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Accounting, Auditing and Accountability Journal

DOI:
10.1108/AAAJ-04-2013-1333

Published: 01/11/2014

Peer reviewed version

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An earlier draft of the paper was written while Doris Merkl-Davies was a visiting scholar at the University of Sydney Business School whose support we gratefully acknowledge. We also thank participants at the following conferences/seminars for helpful comments on earlier drafts of the paper: British Accounting & Finance Association 2012; Irish Accounting & Finance Association 2012; Accounting & Finance Association of Australia and New Zealand 2012; University of Exeter; Newcastle Business School, Northumbria University; University of Victoria, Melbourne; University of Canterbury at Christchurch, University of Bristol, Edinburgh University. We thank Annika Beelitz for her preparation of Figure 1 in the paper.

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Abstract

Purpose – This paper explores the interactive element in social and environmental reporting during a controversy between business organisations and a stakeholder over environmental performance.

Design/methodology/approach – We adopt Aristotle's triangular framework of the rhetorical situation to examine how the writer, the audience, and the purpose of communication interact in the choice of rhetorical strategies used to persuade others of the validity and legitimacy of a claim during a public controversy. Our analysis focuses on the strategies (i.e., moves and their rhetorical realisations in the form of on *logos* (appealing to logic), *ethos* (appealing to authority), and *pathos* (appealing to emotion), with a particular emphasis on metaphor, used to achieve social and political goals. We base our analysis on a case study involving a conflict between Greenpeace and six organisations in the sportswear/fashion industry over wastewater discharge of hazardous chemicals. The conflict played out in a series of 20 press releases issued by the parties over a two-month period.

Findings – All six firms interacting with Greenpeace in the form of press releases eventually conceded to Greenpeace's demand to eliminate hazardous chemicals from their supply chains. We attribute this to Greenpeace's ability to harness support from other key stakeholders and to use rhetoric effectively. Results show the extensive use of rhetoric by all parties.

Originality/value – We regard legitimacy construction as reliant on communication and as being achieved by organisations participating in a dialogue with stakeholders. For this purpose, we develop an analytical framework which situates environmental reporting in a specific rhetorical situation and links rhetoric, argument, and metaphor.

Keywords Rhetoric, Argument, Environmental reporting, Stakeholder, Greenpeace.

Paper type Research paper

> As humans, we don't absorb … experiences as abstractions; we take them personally. And that's [what metaphors do]: taking the universal into the particular. (Anne Michaels) (Crown, 2009)

1. Introduction

This paper focuses on the interactive element in social and environmental reporting during a legitimacy threat in the form of a controversy between business organisations and a stakeholder over environmental performance. Prior studies on organisational legitimacy threats focus on the analysis of corporate narrative documents, including press releases, annual reports and CSR reports (e.g., Ogden and Clarke, 2005; Linsley and Kajüter, 2008; De Tienne and Lewis, 2005; Castelló and Lozano, 2011). Stakeholder communications relating to violations of social norms and rules or stakeholder values and beliefs are treated as part of the organisational context which is described in order to shed light on corporate reporting (e.g., Hooghiemstra, 2000). An exception is Massey (2001) who, in an experimental setting, finds that the crisis-response consistency of communication by organisations influences perceptions of organisational legitimacy. Thus, most prior research presumes that organisations are in control of legitimacy construction. By contrast, we adopt a relational view by regarding legitimacy as being constructed between organisations and their audiences in a 'process of reciprocal influence' (Ginzel *et al*., 2004, p. 225). This is in line with Suchman's (1995) discussion of moral legitimacy which arises from a positive normative evaluation of an organisation and its activities by its audiences. As judgements are formed through public discussion, legitimacy is reliant on communication and is achieved by organisations participating in social dialogue (Suchman, 1995, p. 585; Tregidga *et al*., 2007, p. 5).

We examine a conflict between Greenpeace and international sportswear/fashion firms over environmental performance. Complementary prior research has analysed the dialogic nature of verbal interactions between the parties involved in this controversy (Brennan *et al*., 2013). The focus of analysis in this paper is on the use of rhetoric and argument by both sides as a means of influencing audiences' opinions of the issue of contention, namely the use of hazardous chemicals in organisational supply chains. For this purpose we build on Aristotle's (2010) triangular framework of *logos* (appealing to logic), *ethos* (appealing to authority), and *pathos* (appealing to emotion) and insights from the 'New Rhetoric' movement. We show the outcome of the conflict, which entailed all firms conceding to Greenpeace's demand, to be dependent on Greenpeace's power and legitimacy and the urgency of its claim.

Research questions were developed abductively during an iterative process of going backwards and forwards between theories and concepts and data. The overarching research question is: How do parties in a conflict over corporate environmental performance interact? We subdivide this overarching research question into three sub-questions: (1) How does the rhetorical situation/social context influence the interactions? (2) What moves do the parties make in the conflict? (3) How are those moves realised rhetorically?

The publication of Greenpeace's 'Dirty Laundry' report in July 2011 marked the start of what it referred to as its 'Detox' campaign. It alleged that 18 brands (16 firms) were using hazardous chemicals in their textile manufacturing processes. This was followed by a second report, 'Hung out to Dry', in August 2011. The purpose of the campaign was twofold, namely (1) to voice its concern regarding the industry's failure to safeguard environmental standards throughout its supply chains and (2) to draw public attention to this failure with the intention of pressurising the firms to take corrective action. This controversy played out in a series of 20 press releases issued by both sides (Greenpeace and six sportswear/fashion firms) over a two-month period. Three of the six firms responding to Greenpeace's accusation of misconduct disputed Greenpeace's claims (NIKE, adidas, H&M), while three (PUMA, LACOSTE and G-Star RAW) conceded to Greenpeace's demand. Greenpeace used negative publicity to pressurise the initially unyielding firms to comply with its demand. Our findings show the extensive use of rhetoric by all parties involved in the conflict. Greenpeace used metaphors that resonate with the firms' key stakeholders, i.e., consumers and the media (metaphors of housekeeping, size, racing, sport and fashion), in order to coerce the firms to agree to eliminate hazardous chemicals from their supply chains by 2020. The sportswear/fashion firms responded by using metaphors which redefine the constructs of competition and speed inherent in Greenpeace's claims (metaphors of journey, complexity and co-operation).

Our paper builds on three streams of literature: (1) research that views social and environmental reporting as relational – as such we respond to Bebbington *et al.*'s (2007) call to apply dialogic thinking to social and environmental reporting; (2) research on crisis management and organisational responses to legitimacy threats; and (3) research analysing corporate reporting and communication using text analysis approaches based on the concepts of rhetoric and argument. For this purpose, we extend the work of Brennan and Gray (2000) and Brennan *et al*. (2010) on interaction during takeovers to a social and environmental context by building on

the work of Coupland (2005) and Higgins and Walker (2012) on rhetoric and argument in social and environmental reporting.

The paper makes four contributions to the literature. First, we introduce a dynamic and interactive element to stakeholder theory which is based on the view of conflict resolution between organisations and a stakeholder as dependent on the stakeholder's power, legitimacy, and the urgency of its claim. Power constitutes the ability to achieve intended outcomes and results from access to material and symbolic resources, including the ability to mobilise support from other key stakeholders. Rhetorical skill is crucial in gaining support by persuading audiences that firms' environmental practices and policies violate social norms and rules relating to pollution. Second, our analysis focuses on interactions in the form of moves (i.e., speech acts or discursive strategies whose objective is to achieve a specific social purpose, such as excusing, threatening, or apologising) between parties involved in the conflict. Third, we develop an analytical framework which situates environmental reporting in a specific rhetorical situation and links rhetoric, argument, and metaphor. Fourth, we highlight the use of metaphor as a powerful means of persuasion in public controversies.

The remainder of the paper comprises five sections. First, we review the literature on social and environmental reporting, including theoretical perspectives and rhetorical approaches. In Section 3 we outline the relationship between social and environmental reporting, rhetoric and metaphor. Then, we provide an overview of the data, consisting of 20 press releases by Greenpeace and by six sportswear/fashion firms, and set out the analytical framework and the categories of analysis. Next, we apply the analytical framework developed in Section 4 to the analysis of rhetoric and argument in the 'Dirty Laundry' case and discuss findings. The paper concludes in Section 6 with a summary and recommendations for future research.

2. Prior literature

We first review the relevant literature on social and environmental reporting, then discuss predominant theoretical perspectives adopted in research on organisational crises in the form of legitimacy threats or public controversies, and finally consider research on the use of rhetoric and argument in corporate narrative reporting.

2.1 Social and environmental reporting

Social and environmental reporting has variously been described as "the process of communicating the social and environmental effects of organisations' economic actions to particular interest groups within society and to society at large" (Gray *et al*, 1987, p. ix) and as an "extension of disclosure into non-traditional areas such as providing information about employees, products, community service and the prevention or reduction of pollution" (Mathews and Perera, 1985, p. 364). We build on the literature focusing on the role of social and environmental reporting following organisational legitimacy threats or crises caused by organisational 'wrongdoing' (Ashforth and Gibbs, 1990) or misconduct (Ketola, 2006, 2008). Corporate social and environmental reporting is used as a means of demonstrating that the organisation has realigned its practices, policies, and performance in line with expectations of organisational audiences (retrospective focus). The focus of analysis is on the strategies used in corporate narrative documents to restore legitimacy after a corporate scandal, environmental disaster, or product failure. For example, Elsbach (1994) and Linsley and Kajüter (2008) analyse the use of verbal remedial strategies, such as excuses, apologies, and justifications, to separate the negative event from the organisation as a whole. In this context, Beelitz and Merkl-Davies (2012) differentiate between real changes in processes and procedures (substantive management) and merely superficial changes in the form of executive replacement or the creation of monitors and watchdogs (symbolic management). The latter makes the organisation *appear* to respond to social pressures exerted by the general public, the media, or a particular stakeholder.

However, social and environmental reporting also plays a crucial role during organisational crises or public controversies between an organisation and a particular stakeholder as a means of resolving the conflict by shaping audiences' attitudes towards the issue of contention (prospective focus). A study of the use of rhetoric and argument by organisations and a key stakeholder during a public controversy can add insights to our understanding of the ways in which social and environmental reporting is used to influence audiences' opinions of a problem, in our case water pollution in supply chains. Indeed, research suggests that the use of rhetoric and argument is particularly pronounced during public controversies, conflicts over values, or shortfalls in corporate social and environmental performance (Suddaby and Greenwood, 2005; Coupland, 2005), as organisations depend on public approval and thus need to 'engineer' public support (Bernays, 1947).

