. (2016). Counternarrative and antenarrative inquiry in two cross-cultural contexts. *European J. of Cross-Cultural Competence and Management*, *4*(1), 55. https://doi.org/10.1504/EJCCM.2016.081210

Cambridge Dictionary. (n.d.). *Martyr*. Cambridge Dictionary. https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/martyr

Chambers, S. (2019). *Maersk's social media position not liked by all*. Splash247. https://splash247.com/maersks-social-media-position-not-liked-by-all/

Coombs, W. T. (2007). Protecting Organization Reputations During a Crisis: The Development and Application of Situational Crisis Communication Theory. *Corporate Reputation Review*, *10*(3), 163–176. https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.crr.1550049

Dreyer-Andersen, A. (2025). *After 37 years: Maersk containers are getting a new color*. Søfart. https://www.soefart.dk/article/view/1162292/after_37_years_maersk_containers_are_getting_a_new_color

Entman, R. M. (1993). Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm. *Journal of Communication*, *43*(4), 51–58. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.1993.tb01304.x

Evans, B. (2017). *1 Million Facebook Fans Prove Maersk Line's Remarkable B2B Social Smarts*. Forbes. https://www.forbes.com/sites/oracle/2013/08/19/maersk-lines-remarkable-b2b-social-breakthrough-1-million-facebook-fans/

Fage-Butler, A. (2020). Applying Foucault's tool-box to the analysis of counter-narratives. In K. Lueg & M. W. Lundholt (Eds.), *Routledge Handbook of Counter-Narratives* (pp. 85-95). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429279713

Fairclough, N. (1992). *Discourse and social change*. Polity.

Fairclough, N. (1995). *Critical discourse analysis: The critical study of language*. Longman.

Fisher, W. R. (1987). *Human communication as narration: Toward a philosophy of reason, value, and action* (First paperb. Ed). Univ. of South Carolina Pr.

Foucault, M. (1972). The Archaeology of Knowledge. Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group.

Foucault, M. (1980). *Power / Knowledge: Selected interviews and other writings 1972 - 1977* (C. Gordon, Ed.). Pantheon Books.

Freightender. (n.d.). *20 Largest Container Shipping Companies Dominating Trade 2025*. Freightender. https://www.freightender.com/20-largest-container-shipping-companies/

GGJ Alliance. (n.d.). *Palestinian Youth Movement*. Grassroots Global Justice Alliance. https://ggjalliance.org/members/palestinian-youth-movement/

Gitlin, T. (2003). *The Whole World Is Watching: Mass Media in the Making and Unmaking of the New Left* (T. Gitlin, Ed.). University of California Press. https://doi.org/10.1525/9780520352438

Goffman, E. (1956). *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. (Monograph No. 2). University of Edinburgh, Social Sciences Research Centre.

Goffman, E. (1986a). *Frame analysis: An essay on the organization of experience* (1. Northeastern Univ. Press ed., reprint). Northeastern Univ. Press.

Goffman, E. (1986b). *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*. Touchstone.

Hacke, C. (2023). *The Sea Is Not A Dustbin': Remembering Greenpeace's Brent Spar Campaign*. History Matters. https://historymatters.sites.sheffield.ac.uk/blog-archive/2023/the-sea-is-not-a-dustbin-remembering-greenpeaces-brent-spar-campaign

Halliday, M. A. K., & Hasan, R. (2013). *Cohesion in English* (0 edn). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315836010

Hayes, A. (2024). *The Human Attention Span*. Wyzowl. https://wyzowl.com/human-attention-span/

Jenkins, H. (2006). *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*. New York University Press. https://doi.org/10.18574/9780814743683

Jewitt, C. (Ed.). (2014). *The Routledge handbook of multimodal analysis* (Second edition, first published in paperback). Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.