Press releases are an established means for both commercial and non-commercial organisations to communicate with their audiences. They are used by firms to keep their relevant publics, e.g., shareholders, customers, or employees, informed on a variety of issues, including social and environmental practices and policies. During a conflict or public controversy corporate press releases are used to state the firm's position on the contested issue. By contrast, non-commercial organisations, such as Non-Government Organisations (NGOs), trade unions, or public bodies, use press releases to initiate a public dialogue about a particular issue. Alternatively, press releases by non-commercial organisations may be prompted by a disagreement with the action, non-action, or controversial action of a specific industry or company.

Target audiences for corporate social and environmental reporting are complex. Social and environmental reports are sent to shareholders who tend to be the primary audience for such information. However, managers are aware of other parties who also access these public documents, including, *inter alia*, various stakeholders, NGOs, social pressure groups, the media, and government. Social and environmental reporting constitutes a means of responding to social pressures exerted either by the public at large or by specific stakeholders in particular. It may be used to demonstrate that organisational practices, policies, and performance are in line with social norms and rules and/or with the values and beliefs of key stakeholders.

2.2 Theoretical perspectives

Organisational crises and public controversies between a business organisation and a stakeholder have been studied through a variety of theoretical lenses, including the theory of image restoration (Benoit, 1997; Benoit and Czerwinski, 1997), legitimacy theory (Elsbach, 2001; Ogden and Clarke, 2005; Beelitz and Merkl-Davies, 2012), and stakeholder theory (Hooghiemstra, 2000). Wood (1991) differentiates between the concepts of legitimacy and public responsibility. Legitimacy refers to the perception of organisational behaviour as being in line with social norms and rules. By contrast, public responsibility indicates that organisational practices and policies are perceived as conforming to the specific values and beliefs of a particular stakeholder. Both legitimacy and public responsibility refer to audience perceptions of the desirability and appropriateness of organisational actions within a socially constructed system of norms, values, and beliefs (Suchman, 1995, p. 574). This means that legitimacy and public responsibility are granted, withheld, or questioned by audiences. Stakeholders, particularly social movements and NGOs, perform the important functions of

monitoring and challenging organisational behaviour (Hooghiemstra, 2000; Cooper, 2009; Joutsenvirta, 2011). Challenges of organisational behaviour may result in legitimacy threats, if the stakeholder's socially constructed value system is congruent with that of society.

Stakeholders are persons, groups, or organisations that have a direct or indirect stake in an organisation because they can affect or be affected by the organisation's actions, objectives, and policies (Freeman, 1984). As firms depend on stakeholders for resources, such as finance, labour, and patronage, a good relationship between the two parties is crucial for organisational survival (Jawahar and McLaughlin, 2001). In their review of stakeholder theory, Mitchell *et al*. (1997) identify three key stakeholder attributes, namely power, legitimacy and urgency. These three aspects impact on stakeholder salience (the degree to which managers give priority to competing stakeholder claims). The three stakeholder attributes are discussed in more detail in Section 4.3 of the paper where we apply the framework to the analysis of the 'Dirty Laundry' case. Mitchell *et al*. (1997) further differentiate between stakeholders who have a legal or moral claim on organisations and stakeholders who have the ability to influence organisational behaviour, processes, or outcomes. The former consist of employees, suppliers, and debt and capital providers. The latter are also referred to as 'stakeseekers' (Fassin, 2009) in the sense that they seek to have an input into organisational decision-making processes and include NGOs, pressure groups, and social movements. Similarly, Holzer (2008, p. 52), citing Heath (1997), distinguishes between constituents who have vested interests in the organisation (e.g., employees, trade unions, and suppliers) and those that do not have organisationally defined links, but claim new stakes. Environmental NGOs, such as Greenpeace and the World Wildlife Fund, fall into the latter group, as they are not formally linked to business organisations, yet seek to influence their environmental activities, performance, and reporting. Prior research shows that NGOs are able to challenge corporations in the form of direct action campaigns, such as the McLibel trial (Vidal, 1997), Greenpeace's campaign against Shell concerning the Brent Spar oil platform (Tsoukas, 1999, Hooghiemstra, 2000), and the 'No Sweat' campaign against major clothing manufacturers (Ross, 1997). Conflicts between a business organisation and an NGO are more likely to be resolved in favour of the NGO, if the NGO's values and beliefs are shared by the general public, the media, and other key stakeholders.

2.3 Rhetoric in corporate narrative reporting research

Organisations use rhetoric retrospectively to respond to existing rhetorical situations or proactively to shape or frame future rhetorical situations (Cheney *et al*., 2004, p. 87). Rhetoric

serves to resolve both overt and covert conflicts and to avoid conflict in the first place. It constitutes a powerful means of manufacturing consent by using dominant discourses. Rhetorical approaches emphasise either the strategic or political nature of corporate narrative reporting and communication. The underlying assumption is that the purpose of corporate narrative reporting and communication is to achieve specific communicative or political goals, such as convincing financial stakeholders of the financial soundness or creditworthiness of the company, persuading organisational audiences of the company's environmental credentials (Higgins and Walker, 2012), persuading stakeholders to accept planned structural re-organisation, such as privatisation (Craig and Amernic, 2004a, 2008), reinforcing capitalist ideology, or securing hegemony.

However, there is little research on the use of rhetoric by a powerful stakeholder, such as Greenpeace, Amnesty International, or the World Wildlife Fund, as a means of persuading organisations to review their values or improve their social and environmental performance. In the case of an overt conflict between an organisation and a stakeholder, the goal is to convince both the other party and relevant publics, including the media, of the validity of a particular point of view or of the necessity and legitimacy of a particular course of action.

3. Rhetoric and argument

We consider rhetoric and argument to be communicative resources which are used to achieve intended outcomes. Our view of rhetoric is informed by insights of theorists of the 'New Rhetoric' movement who regard rhetoric as an essential constituent part of social interaction and communication, rather than mere ornamentation of speech. This is linked to the ideas of the so-called 'ordinary language philosophers' of the 1950s and 1960s, such as Austin (1962) and Searle (1969) who view language as action, i.e., 'doing things with words' (Austin, 1962). Everett and Neu (2000, p. 7) observe that "language … 'activates' reality and makes reality meaningful." Wetherall and Potter (1988) emphasise the action orientation of language use and its use to achieve particular consequences. Billig *et al*. (1988) argue that the use of contrary themes is valuable in argumentation and deliberation in social dilemmas. They discuss the use of reasons, arguments justifications and criticisms, the use of pros and cons, and the use of opposing images, words, evaluations and maxims in arguing about dilemmas. Arguments constitute the verbal means by which speakers/writers aim to exert influence on their audience in a verbal exchange (Amossy, 2001). Arguments consist of three elements: (1) the claims or statements made, (2) the assumptions or beliefs underlying these statements, and (3) the

evidence provided for the claims. Evidence for a claim is provided by means of rhetoric which "is the science and art of persuasive language use" (Reisigl, 2008, p. 96). Rhetoric constitutes a means of influencing others' opinions of an issue (e.g., pollution) or of persuading others to change their attitudes, beliefs, values or actions (Cheney *et al*., 2004, p. 80). Due to their function as both heuristic and persuasive devices, metaphors play a central role in rhetoric and argument.

3.1 Rhetorical strategies

Our rhetorical framework is based on classical Aristotelian rhetoric which differentiates between three types of rhetorical strategies: *logos* (appeal to logic), *ethos* (appeal to values or to the authority of the speaker / a respected person or organisation), and *pathos* (appeal to emotion). *Logos* aims to convince audiences by using facts and figures to back up a claim. It involves using discourse from the domains of science, technology, bureaucracy, law and business to persuade audiences of the validity and legitimacy of the claim. In the context of environmental reporting, *logos* is of particular importance, as the discourse of ecological modernisation, which predominates in debates on environmental issues, is based on the "accumulation of scientific evidence of environmental impacts" (Harvey, 1998, p. 343; quoted in Everett and Neu, 2000, p. 11). Constructing pollution based on the principles of scientific management thus constitutes a widely accepted way of constructing an argument. What is more, it makes the speaker/writer seem knowledgeable, thus enhancing their authority (*ethos*). *Ethos* is used to persuade audiences by either appealing to the authority of the speaker/writer, the authority of another social actor (e.g., an expert, an independent authority or a person of high social or moral standing in the community), or the authority of the law. This is particularly important in debates on environmental issues, as environmental standards and regulations are regarded as a means of safeguarding the environment from harm caused by economic activity (Everett and Neu, 2000). Finally, *pathos* is aimed at influencing audience attitudes by evoking an emotional response. It involves the use of figurative language, particularly metaphor (Charteris-Black, 2004, 2005).

3.2 Metaphors

Metaphors involve an implied comparison between two entities, achieved through a figurative use of words (e.g., top management, fringe benefits, and front-line staff). They entail "understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another" (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980, p. 5). For example, we conventionally conceptualise money as liquid (e.g., cash flow,

liquidation of a firm, to run out of money) or organisations as machines (e.g., human resources, communication has broken down). Metaphors are powerful conceptual devices (Morgan, 1980, 1983, 1993), as they indicate particular ways of thinking and seeing in the sense that "the[ir] use...involves cognitive processes which structure thought and behaviour" (Amernic and Craig, 2009, p. 878). As highlighted by the linguistic 'turn' in the social sciences, social phenomena are perceived only in terms of the images used to represent them (Gabriel, 2004, p. 63). Thus, metaphors play a key role in knowledge construction and constitute "a way of knowing" (Walters, 2004, p. 160). Metaphors govern how events and issues are interpreted and communicated. Making claims or statements invariably involves the use of metaphors. Metaphors reinforce specific perceptions and ways of thinking about an issue while ignoring others. For this reason, they not only function as a means of knowledge construction, but also as a means of perception engineering (Walters, 2004). Metaphors thus play a key role in influencing others' thinking and behaviour. This means that they are intrinsically rhetorical. Thibodeau and Boroditsky (2011) test the persuasive power of metaphor in an experiment. They show that people's thinking and behaviour are influenced by the metaphors used to present a problem. When crime is presented as a 'beast', people are more likely to approve of strong law enforcement. By contrast, when it is described as a 'virus' infecting society, people are more receptive to rehabilitation and understanding of the causes of crime. The same holds for environmental metaphors. For example, using the metaphors of 'mother nature' as opposed to nature as a 'resource' denotes a specific view of the relationship between business organisations and the natural environment which, in turn, makes specific ways of acting possible, while excluding others.

Metaphors are also indicative of social actors' underlying values and beliefs. They provide an insight into the assumptions underlying a claim or statement made on a particular issue. For this reason, metaphors play an instrumental role in constructing and reproducing ideologies and justifying social action and behaviour. In fact, the persuasive power of metaphors lies in their ability to "tap … into an accepted communal system of values" (Charteris-Black, 2004, p. 12). They are thus a common feature in the speeches of political and corporate leaders (see, for example, Amernic *et al*., 2007; Charteris-Black, 2005; Cox, 2012) and constitute a prevalent feature in corporate reporting and communication (Beelitz and Merkl-Davies, 2012; Craig and Amernic, 2004b; Crowther *et al*., 2006). Goatly (2007) argues that there are patterns of metaphors which are associated with the dominant capitalist ideology which underpins Western societies. Ideologies are social beliefs shared by a group of people which are used to

further their interests. The basic beliefs of an ideology organise specific attitudes (socially shared opinions) about an issue, such as immigration or pollution. Some groups of people are more powerful than others which results in the dominance of specific ideologies. Language, meaning and power are interlinked. For this reason, the use of metaphors associated with dominant ideologies affect the way we think and act, thus reinforcing social inequality, injustice, and environmental exploitation. The ideology of capitalism is characterised by "the impulse to acquisition, pursuit of gain, of money, of the greatest possible amount of money" (Weber, 1958, p. 17). Metaphors associated with the capitalist system include metaphors of power (e.g., activity is conceptualised as fighting as in 'takeover') and metaphors for humans and the living world (e.g., human beings are conceptualised as machines as in 'human resources'). In the same vein, the dominant discourse of sustainable development conceptualises nature as a 'resource' requiring expert human management (McGregor, 2004, p. 596). Metaphors tend to occur in the form of differentiation, i.e., significant pairings, contrasts, or dualisms, such as up-down, mind-body, public-private, etc. which are often seen "in contradiction to each other, frequently with one term assuming dominance" (Llewellyn, 2003, p. 670).

3.3 Rhetorical situation

Rhetoric is embedded in the 'rhetorical situation', i.e., the social context in which the verbal interaction takes place. The rhetorical situation consists of three interrelated elements: (1) the speaker/writer, (2) the audience(s), and (3) the purpose of communication. Due to the public nature of press releases, they are directed at multiple audiences. DeRosa and Ferruci (2011) differentiate between the primary/target/stated audience (the other party/parties involved in the conflict) and secondary/wider/implied audiences (the wider public, such as consumers, the media, and shareholders). Press releases therefore have multiple purposes directed at the primary/target/stated audience and at secondary/wider/implied audiences. Business organisations thus address multiple audiences, including one another (Cheney *et al*., 2004, p. 86) through formal public messages, such as CEO speeches, mission statements, and public relations communication (Cheney *et al*., 2004, p. 81).

4. Data and methodology

We analyse the use of rhetoric and argument in a public controversy between Greenpeace and international sportswear/fashion firms over the use of hazardous chemicals in their supply chains. The conflict resulted from the firms' environmental practices and policies violating

Greenpeace's norms and rules with respect to pollution. It played out in the form of 20 press releases issued by Greenpeace and six sportswear/fashion firms (adidas, G-Star RAW, H&M, LACOSTE, NIKE and PUMA) over a two-month period.

4.1 The 'Dirty Laundry' case

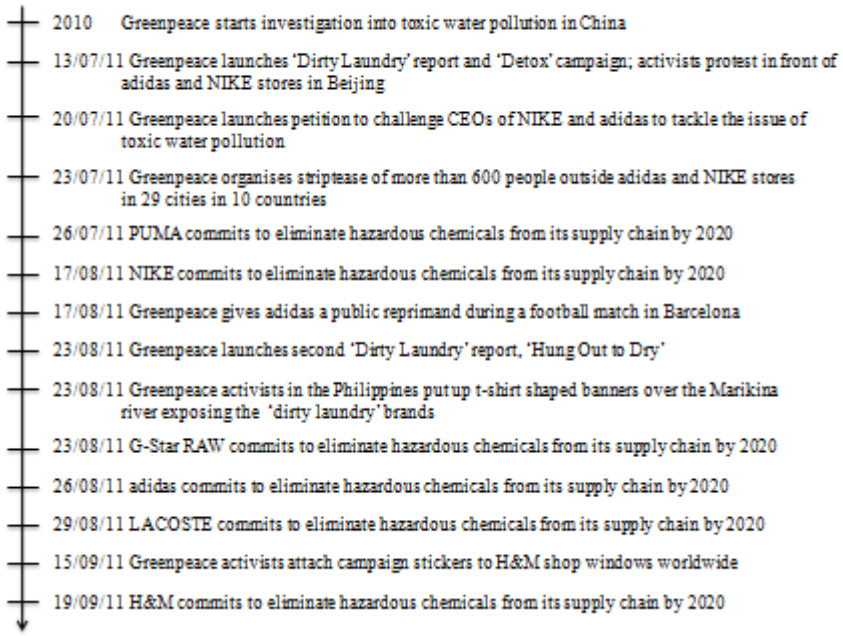
In July 2011 Greenpeace issued a press release highlighting the findings of its 'Dirty Laundry' report on water pollution in China and Southeast Asia. This marked the start of Greenpeace's 'Detox' campaign focusing on the elimination of hazardous chemicals in the supply chains of international sportswear/fashion firms. In August 2011 Greenpeace published a second report, 'Hung out to Dry'. Following Greenpeace's first press release, 19 subsequent press releases were exchanged over a two month period, six from Greenpeace and 13 from the six firms referred to above. As the events and the exchanges of press releases took place over a fairly short period of time, the resulting dataset is suitable for a fine-grained analysis of rhetoric and argument. The advantage of rhetorical analysis (as opposed to content analysis) is its sensitivity to linguistic nuances and contextual features.

The summary timeline of key events shown in Figure 1 indicates that Greenpeace used both 'peaceful protest' and 'creative communication' in the 'Detox' campaign, as outlined in its mission statement. The purpose of both strategies is to achieve its dual aims to 'expose global environmental problems' and 'promote solutions that are essential to a green and peaceful future' (Greenpeace USA, 2013, p. 1). In the 'Dirty Laundry' case this entailed drawing public attention to the harmful environmental practices of the sportswear/fashion industry and pressurising firms to change them in order to protect the environment from pollution. For this purpose, Greenpeace drew on its social capital (its social connections allowing it to advance its interests) in order to mobilise activists to participate in key events, including (i) a protest outside the world's largest adidas store and a NIKE store in Beijing, (ii) an online petition signed by thousands of people, (iii) a record-breaking striptease in front of adidas and NIKE stores worldwide, (iv) a public reprimand to adidas at a European cup football match watched on TV worldwide, (v) activists stringing out t-shirt shaped banners over the Marikina river in Manila, and (vi) a week-long campaign of attaching protest stickers to H&M shop windows. Greenpeace also extensively used social media networks to exert pressure on sportswear/fashion firms. The 'Detox' campaign was characterised by two elements which Bernays (1947) highlighted in his work on public relations, namely the vivid dramatisation of events for those who do not witness them and the constant creation of news to capture public

attention. The negative publicity created by Greenpeace' social activism put pressure on the firms to concede to its demand.

Six months after the data was collected for this paper Greenpeace re-commenced its campaign in March 2012 by issuing its third report, 'Dirty Laundry – Reloaded'. It does not appear to have generated press release responses from sportswear/fashion firms, thus making it less suitable for the analysis of rhetoric and argument applied in this paper. In November 2012 Greenpeace issued another report, 'Toxic Threads – The Big Fashion Stitch-Up', which outlined the results of Greenpeace's investigation of the presence of hazardous chemicals in the clothes of 20 fashion brands. Zara conceded immediately in similar manner to PUMA outlined in our paper. These subsequent reports and press releases point to opportunities for further analysis of this case.

Figure 1: Timeline of key events



4.2 The data

Table 1 presents the 20 press releases in terms of chronology, issuing organisation, title and length. Length is measured as total sentences/phrases and as total number of words including notes to editors (a particular feature of the Greenpeace press releases), footnotes, but excluding

contact details. While website addresses were included in the calculation of length, they did not form part of the rhetorical analysis.

Table 1: Press releases relating to Greenpeace 'Detox' campaign

PR No.	Date	PR issuer (no. press release)	Title (per the press release – Greenpeace inaccurately names some organisations)	No. sentences/ phrases		No. words	
				Greenpeace	Firms	Greenpeace	Firms
1	11_07_13	Greenpeace (1)	Greenpeace challenges Adidas and Nike to champion a toxic-free future	37		746	
2	11_07_13	adidas (1)	adidas Group Response to Greenpeace Report 'Dirty Laundry - Unravelling the corporate connections to toxic water pollution in China'		52		1,056
3	11_07_22	adidas (2)	adidas Group Response to Greenpeace Report - Update July 22nd, 2011 adidas Group Response to Greenpeace's Request "to eliminate all releases of hazardous chemicals" from across the supply chain and products		42		785
4	11_07_23	Greenpeace (2)	World's largest striptease challenges Adidas and Nike to Detox	21		663	
5	11_07_26	PUMA (1)	PUMA is Committed to Eliminate Discharges of Hazardous Chemicals		13		336
6	11_07_26	Greenpeace (3)	Puma overtakes competitors Adidas and Nike in race to drop toxic pollution	22		613	
7	11_08_17	NIKE (1)	NIKE, Inc. Commitment on Zero Discharge of Hazardous Chemicals		26		700
8	11_08_18	NIKE (2)	NIKE, Inc.'s Response to Greenpeace Report		120		2,335
9	11_08_18	Greenpeace (4)	Nike Scores 1-0 Over Adidas with toxic pollution clean-up commitment	22		692	
10	11_08_23	Greenpeace (5)	New clothing tests implicate global brands in release of hormone-disrupting chemicals	29		821	
11	11_08_23	H&M (1)	Personal views of Helena Helmersson (Head of CSR)		23		410
12	11_08_23	G-Star RAW (1)	G-Star RAW committed to eliminate hazardous chemicals		20		444
13	11_08_23	NIKE (3)	NIKE, Inc.'s Response of [sic] the Use of NPEs		9		214
14	11_08_26	adidas (3)	adidas Group's Commitment to Zero Discharge of hazardous chemicals		58		1,248
15	11_08_29	LACOSTE (1)	Lacoste apparel – health environment comments		17		423
16	11_08_31	Greenpeace (6)	'Impossible is nothing' as Adidas join [sic] Nike and Puma in cleaning up their supply chain	31		819	
17	11_09_13	H&M (2)	Personal views of Helena Helmersson (Head of CSR)		9		172
18	11_09_19	H&M (3)	H&M engages with Greenpeace		67		1,588
19	11_09_20	Greenpeace (7)	H&M's "Detox" commitment set to be this season's hottest fashion trend	33		978	
20	11_09_23	PUMA (2)	PUMA Progress Update Detox Campaign		14		362
			Total sentences_phrases/words	195	470	10,073	5,332
			Average sentences_phrases/words per press release	27.9	36.2	775	761

Key: PR = Press release

Website addresses for the 20 press releases are available from the authors on request.