Jiang, T. (2025). No More Backstage? Revisiting Goffmans Dramaturgical Theory in the Age of Social Media. *Communications in Humanities Research*, *95*(1), 93–99. https://doi.org/10.54254/2753-7064/2025.HT29167

Kjær, A. S. (2025). *Bills of Ladings reveal Maersk's cargo to Israel: Loaded with military hardware*. Danwatch. https://danwatch.dk/en/consignment-notes-reveal-maersks-cargo-to-israel-loaded-with-military-hardware/

Kress, G. (2010). *Multimodality: A Social Semiotic Approach to Contemporary Communication* (0 edn). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203970034

Kress, G., & Leeuwen, T. van. (2021). *Reading images: The grammar of visual design* (Third edition). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003099857

LEGO. (n.d.). *The LEGO® Brand*. LEGO. https://www.lego.com/en-us/aboutus/lego-group/the-lego-brand

Lemke, J. L. (2002). Travels in hypermodality. *Visual Communication*, *1*(3), 299–325. https://doi.org/10.1177/147035720200100303

Maersk. (n.d.a). *Human rights*. Maersk. https://www.maersk.com/sustainability/governance/human-rights

Maersk. (n.d.b). *Maersk core values*. Maersk. https://www.maersk.com/about/core-values

Maersk. (n.d.c). *Sustainability at Maersk*. Maersk. https://www.maersk.com/sustainability

Marwick, A. E., & Boyd, D. (2011). I tweet honestly, I tweet passionately: Twitter users, context collapse, and the imagined audience. *New Media & Society*, *13*(1), 114–133. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444810365313

Marwick, A. E., & Boyd, D. (2014). Networked privacy: How teenagers negotiate context in social media. *New Media & Society*, *16*(7), 1051–1067. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444814543995

O'Reilly, L. (2014). *Here's The Chilling Greenpeace Video That Ended Lego's $116 Million Deal With Shell*. Business Insider. https://www.businessinsider.com/lego-ends-shell-deal-after-greenpeace-viral-video-2014-10

Parker, J. (2025). *The Rise of Digital Activism: Lessons from Online Movements*. Institute of Internet Economics. https://instituteofinterneteconomics.org/the-rise-of-digital-activism-lessons-from-online-movements/

Polisano, E. (2014). *Greenpeace: How our campaign ended the Lego-Shell partnership*. The Guardian. https://www.theguardian.com/voluntary-sector-network/2014/oct/10/greenpeace-lego-shell-climate-change-arctic-oil

Polletta, F. (2006). *It Was Like a Fever: Storytelling in Protest and Politics*. University of Chicago Press. https://doi.org/10.7208/chicago/9780226673776.001.0001

Robinson, L. (2007). The cyberself: The self-ing project goes online, symbolic interaction in the digital age. *New Media & Society*, *9*(1), 93–110. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444807072216

Sheposh, R. (2023). *Shell plc*. EBSCO. https://www.ebsco.com/research-starters/business-and-management/shell-plc

Snow, D. A., et al. (1986). Frame Alignment Processes, Micromobilization, and Movement Participation. *American Sociological Review*, *51*(4), 464. https://doi.org/10.2307/2095581

Snow, D. A., & Benford, R. (1988). Ideology, Frame Resonance and Participant Mobilization. *International Social Movement Research*, *1*, 197–217.

Thompson, J. B. (2005). The New Visibility. *Theory, Culture & Society*, *22*(6), 31–51. https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276405059413

Tweedie, S. (2014). *This Chart Reveals The Age Distribution At Every Major Social Network*. Business Insider. https://www.businessinsider.com/age-distribution-of-facebook-twitter-instagram-2014-11

van Dijk, T. A. (1993). Principles of Critical Discourse Analysis. *Discourse & Society*, *4*(2), 249–283. https://doi.org/10.1177/0957926593004002006

van Dijk, T. A. (2008). Discourse and context: A sociocognitive approach. Cambridge University Press.

van Dijk, T. A. (2016). Sociocognitive Discourse Studies. In Flowerdew, J. & Richardson, J. (Eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Critical Discourse Studies* (pp. 26-43). Routledge. https://doi-org.zorac.aub.aau.dk/10.4324/9781315739342

Zulli, D. (2018). Capitalizing on the look: Insights into the glance, attention economy, and Instagram. *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, *35*(2), 137–150. https://doi.org/10.1080/15295036.2017.1394582