4.3 Analytical framework

Our view of language as an inherently social activity results in an analytical framework consisting of two levels of analysis, namely (1) an analysis of the rhetorical situation (social context) in which the press releases are embedded and (2) a rhetorical analysis of the 20 press releases exchanged by Greenpeace and the fashion/sportswear firms (text). The analysis of the rhetorical situation utilises Mitchell *et al*.'s (1997) framework and focuses on the relationship between Greenpeace and the fashion/sportswear firms and their relationships with other organisational stakeholders and the media. The rhetorical analysis is based on the view of rhetoric and argument as social action and focuses on the strategies (i.e., moves and their rhetorical realisations in the form of *logos*, *ethos*, and *pathos*, including metaphors) used to achieve social and political goals.

The analytical framework and categories of analysis, resulting in Figures 2, 3, and 4, were developed abductively in an iterative process of going backwards and forwards between the theories and concepts introduced in the prior section of the paper and the data. The data analysis and interpretation was preceded by the authors familiarising themselves with Mitchell *et al*.'s (1997) framework of stakeholder identification introduced in Section 2.2 and the theories and concepts relating to rhetoric and argument discussed in Section 3. This was followed by a number of close readings of the press releases issued by Greenpeace and the sportswear/fashion firms in order to provide a high level familiarity and understanding of the data. Following the close readings, initial categories of analysis were selected based on their ability to capture rhetoric and argument in the press releases. These were refined a number of times until we were satisfied that the analytical framework and categories of analysis were able to capture the dynamics of interaction between the parties involved in the conflict. We have made our analysis as transparent as possible, for example, by providing illustrative examples throughout the presentation of findings in Section 5, particularly in Tables 3, 4, 6 and 7.

<u>Categories of analysis</u>

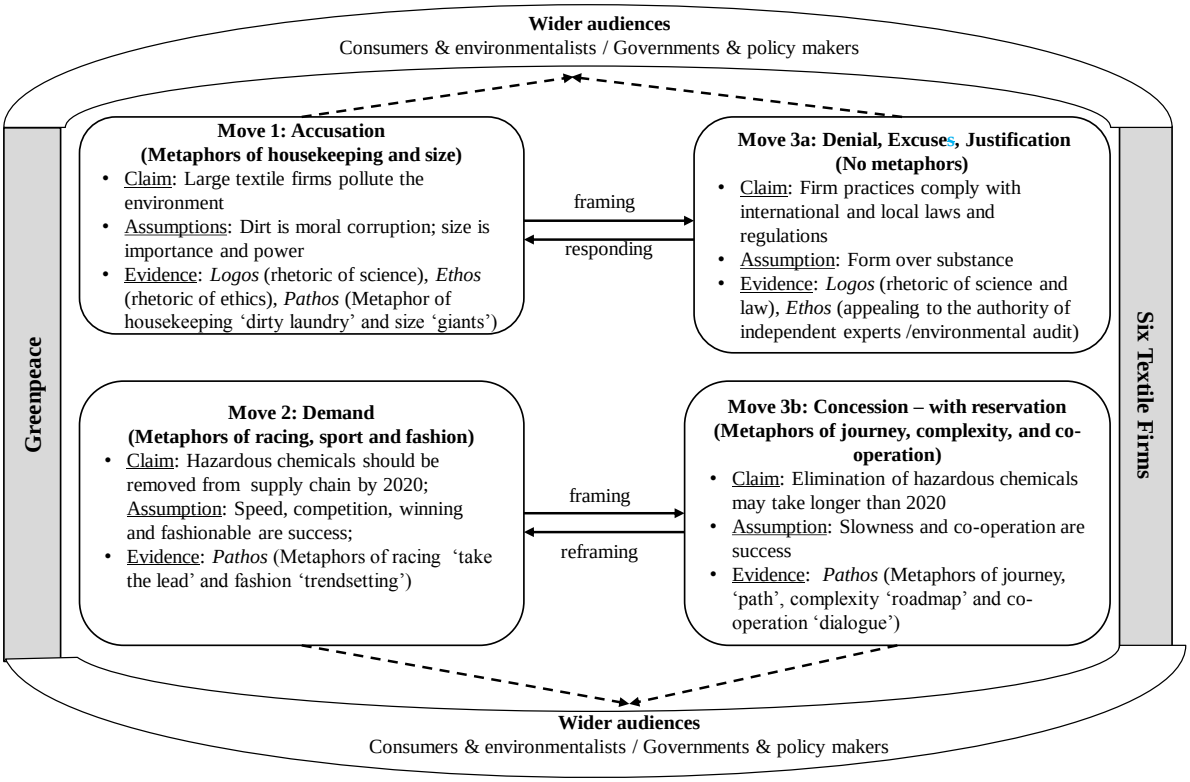
We focus on the dynamics of verbal interaction between Greenpeace and the six sportswear/fashion firms involved in the 'Dirty Laundry' case. First, we conceptualise verbal interaction as a series of conversational units or moves which have a specific communicative purpose, such as accusing, demanding, requesting, threatening (Greenpeace) and denying, excusing, and conceding (sportswear/fashion firms). Ketola (2006, 2008) classifies organisational response to charges of misconduct based on whether the organisation (1) admits

the misconduct and/or (2) admits responsibility for the misconduct. Combining the two possible responses, namely (1) admitting (or not admitting) the misconduct and/or (2) admitting (or not admitting) responsibility for the misconduct, results in four moves by the sportswear/fashion firms: denials, excuses, justifications, and concessions (see Figure 2). Denials involve the failure to admit to the misconduct and the refusal to take any responsibility for it. Excuses entail admitting to the misconduct, but refusing to take any responsibility for it. Justifications involve admitting responsibility for actions, but denying their harmful nature. Finally, concessions involve admitting both responsibility for actions and the harmful effects of environmental practices.

Second, we analyse on how the moves used during a verbal interaction between parties are realised in the form of rhetoric and argument. For this purpose, we focus on *logos* (appealing to logic), *ethos* (appealing to authority), and *pathos* (appealing to emotion), with a particular emphasis on metaphor. Third, we analyse the rhetorical use of metaphors. Metaphors work by conveying abstract concepts (such as money or time) in concrete terms (e.g., as physical objects, spatial orientations or fixed structures relating to everyday human experience). As people find it difficult to relate to abstractions, metaphors capture the audience's imagination. The more vivid the image conveyed by the metaphor, the stronger the emotional response and thus the greater its persuasive power.

Figure 2 operationalises the use of rhetoric and argument in the 'Dirty Laundry' case. Each argument is conceptualised as a move which is shown to consist of a specific claim, an underlying assumption, and evidence provided in the form of rhetoric, including the use of metaphors. It shows that Greenpeace used rhetoric prospectively to frame the issue of pollution by sportswear/fashion firms and the need to eliminate hazardous chemicals from their supply chains by using *logos*, *ethos*, and *pathos* (metaphors of housekeeping, size, racing, sport and fashion). By contrast, the sportswear/fashion firms used rhetoric reactively to either dispute Greenpeace's charge of misconduct by means of *logos* and *ethos* or to reframe the demand to eliminate hazardous chemicals from their supply chains by means of *pathos* (metaphors of journey, complexity, and co-operation) as a means of conceding to Greenpeace's demand on their terms.

Figure 2: The use of rhetoric and argument in the 'Dirty Laundry' case

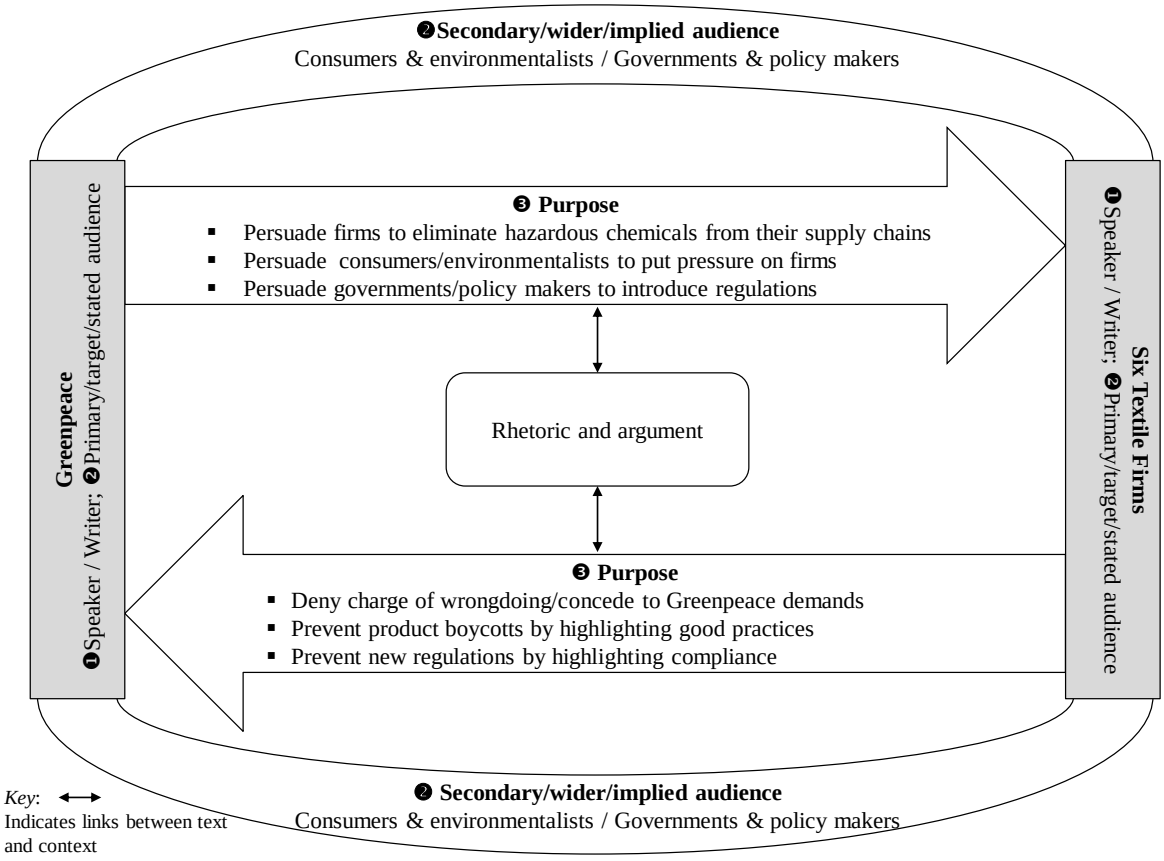


Key: - - → Representing link between rhetoric (text) and rhetorical situation (context)

Elements of the rhetorical situation

Figure 3 applies the three elements of the rhetorical situation, i.e., (i) speakers/writers, (ii) (direct and indirect) audiences, and (iii) the purposes of communication to the 'Dirty Laundry' case. It shows that the press releases are not only directed at the other party involved in the conflict, but also at wider audiences, including environmental activists/Greenpeace supporters, consumers of fashion and sports goods, governments and policy makers, the general public, and the media.

Figure 2: The rhetorical situation in the 'Dirty Laundry' case



In order to identify the audiences for the press releases, we analysed the press releases for direct references to stakeholders. Table 2 indicates that Greenpeace was primarily concerned with its own supporters/activists, consumers, policy makers, and possibly with suppliers - to which it refers frequently. By contrast, the sportswear/fashion firms addressed their press releases mainly to Greenpeace and, to some extent, to their suppliers.

Table 2: Audiences for the press releases – references to other parties

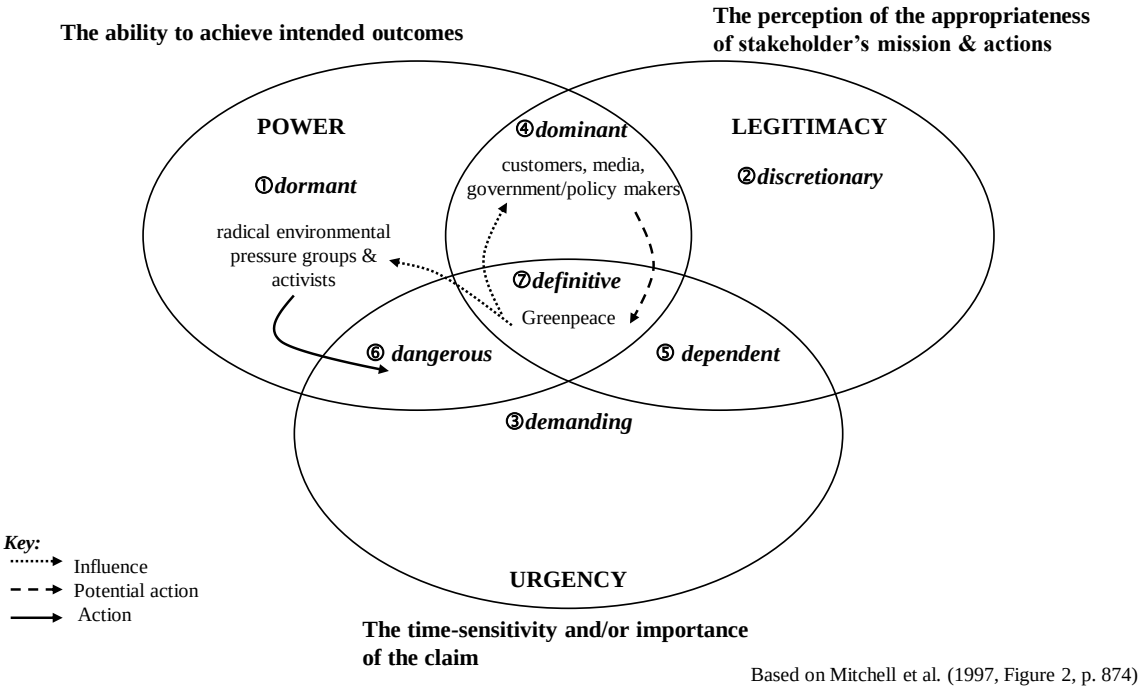
	Greenpeace No. references	Sportswear/fashion firms No. references
Primary/target/stated audience		
Six sportswear/fashion firms	172	
Greenpeace		64
Secondary/wider/implied audiences		
Supporters /Activists	10	0
Consumers/Customers	6	8
Suppliers	16	76
Government/Policy makers/Regulators	7	6
Non-governmental organisations	-	8
Workers/employees	0	1
Stakeholders/Communities/Civil society	1	9
	40	108

The presence of multiple audiences and purposes for social and environmental reporting in the 'Dirty Laundry' case necessitates a framework of analysis encompassing all relevant stakeholders. For this purpose, we use Mitchell *et al*.'s (1997) classification of stakeholder attributes introduced in Section 2.2, namely (1) power, (2) legitimacy, and (3) urgency. Power constitutes the ability to achieve intended outcomes and derives from the ability to access resources. Resources include both financial resources (e.g., donations) and symbolic resources, such as the relationship of the organisation with its relevant publics or stakeholders (e.g., donors and supporters, the general public, and the media) and staff knowledge and experience (e.g., public relations and communication skills). Legitimacy involves the perception of the desirability and appropriateness of the stakeholder's mission and actions by the general public and the media and can thus be considered a resource which is used to attract and maintain public support (Suchman, 1995, p. 575). In a conflict between firms and a stakeholder, this includes the stakeholder's ability to form alliances with customers, thus influencing the consumption of the organisation's goods and services. Urgency relates to the time-sensitiveness or the importance of the stakeholder's claim. By combining their three relationship attributes, Mitchell *et al*. (1997) identify seven types of stakeholders, with examples for each type: (1) dormant (only power; e.g., employees who have been dismissed or have been made redundant), (2) discretionary (only legitimacy; e.g., beneficiaries of corporate philanthropy), (3) demanding (only urgency; e.g., lone picketer outside company premises), (4) dominant (power and legitimacy; e.g., shareholders, creditors, employees, customers,

media, government/policy makers), (5) dependent (legitimacy and urgency; e.g., local residents affected by activities of the firm), (6) dangerous (power and urgency; e.g., wildcat strikers, employee saboteurs, terrorists) and (7) definitive (power, legitimacy and urgency; e.g., shareholder activists, whistleblowers). Alpaslan *et al*. (2009) argue that a crisis may trigger an increase in stakeholder salience by transforming dormant into dangerous stakeholders, discretionary into dependent stakeholders, and dominant into definitive stakeholders. This, in turn, changes the degree to which managers give priority to competing stakeholder claims.

We apply Mitchell *et al*.'s (1997) typology of stakeholder attributes to the 'Dirty Laundry' case in Figure 4. Stakeholders combining power, legitimacy and urgency constitute definitive stakeholders in the sense that organisations tend to prioritise such stakeholders' demand. Organisations also have strong incentives to resolve conflicts with this type of stakeholder quickly and satisfactorily for both parties. This is particularly the case for stakeholders who have the support of the wider public and the media, as the potential negative publicity associated with the conflict may damage the firm's image, reputation, or legitimacy. Large NGOs, such as Greenpeace or the World Wildlife Fund, are thus able to put considerable pressure on business organisations, particularly if these operate in industries characterised by strong public visibility, both in terms of media attention and the presence of a consumer audience (Carter, 2006).

Figure 4: Stakeholder relationships in the 'Dirty Laundry' case



Based on Mitchell et al. (1997, Figure 2, p. 874)

To summarise, our analytical framework comprises two levels, namely (1) a rhetorical analysis of press releases (text) and (2) an analysis of the rhetorical situation (social context). The rhetorical analysis focuses on the dynamics of interaction between the parties involved in the conflict in the form of moves (i.e., accusations, demand, denials, excuses, justifications and concessions) and their rhetorical realisation (in the form of *logos*, *ethos*, *pathos*), with a particular emphasis on metaphor as a means of appealing to emotion. The analysis of the rhetorical situation focuses on the relationships between the parties involved in the conflict, including their relationships with other stakeholders.

5. Discussion of findings

Figures 2, 3, and 4 visualise the application of the analytical framework developed in Section 4.3 to analyse the interaction between Greenpeace and sportswear/fashion firms in the 'Dirty Laundry' case. In this section, we first discuss the findings arising from Figure 2 relating to the dynamics of interaction between the parties. Illustrative examples to support our findings are provided in Table 3. We then discuss the findings arising from Figure 3 and Figure 4 relating to the rhetorical situation characterising the 'Dirty Laundry' case, including the relationship

between stakeholders.

5.1 Use of rhetoric and argument

Both Greenpeace and the sportswear/fashion firms used rhetoric and argument in their press releases to address multiple audiences in order to achieve specific purposes (see Figure 3). This section considers the dynamics of verbal interaction between the parties involved in the dispute in the form of moves and the rhetorical strategies used to realise the moves, including metaphor. Metaphors are used as a means of evoking an emotional response, thus underlining the urgency of Greenpeace's claim both in terms its importance and speediness of response required. Table 3 provides illustrative examples in the form of quotes from the press releases.

Dynamics of interaction: Moves

The interaction between Greenpeace and the six sportswear/fashion firms took the form of four moves (see Table 3). Greenpeace initiated the interaction by accusing the sportswear/fashion firms of using hazardous chemicals in their supply chains (Move 1) and demanding their elimination by 2020 (Move 2). This involved the prospective use of rhetoric as a means of framing the projected rhetorical situation, thus putting Greenpeace firmly in the driving seat. The six sportswear/fashion firms used rhetoric retrospectively to respond to an existing rhetorical situation, namely Greenpeace's charge of misconduct and demand for action. Responses fall into two categories, namely responses to the charge of misconduct and responses to the demand for remedial action. adidas, NIKE, H&M disputed Greenpeace's claim and defended their environmental practices (Move 3a – denials, excuses, justifications). By contrast, adidas excused its harmful environmental practices by shifting the responsibility onto its Chinese supplier by stating "Our business relationship with Youngor Group is restricted to the cutting and sewing of garments" Example 3.4 in Table 3). H&M questioned the validity of Greenpeace's claims ("Our own result and audits done by an independent laboratory shows [sic] that the chemical has not been used" Example 3.13) and justified its harmful environmental practices by reference to compliance with local and international regulations ("there is no law demanding the restriction" Example 3.10).

By contrast, PUMA, LACOSTE, G-Star RAW responded by aligning themselves with Greenpeace's aims and acquiescing to Greenpeace's demand (Move 3b). This allowed them to sidestep the validity of the charge of misconduct, thus giving them scope to reframe the rhetorical situation. PUMA responded by stating that it "recognises the urgent need for

reducing and eliminating industrial releases of all hazardous chemicals" (Example 3.14). This statement underlined PUMA's environmental credentials. However, it neither acknowledged the "urgent need" as originating in Greenpeace's 'Dirty Laundry' report nor that PUMA was targeted by Greenpeace in the report. This means that there was no real dialogue between the two parties about the validity of the charge of misconduct. In turn, Greenpeace responded by portraying non-acquiescing firms in a negative light (see Example 3.17 and Example 3.18) (Move 4a) and acquiescing firms in a positive light (see Example 3.19) (Move 4b). This resulted in all six sportswear/fashion firms eventually conceding to Greenpeace's demand.

Table 3: Dynamics of interaction between Greenpeace and sportswear/fashion firms in the form of moves

Greenpeace accuses sportswear/fashion firms of water pollution: Move 1 (Accusation) (Press release 1 Greenpeace (1))

- Example 3.1: The Greenpeace International 'Dirty Laundry'[pathos] report … found hazardous chemicals in samples[logos] of wastewater discharges taken at two textile processing facilities…
- Example 3.2: ...snapshot of the kind of toxic[pathos] chemicals that are being released by the textile industry into waterways all over the world.

Greenpeace demand elimination of hazardous chemicals from the supply chains: Move 2 (Demand) (Press release 1 Greenpeace (1))

- Example 3.3: ...calling on the sportswear giants[metaphor] to remove toxic[pathos] chemicals from their supply chains and from their products...

Firms' responses to Greenpeace's accusation: Move 3a (Denials, Excuses, Justifications)

Firm responses to Greenpeace's demand: Move 3b (Concessions)

adidas
Excuse – shifts the blame to supplier
(Press release 2 adidas (1))

- Example 3.4: Our business relationship with the Youngor Group is restricted to the cutting and sewing of garments.
- Example 3.5: We have requested Youngor's Management to investigate Greenpeace's claims and, if they are accurate, to take immediate steps for remediation.
- Example 3.6: We have also asked Greenpeace to share with Youngor the specifics of their research, e.g. to disclose all information related to waste water sampling and detection methods to support Youngor's own investigation and remediation process.
- Example 3.7: We share Greenpeace concerns about widespread water pollution[pathos] in China
- Example 3.8: We do not agree with Greenpeace's conclusion.

H&M
Denial of Greenpeace's claim and justification of environmental practices
(Press release 11 H&M (1))

- Example 3.9: The levels of the chemical nonylphenolethoxylate that Greenpeace claim [sic] to have found are below our restricted level of 100 ppm (=100 mg/kg).
- Example 3.10: There is no law[logos] demanding the restriction
- Example 3.11: The reason for a limit of 100 ppm is that the test methods are uncertain, so a restriction of 0 ppm is not trustworthy.
- Example 3.12: Hence the level of the findings stated are very low, one cannot know that our products contain nonylphenolethoxylate.
- Example 3.13: Our own result and audits done by an independent laboratory[ethos] shows [sic] that the chemical has not been used, since the results are below the detection level the independent laboratory[ethos] recommends (in this case below 100 ppm). (see also Example 4.2 where this sentence also illustrates logos)

PUMA
Concedes to demand
(Press release 5 PUMA (1))

- Example 3.14: PUMA recognises the urgent need for reducing and eliminating industrial releases of all hazardous chemicals.
- Example 3.15: PUMA is committed to eliminate the discharges of all hazardous chemicals from the whole lifecycle and all production procedures that are associated with the making and using of PUMA products by 2020.
- Example 3.16: An Action Plan will be set up by PUMA within eight weeks from the time this commitment was made.

Greenpeace's response to firms: Move 4a (negative presentation) or Move 4b (positive presentation)

Punishment – Greenpeace sanctions adidas with activism
(Press release 9 Greenpeace (4))

- Example 3.17: World's largest striptease challenges Adidas and Nike to Detox[pathos]

Punishment – Greenpeace sanctions H&M with activism
(Press release 19 Greenpeace (7))

- Example 3.18: ...activists in 12 countries urging the company to come clean[metaphor] by attaching "Detox[pathos] our future!" stickers to H&M's shop-windows, and online activists around the world calling on the brand to commit to a toxic-free[pathos] future

Greenpeace verbally rewards PUMA
(Press release 16 Greenpeace (6))

- Example 3.19: Puma, the world's third-largest[metaphor] sportswear brand, has responded to a Greenpeace challenge to 'detox'[pathos], by publicly committing to the elimination of all releases of hazardous chemicals from its entire product lifecycle, and across its global supply chain by 2020, putting it firmly ahead[metaphor] of its competitors Nike and Adidas in the race[metaphor] for a toxic-free[pathos] future.

Key: See Table 1 for identification of the specific press releases; underlined words indicate rhetorical strategies (*logos*, *ethos*, *pathos*, metaphor)

Rhetorical strategies: *Logos*, *ethos*, and *pathos*

In order to persuade audiences of the validity and legitimacy of their claim, speakers/writers appeal to logic (*logos*), to authority, (*ethos*), or to emotion (*pathos*). Both Greenpeace and the sportswear/fashion firms drew on all three rhetorical strategies when making their claims. Figure 2 conceptualises the interaction between the parties as a series of moves which have specific communicative purposes, i.e., accusing (Move 1), demanding (Move 2), denying (Move 3a) and conceding (Move 3b). Each move manifests itself in the form of a claim with supporting rhetorical strategies (*logos*, *ethos*, and *pathos*) and associated assumptions and beliefs. For example, Greenpeace's statement "The Greenpeace International 'Dirty Laundry' report … found hazardous chemicals in samples of wastewater discharges taken at two textile processing facilities" (Table 3, Example 3.1) is based on the claim that sportswear/fashion firms were polluting the environment. The underlying assumption is that economic activity systematically produces environmental harm (Everett and Neu, 2000). Consistent with the discourse of ecological modernisation, which underlies this assumption, the evidence is provided in the form of *logos* (rhetoric of science: 'samples of wastewater discharges' (Table 3, Example 3.1) and reinforced by *pathos* (metaphor of housekeeping: 'Dirty Laundry report') (Table 3, Example 3.1).

Logos (rhetoric of science) and *ethos* (rhetoric of law and audit)

The interactions between Greenpeace and the sportswear/fashion firms in the 'Dirty Laundry' case focused on charges of organisational misconduct in the form of harmful environmental practices. Table 4 summarises the use of *logos* (rhetoric of science) and *ethos* (rhetoric of law and audit) by Greenpeace and the sportswear/fashion firms, illustrating differences in rhetorical strategies. The rhetoric of science (*logos*) permeates debates on the environmental impact of business organisations (e.g., pollution, climate change, population growth). Science and scientific rationality, "both in terms of accumulating 'scientific facts' and in posing solutions to environmental problems" (Everett and Neu, 2000, p. 10), play a central role in the discourse of ecological modernisation which has become the dominant discourse of conceptualising the relationships between business organisations and nature. It is widely used by governments, companies, and NGOs (Everett and Neu, 2000; McGregor, 2004). It is therefore not surprising that both sides in the 'Detox' campaign used the rhetoric of science (see examples 4.1, 4.2, 4.3 in Table 4) to convince both the other party and wider audiences of the legitimacy and validity of their arguments, albeit in different ways. Greenpeace used the rhetoric of science as a means of evoking an emotional response ("bioaccumulative hormone disruptors" – Example 4.1),

whereas the firms tended to use precise chemical formulae and measurements ("Nonylphenolethoxylates", "alkylphenols", "alkylphenolethoxylates" – Example 4.3). The reference in Table 4 to "78 articles tested" (Example 4.7) and "52 were found to contain nonylphenolethoxylates" (Example 4.7) implies objectivity and precision that may not be valid. For example, we do not know the research methods applied that led to this finding. The sample, which is small, may be biased and the amount of chemical found may be very small. As the environmental domain is characterised by stringent regulation, appealing to the authority of the law (*ethos*) in the form of legal compliance (see examples 4.4, 4.5, 4.6) is also an important means of persuading various audiences of the legitimacy and validity of one's claim. *Ethos* also entails appealing to independent parties, such as experts or laboratories, to verify environmental performance (see examples 4.7, 4.8, 4.9).

Table 4: Examples of the rhetoric of science, law, audit/inspection/review

Rhetoric of science (*logos*) used by Greenpeace to accuse sportswear/fashion firms

- Example 4.1: The chemicals found in the sampling carried out by Greenpeace include persistent and bioaccumulative hormone disruptors (Press release 1 Greenpeace (1))

Rhetoric of science (*logos*) used by the sportswear/fashion firms contesting Greenpeace's claims

- Example 4.2: Our own result and audits done by an independent laboratory shows [sic] that the chemical has not been used, since the results are below the detection level the independent laboratory recommends (in this case below 100 ppm). (Press release 11 H&M (1)) (see also Example 3.13 where this sentence also illustrates ethos)

Rhetoric of science (*logos*) used by the sportswear/fashion firms conciliating to Greenpeace's claims

- Example 4.3: Nonylphenolethoxylates (NPEO or NPE) are a class of chemical substances that belong to the general family of chemicals known as alkylphenols (AP) and alkylphenolethoxylates (APEO). (Press release 13 NIKE (3))

Rhetoric of law (*ethos*) used by Greenpeace to accuse sportswear/fashion firms

- Example 4.4: [Policy makers] can set stringent regulations that systematically reduce and eliminate hazardous chemicals while supporting sustainable innovations (Press release 1 Greenpeace (1))

Rhetoric of law (*ethos*) used by the sportswear/fashion firms contesting Greenpeace's claims

- Example 4.5: The adidas Group also commissioned a German-based independent testing institute specialised in water analysis to compare testing results as reported in the Greenpeace report with German and European waste and drinking water regulations. (Press release 2 adidas (1))

Rhetoric of law (*ethos*) used by the sportswear/fashion firms conciliating to Greenpeace's claims

- Example 4.6: EU restriction: 1000 mg/kg G-Star limit: 100mg/kg Greenpeace detection limit: 1 mg/kg (Press release 12 G-Star RAW (1))

Rhetoric of audit/inspection (*ethos*) used by Greenpeace to accuse sportswear/fashion firms

- Example 4.7: Of the 78 articles tested, 52 were found to contain nonylphenolethoxylates, chemicals which breaks [sic] down into the hormone-disrupting nonylphenol (Press release 10 Greenpeace (5))

Rhetoric of audit/inspection (*ethos*) used by the sportswear/fashion firms contesting Greenpeace's claims

- Example 4.8: We conduct about 30 000 chemical tests every year to ensure compliance with our chemical restrictions. (Press release 17 H&M (2))

Rhetoric of audit/inspection (*ethos*) used by the sportswear/fashion firms conciliating to Greenpeace's claims

- Example 4.9: At the moment, G-Star has a compliance system fully focused on hazardous substances, which includes a Restricted Chemicals List, regular checks on the sites, risk assessments, training and support to suppliers, product testing and independent environmental auditing. (Press release 12 G-Star RAW (1))

Key: Key phrases guiding the coding judgement are underlined

In contrast to the firms, Greenpeace hardly used any rhetoric of law or audit (see Table 5 and Table 6). The three firms who denied the charge of wrongdoing defended their environmental practices by reference to local and international laws and regulations. However, organisational legitimacy extends beyond laws and rules and encompasses "a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some

socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions" (Suchman, 1995, p. 547). This means that a debate on a charge of environmental misconduct is ultimately a debate on the norm-appropriateness of organisational behaviour which cannot be won by reference to rule compliance. By conceding to Greenpeace's demand, the other three firms avoided engaging in a debate on the validity of the charge of wrongdoing, thus protecting their legitimacy and reputation from further damage.

The frequencies of usage of terms associated with the rhetoric of science, law and audit by Greenpeace and the firms is summarised in Table 5. The terms used/basis for the frequency counts in Table 5 are shown in Table 6.

Table 5: Frequency of use of rhetoric of science, law and audit and metaphor

Rhetoric of science, law and audit	**Science**	**Law**	**Audit**			**Total**
Greenpeace press releases	65	1	6			72
Sportswear/fashion firms' press releases	94	39	49			182
Metaphor	**Housekeeping**	**Size**	**Racing**	**Sport**	**Fashion**	**Total**
Greenpeace press releases	95	30	11	32	12	180
Average per press release						25.7
	Journey	**Complexity**	**Co-operation**			**Total**
Sportswear/fashion firms' press releases	32	11	100			143
Average per press release						11.0

Table 6: Analysis of the frequency of terms used in the rhetoric of science, law and audit

Greenpeace (Total length of press releases in words: 5,332)		**Firms (Total length of press releases in words: 10,073)**	
Logos: Rhetoric of science			
Bioaccumulative	15	Bioaccumulative	8
Hormone disruptors	22	Endocrine disruptors	4
Nonylphenolethoxylate, alkylphenols, alkylphenolethoxylates, perflourinatedsulphorates, etc	21	Nonylphenolethoxylate, alkylphenols, alkylphenolethoxylates, perflourinatedsulphorates, etc	31
Other terms referring to science	7	Other terms referring to science	51
	65		94
Ethos: Rhetoric of law			
European legal regulations	0	European legal regulations	16
Local regulations	0	Local regulations	6
Regulations	1	Regulations	14
Best practice standards	0	Best practice standards	3
	1		39
Ethos: Rhetoric of audit, inspection, review			
External audit/Independent review	6	External audit/Independent review	15
Internal audit	0	Internal audit	34
	6		49

Pathos – Rhetorical use of metaphors

Both Greenpeace and the sportswear/fashion firms used metaphors rhetorically to persuade the other party and implied audiences (see Figure 2) of the validity of their claims. Table 5 shows the frequency of metaphors used, classified according to the categories summarised in Figure 2 (three of the five categories for Greenpeace, three categories for the firms). Greenpeace used metaphors to a much greater extent than the sportswear/fashion firms. This is in line with the strategy of creative communication outlined in its mission statement. By using metaphors which questioned the sportswear/fashion firms' legitimacy, Greenpeace was able to put pressure on the firms to concede to its demand.

Greenpeace used metaphors (see examples in Table 7a) which draw on collective unconsciously formed sets of beliefs, attitudes, and values (Chateris-Black, 2005, p. 175) underlying Western societies. For example, the title of its first report, 'Dirty Laundry' report, uses the metaphor of housekeeping ('dirty laundry' – Example 7.2 in Table 7a, 'clean up their acts' – Example 7.1) embedded in the popular saying 'washing your dirty laundry/linen in public' to refer to the pollution by the sportswear/fashion industry. The power of this metaphor derives from its inherent dualism, i.e., clean versus dirty. Whereas cleanliness is associated

with morality (i.e., godliness), dirt is associated with amorality (i.e., vice). This allowed Greenpeace to construct the practices of sportswear/fashion firms as both physically and morally 'dirty'. As this metaphor resonates with the belief system of Western societies, Greenpeace was able to psychologically connect with its various audiences, including consumers, environmentalists, and the media. They, in turn, have the ability to put pressure on the sportswear/fashion firms to abolish their harmful environmental practices by product boycotts, protests, and negative publicity. The metaphor of size ('giants' – Example 7.6 in Table 7a) constructed the sportswear/fashion firms as important powerful organisational actors. This rendered Greenpeace's plea for action both compelling and viable. What is more, in the dominant capitalist ideology, size is associated with importance, growth, and power. Both metaphors resonate strongly with the beliefs system of Western capitalist societies. This made it difficult for sportswear/fashion firms to counter Greenpeace's charge of misconduct with *pathos*. Thus, sportswear/fashion firms contesting Greenpeace's accusation of environmental misconduct resorted to *logos* (rhetoric of science) and *ethos* (reference to the authority of the law and to the authority of independent testing) to defend their environmental practices.

Greenpeace framed its demand to eliminate all hazardous chemicals both as a race and as a fashion contest, thus pitting the firms against each other in a competition to reach this target. Greenpeace used the metaphors of sport and fashion to construct the firms conciliating to its demand as winners, champions (examples 7.9, 7.10, 7.11, 7.12) and trendsetters (examples 7.18, 7.19, 7.20) in Table 7a and the firms resisting its demand as 'losers' (examples 7.13, 7.14, 7.15. 7.16, 7.17) and unfashionable (Example 7.21). As consumer goods firms are highly dependent on public opinion, this positive/negative labelling by Greenpeace (Move 4b positive presentation and Move 4a negative presentation) was aimed at influencing public perception and thus risked impacting on organisational reputation and legitimacy. As a result, all six sportswear/fashion firms which engaged in verbal interaction with Greenpeace eventually agreed to Greenpeace's demand. The metaphors of racing, sport and fashion are powerful, as they tap into the dominant capitalist ideology which emphasises competition and success. Goatly (2007) argues that metaphors of speed involve the conceptualisation of a process or an activity as motion, regardless of whether it involves movement or not. The intensity at which an activity takes place, is then associated with speed. Thus, speed metaphors tend to double up as metaphors for success. Greenpeace cleverly linked the association between speed and success with the firms' products (sportswear and fashion) to construct the elimination of hazardous chemicals from their supply chains as a competition between firms. What is more,

Western fashion functions as an aesthetic medium for the expression of ideas, desires, and beliefs circulating in society (Counsell and Wolf, 2001, p. 150). Environmental concerns have gained prominence in Western societies (McGregor, 2004). Using the metaphor of fashion, Greenpeace exploited the fashion firms' dependency on being perceived at the forefront of ideas, desires, and beliefs. Thus, firms conceding to Greenpeace's demand are constructed as 'trendsetters' and firms refusing to do so as old-fashioned.

The sportswear/fashion firms countered Greenpeace's demand for the elimination of hazardous chemicals from their supply chains by using the metaphors of journey, complexity and co-operation (*pathos*) (see Table 7b) which redefined Greenpeace's target as a complex process involving a collaborative effort by the sportswear/fashion industry. They strategically used the concepts of slowness and co-operation to gain time. Slowness and co-operation, the non-dominant aspect of the metaphors of speed and competition, are particularly valued by environmentalists and other counter-culture groups in society (e.g., the slow food movement, the rat race). The journey metaphor constitutes a predominant metaphor in business discourse on sustainability used in annual reports, press releases, and CEO speeches (Milne *et al*., 2006). However, it also functions as a means of obfuscation, as it simultaneously evokes the impression of engaging with and progressing towards sustainability, yet masks the actual destination of the journey by describing it as a "long, difficult, on-going, perhaps never ending, and ill-defined" process (Milne *et al*., 2006, p. 820). However, in its 'Detox' campaign Greenpeace defined the end point of 'the journey' both in terms of outcome and time-frame as the elimination of hazardous chemicals from the firms' supply chains by 2020. This suggests that Greenpeace was not only aware of the risk of corporate greenwash (i.e., merely influencing audiences' perceptions of environmental performance, rather than improving environmental performance), but also aimed to prevent targeted companies from engaging in it.

In conclusion, both Greenpeace and the sportswear/fashion firms used the rhetorical strategy of *pathos* in the form of metaphors embodying the values of the other party to persuade them of the validity of their argument. What is more, both sides involved in the conflict used the rhetorical strategy of *logos* (rhetoric of science) in line with the dominant discourse of ecological modernisation which advocates sustainable economic development based on the principles of scientific environmental management. The rhetorical strategy of *ethos* (rhetoric of law, audit, and inspection) aimed at persuading audiences of the need for stringent environmental regulation (Greenpeace) or of the compliance with environmental standards and

regulations (firms) is in line with the assumption that economic activity systematically produces environmental harm (Everett and Neu, 2000). Constructing an issue, such as pollution, in the language of the dominant discourse is a powerful way of presenting an argument and influencing opinion, as dominant discourses do not require lengthy explanation or legitimisation because they are familiar, recognisable, and accepted by a variety of audiences (McGregor, 2004, p. 598).

Table 7a: Use of metaphors by Greenpeace

Housekeeping (Laundry) metaphors: Used by Greenpeace to accuse sportswear/fashion firms (Move 1)

- Example 7.1: As industry frontrunners, major sportswear brands have a responsibility to show leadership and clean up their acts (Press release 4 Greenpeace (2))
- Example 7.2: …global brands like Adidas are expecting customers to do their dirty laundry for them (Press release 10 Greenpeace (5))
- Example 7.3: Brands must … come clean about what chemicals their factories are using and discharging (Press release 10 Greenpeace (5))

Housekeeping (Laundry) metaphors: Used to reward sportswear/fashion firms conceding to Greenpeace's claims (Move 4b)

- Example 7.4: By committing to clean up its dirty laundry, Nike is showing real winning form (Press release 9 Greenpeace (4))

Housekeeping (Laundry) metaphors: Used to punish sportswear/fashion firms contesting Greenpeace's claims (Move 4a)

- Example 7.5: To highlight this problem and the need for urgent solutions, activists in the Philippines today hung out t-shirt shaped banners exposing the 14 brands 'Dirty Laundry' over the Marikina River, challenging them to "Cut the chemicals and Detox our water". (Press release 10 Greenpeace (5))

Size metaphors: Used to apply pressure on sportswear/fashion firms to concede to Greenpeace's demand

- Example 7.6: …calling on the sportswear giants to remove toxic chemicals from their supply chain (Press release 1 Greenpeace (1))
- Example 7.7: Puma, the world's third-largest sportswear brand (Press release 16 Greenpeace (6))
- Example 7.8: …major fashion brands (Press release 19 Greenpeace (7))

Racing metaphors: Used to reward sportswear/fashion firms conceding to Greenpeace's claims (Move 4b)

- Example 7.9: Nike Scores 1-0 Over Adidas with toxic pollution clean-up commitment (Press release 9 Greenpeace (4))
- Example 7.10: Round one of the Detox challenge goes to Puma (Press release 6 Greenpeace (3))
- Example 7.11: …putting it [Puma] firmly ahead of its competitors Nike and Adidas in the race for a toxic-free future (Press release 6 Greenpeace (3))
- Example 7.12: Nike is showing real winning form (Press release 9 Greenpeace (4))

Racing metaphors: Used to punish sportswear/fashion firms contesting Greenpeace's claims (Move 4a)

- Example 7.13: …now Nike and Adidas better get in gear, or else risk falling behind in the race towards a toxic-free future (Press release 6 Greenpeace (3))

Sporting metaphors: Used to punish sportswear/fashion firms contesting Greenpeace's claims (Move 4a)

- Example 7.14: …losers shouldn't throw in the towel (Press release 9 Greenpeace (4))
- Example 7.15: …water pollution is not fair play (Press release 9 Greenpeace (4))
- Example 7.16: Adidas and Nike are playing on the same team as toxic polluters (Press release 4 Greenpeace (2))
- Example 7.17: Adidas and Nike talk a good game (Press release 4 Greenpeace (2))

Fashion metaphors: Used to reward sportswear/fashion firms conciliating to Greenpeace's claims (Move 4b)

- Example 7.18: …this season's hottest fashion trend (Press release 19 Greenpeace (7))
- Example 7.19: …setting the trend for this season and the future (Press release 19 Greenpeace (7))
- Example 7.20: …"detoxing" is back in fashion, with a number of clothing brands publicly engaging in the "Detox" challenge (Press release 16 Greenpeace (6))

Fashion metaphors: Used to punish sportswear/fashion firms contesting Greenpeace's claims (Move 4a)

- Example 7.21: …it also sends a clear message to other brands that using toxic chemicals to make our clothing is no longer in vogue (Press release 19 Greenpeace (7))

Key: Key phrases guiding the coding judgement are underlined

Table 7b: Use of metaphors by the sportswear/fashion firms

Journey metaphors

- Example 7.22: Driving industry collaboration for the development of a dye-house audit protocol (phrase repeated - Press releases 2 & 3 adidas (1) & (2))
- Example 7.23: To make this a reality, NIKE, Inc. will continue phasing out hazardous chemicals in our supply chain and we will accelerate the phase out of the highest priority hazardous chemicals (Press release 7 NIKE (1))

Metaphors of complexity

- Example 7.24: This work is done within a complex and tiered network of buyers, agents, distributors and material suppliers (Press release 8 NIKE (2))
- Example 7.25: The supply chain of a garment is a very complex system with as many steps and suppliers in the chain as parts and raw materials used (Press release 12 G-Star RAW (1))

Metaphors of co-operation

- Example 7.26: We always strive to strengthen our methods and routines, and as part of our work we wellcome [sic] the dialogue with all our stakeholders – of course including Greenpeace (Press release 11H&M (1))

Key: See Table 1 for identification of the specific press releases; Key phrases guiding the coding judgement are underlined

5.2 The rhetorical situation in the 'Dirty Laundry' case

As shown in Figure 3, Greenpeace's press releases simultaneously served three purposes: (1) to persuade firms to eliminate hazardous chemicals from their supply chains, (2) to persuade consumers and environmentalists to put pressure on firms by product boycotts and participating in protest activities, and (3) to persuade governments and policy makers to introduce tighter environmental regulations. Conversely, the press releases of the sportswear/fashion firms also served three purposes: (1) to deny Greenpeace's charge of wrongdoing or to concede to Greenpeace's demand, (2) to prevent product boycotts and (3) to prevent increased regulation by highlighting good environmental practices and aligning themselves with Greenpeace's cause.

Greenpeace is a stakeseeker, as it aimed to exert influence over the firms' environmental practices, policies, and performance without having any organisationally defined links to them. Prior to the first 'Dirty Laundry' report, Greenpeace is a dominant stakeholder for firms with a high-street or strong brand presence (i.e., operating predominantly in the retail and food sector) in that it combines power and legitimacy gained through a variety of successful campaigns targeting these industries (Cooper, 2009). Figure 4 indicates that the presence of pollution in the supply chains of the sportswear/fashion industry provided Greenpeace with an urgent claim, thus transforming it from a dominant to a definitive stakeholder. The urgency of the claim (see discussion in the next section) manifested itself rhetorically by means of the

metaphor of racing in Greenpeace's press releases. During the 'Detox' campaign, Greenpeace skilfully used its power and legitimacy to access symbolic resources in the form of support by activists, consumers, the government/policy makers, the general public and the media (see dotted arrows indicating influence in Figure 4). This support results from Greenpeace successfully persuading audiences that the firms' environmental practices and policies violated social norms and rules relating to pollution, thus creating a legitimacy threat. Consumers, government/policy makers and the media are dominant stakeholders in the sense that they have both power (i.e., access to financial and symbolic resources) and legitimacy. By persuading them of the urgency of the claim, they have the potential to become definitive stakeholders who can exercise their power in the form of product boycotts, more stringent environmental regulations and negative portrayal in the media (see broken arrow indicting potential action in Figure 4). By contrast, activists are dormant stakeholders in the sense that they have power to impose their will on organisations by means of campaigns which attract the attention of the media. By persuading them of the urgency of the issue, Greenpeace mobilised activists to participate in high-profile events, such as a mass-striptease, activism during a football match, and a sticker campaign (see arrows indicating action in Figure 4). This transformed them into dangerous stakeholders who used their power to coerce the firms to commit to Greenpeace's demand. These events were reported in the media, thereby not only creating negative publicity and threatening the firms' reputation and legitimacy, but also influencing the perceptions of the consumers of sportswear/fashion goods. Greenpeace subsequently rendered the support by activists explicit in its press releases (see Example 3.17 and Example 3.18 in Table 3).

6. Summary and implications

We examined the use of rhetoric and argument in social and environmental reporting in the 'Dirty Laundry' case which involved a conflict between Greenpeace and firms in the sportswear/fashion industry over the use of hazardous chemicals in their supply chains. Both sides used the rhetorical strategies of *logos*, *ethos*, and *pathos* to convince audiences of the validity and legitimacy of their claims. Greenpeace skilfully used *pathos* (i.e., appealing to audiences' emotions) in the form of metaphors associated with the dominant capitalist ideology underpinning Western societies (metaphors of housekeeping, size, racing, sport and fashion) to expose the harmful environmental practices of fashion/sportswear firms and to demand their improvement. This is in line with Greenpeace's strategy to use creative communication to achieve its aims, as outlined in its mission statement. Greenpeace also used the rhetoric of science, law, audit, and inspection which underpin the dominant discourse of ecological

modernisation. Based on "the accumulation of scientific evidence of environmental impacts" (Harvey, 1998, p. 343; quoted in Everett and Neu, 2000, p. 11), the rhetoric of science provides a familiar and thus accepted way of conceptualising pollution. What is more, the assumption that economic activity systematically produces environmental harm which underlies the discourse of ecological modernisation necessitates "proactive strategies, preventative practices, and rigid and systematic politics, institutional arrangements and regulatory practices" (Everett and Neu, 2000, p. 9). These are evident in the rhetoric of law, audit, and inspection used by Greenpeace.

The sportswear/fashion firms eventually conceded to Greenpeace's demand by using metaphors based on values and beliefs of the environmental movement (journey, complexity, and co-operation). This enabled them to reframe the elimination of hazardous chemicals from their supply chain as a complex process, thus allowing them to buy some time. Both Greenpeace and the firms used metaphors associated with the other party's belief system to persuade them of the validity and legitimacy of their claims. This indicates that the use of *pathos*, particularly in the form of metaphors which are associated with the value system of the respective audience, constitutes a powerful method of persuasion.

Our findings suggest that the outcome of conflicts on social and environmental issues is dependent on the particular attributes of the stakeholder involved and the stakeholder's ability to harness the power and legitimacy of other key stakeholders. Firms find it difficult to ignore the demand of powerful and legitimate stakeholders who have urgent claims. Power derives from the ability to access material and symbolic resources. Our findings suggest that, in social and environmental conflicts, access to financial resources is less crucial than the ability to gain support from key stakeholders, such as environmental activists, consumers, the general public and the media. This support depends on the stakeholder's rhetorical skill in persuading audiences that the firms' environmental practices and policies violate social norms and rules. The use of metaphors allows parties involved in a conflict to frame and reframe the contested issue in particular ways. Thus, rhetoric plays a key role in the way the conflict is resolved. Our findings suggest that Greenpeace combines all three attributes of a 'clever' stakeholder, namely skills in coalition-building, political action, and social reality construction (Mitchell *et al*., 1997, p. 879). For this reason, the sportswear/fashion firms found it impossible to ignore Greenpeace's demand and eventually all committed to the elimination of hazardous chemicals from their supply chains. This is in line with the view that language is a mechanism of power through which constituents pursue their interests (Bourdieu, 1991).

It is too early to say whether Greenpeace's 'Detox' campaign will lead to substantive changes in manufacturing processes, rather than just greenwash. If the firms do not follow through with their commitments, this puts Greenpeace's reputation as a change agent at risk. Greenpeace took advantage of the intense competition between the sportswear/fashion firms in order to ensure their compliance. If the firms do not deliver on their promises, they face the risk of further Greenpeace activism resulting in negative publicity. The fourth Greenpeace report on the use of hazardous chemicals by the sportswear/fashion industry, 'Toxic Threads – The Big Fashion Stitch-Up', published in November 2012, shows that Greenpeace kept up the pressure on the firms by playing on the competition in the fashion industry. Greenpeace classified the firms into four categories, depending on the strength of their commitment to Greenpeace's 'Detox' challenge and their individual strategies to eliminate hazardous chemicals from the supply chains. 'Engaged detox brands' are firms that have made the zero discharge commitment and have implemented individual action plans (including five of the six firms discussed in this paper). 'Detox greenwashers' are firms that have made the zero discharge commitment, but have not implemented individual action plans (including G-Star RAW). 'Detox laggards' are firms that have not made the zero discharge commitment, but that have individual chemical management policies. 'Detox villains' are firms that have neither made the zero discharge commitment, nor implemented individual chemical management policies.

In this paper we only focus on one aspect of communication (written communication in the form of press releases) between the parties involved in the 'Dirty Laundry' case. However, Greenpeace also used visual rhetoric (a video, posters and placards) and the rhetoric of performance (social activism in the form of a strip-tease, a sticker campaign, etc.) to put pressure on the firms to concede to its demand. These non-verbal forms of communication constitute a powerful means of persuasion and undoubtedly contributed to the outcome of the conflict. Prior research has focused on the use of visuals in corporate annual reports to convey a particular message. However, we know little about the use of non-verbal means of communication by stakeholders, and even less about the use of non-verbal means of communication during interactions between business organisations and stakeholders. Images have a strong psychological impact and therefore constitute an even more powerful way of persuasion than words. In order to understand the dynamics of communication between business organisations and their various audiences, future research needs to explore non-verbal

as well as verbal communication. This necessitates interdisciplinary research drawing on insights from visual arts and drama.

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